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Views and Opinions.

Evolution and Change.

The permanent and universal fact in Nature is change. The most general—the law—of this aspect of Nature is that which meets us in the law of evolution. And so far as the world of living things is concerned, the basic fact is adaptation. This much was, we hope, made clear in our notes of last week. But adaptation is a relative fact. What constitutes adaptation must be determined by the environment, and it is in the consideration of the nature of the environment in determining what qualities or functions shall have a survival value that we arrive at the importance—social, ethical, and religious—of environmental influences. For the fact of change, perhaps its possibility depends upon the environment, whatever be its character, undergoing alteration. The change may be of that slow secular character such as meets us in geological or astronomical phenomena. Or it may be a failure of the food supply which gives to certain animals the advantage derived from possessing variations, but which would have been without value had the food supply not been interrupted. Or, what amounts to the same thing, increase of numbers changes the organic environment of every member of the species. And the one quality brought out in all this is persistence. There is no necessary moral significance, and there is no end involved, as is implied in such terms as "higher" or "progress." These are conceptions introduced by us—useful enough in their way, but having no objective value. Ideally, one quality may be higher than another; but if it does not establish a greater degree of adaptation, it brings no advantage to its possessor, and may bring a positive disadvantage. In a thieves' kitchen the honest man is handicapped. In the existing political world a perfectly truthful man would be a parliamentary failure. In the pulpit a preacher who knew the truth about religion, and told it, would soon be out of the Church. Adaptation is not, as such, a question of moral goodness or badness; it is simply adaptation.

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Environment.

There is embedded in the theological use made of the doctrine of evolution, as also in its handling by a certain school of sociologists, the notion that the fact of adaptation leading to what we recognize as progress, affords

ground for the belief that evolution supplies us with what Huxley very foolishly called a "wider teleology," which will escape the gross illogicalities of the older Paleyan form. This is wholly fallacious. So far as evolution makes for morality, it is only as adaptation is fundamentally and substantially identical with the persistence of certain structures, whether these structures be that of an organism or of a social group. As we have often pointed out, moral laws are to the social group what physiological laws are to the individual. They are expressions of the conditions that make group life possible, and the reasoning which sees in the existence of morality proof of a "divine plan," or divine guidance, is of the same order that sees design in the fact of death coming at the end of life instead of in the middle of it. What we are dealing with here is again the simple fact of adaptation, although in the case of the human group, the traditions and customs and ideals of the group form a very important part of the environment to which adaptation must be made, and which, therefore, have a distinct survival value. And it is in the creation of this peculiarly human environment that one has to look for the real influence of religion in moulding the life of the race. In that direction the case against religion is indeed black.

* * *

Man and Evolution.

Excluding pathological cases, there is no real difference between the fundamental qualities possessed by men. There are differences as to the strength of these qualities, and also as to their relative values in contrasted individuals, and there are differences in the form in which the same qualities express themselves; but that is all. Civilization does not change the man; it only gives a new direction to existing qualities. In a bad social environment qualities are expressed harmfully, in a better environment they are expressed beneficially. The fundamental evil of war in the modern State is that it expends human energies in a relatively injurious manner. The love of contest and of competition, without which human nature would be a poor thing, is expended in the way of destruction instead of in the socially beneficial channels of adventure and healthy intellectual contest. Sympathies are narrowed instead of widened, and hatred of the outsider, a manifestation of which most civilized persons are ashamed during times of peace, becomes a belauded virtue in time of war. In other words, we create an environment—fortunately for only the time being—which gives a certain survival value to such expressions of human capacity as indicate a reversion to a lower type of culture. And this principle allows of a very wide application. It is one that is indicated by the whole course of social evolution. More and more it is being realized that what the individual is to become, the direction in which his energies are to be expended is, so to speak, a function of the environment. Man is not a creature of his environment in the sense in which the expression was once used, but he is in the

sense that the *form* of the reaction of his nature is determined by environmental influences.

* * *

Man and His Environment.

It is this that makes of so great consequence the power of education and the influence of religion. The human brain is the most plastic organ known to science. It is educable to an enormous degree. That, indeed, is the one great distinction between the human and the animal baby. The compensation for being born with fewer instincts than other animals is the greater educability of the human brain. But that, of necessity, throws into greater prominence the educative influence of the environment. And the predominantly operative environment here is the human one as expressed in teachings, ideas, and ideals. We cannot alter the nature of the qualities with which an individual is born, but we can by placing a social emphasis on certain aspects of their activity largely determine whether they shall be expressed in a socially injurious manner or not. The love of adventure, for example, may be exploited in the interests of some form of piratical enterprise, or it may be guided into channels of exploration, research, or other forms of social effort. Social approval is in itself a very powerful influence, and can be made to operate with all the intensity of personal gain. That it does operate with many is plain, that it might operate with more is a conclusion that fits in with all our knowledge of human nature. It lies with society itself to see that the environment of such as to exercise a selective influence with regard to those qualities that really make for real culture and civilization.

* * *

The Power of Man.

To sum up. It is not the fact that evolution means a "levelling up." Neither does it necessarily mean progress, as we understand the term. Evolution is no more than a formula that expresses the way in which a moving balance of forces is brought about by purely mechanical means. So far as animal life is concerned this balance is expressed in the term adaptation to environment. And in human society the environment is in a growing measure made up of the ideas, customs, traditions, and ideals with which each finds himself surrounded. The game is thus very largely in our own hands. If we create an environment in which it is costly or dangerous to be honest and fearless in the expression of opinion, we shall be doing our best to develop mental cowardice and hypocrisy. If we bring up the young with the successful soldier or money-maker before them as our ideal figure, while we continue to treat the scientist and the idealist as more or less harmless cranks, we shall be continuing the policy of forcing an expression of human capacity upon lower levels than would otherwise be the case. If we encourage the dominance of a religion which beyond a profession of loftiness irradiates a narrow egotism that teaches the inutility of conduct without the prospect of a future life, we are doing our best to perpetuate an environment which emphasizes the value of the poorer aspects of human motive. In short, the cards are in our hands if we will only learn to play them wisely. Evolution does not, as we have said, necessarily involve "progress," but it does indicate that human wisdom and foresight may so control the social forces as to turn that ceaseless change which is indicated by the law of evolution into channels that make for human happiness and prosperity.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The religion of one age is the literary entertainment of the next.—Emerson.

Christ's Descent into Hades.

Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison.—1 Peter iii. 18, 19.

WHO wrote the First Epistle of Peter is not known, but we are absolutely certain that the Apostle Peter did not write it. In all probability it was composed early in the second century by a disciple of Paul for the purpose of showing that Peter's theology was in reality identical with that propounded by the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Peter was a pillar-apostle whose home was at Jerusalem, and who was a follower of James in theology rather than of Paul. By the beginning of the second century, the bitter controversy between the two schools was dying down, and some ardent admirer of Paul was anxious to represent Peter as an earnest advocate of Paulinism. In any case, the theology of this Epistle is distinctly Pauline. It is well known that the doctrine of the Atonement, for example, formed no part of the theology of the Jerusalem Church, its entire emphasis being laid on the life and teaching of Jesus, not at all on his sacrificial death; but in this Epistle Peter is held responsible for the view that Jesus, the sinless one, "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," and that by his stripes mankind may be healed. The author informs his readers that they were redeemed not "with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." In the *Twentieth Century New Testament*, the words of our text are rendered thus:—

Christ himself died to atone for sins once for all—the good on behalf of the bad—that he might bring you to God; his body being put to death, but his spirit entering upon new life. And it was then that he went and preached to the imprisoned spirits, who once were disobedient at the time when God patiently waited, in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which some few lives, eight in all, were saved by means of water.

This is the Pauline doctrine of the atonement. The salvation of lost sinners is said to have been made possible by the death of the righteous one. But a new note is introduced, not found in any of the Pauline Epistles, a thoroughly heterodox note, never adopted as part of the Church's teaching, namely, that between his death and resurrection Christ went down to Hades and preached his Gospel there. This is, undoubtedly, the meaning of the nineteenth verse. In Professor Charles' article on Eschatology in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, it is admitted that the interpretations are multitudinous; but the writer claims that the phrase, "the spirits in prison," can be interpreted only in two ways:—

The spirits in question are either those of men in Sheol, or the fallen angels mentioned in 2 Peter ii. 4; Jude 6. In the next place the words "in prison" denote the local condition of the spirits at the time of preaching. Hence, according to the text, Christ "in the spirit" (i. e. between his death and his resurrection) preached the Gospel of redemption to human or angelic spirits in the underworld.

The accuracy of this exegesis is confirmed in iv. 6: "For unto this end was the Gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." And yet the overwhelming majority of the great divines in all ages emphatically deny the doctrine here enunciated. Augustine, Bede, Thomas Aquinas, Lyra, Hammond, Beza, Leighton, Hoffmann, assert that the preaching mentioned was the preaching of righteousness

by Noah and his contemporaries; that Noah preached to his contemporaries who were *now* in prison, "by virtue of the spirit of Christ inspiring him; and that thus his preaching was in fact a preaching by Christ in the Spirit." This interpretation is simply grotesque, being forced by the belief that salvation is possible only in this life. According to the orthodox Church it is heresy of the deepest dye to maintain that there is the slightest chance of redemption for those who die in unbelief. Many of us have a vivid recollection of the terrible bitterness with which Dean Farrar and Samuel Cox were persecuted thirty and forty years ago for preaching and publishing books on what was called the Larger Hope. The prevailing belief was that those who die out of Christ go to everlasting punishment. So to cherish the slightest hope of the unbelieving dead was considered an unpardonable crime.

Now, the Rev. Professor David Smith, D.D., holds the orthodox view with a vengeance. In answer to "M. M.," who asked, "Would you give me your view on 1 Peter iii. 19?" he devotes his Correspondence Column in the *British Weekly* for October 23 to a vigorous defence of the unnatural exegesis adopted by the Church. Dr. Smith characterizes the passage as the proof-text of "the old idea of the *Descensus ad Infernos*, the 'Harrowing' or 'Harrying of Hell'—the fancy so picturesquely presented in the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus* and embodied in the so-called Apostles' Creed," which he states thus:—

That during the three days between his death and his resurrection, while his body lay in the sepulchre, our Lord descended to Hades, where the saints of old were kept imprisoned until their redemption should be accomplished, and brought them forth in triumph. The idea, however, is an unscriptural fiction. It was not until the first century that it first made its appearance in its simplest form; and though it built itself on this passage and claimed this passage as its authority, it is nothing else than a misinterpretation of the Apostle's language.

But that idea is not in the passage at all. What we are told is not that Christ went down to Hades to deliver the saints of old imprisoned there, but that he went and preached, not to saints, but to the spirits of those who had refused to believe Noah's Gospel. The emphasis is on the idea that Christ descended to the Inferno and preached to those who on earth had been disobedient. There have been a few in the Church, it is true, who held that all the saints of old were imprisoned in hell until Christ purchased their release with his blood, and went down to claim them and conduct them to heaven. The *Gospel of Nicodemus* supplies a minute account of his journey and the marvellous feats he performed during the three days in the underworld. Of course, all this is pure fiction, though by no means unscriptural. As interpreter of 1 Peter iii. 19, the Rev. Dr. Charles, Professor of Biblical Greek in Trinity College, Dublin, is much superior to Dr. Smith, for he wrote as a mere literary critic who allowed no theological theory to blind his judgment; but the idea of the passage is itself fiction, with no foundation whatever in history. The writer of the passage under discussion drew entirely upon his imagination. He possessed no knowledge of an under-world, of heaven and hell, or of spirit as distinguished from flesh. Even the doctrine of the atonement is scriptural fiction, and as immoral as it is false. Dr. Smith presents this doctrine in such a way as to lay bare its absurdity:—

Our Lord's historic atonement, his passion in the days of his flesh, was the revelation of an age-long sacrifice for the sins of the world. He is the eternal Saviour, and his incarnation was merely his manifestation. The

Lamb was "slain from the foundation of the world" (*cf.* Rev. xii. 8). All down the ages he was bearing the guilt and sorrow of the world's transgression, and the Cross was merely the revelation of what sin had been costing him all along, and is costing him still, and must cost him evermore until it has been purged from the Universe. What he suffered in the flesh on Calvary he had been suffering all the while—not by the Spirit, but "in the spirit" (*cf.* R.V.).

This fantastic view of the atonement is offered to justify the orthodox exegesis of the text under consideration. As a matter of fact, however, it utterly fails to justify that interpretation. According to the writer, Christ suffered for sins *once for all*, "being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit, in which (thus quickened) he went and preached unto the spirits in prison." Logically, his going and preaching in the spirit follows his being put to death in the flesh; but according to Dr. Smith, it precedes his death by thousands of years. He suffered for sins *once*, being put to death *in the flesh*, but quickened *in spirit*, in which he went and preached to antedeluvians who are now spirits in prison. There is nothing to indicate that the writer of the Epistle believed in an eternal Saviour, an age-long sacrifice; and had he done so, he would have expressed himself very differently. But the very notion of an eternally suffering Saviour is unutterably absurd and futile, because the world is to-day just what it was ten thousand years ago, morally neither much better nor worse. Of any interference from beyond the stars there is absolutely no evidence. The world to come is "the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns." Neither God the Father nor God the Son yields any sign of being objectively real, and this world goes on as if they were not.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Price of Priestcraft.

We shall never enfranchise the world without touching people's superstitions —G. W. Foote.

THE report of the recent Church Congress contains much that is of interest to Freethinkers. The parsons have been hard hit by the War and the industrial crisis. The Congress called for a "living wage" for its clergy, and, in discussing the pay of these poverty-stricken gentlemen, some remarkable disclosures were made.

A lurid picture was drawn by the champions of the "starving" clergy. It was alleged that one anonymous parson was known to be living in a cellar, because he could not afford to warm his house. Another anonymous brother was stated to have been forced to sell his furniture to pay his rates. But no mention was made of the historic case, vouched for by the Bishop of London, of the rural dean who fed himself, his wife and family, on sixpence a meal. Sufficient unto the day was the evil thereof.

The Rev. Dr. Headlam, of Oxford, voicing the claims of the clergy, gave some facts. He stated that there were 3,275 livings of £200 and under; 5,860 under £250; and 8,029 under £300. But Dr. Headlam also gave some examples of the use of Church revenues which were even more startling. He instanced the City of London where £50,000 is spent each year on ministering to a small resident population of caretakers, policemen, and Jews. The Church had also property there worth £2,000,000. Presumably, if the clergy were really starving, this could be realized to endow poor parishes where needed. Besides, there is a terrible waste of man-power in the Church. There are, so Dr. Headlam declared, 1,877 parishes with a population under 200; and 4,802 with a population under 500.

Very little was said about the resources of the Ecclesiastical commissioners, and of Queen Anne's Bounty. The Archbishop of York, evidently scenting danger in too close a scrutiny, condemned the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire further into the starvation of the clergy.

The plaint of "starvation" is, after all, largely a matter of rhetoric. Those ecclesiastics who lament the loudest may be only practising the wiles of their artful profession. Perhaps they are merely seeking to excite the generosity of devoted Churchmen who have balances at the bank. For, apart from a few anonymous examples, which cannot be taken too seriously, the clergy are not nearer starvation than millions of their countrymen. It is absurd to pretend otherwise. In so many parishes the parson with his big and expensive vicarage too often is a miniature reproduction of the bishop in a palace too large for him and for the times. I remember, also, that the practical issue at stake in the great railway strike was simply that of a minimum wage of £3 a week.

Despite the Bishop of London's apologetics, the higher clergy are in no danger of starvation. Thirty-nine ecclesiastics receive, between them, £180,700 yearly, with emoluments in the shape of palaces and palatial residences. The Bishop of London himself is a bachelor, with an income of £200 weekly. Nor do the clergy, like Nebuchadnezzar, eat grass. The late Judge Rentoul stated that at the annual banquets given to the clergy at the Mansion House seventy-four bottles of champagne were drunk, costing about £40. He added that he actually saw those figures, and he was told that the amount was every year about the same.

A former canon of St. Paul's Cathedral once said that some of the reasons why men remained in the Church were "purple, palaces, patronage, profit, and power." There is something in this. The right to appoint clergymen to benefices is sold for money in the open market, as if it were so much coal or so much soap. The clergy pretend, professionally, to be entirely uninfluenced by financial considerations. Indeed, the Bishop of London has proved to an admiring world that the more money he receives the poorer he becomes.

The cat does sometimes get out of the bag. When the clergy die, the outside public learns, with emotion, how they evaded the blessings of poverty. The late Bishop of Colchester left estate to the value of £60,848. Bishop Creighton, who used to talk of the fearful struggles of the wretched clergy, left £29,000. Archbishop Benson left £35,000, and Archbishop Tait a similar sum. The largest episcopal estate of recent years was that of Bishop Walsham How, who left £72,240. A good second to this was Bishop Tuffnell's £65,800. Bishop Phillpot left £60,000, whilst Archbishop Thomson left £55,000, and Bishop Trollope £50,790. Compared with these sums, the £19,361 of Bishop Harvey Goodwin, the £10,000 of Bishop Tozer, and the £12,605 of Bishop Pelham seem quite modest.

If the Nation insisted on a Commission to inquire into the revenues of the Established Church, it would be astonished at the result. What is all this money used for? Priests are not only the enslavers of men, but most formidable foes of Democracy. They claim to be regarded as sacred persons, and declare that their dogmas are essential to salvation. Unless a man accepts them and their dogmas, without doubt he shall suffer everlastingly. That is Church teaching for the masses, tempered with polite reservations for the classes. It is only the power for mischief that has been destroyed; the will is still there. To give money to the Church is simply to perpetuate the superstitions of the Dark Ages.

MIMNERMUS.

The Bible.

IF the worst thing about the Bible were that it is a collection of fairy tales pretending to divine truth, we could smile and let it go at that, for it is not a matter of any vital importance to us whether the whale swallowed Jonah or Jonah swallowed the whale. The really important objection to the Bible is that it teaches and gives divine sanction to doctrines which are keeping the present generation of men in poverty and servitude. The Bible teaches the horrid doctrines of self-denial and submission to authority on which every spiritual and political tyranny, and every scheme of legalized plunder, is built. It would have you believe that the way to be virtuous and happy, and to prepare for a world in which you will have everything you want, is to be patient and do without pleasure in this world. Bishops who live in palaces and enjoy every luxury tell us that we should reverence them, and do without the things they enjoy to the full. Well-fed parsons who hob-nob with millionaires preach of the blessings of poverty and the sweetness of want. Politicians, who obey nothing but their greed of gain and lust of power, use the Bible to deceive the people into submission to their oppression and plunder. Monopolists who respect no laws but those which enable them to rob the workers, exhort us to be servile and law-abiding. And each of these classes find ample warrant for all they do in the Bible.

It is that book which bids us honour and obey those set in authority over us, although we know that most of them got where they are by schemes of wire-pulling and falsehood which would make the Devil himself squirm with envy; and that when they are in power they trample on every principle of justice and humanity should it become necessary to their sordid ends. It is that book which has divided society into masters and slaves. It was a storehouse of texts for the slave-holders of the Southern States of America, and it is still such to the landlords and usurers who enslave their fellow-men by monopolizing land and banking, thus subjecting them to the alternative of working for low wages or starving. It is that book which commands women to be dumb in the presence of men, and to be in subjection to their husbands, on the theological ground that man is a kind of God before whom women should bow in stupid silence and servitude. It is that book which makes of children mere non-entities, and to pass the days of childhood in servile obedience by way of preparation for similar subjection to the priest and the politician, when the parent has got through with ordering them to do things they should not do, and beating them for doing what they should do. It is that book which commands men and women to have as many children as possible, notwithstanding that for most of us it is almost a crime to bring children into this world, since while banking and land are monopolized by a privileged few, every child is likely to fall under a form of slavery incalculably worse than non-existence. It is that book which has encouraged the slaughter and starvation of millions of human beings by presenting to the world an imaginary God who is triumphantly described as a Man of War, and who did not hesitate to command the massacre of men, women, and children, to the extent of extermination, when his barbarous chosen people were on the war-path.

It is that book which approves the erection of every gallows and every prison, by advocating judicial murder and other punishments that are far more horrible than the crimes sought to be avenged, and makes the worst deeds of human rulers seem merciful beside the horrors

it threatens to those who offend the insane monster whom it calls Jehovah.

It is that book which has so steeped the mind of the so-called civilized world with savage and senseless superstitions that when Freethinkers preach truths so simple that a child should understand them, they are regarded as immoral cranks, and are lucky if they do not fall victims to the ignorance of the populace and the ferocity of the clergy and politicians.

What man needs is general wealth, so that each may be able to satisfy all his rational wants. But the Bible tells you that it is blessed to be poor. The clergy and Christian business men do not believe this, but they wish their dupes and their employes to believe it, in order that they may give to the Church and submit to starvation wages. What men need is freedom. Men are driven into crime by the lack of freedom. They grow better in morals just in proportion as government by violence declines; and when there is no such government, when people no longer interfere with each other by brute force, vice will be far more rare than virtue is now. But from cover to cover the Bible is against human freedom. Not one word is said in its defence. Every line of the wretched book teaches the sanctity of slavery. Every class in society is exhorted to cultivate the vice of base submission to some other class, and all are said to be under the heel of the omnipotent tyrant in the skies.

The world has never been so miserable as when the teaching of the Bible was most in vogue, and it grows happier in proportion as it throws the dreadful book aside. Every step of progress has been won by discarding the doctrines and disobeying the commands of the Bible. The Bible bids the chattel slave to obey his owner, but where this form of slavery has been abolished the people are happier.

The Bible bids women to submit to men; but where women are free from dependence on men, and will not submit to them, both are happier. The Bible bids children to obey their parents, and parents to thrash their children for disobedience; but in those few families where blind obedience is not exacted, and the rod is unknown, both parents and children are happier. The Bible says that the poor are blessed, and certain of everlasting bliss in the next world simply because they are poor; but when they cease to believe this, and throw off the shackles of the landlord and the usurer that keep them poor, both they and their exploiters will be happier.

I do not say there is nothing good or true in the Bible. It would be hard to write such a collection of books without hitting on some truth occasionally. What is good in the Bible should be treasured, but we should get rid of all our reverence for it as being any different from other books written by ignorant men in ignorant ages. We should understand that, as a whole, it is the book of rulers, monopolists, pompous prelates, and designing priests—a book that will keep humanity forever in barbarism unless men and women can fling off this millstone and free themselves from its deadening power.

Pay no attention to any book which preaches up rulers and whips down the people; which artificially exalts men and degrades women; which never speaks of the training of children except in connection with the rod. The only character in the Bible worthy of the slightest attention is Jesus, and even he glorifies self-denial and puts a halo about poverty, which are the twin nightmares that sit on the breast of half-awakened humanity.

G. O. WARREN.

Smiles are as catching as tears.—*Masterlinck.*

Acid Drops.

Bishop Gore says that except in the vaguest sense you cannot call England a Christian country. Well, we do not burn people for heresy or witchcraft, but there is still enough humbug in the land to give us a good position in the race for the name. And Bishop Gore himself is not a bad illustration. He is eloquent enough on the evils of war in a Christian country. But both he and the other members of the Church Congress were curiously silent concerning one of the very worst and most brutal forms of warfare that has been elaborated by the Allies. We mean the policy of starvation adopted to bring an enemy to terms. The policy of starving all the women and children and old people of a nation in order to reduce the rest, strikes us as far and away the most cold-bloodedly brutal that the world has ever been known. Hitherto this weapon has been, so to speak, incidental to warfare. Now it has become a recognized weapon! And Christian England has sanctified its use.

At Guildford, Surrey, a shopkeeper, aged 81, was married to a bride of 63, by a parson aged 93. There is nothing extraordinary in this humdrum affair. For instance, it is commonplace beside the first bridal party mentioned in Genesis, where Adam and Eve attended their son's wedding to a non-existent bride.

Dr. Voronoff, a Paris surgeon, claims that he has discovered the secret of living to be as old as Methuselah. Perhaps a rival scientist will go one better, and discover the secret of Melchisedek, who had neither beginning nor ending of days.

Providence cares as little for places of worship as for other buildings. A Jewish synagogue in Fairclough Street, East London, has been severely damaged by fire.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has roused the clergy on the subject of Spiritualism. He can take very good care of himself, too. Replying to the suggestion that people had gone mad studying the cult, he said that an American doctor went through the New England asylums and analysed 14,500 cases of lunacy. He found four Spiritualists and 222 parsons.

Is there any humbug in the world like Christian humbug? And is there any variety in the world quite so nauseating as the kind supplied in this country? Here, for instance, is the Bishop of Peterborough saying that the European nations must find some substitute for war, because the growth of aerial warfare may mean the destruction of provinces. And meanwhile we see that it is to be generally adopted against those uncivilized, or semi-civilized, or differently civilized, peoples who object to our rule. Air fighting against civilized people, who can hit back, is horrible and unchristian. But air fighting against people who have no aeroplanes and no anti-aircraft guns is quite proper. The Bishop of Peterborough protests against the one; he says nothing against the other. For our own part, we think this new use of the aeroplane is more objectionable than the previous one. It makes war more cowardly and contemptible than ever. Bombing an enemy, with its indiscriminate killing of women and children, is bad enough when the enemy can hit back. But bombing an enemy who cannot hit back is infinitely worse. The picture of a man sitting in absolute safety, raining down explosive bombs on a defenceless mob of people, is enough to make warfare stink in the nostrils of decent people. If this kind of thing doesn't kill war, then the future of the race is almost hopeless. There is, indeed, no such thing as "fair fighting" in war. What there is are agreed degrees of unfair fighting.

The Rev. C. F. Upsdell, of Moulton, Northampton, prohibited the Saturday dances which for the past two years have been held in the church hall. A protest meeting was held, and a resolution passed calling upon the vicar to allow the Saturday hops.

Speaking on the ministry of women, Canon Streeter, at the Church Congress, said that the "oversexing of women was the greatest obstacle towards the realization by society of the lofty purity of the teaching of Christ." Apparently, the "lofty purity" does not recognise woman as a human being.

When journalists do agree their unanimity is perfectly marvellous. Nearly all the dear editors appear to be convinced that the poor clergy are actually starving. It is almost as pathetic as the belief of the Church-going spinsters that the medals on the Padre's manly breast were won in the thick of the fighting.

Father Bernard Vaughan has been talking again. Speaking at the Tuberculosis Conference he said: "Fancy 100,000 of our people being infected with consumption. Fancy losing 60,000 every year, all the flower of youth and beauty." Unhappily it is not "fancy" but stern fact. And it is hard to reconcile with the statement: "Our Father which art in heaven."

The clergy are still "starving." Canon John Rowlands, of Aberdovey, Merioneth, left £22,580, including bequests to his servants. Another case of destitution is that of the Rev. W. T. Southward, of Cambridge, who left £4,267.

Sir A. Conan Doyle complains that a Church Canon asserts that mediums are neurotic. Just so! But less severe critics suggest that mediums are "tommyrotic."

The new Bishop of Southwark, the Rev. Canon Garbett, is already complaining of the poverty of the ecclesiastics, and says that there is no bishop who would not be insolvent without private means. We wonder how the new Father-in-God made this remark without smiling, for, as thirty-nine ecclesiastics receive between them £180,700 yearly, they must be absolute wasters if this large sum is insufficient for their needs.

In the village of Moulton, Northamptonshire, there is a row over the question of dancing, not on Sunday, but on Saturday evening. The vicar objects to it as it takes place on Church premises. At a meeting of the club management committee, held in the church rooms, the vicar was questioned on the matter, and said that dancing did not aid him in his work, and he, therefore, objected to it on Church premises. The chairman of the meeting put the whole matter in a nutshell by saying that the trouble would not have arisen had they attended Church better. It was difficult to get Sunday-school teachers and to get children to the school. Things were "at a pretty low ebb, and they could not wonder that the vicar thought he was making no progress when people flocked to the entertainments but did not go to the religious gatherings." So it is the old position over again. The early Christians protested against the theatres being open on Sundays because they kept people away from Church, and the modern ones are at the same game. If people are allowed to be human on Saturday night it is difficult for them to be otherwise on Sunday morning. The only way to make Church-going attractive is to make life so deadly dull that even a sermon is a wild frolic by comparison.

The *Christian World* complains that the defeat of the German Army has not brought a sense of humility to the German people, nor taught them "the needful lessons of righteousness, peace, and mercy." No one but fools would ever have imagined that these consequences follow from defeat in war. Is it not our own boast that we never know when we are beaten? And imagine a Christian paper that is continuously dwelling upon the conquering power of love, etc., complaining that the other fellow, after getting his head punched, doesn't turn round and hail the one who has punched it as his benefactor! War breeds war. That is the lesson of the situation; although the Germans, if they were wise enough, would see that up to now they are the only ones who have secured any real gain from the War. They have got rid of their army and navy, and their here-

ditary monarchy. They have got rid of a number of evils—thanks to the Allies—that we have still to clear out. It is a case of the winners lose and the losers win. War was always bad; it is now supremely silly. It is only waiting for a Cervantes to do for it what was done for knight-errantry. When the world can laugh at its solemn silliness and pretentious buffoonery, the world will be safe—if not for democracy, at least for sensible people.

The Vicar of St. Luke's Parish Church, Preston, complains that Sunday after Sunday well-dressed people claim seats, books, etc., and only value their religious privileges at one penny each. Well, if it is left to them to fix their own price, one should accept their judgment as to its value. We suggest to the Vicar that he should decline to supply them with these religious privileges any longer. Why not give up the church, and leave these penny customers to go to hell at their own rate?

At the Church Congress, the Rev. F. Iremonger said that "parsons are like potatoes—they cannot thrive unless their ground is changed." The illustration is very faulty. It is not the parsons who require change in the interests of health, but the congregations. Parsons are not better in their new habitat, but it takes the new people some time to find them out. A better illustration would be that parsons are like potatoes because the best of them are underground. They are unlike potatoes inasmuch as they would not repay for digging up.

It is a step in the right direction that the Lord Mayor's Show this year is to be what is called a "Peace Show." There will be no military display except a small escort of soldiers furnished from the War Office. That is a very welcome change. If the people are really in earnest in their talk of doing away with militarism, a very important step will have been taken when we reach the point of ceasing to hold up the soldier in all our civic functions as the most prominent figure. The public adoration of the military is the indispensable condition of the establishment of militarism. You cannot at the same time admire the profession and repudiate the practice. Civic functions should emphasize the civic life of the people, and it is an insult to the community as a whole to assume that at all these civic parades a great military and naval display is necessary. In a really civilized country an army should be regarded as at best a necessary evil, and one way of getting that evil reduced to as small dimensions as possible would be to have as little of it in the public eye as possible, and to show all our normal civic functions being carried on in their complete absence.

Rev. W. E. Orchard quotes with approval a friend of his who says that most Anglican sermons are worse than is necessary. We do not know that this is more applicable to Anglican sermons than to those that are preached in other places. If the one is banalistic in one direction the other is equally bad in another. The curious thing is that few people expect common sense in a sermon. Hence the distinction between a lecture and a sermon.

This is serious news! Baptism in the Jordan has for generations been a popular and pious custom. We believe that bottles of the water have even been brought home for the same purpose. Now, the American Red Cross has made an analysis of the water, and discovered that the stream abounds in germs of all sorts of disease, and baptisms in the Jordan are to be strictly forbidden. Piety and plague, disease and devotion! These are very old associates, but it is distressing to learn that all the trust of the faithful has not been able to keep the holy river free from pollution. We should not be surprised to learn that it even has a few disease germs that are peculiar to it. It would be just like Providence to provide them.

The Young Men's Christian Association is devoting a portion of its energy to "blind alley" occupations for lads. This is more in harmony with its scope than some things it attempts, for the Christian Superstition is the finest "blind alley" ever devised for misdirecting the Democracy.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

November 2, Glasgow; November 3, Paisley; November 4, 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.—November 16, Leicester; November 23, Manchester; December 7, Swansea; December 21, Glasgow; December 22, Paisley.

ONE of our readers writes:—"After the strike, we read that a certain congregation sang the Doxology. I was dining the other night with four or five people, including two Cambridge graduates. Not one of us knew what the Doxology was." Our correspondent overlooks the fact that it is precisely there that the power of a religious ceremony lies.

W. J.—Your suggestion came too late to be of use. The discussion between the Editor and Dr. Lyttelton is now printed and is at the binders.

R. SEDDON.—Your polemic is singularly ill-placed. We have never said that the distinction between the Theist and the non-Theist is that one believes in, or uses, reason and the other does not. Such a distinction would be absurd. The issue between the two arises on a difference of interpretation of facts that are common to both. Christians believe in reason, as you say, the Freethinker's complaint is that either their reasoning is inaccurate, or they introduce a factor, through a process of reasoning, which robs their subsequent reasoning of real value.

S. R.—You had better get into touch with some good American publishing firm. Some of the finest works on animal psychology and animal behaviour are American in origin. But beware of the common error of confusing mere animal biography with an understanding of evolution. We know plenty of popular writers who are familiar with the former but are sadly deficient in the latter. Anyone can acquire a knowledge of animal habits, and that bears the same relation to evolution that a knowledge of facts does to an appreciation of scientific method. It is the method and the philosophy that is all important.

E. LEARMONT.—Yes, we received the invitation, but was compelled to refuse it. There is too much to do in the field of Freethought and too few to do it for us to spend our energies in other directions. Besides, platform work has too few attractions for us to ever take it up either for its own sake or for financial reasons. Hence, we refused; but there was no other motive at work, and you have our authority for saying so.

MRS. TURNBULL.—We are pleased to hear from you, and appreciate your good wishes. Hope that you are well, and that we may see you during our visit North. Some of the family we are certain to see.

MR. R. WILSON sends subscription to the Sustentation Fund in return for "the treats of the past, and with assurance of their continuance in the future." Thanks; but why talk of our "thankless task"? The thanks we want is the progress of the Cause, and that is assured if all will do what they can to assist.

A. CUNNINGHAM.—Sorry we are unable to find room for the whole of your letter, but we have published the salient parts. It is, as you say, a question of want of backbone, and, we may add, of the capacity for clear thinking.

R. GREEN.—Pleased to have your good opinion of the *Freethinker* and its weekly contents. Its late Editor used to say that there was no other paper in Britain with so much brain-power behind it, and we have done our best to keep it clear of wishy-washy writing and compromising opinions. We are out for a straight fight on one of the greatest of issues.

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

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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.

Mr. Cohen commences a week's campaign in Scotland today. He will lecture in the Good Templar's Hall, Ingram Street, Glasgow, on November 2; in Paisley, in the G. A. Clark Town Hall, on November 3, on "Christianity and the Labour Movement" (a lively meeting is anticipated here); at Milngavie on the 4th, in the I.L.P. Hall; at Falkirk on the 7th; and at Edinburgh on the 9th. The rest of the week he will be able to take things easy, as he will only have the paper, his ordinary correspondence, and other odds and ends to attend to. For those who love a life of leisured ease Freethought writing and speaking is just the thing.

Mr. Lloyd, we are glad to hear, had a good meeting at Birmingham on Sunday last, and delivered a lecture that delighted all present. Next Sunday our Birmingham friends have arranged for a discussion on the subject of "Has Humanity Gained from Unbelief?" to be opened by Mr. Clifford Williams. The discussion is sure to be interesting. We hope the Repertory Theatre will be crowded.

The Manchester Branch's lecture season opened well on Sunday last. Both of Mr. Cohen's lectures were well attended, and the evening lecture was followed by a very animated discussion. Some new members were made, and we believe that the literature stall did a good business. Mr. Monks occupied the chair on both occasions, and it was pleasant to learn that the Branch opens its season in a better position, numerically and financially, than it has yet been. A feature of the meetings was the violin-playing of Miss Francis in the afternoon, and the singing of Mr. Tilley in the evening. The appreciation of the audience was so marked that the lecturer felt like apologizing for intervening with anything so ordinary as a speech.

We have said nothing lately about the L.C.C. and its refusal to permit the *Freethinker* to be sold in the parks, but the matter has not been allowed to drop. We were waiting to see what could be done by peaceful and constitutional methods before trying more drastic ones. As our readers will see on referring to another column, the subject was raised by Mr. Snell, and a debate followed, which seems to indicate that the bigots on the Council may see reason to modify their present policy. We may say more on the subject next week, for the present we leave the report to speak for itself. It is intolerable that these petty Councillors should arrogate to themselves a right that even powerful organizations have seen the wisdom of forgoing. We are greatly indebted to Mr. Snell for seeing that the matter was made the subject of open debate, and also to Mr. Frederick Verinder for supplying us with the report. Both deserve the thanks of all lovers of free speech, which was never in greater danger than it is at the moment. It says something for the servile and time-serving character of the London Press that, so far as we are aware, not one of the papers thought it worth while to report a discussion on so important a question as the right of the public to sell in the public parks papers and pamphlets that are sold without hindrance elsewhere. "Contemptible" is becoming a dignified epithet when applied to a large part of the British Press.

On Sunday afternoon the last of the present series of lectures, under the auspices of the "National Secular Society," was delivered at South Place by Mr. W. H. Thresh. Considering the conditions, there was a very fair attendance. The veteran Freethinker, Mr. Arthur B. Moss, presided. The subject of the lecture was "From Savage to Shakespeare." It proved not only an interesting and instructive

discourse, but demonstrated that Mr. Thresh is able to illustrate the evolution of man, with all the latest data from various branches of science. The audience was most appreciative, and passed a vote of thanks to the lecturer for the able and interesting way in which he had dealt with the subject.

Will the members of the Rhondda Branch please note that an important meeting of members will be held at Morley's Restaurant, Porth, to-day (November 2), at 2.30. We hope all will make an endeavour to be present.

"Freethinker" "Victory" Sustentation Fund.

Seventh List of Subscriptions.

Previously acknowledged £283 18s. 6d. A. Atherton, 9s. 6d. J. F. Williams, £1. W. Cliffe, £1 1s. W. R. Edwards, 5s. N. Lawson, 10s. R. Wilson, £2. M. Penny, 5s. M. Wright, 10s. Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Turnbull, 10s. Mrs. Turnbull, 5s. T. Turnbull, 5s. W. Lamb (Bedford), 10s. J. S. Norman (Bedford), 10s. J. Wills (Ayr), £1 1s. W. Hill, 2s. 6d. The Brothers Davies, 15s. C. U. King, £2 2s. A. Younger, 5s. 622740, £1. J. Thomas, 2s. 6d. R. Green, £1 0s. 6d. S. Cohen, 10s. Mr. and Mrs. J. Crompton, £2. E. Learmont, 5s. Ex-Curate, 5s. N. A., 2s. S. W. Soper, 2s. 6d. E. Langridge, 2s. 6d. J. J. Alcock, 3s. 6d. Mr. Barnard, 5s. W. F. Ambrose (7th and 8th subs.), 4s. C. E. Hill, 5s. W. W. Pearce, 10s. G. W. M., 2s. 6d. T. H. Elstob, £1. A. H. Deacon, 5s. Total, £304 9s. 6d.

Pages from Voltaire.

Instructions of the Superior of the Capuchins at Ragusa to Friar Pediculoso on his setting out for the Holy Land.

(1768.)

I. THE first thing you will do, Brother Pediculoso, will be to pay a visit to the earthly paradise where God created Adam and Eve. This paradise was so well known to the ancient Greeks, the early Romans, the Persians, Egyptians, and Syrians, that no writer among them has ever thought of mentioning it. You will have no difficulty at all in finding it, for it is at the sources of the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Araxus, and the Nile; and although the sources of the Nile and the Euphrates are a thousand leagues apart, it is but a trifling matter, and should put you to no inconvenience. You have only to ask the Capuchins at Jerusalem, who will not let you go astray.

II. Don't forget to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; for you appear to be rather ignorant and knavish. When you have had your fill, you are sure to become a very learned and very good man. The tree of knowledge is a little worm-eaten; its roots are made of the works of the rabbis, the writings of Gregory the Great, those of Saint Thomas, Saint Bonaventura, Saint Bernard, Abbe Tritheim, Luther, Calviu, Father Garasse, Bellarmin, Suarez, Sanchez, and others. Its bark is rough; its fruit is as bitter as gall; it goes to the head like opium; you drop off to sleep when you have had ever so little of it, and you send other people to sleep; but the moment you wake up, you hold up your head proudly; you look down at people; you acquire a new sense which is far above common sense; you speak in an incomprehensible manner, which sometimes brings you many gifts and sometimes a score of blows from a big stick. You will, perhaps, answer that it is expressly said in *Beresith* or

Genesis: "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."¹ Go to, our dear brother; there is nothing to be afraid of! Adam ate of it and yet lived to the good old age of nine hundred and thirty years.

III. With regard to the serpent which *was more subtle than any beast of the field*,² he is chained up, as you know, in Upper Egypt. Many missionaries have seen him. Bochart will tell you what language he spoke, and what was the tune he whistled when he tempted Eve; you must mind that no one whistles to you in the same way. You will be able to explain what the bull is like that kept the entrance to the garden; for you know that *cherub* in Hebrew and in Chaldean means a bull, and it was for that reason that Ezekiel called the king of Tyrus a cherub.³ O heavens! what a number of cherubs we have in this world. Look up, on this point, Saint Ambrose and the Abbe Rupert, and especially the cherub Calmet.

IV. You must make a careful examination of the sign which the Lord set upon Cain. Notice if it was on the neck or the shoulder. He surely merited kingly rank for slaying his brother; but as Romulus, Richard III., Louis XI., etc., did as much, it is clear that you will not insist upon the pardoning of a fratricide, while the whole race is damned for an apple.

V. It is your intention to push on as far as the city of Enoch, which Cain built in the land of Nod. Be sure you get careful information as to the number of stonemasons, joiners, carpenters, blacksmiths, locksmiths, drapers, hatters, cobblers, dyers, linen-spinners, labourers, shepherds, manual workers, workers of iron and copper mines, judges and lawyers, employed by Cain when there were not as yet four or five hundred people on the earth.

Enoch was buried in that city built by Cain, his father; but he is still alive. Try to find out where he is, ask him how he is keeping in health, and give him our compliments.

VI. From there you will pass between the legs of the giants that were the issue of the sons of God and the daughters of men.⁴ And you will introduce to them the Rev. Father Calmet's vampires; but be sure you speak to them politely, for they won't stand any vulgar scoffing.

VII. It is in your programme, afterwards, to ascend Mount Ararat to see the remains of the Ark, which was made of Gopher wood. Verify the measurements of the Ark taken on the spot by the illustrious Mr. Lepelletier.⁵ Measure the mountain carefully, and afterwards measure Mount Pitchincha, and Mount Chimborazo in Peru, and Mount St. Gothard. Work out, after Whiston and Woodward, how many oceans would be required to cover all these mountains and yet leave fifteen cubits of land above the water. Examine all the animals, pure and impure, which went into the Ark, and when you come out, do not alight on the dead bodies, as did the raven.

You will also have the goodness to send us the original of the Hebrew text which places the deluge in the year of the Creation 1656, the Samaritan original which puts it in 2309, and the text of the Septuagint which puts in 2262. Harmonize these three texts, and strike a true balance after Abbe Pluche.

VIII. Give our compliments to Father Noah, who planted the vine. The Greeks and the Asiatics had the misfortune not to know him personally; but the Jews are fortunate in their descent from him. Ask him to show you the covenant which God made with him and

¹ Genesis ii. 17.

² Genesis iii. 1.

³ Ezekiel xxviii. 14.

⁴ Genesis vi. 4.

⁵ Jean Lepelletier (1633-1711) was the author of a *Dissertation on Noah's Ark*.

the brute beasts. We are sorry that he should have got drunk; let us not imitate him in this.

Be sure you make an exact note of the time when Gomer, the son of Japheth, came to reign in Europe, which he found densely populated. It is an established point in history.

IX. Ask what has become of Canaan, son of Arphasad, so famous in the *Septuagint*, and of whom the *Vulgate* has not a word to say. Get him to take you to the Tower of Babel. Note whether the remains of this tower agree with those given by the Rev. Father Kircher.¹ Consult Paulus Orosius, Gregory of Tours, and Paul Lucas.

From the Tower of Babel you will proceed to Ur of the Chaldeans, and you will get to know from the descendants of Abraham the potter why he left that fine country to buy a tomb in Hebron, and corn in Memphis; why he passed off his wife, on two occasions, as his sister; what precisely he gained by this piece of Semitic deception. Find out particularly what complexion-preserver his wife used so that she might appear beautiful at the age of ninety. Find out also if she used rose water or lavender water to counteract the smell of dirt and perspiration when she arrived on foot, or on a donkey, at the court of the king of Egypt and that of the king of Gerar; for all these things are necessary to salvation.

You know that the Lord made a covenant² with Abraham by which he gave to him all the land from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates. Find out why this covenant has not been kept.

X. On your way you will look in at Sodom. Get any news you can of the angels who came to see Lot, and for whom he prepared a fine supper. Find out how old they were when the Sodomites wished to know them, and if Lot's two daughters were virgins when he offered to bring them out to the Sodomites rather than give up to them the two sons of God. The whole of this story is also very necessary to salvation. From Sodom you will go to Gaba, and you will get to know the name of the Levite whom the good Benjaminites treated with the same politeness shown by the Sodomites to the sons of God.

XI. When you are in Egypt, get to know whence came the cavalry which Pharaoh sent into the Red Sea in pursuit of the Hebrews; for all the animals, having perished in the sixth and seventh plague, the infidels maintain that Pharaoh had no cavalry. Read again the *Thousand and One Nights*, and the whole of Exodus, whereof Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius, and Livy make mention in so pointed a manner, as do also all the Egyptian historians.

XII. It is unnecessary for us to mention to you the exploits of Joshua, the successor of Moses, and of the moon which stood still over Gabaon; these are matters of everyday occurrence, and merit no special attention.

But that which has a noble moral value, and contributes much to make our ideas of virtue more refined, is the historical record of the Hebrew kings. An exact calculation must be made of how many assassinations they committed. There are Fathers of the Church who put them at five hundred and eighty, others at nine hundred and seventy; it is important not to be misled. You must particularly remember that we refer not to the murder of kinsmen, for such are countless. Nothing could be more instructive than an exact note of the number of assassins, and assassinated, in the name of the Lord. It might be used as a text for court sermons on the love of our neighbour.

GEO. UNDERWOOD.

(To be concluded.)

¹ In his *Turris Babel*.

² Genesis xv. 18.

The L.C.C. Censorship.

MR. HARRY SNELL and his colleagues in the L.C.C. Labour Party have rendered a magnificent service to the cause of freedom of propaganda by dragging the recent proceedings of the Parks Committee into the light of day. At the Council meeting on October 21, the Committee brought up the following Report, asked for by Mr. Snell many weeks ago:—

Sale and distribution of literature.—Since our reconstitution in March last, we have dealt with 54 applications for permission to sell or distribute literature at parks and open spaces under the control of the Council, involving over 160 books, periodicals, pamphlets, and leaflets. We have not granted the applications so far as they referred to the following:—The Freethinker; Condemned from the Dock; Solidarity of Shipowners; Marx and Modern Capitalism; Socialism and the League of Nations; Capitalist Europe and Socialist Russia; Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Great Britain; Communist Manifesto; Christianity and Slavery; Woman and Christianity; Philosophical Dictionary; History of the Russian Revolution; What Roman Catholics are Taught at Maynooth College; The Ne Temere Decree; the Secret Instructions of Jesuits; and Six Weeks in Russia.

We have also refused to permit the sale of rosettes and perfumed cards.

MR. HARRY SNELL (Lab., Woolwich E.), on the motion for the adoption of the Report, said there had been an unjust discrimination on the part of the Parks Committee against certain classes of literature. The parks had been established for the use of all the citizens (including minorities) for their physical and mental recreation. If we set apart open spaces for mental recreation, we are bound to see that all citizens are entitled to all the facilities that are offered. We are bound to be impartial—not to take sides. But there had been a very biased treatment. Out of 160 publications submitted, only a very few had been rejected; nearly all Socialist and Rationalist. If the Sermon on the Mount had been submitted for the first time to the Committee's censorship, it would probably have been rejected as a disturbing and innovating document! The policy of the Parks Committee was biased and ludicrous. Such an historical document as the Communist Manifesto of 1848 had been banned. Some books have been prohibited, apparently because their sale in the Parks might interfere with the trade of some booksellers. A general permission had, he understood, been given for the sale of the *Freethinker*, but the Committee found some pretext for forbidding the sale of each number. If the *Freethinker* is wrong, it should be answered. But it cannot be suppressed, even if it did "offend some people's taste." His own taste was horribly offended by some "Christian" persons who preach their doctrines in a way that is an offence to God and man. The taste of the Labour Party was offended by a paper circulated in the Parks, stating that they were Bolsheviks and desired to bring about the degradation of English women. No one buys the *Freethinker* to whom its views are an offence, and no one buys it unless he goes into the enclosure where meetings are held. It is no part of the duty of the Council to suppress criticism either of Christianity or of Capitalism. They must be careful lest, in suppressing the views of the minority, they should incur a greater danger than that which they suppress. The Parks are the poor man's cathedral. Who has made the Council the judge of whether the views expressed are right or wrong? Let us have intellectual hospitality and tolerance.

MISS SUSAN LAWRENCE (Lab., Poplar S.), in a brilliant and witty speech, which made a great impression, appealed to the Council's sense of the ridiculous. She took the list of banned publications, and asked what sense there was in prohibiting a classic document like the Communist Manifesto, a feeble attack by the S.P.G.B. on the I.L.P. and the Fabian Society (to which she, as a member of the I.L.P., had no objection), the ancient *Philosophical Dictionary* (did the Council object to Philosophy? or to Dictionary? or to the name of the author, dead more than a century?), and so on. No one, she said, who is wise enough and good enough to be a censor would take on the job. Nothing could be sillier than the attempt of the Parks Committee to do what no Pope and no Government had ever succeeded in doing.

MR. E. CRUSE (Lab., Poplar), in supporting the attack, reminded the Council that ten years ago he defied the Council's bye-laws in Victoria Park, and he was prepared, if necessary, to do it again.

MR. G. H. HUME (Greenwich: leader of the Moderate Party) protested that not one member of the Council desired to suppress the expression of opinion. He advised the Parks Committee to reconsider their position. Nothing should be sold in the Parks that could not be sold outside the Parks, and of course nothing against the Blasphemy Laws or against public decency [unfortunately no member reminded the Council that the Blasphemy Laws had been virtually repealed by the House of Lords]. The days had gone by when you could censor opinion, but there must be some control.

THE REV. DR. SCOTT-LIDGETT (Rotherhithe: leader of the Progressive Party) neatly amended one sentence of Mr. Hume's speech. Nothing, he said, should be *prohibited* in the Parks which is legally permitted to be sold in the streets of London. Censorship was generally unjust, and the Parks are as much the property of the public as the roads are.

THE REV. STEWART D. HEADLAM (Progressive: Bethnal Green, S.W.) reminded the Parks Committee that years ago he had called their attention to the dangerous course upon which they were entering. That view had now been endorsed by the leader of the Council (MR. HUME).

MR. W. C. JOHNSON (Progressive: Whitechapel), did not think that literature should be sold in the Parks at all. But the Council had decided otherwise. The Parks Committee should drop its censorship, and leave the Common Law to deal with any offences.

MR. WALTER REYNOLDS (Moderate: Hampstead), said there was some defence for the Parks Committee. He had only once voted for prohibition, viz., in the case of an issue of the *Freethinker*, which contained a paragraph which no decent man could read in a mixed assembly, or permit to be sold in the parks.

MR. A. A. WATTS (Labour: Battersea) pointed out that the police had full power to prevent anything indecent or immoral from being sold. "The censorship is worse than wrong: it's silly."

BRIGADIER-GENERAL COOPER (Moderate: St. George's, Hanover Square), Chairman of the Parks Committee, admitted that the censorship was unsatisfactory. It was probably true, as one speaker had stated, that worse publications had been passed than some that had been prohibited. This was because the same members did not always attend the Committee. What was done in the great democratic cities of Paris and Stockholm? In France, any literature might be sold in normal times, but during a war or general strike, nothing could be sold. A law had been passed in Stockholm making it penal to publish, sell, or possess any pamphlets printed

after the date of the Act. If the Council did not stop the sale of undesirable publications in its own Parks, the Government might interfere. The Council should be master in its own house. The Parks Committee would discuss the matter, but he could not promise to do away with all control.

At a later stage, the following motion, standing in the name of Mr. Snell, was carried without discussion:—

That it be referred to the Parks and Small Holdings and Allotments Committee to consider and report whether the regulations governing the sale and distribution of periodicals, leaflets, pamphlets and books in the parks and open spaces should be amended so as to provide that responsible organizations be granted permits to sell or otherwise circulate such literature, subject to the condition that, for satisfactory reasons, these permits may be cancelled.

During the debate, a strong hint was thrown out that, if the censorship is continued, the Labour Members on the Council will themselves sell the prohibited publications and take the consequences.

FREDK. VERINDER.

HELL.

MADAME—you can have no idea of Hell! We have very few official returns from that place. Still it is rank calumny to say that down there all the poor souls are compelled to read all day long all the dull sermons which were ever printed on earth. Bad as hell is, it has not *quite* come to that,—Satan will never invent such refinement of torture. On the other hand, Dante's description is too mild—I may say, on the whole, too poetic. Hell appeared to me like a great town-kitchen, with an endlessly long stove, on which were placed three rows of iron pots, and in these sat the damned, and were cooked. In one row were placed Christian sinners, and incredible as it may seem, their number was anything but small, and the devils poked the fire up under them with especial good will. In the next row were Jews, who continually screamed and cried, and were occasionally mocked by the fiends, which sometimes seemed odd enough—as, for instance, when a fat wheezy old pawnbroker complained of the heat, and a little devil poured several buckets of cold water on his head, that he might realize what a refreshing benefit baptism was. In the third row sat the heathen, who, like the Jews, could take no part in salvation, and must burn for ever. I heard one of the latter, as a square-built, burly devil put fresh coals under his kettle, cry out from his pot—"Spare me! I was once Socrates, the wisest of mortals—I taught Truth and Justice, and sacrificed my life for Virtue." But the clumsy, stupid devil went on with his work, and grumbled—"Oh, shut up, there! All heathens must burn, and we can't make an exception for the sake of a single man."—*Heine*.

There is alms for a man's every joint, every day in which the sun riseth; doing justice between two people is alms; and assisting a man upon his beast, and his baggage, is alms; and pure words, for which are rewards; and answering a questioner with mildness is alms; and every step which is made towards prayer is alms; and removing that which is an inconvenience to man, such as stones and thorns, is alms.—*Mohammed*.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S.—We have been fortunate in securing the use of the beautiful and commodious Marsden Miners' Hall, Imeary Street. We are arranging for a visit from Mr. Cohen on November 16, when he will deliver two lectures, afternoon and evening. Arrangements are made for tea for visitors, whom we hope to see in good numbers. We are making a special effort, with the view to continuing lecturing at much shorter intervals. Might we hope for the fullest assistance from all Secularists in the vicinity of South Shields.—J. FOTHERGILL, Hon. Sec.

Correspondence.

SOCIALISM AND RELIGION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In "Views and Opinions" for October 12 (just to hand) you make certain damaging statements regarding the methods employed by Socialists generally in dealing with Christianity. Unfortunately, they are correct! This is done for the purpose of doping the electors, so that vote-catching will follow, they, evidently, holding that the capture of the political machine means liberation from the present economic thralldom. It is a fallacy, a decided fallacy! We, of the school of Marx, are Freethinkers in everything. We consider all religious survivals of primitive times, and make no secret of it. In other ages, when Papa of the Holy See was able to make and unmake kings, the Church appeared to be the dominant faction in society. When he coveted a fair piece of land he linked up all the allies he could and declared war, thus showing in a small way that God is love. In other instances, where the strength of the adversary made allies hard to find, he demanded tribute, if not forthcoming, excommunication followed, and, as burial could not take place without Christian rites, the dead were dumped in the streets, the diseases emanating from the putrifying corpses adding to the death-roll, proving, surely, the beauties of Christianity! The position of the clergy under capitalism is that of a satellite class; they endeavour to keep the eyes of the worker turned to a merely speculative world in which they assure them they shall have all the good things while their masters take the goods here and now, for which they (the clergy) get somewhat of the produce of which the workers have been robbed. It will be seen that Christianity is an economic necessity under capitalism. There seems little hope of the Socialists you mention speaking the truth. They lack backbone.

ALEC CUNNINGHAM.

Obituary.

We regret to record the death of Mr. Edward Brooks at 8 Allan Avenue, Brooklands, Manchester, aged thirty-four. He was the son of Freethinking parents, and was himself a staunch Freethinker. Though ill-health prevented him taking an active part in the movement, his sympathies were always with the activities of those more able than himself to further the cause of liberty of thought. In accordance with his known views, and with the wishes of his family, his funeral, which took place at Padiham on October 8, was a Secular one.—A. C. R.

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.

A FREETHINKER going abroad offers the following:—Life of Charles Bradlaugh (2 vols.), 15s.; Flowers of Freethought (2 vols.), 6s.; Bradlaugh's Debates, 4s.; Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers, 5s.; Vol. I. of The Reasoner, 5s.; Taylor's Diegesis, 5s.; London Investigator (3 vols.), 6s.; Elements of Social Science, 3s. 6d.; Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life (2 vols.), 5s.; Four Hundred Years of Freethought, £1; A Concise History of Religion (3 vols.), 10s.; Our Corner (7 vols.), £1; Progress (5 vols.), 15s.; Married Love and Wise Parenthood, 8s. 6d.; Dr. Hardy's Birth-Control, 2s. 6d.; Physiology and Psychology of Sex, 7s.; Loves Coming of Age, 3s. 6d.; Mating and Marriage, 2s. 6d.; Three large bundles of Pamphlets, 5s. each. All post free.—W. HARRISON, 47 Jeffreys Road, Clapham, London, S.W. 4.

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.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., "Approaches to a new Religious Synthesis."

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, Open Debate, "Is Prohibition Desirable?" Introduced by Mr. A. Eagar.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "The International Labour Conference."

OUTDOOR.

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

REGENT'S PARK BRANCH N. S. S. (near Band Stand): 3, Mr. H. Brougham Doughty, "The Birthplace of Sin"; Mr. R. Norman, "Our Audiences in 1919."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, Debate, "Has Humanity Gained from Unbelief?" Opened by Mr. E. Clifford Williams.

FALKIRK: Friday, November 7, Mr. C. Cohen.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (The Good Templar's Hall, 122 Ingram Street): Mr. C. Cohen, 12 noon, "God and Evolution"; 6.30, "Christianity, the Army, and the Nation." (Silver Collection.)

LEEDS SECULAR SOCIETY (19 Lowerhead Row, Youngman's Rooms): Members meet every Sunday at 6.30.

MILNGAVIE: Tuesday, November 4 (I.L.P. Hall, Kersland Drive): 7.30, Mr. C. Cohen.

PAISLEY: Monday, November 3 (George A. Clark Lesser Town Hall): 7.30, Mr. C. Cohen, "Christianity and the Labour Movement."

RHONDDA BRANCH N. S. S. (Morley's Restaurant, Porth): 2.30, Important Matters to be considered.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (6 Wenlock Road, Simon-side): 6.30, Meeting of Members and Friends. Arrangements for Mr. Cohen's visit on November 16.

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (The Docker's Hall, Swansea): D. J. Morgan, 3, "Labour and the Churches"; 7, "The Way of Salvation—'Secularism.'" Tickets Sixpence each.

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