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## Views and Opinions.

### Bolstering Up the Bible.

In the life of his father, Dr. Leonard Huxley is angry with the Religious Tract Society for using his father's eulogy of the Bible in order to rake in funds to help "the Society in its work of extending Bible teaching in our elementary schools." For our own part, we think he has little cause for anger. Dr. Huxley says that his father's commendation of the Bible was written "with grave qualifications, especially as to the need of excluding doctrinal teaching." Well, here is the passage in question. And it is worth remembering, as we said in last week's notes, that it was written on the eve of the election of the first School Board in 1870, when a struggle was being made to establish Secular Education:—

Take the Bible as a whole; make the severest deductions which fair criticism can dictate.....there still remains in this old literature a vast residuum of moral beauty and grandeur. And then consider the great historical fact that, for three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history; that it has become the national epic of Britain, and is as familiar to noble and simple from John-o'-Groats to Land's End, as Dante and Tasso were to the Italians, that it is written in the noblest and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of mere literary form, and finally that it forbids the veriest hind who never left his village to be ignorant of the existence of other civilizations, and of a great past that goes stretching back to the oldest nations in the world. By the study of what other book could children be so much humanized and made to feel that each figure in the vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary space in the intervals between two eternities; and earns the blessings or the curses of all time, according to its efforts to do good and hate evil, even as they are earning their payment for their work.

A lengthy quotation, but it is better that readers should have before them in its entirety a passage which has been hailed as a veritable Godsend ever since it was first given to the world. And we think it will be admitted that the Religious Tract Society was not abusing the passage in using it as an advertisement for the Bible, and also that if it be justified, then Bible teaching is a necessity in our elementary schools.

### A Priest's Book.

Eulogies of things and people in power are always open to suspicion. They may be pleasant and true, but they are not often necessary. And one is inclined to test the value of a man more by the number of poor, forlorn, and unpopular causes he helps, than by the praise he spends on things that are already overpraised. To begin with, let us ask, why is it that the Bible is in the school at all? To say that the Bible is there on account of the beauty of language, or for its history, or for its ethical teaching, or for its science, is in the highest degree absurd. The Bible is there for one reason and for one reason only. It is the book of a religion, of a sect, and it is there to serve the interests of that sect. And so long as we support the presence of the Bible, as the Bible, in the schools, so long, whether we know it or not, we are serving the interests of Sectarianism. This seems so plain that it is difficult to imagine anyone dull enough not to realize its truth. To speak of the Bible stretching back to the oldest nations in the world is sheer rhetoric, and false rhetoric at that. To say that children are humanized by the study of the Bible, is directly contrary to the facts, since in no school is the Bible ever used for that purpose. It may play a part, but only as any other book in the hands of a capable teacher plays a part. Dr. Huxley goes further, and speaks of it as the Magna Charta of the poor and oppressed, which adds one more absurdity to the tale. And to attempt to make the English people a "people of the Book," as is done in the passage commencing "this book has woven," etc., is to convert a chapel harangue into history. The Bible is a Christian "sacred" book in a Christian country. It is placed in the schools in a position of privilege. It is set before the children in a light that Huxley himself would have rejected. It is made the foundation of a teaching of religion that Huxley denounced as false. And the invention of a score of excuses to keep the Bible in the schools cannot remove the real reason why it is there. The Bible must be disestablished before it can be used in a rational manner. And when it is disestablished, we shall see the enthusiasm of the Churches for its literary and moral qualities disappear. They want it as a religious book or not at all.

\* \* \*

### The Bible and Literature.

What precisely is meant by this praise of the Bible as literature? And here we feel inclined to come to close quarters with a very common statement, one that is passed from hand to hand by all sorts of people, and accepted as many other things are accepted, because few have the courage or the inclination to subject it to careful examination. That the Authorized Version of the Bible contains much fine writing no one will deny. That its study is of value so far as it helps us to understand the intellectual character of certain of our ancestors, no one will deny either. But when all this has been granted the fact remains that the praise lavished on the Bible is not justifiable on the grounds usually assigned. Let us commence with the fact



that the Bible, as we have it, is in the nature of a growth, and a growth which represents the development of a special language that was written neither by the bulk of the great writers of English nor spoken by the people, whether they were literate or illiterate. Our Authorized Version was based upon preceding versions, and, in each case, the existing versions appear to have been taken as a model with only such additions and alterations as were considered requisite to carry on what had become, in a way, fixed as the message of the Bible. But the language of the Bible was not the language of general literature. It was not the language of Dryden, or of Shakespeare, or of Daniel, or of Sidney, or of Raleigh, or of Bacon, or of that group of translators who made the Elizabethan versions of foreign classics famous for their beauty and strength. In the case of Shakespeare his vocabulary outnumbered that of the Bible in the proportion of nearly four to one. The language of the Bible is not that of the reign of Elizabeth, nor that of James, nor was it that of any other period. And if anyone cares to take the Book of Homilies and the preface to the authorised version, and compare these with the Bible, they will see the justice of what has been said. In what way, then, can it be said that the Bible is a source of English literature? Great writers use expressions from it, but they quote as freely from the Italian, the French, and from the translations of Plutarch and the Latin classics. But to present English literature as being in any serious way inspired by or dependent upon the English of the Bible is monstrously absurd. The language of the authorised version was never spoken nor written generally by the English people at any period of their history.

Facts v. Sentiment. \* \* \*

Let us look at the matter from another point of view. Huxley's picture of the English people, from John-o'-Groats to Land's End, drawing their mental nutrition from the Bible, may go along with the following from J. R. Green's *History of the English People*. Writing of the early seventeenth century, he says the Bible—

formed the whole literature which was practically accessible to ordinary Englishmen; and when we recall the number of ordinary phrases which we owe to great authors, the bits of Shakespeare, or Milton, or Dickens, or Thackeray, which unconsciously weave themselves into our ordinary talk, we shall better understand the strange mosaic of Biblical words and phrases which coloured English talk two hundred years ago. The mass of picturesque allusion and illustration which we borrow from a thousand books, our forefathers were forced to borrow from one.

Thus is built up the picture of a people who were dependent upon a single book for practically the whole of their mental nourishment, and who came to regard that book as a part of their inmost lives. And the picture is quite false. How false it is will be realized when we bear in mind that (1) the authorised version dates from 1611, by which time the larger portion of the principal Elizabethan writings had appeared. (2) Some of the greatest writers show no traces whatever of Biblical influence. (3) As the great mass of the people could neither read nor write, either then or for two centuries afterwards, the picture of the English people soaking themselves in Biblical language and allusions is clearly absurd. (4) It is only for a brief period that Biblical phrases appear to have been current, and then only in the mouths of those zealous sectaries who were exerting some political influence. The fact that there was an opposition party which ridiculed this use of Biblical phrases shows that it could not have been common with the people. (5) That the ordinary Englishman had no other literature than the Bible open to him

is simply not true. The suggestion that each house had its family Bible, where it stood as in the traditional Victorian "parlour," and could have no other literature, is ridiculous. Other literature was as easily accessible as was the Bible, and one may venture the opinion that it was much more read. As evidence of this, we may note that the Stationers Company was formed in 1557, and one may assume that a society for the registration of books would never have been formed had they not been appearing in some quantity. Between 1570 and 1580 there were many editions of sermons published, and there were three editions of *Piers Plowman* from one press during 1550. Mr. J. Payne Collier compiled, in 1849, a couple of volumes giving a list of ballads, broadsides, romances, and other works, entered at the Stationers' Company between 1570 and 1587, which would really represent the literature of the general public. In 1587 a regulation was passed limiting the edition of any one book to 1,250 or 1,500 copies. Almanacs, herbals, etc., were plentiful, while it was said of ballads that they were so plentiful that "scarcely a cat can look out of a gutter but presently a proper new ballad is indited." And to the home publications we have to add those that were, for various reasons, published abroad. Over 500 printers and publishers of the period are known. In 1618 Taylor, the Water Poet, on the strength of his subscription list, printed no less than 4,500 copies of his *Penniless Pilgrimage*. Thus the picture of the English people deriving the whole of their mental sustenance from the Bible is as false as it could be. One day we hope to go into the matter more thoroughly, but we have said enough to show that the belief is just one of those statements that are given currency for very obvious reasons, and then are accepted as settled facts by people who never ask on what evidence the statement is based.

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The Citadel of Priestcraft.

On all counts, then, the praise of the Bible is unjustified. Even though the statements made concerning the Bible were true, they would not represent the reason why the Bible is in the schools, nor would they indicate the use that is made of the Bible. The children are given a false idea of the Bible from a religious point of view, and a no less false view from a literary and historical standpoint. And while that sort of thing is encouraged, all the talk of the evils of "priestcraft" is largely wasted effort. It requires little courage to denounce priestcraft. That has few friends even among the ranks of confirmed and convinced believers. It is the citadel of priestcraft that must be taken. And it is unfortunate that so many public men in this country should weaken the force of what they say and do by spending so much of their time and labour in disassociating themselves from definite attacks upon organized religion. Abroad, Huxley and Spencer, and many others, would have called themselves, and would have been recognized as, Atheists. Here they are anything but that. Abroad, holding the opinions they did hold, they would have attacked the central superstition without hesitation. Here they spend their time in finding an inner core of goodness in the thing they should be engaged in destroying. As though intellectual principles were no more than a matter of geography!

CHAPMAN COHEN.

PROVED BY THE PRAYER.

Mollie (aged six): "Oh! I say, do you know what my governess told me to-day? She told me that the world is round. Isn't that funny?" Dolly (aged six-and-a-half): "You silly! Of course the world is round; I could have told you that. That's why we say in our prayers, 'World without end.'"



## The Alleged Evidence for the Supernatural.

LAST week we criticized a sermon on "The Need of the Supernatural," by Dr. Feetham, Bishop of North Queensland. That discourse was remarkable for the entire absence of any attempt to present an intellectual statement of the Christian position, or to furnish the slightest evidence of the actual existence of the supernatural. Admitting that the trend of the world is away from the belief in it he proceeded, in the most dogmatic manner, to repeat again and again the bald assertion that continual gazing upon the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, would satisfactorily solve all the world's perplexing problems, and fill the hearts of men with seraphic peace and happiness. The right reverend gentleman, however, forgot two facts of vital importance, namely, that it is impossible to gaze upon that in the objective reality of which we do not believe, and that though the Church dominated the Western world for many centuries, professionally gazing upon the Holy Trinity all the time, the evils and wrongs of life remain unredressed, and the blessedness so confidently predicted delays its advent. The whole address was a purely emotional appeal to an emotionally disposed audience long accustomed to such treatment.

In the present article I propose to deal with another pulpit deliverance on the Supernatural, which is by the Rev. N. Farquhar Orr, B.A., B.D., of Stanley, Perth, and may be seen in the issue of the *Christian World Pulpit* for June 9. Mr. Orr's discourse is entitled "The Evidence of the Unseen," based on Elisha's petition on behalf of his servant: "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see" (2 Kings vi. 17). Unfortunately the text is taken from a Book steeped in myth and legend. At every turn we are face to face with alleged supernatural interferences in human affairs. We read of Elisha accomplishing all sorts of impossibilities, such as healing the waters of Jericho with salt, sprinkling meal upon poisonous gourds in time of famine to make them wholesome, feeding a hundred people on twenty barley loaves, making iron to swim, and restoring the son of the Shunamite woman to life. Such is the legendary stuff in the midst of which Mr. Orr's text occurs, and no doubt the prayer it records is as legendary as the rest. Yet the reverend gentleman utilizes it as the basis of a fanciful classification of mankind. He says:—

Elisha and his servant are types which represent for us two kinds of people. On the one hand there are those who are sensitive to the spiritual realities that are hidden from sight, whose confidence is in the secret forces which the soul discovers and from which it draws its strength. While on the other there is the man who is content to put his trust only in that which he can test or observe, who relies upon what may be called the matter of fact, the positive, the material. And it comes to be a question of great importance as to which of these types we represent.

That classification bears the stamp of antiquity upon its face and the snow of many ages has settled on its head; but it is as false as it is old. It is a metaphysical distinction without a factual difference. Mr. Orr candidly concedes that this is a matter concerning which each one of us should be fully persuaded in his own mind. Is there a realm in which God lives, and moves, and rules unseen by mortal eyes, and are there powers within ourselves which link us with that realm? Or should we be content with the amount of knowledge within our reach through the senses?

Very wisely Mr. Orr refrains from judging his fellow-beings who cherish views fundamentally differing from

his own, and with due modesty goes on to state the evidence for the supernatural which appeals to him as adequate. With equal frankness and good nature, I hope, I shall now analyse that evidence. The first question that arises is, does the material brought together by the preacher constitute legitimate evidence? Curiously enough, Mr. Orr, prior to the adduction of his so-called evidence, assumes its existence. The allusion to the challenge of Eliphaz to Job is altogether beside the mark, for what Job doubted was not the existence of God, but his justice, not the reality of the supernatural, but its moral integrity. And the supreme question is, not whether we can find out the Almighty to perfection, but whether there is an Almighty, findable in any degree or on any terms. Mr. Orr, following Eliphaz, takes it for granted that God cannot be known in all his fulness, and asks, "how then can he be known at all?" And here, again, he assumes the existence of the unseen, and inquires if the veil that divides it from the seen can be lifted. Then, assuming the existence of the soul, as an entity distinct from the body, he asks, "Is there soul sight by which men's eyes are opened to another world different from that which they daily perceive?"

At last we have reached the very heart of the subject. We are referred first of all to the evidence of the child. This is an exceedingly delicate point, needing very careful handling. Mr. Orr accepts Wordsworth's theory as stated in his *Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, and says that to repeat the line "'Heaven lies about us in our infancy,' is to utter not a platitude but a profound truth"; but I venture to affirm that the well-known line expresses neither a platitude nor yet a profound truth, but simply an interesting speculation. Plato, a greater man than Wordsworth, advocated a different theory, which is that our life in this world is a process of endeavouring to recover the knowledge we lost on entering into it. Wordsworth's theory is that our life in this world is a process of losing the knowledge which we possessed in our infancy. Both theories are vigorously contradicted by incontestable psychological facts. A child begins life with neither ideas, knowledge, nor intuitions, but with an organism capable of adjusting itself more or less fully to its environment, and this process of adjustment is at first and for several years extremely slow. As the organism develops, the area of the environment becomes extended, and the process of adaptation thereto goes on apace. By degrees memory and association make their appearance. Then follow ideational processes, the formation of ideas, images, and impressions; and every species of psychical development has its physiological counterpart in some slight modification of the substance of the brain. But what I am anxious to emphasize at this stage is that human life is simply the evolutionary story of the organism in direct contact with the environment, and psychology is the science that investigates all its activities from the cradle to the grave. Mr. Orr avers that "the coming of a child into the world may be taken as an 'intimation of immortality.'" On the contrary, birth is a certain intimation of mortality. In every life, from the simplest form to the most complex, there is an ascending scale followed inevitably by a descending scale. There is, indeed, something irresistibly fascinating about a child, admired by all alike; but the secret of that something lies in the fact that the child is displaying all the beauty and charm of the spring of life. The life of summer is generally fuller and richer, but lacks some at least of the natural joy of life so characteristic of spring; but summer is inexorably succeeded by autumn and winter; and winter in human life marks the end of individual existence, of which birth involves the prophecy.



Neither Plato's nor Wordsworth's theory is true to life. They are both metaphysical conjectures falsified by events. Has it never struck Mr. Orr as passing strange that it is so extremely difficult, as a rule, to infuse religion into a child's mind? Has he not noticed, in his own ministerial experience, how long it takes a child to form the habit of prayer, and if it neglects it for even a day, how easily and quickly it grows clean out of it? Has it never occurred to him to reflect upon the fact that, though children go to church and listen to sermonettes specially intended for themselves, and sing special hymns; attend Sunday-school, where they receive carefully prepared instruction in Bible subjects; and though in addition to all this, a certain amount of time is daily devoted to religious education in Government supported schools, yet so many of them decline, when grown up, to become Church members, or to take any interest whatever in religious movements? Despite all the assiduity of parents, clergy, and numerous qualified teachers, not a few of them actually adopt Atheism as the creed of their life. Besides, is it not on account of this difficulty of making children Christians that the Churches are almost prepared to sink their differences in order to offer their united and most determined opposition to the policy of Secular Education? The truth is that children must be persistently persuaded to believe in the supernatural, must often be punished before they form religious habits, and that after all many of them pass through the whole course without acquiring religious convictions. *What, then, becomes of the evidence of the child?*

(To be concluded.) J. T. LLOYD.

## Honouring Thomas Hardy.

In our fat England the gardener, Time, is playing all sorts of delicate freaks in the hues and traceries of the flower of life, and shall we not note them?—George Meredith.

MR. THOMAS HARDY has entered his eighty-first year, and representatives of every branch of art have sent birthday greetings to the veteran, who is the greatest living writer using the English language. After his early years of struggle, it is pleasant to think of the Indian summer of his age. Hailed everywhere as a master, he has had honours heaped upon him, from the Order of Merit to University degrees.

His present enviable position has been won after years of labour. Mr. Hardy's first published novel, *Desperate Remedies*, bears date as far back as the "seventies" of the last century. Since that time his reputation has been steadily on the increase until he occupies the proud position of being able to dispense with praise or blame. From *Far from the Madding Crowd* to *Jude the Obscure*, his splendid range of novels commands attention. The characters, too, from Bathsheba to Sue Bridehead, seem taken from real life. The heroine, as in *Two on a Tower*, who woos a lover younger than herself, is frequent in these novels and in real experience. She is almost ignored by the circulating-library writers, whose many books proclaim their industry rather than their ability. The women in Hardy's pages are not invariably charming, but they are entirely feminine, and their moods and whims are depicted by a master-hand. In his knowledge of "the concrete Unknowable," Hardy is as wide and as true as Shakespeare, and as modern as Meredith. He is no less successful with his male characters; witness Gabriel Oak in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Dr. Fitzpiers in *The Woodlanders*, Michael Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Angel Clare in *Tess*, or the hero in *Jude the Obscure*.

More than that, Mr. Hardy has sown broadcast over his works the most delightful, ironical humour. Not one of his rustics, of his working-class folk, but has a special originality, a native pleasantry, and a cast of drollery. Few writers have strewn over their works such abundant irony. In one of the greatest of his novels, *The Return of the Native*, the chapter in which he introduces the characters bears the heading, "Humanity appears on the scene hand-in-hand with trouble." In his masterpiece, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, the dramatic effect is heightened by the comment:—

"Justice" was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Æschylean phrase, has ended his sport with Tess.

He is indeed a master of the lash, as fertile as Heine, as detached as Gibbon, as acidulated as Renan. Mr. Hardy has been called pessimist, but there is no lack of comedy in his novels. *The Hand of Ethelberta*, that most whimsical story, is full of humour. *The Laodicean* is inspired with the highest comedy. *Far from the Madding Crowd*, written in his sunniest mood, is comedy of the highest. From the opening description of Gabriel Oak's smile to the ringing down of the curtain, it is a joy to anyone who possesses taste and perception enough to discriminate between a Molieresque humour and a riotous Charlie Chaplin farce.

Mr. Hardy is no less successful as a short-story writer. If *Wessex Tales* and *Life's Little Ironies* had been written by a Continental artist, they would have been acclaimed to the skies. They are as perfect as anything of Daudet or Maupassant, and reveal far more delicate and faultless work than any of the Russian writers.

What shapes arise as you recall Mr. Hardy's finest work? Not sawdust dolls, not shadows, but full-blooded creations moving in a living world, instinct with the fire of life. Where in all contemporary fiction is there nobler work than the poignant scene of the bridal night in *Tess*, or that other showing the dying Jude and the choristers, or the quiet figure of the bereaved girl in the closing scene of the *Woodlanders*, as wonderful in its way as Millet's *Angelus*? In these is struck the consummate tragic note, as in the pages of old Æschylus and our own Shakespeare. They wring the heart like individual experience. For they are life-sublimed by passing through an imagination of uncommon force.

The attentive reader cannot fail to note the essential Secularism in these admirable novels and stories. Even in the earlier books, amid their picturesque colour, their delightful atmosphere, their delicious pastoral scents and sounds, we find a frank Paganism. As the author advances in reputation and grows in intellectual power, the note deepens, until, in *Tess*, it grows into a cry of defiance, and, finally, in *Jude the Obscure*, a great sob of pain.

It is a further proof of Mr. Hardy's genius that he has also achieved success in poetry, no less than in prose, and as he gets older he turns more and more readily to the Muses, and writes with all the zest and enthusiasm of a young poet beginning his career instead of a veteran who has enriched the literature of Europe with masterpieces for two whole generations. His poetic work, *The Dynasts*, alone would have made the reputation of a lesser man. And, be it noted, his poetry has the same intellectual outlook as his prose. Humanity is limned against a remorseless background:—

Meanwhile the winds and rains,  
And Earth's old glooms and pains,  
Are still the same, and Death and glad Life neighbours nigh.

It is enough to-day to hope that Thomas Hardy may long remain our living Master of Literature.

MIMNERMUS.



## Science and the Occult.

### II.

(Continued from p. 390).

In a word, I have never yet in any land or with any medium or adept discovered any alleged occult manifestation that was not explicable upon a perfectly natural basis, which in the majority of instances could not be duplicated under precisely similar conditions. This, as the true believer would say, has been my misfortune; but there it is. So inherent is this hankering after the supernatural in human nature that many would much rather seek for a supernatural than a natural explanation of what may seem mysterious or out of the way to them. It is just this longing in human nature upon which these professional psychic frauds are preying to-day.—*Stuart Cumberland, "That Other World"; 1918; p. 17.*

PROFESSOR MUNSTERBERG arranged a scene at one of his lectures to test the powers of observation of his students. At the mention of a certain book, one of the students was to shout some remark, whereupon another student was to start up and shout, "I cannot stand that." A quarrel develops, ending with the firing of a revolver.

The students—who were not in the secret—were now requested to write down an account of what had happened, with the following result:—

The smallest number of mistakes gave twenty-six per cent. of erroneous statements; the largest was eighty per cent. The reports with reference to the second half of the performance, which was more strongly emotional, gave an average of fifteen per cent. more mistakes than those of the first half. Words were put into the mouths of men who had been silent spectators during the whole short episode; actions were attributed to the chief participants of which not the slightest trace existed; and essential parts of the tragic-comedy were completely eliminated from the memory of a number of witnesses.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Munsterberg gives a still more remarkable illustration of the fallibility of human observation in the following narrative:—

There was, for instance, two years ago in Gottingen a meeting of a scientific association made up of jurists, psychologists, and physicians, all, therefore, men well trained in careful observation. Somewhere in the same street there was that evening a public festivity of the carnival. Suddenly, in the midst of the scholarly meeting, the doors open, a clown in highly coloured costume rushes in in mad excitement, and a negro with a revolver in hand follows him. In the middle of the hall first the one, then the other, shouts wild phrases; then the one falls to the ground, the other jumps on him; then a shot, and suddenly both are out of the room. The whole affair took less than twenty seconds. All were completely taken by surprise, and no one, with the exception of the President, had the slightest idea that every word and action had been rehearsed beforehand, or that photographs had been taken of the scene. It seemed most natural that the President should beg the members to write down individually an exact report, inasmuch as he felt sure that the matter would come before the courts. Of the forty reports handed in, there was only one whose omissions were calculated as amounting to less than twenty per cent. of the characteristic acts; fourteen had twenty to forty per cent. of the facts omitted; twelve omitted forty to fifty per cent.; and thirteen still more than fifty per cent. But besides the omissions there were only six among the forty which did not contain positively wrong statements; in twenty-four papers up to ten per cent. of the statements were free inventions and in ten answers—that is, in one-fourth of the papers—more than ten per cent. of the statements were absolutely

false, in spite of the fact that they all came from scientifically-trained observers. Only four persons, for instance, among forty, noticed that the negro had nothing on his head; the others gave him a derby, or a high hat, and so on. In addition to this, a red suit, a brown one, a striped one, a coffee-coloured jacket, shirt-sleeves, and similar costumes were invented for him. He wore in reality white trousers and a black jacket with a large red necktie. The scientific commission which reported the details of the inquiry came to the general statement that the majority of the observers omitted or falsified about half of the processes which occurred completely in their field of vision. As was to be expected, the judgment as to the time duration of the act varied between a few seconds and several minutes.<sup>1</sup>

Many years ago I saw a trick performed which illustrates the fallibility of human observation. I was made to see something that did not really happen. It was performed by that very clever sleight-of-hand performer—the late Paul Cinquevalli. He held a pack of plain white cards and commenced throwing them very rapidly to all parts of the house. But the last one rose in the air and then melted away into nothing, leaving the audience with a look of blank amazement on their faces, asking one another where it had gone. I had not the slightest doubt that I had seen it leave his hand, like the others, but it had not. He had the card in his hand, and made the movement to throw it, and then he deftly "palmed" it, while he fixed his eyes on the gallery as if he had thrown it there. This was a case of suggestion. For by rapidly throwing a great many previous cards he had created an expectation that by executing the same movement the same result would follow. And, in fact, we completed the operation in our own minds and saw what really did not take place. If Cinquevalli had performed that trick during the Middle Ages, he would assuredly have been burned as a sorcerer.

As Professor Munsterberg truly remarks:—

The sources of error begin, of course, before the recollection sets in. The observation itself may be defective and illusory; wrong associations may make it imperfect; judgments may misinterpret the experience; and suggestive influences may falsify the data of the senses. Everyone knows the almost unlimited individual differences in the power of correct observation and judgment. Everyone knows that there are persons who, under favourable conditions, see what they are expected to see. The prestidigitateurs, the fakirs, the spiritualists could not play their tricks if they could not rely on associations and suggestions, and it would not be so difficult to read proofs if we did not usually see the letters which we expect.<sup>2</sup>

Mediums, like Slade, Home, and Palladino, are well aware of the weakness and fallibility of human observation. They are also good judges of human character, knowing instinctively whom they can deceive and whom they cannot. Home would never perform before sceptics, and if he could not get rid of them there was no phenomenon. At all the sittings given to the committee appointed by the Dialectical Society to investigate his claims to supernormal powers, upon which Charles Bradlaugh sat, nothing happened, and there was no one in the world Home would have been more pleased to convince than Charles Bradlaugh. But he dared not attempt it.

(To be continued.) W. MANN.

Two little girls, returning from Sunday-school, were discussing the progress they respectively had made.

First girl: "I'm past original sin."

Second girl: "O! that's nothing, I'm past redemption!"

<sup>1</sup> Munsterberg, *Psychology and Crime*, pp. 50, 51.

<sup>2</sup> Munsterberg, *Psychology and Crime*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>3</sup> Munsterberg, *Psychology and Crime*, p. 56.



## Some Recent Clerical Utterances.

IF we may judge from the public utterances of several clerical gentlemen up and down the country, the process of secularizing the clerical mind is developing at a considerable rate. It is true that not by any means have all the clergy got rid of other-worldliness. For instance, some remarks on the housing question contained in an address by a distinguished (officially) Army chaplain were published in the press recently. In the real spirit of Chadbandian unction he exhorted demobilized soldiers not to worry about the housing shortage as in a few short years they would have reached a land where the scarcity of houses need not trouble them. In our Father's house, he assured them, there are many mansions. The latter statement is, of course, impossible of verification. Even assuming its truth, we have no satisfactory assurance that when we *do* arrive at the other side of Jordan we shall find any of those delectable and desirable mansions to let. With the other part of our worthy chaplain's statement we are inclined to agree, though we are probably interpreting it in a spirit foreign to his reverence's meaning. We believe the housing requirements of the people *will* be quite effectually met after the people are all dead. Seriously speaking, the effrontery of this parson is amazing. "Live, horse, and you will get grass." "Die, returned warrior, and God will give you a house in which to live." One can understand what overpowering gratitude the houseless must entertain for consolation of this sort. The theory upon which men, like the aforesaid chaplain, base their gospel is that those who go without here will have everything made up to them in another life. In its present temper the democracy is not disposed to be cozened by the promise of postmortem happiness. This form of confidence trick has become rather stale. One curious point in the business is that none of God's representatives can tell us why it is that if he is able and willing to do so many things for the poor and downtrodden in the next world, he is so totally unable or unwilling to do it here. Can it be possible that with all their talk about the recompense that awaits us hereafter the clergy know no more about it than *we* do? But we set out to refer to the more secular-minded clergy, not to the antediluvians amongst them.

One gentleman—the Rev. Silas Hocking—bluntly says it is no use falling back on religion and telling people they will get their reward hereafter. Religion must be made something more than an insurance company. This seems a candid admission in itself. It implies, moreover, that adhesion to the Churches in the past has with many people been merely a policy of insurance. This is to say that the fear of death and of what may come after is the mainstay of religion, or, at any rate, has been so up to modern times. A sorry confession indeed! Many Churchmen are, however, not ashamed of making it. The Roman Catholic Church reckons it a strong count in her condemnation of cremation that this mode of disposing of the dead tends to destroy the fear of death which is the "great fulcrum of religion."

The utterance of the Rev. Mr. Hocking is not an isolated one. This note of recognition that in future the Churches must pay a little more attention to the improvement of conditions in this world than they have done in the past is being sounded with some frequency of late. Of course this attitude on the part of the clergy is not spontaneous. It is being forced upon them as the only alternative to losing the last remnant of their power and influence with the masses. The recent General Assembly

of the Church of Scotland was exercised over this very matter, and in his closing address the Moderator (the Rev. Dr. Martin, of Peebles), insisted that the Church must face the question whether it had no contribution to make or no real motive force to supply towards a solution of the problems that were confronting her. We do not hesitate to affirm that the Churches—as Churches—have no contribution to make and no force to supply towards a solution of the problems of civilization. Who, nowadays, turns to the Church for guidance in mundane affairs? The Moderator himself admitted that the chief difficulty of the Church was with a crowd who never darkened her doors, and regarded her as a negligible factor in human progress. Does he think to get these wandering sheep back to the fold?

In the opinion of the Moderator, not a few leaders of Labour and Socialism are firm believers in Christ's teaching. We have some doubt as to the firmness of the belief in many cases, but it cannot be denied there are Labour leaders who do not deem it politic to quarrel with Christianity. Dr. Martin consoles himself with the reflection that the former feud between science and the Church no longer exists. If this be so, it must be because the Church has retired from the contest. Science has withdrawn nothing. For sheer fatuity the final sentences of the Moderator would be difficult to equal. "It would be time enough," he said, "for the Church to shut her doors if, after having unfolded the treasures of the mind of Christ, they still failed to arouse the ear of the people." We rather fancy it will be necessary to appeal to more than their ears in time to come, though the people have been such patient asses all along that a clergyman may be pardoned for visualizing their aural appendages more clearly than anything else. The cream of the joke, however, is, that after having been at work for all these centuries, the Church is apparently now to begin unfolding the mind of Christ to the people.

At the same Church Assembly the Rev. J. B. Cochrane, of Dumfries, appealed for a better selection of children's hymns. The press report him to have said that to the child this world was a happy one. To bring a child into a Sunday-school, and make it sing "Here we suffer grief and pain," or "There is a happy land, far, far away," was absurd. They should emphasize the kindness of God. We agree that God's kindness needs a lot of emphasizing. Might we suggest the recent War as the most convincing modern instance of the kindness of God that could be put before children? Those of them particularly who have been left fatherless by it can scarcely fail to appreciate God's kindness. We also agree that it is absurd to ask children to sing hymns of the above type, but it is even more absurd to expect grown-up people to sing them. After all, as the writer can testify from personal experience, children sing such hymns as they say their prayers, in parrot fashion, not understanding them in the least; whereas adults presumably know the meaning of what they sing or recite, which makes their repetition of inane drivel all the more reprehensible. In the course of the same discussion the Rev. Dr. Fraser, of Edinburgh, had the courage to declare that too many of the Church Hymnary pages were "flooded with sentimental nonsense," and it is a pleasure once more to agree with a clergyman's strictures.

There was also some frank talking at the annual assembly of the United Free Church. One speaker said it was not now a question of whether Christianity would be able to overcome the religions of the East; it was a question of whether Christianity would be able in the near future to overcome the semi-Pagan civilization which prevailed over a large part of Europe. We think that few even amongst professional Christians can possibly pretend to see any likelihood of Christianity being



at any future time universally accepted by the human race. That used to be the expectation, but the chance of its realization becomes more exiguous with the passing generations. Of course, when the clerical fraternity speak of our civilization being Pagan or semi-Pagan, what they really mean is that it is non-Christian. This is just what it should be. All religions—Christianity included—are barbaric survivals, and as civilization is described in the Dictionary as the state of being reclaimed from barbarism, it should seem that in a really advanced stage of civilization Christianity would be entirely eliminated. Christianity we know, and civilization we know (in part); but there is no such thing as Christian civilization.

GEORGE SCOTT.

### Acid Drops.

Perhaps we are a myth, and perhaps the bulk of our readers are no more than a vision and our letter-bag a delusion. Something of the kind must be, because we see that on the authority of the Rev. Dr. Guttery there is less Atheism to-day than ever there was before; it is no longer a fashion, and is scarcely surviving. Therefore, if this parson is correct, we are living in the land of dreams, and our readers must be mythical. For we were under the impression that there were more Atheists to-day than ever, and on that topic we were more likely to know the facts than Dr. Guttery. Of course, it may be that Dr. Guttery does not meet these Atheists; it may be that he doesn't want to meet them; or it may be that he won't see them when he does. For the parsonic vision is a wonderful thing. It could see the power of Atheism in the mind of the religion-drunk Kaiser. It could also see the immense revival of religion among the soldiers—till the War was over; and then it was equally quick to see the power of "Materialism" over their minds. And now it can see that Atheism is dead. No wonder that Herder said Christian truth deserved to rank with Punic faith.

But, to be serious, we wonder on what Dr. Guttery bases his judgment? Does he argue that Atheism is dead because people are paying more attention to Christianity, or attending church more regularly, or looking to the power of prayer to help them in their social difficulties? And when was Atheism a fashion? That is a period of English history to which we should very much like an introduction. So far as we are aware, Atheism has never been a fashion, and the reason is that given by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, that not one man in ten thousand has either strength of mind or goodness of heart to be an Atheist. It has always required a considerable amount of moral courage to declare oneself an Atheist, and moral courage is precisely what the average man or woman lacks. But we are not surprised. At the moment the statement suited the sermon. To-morrow, when a different discourse is being delivered for a different purpose, we shall probably be informed that never before was Atheism so rife in the land, and people will be urged to be liberal with donations in order that the arch-enemy may be crushed. And the pious congregation will recall the fact that when two contradictory statements are presented to the mind, it is the duty of the good Christian to believe both.

During a thunderstorm at Island Derry, county Down, Ireland, two men were struck by lightning and paralyzed, and two horses were killed outright. At Mill Hill, a woman was struck by lightning, and was removed to hospital. At Mardy, Rhondda Valley, a mountain is in motion, and thirty-eight houses have had to be vacated, owing to the walls cracking. "He doeth all things well!"

The sufferings of the clergy are not so severe that they shorten their lives. The Rev. Owen Evans, a well-known Welsh minister, died recently, aged ninety. If Mr. Evans had lived in the days of Methuselah, he would have been trundling a hoop at such a tender age.

After four hundred years, the Holy Rood at Wells Cathedral has been restored as a War-memorial. This is unusually appropriate, for it means using one barbarism to celebrate another.

Bishop Furse says that "The Church is setting a very poor example to other employers of labour." Organists, choristers, and church-workers will recognize the pathetic truth of this candid statement.

The Rev. N. Farquhar Orr, of Stanley, Perth, is presumably a Presbyterian minister, and appends the degrees of B.A. and B.D. to his name; and yet, with the main facts of the Great War fairly well known, this is what he has the effrontery to say about it:—

Let us hope that the events of the last five years have taught the nations that the doctrine of the supremacy of material force is an exploded notion of the past. We cast no discredit on the brave when we say this. For in the end it is not the arms but the man who decides the issue. The invisible triumphs over the visible, the spiritual over the temporal, the Unseen over the seen. Already the grass grows over No Man's Land, already the weapons of war perish, already the bitterness of death is passed, but never, let us hope, will we forget how the hosts of the Lord came to help, how right and justice have triumphed through him.

Is it any wonder that church-going is so enormously falling off everywhere when preachers talk such arrant nonsense?

The Rev. Thomas Yates, of Kensington Chapel, is above the average of clerical efficiency, but, like every other supernaturalist, he is a stupendous believer. He believes in the Devil, who, working through and in conjunction with men, is stronger than the Almighty, and often succeeds in frustrating the Divine purpose in human affairs. Now, whence came the Devil? Clearly he is not man's creature, from which it follows that he is either self-made or God's creature. In either case, his existence proves that the much-vaunted sovereignty of God is a farce. Of course, Mr. Yates' teaching is perfectly Biblical, and on *that* score it is abundantly justified; but it stands utterly condemned at the bar of reason and common sense.

Mr. Yates says that when Shakespeare came "face to face with the possibilities and actualities of malignity in the heart and will of man," he was thrown back upon "the ultimate things." That is true, though not in Mr. Yates' sense. In neither *King Lear* nor *Othello* is religion recommended, directly or indirectly, as a remedy for the malignity and wickedness of such characters as Iago and Edmund, Goneril and Regan.

It would be a pity to spoil the following, from the *Liverpool Daily Post* of June 12, by any comment:—

Mr. Stewart Deacon was surprised when an Arab seaman was brought before him, yesterday, and charged with drunkenness. "He's a Mahomedan, is he not?" he asked. The answer confirmed the surmise. "Then does he not know that the sin of intemperance is forbidden by his own religion?" asked the magistrate stonily. The reply which filtered back through the interpreter scored a palpable hit. "Yes, he knows that, but he doesn't mind when he's in a Christian country."

A sidelight on the sincerity of the cry of clerical "starvation" is shown by a paragraph in the *Daily Graphic*: "Talking of the Lakes, what is the secret of their appeal to clergymen? Every other visitor this year is 'of the cloth.' In one hotel, out of thirty guests, there were two bishops and ten vicars—an array that quite eclipsed the remainder of the visitors."

Scarborough has a number of cafes open on Sunday, under the control of the Council. They are situated in the various beauty spots, for the convenience of visitors. An impertinent lot of religious busybodies, known as the "Free Church Ministers' Fraternal," has written to the Council, asking that these places shall be closed. The Corporation has declined to do anything of the kind. But it is a pity that the Corporation did not tell these nuisances exactly



what it thought of them. If these men had their way, life would hardly be worth living. Even the Christian heaven would become attractive in comparison with existence here.

The Papacy is very anxious concerning Zionism. The Pope, says the *Star* of June 18, would consider intolerable the oppression of other religions by a new Jewish State. Hear, hear! And we quite agree that if a religious State is established it would persecute whether it is called Jewish or Christian. Theocracies must persecute. As Heine said, of the deity and forgiveness, that is their trade. Fortunately the notion of a religious State being established in Palestine is a mere political dodge, and as likely to be realized there as in the moon. But the Pope protesting on behalf of the religious freedom of the inhabitants of Palestine! That is really enough to make the angels stare, and St. Peter to put on new spectacles. We are losing our bearings.

The list of speakers at the Anglo-Catholic Conference includes the name of Mr. G. K. Chesterton. Is he, however, an "Anglo"-Catholic or a "Roman" Catholic?

Rev. Principal Selbie writes to the *Times* that he is assured there are a large number of Nonconformists who are anxious to co-operate in securing some form of religious instruction in the schools that is acceptable to all who want the fundamentals of the Christian faith taught to their children. We do not doubt it. There has never been wanting large numbers of Nonconformists who were ready to sell all their professed principles for the sake of a sectarian advantage. And the Church has always known it. At any critical moment the Nonconformists could always be bought, and the more closely they became associated with politics, the less they were concerned with principles.

The mind of the average Town Councillor works in a fearful and wonderful way. The Ealing Town Council, for example, closes the public swimming baths on Sunday morning, but permits bands in the park, providing they do not play before 8.15—so as not to compete with the Churches. Strangest of all, the musical programme is to be submitted to the Borough Surveyor for his approval, and must not be varied without his consent. Now, we wonder why the Borough Surveyor? Why not the Medical Officer of Health? Perhaps the Council decided that the programme of music was something to be surveyed, and therefore fell within the Surveyor's office. It must have been the Ealing Council which rejected a proposal for a crematorium because it thought it had something to do with the manufacture of butter.

The frightful sufferings of the "starving" clergy make harrowing reading. Dr. Perowne, the Bishop of Bradford, says: "At Horton Hall we have no servants' quarters. The garden usually occupies three gardeners on full time. We do the work ourselves, with the assistance of a woman-gardener." And the Archbishop of Capetown is scarcely more fortunate, for he had the terrible experience, together with his wife, of being the week-end guests of the King and Queen at Windsor Castle.

When the Poles evacuated Kieff they destroyed the Vladimir Cathedral. The report it should be said comes from Bolshevik sources, but as the Moscow war reports have been invariably accurate—the only accurate war reports issued during the whole of the war—one feels inclined to accept the report as true. Having read this, we were on the look-out for tears to flow from the eyes of writers such as are employed on papers like the *Church Times*, who have so eloquently denounced the imaginary closing of Churches in Russia, and their destruction by the Bolsheviks. But its pages are silent, as silent as they were when it was made clear that religion in Russia was not suppressed and the churches had not been destroyed. The matter is an illustration of the hypocrisy of the press, and the credulity of the public. Presently, we have no doubt, we shall come across the destruction of the Kieff cathedral as a sample of the

barbarities that are committed when religion is disestablished.

Rev. C. Heughan is, we understand, the Labour candidate for Gorbals, Glasgow, at the next General Election. Speaking at the Parish Church, Mr. Heughan said he had come to the conclusion that the best way of directing the Church's energies into the midst of things was through the Labour Movement. Now that is a very enlightening statement. It discloses the real motives at work in Mr. Heughan's mind whether he is aware of them or not. Clearly he is more concerned with the Church than with anything else, and other things, including the Labour Movement, are of use only so far as they may serve to reinstate the Church. And we should like to ask members of the Labour Movement who are inclined to take a serious view of things whether they have in mind their Movement being used as an adjunct of the Churches or not. It certainly will be if it becomes crowded with men who are seeking through the Labour Movement to place the Church in the midst of things. Outside things is the proper place for the Churches.

What right has the Church, as an organization, to be in politics at all? None that we know of; and it is a monstrous abuse of things that it should be there. The members of churches have a right in politics only as citizens, not as Church members. As members of a religious sect they are outside, and to interfere in a corporate capacity is to reintroduce some of the worst abuses for which the Roman Catholic Church is famous. And it certainly says little for either the capacity of Mr. Heughan or of his Labour supporters for political thinking that he should use the statement criticized as an inducement to secure public support. That Mr. Heughan does not realize the implications of his statement does not improve matters; the underlying motive is there, and, sooner or later, it will work itself out in practice.

"The Bible was the cause of the trouble," said a woman at West London Police Court, who had charged her husband with assault. The woman stated that she told her husband to read the Bible, and he struck her. She admitted that she scratched the husband's face. The defendant was bound over. This is not the first time the Bible has caused a row.

Rev. Mr. Hayward puts it on record, in one of the religious weeklies, that during the past seven years the Free Church Sunday-schools have lost over a quarter of a million of scholars. We congratulate a quarter of a million boys and girls on their escape. We don't know how many of them will read these words, but that will not prevent their feeling the benefits of escaping the clutches of the clergy.

We are indebted to the *Times Literary Supplement* for the following quotation from Seneca:—

We put down murder and the killing of individual by individual. What of wars and the vainglorious crime (*gloriosum scelus*) of slaughtering whole nations? And yet such acts when done stealthily and by individuals are less harmful and less monstrous: atrocities are committed by decrees of the Senate and resolutions of the people, and what is forbidden as a private act is commanded as a public service (*publice iubentur vetata privatim*).

But then Seneca was a poor benighted Pagan. Had he belonged to a Christian nation 2,000 years later he would have realized that War was a school of virtue, and that our duty was to keep ourselves ready for "the next time," and would have found bands of boys being drilled in military fashion by churches and schools in order to accustom them to the committal of "vainglorious crime."

The Archdeacon of Rochester declares that the Cathedral authorities are financially embarrassed. To use his own words, "they have not a penny left with which to do even the ordinary repairs for the Cathedral." It seems to us that this is a matter particularly suited for submission to the Throne of Grace. And if ordinary prayer is not effective, a praying-barrel might be used.



## SPECIAL.

Until the end of June, and in order to bring the "Freethinker" into contact with a larger number of people, we are prepared to send this paper for thirteen weeks, post free, for 2s. 9d., on receiving names and addresses from any of our present subscribers. Subscribers are not limited to sending one address; they may send as many as they please. This offer applies only to those who are already subscribers, and is part of a general advertising scheme, having for its object the creation of a larger circulation and a more extended sphere of service. New readers who receive the paper for thirteen weeks are not likely to drop it afterwards.

## To Correspondents.

E. SMEDLEY.—We agree with what you say, but mental epidemics, such as Spiritualism, exhaust themselves sooner or later, and in these days, sooner rather than later. The War prepared a suitable soil, and the harvest has been reaped.

F. SMITH.—We do not know any book entitled *Freemasonry Exposed*, but the number of books written on that subject is very large. Hope to see you again in Manchester.

J. O. TREVOR.—Pleased to hear from a two year reader of the *Freethinker* of the pleasing impression the paper makes. We are sending on the *Freethinker* to the address given.

H. S. WISHART.—Received, and shall appear. Dr. Orchard's *The Outlook for Religion*, but the main admissions would have to be collected from the periodical press.

J. BREESE.—See "Acid Drops." We haven't any doubt but that he knows the *Freethinker*. Most parsons do.

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## Sugar Plums.

We have received No. 1 of *Korrost*, a weekly paper published in English in Vienna. It is typewritten, and from one item we see that the National Socialists in the Czecho-Slovak Parliament have introduced a Bill demanding the complete separation of Church and State, the confiscation of Church property for the benefit of the State, and the abolition of religious instruction in schools. The paper adds that "All the signs are tending to prove that this will be the ideal basis and platform which will unite all the parties and all the nationalities which to-day are yet opposing each other." The President of Czecho-Slovakia is himself a Freethinker. By the time the Continent settles down we fancy that religion will be seen to have lost heavily. Gods and kings will be at a discount.

The West Ham Branch of the N.S.S. is arranging a "Ramble" for Sunday, July 11. The train will leave Plaistow at 9.58 for Upminster, calling at Upton Park, East Ham, and

Barking (M.R.). The Secretary will meet the party at Upminster, and the route will then be through some very pretty country to Warley. Tea will be provided at Warley, but lunch must be carried by the "Ramblers." The return journey will be by different alternative rail routes, so that it will be advisable to take single tickets only. All Freethinkers and friends are cordially invited.

With reference to the letter published in these columns recently, asking that parties might be arranged for the purpose of visiting the British Museum, we are informed that the galleries which would be of special interest to Freethinkers are not yet open to the public. They were closed during the War, and as in so many other instances, things are taken away from the public with much greater haste than they are restored. But we are hopeful that something may be done in the matter when conditions are more favourable than they are at the moment.

We have still on hand a good supply of the slips advertising the *Freethinker*, and we should be pleased to hear from such of our friends as care to undertake their distribution. We could also send supplies of back numbers of the paper for the same purpose. Both methods help to get the paper better known.

Messrs. Macconnell and Mabe write:—

Dear Sir,—I enclose herewith cheque for advertisements. He is a happy man, isn't he, who gets best value for his money in that quarter where he most wishes to spend it? There is no paper in existence I wish to advertise in more than I do in the *Freethinker*, and, in my experience of seven others, there is no other journal that pays more than a tenth as well those wise enough to use its columns. I wish I could drive this into the heads of some more of your business readers.

Perhaps one day they will see it. It takes a lot to make a start, and most folk are very conservative.

We are asked on behalf of the new Leeds Branch of the N. S. S. to appeal to all Freethinkers in Leeds and vicinity to associate themselves with the organization. We hope the appeal will meet with the success it deserves. The district covered by the Branch is a very large one, and there is an opportunity for the building up of a large and healthy Society. The Branch meets at 19 Leatherhead Row every Sunday evening at 6.30. Mr. A. Radley is the Secretary.

## Two Lords and a Priest.

The Earl of Sandwich and Lord Beachamp are assisting in the preparations for a reception of starving Viennese children; the Bexhill what's-his-name is busy in proving that Christian love does not exist.

Most noble Lords, in spite of titles sound,  
When speech is praised, and promises abound  
To fill all ears, and herald the new age,  
Take this, our thanks, for action nobly done—  
Action that shines, as gracious as the sun  
On this torn earth, befouled by human rage;  
As Men you take these children to our land;  
Too noble for a priest to understand.

The priest is blind, his creed dries up his heart.  
Fie on this creed, that cannot cut apart  
The man from priest, and bid compassion flow  
To heal with service years of grief and hate  
To feed the hungry, ere it be too late.

Most noble Lords, you yet must teach the foe,  
The decent rules of life—that children sing  
That this priest cannot stammer—what a thing!

There are two stars that gleam on this dark earth,  
They hold the total of all human worth;  
Pity and Fairness are their simple names  
Unlearned as yet by skirted priests who bawled  
At bloody Mars—and for exemption called,  
To speak of God at home, to fan the flames  
Of Hate; my Lords, we mark your conduct well,  
Long may you live, in good deeds to excel.

WILLIAM REPTON.



## Labour and the Fisher Proposal.

At the end of March, Mr. Fisher, the Coalition Minister of Education, issued certain proposals for "settling" the "religious difficulty" in State-supported schools.

I have been waiting in the hope that, from some of the Labour leaders or from the great committees of the industrial and political side of the Labour Movement, some pronouncement on the subject would be forthcoming to which I could give my support. No such pronouncement has appeared. At the I.L.P. and B.S.P. Conferences at Easter, no "lead" was given. Up to date (June 21) Mr. George Lansbury has been silent in the *Herald*. At the Labour Women's Conference held in London four or five weeks ago, no "lead" (so far as I have been able to gather) was given to the delegates by Miss Mary MacArthur, Miss Margaret Bondfield, Miss Susan Lawrence, and Dr. Marion Phillips, the women leaders in the Labour Party.

On the day on which Parliament rose for the Whit-suntide recess, I learned from Labour M.P.'s that the party had not discussed the Fisher proposals. I regretted this, as I had hoped that the party would have given a "lead" to the various working-class conferences which met during Whit-week.

Does this long-continued and widespread silence in Labour circles mean consent? Certainly if the silence is continued up to, and during, the forthcoming Labour Party Annual Conference at Scarborough, Mr. Lloyd George (the Nonconformist leader) and Mr. Fisher will be justified in introducing into Parliament the promised Bill, embodying the ultra-clerical Fisher proposals. Acquiescent and characteristically feeble opposition on the part of the Labour Party in the Commons, coupled with a like attitude on the part of the High Labour and Socialist Bureaucracy outside Parliament, will enable the Government, with its "coupon" majority, to carry the measure triumphantly through the House of Commons. Mr. Lloyd George will be able to say to the Labour Party: "I thank you for not having done anything to bring the true nature of the Fisher proposals before the organized workers—and now you and I will show to the world that, although British, we can be logical, and support a Bill which, after all, is but the logical development of the clerical education legislation of 1902 and 1903, which you and I opposed, and to which we have both since capitulated—indeed, it might be said ignominiously capitulated."

Let me here, for the benefit chiefly of the large numbers of Trade Unionists and Socialists who read the *Freethinker*, deal with only two of the proposals. The first, that the various religious denominations are to have the statutory right to have their distinctive religious tenets taught at the public expense in Council schools, either by members of the staff who will "volunteer" for the work, or by specially trained outside teachers. (In the latter category clergymen would naturally be included.) The children in such schools would thus, for purposes of religious instruction, be grouped according to the "Faiths of their Fathers." This would require a "credal register." So that each child on enrolment would have its "creed" registered.

In ecclesiastical and other political circles, the "credal register" is well known to be the idea of Bishop Gore. It may be replied, "A very 'advanced' Bishop." After a long experience in education and international politics, I am rather sceptical about the "advancement" of Bishops, and I hold that a Bishop is never so dangerous as when he is "advanced."

The proposal for the "credal register" was sent forth some ten or twelve years ago. At many working-class

meetings, I opposed the credal system, urging the workers, if it became law, to fight it if necessary by "direct action" (withdrawing their children from the schools), and to refuse to submit to the ignominy of a religious test, either for teachers or for parents and children. What I said then, I repeat now, with added emphasis, in view of the growing strength of the forces of reaction (not excluding the Labour Party) in education politics; in view also of the great efforts in capitalist circles to divide Labour. The enemy are wise in their generation; they know the value of "atmosphere" in education, and they realize that, given in the schools during the plastic years of childhood, the element that divides is a SECTIONAL "ATMOSPHERE." Then, when the children grow to be men and women, they will not be so likely to unite in the combination necessary for the overthrow of those bulwarks of reaction, clericalism and militarism.

The other proposal to which I will refer is that the denominational schools shall be repaired and extended at the public expense, *while remaining the property of the denominations*. This, too, in spite of the fact that the forces behind the clerical education legislation in 1902 and 1903, powerful as they were, were not sufficiently so to save the managers of those schools from the legal obligation to keep the fabric of the schools in proper repair. The C3 condition of large numbers of those schools shows how the wealthy, and therefore politically powerful forces behind them, have been allowed to evade that obligation. What this will mean to the overburdened ratepayer in London alone may be gathered from a L.C.C. report, May 24, 1914, (No. 33), in which, covering forty foolscap pages, are the facts concerning 124 denominational schools in London (counting for an accommodation of 54,545 children). The facts, as officially given, reveal a disgraceful, disgusting, often nauseating, condition of things. Such schools are to be found also outside the London area. Why has Labour for so many years been silent on this scandal? and will Labour now consent to the repairing and extending of those schools being made a public charge while the schools remain the property of the denominations?

I charge the Labour organizations with being responsible for the condition of those schools. Why does not the London Labour Party take action? Further, many of the large Labour organizations have their headquarters in London, in expensive buildings (two in the fashionable region of Eccleston Square), and thus, being large ratepayers in London, are directly responsible for the degrading conditions in which tens of thousands of working-class children are doomed to be "educated" in the "Faiths of their Fathers."

The question arises, "When and whence comes the mandate for legislation based on the Fisher proposals?" Even Welsh "wizadry" will find it difficult to show that the mandate is more implicit in that of the 1918 election to "hang the Kaiser and make Germany pay" than was the mandate to destroy the School Boards in that of the khaki election of 1900.

Mr. Fisher informs us that the proposals were the result of discussions with persons representative of the various points of view concerned.

Was Labour represented at those discussions? If so, by whom? And were any guarantees given that Labour would acquiesce in the proposals?

If Labour was not invited to those discussions then, why not? Is it because no fundamental democratic principle differentiates the educational policy of the Labour Party from that of the Coalition Government?

Was Mr. Arthur Henderson invited? If not, then, again, why not? Is it because during his brief regime



as Minister of Education in 1915 he gave satisfactory proof that the denominational system had nothing to fear from him? Why has he, a leader in the world of Nonconformity and Labour, been so long silent on proposals which are an insult alike to Nonconformity and Labour? Mr. Henderson is President of The Brotherhood, a powerful organization, which, probably, includes thousands of adherents of the Labour Party. Will the members of The Brotherhood call upon their President to break his long silence on this question?

The *Freethinker* is widely read in mining centres. I am wondering what the Miner's Federation will have to say in this matter? The logical alternatives on the question of religious teaching in State-supported schools are "all religions or none." As to the latter alternative, the Trades Union Congress at Newport in 1912, following the "steam-roller" lead of the Miner's Federation, declared that never again should the "secular solution" be discussed at the Trades Union Congress. This decision was claimed by Mr. James Sexton, M.P., in the *Catholic Times*, as a victory for Catholicism, due to the hard slogging work within the Trade Union movement, by Mr. James O'Grady and himself, over a period of ten or twelve years. The miners said, "If we retain Secular Education in our programme the Federation will be rent in twain, and Catholic Trade Unions formed—we must not endanger the unity of our Industrial Organization." Will the miner's accept the other alternative: "All religions in State-supported schools"? Will they say: "Unity in our Industrial movement must be preserved, even at the price of theological sectionalism among the children of the workers"?

What will be the attitude on this question of the British Section of the International Labour and Religion Committee which is to be attached to the Labour Department of the League of Nations?

The British Section of this Committee consists of Mr. George Barnes, M.P., Mr. George Lansbury, Bishop Gore, Mr. William Adamson, M.P., and Mr. Frank Hodges. Can any of our Labour friends say whether this Committee has spoken on the subject of the Fisher proposals? How many of the members were invited to the discussions referred to above?

As a result of growing opposition, not in Labour, but in Liberal N.U.T., and Nonconformist circles, the proposals may just possibly be dropped. I submit that Mr. Fisher should not be allowed to withdraw from the fight, if the "dark forces" behind those proposals retreat now it will only be to advance later—the present is a bed-rock time suitable for a fight on bed-rock principle, a fight to a finish until a knock-out-blow has been given to the clericalism which is ever on the alert—watching for any opportunity to increase its already enormous power in our educational system until, in short, we realize the demand laid down in the comprehensive constructive education programme which, for many years prior to 1912, constituted the official policy of the Trades Union Congress for a national system of education under full public control, free and secular, from the primary school to the University.

Meanwhile the "Right" and "Left" wings of the Labour Party, the Trade Unionist and Socialist sections, must remember that it is poor business to give adherence to the watchword of the working class International—"workers of the world unite," and calling for cheers for the principle of "International Labour Solidarity," while by silence supporting a policy which would divide the children of the workers at home into theological camps in the people's schools.

(Mrs.) BRIDGES ADAMS.

(Late Labour and Secular Education Member  
of the London School Board).

## Booth on the Boom.

THE leaders of the Anglican community had better be looking to their laurels. If they are not very careful the Salvation Army's will soon be *the* religion of the Empire. According to the *War Cry* of May 22, the "General" is making a triumphal progress through New South Wales and Queensland. In Queensland, we are told, the Army has been fighting since 1886; and its flag flies higher in Australia than ever before. In the capital of Queensland there are about a dozen corps.

Our People's Palace—a large and handsome institution right opposite the Central Railway Station—is one of the most popular rendezvous in the city. Here members of the State Legislature may be seen at times rubbing shoulders (why not noses?) with the city worker or cattle station labourer.

Whether with his permission or not, there appears on the front page of the *War Cry* a portrait of the Governor General of the Commonwealth. All this is significant of much, even although on the editorial page of the paper we read that—

The maintenance of the principle that the Salvation Army is and must remain separate from the world is of the greatest public importance.....Public favour and strength of numbers have often been sacrificed by the Army in order to preserve this and other equally precious principles to maintain which soldiers as well as officers are fully pledged.

These be "prave orts" truly; but we have yet to learn that there is any principle of the Salvation Army so precious as to demand discrimination in the receipt of money. All is fish that comes to the net of the Army, and it will never worry itself about the sources of its financial support as some of the smaller, more reserved, and less noisy sects are in the habit of doing.

If, for the great good of the British people, a secular solution of the education problem could have been found sixty years ago, this fanatical compound of superstition, hysteria, and ignorance, the Salvation Army, would have been a thing of relatively small proportions. Just because the keys of knowledge have been withheld from the common people, the Army has flourished. The big drum and the frenzied appeals, *plus* the horrors of hell, remain for one-half of its constituents the power of God unto salvation. For the other half, labour colonies, emigration agencies, maternity homes, refuges, and shelters have been instituted. What can the educated and well-bred High Churchman think of it all? Public favour sacrificed, forsooth! The Salvation Army receives the benedictions of monarchs, governors, pro-consuls, and statesmen. We have always maintained that any public officer who parades his favour for one particular religious sect is guilty of a gross dereliction of duty. The strictest and most painstaking impartiality should be observed by him in his attitude to people of all creeds and of none.

The Salvation Army is a very astutely managed business concern, and its prosperity is evident from the fact that its highest officers and their suites can indulge in world tours at a time like the present—just like these peripatetic statesmen who have been peace-making successively at Versailles, Monte Carlo, and San Remo. What contribution does the Salvation Army make towards reconstruction? Our Prime Minister has implicitly confessed his Government's utter failure to cope with the housing question by his testimonial to the "Army" for its efforts in this direction. But what exactly is the work of the "Army" in this respect? It has been able to acquire on favourable terms and by endless cadging buildings of various sorts which have been turned into



lodging-houses. These are plastered over with glaring advertisements and a huge "Welcome!" over the front entrance. What are you being welcomed to? Simply to bed and breakfast at current market prices. It is only spiritual gifts that are without money and without price. When an "Army" officer has acquired an undoubted influence over a young person of either sex who has succumbed to the stock superstitions that young person can become a very profitable commercial asset in the labour market. It is to be noted that there is no scheme of higher education in literature, science, or art included in the policy of the Salvation Army. No, that would be a profitless affair. But in connection with the conversion of an "immense iron structure" at Rosyth into a "Naval Home," with forty bedrooms, readers of the *War Cry* are informed that—

Naval men at Rosyth need no longer want for a place to which they can go for cheap beds, good and appetizing food, the best comradeship, and reading and recreation of a wholesome sort.

State-recommended, boomed, and brayed about, it looks as if Messrs. Booth and Company, Unlimited, had acquired a monopoly in the lodging-house line! But what about the poor man whose tastes do *not* lie in the direction of blood and fire, brass lungs, cymbals, tambourines, and drums, or even the literature of the *War Cry*? It is not suggested that here and there we do not find morsels of entertainment in the columns of the *War Cry*, e.g.,—

Sold to a man in a public-house a *War Cry*, revived memories of a Godly home and saintly parents. The next night the same man was in another public-house trying unsuccessfully to console himself with more beer when he heard the Army band playing "Oh, the Lamb!" He straightway left his unfinished beer and went to the Hall where he sought Salvation and testified that he had found it.

"Jolly good ale, and old," is, evidently, no ally of the "Army." But stay. Is it not? In this same number of the "Official Organ" we read that at Edinburgh a man under the influence of drink entered a hall where twenty-two comrades were praying:—

For two hours the praying continued, and, then, without anybody speaking to him, the man came and sought salvation. He declared that as he was passing the Hall some mysterious power took hold of him, compelling him to enter.

The Holy Ghost had evidently caught him when he was on the right tack. From Hamilton is published a report stating that "A sacred influence pervaded the meetings. On Saturday night splendid crowds gathered and a drunkard came to the mercy seat."

The Salvation Army is certainly not bigoted in the matter of the choice of co-workers. Perhaps it would entertain an application from the Church of England, or the Church of Scotland, or even his Holiness the Pope. Any offers?

IGNOTUS.

#### BUDDHISM AND TOLERATION.

Throughout the long history of Buddhism, which is the history of more than half the people in the world for more than two thousand years, the Buddhists have been uniformly tolerant; and have appealed, not to the sword, but to intellectual and moral suasion. We have not a single instance, throughout the whole period, of even one of those religious persecutions which loom so largely in the history of the Christian Church. Peacefully the Reformation began; and in peace, so far as its own action is concerned, the Buddhist Church has continued till to-day.—*Rhys Davids, "Buddhism: its History and Literature,"* p. 116.

## Necessary Truths.

There must result at length a certain state of the brain and its functioning that seems to be the last result of a process of acquisition, experience, and heredity. Thus the individual cannot divest himself of these transmitted forms of thought, since they are inherent in the very organization of his brain.—*Buchner, "Last Words on Materialism,"* p. 65.

For if man is a product of Nature like all its other products, his relation to his environment must also be thoroughly natural and orderly; or, in other words, the outer world of Nature and the inner world of Mind must stand in a necessary and orderly internal relation to each other.—*Ibid.*, p. 290.

It is sometimes of great interest to review some old scientific or philosophical controversy of half a century or so ago, in order to see how it compares with our present ideas, and to estimate what progress, if any, has been made by human discovery or speculation in the interval. Such an opportunity is afforded by the well-known discussion between Spencer and J. S. Mill on the philosophical meaning of Necessary Truths—those ultimate and irresistible dicta of human reason which we feel compelled to accept as absolutely and universally true. The ground of the controversy between these two great thinkers (who held views so much in accord on other questions) lay, as everyone knows, in the fact that Spencer held the validity of Necessary Truths to be based on the innate constitution of our minds as derived from all ancestral experience; while Mill maintained that, despite their apparently transcendent certitude, they were all derived from individual experience, and differed from other generalizations of such experience merely in the fact that they were based on much wider inductions.

Though it would perhaps be premature to say that the question has been definitely settled, modern speculation seems inclined to pronounce in favour of Spencer's view, and the reason is not far to seek. Like so many other doubtful questions, this question has received no small measure of illumination from the great idea of evolution which has informed and lighted up whole regions of thought since Spencer and Mill wrote. And Spencer was pre-eminently an evolutionist, while Mill was not. The former, as we know, was absolutely saturated with the idea of evolution. The stupendous task to which he devoted his entire life was completely inspired by that idea, and he himself came very near to anticipating Darwin in the actual discovery of Natural Selection. Mill, on the other hand, was distinctly pre-evolutionist, and even Darwin's great theory seems to have aroused in him but a languid interest. He was the last great apostle of the "experiential" school of thought, and to this school the notion of innate ideas, of an intuitive element in reason, or of *a priori* truths seemed to be anathema. And we can see the reason for this since, in the absence of an evolutionary interpretation, the only explanation of such mental qualities would be a "supernatural" one, and this, to most of these thinkers, was logically barred. Under these conditions it might be supposed that Mill should have gladly welcomed Darwin's theory and the rise of a new evolutionary school, as affording a scientific way out between the opposing views of sheer empiricism and supernatural intuitionism. But it is not easy for a thinker who has spent all his life in following up a certain line of thought and expounding a definite philosophy to assimilate new ideas opposed to these; besides which, all the implications and consequences of the new



theories of evolution had not been fully recognized in Mill's time.

When we come to consider our modern views on this subject we seem to find that while Spencer was probably right as far as he went, he would have got still nearer the truth if he had gone further. But while Spencer was an evolutionist in science, he was unfortunately a dualist in philosophy. He divided all existence into two distinct spheres, the Knowable and the Unknowable, and between these two there was a great gulf fixed. Within the sphere of the Knowable the principle of causation ruled supreme, but who could say that it ever passed across this great gulf? Indeed, if you assumed that causation could bridge the gulf, then by that very assumption the idea of an Unknowable would cease to have any logical justification; it would cease to exist, and the two spheres would become one. This is the Monistic view. If, as there is independent reason for believing, all existence be one and undivided, causation must operate through the whole of it, and mind is but a phase or function of reality. Hence to the Monist the phenomenal world is not a mere phantasmagoria of the real world, and a necessarily distorted one at that (see Spencer's chapter on Transfigured Realism in the Psychology), but is itself a revelation of the real world which it is the task of science to interpret. Hence, too, as a function must be conditioned and limited by the nature of that which functions, so the ultimate laws of thought are conditioned, limited, and necessitated by the ultimate nature of reality. They must, therefore, be *true*, for a function of reality itself cannot but be real and true if the terms "reality" and "truth" are to have any meaning at all. And this, according to Monism, is the basis of Necessary Truths—a foundation of bed-rock firmness compared with the shifting sands of mere individual experience.

Spencer found this basis in the inheritance of organized nervous structures wrought out of the accumulated experiences of the human race, but there seems to be no reason to stop here. Monism, drawing no distinct line between human and pre-human evolution, follows the process back to the very beginnings of life. Indeed, it goes further still, for drawing no fundamental distinction between the living and the non-living, or between the mental and the physical worlds, it is free to seek the basis of these ultimate conceptions in the very organization of matter, and to follow the search to its final goal in the primal nature of reality. The ultimate existence, functioning in time and space, must function in accordance with time and space conditions, and in the earliest gleam of consciousness, as it awakens in the earliest forms of sentient protoplasm, must function in accordance with such pre-existing conditions—must express itself under a definite, determined, and necessary order. And as sentiency advances through all its stages of structure and function from the earliest speck of protoplasm to the developed brain of man, it continues ever under the control and guidance of the energy functions of matter, it must develop in accordance with the ordered process of reality, and hence its fundamental elements—its raw material, so to speak—must exhibit the characteristics of necessity and of truth.

(To be concluded.) A. E. MADDOCK.

## Notes From Ireland.

*St. Anthony's Annals, Little Flower Monthly, The Cross, Irish Rosary, Calvary, Irish Catholic, and Freeman's Journal* are a few of the religious papers published in Dublin. Collectively, their circulation is something immense. I'd nearly bet that in the whole of Catholic Ireland there aren't more than 1,000 families that do not take in at least two of them. Every one of them bolsters up the nation's belief in the multitudinous crucifixions of "the sweet-souled Saviour of a man-tormented earth." But perhaps this ugly cult won't rule the roost much longer. As it is, signs are not wanting that the probability of success attending Sinn Finn endeavour is already causing uneasiness in clerical quarters; for it is beyond doubt that, when the political question is solved, the people will see clearly the infamy of supporting thousands of bald-headed monks and tens of thousands of priests, and will comprehend the witless barbarity of nunneries. Meantime, however, what a pity our guns aren't levelled at bishops instead of at policemen, at cathedrals instead of at police-barracks!

All our Catholic secondary schools are run by the clergy. What do you think of the Holy Ghost Fathers? Not a very frisky name, I admit; still, I expect that the boys of Rockwell College could tell some fine yarns about the frolics of these same bits of ghostly rotundity. Again, take Castleknock College. The president, vice-president, bursar, prefect of studies, dean, and seven of the masters are all priests; the dentist, physical drill instructor, and gardener are not.

I have often tried to imagine heaven, but could never get further than a sunset. One thing is, I think, fairly certain, anyway: its pavement is heaped with piles of diamonds, beryls, sapphires, and such, while God himself is hardly likely to be less than a great whopping big bloodstone. (This is quite reasonable; I am dead serious.) Well, I attended Mass the other Sunday. I was in the penny seats. You should have seen and felt the crush in the poorer parts of the house! The people were as closely packed as the hairs on some women's heads. I looked at the man next to me. He was mumbling incoherently, and holding beads, brownish beads, so that his eyes could rest upon them, while his face was glum with the remembrance of thousands of sins committed during the previous six days; there were even visible the tracings of murder, for he knew that he had had a hand in the killing of Christ two thousand years ago, and every day since. He was a fair specimen of the whole crowd.

It is great fun to eye a priest minutely and from as close a range as possible. Immediate proximity is not always obtainable as the middles of their bodies are usually somewhat puffy. I went the round of one such a short time ago. For a waistcoat he had an exquisite satin business as large as the sail of a yacht; the undulations were correspondingly big. His nose was like a thing that wasps would settle on; his face was the usual holy miuce. This creature swept along the pathway—our priests rarely use carriages or motors; too expensive—with the airs of God and looking for all the world like a two-legged pig upon a park drive. And all the populace doffed their hats to him, and saw not his stomach for his collar! I looked after him in order to chuckle the longer at his magnitude. 'Twill be a great coffin that will hold him and his likes—but a nation can build anything.

"I say, you've dropped your trinkets," I called after a woman some days ago.

"Trinkets!" she snorted, as, with a mighty flourish, she bent to pick up her rosary beads.

DESMOND FITZROY.

The human being has the saurian and the plant in his rear.—Emerson.



## Correspondence.

## AN INVITATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—May I take this opportunity of offering my services to any Freethinkers who may be passing Madeira, and who may be landing during the steamer's stay here? I should be very glad to make their acquaintance and helping them. I can always be found at the offices of Blandy Brothers and Co.

Perhaps Freethinkers in other parts of the world will also place their services at the disposal of travelling Freethinkers. Let us form a Freemasonry of Freethought.

If all Freethinkers would wear the pansy badge of the N. S. S., it would be the cause of many introductions.

Madeira.

A. H. PALMER.

## CHURCH AND LABOUR.

SIR,—I think no Freethinker will deny there may be some clergy who are sincerely concerned for the working class. The vicar of Haggerston may be such a one. But what the Freethinker can deny, with the record of the Church and the bench of bishops before him is, that no man really desiring to benefit the workers, possessing sincerity, united with intelligence, can remain in the Church and draw from it substance. The Church is an integral and essential part of a social system based on an iniquitous land monopoly. The source of all social misery and evil. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners own 250,000 acres of land, including coal mines, slum tenements, highly valuable city and rural sites, the birthright of the people, of which they are dispossessed, which the labour of the workers every day makes more valuable. But the workers do not take the value; it is drawn from them by the Church in the form of tithes and rents, to keep 50,000 odd men and their dependents in luxurious comforts, condemning the workers to a life of laborious toil. It is a tragic pity that Driver Griffiths allows the tinsel glory of reading the lessons to obscure these simple truths for him. What is there in the "lessons" to work a radical social reform?

M. B.

## COMMERCIALISM AND LITERARY CRITICISM.

SIR,—Will you allow me a word of protest against the contemptuous reference of my friend Mr. Repton to the *Times Literary Supplement*? I am sure I cannot detect the unpleasant note of commercialism in what I have always looked upon as a valuable guide to current letters. To me its judgments appear alike independent and scholarly; but naturally I have not the inside knowledge which, I have no doubt, has urged my friend to throw the weight of his opinion against the paper. Yet, from the standpoint of a modest literary outsider who has at times the opportunity to check the journal's criticisms with the books reviewed, I cannot but think that Mr. Repton's imputation is as wrongheaded as it is hasty. I don't agree with him that the *Supplement's* notices are written with an eye to advertisements or sales, the only meaning I can attach to "commercial." After all, perhaps, it may be merely a prejudice that my friend has against the *Supplement*—the irrational dislike, say, of Dr. Johnson for Dr. Fell. He no doubt prefers the literary principles of *The New Age* and *The Venture*, and has just picked up the handiest brick to throw at something he doesn't like. Every journal that is not given away must be run on more or less commercial lines, and, for my part, I cannot see why a paper that pays for its articles, gets advertisements and good sales, is more commercial than one that does not pay, has no advertisements, and meagre sales.

GEO. UNDERWOOD.

## "THE JESUS MYTH."

SIR,—Kindly permit me to say, in reply to the letter of J. B. S., which appears in the *Freethinker* for June 20, that it would be no use my discussing the question as to whether the "Gospel Jesus" were a "Clairaudient" or "Theomaniac" until the historicity of the "Gospel Jesus" is proved.

The statement of J. B. S. that "there is sufficient *intrinsic* evidence in the narrative of Jesus of Nazareth to warrant the conclusion that the Evangelists were biographers who recorded what they saw happen, and, apart from miracles of birth and life, that they have recorded a true history of a personality who lived and died about the period recorded" is not correct, if by "narrative of J. of N. he means the Gospels." It is because there is no intrinsic evidence for the historicity of the "Gospel Jesus" that there is so much dispute; and it is precisely because there are so many "miracles of birth and life" in the Gospels that they must be denied all value as biographical documents. Delete all the miracles from the Gospels and what is there left? Nothing upon which to build up a reliable biography.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on postcard.

## LONDON.

## INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, Right Hon. John M. Robertson, "Industrial Ethics."

## OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 6.15, Mrs. H. Rosetti, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.30, Mr. E. Burke and Mr. Maclaren.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, A Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. W. Thresh, "The Fallacious Claim of Spiritualists."

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Mr. Samuels: 3.15, Messrs. Baker, and Ratcliffe. Every Wednesday, 6.30, Messrs. Saphin and Hyatt.

## COUNTRY.

## INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Clarion Fellowship Hall, 24 North Portland Street, off George Street, City): 12 noon, H. C. Mellor, Conference Report; also preliminary arrangements for next Lecturing Season.

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

PLYMOUTH AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (Room No. 7, Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus): Thursday, July 1, at 8, Mr. G. McCluskey, A Lecture. Plymouth Freethinkers please note.

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