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Views and Opinions.

Do We Need a Substitute for Religion?

It is a trick of controversy to put a question in such a way that to answer it gives away part of one's case. To this class belongs a question so often put to the Free-thinker, that if we assume Christianity, or religion, to have disappeared, what is there that will profitably take its place? The question is misleading, since it assumes that a Freethinker is concerned with providing some sort of a substitute for religion, whereas he is concerned with nothing of the kind, his case being that religion, as such, has no necessary connection with anything that is vital to social wellbeing. The real question at issue might be put thus: How far does religion minister to what is agreed are the vital necessities of human life? In other words, the Freethinker is asking people to consider whether there is anything done by religion or by religious organizations that could not be as well done by social organization freed from all trace of religious belief? This raises the issue in a quite unambiguous manner. It does not deny that good things are done in the name of religion, nor that many good men and women are associated with the Churches. It is, indeed, one of the evils of religion that it does enlist in a service, quite unworthy of them, many good men and women. The criticism of religion is not that it takes hold of bad men and women and keeps them bad, but that it quite often seizes hold of the good, and, by a misinterpretation of their feelings and by a distortion of their sympathies, uses them to perpetuate the very evils against which they believe themselves to be fighting.

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Man and the Herd.

One may even grant that much of the good done by people is done in the conviction that it is due to the influence of religion. Many say so, and there is no reason for assuming that they are consciously lying. But all religions are bound up with a number of non-religious elements; nor is it an easy task to disentangle the two groups of forces. Most are incapable of such discrimination, and, indeed, it is only with the few that the question ever arises. With the majority a casual connection easily takes rank as a causal one, and the continuous association of religion with morals is taken

as evidence of their being inseparable. The bottom fact in all this is not belief—not even of a non-religious kind; the fundamental fact is organization. And organization is not a religious fact, but a social one. Social life expresses itself as organization, and within society men organize themselves into subsidiary groups for all sorts of purposes and for every sort of purpose, and it is important to note that each organization creates a social opinion which enforces obedience from those that belong to it. Thus, when we watch such organizations as the Salvation Army, it is not difficult to realize that it is not the belief in certain religious doctrines which affects its members, but the pressure exerted by the organization. Eliminate the influence of organization, and what have we left for religion? Leave an individual to the unsupported influence of religious belief, and the consequence is anti-social asceticism of an extremely unstable type. In brief, a Church, so far as its influence on its members is concerned, is a replica on a small scale of society at large. Trades Unions, clubs, schools, all have the same kind of influence on their members. It is the pressure of the herd on its units.

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Organization and Belief.

Any organization, therefore, will serve the purpose of inducing compliance with a standard of conduct. Good or bad, it is certain to do this. Indeed, some form of organization is inescapable with a society of human beings that is fundamentally gregarious. Belief only plays the part here of determining the form. And even here the kind of belief is unimportant. A belief held in common is all that is needed. Thus, when it is argued that religious belief leads people to work heartily for certain causes, the reply is that this is not a peculiar consequence of religious belief; any belief will produce the same effect. The Nihilist, the Anarchist, the Atheist, are all moved to action by the influence of their beliefs. It is possible to argue that religious beliefs have a greater moral value than others, but it is sheer absurdity to argue that the disappearance of religion will weaken either the desire or the capacity for organization and effort. And the problem is not that of providing substitutes for religion; that assumes religion to be fulfilling some useful function in life. The vital problem is how to make people realize that the credit given to religion belongs elsewhere; and that when we have cleared out religion, we have remaining all the impulses and desires and capacities that we had while religion was an established fact.

* * *

Religion and Growth.

The fear that a rejection of religion will involve a lowering of life may be met by one or two simple observations. The history of religion, like the history of all else in nature, is the history of an evolution. We change our religion as we change the fashion of our clothes or the shape of our houses. We make use of the same religious formulæ, but our interpretation of them is vitally different. In a world of change it is impossible

for even religion to remain stationary. The fact of change is obvious and undisputed; its cause alone is open to debate. And the more closely the cause is studied the clearer it becomes that instead of religion moulding life it is ultimately life that moulds religion. A doctrine such as that of eternal damnation dies out, not because anyone has demonstrated the non-existence of hell, but because, rejected by the developing sense and feeling of mankind, it becomes impossible. It becomes dishonouring to God, to use the theological excuse, because it is an insult to man. Social preaching begins to figure in the Christian pulpit, not because the social question is a new one—centuries of history proves that the Churches can accommodate themselves to any amount of social wrong, just as they have during the past year accommodated themselves to the deliberate starvation of millions of people on the Continent—but only because a growing number of people have ceased to concern themselves with any other than social salvation. It is always the pressure of opinion outside that is the cause of movement within the Church. The problem of the Church is always twofold; first an endeavour to keep the age in line with the Church, and then, by methods more or less dishonest to bring the Church into line with the age.

Freedom and Cure. * * *

We see the same principle in operation if instead of religion we take Christianity in particular. The earliest converts to Christianity were among the Eastern peoples. And their religion to-day remains substantially what it was. They retain many of the ignorant superstitions that are characteristic of the New Testament and of the primitive Christians. So long as the social environment remains unchanged there is little or no modification in the religious beliefs held. The same religion carried among the people of the Western world, and subject to different conditions, undergoes a complete transformation. The quietistic and erotic elements are suppressed or glossed over, direct illumination from heaven is dismissed as an idle dream, and we have a social Gospel gradually coming into being in place of the original one. In a famous passage Gibbon speculates what might have resulted had Charles Martel been defeated by the Mohammedans in the eighth century. He says that the Koran might have been preached at Oxford in place of the New Testament. Probably. But in that case we feel pretty certain that Mohammedan priests would, by this time, have played the same tricks with the Koran that our own priests have played with the Bible. For there is really no difference in the medicine man, no matter to what religion he belongs. When he could no longer preach the one thing with profit he would soon decide on preaching another. He is as accommodating as a politician, and, indeed, one might plausibly argue that were politicians less religious they would most probably be more honest. In the long run the compulsive force of the general environment will make itself felt. And our work as Freethinkers is to give these social forces as free play as is possible. We have not to provide substitutes for a dying creed; there has been too much of that kind of thing by people who, while rejecting theological beliefs, still retained the theological habit of mind, and could see no more in Free-thought than the building up of a new Church with a slightly different ritual. We have to clear the way, and to force home the lesson that human qualities will surely gain in clarity and strength by the removal of all forms superstition.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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

"Evangelizing the World."

OUR forefathers firmly believed that Christianity was the only Divinely given and infallible religion in the world, all Heathen religions being treated as wholly false. The more scholarly and cultured divines of to-day repudiate that view, but there is still a consensus of conviction that Christianity is, incomparably, the best religion; and that being such, it is destined ultimately to supersede all the others. The great Missionary Societies owe their existence to the belief that salvation is possible only through faith in Christ. No longer ago than fifty years, Heathen nations were described as lying under the wrath of God and doomed to spend eternity in hell-fire. It was not explained why the knowledge of Christ had been withheld from them through so many centuries, or why that knowledge had to be conveyed to them by missionaries from Christendom. Subscribers to the funds of the societies were confidently informed that God had seen fit, in the exercise of his unfathomable wisdom, to honour them by making them his instruments for the evangelization of the world. As yet, very little has been accomplished by the missionaries in any Heathen country; and the complaint is frequently made that the funds are sadly inadequate. Realizing this deplorable fact, the Americans have just formed a scheme of gigantic proportions, extending over a period of five years, for the conversion of the whole world to Christ. Thirty Protestant denominations, with a huge membership of 19,500,000, have united and brought into being what they call the "Inter-Church World Movement of America," which, we are assured, "will be the biggest, best financed, best organized, and most aggressive religious revival since the Crusades." In the *Daily Telegraph* of March 8 the following account of the movement appeared:—

There are twenty-six million Protestants in America, according to the organization's own figures, 75 per cent. of whom are behind the Inter-Church World Movement, and the remaining 25 per cent. will be brought into the fold as quickly as possible. It is estimated that the revival budget for the five years will reach the enormous proportions of £26,000,000. The headquarters have already been established in New York in a vacant department store, for which a rental of £700,000 has been paid, and which provides twelve acres of floor-space for executive offices. One of the biggest undertakings now occupying the organizers is a national religious survey of the United States, and the compilation of a complete card-index of every man, woman, and child in the country. A census of each household is being taken, giving full information regarding the religious record of every member. From the colleges in the next five years the Inter-Church World Movement expects to recruit 100,000 young men and women for religious work at home and abroad. The general aims of the movement include evangelizing the world, churching unchurched America, giving religious education to every child, increasing largely the number of church hospitals, avoiding duplication and competition in the work of the churches, strengthening weak church-centres, bringing religion into the lives of at least a large proportion of the 58,000,000 Americans who are without any definite church affiliation.

In five years it is confidently anticipated that America will be entirely Christianized, and "the world itself well on the road to evangelization." The leaders of the movement are tremendously optimistic. They are raising funds for this stupendous work by public subscription, and so certain of success are they that they are already ear-marking the immense balance there will be at the end of the campaign. Retired ministers will

be pensioned, and all necessitous clergymen amply provided for. To what extent this glowing optimism is justified remains to be seen. No doubt the money will be secured without much difficulty, hosts of workers will proudly offer their services, and a fair measure of success may attend the campaign.

The Inter-Church World Movement is a purely business proposition and will be conducted on strictly business lines. The *Daily Telegraph* says that it "challenges comparison with the Standard Oil and other huge commercial combinations which have sprung up during the last fifty years, and it might be called a religious trust." Indeed, it is difficult to see where God comes in at all. Apparently, there is nothing for him to do, all that the leaders need being men, and women, and money. In the time of the Hebrew Prophets men prayed: "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years," but the twentieth-century Americans can bring about the biggest revival conceivable without calling upon the Lord for the least help. Only give them 19,500,000 Protestants and £26,000,000, and in five years the miracle will be performed. They are quite right. Religion is of this world alone, solely man-made and man revived. As Matthew Arnold used to say: "God is a magnified, non-natural man," who has never done anything to justify the belief in him. The greatest honour we can do him is to disbelieve in him. To say, "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible," would be to offer him the grossest abuse, if he really did exist. To treat Christianity as God-inspired is to insult God beyond hope of forgiveness. In other words, the very existence of Christianity is the strongest possible argument for Atheism. The argument thus furnished is two-fold. The alleged need for Christianity destroys God's character as Creator. The imperfection of a creature proves the imperfection of his maker. If man is a sinner in need of salvation the God who made him is to blame for it. Again, on the assumption that Christianity is a Divine scheme to save a lost world, how are we to explain the fact that after nineteen hundred years only a comparatively small portion of the world has any knowledge of it? Besides, how is it that in the most Christian country under the sun some eighty per cent. of the population do not even know what it is? Is such a state of things creditable to the Saviour of the world? If he exists, it is an absolute certainty that he always has been and still is guilty of the most culpable favouritism. According to the testimony of the Bible, he confined his attention for many ages to the Jews, and neglected all other nations, whilst ultimately he cruelly rejected his chosen people and showered his favours on the Gentiles. Among the Gentiles, also, the most wicked favouritism has been exercised, for Christianity is almost exclusively the religion of the Western world, while the Orient is still very largely Pagan. Why has God thus favoured the West and forgotten the East?

The truth is that God has never granted the slightest evidence of his existence. The history of Christianity serves as a wellnigh positive proof that he does not exist. Its successes no less than its failures bear witness to his non-existence. As a man-made religion, it has had a wonderfully prosperous career. The Papacy for several centuries wielded terrific power over States and society. In the Dark Ages the priest reigned supreme. In those days nations were evangelized at the point of the sword. The Inter-Church World Movement of America will adopt quieter, businesslike methods, and the evangelization will proceed but slowly. And yet, in spite of all efforts to perpetuate it, Christianity is steadily dying out. One by one its doctrines

are being dropped by those who profess it. Its secularization is doubtless a sluggish process, but it is an unbroken process. Even evangelization is a very different thing to-day from what it was fifty years ago.

J. T. LLOYD.

Genial Grant Allen.

When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.

And thou in this shall find thy monument.—*Shakespeare.*

Few men I have known well have cared more for the essentials than Grant Allen.—*Edward Clodd.*

GRANT ALLEN's geniality was extraordinary. There was nothing he could not write about, and whatever he wrote was always pointed and suggestive. This was in part due to the varied character of his experiences. Before he was twenty-five he knew Canada, England, France, and the West Indies. He was educated in America, in Dieppe, in Birmingham, and at Oxford. He also had some experience in the Indian Statistical Department. But there is no doubt his most successful and satisfactory work was that of a popularizer of science. Never a profound scientist himself, he had a splendid gift of lucid interpretation and exposition of the work of greater minds.

His papers on biology, philology, the evolution of species, and kindred subjects, were entirely readable, even at times highly amusing. As a rule, when scientific writers try to be funny, the result is "too deep for tears." The gift of Grant Allen's made him anything but popular in some scientific circles. Those serious pedants, whose solemnity raises doubts of their mastery of their special topics, professed scorn of his scientific journalism. They despised the star-gossip of Richard Proctor on similar grounds, preferring, presumably, the scholastic, dry-as-dust simplicity of the lamented Dionysius Lardner, F.R.S., whose chaste volumes used, in my youth, to adorn booksellers' fourpenny boxes. Whether they felt that, having gained their facts by years of hard work, it was prodigality to give them away so easily, or whether the old Puritan spirit had found a new stronghold in modern science may be an open question. Nothing appeared to irritate some of the authors of ponderous monographs so much as having their life-work made intelligible to the workers. Grant Allen opened up a new universe to thousands, with a charm all its own. Who that came fresh to the study of science could ever say an ungrateful word of the author of *The Hand of God* and other fascinating volumes? He invested serious subjects with a new interest that led the reader a veritable royal road to knowledge.

Grant Allen, be it remembered, was himself a scholar, but he carried his weight of learning gracefully. He had translated Catullus, and he was the first seriously to apply evolutionary theories to the God-idea. Theology has always met strange bed-fellows, but Grant Allen was a surprising theologian. Listen to his remarks on strange gods:—

The domestic cat is well known to be a most sacred and reverend animal. Its mummied remains are offered for sale to the intelligent traveller by ninety-nine per cent. of the available small boys in Upper Egypt. The common cow is also a particularly divine beast; it was Hathor on the Nile, and Here in Hellas, while everybody knows how the Hindoo who has lost caste, has to recover his position by being "born again" of a golden heifer. The streets of Benares are crowded with holy Brahmans and no less holy bulls. Certain Indian monkeys, once more, are almost as sacred as the Egyptian cynocephali, the calf Apis, or the crocodiles of the Nile. But of all the divine beasts on earth the

strangest and most paradoxical as an object of human adoration is surely the scarab, or sacred beetle, of Egypt.

This is vivid writing, and as entertaining as a novel. Here is a paragraph on his favourite subject, that popular religion is, to a great extent, a collection of psychological fossils:—

In modern Christendom, however, as in early savage religions, where you cannot afford to have a whole saint to yourself, you can do almost equally well with a part or fragment of him. It is lucky for Bologna that it enjoys a complete Saint Dominic; lucky for Padua that it possesses an entire Saint Antony; but where such good fortune cannot be fully secured, the head or the finger of some holy man is quite sufficient. Innumerable altars in the Catholic world are thus satisfied with the faintest relic of a departed saint; and no altar can exist or be consecrated without the presence beneath it of a relic of some sort. The altar thus shows its affiliation on the primitive tomb by preserving a last touch with the cult of death in its evanescent condition.

In an enchanting essay on "Practical Religion," he says:—

If you were to ask almost any intelligent and unsophisticated child, "What is Religion?" he would answer off-hand, with the clear vision of youth: "Oh, it's saying your prayers, and reading your Bible, and singing hymns, and going to church on Sundays." If you were to ask almost any unsophisticated Hindu peasant the same question, he would answer in almost the selfsame spirit: "Oh, it's doing poojah regularly, and paying your dues every day to Mahades." If you were to ask any simple-minded African savage, he would similarly reply: "It's giving the gods flour, and oil, and native beer, and goat-mutton." And, finally, if you were to ask a devout Italian contadino, he would instantly say: "It's offering up candles and prayers to the Madonna, attending mass, and remembering the saints on every festa." And they would all be quite right. This, in its essence, is precisely what we call religion. This is just what religion means and has always meant to the vast majority of the human species.

Grant Allen was proud to believe that he was the first seriously to apply evolutionary theories to the god-idea. In a preface, he says:—

It contains, I believe, the first extended effort that has yet been made to trace the genesis of the belief in God from its earliest origin in the mind of primitive man up to its fullest development in advanced and etherealized Christian theology.

Allen certainly made an honest attempt to explain the whole matter to the ordinary man. By insidious reasoning and delightfully entrancing chapters, he led so many of the outside public gradually to understand those esoteric mysteries that, expressed in the terminology of pedants and professors, else had remained unknown for ever. Thanks to Grant Allen, and such men, the ordinary reader may see more clearly the tendency of scientific movements than those who with far more technical knowledge, dissect the old ideas with wavering eyes on the Goddess Grundy.

Remember, too, that popularizing advanced ideas does not pay. That way lays bankruptcy, and even so delightful a writer as Grant Allen had to turn to writing novels in order to live. From the lofty region of thought and scholarship, it is a sharp curve to turn to Grant Allen as the author of novels which earned the applause of readers of circulating libraries. Even in this uncongenial medium, Grant Allen had a sweet revenge, and *The Woman Who Did* and *The British Barbarians* did more to shock Mrs. Grundy than all his scientific writings put together.

Curiously, Grant Allen never liked fiction. Unlike the great Darwin, he never even read it if he could help it. But, in spite of all this, he succeeded as a novelist. This is one of the most extraordinary things in his extraordinary career. The truth was that Grant Allen could write anything, and wrote all things well. He even attempted poetry, and proved himself a master in the ballade, though he seldom worked in that fantastic field.

Grant Allen opened up a new world to tens of thousands, and the quiet growth of appreciation, silent but real, gathers strength. For in the hearts of self-educated democracy to-day Grant Allen's lessons have sunk deep, and if pedants sneer and professors smile, it is something to have helped the working classes to grasp the teachings of science.

MIMNERMUS.

Wandering "Spirits."

SEVERAL months passed and I had not paid a visit to my dear old relative, Uncle Joe. One evening in January I was sitting quietly at home by the fireside reading a favourite book, and at odd moments thinking how unkind it was of me not to have given my old friend a call, when I was suddenly aroused from my reverie by a sharp "rat-a-tat," and when I had walked hurriedly through the passage and flung open the door who should I behold but the jolly face and form of Uncle Joe himself looking as hale, and hearty, and jovial as ever.

"I was just thinking of you, Uncle," I said. "Come in, I want to have a chat with you. I've got so many things to talk about that will interest you that I am really glad of this visit. Sit down. Have a cigar? And help yourself to refreshments. There is no need to go dry in my poor little establishment." He sat down, and in a very few moments we were engaged in a very animated conversation. We discussed a variety of subjects before we came to one upon which we could dwell with any degree of pleasure. At last I mentioned quite casually the word "Spiritualism," and asked my respected relative if he had read any reports of the speeches of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle on the subject.

"Read them?" he said, with a sneer, "of course I have, and I am astonished that a man with a reputation like that of Conan Doyle could make himself responsible for such a lot of silly statements."

"But you, as a Christian, ought to believe in spirits. Not only was the third person of the Christian Trinity a spirit that sometimes appeared in the form of a 'dove,' but there are other spirits mentioned in the Bible, good and bad spirits, which sometimes played rare havoc with the bodies of men and pigs."

"Oh, I don't say that I have no belief in spirits at all," said Uncle Joe, rather apologetically, "but I don't believe in spirits of the departed attending *seances* at the request of hired mediums and rapping on tables in response to questions addressed to them."

"Oh, I see," I responded, "the spirits you believe in are purely passive so far as this life is concerned; they merely wander aimlessly about in space, doing nothing in particular, or enjoying themselves with kindred spirits 'up above' or down below, as the case may be."

"Well, not exactly that, but I certainly do not believe in spirits that attend *seances* and bang tambourines, or remove coats, or other wearing apparel, from mediums in cabinets, or write unintelligible rubbish on 'slates,' or appear like the ghost of Hamlet's father armed in complete steel, and disappear as mysteriously at the back of the stage—that sort of thing I cannot believe. It taxes my credulity too much."

"But why can't you believe it?"

"I will tell you. Because you know that such tricks as these can be performed by expert conjurers with even greater skill than by Spiritualists. When, however, you are told by Christians that a number of angels appeared on the battlefield of Mons and stood before the German Army and stopped its advance, you see nothing very incredible in a story like that. I merely say that it is not impossible. I can quite conceive of an Almighty God commanding angels to perform such a commission as that."

"Then why could not a good God have commanded the angels to have stopped all the armies from advancing at the very outbreak of the War?"

"Perhaps it was not his will."

"In that case God was responsible for the War up to the retreat from Mons; or, at all events, he did nothing to prevent it."

"I won't argue that question," said Uncle Joe; "besides, that is nothing to do with 'Spiritualism,' which is the matter we set out to discuss."

"You are quite right, Uncle; you certainly score there. But what were you going to say about Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's statements that you think are so absurd?"

"Just this. Some time ago he said, in a lecture that he delivered at the Queen's Hall on 'Death and the Hereafter,' that the spirits went, after they left the body, 'straight; or almost straight, into beautiful abodes.' What could he mean by 'beautiful abodes'? What sort of abodes do spirits want?—that's what I should like to know."

"Exactly. But don't you see that you're reasoning now precisely like a Freethinker, not like a Christian at all? Suppose I were to ask you what sort of abode do the souls of Christians inhabit when they get to heaven; wouldn't you reply, 'Heavenly mansions'? Well, why can't the souls of Spiritualists go to as good a spiritual home as that of the soul of the Christian?"

"Well, but God has promised the Christian a heavenly abode when he dies; but I haven't heard that God has promised the Spiritualist anything hereafter; and remember that some Spiritualists have no more belief in God than you have."

"I know that. What then?"

"Why, then Sir Conan Doyle went on to say people asked, 'What about the child who dies?' And he answers: 'The child grows up under delightful conditions, and when the parents come across it'—up in the heavenly abode, I suppose—it is there grown up to welcome them.' That seems to me ridiculous. If the children are grown up to men and women, even if they have only a celestial body, how are the parents to recognize them?"

"A very good point indeed, Uncle Joe," I exclaimed, with a chuckle; "but it applies just as fittingly to the celestial body of a Christian child as to that of a Spiritualist. Don't you see that you are destroying the Christian Faith with the same weapon which you propose to destroy that of the Spiritualist?"

"No, I don't see it at all," said Uncle Joe, with some warmth. "We have at least God's word as the foundation of our belief, but the Spiritualist has nothing but the word of a number of mediums, many of whom have been proved to be impostors. And then, finally, Sir Conan Doyle said, when asked about old persons: 'The old person goes back to the normal—the man to about 35 and the woman to 30; so that no man need mourn his lost strength, or any woman her lost beauty.' Well, what do you think of that? I think that that's about the limit. Fancy growing backwards! Besides, if you can grow backwards, why not grow back to childhood

again, and begin afresh? There might be some sense in that."

"Uncle Joe! really, I've never heard you reason so well before. If you go on like that, you will assuredly become a Freethinker in time. You will, indeed."

To which Uncle Joe replied with pious unction, "Heaven forbid!"

"Very well. Then just let me ask you a few questions. When Christians die, do their souls go straight to the heavenly mansions, or do they wander about in the universe until the mansions are prepared for them?"

"I can't say," said Uncle Joe.

"Do they become angels, or merely wander about as intangible spirits, for some ages before they assume the angelic form?"

"I don't know."

"All the pictures of angels I have seen represent young people, generally of the feminine gender, with fine large wings—young flappers, so to speak. Is that not so?"

"I suppose so. I won't deny it."

"So that Christian angels do not grow old?"

"So you say."

"But do they?"

"I don't know."

"Are all the Christians that have died since the alleged resurrection of Jesus now angels, or in the process of becoming so?"

"I can't say."

"Some of them must be pretty old?"

"I suppose so."

"Then they must grow backwards if they become young angels?"

"So you say."

"There must be some millions of them?"

"I suppose so."

"Are they like Peter Pan, and refuse to grow old?"

"I can't say."

"Well, then, in what respect does the Christian soul differ from the soul of the Spiritualist?"

"I have said that I can't say," said Uncle Joe, with strong signs of irritation, "and I won't answer any more of your absurd questions. Let us talk about something else."

"Oh, very well. But you'll allow me to remark that I fancy the Christian's talk about a future life and the conduct of the spirits in the other world is no more reasonable than that of the Spiritualist."

"You can think so if you like; you are quite entitled to your opinion."

"Thank you. Let us come into the other room and hear some music."

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

THE DESIGN ARGUMENT.

At present, natural theology has undertaken the impossible task of "finding out God" who can only be found in so far as He has been pleased to reveal Himself. The Deity thus elicited, or as Fichte rightly says "constructed," as a scientific abstraction answering to the concrete figure of the Vulcan of the Greeks—that is to say, a universal Smith. The course of the natural theologians is as follows: they see in the human body and the world the principles and applications of the arts in a surpassing degree; the skull displays the virtues of the arch, and the hand embodies wondrous pulleys and levers; whence they infer that God is acquainted with mechanics. And from all the other parts of man, the clay patronizes the Potter in the same way, and the Deity which arises out of the whole is at best an infinite handicraftsman. This is *anthropomorphism*, or the distillation of God out of our own limits and thoughts, our own space and time. The Paleys, Broughams, and the authors of the Bridgewater Treatises, seemed to have been satisfied with this vulgarity of heathenism.—Garth Wilkinson.

The Fourth Age.

III.

IN THE MIDST OF LIFE.

'Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights and Days
Where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays.

APRIL had arrived. There was a leaden ache in my heart as I looked on the beauties of field, wood, and wayside. A young officer, an artist, used to talk to me; it was a mutual pleasure. His friend, a brother officer, wished to impress on me the necessity of "thinking imperially"; but his advice fell on deaf ears. The artist pointed out to me the corner of a wood that he had been observing at all hours of the day, and he spoke of the effect of light on it—how it appeared in the morning sun—how it assumed another aspect in the twilight. We discussed religion, politics—anything to kill the horrible ennui—not even broken by a bombardment or aerial attack.

My little winged friend the bee now came regularly every morning, and I looked on the green wheat growing, wondering where I should be when it would be ripe in the autumn. These selfish speculations were caused through being blown inside the cook-house when going for my breakfast. I picked myself up—I shook all over; but nothing was to be gained through giving way to feelings of rage or fear. I sat down on an ammunition box, and looked out at the blue sky with a feeling of resignation. I suppose, to be in harmony with the twaddle written in most of our newspapers, and such insufferable papers as *John Bull*, I ought to have stood on the top of the cook-house and sang "Let me like a soldier fall," or have fallen on my knees in prayer! We had about three hundred rounds put on and near to our position that time; we were told that it was an "area sweep," but, whatever the name of it was, the sum-total of myself, apart from any memory of me by others, had been to the verge of the great beyond.

This may explain a ridiculous incident a few nights later. I say ridiculous deliberately, for let no reader imagine that I wish to figure as a hero. The penalty of cowardice was already known, and I shall not touch on the high ethical value of compulsory bravery in facing gas shells that, in their approach, made a noise almost as loud as a train coming into a station. Such a friendly way of exchanging civilities by Christian nations!—and what avail, pray you, would be the chivalry and bravery of King Arthur and all his Knights of the Round Table against such messages of love?

There was a full moon shining—a cloudless sky, and communication with H.Q. had been broken by shell fire. We cut the cards,¹ and I and another signaller had to go out to mend the wire. We found the break, and, in the middle of mending it, an enemy 'plane, flying very low, came right over our heads, and commenced to fire at us with a machine gun. We were in an open field. We parted. I found a hole in the ground. It was a little bigger than a bucket, but not so big as a bath-tin. In this hole I tried to put my body out of sight. I suppose the moon laughed, for the attempt was ridiculous. Newspaper heroics again; take pliers in right hand, wave them in a threatening manner, at same time shouting, "Yah! Dirty Fritz." As an alternative, throw your tin hat at the aeroplane. If religious, sing a hymn, or recall quotation from the Bible.

We had, during the night, about twenty rounds on our position—no casualties. A wooden latrine was reduced to pieces; twenty shells costing about £50 to do this! The wisdom of man passeth all understanding. In the morning I found a poor little mole trying, in its blind manner, to burrow into the hard road where it had been flung by explosion. I picked it up, placed it in the field musing at the same time that we men were intruders in their world, and their code of life was not so savage as ours.

One Sunday morning I handed my officer, Mr. S., the artist, his field-glasses. He was for liaison duty. I never saw him again. He had been observing the effect of our barrage, and a piece of shrapnel from an enemy shell struck him in the chest. He was killed instantly. A biological necessity say the devils in human shape! In the midst of war he could be drawn by the subtle charms of beauty. He

¹ Those drawing the lowest cards were for duty.

had safely come through the horrors of the March retreat, and, when we left the position, we found in our dug-out a letter from his mother to him thanking God for his escape, and trusting to see him again, as all mothers trusted to see their loved ones again. We burnt the letter. A few yards from the dug-out entrance was a shell-hole; on the edge of it, in all the fresh bloom of spring, was a clump of marguerites, untouched by the burst, whilst one piece of a shell in another place had carried away a son.

We left Englebelmer and moved to the village of Senlis; I think I now know the connection between that place and the tears that rushed from my eyes when I heard the soldier in "Cyrano" play a plaintive strain on his pipe. Those who have experienced misery, cold, and hunger, with destruction hovering over their heads continually will understand; those who have not will perhaps pause in their judgment of others who have been stretched on the rack. The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman; a loving father above looking on at scientific murder and doing nothing is a fit object of worship for fools. And besides—why all the fuss about one man dying to save the world when thousands are now rotting in their graves for—nothing? Hundreds have no graves, for a shell would scatter limbs to the four winds. That was the fate of one of my friends. Can fury be worse than deny a resting-place to a body that has passed beyond feeling? Let dividend drawers from armaments answer that. There is blood on their script.

WILLIAM REPTON.

In Wilderness Street.

THEY were destined to meet down in Wilderness Street,
Where things that once lived are soon dead.
Where children of "God" are born 'neath the rod,
And the spinet of Joy hangs its head.

They were destined to kiss where the factories hiss,
And the hammers of hell crush the heart.
Where the people are sold for immaculate gold,
And the tears of the wondering start.

The man killed his woman because she was sweet
He had learned in the language of Strife.
That Death in the end is a beautiful friend,
Whose gift is much greater than life.

She was fading away like a shadow at play,
He had watched with the anger of pain,
How her womanly charms and her mothering arms,
By the torture of living were slain.

So in Wilderness Street where the factories meet
Is the maw of Earth's ugliest Hell,
A woman of grace with her beautiful face
Escaped where the dead cannot tell.

And the man kissed the brow of the woman who now
So silently lay by his side.

"It is better," he said, "to be broken and dead,
Than choked by the pitiless tide."

He was hanged for his shame, but he smiled when they came
At eight to his cell with the rope.

"I am going," he cried, "where those who have died
Need nothing from Life nor from Hope."

So the Priest held the Cross and mumbled his dross,
And the sun slanted down from the sky.
The murderer smiled as they solemnly filed
To the shed where law's enemies die.

And in Wilderness Street, where the half-frozen feet
Of children are torn to the bone,
The women who cry for their babies to die
Must live through their frenzy alone.

Life seethes like a dream through a desolate stream
In this Wilderness dark with despair,
Where Love is a crime and chapel bells chime,
And lust conquers all that is fair.

Ah! in Wilderness Street, where the factories meet,
And the Parson smiles in at the door,
There are phantoms of shame who thrive on the game
That throttles the soul of the poor.

ARTHUR F. THORN.

Acid Drops.

In view of the tall lying that has been going on in the press, particularly the religious press, about the treatment of religion by the Russian Government, the following from the special correspondent of the *Daily News* in Moscow is interesting. He says of the religious aspect of Moscow:—

Moscow has changed little externally. All her innumerable Churches are unharmed, and holding services as usual. Even the solid gold ikons and rich gold leaf ornamentation that distinguish the foremost among them have been left untouched by the Bolsheviks, who have contented themselves with withdrawing all State support from religion.

It will be well for our readers to remember this, and also the circumstantial way in which some of our leading ecclesiastics and religious writers described the spoliation of the Churches, the suppression of religious worship, and the ill-treatment of the clergy. We have warned our readers all along as to the untruthfulness of these reports, and if we did not know our religionists so well, we might ask them to apologize for their lying. But that is hopeless. And some will believe the tales, in spite of anything that may be said to the contrary.

A newspaper paragraph states that three gold watches were found in an offertory in a West Country church. We hope this does not point to a reformed burglar being in the congregation.

The Church will possess shortly a new ecclesiastic, the Archbishop for Wales. We wonder if he will have the starvation pittance of "Canterbury," or the poverty-stricken allowance of "York"?

The *Evening News* concludes a list of instructions as to what to do after the 'flu with "Thank God and take courage." But we are not sure that we quite know what one is to thank God for. Is it for having had the 'flu? or are we to thank him because he has not given us a worse dose than we happen to have had? It seems clear that it is *his* 'flu, otherwise there seems no reason why God should be introduced. It seems to us that when a man *has* had the 'flu, he will feel more inclined to blame God for sending such a scourge on earth rather than thank him for having had it.

How tender-hearted and considerate Nonconformist deacons sometimes are. A well-known missionary tells the story that when at college he was sent as "supply" to a village chapel. At the close of the evening service one of the deacons put two half-crowns into his hand, saying, "Young man, you've done pretty well, but you might tell them at the college the next time they send a 'supply,' to send us a ten-bobber."

The Rev. John A. Hutton, D.D., of Glasgow, accuses Christians of treating God very badly, but anticipates a time when "perhaps we are quiet enough to do justice to God." Evidently the reverend gentleman imagines that he possesses a vast amount of personal knowledge of the Supreme Being, and is able to inform others authoritatively what sort of treatment is due to him. Amazing is the vanity of some men!

Miss Maude Royden is leaving the City Temple, and that church is losing a preacher with more brain power than it has had for some years. For she was certainly the intellectual superior of both R. J. Campbell and his successor. In her closing address she made reference to the narrowness of mind that is found in connection with religious beliefs, although it would have been more to the point had she enlightened her hearers by some explanation as to why religion is always accompanied by this narrow mental outlook. At any rate it is curious that, while in other directions narrowness of mind is treated as something of which one ought to be ashamed, in religion it is regarded as a virtue. The truth is that religion must be narrow if it is to exist. When it broadens, it breaks.

Miss Royden says that Shelley, who wrote himself Atheist, would have been welcomed as a disciple by Jesus Christ, and

that Darwin was nearer God than Christians who are afraid to read his books. We suppose it is intended as a compliment, but Shelley, as a disciple of the New Testament Jesus, is rather difficult to realize. And as to Darwin being near to God, his own opinion was that he got farther away from him as he grew older. Shelley knew what he meant when he called himself an Atheist, and so did Darwin when he wrote himself an Agnostic. What Miss Royden probably has at the back of her mind is the feeling that the Christian world of to-day would very much like to swap some of the people it possesses for two men like Shelley and Darwin. And that we can readily believe. Brainy men are becoming scarcer and scarcer in the Christian Church.

According to the veracious evangelists, only Atheists commit suicide. This is not always the case. The Rev. F. Tufnell, a Derbyshire rector, shot himself, and a verdict of "Suicide during temporary insanity" was recorded at the inquest.

A daily newspaper declares that present-day University professors golf, row, and play football. Just so! It must not be overlooked, however, that the ideal of so many British Universities is brawn and not brains.

A proposed Gloucester War-memorial, which was intended to take the form of an ornamental cross in front of the Cathedral, together with a book of names to be placed in the church, has lapsed through lack of subscriptions. Comment is unnecessary.

Referring to the new pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, a religious contemporary observes that the newcomer "is expected to carry on the theological traditions of Spurgeon." Great expectations, indeed!

In a recent leading article the *Daily Herald* remarks that while believing in freedom of speech, it will follow the obvious reservation not to publish anything that is blasphemous or libellous. We are left wondering why a paper, such as the *Daily Herald*, should make the reservation concerning blasphemy, and why it should introduce the term. If it is using the word in the religious sense, all we can say is that it is one more example of the way in which the labour press of this country plays to Church and Chapel. And if it uses "Blasphemy" as the equivalent of coarseness and indecency, then it is offering an insult to a very large body of men and women in the country. And if it is using the word in neither of these senses, then we should very much like to know what on earth it does mean by the term. Perhaps it will oblige us by giving an explanation. From letters that have reached us we are sure that many of its readers would also be pleased to see some sort of an explanation of so cryptic an utterance.

Unexpected humour is not the worst of its kind. Owing to a printer's slip, a newspaper stated that "Eight hundred miles east of New York, Saint Paul developed boiler trouble." The paragraph should have read: "the liner, Saint Paul."

Sir Herbert Nield, K.C., M.P., says he does not know who are the Board of Trade, but the Archbishop of Canterbury is a member. Is His Grace trying to serve God and mammon?

There are two ways in which one can secure oneself from criticism. One is by being so stupid that one is proof against it. The other is by making such sweeping claims that it is difficult to find either space or time to deal with them. We are reminded of the latter plan by the report of a sermon by the Rev. G. McNeal, which appears in the *Yorkshire Telegraph* for March 8. According to Mr. McNeal the Church did so much that no one else appears to have done anything. It liberated the slaves, it equalized classes, it freed the working man, it gave us representative government, etc. One wonders where the evils came from. If the Church abolished the evils indicated by these reforms who in the name of common sense kept them going? For they were

all going at a time when the Church was at its strongest. And if Christians had been against these same evils, may one ask who was strong enough to have perpetuated them? Mr. McNeal proves too much. He makes the Churches so powerful that he gives them, unconsciously, the responsibility for the very evils he says they removed. And he is quite oblivious to the fact that very many people do not believe that the millennium has yet arrived.

Of course Mr. McNeal quite fails to appreciate the fact that in a society where the majority of the people call themselves Christian, a very great deal that goes on will be done in the name of the current religion. The same thing would happen if the majority of the people called themselves Jews or Mohammedans. Those who are able to take a rational view of social matters will recognize that human feelings operate under all conditions, and that these have no necessary connection with any religious beliefs whatever. And it would, indeed, be strange if among so many millions of professing Christians there were not found many whose human feelings found expression in trying to remedy wrong when they saw it. What Mr. McNeal should try and prove is that reforms would not have occurred had people not been Christian.

Parsons adopt novel methods nowadays. The Rev. G. James, of Munster Park Wesleyan Church, is said by the *Daily News* to pay periodical visits to the local public-houses, so as to get in touch with people he would not otherwise meet. Presumably, to increase his knowledge of "publicans and sinners."

The "starving" clergy adopt the same methods as other tradesmen in order to better their condition. Instead of obeying the injunction to pray, they prey. At Guildford clergymen's fees have been raised two hundred and fifty per cent.

In a London daily paper there appeared the pertinent question: "How many Anglicans ever read a book by a Nonconformist?" And one might also ask how many Christians see Freethought publications?

The Chinese Minister at Berlin says that there are no profiteers in food and no speculations in food in China. This sounds as though things must be in a very backward state in the Flowery Land. But if only Christianity can make enough headway, that state of affairs will soon be altered. Christians have already forced the Chinese people to recognize the importance of developing themselves in a military sense, and we have no doubt whatever that if Christianity can make itself secure enough, it will show China the many advantages of imitating us in other directions. And should anyone have twinges of conscience, there is always the opportunity of giving to the Churches, and so ending life with the reputation of a good Christian philanthropist.

The Bishop of London says that people "blamed God for what was the sin of man"; but he does not tell us to what the sin of man is due, which is a fatal omission. If there be a God, and if man is his creature, does it not follow of necessity that man's sin can be laid at no other door than God's? Man must be true to the constitution his Maker has given to him.

Canon Peter Green, of Salford, has just published a book, entitled *The Problem of Evil*, in which he makes a determined but unsuccessful attack upon the citadel of Atheism; and it is highly significant that, in a review of his treatise, the *Church Times*, whilst welcoming it as "thoughtful and readable," admits that "he has not stormed the citadel." The point to be emphasized, however, is that Canon Green has failed, not through any lack of skill on his part, or shortage of high explosives, but simply because the fortress is absolutely impregnable. Innumerable attempts have been made, by some of the greatest intellects, to overthrow Atheism; but Atheism still stands, and is more firmly established than it ever was before.

The Bishop of Carlisle, who is resigning on account of age, says that he owes his success in life by taking time by the forelock. His resignation suggests that now time has got the Bishop by the forelock.

"Man has bungled his creation," says that worthy Roman Catholic, Mr. Hilaire Belloc. Especially his gods—and their priests, eh! Brother Belloc?

Lady Bonham Carter declares that she "would rather be a good clown than a bad preacher." But so many preachers are both.

An application was recently made by some Wesleyan Methodists at Corringham, Gainsborough, for the use of the Church school. It was refused on the ground that it could not be used for the propagation of doctrines contrary to those of the national Church. The *Christian World* asks how much does the school receive of public money from those who do not believe in Church of England doctrines. The retort is apt, but it lies ill with a Nonconformist to make it. For all the chapels in the kingdom by being relieved of the payment of rates are also drawing money from people who do not believe in their doctrines. And we wonder whether we should have support of the *Christian World* in asking for the use of a Nonconformist building to hold a Freethought meeting? We very much doubt it. The probability is that we should be met exactly as the vicar met the Wesleyans, and that the *Christian World* would endorse the refusal.

The clergy of all denominations have keen eyes for the main chance. A Jewish War-memorial is to take the form of a rabbis' training college, and the endowment of religious education.

The Rev. Dr. Kelman, who recently left Edinburgh to become Dr. Jowett's successor in the pastorate of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York, has already got at loggerheads with at least the official elements in his new charge. His great offence is that he, the minister of a rich, fashionable, severely orthodox, or Old School Church, has permitted himself to be made a Director of Union Theological Seminary, which is a New School institution and represents somewhat advanced theological views. In due course, the Session solemnly passed a resolution expressing disapproval of their pastor's action and inability to take any responsibility for it. We have often heard of the war of the sects, which has often been brutal in the extreme; but this case is an instance of the perpetuation of a bitter feud between two factions in the same denomination which were officially reconciled a long time ago. Behold, how the Christians love and bear with one another! It is as true to-day as ever that religion breeds discords, divisions, and enmities among its own professors, and that the ideal God of love is in practice more frequently the God of battles, a veritable man of war.

A newly-appointed Baptist minister at Netherton, unable to find a house, has had to make his home in the vestry. He has the consolation of knowing that the founder of his religion lived, whilst very young, in a stable.

"The attitude of the Labour Movement towards religion is one of indifference," says Mr. C. T. Cramp, of the Railway-men's Union. We wish we could say the same with regard to the attitude of the clergy towards the Labour Movement.

Bishop Graham, of Edinburgh, declares that "the present low backs and short skirts are undiluted Paganism." There's wisdom for you! And the bishop might have added that the costumes worn by priests are also "undiluted Paganism."

"To-day there is no popular demand for the old type of religious missions in this country. A Torrey mission would be a failure in England to-day," says the *Daily News*, as Shakespeare puts it, "For this relief, much thanks."

O. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

March 21, Manchester; March 22 and 23, Leeds; March 28, Maesteg; April 11, Stratford Town Hall; April 18, Swansea; April 25, Mardy.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—March 21, Abertillery; March 28, Stratford Town Hall.

F. W. HAUGHTON.—Thanks for cuttings. English papers are very scrappy in their reports—an example of the prevailing parochialism. Hope you are well.

D. S. MACDOUGAL.—Glad you were helped by the Glasgow debate. Of course, the charge of fraud against mediums is sound enough, but it is quite inadequate to deal nowadays with Spiritualism from that standpoint alone. A study and an understanding of abnormal psychology would enable people to appreciate all that occurs, after fraud has been eliminated, and would thus save them from the spiritualistic interpretation. Unfortunately, the majority of those who defend, and those who attack, Spiritualism deal with it from the standpoint of about forty years ago, which is about as helpful as dealing with religion from the point of view of a couple of centuries ago.

S. BETTS.—Sorry for delay in sending literature for distribution. It has now been forwarded.

T. MAY.—We cannot print a report of the Glasgow debate without the permission of Mr. Leaf. We are waiting to hear from him on this subject. The delay in no way reflects upon that gentleman, we hasten to add.

J. GRAHAM.—Thanks for offer, but the condition of the printing trade forbids our availing ourselves of what you suggest.

W. J.—We will do our best to see that the paper reaches the address given; (2) your friend's question is really too stupid to waste time on; (3) we do not see that we are warranted in forcing the matter of an answer to your question. It was before the party concerned, and the rest must remain with him.

G. O. WARREN.—Received with thanks.

S. C. NEALE.—There is no law at present operative of the kind you name.

R. HARDING.—Crowded out this week. Shall appear in our next. *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.

To-day (March 21) Mr. Cohen lectures in the Co-operative Hall, Ardwick, Manchester. The meetings will be at 3 and 6.30. The subjects are, at 3, "Ghosts: A Study in Survivals"; at 6.30, "God, Man, and the World: An Hour with Canon Peter Green." As these are the last special lectures of the season, good meetings are anticipated. On Saturday evening (March 20) the Branch is holding a Whist Drive, Dance, and Social Evening. Tickets are 2s. each, which includes refreshments. Mr. Cohen hopes to look in for a time during the course of the evening.

From Manchester, Mr. Cohen is going to Leeds, where he will lecture in the People's Hall on Monday and Tuesday

at 7.30 each evening. We hear that good meetings are anticipated, and judging from previous experiences in that city, we feel that anticipations will be justified by results.

The N. S. S. Conference will this year be held at Birmingham. Swansea was also nominated, but the voting favoured the former place. It may be Swansea's chance next year. Will Branch Secretaries and members note that all resolutions for the Conference Agenda should be sent in to the General Secretary *at once*. There will be just time after this issue of the paper is in the hands of its readers. Branch Secretaries should also note that they must send in as soon as possible their nominations for the Executive. If any are in doubt as to which area they belong, the Secretary will supply all the needed information. But they must get to work at once.

After a considerable interval, Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures to-day (March 21) at Abertillery. We have no details of the lectures, but presume that they will be, as usual, in the Tillery Institute, at 3 and 6.30. Mr. Lloyd's many friends in the locality will no doubt be looking forward with pleasurable anticipations to his visit, and we hope to hear that the hall was crowded on both occasions.

We are evidently in for more trouble in the paper world. Since we wrote last week there has been another advance in price, and we see from the *Daily News* that fifteen more papers announce an increase in their price. At the present rate it will not be long before paper reaches the level touched during the worst days of the War. And we may be quite certain that our "patriots," who squeezed every penny out of the nation while the War was on, will not hesitate now that the War is over to pursue the same policy.

We very much regret the delay caused in sending out the bound copies of Mr. Cohen's *Determinism*. The fault was entirely due to the unreasonable delay at the binders. However, they will soon be delivered, and all copies ordered will be sent at once to purchasers. The steady demand for the second edition of this work is most encouraging.

The Executive has arranged for two more lectures at the Stratford Town Hall. Mr. Lloyd will lecture there on March 28, and Mr. Cohen on April 11. We hope that all our friends in the East End of London will do their best to see that the meetings are as widely known as possible. We should like to hear of the hall being crowded with Christians.

The West Ham Branch has arranged for a course of Sunday evening lectures in the Stratford Engineers' Institute, 167 Romford Road, the first of which will be given this evening (March 21), at 7 o'clock. The speaker is Mr. H. Spence, and the subject "Man's Ancestry." Local friends will please note, and, we hope, do their best to give the venture a good send-off.

LIFE IDEALS.

The superior man is catholic and no partizan.—*Confucius Analects*, book ii., c. xiv., p. 127, Dr. Legge's translation.

As the bee collects nectar and departs without injuring the flower, or its colour and scent, so let the sage dwell on earth. *Buddha, Dhammapada*, verse 49, c. iii., Max Muller's translation.

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.—*Paul 1st, Ep. to Thess.*, v. 21.

A man, I think nought human alien to me.—*Terence, "Self-Tormentor"*, act i., sc. 1.

For not this man and that man, but all men make up mankind, and their united tasks the task of mankind.—*T. Carlyle, "Sartar Resartus"*, book i., c. i.

The earth is no sojourn of expiation. It is the home wherein we are to strive towards the realization of that ideal of the true and just of which each man has in his own soul the germ.—*J. Mazzini, "On the Duties of Man"*, c. vii.

A German Apostle of Freethought.

MOST advanced thinkers in this country will recognize with hearty goodwill the large share which Germany has taken in furthering the emancipation of the human intellect from the thralldom of ecclesiastical domination and religious superstition. Other nations may have contributed in a greater degree to advance the cause of *political* freedom by putting theories into practice, but no unprejudiced person will deny to German scholars and writers the honour of having done immense service in stimulating a healthy and progressive thought in all parts of Europe during the last hundred and fifty years.

In the long roll of the illustrious dead to whom we moderns owe no small debt of gratitude, the name of Lessing stands out conspicuously. Like that of many another leader of thought, the career of Lessing furnishes an instructive study in mental evolution. He travelled far—mentally—between 1746, when he was a theological student at Leipzig, and 1781, the year of his death. His career, indeed, constitutes one of those human puzzles that are so difficult to explain in accordance with theories of heredity or the influence of environment, or otherwise than as being an example of reaction against the latter.

It is certain that his immediate progenitors were severely orthodox Lutherans; he was brought up as a child in an atmosphere of strict piety; he was destined for the service of the Church; and from his twelfth to his eighteenth year he was trained in a school the majority of whose pupils were intended for the Church, and the curriculum of which was arranged with a view to making "Good Lutherans and good Latinists." His father was a Lutheran pastor and his mother the daughter of a Lutheran pastor. Yet in spite of all these formative influences—so strongly conducive to narrowness of intellectual outlook and lack of sympathy in dealing with the problems of life—Lessing grew to be one of the most liberal-minded of his generation in Germany. Even at the age of twenty we find him saying, in a letter to his father, "The Christian religion is not a thing that a man should accept on the mere word of his parents." He did, indeed, ostensibly preserve his belief in a supreme supernatural Being to the last, but it cannot be said that he retained any other dogma of religion whatever. He entirely outgrew anything of that nature. At the same time it must be admitted that Lessing could never be persuaded into making any precise statement as to his personal attitude towards Christian doctrine. His position was mainly that of a critical philosopher who had a keen eye for the logical absurdities of which the orthodox creed was composed, and who resented the utterly antiquated and uncritical view of so-called revealed religion presented by German theologians. Although now classed as a Deist, it may be surmised that Lessing went further in his scepticism than he cared to own before the world. Sturdy fighter though he was, in the words of a keen freethinking critic, "he was not prepared to lay his cards on the table in the society in which he found himself." In his later years he is reputed to have privately avowed Pantheism.

Lessing was the first prominent thinker to recognize that Protestantism could not logically stand still, and that it was absurd to imagine that the intellect of man, which had shaken off the yoke of Romanism, would permanently acquiesce in the blighting tyranny of Lutheranism or Calvinism. Freedom of the individual intellect was as essential to human progress and happiness as freedom of the individual conscience. But although Lessing saw this clearly enough, his attitude towards revealed religion oscillated between philosophic

indifference and a distinct hostility, and all attempts to draw from him a positive statement as to the extent of his belief or unbelief were unsuccessful. As one of his critics acutely remarked, "The fact seems to be that Lessing, in his later years, had reached a stage of philosophical development in which the expression of final truth on these subjects is seen to be impossible." In his eyes, "all positive religions, which exist by their endeavour to express the inexpressible," contained at once an element of the true and an element of the false.

The nearest approach Lessing made to a definite pronouncement regarding the Christian religion is contained in a fragment of less than a dozen lines which was published among his posthumous works. In the course of these few sentences he says, not very enthusiastically, that Christianity "answers the purpose of a positive religion as well as any other." The fragment is undated, and does not bear the appearance of embodying his mature thought on the subject. But whatever his final attitude with regard to Christianity, we know—and rejoice to know—that all his life he was the implacable foe of pretentious mediocrity in the domains of theology and literature, and a terror to all those who upheld the orthodox view with respect to the authority of revealed religion. His controversial victories over such windbags as Klotz and Goeze were decisive and even overwhelming.

No one ever threw himself with greater zest into polemics than Lessing. The trumpeting of blatant bigotry never failed to rouse him, and, as is the case with most really great men, opposition brought out the best that was in him. In fact, as between Lessing and his opponents, it was often a case of killing a gnat with a sledgehammer. One would feel sorry sometimes for his discomfited rival were it not that, as a rule, the castigation administered was richly deserved. It was in his reply to Röss's *Defence of the Account of the Resurrection* that Lessing used the famous phrase in which he alleged that the defenders of the infallibility of the Gospels treated the statements contained therein as so many noses of wax, which could be squeezed into any shape that seemed suitable to the exigencies of the commentators. Noses of wax the texts of Scripture remain to this day. One of Lessing's biographers in dealing with his controversial methods admirably says:—

Lessing's strokes were delivered with the arm of a giant, and guided by the eye of a lynx. His vast and exact learning, his trained dramatic faculty, his mastery of style.....made the solitary thinker more than a match for all the schools of Protestant Germany. He seemed to multiply himself to meet the multitude of his enemies.

It is interesting to note that Lessing in his earlier days at Leipzig had some connection with a short-lived publication called the *Freethinker*, which, however, does not appear to have been a remarkably advanced periodical. Apart from his other literary labours, the services of Lessing to the cause of the drama in Germany were of the highest importance, and he did not a little to foster that interest in Shakespeare which subsists so widely throughout Germany down to the present time. It will also ever stand to the credit of Lessing that he championed the oppressed and maligned Jew at a time when Jewish children could not walk in the streets of Berlin without being stoned and hooted, and when Jews had to pay toll on their own bodies like merchandize at the city gates.

Of the numerous controversies in which Lessing engaged the most noteworthy and most embittered was that which raged around his issue of the *Fragments of Reimarus*. These *Fragments*, which came to the hands

of Lessing in manuscript form, were the secret life-work of Reimarus, a Professor of Oriental Languages at Hamburg. In these private writings Reimarus subjected the Gospel narratives to the test of reason, minutely discussed the historic evidences for Christianity, and delivered a strong attack on the doctrine of the Resurrection. The publication of these writings—to which Lessing added his own comments—created a profound sensation. In one of the *Fragments* Reimarus argued at great length that—

however convincing a revelation might be to those who first received it, it could never be a subject of rational religious belief to others who had to take it from tradition or documentary evidence.

This is an anticipation of the line of argument which Thomas Paine struck out for himself later in the *Age of Reason*.

For us to-day the views of Lessing may not seem very advanced, but it is not fair to judge the thinkers of earlier generations by modern standards. While he lived Lessing was a thorn in the side of the obscurantist orthodoxy of the Germany of his day, which, in itself, would entitle him to a place in our remembrance. But he was much more than that. Many writers have developed the critical faculty to a high pitch; many others have been distinguished by their creative powers; few have combined the critical faculty and creative genius in the degree attained by Lessing. The man to whom Goethe and Schiller looked up as to a master assuredly stands on a pedestal of exceptional eminence.

GEORGE SCOTT.

Pages from Voltaire.

COUNT BOULAINVILLIER'S DINNER PARTY.

SECOND CONVERSATION. DURING DINNER.

Count.—Ah! my dear lady, I see that you eat meat on a Friday without the Archbishop's permission or mine. Don't you know that you are sinning against the Church? The Jews were not allowed to eat the hare¹ because, although this animal chews the cud, its hoof is not cloven. It was a frightful crime, as you know, for the Jew to eat the *ossifrage*² and the *glede*.

The Countess.—My dear sir, you are always amusing. Tell me, please, what is an *ossifrage*?

Count.—I haven't the faintest idea; but I do know that anyone who, without the permission of his bishop, eats so much as the wing of a fowl on a Friday, instead of stuffing himself with salmon and sturgeon, is sinning mortally. His soul will be burnt while waiting the arrival of his body, and later on they will both be roasted everlastingly without being utterly consumed.

The Countess.—Nothing, surely, could be wiser and more equitable. It is a pleasure to live within the pale of so wise a religion. May I help you to the wing of this partridge?

The Count.—My dear fellow, don't refuse it! Did not Jesus Christ say: "Eat such things as are set before you"?*

Count.—But before the servants, on a Friday, the day after Thursday! Why, the whole town will know of it!

The Count.—Then you have more respect for my servants than for Jesus Christ?

Count.—It is true that our Saviour knew no distinction between meat-days and fast-days; but we have changed the whole of his doctrines for the better; we have been given complete power over heaven and earth. Are you not aware that a century ago, in more than one province,

we used to hang people for eating meat in Lent? I could easily supply you with examples.

The Countess.—That is instructive. It proves at once that our religion is divine.

Count.—So divine is it that in the same country where they hanged those who had eaten an omelette fried in lard, they used to burn those who refused to eat the bacon of a larded pullet.¹ The Church at times still makes use of this wise provision, so well does she know how to deal with the various weaknesses of men. Your health!

The Count.—By the way, Vicar-General, does your Church allow a man to marry two sisters?

Count.—No, if you mean both at once; but one after the other, according to need, circumstances, money paid into the Papal exchequer, and, lastly, influence. You must know that everything changes, that everything depends upon our holy Church. The holy Jewish Church, our mother, whom we detest, and whom we are always setting up as an example, found it well that the Patriarch Jacob should marry two sisters at one time. In Leviticus it is expressly forbidden to marry a brother's widow,² although it is commanded in Deuteronomy;³ and custom at Jerusalem permitted a man to marry his own sister; for you know that when Ammon, the son of the virtuous King David, wanted to force his sister Tamar, that modest and wise young lady said to him: "Do not thou this folly.....I pray thee speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from thee."⁴

But to get back to our divine law sanctioning the marriage of a man with two sisters, or with his brother's wife. Of course, it varies with the time, as I remarked before. Clement VII. did not dare to pronounce invalid the marriage of Henry VIII. with the wife of Prince Arthur, for fear that Charles the Fifth would have him clapped in prison a second time, and declare his Holiness a bastard—as, in fact, he was. But you may be certain that in the matter of marriage, as in other things, the Pope and the Archbishops are the masters when they have the Power. Your health!

The Countess.—Ah! my dear Mr. Freret, you seem to have no answer to our friend's eloquent sentences. You say nothing.

Mr. Freret.—I have said nothing, my dear lady because I might have to say too much.

Count.—But, sir, what could you say to shake the authority, obscure the splendour, and invalidate the truth of our holy Catholic and Apostolic Church? Your health!

Mr. Freret.—I might say that you are all Jews and idolators; that you make fools of us, and pocket our money.

Count.—Jews and idolators! How do you make that out?

Mr. Freret.—Yes. Jews and idolators, since you force me to say it. Was not your God born a Jew? Was he not circumcised like a Jew?⁵ Did he not observe all the Jewish ceremonies? Is he not made to say over and over again that we must obey the law of Moses?⁶ Did he not sacrifice in the Temple? Was not your baptism a Jewish rite derived from Oriental religions? Is not the name of your principal feast a Jewish one? For the last seventeen hundred years have you not chanted to execrable music the Psalms of a petty Jewish king, a brigand, an adulterer, a murderer, in fact, a man after God's own heart? Do you not practice usury at Rome,

¹ The reader will remember the two Portuguese Jews who had turned "New Christians," and were burnt because an officer of the Inquisition had noticed that they left on their plates the portion of bacon served with a larded fowl—*Candide*, chap. vi.

² Leviticus xviii. 16. ³ Deut. xxv. 5. ⁴ 2 Sam. xiii. 12, 13.

⁵ Luke ii. 22 and 39. ⁶ Matthew v. 17 and 18.

¹ Deuteronomy xiv. 7. ² *Ibid.*, xiv. 12, 13. ³ Luke x. 8.

and do you not sell the goods of the poor when they have not wherewith to pay the interest?

The Count.—Certainly, my friend is right; there is only one part of the Jewish law you have not observed; that is a good and real *jubilee* whereby the nobility could recover the property which, like fools, they gave to you when you persuaded them that Eli and Antichrist were coming, that the world was about to come to an end, and that our possessions, for the eternal welfare of our souls, must be given to the Church. Such a jubilee would be worth more than all your plenary indulgences; I myself would be a hundred thousand francs a year the better for it.

Couet.—I should like to see you get it, provided you gave me a substantial pension out of it. But why do you call us idolators, Mr. Freret?

Mr. Freret.—Why, indeed, Sir? Ask Saint Christopher who is the first figure you meet in your cathedral, and whose statue is the worst monument of a barbarous age you possess. Ask Saint Clare whom you invoke for diseases of the eyes, and to whom you have raised shrines. Ask Saint Senon who cures the gout, and Saint Januarius whose blood liquefies so solemnly when it is brought near the head of its saint, and Saint Anthony, who sprinkles your horses in Rome with holy water. Do you dare to deny your idolatry, you who adore in your churches the milk of the Virgin, the prepuce and navel of her son, the thorns with which you say he was crowned, the rotten wood of the cross on which you declare the Eternal Being suffered death? You who adore, with the worship due to God, a piece of bread which you enclose in a box, for fear of mice? Your Roman Catholics have carried their extravagance so far as to say that they can change this piece of bread into God in virtue of a few Latin words, and that all the crumbs are so many divine creators of the world. A beggar whom you have turned into a priest, a monk who has just left the embraces of a loose woman, mumbles, for a shilling, in a strange language, what you call a mass, cleaves the air with three fingers, bends down and gets up again, turns to right and left, towards you and away from you. He makes as many gods as he pleases, drinks and eats them, and finally evacuates them in the usual way. Will you not admit that this is the most monstrous, the most ridiculous idolatry that has ever dishonoured human nature? Must not a man be a brute-beast to imagine that bread and wine can be changed into God? You new idolaters must not compare yourselves with the ancients who adored Zeus, the demigod, the ruler of the gods and of men, and who rendered homage to the secondary gods. Be sure that Ceres, Pomona, and Flora are better than your St. Ursula and her seven thousand virgins, and that it is not for priests of Mary Magdalen to scoff at those who serve the goddess Minerva.

The Countess.—I am afraid, my reverend friend, you will find a rather unceremonious opponent in Mr. Freret.

Couet.—My dear lady, I'm used to these tussles; I'm not a bit afraid; I have been listening to the arguments against our holy Church for many years.

The Countess.—You are like a certain duchess whom an ill-natured person called a —; she replied that she had heard the expression for the last thirty years, and hoped she would live to hear it for the next thirty.

Couet.—My dear lady, a witty retort proves nothing.

The Countess.—That it true enough; but the maker of a witty retort is not necessarily wrong.

Englished by GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

SOME ANSWERS TO OBJECTIONS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I do not find much to answer in your correspondent's letter, for whether a whole page or part of a page of the Codex Alexandrinus appeared upon the plate at Crewe is really of no importance. The wonder is the same in either case. I do not know what your correspondent is trying to prove when he reproaches me for saying that it never left the museum. That is how I understand the account of the matter given on p. 219 of Professor Henslow's recent book. Do I understand that your correspondent has some proof that it *did* leave the museum? If not, what is amiss?

In answer to your correspondent's question, I do deny that Professor Zollner was in bad health either at the time of the Slade experiments or at any other time until the seizure which rapidly carried him off. This I can show by evidence from his University. For one who is such a stickler for accuracy in others your correspondent is very loose in his remarks.

Finally, your correspondent says: "To bring up Drs. Schrenk, Notzing, and Geley, as Sir A. C. Doyle does, as if their investigations were necessarily of a spiritualistic nature, is simply to mislead the public." Is it? The Spiritualists for the best part of seventy years have been contending, amid the jibes of their critics, that a medium exudes a soft plastic matter, and that this is the physical base of all materialization phenomena. Here we have the existence of this matter confirmed by men of science with hundreds of photographs. How, then, is there no connection with Spiritualism, when it is a complete confirmation of what we have been preaching to deaf ears? The last sentence of Madame Bisson's detailed account is: "Since the *seances* described, and on several occasions, the entire phantom showed itself; it came out of the cabinet, began to speak, and reached Madame Bisson, whom it kissed on the cheek. The sound of the kiss was audible." Has this nothing to do with Spiritualism?

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

P.S.—The foot-note to the above quotation is: "During these phenomena Eva remained visible, stretched without motion on the couch."

MAN'S ANCESTRY.

SIR,—In reply to Mr. Egerton Stafford's letter in your issue of the 14th ult., allow me to say that I have read Mr. Pocock's article in *Discovery*, and find that he supports my contention that the genealogy of man, as set forth by Huxley and Haeckel, is now out of date.

Your readers can judge for themselves by perusing the following extracts:—

It was formerly held, I believe, that, so far as habits are concerned, the transitional steps in man's descent were to be traced from an active arboreal monkey to the equally active arboreal gibbon, and thence to the less active, but still mainly arboreal, orang-outang; from the latter to the half arboreal, half terrestrial chimpanzee, thence, through the mainly terrestrial gorilla, to wholly terrestrial man.

No one supposes the gorilla or the chimpanzee, the orang-outang or the gibbon to be the direct ancestor of man, or man to be the direct ancestor of any one of these apes or of the lot collectively. And the still prevalent talk about the "missing link" shows that no one pretends to know precisely how man is related to them.

Finally, Mr. Pocock says: "It is necessary, therefore, to formulate another theory." I am not concerned with either Mr. Wells' or Mr. Pocock's heresies at the present juncture.

In my article I stated certain facts about man and tarsius; would it not be more to the point if Mr. Egerton Stafford dealt with these rather than throwing at my head the opinions of the Superintendent of the London Zoological Gardens. Mr. Pocock is an authority on the external characters of the primates, but I have yet to learn that he would be regarded in such a capacity on the internal anatomy of these animals.

It is a curious fact that as late as March 6, 1918, he published a paper in the Proceedings of the London Zoological

Society, in which he removed the tarsier from among the lemurs, and placed it in a class all by itself, a rather belated proceeding, seeing that Professor Hubrecht, as far back as 1879, after embryological and anatomical work of a very high order, had done so much towards establishing our knowledge of Tarsius.

As a Freethinker, I do not like the appeal to Authority. Nevertheless, I think even on that ground I could make out a strong case.

The greatest living authority on the anatomy of mammalian brains, Professor Elliot Smith, states in *Nature*, May 2, 1907, p. 8:—

The mass of facts elucidated by Burmeister, Turner, Hubrecht, Mivart, Leche, Eugen Fischer, and the writer among many others, can, I think, find a rational explanation only by admitting that the Primates consist of three divergent phyla, which have all departed in varying degrees, and in different ways, from their original common ancestor, which must have been a creature in many respects like Tarsius, but more microsomatic, and possessed of a smaller and less highly specialized visual cortex.

Again, Professor Boule, of Paris, whose description of the skeleton of the early individual discovered at Chapelle-aux-Saints, is a masterpiece, concludes that man has "been derived neither from the Anthropoid stem, nor from any other known group, but from a very ancient Primate stock that separated from the main line even before the giving off of the Lemuroids" (*L'Homme fossile de la Chapelle-aux-Saints*, Ann. de Palæontologie, 1912).

There are others; yet Darwin still reigns and Evolution still stands.

HENRY SPENCE.

STATE ENDOWMENT AND THE CHURCHES.

SIR,—In the columns of the *Glasgow Herald* there has been a discussion on the Assessment for Local Purposes of Church Halls, etc. Some of these halls were let to the Temperance people for propaganda *re* the Temperance Act vote in August next. Mr. Walker, the City Assessor, sent out the usual notices. Hence these tears—and bad temper. I enclose a typical letter, and underneath is a copy of a letter I sent by way of reply, but which has not yet appeared, and, judging by the past, will not appear. If you choose to print my letter, I will take care to send to Mr. Mann a suitably marked copy, and leave the next word to him. But, of course, the choice rests with you.

"AUTOLYCUS."

[COPY.]

The Editor the *Glasgow Herald*. 24/2/20.

SIR,—The decision of some of the Free Churches to pay assessments only after costly and protracted legal action is truly amazing to Social Reformers. That Churches should accept endowment in the form of exemption from payment of Local rates and still call themselves "Free," that, in other words, they should add to the burden of the slum—and other—dwellers in this drink-cursed city seems to Mr. Mann and the others quite equitable. But after all there is such a thing as consistency. The Churches are exempted under conditions. The Churches should keep within these conditions. For years the bulk of the Churches did nothing towards Social Reform. Now the cat is going to jump, and they want to be where it lands. They go outside the conditions, and Mr. Walker, for doing his plain duty, gets his good work for the Belgian Refugees thrown at him as a reproach, and his committee are threatened with November! Are the Churches willing to make exemption a test question in November and abide the result?

That a State Church should be exempted is logical, but that a "Free" Church should accept a privilege (and also abuse it) is illogical, not to say discreditable.—Yours, etc.,

"AUTOLYCUS."

[We insert the above in order to show the sense of fair play possessed by so prominent a paper as the *Glasgow Herald*.—ED.]

Man and Woman are equal in nothing, and unequal in nothing, but complementary in everything.

—Garth Wilkinson.

Branch News.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—Our lecture season will conclude with Mr. Cohen's visit on March 21. The introduction of a fortnightly lecture has been very successful insofar as a number of new supporters have been found, but the old members generally have not answered expectations. May I hope for a good rally on the above date, and a successful wind up of this winter's lectures. Also to ask for payment of outstanding subscriptions by the 31st inst. The annual meeting of members will be held at Downing Street on Saturday, April 10, at 4 p.m. to be followed by a social evening.—H. BLACK, Hon. Sec.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S.—FREETHOUGHT ON TYNESIDE.—We are forging ahead. Four special meetings have been held this season, and there was a marked and encouraging improvement as they progressed. This should spur all concerned to further efforts. It would be unwise to underrate the forces against us, but there is no need to be cast down. Hasty and pessimistic friends may say that our philosophy makes slow progress among ordinary people, but that is not our experience. Our district is permeated with Freethought; those in the highest places are being looked squarely in the face, and the old dominating authority is dying away. It is when we look back at the distance we have travelled from the time when the pioneers of our movement began their work that we can appreciate the progress made. And the call for work is still with us. No man can be certain what the future will be, all we can do is to unmask the irrationalities and injustices of life and work for their removal. And our call is more than ever to the young. The burden, heavy with a few, becomes light and almost unnoticeable when shared by the many. Will the whole of the Tyneside respond? Freethinkers who read the signs of the time aright know that we are faced with a magnificent opportunity if they will only seize it. We are doing our best to create a permanent movement for Freethought throughout the whole of the district. And we hope to hear from all those who are willing to help in any way.—J. FOTHERGILL, Secretary, 3 Thompson Street, Tyne Dock, South Shields.

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SOCIETY.—On Saturday, March 13 a Reunion, or Welcome Home Tea Party, was given by the members to all those friends of the School who were called up for service in his Majesty's Forces during the War. About sixty-five friends, with their wives, sweethearts, or lady friends, were invited to partake of hospitality and enjoy a social evening together. There were about 200 guests and friends present, who spent a happy time together. We have to regret the loss of five members who paid the supreme penalty. On the other hand, we are pleased that the remainder have returned without any serious disabilities, all pleased that the War and all its miseries are over, let us hope never to return. In addition to the above, those members of the School on active service have had at various times gifts sent to them to the value of over £65.—H. TAYLOR, Secretary.

There is, indeed, no fact more patent in history than that with the triumph of Christianity under Constantine the older and finer spirit of charity died out of the world, and gave place to an intolerance and bigotry which were its extreme antithesis, and which have only in recent years come to be mitigated.—J. A. Farrer, "*Paganism and Christianity*."

"In exactly the same way there are numbers of questions relating to the connection of the mind with the body which have ceased to be open questions, because Science has had her word to say about them; and they are open now only to people who do not know what that word of Science is, and who will not try to learn it."

—William Kingdon Clifford, "*Body and Mind*."

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON MARCH 11.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, occupied the chair. Also present: Messrs. Kelf, Neate, Quinton, Rosetti, Samuels, and Willis; Miss Kough, Miss Pitcher, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed.

New members received for West Ham Branch and the Parent Society.

Reports were received from Belfast, Edinburgh, and Rhondda Branches, the latter reporting two interesting addresses by Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe.

The President reported on conditions at South Shields, and a further grant of £5 was made for propaganda. As no larger hall was available at present, the Secretary was instructed to arrange lectures for the South London Branch at the Trades Union Hall, Kennington Road.

The President reported that the legacy of £1,000, less £100 legacy duty, from the late Chas. Antonini, had been received and banked.

It was further reported that Stratford Town Hall had been booked for March 28 (Mr. Lloyd) and April 11 (Mr. Cohen), the West Ham Branch undertaking the local arrangements, as before.

Re the Annual Conference, the votes from the Branches were found to be in favour of Birmingham. It was formally agreed that the Conference be held in Birmingham.

Arrangements for a Social Evening were again adjourned in consequence of no suitable hall being obtainable.

The adjourned discussion on the draft of registration of the N.S.S. was resumed, and it was moved that the draft for registration for presentation to the Registrar as finally decided be adopted.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

N.B.—Branch Secretaries and members generally are reminded that all Notices of Motion intended for the Conference Agenda must reach the N.S.S. office not later than March 23.

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, Mr. E. C. Ratcliffe, "Some Spiritualistic Experiences."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Dr. Binnie Dunlop, "How to Give Minorities Representation."

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, Mrs. Rosetti, "Christian Burial Grounds—A Collection of Curious Relics." Music from 6.30.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, S. K. Ratcliffe, "Forty Years of London."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Stratford Engineers' Institute, 167 Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. H. Spence, B.Sc., "Man's Ancestry."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

ABERTILLERY (Tillery Institute): Mr. J. T. Lloyd, 3, "Christianity in the Melting-Pot"; 6.30, "Dream Life and Real Life."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, Debate.

LEEDS SECULAR SOCIETY (Youngman's Rooms, 19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds): Every Sunday at 6.30. The People's Hall, Mr. C. Cohen, Monday, March 22, 7.30, "A Search for God"; Tuesday, March 23, 7.30, "The Logic of Faith and the Logic of Fact."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Rt. Hon. John M. Robertson, "Spiritual Morals."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, Ardwick): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "Ghosts: A Study in Survivals"; 6.30, "God, Man, and the World: An Hour with Canon Peter Green."

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (The Dockers' Hall, Elysium, High Street): John Thomas, B.A., 3, "Rationalism in the New Russian Republic"; 7, "Dividends and Divinities in America."

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President:

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary:

Miss E. M. VANCE, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

Principles and Objects.

Secularism teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

Membership.

Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects.

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Address

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This declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription.

P.S.—Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year, every member is left to fix his own subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

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