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Views and Opinions.

Saving Sunday.

We noted in a recent issue that the Parks Committee of the London County Council had passed a resolution recommending that certain of the parks and open spaces under its control be opened for games on Sunday. The matter has, of course, to go before the Council for confirmation or rejection, and meanwhile various religious bodies are busy. They are protesting in the interests of religion, and, of course, morality—for your true Briton is nothing if he is not moral. A deputation representing the Imperial Sunday Alliance and the Sunday Lay Movement waited upon the Parks Committee and aired its alarm at the grave dangers threatened by the suggested innovation, and it was illuminating to know that Mr. Arthur Henderson was quite in sympathy with the protest. That we say is illuminating, because when a man who, we are informed, is likely to hold a position of authority in the coming Labour Government, gives his adherence to the theory that it is within the functions of the State to force an observance of the Sabbath, which is really no more than a sectarian dogma, the promise to intellectual freedom under the new dispensation is not of the rosiest. Presumably, as Mr. Henderson supports the proposal, the State should use its power to prevent us doing anything that is objectionable to a band of bigoted Sabbatarians, he would have no insuperable objection in forcing us to attend any Church which the same band should declare to be the true one.

* * *

A Straw on the Stream.

We are anxious to give honour where honour is due, and before saying anything further on the matter we desire to place on record the action of Dean Gamble who, in the *Times* for February 4, writes a lively comment on the action of the deputation. He hopes “that the Council will not be deterred from opening the Parks,” and he points out that the majority of the deputation “consisted of gentlemen over 70 years of age,” and who may not, therefore, be counted authorities as to what is the best way for youngsters to employ their Sunday leisure. And as one who was for many years a clergyman in London, he rightly points out that Sunday is a capital time for “loafing,” and, he might have added,

that if careful inquiry were to be made, it would be probably found that the beginnings of more bad habits were made on Sunday than on any other day in the week. Dean Gamble is wise in his generation. Sabbatarianism was possible while it was also possible to practically force people to attend Church. When that became no longer feasible it was inevitable that people should seek some other way of spending their leisure time. The result was the growth of a feeling that has become increasingly general in favour of spending the day of rest in a more rational and a more moral manner than that of attending Church or Chapel. Many of the clergy see this. The newspapers, more time-serving and more opportunist than even the Churches, see it. And the result is that while we have letters such as those of Dean Gamble’s on the one hand, we have papers such as the *Evening News* on the other, laughing at the deputation as being hopelessly old-fashioned and out of date.

* * *

A Fight for Clients.

But one swallow does not make a summer, and one dean is not, after all, the British clergy. And, as a body, these will continue to do what they can to prevent the day of rest being what it should be. The more astute ones will remain silent now that the fetish of Sunday is not so powerful as it was, leaving it for the less astute, but the more honest, to make the running. They realize that in the competition between the Churches and more rational ways of spending the Sunday, the former are at a hopeless disadvantage. In the main, people will not go to Church to-day unless they are compelled to do so by the pressure of public opinion. And every Sunday concert, every museum or art gallery, every public playing field, every theatre or picture palace that is open on Sunday, is a force that is breaking down the public opinion by which alone churchgoing may be maintained. Unless we grasp that purely economic aspect of the question, we shall never get at the true inwardness of the modern clerical opposition to the rational enjoyment of Sunday. Just as, in the question of education, the struggle of the clergy to retain control is a struggle to secure clients at a later day; so the fight for the Puritan Sunday is a fight to hold in check forces which the clergy feel are robbing them of the support of the adult population. For the clergy are accommodating in the matter of Sunday labour and Sunday amusements when it pays them. During the five years of war, Sunday labour, and Sunday games and amusements among the soldiers were the rule, and, so far as we are aware, there were no protests from the clergy. And it would be strange indeed if a clergyman were to argue that the only justification for Sunday labour is when the aim is to make guns, and the only reason that will sanctify Sunday games is when they will serve to keep men fit for the work of killing.

* * *

A Day of Demoralization.

If one were not so used to the excuses put forward by these Sabbatarians, one would be amused on hearing

them: "It will mean labour." Of course it will. But so will everything in a civilized community. And will the heating of a concert-hall involve more labour than the heating of a church? What labour is involved in the opening of playing grounds in the parks? The park-keepers are already there, and, if asked, we fancy they would say that youngsters engaged in cricket or football require far less looking after than the same youngsters engaged in lounging about the streets or the parks. As a matter of fact, one of the immediate consequences of the enforcement of the Puritan Sunday was the growth of drunkenness among the people. Nor was this surprising. When the Churches set themselves against healthy games on Sunday, they left the people with but two outlets. There was the church and there was the public-house. The people had their choice. They could take either, or both. There was no competition here, for one closed when the other opened. And one has only to remember that, generation after generation, the British public has been brought up with one-seventh of their lives spent in either the repetition of religious formulæ that are an insult to civilized intelligence, or in a state of mental dreariness and desolation such as our descendants will find it hard to conceive, to see therein a very powerful cause of the prevalence of some of the more regrettable features of present-day life.

* * *

The Moral Fetish.

Most curious of all is it to find the deputation opposing Sunday games on the ground of "vital moral interests." What these moral interests are the report that we have before us does not state, and perhaps it was as well not to be precise. Still, one would like some details concerning the vital moral interests that are threatened by youngsters playing cricket in a public park on Sunday. Over the vital moral interests that are threatened by overcrowding, or by sweated labour, or by rack-renting, or by numerous other things, the clergy have shown themselves wonderfully tolerant; so that it is perhaps cheering to find them so wholeheartedly concerned when these same vital moral interests are threatened by boys playing football on Sunday. It is well to know that there are limits beyond which even the moral complaisance of the clergy will not go. The truth is that the only interest that is threatened by the secularizing of the day of rest is the interest of the clergy. And that rests upon sheer superstition. Because thousands of years ago a dead-and-gone people devoted one day in the week to the planet Saturn, and because they were superstitious enough to believe that anything done on that day would be unlucky, enjoyment and employment on the day of Saturn became taboo. And when in the course of time the Christian Church took over the day of the Sun, it transferred to it all the gloom of the day of Saturn. Here, as elsewhere, Christianity worsened almost all it touched. And it now rests with the people of London to say whether they will allow this survival of an old Oriental superstition to close our playing grounds and places of entertainment on the day of rest, or will act in a manner that is more in accord with present-day knowledge and requirements.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Everything hath two handles; the one, by which it may be borne; the other, by which it cannot. If your brother acts unjustly, do not lay hold on the action by the handle of his injustice, for by that it cannot be borne; but by the opposite, that he is your brother, that he was brought up with you; and thus you lay hold on it, as it is to be borne.
—*Epicetus*.

"Protestant Truths."

THE Rev. J. E. Rattenbury is a popular Wesleyan minister, who in 1919 became Superintendent of the West London Mission founded by the late Hugh Price Hughes. At present Mr. Rattenbury is by many suspected of being one of the leaders of the so-called Rome-ward or "Catholic" movement supposed to be active in Methodism. There has been formed a society named the Wesley Bible Union, the object of which is to put a stop to that same movement. In the *Methodist Times* there is going on a somewhat acrimonious correspondence on the subject between Mr. Rattenbury and the Rev. H. C. Morton, M.A., who is evidently a strenuous leader in an anti-Romeward movement. In consequence of the charges levelled at him, Mr. Rattenbury is delivering a series of sermons on "Roman Errors and Protestant Truths." With the controversy itself, I am not in the least concerned; but the second discourse in the series, entitled "The Great Truths of the Reformation," which appeared in the *Methodist Times* for January 29, lays itself open to serious criticism. Mr. Rattenbury candidly admits that he holds views for which the Catholic Inquisition, had it the power, would burn him at the stake. He also admits that he hates Rome and what Rome stands for. We share neither his hatred of Catholicism nor his admiration of Protestant teaching. In our estimation, the latter is as erroneous as the former.

What are the so-called truths of the Reformation? According to this preacher the Reformers made two great discoveries, namely, the Bible and the Pauline doctrines of salvation. The first thing the Reformers did was to place "an infallible Book against a very fallible Church." Of the fallibility of the Church there is not the shadow of a doubt, but the infallibility of the Bible is the falsest of all dogmas. Mr. Rattenbury tells us that a subsidiary truth to the infallibility theory was "the right of the individual to read and interpret the Divine Book for himself." He dwells at great length on the advantages of having an open Bible, a point on which we almost agree with him; but even here he makes rash statements supported by no facts, such as that "the open Bible meant the doom of Rome." Catholicism is still in active existence, and certainly not losing ground on a larger scale than Protestantism. Here is another extravagant statement:—

Why is Rome gaining to-day? Primarily because we do not read the Bible. The votaries of Rome have at least a little dogmatic knowledge, a few scraps of Scripture, in which they are carefully instructed, and the modern Protestant often has no reply. He has no armoury because he has no Bible. He has laid aside his sword, the Word of God.

As a matter of fact, Rome is not gaining, but, in company with Protestantism, is losing everywhere. This is statistically verifiable.

Mr. Rattenbury does not even attempt to prove the infallibility of the Bible. He simply laughs to scorn the fact "that people brought up to think that the authority of Scripture depended on their belief that a fish once swallowed a man and gave him accommodation for three days without digesting him, and like stories, should question whether the Bible was true or not." Then he says:—

Like all ancient literature, the Bible has been subjected in our own times, particularly in Germany, to searching criticism. Theory after theory has been formulated to discredit it. And in England these theories have been accepted with too great avidity on the one hand, and resented with too great stupidity on the other. The Bible has not really suffered, but some theories of it have been seriously stricken. There will be nothing lost

if people learn that it is Literature and not a Book—that God's truth is not confined to narratives like the Book of Chronicles, but speaks through Divine fiction like the parable of the Prodigal Son, sublime drama like the Book of Job, and evangelical allegory like the Book of Jonah. The Bible is the Word of God when *rightly interpreted*, as Mr. Dinsdale Young says so well, an infallible guide.

For vagueness and inconclusiveness that passage would be difficult to beat. What the reverend gentleman means by infallibility is a mystery. He says that God's truth is not "confined to narratives like the Book of Chronicles"; but is that equivalent to declaring that God's truth is in those narratives? If it is, does it follow that the two Books of Chronicles are historically reliable? Many years ago Dr. Horton published a book, entitled *The Inspiration of the Bible*, in which he demonstrated the fallibility of those documents. He took special pains to enumerate the mistakes with which they bristle; and many there are who remember the terrible consternation that volume caused in orthodox circles, and how the Baptist Union cancelled the author's engagement to preach at its autumn session in Huddersfield. And Dr. Horton, like a true Evangelical, treats the Bible in his pulpit ministrations as the infallible Word of God. Is that the case with the superintendent of the West London Mission? The editor of the *Christian World Pulpit* in the issue of January 28, informs us that "Dr. Horton once confessed that he used a different copy of the Bible when engaged in critical study to that which he used when reading for devotion and for homiletic inspiration." Thus the preacher was ashamed of the honest work of the critic, for which he had no use whatever, and his conscience would not allow him to use the same copy of the Sacred Writing. In point of fact, the Sacred Writings in the world are practically innumerable; but of none of them can infallibility be truthfully said to be a characteristic.

There are respects, of course, in which the Bible is a great and valuable work, well worth preserving; but in the sense in which Mr. Rattenbury pronounces upon it his passionate eulogium, it has always been and is a source of incalculable evil, and the greatest obstacle to human progress. In the light of the second alleged discovery of the Reformation this contention finds ample justification. That second discovery was the doctrine of justification by faith only. According to the reverend gentleman this "evangelical heritage of the Church had been venalized and prostituted to the magnificence of the Vatican"; but we venture to affirm, without fear of any intelligent contradiction, that the Pauline doctrine of salvation by faith in the merits of another is at once fundamentally immoral and wholly untrue, utterly unworthy of a just God and degrading in its influence upon man. As everybody is aware, it is an inexorable law of Nature that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap"; but to this immutable law the Pauline Gospel gives the most emphatic lie. Taking the Pauline doctrine of salvation as it stands, and as expounded in the Protestant orthodox creeds, what it means is that faith in Christ's atoning blood delivers the believer from the dread necessity of reaping what he has sown. Here is a man who for fifty or sixty years has been persistently sowing to his own flesh, revelling in the worst forms of wickedness, being his own and society's worst enemy. The Pauline Gospel assures such a man that if at the very last minute of his life he repents and gives his heart to Christ all his sins will be instantly and for ever blotted out; or, in other words, that he will there and then be saved from reaping ac-

ording to his sowing. If salvation through the merits of Christ's atonement does not signify the severance of the connection between the believer and his evil past, what on earth does it mean? Surely forgiveness is worse than meaningless unless it overrules and sets aside the law of causation, unless it involves the complete burial, with never the least chance of a resurrection, of the unbelieving, Christless past; unless, in a word, it remits the natural consequences of a wicked life. Mr. Rattenbury is quite right when he says that "the Reformers understood St. Paul." So they did, and so do the professional revivalists and evangelists of to-day. The reverend preacher makes much of the fact that "the Greek word translated justify does not mean *make just*, but *count just*." That only emphasizes the essential immorality of the Pauline doctrine of salvation. The moment a man puts his trust in Christ, God counts and treats him as wholly just and good; and if he dies the next minute, does he not go straight to heaven, where he will be as joyous and happy as if he had never done any wrong?

Mr. Rattenbury is scarcely fair in his hatred and denunciation of the Catholic Church. After all, the differences between Augustinianism and Calvinism are exceedingly slight, and what we maintain is that the one is fully as erroneous and false as the other. There are no supernatural truths, nor can there be any supernatural knowledge. Beliefs there may be and are in great abundance, which multitudes sincerely cherish and find to be channels of overflowing pleasure; but there is not a single shred of evidence that those beliefs represent objective realities. In all its aspects, supernatural is fancy's offspring. Nature is the only object of knowledge, and the joy of life is the fruit of nearness to her heart. Salvation is possible only through knowledge of and conformity to her immutable laws. Happiness consists in making the best of things by seeking to understand them. Sometimes Meredith names these laws God or Gods, as he tells us in the ode, *France, December 1870*; and in the *Test of Manhood*, composed in 1901, he proclaims the grand Gospel of Secularism, namely, that the true man—

While he rejects the suicide despair,
Accepts the spur of explicable pains;
Obedient to Nature, not her slave:
Her lord if to her rigid laws he bows;
Her dust if with his conscience he plays knave,
And bids the Passions on the Pleasures browse.

J. T. LLOYD.

NATURE'S STABILITY.

Now, if Nature should intermit her course, and leave altogether, though it were only for a while, the observation of her own laws; if those principal and mother-elements of the world, whereof all things in this lower world are made, should lose the qualities which now they have; if the frame of that heavenly arch erected over our heads should loosen and dissolve itself; if celestial spheres should forget their wonted motions, and by irregular volubility turn themselves any way as it might happen; if the prince of the lights of heaven, which now as a giant doth run his unwearied course, should, as it were, through a languishing faintness, begin to stand and to rest himself; if the moon should wander from her beaten way, the times and seasons of the year blend themselves by disordered and confused mixture, the winds breathe out their last gasp, the clouds yield no rain, the earth be defeated of heavenly influence, the fruits of the earth pine away as children at the withered breasts of their mother, no longer able to yield them relief; what would become of man himself whom these things do now all serve? See we not plainly that obedience of creatures unto the law of Nature is the stay of the whole world.—*Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity,"* book i., chap. iii., sect. iii.

A Voice from the Vatican.

Miching mallecho—this means mischief.

Shakespeare, "Hamlet."

I would have all men come out of Christendom into the universe.—*John Davidson.*

TO Freethinkers the Pope must ever be an object of unusual interest, for this Italian ecclesiastic addresses the largest congregation of Christians in the world. Using the language of his office, a Roman Catholic Pope utters words which are heard throughout the Christian world, and the Greek and other Christian apostolates seem parochial by comparison. The rhetoric may be enfeebled and the platitudes exhausted, but the Roman Patriarch possesses something of the tragic character of Tithonus, "immortal age beside immortal youth." Nevertheless, his unique position with regard to the huge numbers of men and women who hold their rule of faith from the Church, of which he is chief bishop, is striking. Unlike the ecclesiastics of other churches, he has not included national flags among the sacred articles of religion, and he again and again deplored the sight of millions of men in arms against each other. That his warning has been treated with contempt by Christians is not his fault, and the Pope has been spared nothing that the energy of the militarist parties, and the indifference of the Christian world could make him suffer. Publicly he stands, the Lear of thankless children, too shrill in his menaces, but keeping unimpaired the dignity of a paternity rejected.

It is the death-knell of the political power of the Papacy, and the bitterest and most ironical commentary on the daring diplomacy, which, under Cardinal Rampolla, the former Papal Secretary of State, who, during two decades, sought restlessly for the means of restoring the Pope's temporal power. It was the astute Rampolla who suggested the Catholic Church's remarkable overtures to Republicanism and to Socialism. When Leo XIII. died, Rampolla would have been elected to succeed him but for the veto of the Austrian Emperor. Rampolla accepted the veto, the present Pope was elected, and the daring Catholic's dream of the restoration of the Papal temporal power came to an end. His diplomatic combinations crumbled into nothingness, and with the crisis of the world-war went the last hopes of the greatest and the most powerful of the Christian Churches.

The latest Papal announcement that the sanctification of Joan of Arc will be proceeded with sounds from afar off, "like the horns of Elfland, faintly blowing." What has Joan of Arc to do with the Europe of to-day? The whole thing is a sign of Papal decrepitude. And what can be said of the spectacle, during the War, of Notre Dame, the most famous church of Paris, crowded with a pilgrimage of the Catholic faithful, inaugurated by Royalists, camouflaged as the Patriotic League, to supplicate Joan of Arc to implore the intercession of "the Virgin" for victory. Can unreason go further? Burnt as a heretic, Joan is now claimed as a "saint" by the Catholic Church, and is exploited by reactionary political associations.

Undoubtedly Joan was heretical, however pious. She put her own inspiration above that of the Catholic Church, and she aggravated her offence in the eyes of her judicial murderers by the complete

independence of her replies. Her execution by burning produced an enormous impression everywhere, an impression which the Roman Catholic Church will never efface by a trumpety and belated rehabilitation many centuries later.

Joan of Arc's sanctification is an object lesson in Catholic methods. The Dreyfus struggle and the Ferrer murder have proved conclusively that the Galilean Serpent has not lost its fangs, and there are other and as grave reasons for disquietude. For years past the Roman Catholic Church has lent itself to new and extravagant devotions, which would have shocked the severe piety of its Bossuets and its Fenelons. The material worship of the sacred heart, of the holy face, of Christ's bodily organs, as distinguished from the entire person, the delirium over his "parents," the honours paid to saints, more or less mad, the pilgrimages and the so-called "miracles"—all these must fill thoughtful observers with surprise and misgiving. The clerical press, which can only be described as a literary cesspool, is itself a portent. A decadent Catholicism may exist for a time, but sooner or later its pathological tendencies must, unless checked, be fatal.

MIMNERMUS.

Spiritualism.

III.

WHAT SAITH THE SPIRIT?

IN my preceding articles I put before the readers of the *Freethinker* some specimens of the weighty evidence in favour of what Sir A. C. Doyle calls "the vast new revelation which has been so clearly stated and so abundantly proved." (*Vital Message*, p. 17.) This week we will take a brief survey of some of the information which the spirits have vouchsafed to us concerning the land beyond the grave, and try and get some sort of an idea as to the fate which awaits us on the other side. To be quite frank, the task at first seems a hopeless one. The material is so copious, the inconsistencies so flagrant, that any success in attaining even a tolerably clear conception seems quite out of the question. For the serious inquirer the best course is to work through the early scripts first, noting down the main points as they occur, and then pass on to the more modern matter, which will be found to a large extent similar in content to the older scripts, but brought up-to-date, as it were, in order to fit in to modern events. After having read a dozen or so of these books, it will probably be borne in upon the student that the writings reflect the mind of the scribe up to a certain point, the philosophical and mystical material emanating from more or less educated people, and the more extravagant descriptions coming through the hands of persons of little intelligence or education.

The world beyond the grave is usually called by Spiritualists, Summerland, which is the name given to that sphere where human beings dwell who have not been immediately sent off to hell the moment they pass out of the physical body. I say *hell*, for it must not be imagined that the new revelation lacks some convenient locality into which may be cast those persons who are deemed particularly objectionable to Spiritualists. Thus we are told

that Dante's great work "is a real revelation seen in trance state," moulded and slightly coloured, but true as far as it goes in giving us a picture of punishment beyond the veil (*Gone West* (Lond. 1917), p. 104). The spirits in hell are black, it appears, and as we are informed that "blacks go direct to hell and are met with rejoicing," it is not certain whether hell's inhabitants are black in skin or in soul or in both, the script in question not supplying us with this knowledge. (*The Great Beyond and its inhabitants* (Lond., 1919), pp. 46 seq.)

As to Summerland itself the first question which naturally presents itself is as to its location in space. Most wise Spiritualists keep a discreet silence as to this thorny question, but others claim exact knowledge as to its whereabouts. Thus Mr. A. J. Davis, who is sometimes considered the greatest seer of modern days, discusses learnedly as to the spiritual aspect of our star-lit universe. He mentions the Milky Way and then declares that Summerland lies "directly across this great physical belt of stars." (*Two Worlds*, Dec. 29, 1916, vol. 29, nr. 1520, p. 511). Other observers, however, differ as to the precise position of the spirit world. Some say that it is "the sphere next above the earth plane," whereas another script, which Sir A. C. Doyle thinks will make a great sensation when it is published, rather leads us to suppose that Summerland is the sixth sphere. In the theosophical scheme, Summerland is supposed, according to a great authority, Mr. C. W. Leadbeater, to occupy the first, second, and third subdivisions of the astral plane, a spirit world which is comparatively near, and to a certain extent interpenetrates the earth plane. Raymond, however, through Mrs. Leonard's control, during a sitting on Feb. 4, 1916, apparently does not remember being on the astral himself, but thinks that Summerland, or Homeland, as some call it, is about the third sphere, which might well correspond with Mr. Leadbeater's third subdivision of the astral plane. At any rate it is supposed to be sufficiently near the physical world for those upon it to be able to visit earth-dwellers with comparative ease, and rather puts out of court the theory of the world's greatest seer that this region is on the other side of the Milky Way.

The question of time in spiritual spheres has always been a difficult one, but it is surmounted by Spiritualists by saying that it varies in the different planes. Thus in *Letters from a living dead man* the view is expressed that time exists in the spirit world, whereas in a book by H. A. and F. H. Curtiss, entitled *Realms of the Living Dead* (Philadelphia, 1917, p. 153), we are told that in a sphere bordering on Summerland there is no division of time.

God lives in the seventh heaven, the spirits tell us, where the Holy Ghost is also busy "preparing thrones," and where the inhabitants "are robed in white, with halos, and are known by their facial expression." Sometimes the Deity descends to earth as on the occasion of the appearance of the Angels of Mons, which we are told were led by God Himself, mounted on the back of the Holy Ghost, who had conveniently transformed himself into a white charger for that momentous occasion! (*The Great Beyond*, etc.)

A great deal of difficulty seems to be found in deciding whether the scenery of Summerland, its

towns, colleges, model farms, rivers, etc., are "real" or are merely the creations of thought. In one book I read that such conditions are the results of thought (*Speaking across the Border Line*), but Hudson Tuttle declares that it is "more real than is earth" (*Arcana of Spiritualism*, Lond., 1876, p. 389), and similarly Raymond declares that "people who think everything is created by thought are wrong," and ventures the theory that certain gaseous matter which arises from the earth plane solidifies in spirit land. A simple example of the supposed power of thought can be seen if we consider the question of clothes. Just after death, when the spirit is clear from the physical shell, it is naked, but "when the thought of nakedness crosses the spirit there comes the clothing which you need" (*Letters from Julia*). What exactly the spirit does need we do not know, but in one work we learn that "in the spirit world the dress symbolizes the state of advancement of the spirit" (*A Wanderer in Spirit-Lands*), an observation which I confess I find it difficult to follow. That the garments are quite becoming can be seen from a description recently published of a young spirit called Vi, who wears an apple-coloured dress, draped up at the right thigh and caught with a golden ornament with dangling beads. "I've got a prettier dress than Janet," declares this young spirit, and continues, "I wish you could see my smart gown. It's chic." (*I Heard a Voice*. By a King's Counsel. Lond., 1918, p. 115.)

From dress let us pass to food. The spirits apparently do not actually require food as a necessity of life, but can have it if they wish to do so. Raymond, my readers will remember, did not want to eat, but saw some people who did, and food was provided for them accordingly. Thus we are told in *Life Beyond the Grave* that the spirit "requires no food," and similarly in the script published in King's Counsel's *I Heard a Voice*, we read that "those who desire it can eat and drink, but they have not the same need for refreshment as in the earth-life." Sir A. C. Doyle, in his book *The New Revelation* also says, with reference to the after-life that preoccupations of food, money, lust, pain, etc., are of the body and are gone, whereas Mr. Wales, who says that his scripts coincide with Sir A. C. Doyle's material "almost to the smallest detail," says that the spirits "wear clothes and take nourishment."

Prohibition is, therefore, not legally enforced in Summerland, and those who desire the satisfaction of strong drink may indulge such propensities at leisure. Why Christians consider that wine cannot be procured in heaven is a puzzle to Spiritualists, and it has been left to their champion, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, to clinch the matter by pointing out how Jesus himself said that he would drink new wine in the Kingdom of Heaven. (*Vital Message*, p. 129.)

Beer, or something very much like it, can also be obtained in the Spiritualistic Summerland, if we can trust one script, a portion of which has recently appeared in the *Weekly Dispatch*, and the use of tobacco is not absolutely forbidden, the leaf being manufactured upon the second spirit plane. Life in Summerland appears to be very varied, every earthly thing having its equivalent. "Love of country does not fade at death," the spirits tell us, "nor is the spirit of Patriotism replaced by

Internationalism." This is exemplified in the case of Queen Boadicea, who took a prominent part in the European War, for, as a very high spirit expresses it, "not all the long and peaceful years in Paradise have dimmed the fires of patriotism burning in her soul" (*So Saith the Spirit*, p. 21). Domestic difficulties are easily solved in spirit land, for although as Sir A. C. Doyle puts it "there are no poor and no rich," yet household duties have to be performed, so these are allotted to a race of "nature spirits," who, we are informed, attend to the conservatories and dogs, whilst for amusement they sometimes accompany airmen on their flight! (*So Saith the Spirit*, pp. 15 seq). The government of Summerland appears to be autocratic, and divided up into various provinces ruled by different governors. Far from undermining the principles of religion, one prominent writer assures us that Spiritualism "firmly supports the essential doctrines of religion, and in particular those of the Christian faith." Unfortunately for the harassed inquirer, a serious difficulty arises at this point. For if he has been a careful and industrious student he will remember that in 1892 was published a book entitled *Antiquity Unveiled*. This work comprises a long series of spirit communications purporting to come from the great characters of the past, especially persons of ecclesiastical leanings such as Ulphilas, St. Chrysostom, etc. The aim of the scripts is to prove that Christianity is of heathen origin, and that Jesus of Nazareth never existed. The spirit operators show how the Christian religion was created by man, that Christ was a mythical character who never lived upon the earth at all, and that the book of Daniel relates solely to Zarathustra of the Persians. We have here, then, two definite statements, both made in accordance with "spirit" teaching, and both flatly contradicting one another, a state of affairs which runs through spiritualistic literature from one end to the other. Nor need we be surprised. The ideal world for which man yearns necessarily varies with each individual temperament, and thus, assuming that the scripts are the result of the workings of the medium's own unconscious faculties, the pictures presented would naturally differ just so far as each medium was capable of reproducing them. In the East the spirits tell us of an after-life framed according to their own national and racial conceptions, just as here the world beyond the grave is but an idealized reproduction of Western civilization, the more apparent crudities being softened down to meet the popular taste. As to the credibility of the new revelation that I will leave to the judgment of my readers, merely adding that next week, if space permits, I propose returning to the physical phenomena, and shall deal with the difficult questions associated with the mediumship of Eva C., Stanislaw P., and Linda Gazerra.

E. J. D.

Nothing else can sufficiently inure and steel a man against the prevailing prejudices of the world but that habit of mind which arises from non-conformity to its decisions in matters of religion.—*Hazlitt*.

For we are made for co-operation, like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth. To act against one another then is contrary to nature; and it is acting against one another to be vexed and to turn away.—*Marcus Aurelius*.

A Note on Psychology.

As Thomas Paine remarked, a thought or idea seems at times to "leap into the mind"; but it is merely the ultimate sudden blossoming, the fruit or flower of a conviction slowly rooted and grown in the more or less congenial mental soil. It has been truly said that "The proper study of mankind is man," and the Greek adage, Know thyself, is still a profitable verity of wit. As we try to put into practice (what we fondly suppose) our little schemes for human welfare at large, or it may be our just and natural individual desires, we find ourselves "up against" the *conscious* littleness of the engrained and alarmed prejudice or conceit of some of our fellows. Even this in the long run may be gradually smoothed or worn away, but what helps us ultimately, and incalculably, is the *unconscious* and growing greatness of man in the mass. With the majority of men the open and frontal attack will nearly always fail, the outworks are too old, and fixed, and strong; but while the citadel may not be taken by assault, the friendly fraternizings of besiegers and besieged, even over the social glass, may go far to attain the desired end, or the power of music, or any of the æsthetic pleasures, when the cells of the mind, well stored with ancient and modern impressions, but, heretofore, sealed and darkened by a thick crust of custom and convention, are opened up to the light and heat of common needs and common sympathies. Thus, and thus only, vital blows are struck; there is no visible breach in the walls; no oaths, ferocity, and din of battle; no resentment, rather affection and admiration, an almost too willing capitulation; even, if after many days, many confederating enticements, intimate exchanges, and explanations which are the truer and better forms and means of attack.

"For what purpose," asked a chance acquaintance the other night—man is always questioning, if not his neighbour, then always, and automatically, necessarily, himself, and in his doubt is not despair but hope—"For what purpose am I here, to live this little life, and suffer all I have to suffer?" and we replied bluntly, frankly, and kindly, "For none! Taking the evidence as it stands, Nature has neither purpose nor morality—or immorality—in anything she produces. As a philosopher said: There are no moral phenomena, only immoral interpretations of phenomena; and as another said: Nature produces without purpose, sustains without intention, and destroys without thought. Adding that 'man has a little intelligence, and he should use it. Intelligence is the only lever capable of raising mankind.' There emerges your only Providence; it is yourself; and is only poor and despicable, rich and noble, as you yourself happen to be; yet not by any means is this a cold and isolated eminence or obscurity; there are your fellow-men, and the good they often confer on you, or the good you can do to them. There is also the evil, given or received, and in this, too, man is his own devil—gods and devils, heavens and hells, are but persons and places invented by man; he being too modest to think himself the only doer of good, and too proud to admit all the evil as his own." All this and much more to the point.

Our friend was silent, and yawned a little; not comprehending, it might be, or finding the answer unanswerable; preferring, perhaps, a solution of his doubts more in harmony with his older preabsorbed beliefs.

Still—to vary the metaphor—the hatches had been raised a moment, and the light had penetrated the haunted hold—haunted only by the ghost man makes and man destroys—permitting a firmer faith in, and

more respect for, material things; as to the experienced navigator, the rounded oceans of the globe are no longer the level plains of pre-Columbian days. A. MILLAR.

Acid Drops.

Messrs. Brinsmead & Sons are going out of business as piano manufacturers. The reason given is that the cost of labour is so great they can no longer make pianos to pay. But we see that the curious-minded parson who is telling the readers of the *Weekly Dispatch* all about the next world says there is one whole region there that is quite devoted to making musical instruments. So it may be that the reason given by Brinsmead's is an excuse, and that they are really afraid of the new source of supply. For we feel certain that before long Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle will be holding out to us visions of getting supplies of pianos from the next world. And if they can materialize human forms, we see no reason why they should not materialize pianos, and then all we want is some fixing process that will keep them materialized. Up to the present, materialized forms all fade with the light.

In a circular relating to a series of Fellowship Services, the Revs. Maude Royden and Percy Dearmer say: "We desire to bring into the service of religion all that is lovely in music." This will mean the erasure from the musical programme of such prime favourites as "The Glory Song," "Tell Mother I'll be There," and "The Bells of Hell go Ting-a-ling." For these masterpieces are lively, but not lovely.

A church organist at Woburn, Beds., is giving up his ecclesiastical employment to tour the music-halls with an organ. Doubtless, he will find it better to serve Mammon than God—or God's representatives.

The clergy do sometimes move with the times, especially when they are pushed. The Rev. F. W. Ferraro, a King's Cross parson, has abolished "mothers' meetings" in his parish, and substituted "A womens' social hour." The abolition is not in name only, for the reverend gentleman adds: "mere membership will not carry with it the right to receive coals, harvest offerings, or flannel garments." The list suggests an unhappy parallel to the case of "rice Christians" in Eastern lands.

King Charles the First lost his head, and some present-day Conservatives seem to be in the same unhappy condition. In memory of the "King-martyr," a service was held at St. Mark's Church, Hamilton Terrace, London. The statue of King Charles at Trafalgar Square was also enlivened with wreaths and green groceries.

Militarism and religion are, as we have often pointed out, twins from the same stable, and it is also instructive to note how frequently piety and brutality run together. Now we have the *Church Times* joining in the cry for the use of the "cat" as a means of preventing offences against the person, and repeating the old fallacy that it was the lash that put down garrotting. The growth of crimes of violence is entirely a result of the War, and it will wear itself out in time, without our giving a new social sanction to brutality by the revival of brutalizing methods of punishment. When society gives its sanction to war, it should have at least the courage to take the consequences without whining. And it is instructive to find that section of the population that was loudest in voicing the rubbish about the elevating character of the War and impeccable morality of our own Army, to find it equally ready to resort to degrading and brutal punishments as a means of counteracting some of war's normal consequences.

The *Daily News*, reporting the fact that the city of Bradford has resolved to feed and educate for twelve months

1,000 German and Austrian children, says that Bradford cannot be so materialistic as many have imagined. We have no objection to the word "materialistic" so long as it is properly used, but as it is so often used in this sense in order to discredit scientific and philosophic materialism, we feel that the sentence might be revised so as to read "Bradford is not so Christian as many have supposed." For when it comes to the cultivation of hatred no system has ever shown itself so capable of bitter and sustained hatred as has Christianity. Even good feeling manifested within its ranks seems largely motivated by dislike and hatred of outsiders.

A *Times* personal advertisement in the "Agony Column" reads: "Alexis—I am going to bang the big drum." It looks as if Alexis's friend contemplated joining the Salvation Army.

The late Rev. B. H. Jones, a Carmarthen rector, left, among other items, his "washing-machine and mangle" to his daughter. Most parsons prefer to exhort others to get washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Providence does not trouble more about churches than cinemas. Rathmines Church, Dublin, was destroyed by fire, the damage being about a hundred thousand pounds. Fountainville Church, Belfast, has shared the same fate, the damage being about seven thousand pounds.

The Bishop of Liverpool says that the time has come when, if "we" are to escape secular education, "we" must come to some concordat with our Nonconformist fellow-citizens. The cool impudence of it would amaze one if it were heard for the first time. The calm way in which these Christians settle the affairs of the nation on the basis of what the Churches require is an illustration of the way in which their religion distorts their sense of justice. And whether Churchman or Nonconformist, there is little difference. Thus the *Christian World*, in commenting on the Bishop's proposal, says:—

The only possible concordat is one that will eliminate clerical control altogether, and unite religious men of all denominations in giving practical religious training to children without any afterthought of keeping or winning them for any Church. If the interests of the children and of religion were placed first, there should be no great difficulty in arriving at such a concordat.

The comment is even more illuminating than the Bishop's statement; for that is made in the supposed interests of liberty and justice. And all that the *Christian World* can suggest is that, instead of an arrangement that suits the Church, it should be one that suits Church and Chapel. No one else matters. One would have thought that even a religious journal might have realized that enlarging the circle for those who benefit by an injustice does not abolish the injustice. The case against the State teaching and the State endowment of religion is that religion does not come within the scope of the functions that should be exercised by the modern State, and that, when the State does interfere in matters of religion, it inevitably inflicts an injustice upon a large body of citizens. But one never expects considerations of right and justice to influence the average Christian where he thinks the particular Church he supports may benefit. Nothing so distorts the moral sense as does religion, and no religion has so immoral an influence as has Christianity. The man who does not realize the fundamentally immoral nature of Christianity has yet to learn the A B C of scientific Freethought.

Some of the clergy need have no fear of "starvation." The new Master of the Temple Church, London, will enjoy a salary of about £600 yearly and a fine residence. Before leaving his previous "living" he was presented with a money gift of about £100.

The Baptists are still on the downgrade as regards membership. According to the latest figures, there is a decrease of 2,489 members, 2,360 Sunday-school teachers, 29,511 scholars, and 77 churches. This is enough to make any

Baptist head for the nearest river, jump in—and stop under the water.

The late Rev. J. C. Taylor, of Hindhead, Surrey, left £20,949. The Rev. R. F. Dale, of Oxford, left £14,581, and the Rev. A. Barber, of Eastbourne, 10,529. They will not be handed harps when they reach the pearly gates.

The Vicar of Stoughton, Guildford, says "one of the needs of the parish is a fish-shop." A parson, however, is supposed to care for souls, not "soles."

According to the *Church Times* for February 6, there is a grave crisis in the missionary world. There is "a quite unusual demand" for both men and money, and "a quite unusually small response." Money is, however, much more easily got than men. We are told that "the real crisis of the movement is the shortage of workers." In N.E. Rhodesia, mission stations, with great numbers of Christians, have been abandoned, "owing to the diminished staff." The cause of this grave crisis is the general decay of faith due to the triumphant march of Secularism, within as well as without the Church.

Dr. Frank Ballard is at his old game again. He has just completed a four days' campaign against Secularism at Maesteg, which he found much more arduous than he had anticipated. The Freethinkers bombarded him with questions to which his answers were anything but convincing. One service and open conference lasted nearly four hours. In its report of the campaign the *Methodist Times* for Feb. 5 admits that "the religious doubts of democracy were manifested in the many questions dealt with in the conference that followed each lecture."

Owing to the resignation of the chaplain at Winslow, Bucks, Workhouse, a Nonconformist member was appointed, but the Ministry of Health has refused to sanction any appointment except that of a clergyman of the Government religion.

The Bishop of Chelmsford is asking modestly for two motor gipsy-vans with which to traverse country districts in his diocese. The Founder of the Christian religion was more modest when he traversed his district on a donkey.

In accordance with the economic law of supply and demand, there are a number of ghosts coming forward at the moment. And one may safely prophesy that so soon as the demand for ghosts declines there will be a falling off in the supply. In this respect ghosts are like miracles—they never happen where they are not expected. The other day there were reports of some Spiritual happenings in Hertfordshire, and a ghost was reported who sent communications in Morse code. The rector of Hertingford Bury, Mr. Bayfield, and two others, investigated, and the rector's report was that there was no ghost, no fraud, and nothing supernatural. It all proceeded from a girl in the house who had been taught the Morse Code by her brother, and the case was purely pathological. The girl declares that she did not cause the rappings, and her statement may or may not be true so far as her knowledge goes. But in the event of its truth, there is here a case that can be paralleled by many others in pathological records. And when the patient is told that spirits are communicating through her, the suggestion is enough to account for all that follows. But since Mr. Bayfield investigated and reported on the case the spirits have ceased to give any of their Morse Code messages. Perhaps they feel offended.

One of the stock defences among Spiritualists is that so long as a "medium" happens to belong to one's own family, or to be a personal friend, or not to be practising for money, it is absurd to look for fraud or imposture. The truth is that imposture is practised quite as frequently for other than monetary ends as it is for pure gain. The mere design to pose as something out of the normal, or to confuse, or to obtain a certain notoriety, is enough. Money is not by any

means the only source of attraction in the world, although it is very hard to convince a Christian people that there is anything more powerful for which men and women will work harder. If one reflects on the trouble that some folk will take to master certain sleight of hand tricks, or simple conjuring performances, they will have at once a glimpse of the motives that lead to fraud in Spiritualistic circles without there being any question of money involved.

We have received the prospectus of—at least to us—a new religious organization. Its home is in Paraguay, and the conditions of membership is that you believe in Christianity, Communism Vegetarianism, Teetotalism, and Nudity, both sexes." There is a representative of this curious body in London till June, 1920. By that time he probably calculates to have exhausted the possibilities of this country, or to have filled up all his vacancies.

"Woe unto ye rich" said the Founder of the Christian religion. At Christie's Sale Rooms recently £24,100 was given for jewellery in the course of a few minutes.

Shipdham Congregational Church possesses a girl organist aged fourteen years. The Church will soon appeal only to actual "babes and sucklings."

At Guildford, Surrey, anti-Ritualists are making a fuss over the large crucifix erected at St. Nicholas' Church. How these Christians love one another!

At the inquest on the Rev. W. Dorey, whose body was found on the railway at Wickford, Essex, a verdict of "suicide" was returned. Prior to his death, a charge was pending against the deceased for indecent conduct towards females. The restraining power of religion is not obvious in this case.

In response to a Guildford parson's appeal, 150 bars of soap were contributed by the congregation for use in India. As a rule, soft soap is more readily found in pulpits.

The Lord Bishop of Southwark is a sadly disappointed man. He had "hoped that somehow after the war there might come the new earth; that somehow the nations might be brought closer together; that somehow in our own country there might be a greater fellowship between class and class"; but a necessity is laid upon him sorrowfully to confess that "the new earth seems far off." The confidently predicted revival has failed to materialize. The Church's dream has not been fulfilled.

The Bishop declares that "man by himself cannot form the perfect community." Culture, power, wealth, efficiency cannot do it, for these have all been tried, and they have miserably failed. "Efficiency cannot do it; in Germany you had efficiency, and through Germany there came ruin to Europe." But doesn't his lordship realize that, from the Christian point of view, man's impotence is equally God's? God made man and has always been with man, so that of necessity man's failure is equally God's, both as Creator and Redeemer.

Some of the daily papers keep up a faint pretence of piety, but only in a half-hearted way. One newspaper printed "a sermon for Sunday," which was sandwiched between an instalment of a sensational novelette and sundry patent medicine advertisements.

"The British workman has been spoilt by the War," declares Dean Inge. It looks as if some workmen have forgotten to touch their hats in the dean's presence.

"Hymn-singing has become an important factor in the treatment of shell-shock," says a sapient editor of a religious weekly. Just imagine a ward full of patients undergoing the treatment of listening to a full-toned rendering of "The Bells of Hell go Ting-a-ling"!

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

February 15, Plymouth; February 22, South Shields; February 26, Glasgow (Debate on Spiritualism); February 29, Glasgow; March 7, Leicester; March 14, Birmingham; March 21, Manchester; April 18, Swansea.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—February 15, Stratford Town Hall; February 22, Manchester; February 29, Porth, Glam.; March 7, Birmingham; March 21, Abertillery.

F. REDWAY.—Perhaps Ruskin was not very far wide of the mark when he said: "The first reason for all wars and for the necessity of national defence is that the majority of persons, high and low, in all European countries, are thieves." And in view of the manner in which most of our patriots have seemed determined to wring the uttermost farthing out of the country's necessities, the man who argues for the honesty of the "majority of persons" has a very difficult brief to plead.

G. ATTEWELL.—We quite agree with you as to the character of the rubbish being published by the *Dispatch*. The folly of people who can swallow such stuff is almost unbelievable. But it was very unwise of the editor to publish a portrait of the author. That does away with the need for any further evidence as to the value of the "revelation." But so long as it will sell more copies of a paper nothing seems to matter.

W. T. NEWMAN.—*The Salvation Army and the Public*, by J. Manson, was published by Routledge & Sons in 1906 at 6s. A paper edition at 6d. was afterwards published. We do not know if either are now obtainable, but they could probably be consulted at a good library. It was a wholesale exposure of the Army's methods. No business could have withstood such an exposure, but in this country anything is tolerated so long as it is done in the name of religion.

R. CHAPMAN.—Yes; we saw the paper. *Religion and Sex* is going along merrily. When he can find the time, Mr. Cohen has in view another volume carrying the investigation a step further.

E. E. STAFFORD.—Received with thanks. We have no cause for complaint at present. Presently we hope to start advertising the paper, and so improve our circulation. But we shall be still dependent on and appreciative of the efforts of our friends to secure us new readers.

R. F. MACK.—We are obliged for pamphlet, which we have read with considerable interest.

G. E. FUSSELL.—Thanks. Shall appear at an early date.

A. HINDLEY.—We are pleased to hear of your success. As your affirmation was accepted, you have no legal redress against the impudence of the solicitor, particularly as the magistrate appears to have acted fairly towards you. A respectful protest against a solicitor's insults might be made to the Court at the time; but unless one can show that an actual injustice has been suffered, the matter would have to end there. We are pleased to know that you had the courage to stick to your guns. Glad to know that you are doing what you can to help along the Cause.

R. S. P.—Thanks. Will be useful.

H. J. BAYLISS.—Certainly, there is something in every phenomenon. But if you take away from Spiritualism all that may be explained by illusion, delusion, collusion, and the operations of abnormal states, there does not appear to be much left that is worth bothering about.

C. T. SHAW.—If we were to make out a complete weekly record of all the bad deeds done by Christians, we should have to give up publishing anything else. And the list would be too monotonous for anything.

H. BLACK.—Pleased to learn that Mr. Thresh had good meetings, and that those present were delighted with his lectures.

MAJOR WARREN.—We quite agree with your opinion as to the way in which the press is working the boom in Spiritualism. The press runs the Churches hard for supremacy in the work of demoralizing the public mind and exploiting its lack of culture. Letter will appear next week.

J. T. THURLOW.—Next week. Squeezed out of this issue.

The Secretary of the Barnsley Branch desires to thank a friend who has sent to the Branch Library copies of *Myths and Dreams* and *Modern Thoughts*. No name accompanied the parcel, but the postmark was Bootle.

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, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

We have not worried our friends of late on the matter of securing new readers, but we hope they have not forgotten that is one of constant needs. The only way in which the *Freethinker* can exert the influence it ought to exert is by having the circulation it ought to have. And until the *Freethinker* is an endowed institution, or that fabled millionaire comes along, anything like adequate advertising is impossible. And it is only growth in circulation that will enable us to keep pace with the growing expenses. They are rising all the time. We had a notice this last week of another rise in the cost of paper, and we are informed that when we give another order there will be a still further advance. And the mills will not accept an order for more than three or four week's supply. In this way we are assured that we shall miss none of the rise in prices. It is a merry game!

At the half-yearly meeting of the Birmingham Branch the following resolution was passed unanimously;—

That Mr. J. T. Lloyd be thanked for his article, "Doubt," in the *Freethinker* for January 26, and for the well-merited chastisement administered therein to the Rev. Dr. Horton.

We congratulate our Birmingham friends on knowing a good thing when they see it.

Mr. Lloyd lectures to-day (February 15) in the Town Hall, Stratford. We trust that the local friends are doing their best to make the meeting as well known as possible. It is a capital occasion for them to introduce a Christian friend to these meetings. To these Mr. Lloyd's lectures come with peculiar force, as he speaks with the authority of one who knows both sides intimately. We hope to hear of a crowded meeting.

After many years, Mr. Cohen is paying a visit this weekend (February 15) to Plymouth. He will lecture in the Corn Exchange, East Street, at 3 and 7. Admission will be free, but there will be a "silver collection." That will not prevent those who care to make the attempt turning it into a paper one. The meetings are being well advertised, and there should be good attendances.

On Sunday next (Feb. 22) Mr. Cohen visits South Shields, and will lecture, at 3 and 6 30, in the Marsden Miners' Hall, Imeary Street. He will lecture in the afternoon on "A Freethinker's View of the League of Nations," and in the evening on "Do the Dead Live?" Both subjects are "live" ones, and should bring good audiences.

From South Shields Mr. Cohen goes to Glasgow, where he is to debate, on Thursday, the 26th, with Mr. Horace Leaf, in the St. Andrews Hall, on the subject of "Does Man Survive Death?" Tickets for the debate are 1s. and 2s. each, and early application for them are advisable. They may be obtained from Patersons Sons & Co., Buchanan Street, from members of the Committees of the Spiritualist

or Secularist Societies, or at the hall, if still available, on the night of the debate.

The Secretary of the South Shields Branch writes:—

After some difficulty we have again secured the use of the beautiful Marsden Miners' Hall for Sunday lectures. We have consequently arranged for a visit from Mr. Cohen on Sunday, February 22, when he will lecture afternoon and evening. It is hoped that all friends of the Movement in the district will make a grand rally on this occasion. We must demonstrate that there is a demand for Sunday lectures. We will do our best to provide for the requirements of visitors. Communications on this matter should be sent to Mr. J. Fothergill, 3 Thompson Street, S. Shields.

The Birmingham Branch is holding its annual dinner at the Crown Hotel, Newton Street, on Saturday, February 21. Mr. A. B. Moss will be present as the guest of the Branch, and there will be the usual speeches, social amenities, etc. The cost of a ticket is 3s. 6d., and these may be obtained from the Secretary, Mr. J. Partridge, 245 Shenstone Road, Rotton Park, Birmingham. We trust there will be a good muster of members and friends.

To day (February 15) Mr. W. H. Thresh lectures, for the first time, at Abertillery. The meetings will be held at the Tillery Institution at 3 and 6.30. Local friends will please note the time, and place, and speaker.

How a dog saved the crew of a vessel in distress off the Newfoundland coast was told in the papers the other day. The sea was too rough for a boat to leave the vessel, or for anyone on the vessel to carry a rope ashore. But a Newfoundland dog swam ashore with a line between its teeth, and by this means ninety-one of the ninety-two persons aboard were saved. But there are no dogs in heaven, and when God made dogs and men he forgot to give the dog a soul—or thought he was not worth it.

The Indicator (Vancouver) reprints, with acknowledgments, from our issues of October 26 and November 2, Mr. Cohen's "Views and Opinions" dealing with the question of Evolution.

We are pleased to see a letter in the *Leeds Mercury*, signed "Infidel," pleading for greater candour towards the young with regard to sex knowledge. We feel that is the safer and the wiser way. And in the battle for wider and truer knowledge "Infidels" have generally played a prominent part.

Early Christian Frauds.

III.

(Continued from p. 92.)

4. REFERRING to the employment followed by Jesus, Justin says (Dial. 88):—

For when he was among men he was in the habit of working as a carpenter, making ploughs and yokes; by which he taught the symbols of righteousness and an active life.

There is no record in any of the canonical Gospels of work actually done by Jesus before his appearance as a preacher, and, though he is supposed to have followed his father's trade, no particular kind of carpentry has been suggested. In the Gospel of Thomas, however, it is stated (par. 13):—

And his father was a carpenter, and at that time made ploughs and yokes.

This was probably the source of the foregoing statement of Justin, who naturally assumed that Jesus assisted his father.

5. Justin, when speaking of the baptism of Christ in the river Jordan, says (Dial. 88):—

And when he had stepped into the water a fire was kindled in the Jordan.....And at the same time a voice

came from the heavens.....Thou art my son, *this day have I begotten thee.*

Here we see two circumstances contained in Justin's *Memoirs of the Apostles* which are not found in any of the canonical Gospels. Now, in a version of the Hebrew Gospel in use among the Ebionites and Nazarenes the account of the baptism of Jesus was thus recorded:—

And a voice came from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased; and again, *To-day have I begotten thee.* And immediately a great light shone about the place; and John, when he saw it, saith to Jesus, Who art thou, Lord?

We are indebted to Epiphanius for this fragment of a lost Gospel, which, in all probability, is that from which the narratives common to Matthew, Mark, and Luke were originally derived. The account in Justin's *Memoirs* was a later edition, in which the primitive "light" had developed into a "fire."

6. After quoting Isaiah lxxv. 2 and lviii. 2, Justin says of Christ (1 Apol. 35):—

For also, as the prophet saith, they reviled him, and set him on the judgment seat, and said, "Judge us."

No such action as that mentioned is recorded in the canonical Gospels. In the recently discovered fragment of the Gospel of Peter, however, it is stated that, at the conclusion of the trial before Pilate, "they put upon him a purple robe, and sat him on the judgment seat, and said, 'Judge righteously, O King of Israel.'"

7. Justin says (Dial. 47):—

Wherefore also our Lord Jesus Christ said; "In whatsoever things I shall take you, in these I shall judge you."

This is a direct quotation of a saying of Jesus which is not to be found in any of our present Gospels. It is, therefore, another proof of the existence of fictitious histories. Again, referring to the trials and afflictions borne by many Christians, Justin says (Dial. 216):—

.....out of which, again, Jesus, the Son of God, snatches us. He has promised to *clothe us with prepared garments* if we do his commandments, and has undertaken to provide an eternal kingdom for us.

Here we have further proof that Justin's *Memoirs of the Apostles* were not the canonical Gospels. In none of the latter is there a promise made by Christ to give the righteous "prepared garments." It would seem, then, that some such promise was put in the mouth of Jesus in some of the primitive Gospels; for there can be no doubt that Justin found it in one included in the *Memoirs*.

8. Speaking of the miracles ascribed to Christ, Justin says (Dial. 69):—

But though they saw such works, they asserted it was magical art. For they dared to call him a magician and a deceiver of the people.

In the canonical Gospels, it is true, Jesus is accused of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub; but in none of them is he charged with being a magician. In the apocryphal Acts of Pilate, however, both accusations are brought against him—"and they say again, 'Did we not say that he was a magician?'"

9 Referring to Psalm xxii. 16, Justin says (1 Apol. 35):—

And after he was crucified they cast lots upon his vesture, and they that crucified him parted it among them. And that these things did happen you can ascertain from the *Acts of Pontius Pilate*.

Justin says again (1 Apol. 48):—

And that it was predicted that our Christ should heal all diseases and raise the dead, hear what was said..... And that he did those things you can learn from the *Acts of Pontius Pilate*.

Here at last, we have a clear and undoubted reference to an apocryphal Gospel (the only Christian book that Justin names)—the "Acts of Pilate." The work in the hands of Justin was, of course, a more primitive version than that which has come down to us. But the extant *Acts of Pilate* contains accounts of both the circumstances for which Justin cited it. If we accept the testimony of this book, as did the credulous Justin, the genuineness of the miracles attributed to Christ is fully established.

The result; so far, derived from an examination of the writings of Justin is that about the middle of the second century we find ample evidence of the existence of spurious Gospels, but none that can be relied on which *proves* the use of the canonical ones. It does not, of course, follow that the latter Gospels (or some of them) were not then in circulation in some parts of the world; but the evidence certainly shows that Justin was acquainted them.

Contemporary with Justin was Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, in Phrygia, who compiled a book entitled *An Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord*. A copy of this work was in existence up to the year 1218, but is now lost. Nearly all our information respecting Papias and his writings is derived from extracts preserved by Eusebius and Irenæus.

Eusebius tells us that the Commentary of Papias contained "certain strange parables of our Lord and of his doctrine, and some other matters rather too fabulous," and that the writer "relates the story of a woman who had been accused of many sins before the Lord, which is also contained in the Gospel according to the Hebrews."

The following choice sample of the teaching of Jesus, recorded in Papias's book, is preserved by Irenæus (*Heresies* v. xxxiii. 3):—

".....the Lord used to teach and say: 'The days will come, in which vines shall grow, each having 10,000 branches, and on each branch 10,000 twigs, and on each twig 10,000 shoots, and on each one of the shoots 10,000 clusters, and on every one of the clusters 10,000 grapes, and every grape when pressed will give 25 measures of wine,' etc.....In like manner the Lord declared that a grain of wheat would produce 10,000 ears, and that every ear should have 10,000 grains, and every grain would yield 10 lbs. of clear, pure, fine flour, etc.....And these things are borne witness to in writing by Papias, in his fourth book. And he says in addition, 'Now these things are creditable to believers.' And he says that when the traitor Judas did not give credit to them, and put the question, 'How can things be made by the Lord to bring forth so abundantly?' the Lord declared, 'They who shall come to these times shall see.'"

From the foregoing it would seem that the sceptical Judas was the only sane man amongst his disciples. Papias's complete "Exposition of the sayings of the Lord," could a copy be discovered, would be deeply instructive. A perusal would throw a new light upon the origin of the Christian religion and the character of the Impregnable Rock upon which it stands. The naive remark of this worthy bishop—"Now these things are credible to believers"—proves that there was absolutely no limit to the credulity of the Christians of his time, and that *anything* that was related as a saying of "the Lord" was believed unquestioned. And it was in this grossly superstitious age, and amongst people whose mental condition verged almost upon imbecility, that the four canonical Gospels first saw the light of day, and, without undergoing scrutiny of any kind, or the smallest investigation, were received by all as authentic and historical.

ABRACADABRA.

To be continued.

Pages from Voltaire.

AN IMAGINARY CONVERSATION BETWEEN MARCUS AURELIUS AND A RECOLLET FRIAR.

Marcus Aurelius.—Now I think I am beginning to know whereabouts I am. That's undoubtedly the Capitol, and that Basilica must be the Temple. This man coming along should be one of the priests of Jupiter. Ah! my friend, one word with you, if you have no objection.

Friar.—Friend! very familiar, in truth; you must certainly be a stranger in Rome to address in this manner Brother Fulgentius the Recollet, an inhabitant of the Capitol, confessor to the Duchess of Popoli, and who speaks sometimes to the Pope with as much familiarity as if he were a mere mortal.

Marcus Aurelius.—Brother Fulgentius in the Capitol! Things are somewhat changed, indeed. I don't understand one word you say. Is there, then, no such place here as the Temple of Jupiter?

Friar.—Get you gone about your business, my simple friend; you seem to have taken leave of your senses. Who are you, with your antique dress and your Jew's beard? Where do you come from, and what do you want here?

Marcus Aurelius.—This is my usual dress. I am just come back to have a look at Rome. I am Marcus Aurelius.

Friar.—Marcus Aurelius! I fancy I remember hearing of such a name. If I am not mistaken, there was a Pagan Emperor of that name.

Marcus Aurelius.—I am he. I longed to have another view of that Rome which I loved, and which was so fond of me; that Capitol where I triumphed in my contempt of triumph; that land I formerly rendered so happy; but now I hardly know it for the same place. I have been to see the column which was set up in my honour, but I have not been able to find the statue of the wise Aurelius, my father. The face, I notice, is quite altered from what it was.

Friar.—So it ought to be, Mr. Damned Soul. Sixtus V. erected that column; but, then, he put on it a better man than either you or your father.

Marcus Aurelius.—I always thought it was a difficult matter to excel me; but I imagined that it was no such easy thing to excel my father. It may be that my pious affection towards him has imposed upon my judgment. All men are apt to err. But why do you call me Mr. Damned Soul?

Friar.—Because so you are. Was it not you—let me take care that I am not making a mistake—was it not you that so often persecuted a set of folk to whom you lay under great obligations, and who procured you a shower of rain that helped you to beat your enemies?

Marcus Aurelius.—Alas! I was very far from persecuting anyone. I thank Heaven, by a very happy conjuncture, a storm happened just in the nick of time to save my troops, who were dying of thirst; but I never knew before that I owed the favour of this tempest to the people you mention, though, to speak the truth, they were very good soldiers. I assure you, in the most solemn manner, I am not damned. I have done too much good to mankind for the Divine Being to do me evil. But tell me, please, where is the palace of the emperor, my successor. Is it still on the Palatine Hill? For really I scarcely know my own country again.

Friar.—In truth, I believe you, for we have so much improved things here. If you like, I will take you to Mount Cavallo; you shall have the honour to kiss the big toe of Saint Peter; and you will, besides, perceive a handsome present of indulgences, which, in my humble

opinion, will be very seasonable; for I've no doubt you stand in great need of them.

Marcus Aurelius.—First of all, I wish you would grant me your own; and tell me candidly, is there an end of the Emperors and Empire of Rome?

Friar.—Oh! no, not at all; there is still an Empire and an Emperor; but his court is about four hundred leagues from here, at a small town called Vienna, on the Danube. My advice is, that you should go there and pay a visit to your successors; because here you stand a good chance to pay a visit to the Inquisition. I warn you that the reverend Dominican fathers are not at all disposed to jest in such matters, and that your Marcus Aureliuses, your Antonines, your Trajans, and your Titus's, and such gentry as cannot repeat their Catechism, are treated by them in a very off-handish manner.

Marcus Aurelius.—The Catechism! The Inquisition! the Dominicans! Recollets! A pope and cardinals! And the Roman Empire in a little city on the Danube! I could never have dreamt of such things; though, I will admit, that in six hundred years, things will alter strangely in this world of ours. I should like to see one of these Roman Emperors, Marcoman, Quadus, Cimber, or Teuto.

Friar.—You shall not lack the pleasure when you choose, and a greater than that still. You would, no doubt, be surprised were I to tell you that the Scythians hold one-half of your empire, and we the other; that the sovereign of Rome is a priest like me; that Brother Fulgentius may be that sovereign in his turn; that I shall dispense indulgences on the very spot where you were wont to be drawn in your car by vanquished sovereigns; and, lastly, that your successor on the Danube has not a city he can call his own; but that there is a certain priest who allows him to have the use of his capital, when he has occasion for it.

Marcus Aurelius.—You tell me strange news, indeed. All these great changes could never have happened without great misfortunes. I own that I still love the human race, and am heartily sorry for them.

Friar.—You are too good. These revolutions have, indeed, lost a deluge of blood, and a hundred provinces have been ravaged; but had it not been so, your servant, Brother Fulgentius, had never slept at his ease in the capital.

Marcus Aurelius.—Rome, the metropolis of the world, is them most miserably fallen.

Friar.—Fallen, I admit; but as for miserably, there I must contradict you; on the contrary, peace and the fine arts flourish here eternally. The ancient masters of the world are now become music-masters. Instead of sending colonies into England, we send them eunuchs¹ and fiddlers. We have, it is true, none of your Scipios now, those destroyers of Carthage; but then we have none of your proscriptions. We have bartered glory for tranquillity.

Marcus Aurelius.—I tried hard to become a philosopher in my lifetime, but now I am sure I have become one indeed. I find that tranquillity is at least an equivalent for glory; but, from what you tell me, I should be apt to suspect that Brother Fulgentius is not an adept in philosophy.

Friar.—What do you mean? Not a philosopher? I am one with a vengeance. I once taught philosophy; nay, better still, I read lectures in theology.

Marcus Aurelius.—And what may this theology of yours be, if you please?

¹ Up to the end of the eighteenth century the soprano parts in Opera and in Roman Catholic Church music were sung by men who had been castrated at an early age. These unfortunate creatures seem to have had more vanity and less intelligence than even a modern *prima donna*.

Friar.—Why, it is what caused me to be here—and the emperor elsewhere. You appear to envy me the honour I enjoy, and you are out of humour at the trifling revolution that has happened to your Empire.

Marcus Aurelius.—I adore the eternal decrees of Providence. I am aware that a man ought not to repine at fate. I marvel at the wonderful changes in human affairs; but since everything is so liable to vicissitude, and since the Roman Empire has experienced this marvellous mutability, let us hope that the friars may experience it in turn.

Friar.—I declare you anathematized; but, hold, now I think of it, it is time to go to Matins.

Marcus Aurelius.—And I will go and be reunited to the Being of Beings.

Englised by GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

All After Booth.

If you reproduce a person's photograph often enough in the press, you can make people who do not think believe that that person is a very great and a very wise person, just as you can by impressive advertisement get the same people to buy quack preparations.

This introduction has been prompted by the list of testimonials appearing on the back page of the *War Cry* of January 24 to the work of the Salvation Army during fifty years. And who are the signatories to these testimonials? The King, and a bunch of the most prominent politicians—Lloyd George, Asquith, Bonar Law, Balfour, Maclean, and let this be noted by Secularists who believe in Socialism—Arthur Henderson and J. H. Thomas. Not a single scientist of eminence is invoked as commending the work of the "Army." It is not *eminence* but *prominence* that counts with the credulous individuals who swallow the pabulum provided by the *War Cry*. The men who are doing the world's real and permanently beneficent work are seldom photographed. The readers of our pictorial journals are not familiar with their features, much less with the style of their collars or the size of their feet. But it is strange that "General" Booth did not "touch" Mr. Bottomley for a tribute, or Mr. H. G. Wells, whose God is the "Invisible King." Perhaps, however, it is not so strange after all, because it is quite apparent that the divisions in the religious circles over the editor of *John Bull* are acute, and the "General," doubtless, realizes that with the people of these islands a visible king is much more effective than an invisible one.

"Sweet are the uses of advertisement," but to some sensitive palates they do, upon occasion, become rather cloying. The dulcet notes of the advertisement of fifty years since have now developed into the strident roars and frantic bellowings that deafen us from every hoarding. Violence is the lever of success! Be it that religion is potent as a general influence, that godliness is blooming everywhere, then the fair inference from the facts about is that it is only in irreligion and ungodliness that Justice, Love, and Mercy, are to be found. "Fellowship is what man needs!" cries the up-to-date parson from his vantage tower. And no one denies it. It is a self-evident truth. Man needs fellowship with his kind, and with nature to gain a full life. But the parson's idea of fellowship differs in significance essentially from the Freethinker's idea of fellowship. The former must bring in some supposititious, extra-natural, being or beings so as to breed fanatics. Implant the germ of fanaticism and the whole system is infected. You may try to misname it or camouflage it, but fanaticism remains the same in all persons in all ages.

It is not a question of degree, more or less, it is a matter of *kind*.

We have protested before, and will continue to protest against the unwarranted practice of prominent servants of the State giving gratuitous advertisements to religious sects. Christianity is a religious sect, subdivided into a number of other sects. Necessarily, when a prominent servant of the State appears on the platform of one of these sects, and ladles out his stock of platitudes in its praise, he is insulting millions of people who either belong to no religious sect at all or embrace a faith differing radically from that which is held up as man's only way of hope and salvation. The stupendous impudence of it!

Humour—unconscious, no doubt—glints here and there among the vapidities of these political certificates. Here is one from the Prime Minister's letter: "The efforts which you are making to assist in the proper housing accommodation of the working classes are meeting a national need." "It (the 'Army') filled a gap," writes Mr. Asquith, innocently, "which none of the other Churches and organizations in the country were able to fill." Mr. Henderson informs the public that he "first came in contact with it through your venerated father himself." "Venerated" for William Booth *primus*, the originator of the Army whose symbols are "Blood and Fire," is good—quite good. Father William was one of the cleverest stunters of our time. But—"venerated"? Well, Sir, what have *you* to say against it?

Sir D. Maclean wants the world to know that he has always been a staunch supporter of this "Army"—an institution always uncontrolled and never asked for balance-sheets—particularly when it was not so well known as to-day. And this suggests an interesting topic for inquiry. Why, now that the Army is so well known, are these politicians to be found rushing and tumbling over one another in their keenness to be first in reaching the "General" with their fulsome tosh? Readers might be good enough to consider this question.

IGNOTUS.

The Fourth Age.

I.

THE POWER OF SONG.

"GUNNER REPTON, you're for guard to-night." In the village of Bus, near Acheux, we had our "wagon line," and at this place I was warned for duty. It consisted of guarding wagons, limbers, and stores. From ten o'clock to two o'clock, two hours each side midnight, I was on duty—with a rifle and fifty rounds. The big guns of the Garrison Artillery were in position about five hundred yards away. The enemy long-range guns had dropped some light shells just over the main road from us—quite near enough to be pleasant. Ambulances were busy coming and going to and from the dressing station near by. About twelve, a heavy bombardment was opened by our guns—the R.G.A. guns near to us joined in. Flashes like continuous lightning lit up the sky; between the intervals of the big guns firing I could hear the rattle of the chains from our horse lines, and from the inside of the guard-tent could be heard the snoring of our two prisoners and the two guards.

"On guard" gives one plenty of time to think. The continuous flash and roar of the guns had become commonplace. Was it not an amusing state of affairs that the firing of guns interfered less with one's sleep than the presence on one's body of a tiny insect? It was passed about in our Battery that some famous General had said that his soldiers fought better when they were lousy. Admirable arrangement, divine scheme of Providence—if only the insect would respect one's sleeping hours! The ammunition wagons in the semi-darkness assumed weird shapes—my thoughts had now turned to home. I tried to remember in detail the faces of my wife

and daughter. The recollection was a failure; the vision was blurred. The tone of their voices was easier to remember. What was that? In a little wood near by, a nightingale was singing, and, fancy or imagination it may be, the sadness of the song found a response in my own heart. Then I remembered how I had stalked "the brown bright nightingale amorous" on Wimbledon Common—how its song had fascinated me, and how I was impelled to see this bird with the mystic song.

"Anything to report?" My half-asleep relief, with kneeboots flopping round his ankles, stumbled out of the guard-tent with the usual inquiry. "No," I answered, as I handed him the rifle mechanically—for my body was there, but my intensest self was miles away. Inside, the cold night air, and the fact that my "pals" had all the blankets, recalled me from Wimbledon Common, and I was soon dreaming of climbing a hill, my feet weighted with lead.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Correspondence.

SPIRITUALISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am sorry to intrude a second time in your pages, but since my name is used so freely in connection with your arguments upon Spiritualism, I have to make some comment upon the imperfect and garbled statements put forward.

The only full account of the *seance* in which my son first came back to me appeared in the *Two Worlds* of December 19. If your contributor had seen that he would have known how incomplete was his account. Facts which he has omitted are: 1. That the medium was unpaid; 2. That he was bound with six several lengths of thick twine which were found intact at the close; 3. That the voice was unquestionably my son's voice, in the opinion of his step-mother as well as of myself; 4. That *while my son was talking to me*, Mr. Engholm, at the other end of the small semicircle of six, was talking with a deceased friend, formerly a fellow-journalist in Fleet Street, who gave his intimate nickname as a proof of personality. When these facts are added to your contributor's account you have a fuller picture of what passed. My question is if it was not my son who spoke to me and expressed sorrow for our only disagreement, who was it?

I do not know where your correspondent gets my quotation as to the photograph or psychograph of part of the Codex Alexandrinus, but my account in the *Vital Message* is as follows:—

Professot Henslownarrates how the inquirer subjected a sealed package of plates to the Crewe Circle without exposure, endeavouring to get a psychograph. Upon being asked on which plate he desired it he said "the fifth" Upon this plate being developed there was found in it a copy of a passage from the Codex Alexandrinus in the British Museum.

The plate is reproduced in the book.

This is absolutely correct, but in some passing allusion in an interview or otherwise it is likely enough that I may have said "page" when I meant "part of a page." Such criticism is paltry.

Finally, he is very severe upon me concerning the Head of Christ said to be done under Inspiration—an inspiration which was afterwards denied by the husband of the artist. I am not at liberty to tell the whole facts about this case, largely for the reason that what I learned was while I was enjoying the hospitality of the family. I would put, however, one very obvious question. Why was I asked by Lady Churchill to see the picture? I am not an art expert. I am in a way a psychic expert. Does not this fact alone show that I have nothing to withdraw in the case? Spiritualism is a vexed question upon which families disagree, and therein lay all the trouble.

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

THE LEAGUE AND THE NATION.

SIR,—The League of Nations idea, in the more embryonic stages of its history, passed through many varying vicissitudes. To some it meant a world-wide federation of States

knit together by a new and unprecedented body of constitutional law. It was to be a supreme international judicial tribunal, capable of adjudicating in the most difficult and complicated cases, and extending its authority even so far as the settlement of definitely racial and religious questions. To others, I imagine, it meant only a hypercritical device, a paying of lip-service merely to new principles in which no one really believed. The present Covenant surely reflects this latter view, and regards the League as a mask behind which the old Imperialism can safely be hidden. British statesmen and diplomatists might talk with rhetorical ardour about the glorious principles of International Right, but it is most unlikely that they contemplated any real sacrifice of our own commercial and political interests. France and England are naturally much more interested in the political and military subjection of Germany than in the success of any League of Nations. Imperialism is still the one great fact, and force is the only argument upon which an Englishman can be induced to rely. I am convinced that the majority of Englishmen care as little for International Right as for the Divine Right of Kings. Where now are the wild Utopian conceptions and ambitious schemes of the international theorists? Can anyone maintain, for instance, that England was ready, if need be, to place her strategic possessions, such as Malta, Egypt, and Gibraltar, at the disposal of the League, or, indeed, of any international administrative body? No! We are too jealous of Governmental Controls in any shape or form for such a test of our faith to be possible. There can be no doubt that the theory of true and disinterested internationalism upon which the League is presumably founded is altogether foreign to the mentality of most Englishmen. People for the most part are satisfied with the Covenant because they realize that, in spite of the new regulations of which it is composed, the old Imperialist "status quo" can be more or less effectively bolstered up in a way which will ensure British political hegemony. In drawing attention to what I feel is the true state of the case, I am not intending really to throw the blame solely upon our nation for its shortcomings in this matter. History, in fact, shows that most new ideas, when applied in practice, tend to become old ones in disguise. It merely shows that in our present state of civilization the world is not capable of realizing the high ideals of international justice. After all, in being Imperialists we are only being natural. And it is much easier to be natural than to be always on the side of the angels.

TREVOR BERRY.

Oriel College, Oxford.

AGNOSTIC OR ATHEIST?

STR.—Referring to my letter on this subject, your correspondent, Mr. J. Collins, says: "The Atheist does not say 'There is no God.'" Such was my own impression of Atheists as a body when I wrote that a contributor to the *Freethinker* stated (not "debated" as your printer misread my MS.) that he "knows there is 'no God'"; thus, I was but giving an exception to the rule; so far, therefore, Mr. Collins and I are in accord. I have referred to the *Freethinker* of July 20 last, and find that the writer in question, Mr. H. C. Mellor (on p. 157) was even more emphatic than my quotation from memory, for his words are: "Let Bacon and Addison rave as they will, I *dogmatically* assert that there is no God." The italics are his own, and there is no qualifying addition such as is suggested by Mr. Collins. It was this dogmatism, coupled with the asperity of some writers, which I deplored.

Your correspondent confirms my view that the use of the term Atheist is distasteful to many, but he repudiates the idea of blaming the vulgarities of some propagandists for this result, and says "They preached truth and truth is never vulgar," but it can be told in such vulgar language that many, while ignoring it as truth, may condemn it as vulgarity, which is distasteful to some minds of Freethinkers equally with those of Christians. Mr. Collins quotes Ingersoll's whimsical definition of the Agnostic, but I do not think the Colonel ever seriously denounced the term, and in fact he, I believe, referred to himself on several occasions as Agnostic.

J. LENNARD.

Obituary.

Freethinkers in Hanley and the surrounding district will hear with deep regret of the death, at the comparatively early age of forty-nine years, of Martha Ann Aust, the wife of Mr. J. F. Aust, N.S.S., who passed away on February 3 after a prolonged and painful illness borne with wonderful fortitude. The deceased lady shared her husband's views in every respect, and brought up her children as convinced Freethinkers. She was also in sympathy with all forms of progress, and a prominent member of the local Women's Co-operative Guild. Held in the greatest esteem and affection by all who knew her, and disregarding her own suffering, she was always ready with sympathy and help, and once made she never lost a friend. The numerous and beautiful floral tributes sent as tokens of regard and friendship testified to the respect and affection in which Mr. Aust and his family are held. To her sorrowing husband and her two sons all sympathy is extended. Believing firmly in the power of women to influence the spread of Freethought, one of Mrs. Aust's last requests was that a woman should officiate at her graveside. In accordance with her desires, a Secular Funeral Service was read in the presence of a large assembly of relatives and friends at Hanley Cemetery on Sunday, February 8, by the undersigned.—K. B. KOUGH.

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.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 8, Debate—Mr. T. F. Palmer. Affirmative, Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A.; Negative, "Does Materialism Supply an Adequate Philosophy of Life?"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, A. J. Horrocks, M.A., B.D., "The Problem of Hamlet."

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, Mr. J. H. Van Biene, "Haeckel." Music from 6.30 to 7.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11. C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "Government and Industry."

STRATFORD (The Town Hall): 7, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, "Religion and Morals in the Light of Science."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Good Templars Hall, 122 Ingram Street): 12 noon, Mr. McLean, A Lecture.

LEEDS SECULAR SOCIETY (Youngman's Rooms, 19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds): Every Sunday at 6.30.

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

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Corn Exchange, East): Mr. C. Cohen, 3, "Is Christianity Worth Preserving?"; 7, "Do the Dead Live?"

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (3 Thompson Street): 6.30, Final Lecture Arrangements for Mr. Cohen's Visit on Feb. 22.

"Crown Hotel," Newton St., Birmingham.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH

(National Secular Society).

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1920.

ANNUAL DINNER

Ticket 3s. 6d.

To be obtained of the Secretary before February 15.

Dinner served at 6 o'clock prompt.

Tickets not returned to the Secretary before February 17 will be considered as sold.

Mr. A. B. Moss will attend as the guest of the Branch, and during the evening will recite.

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