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Views and Opinions.

An Old Maxim.

All of us have been told in our youth that honesty is the best policy. In a large and general sense the maxim expresses a truth. Given time, truth will triumph over falsehood, honesty over dishonesty. The dice of evolution are loaded to make it so. Ultimately, as Spencer pointed out, there must be a coincidence between actions which produce pleasure and those which promote life, since in no other way could life be perpetuated. But, meanwhile, exceptions to the rule are not difficult to find, and they give one "furiously to think." If we do not always see the wicked flourishing like the green bay tree, we do see a number of them getting through life with a tolerable measure of comfort. The wicked often wear fine raiment while the virtuous sit in rags. The successful swindler flaunts his success in the light of day while his victim hides himself from the public gaze. Triumphant rascality, having acquired wealth, retires on its laurels, and ends life in an atmosphere of unctuous respectability. Parsons preach lengthy sermons over the body of the pious millionaire, and hurry the corpse of the poor man away with a stereotyped service that betrays an obvious desire to be done with it as quickly as possible. If it is as difficult for a rich man to get into heaven as it is for a camel to get through the eye of a needle, one can only suppose that the camels must be of a microscopic size, or the needles of a kind that could be used as flagstaffs should occasion arise.

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A Question of Values.

But when people talk about honesty being the best policy, they appear to have, in a Christian country, little more in mind than the cheaper, commoner forms of dishonesty, which, when all is said and done, is not of a very serious description. They have in mind the dishonesty that consists in the stealing of a watch, or the non-payment of a debt, and with that their concern seems to stop. It never appears to dawn upon them that beyond this religion of malpractice there exists another of a far more serious nature. Measured by results the profession of beliefs that one knows to be false, the refraining from speaking the truth as one sees it concerning certain institutions, are far more disastrous than what one may call commercial dishonesty. The wrong inflicted by the stealing of a watch or a purse

stops with the action, or, at least, it does not extend beyond a very limited circle. But the man who tampers with truth, who conforms to established beliefs because he wishes to stand well with his fellows, is helping to lower the whole moral tone of society. It must, indeed, be always true that the worst forms of wrongdoing are beyond the reach of the law. Against the thief or the murderer society can always protect itself. The attack is open and invites reprisals. The greatest social danger must always come from those who, while breaking no written law, are daily and hourly outraging those principles upon which the higher life of society depends * * *

Minorities and Opinions.

Happiness, said Spinoza, is not the reward of virtue, it is virtue itself. To one of Spinoza's serene detachment of mind the consciousness of doing right would be enough. But all are not cast in this heroic mould, and with the mass the knowledge that the world looks down upon certain opinions, and even punishes their profession, is enough to sap character in many ways. And even more surprising than the fact that society should pursue this suicidal policy, is the almost general conviction that one must expect it to be otherwise. From the time of Socrates to our own day it has been so much the custom for mentally honest people to suffer for their opinions that the majority see nothing wrong in it. Indeed, if one may judge from the way in which it is quietly assumed that the minority *must* suffer, or that genius must expect to be misunderstood, it might almost seem a beneficent act of Providence that it should be so. Meanwhile, the majority treat those who are inclined to stand by their opinions with a contemptuous pity, and a hardly disguised admiration for their own superior astuteness in pulling with the tide. Society is always more tolerant towards its intellectual cowards than it is towards its intellectual heroes. It is even fixed as a canon of good taste that established beliefs should not be rudely disturbed, and one need not search far for instances that to do so is clearly regarded as the very worst of judgments. That the unbeliever *will* risk material well being for an opinion is something that the average Christian cannot in the least understand. He could understand it easily enough if the Freethinker believed in a future life where he would reap the consequences of his profession here; but to believe in this life only, and to risk comfort and position in propagating an opinion, seems to him the very acme of midsummer madness. In sheer despair of understanding so un-Christian a phenomenon, the Christian falls back upon the policy of depicting the Freethinker as a compound of fool and knave with the latter predominating.

* * *

As We Have Sown.

Now, in all this we are only reaping what centuries of Christian rule has sown. Its whole tendency has been to breed an inferior mental type. Christians have written hundreds of volumes, full of more or less

truthful records of their own alleged martyrs, but the contemplation of these records has never yet led them to appreciate the value of an independent opinion. The effect seems to have been wholly in the other direction. In the whole of Christendom there is not a single Church that really loves an independent thinker. Present conditions are such that some degree of toleration must be exercised; but the principle of childlike faith is still held up as an ideal, and an unintelligent conformity still largely illustrated in practice. And that reacts with disastrous consequences on our public life. The Christian world does not ask to-day that a public man shall not have opinions against Christianity; that would be too much to ask. But it does say that he shall keep them to himself. It raises no objection to the hypocrite; its thunders are reserved for the honest man. And yet it is the avowed Freethinker who is giving the world an earnest of his honesty. No one can be sure that when a man calls himself a Christian he is honest. He may be, but the profession carries no proof. A guarantee of sincerity comes only with the advocacy of a popular belief, and Christians still see to it that a profession of Freethought shall carry with it that assurance. It tries to make the path to preferment lead through the Church, and it is confident that, with the type of character it has helped to cultivate, the road will be attractive to most.

* * *

A Disastrous Policy.

The whole policy of Christianity, carried out by bribing, threatening, burning, imprisoning, or boycotting, has resulted in putting a tax upon honesty and a premium upon mental cowardice. Whether this has been aimed at consciously or not matters very little; the result has been the same. For every saint that Christianity has developed, the Christian Church has made a score of hypocrites. Its one aim has been to secure conformity, its one fear independence of thought. And by striving, through the means adopted, to secure conformity in religion, it has helped to demoralize the whole of our social life. The figure of the mind as being split up into a number of water-tight compartments is very misleading. The brain functions as a whole, and the qualities of courage and honesty when discouraged in one direction are more or less discouraged in all. No man is likely to be more honest in politics because he has been dishonest in religion; he is far more likely to display the same characteristics on both fields. Mankind in the average will be honest as they will be anything else—if the difficulties in the way are not too formidable. Society reaps as it has sown, and it cannot take to itself a religion such as Christianity without paying the price. Hitherto society has gone upon the plan of making it unpleasant for the man who valued intellectual honesty before all things, and if we are to reverse that vicious practice it can only be done by reducing to impotence a religion that has always treated intellectual independence as the greatest of crimes.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM.

Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,
Have oftentimes no connection. Knowledge dwells
In heads replete with thoughts of other men;
Wisdom, in minds attentive to their own.
Knowledge a rude, unprofitable mass,
The mere materials with which wisdom builds,
Till smoothed, and squared, and fitted to its place,
Does but encumber whom it seems to enrich.
Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much;
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.

—Cowper.

“What the Church Stands For.”

DR. CHARLES GORE has filled many offices and played various parts during his public life. Forty years ago he became Vice-Principal of Cuddesdon College, and four years later Librarian of the Pusey Library at Oxford. Twenty-seven years ago he was appointed Vicar of Radly, and a year later Canon of Westminster. For a time he was Chaplain-in-Ordinary to Queen Victoria, and afterwards to King Edward. Eighteen years ago he was elevated to the Episcopal Bench, becoming successively Bishop of Worcester, Birmingham, and Oxford. He is a learned theologian, and has published several books—well known and highly prized in the theological world. He now lives in retirement, but is still active as a preacher and as one of the leaders of the Catholic Party in the Anglican Church. He is also an ardent and courageous advocate of the most radical social reforms. Well versed in ecclesiastical history, he is highly qualified to speak with authority about the Christian Church. And yet, preaching in Westminster Abbey the other Sunday on “What the Church Stands For,” he was forced, from his knowledge and experience, to admit that the average man of to-day does not know what it stands for. The Anglican Church has been in continuous existence in this country for fourteen hundred years, with cardinals, archbishops, bishops, deans, canons, archdeacons, and countless parish priests doing their utmost to put its claims and achievements in order before the people, and yet Bishop Gore sorrowfully admits that “if you ask the average man to-day what the Church stands for, perhaps he is puzzled to answer you.” How utterly absurd, how absolutely untrue, it therefore is to assert that the Church has conquered and won Great Britain, when the average man is puzzled to tell what it means or wants to accomplish.

Dr. Gore pokes fun at the average man and his wants, saying:—

I read a great many recommendations to the Church, some of them based on the experiences of the War, and from these recommendations I gather that what every one of the clergy ought to do is to find out what the average man wants and preach it to him. Well now, I want you first of all to consider this: that that is not the way of God in guiding us into truth and goodness, but the contrary way. There is, I suppose, no literature in the world which pays so little regard to majorities as the Bible. It guides men in the way of redemption, in the way of becoming that which they are capable of becoming; it guides them to the best. Therefore, it lays stress upon, it deals with, the best.

At this stage the Bishop imparts to us his views on the subject of election, his main contention being that election in the Bible is not synonymous with favouritism. But let us consult the records. In Deuteronomy xiv. 2, Israel is thus addressed: “Thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.” This was a choice based, not upon the superior character of the chosen, but upon the sovereign will of the chooser. It was an act of pure favouritism, and, according to the Bible itself, it ended in a tragic failure. Jehovah is represented as ultimately repenting that he ever made such a disappointing and disastrous choice, and as rejecting his own elect. With superlative *naivete* the good Bishop selects an illustration which only proves what an awful farce the election eventually turned out to be. By the time Jesus came, God’s elect were so dominated by national pride and political ambitions that they could pay no serious heed to the demands he made upon them, with the result that they rejected and killed him, and that, subsequently,

God cast them off and sent them as wanderers to the ends of the earth. Their very nationalism destroyed them. The mass of the Jewish people fell away from God's beloved Son, and would have none of him. Then Dr. Gore propounds this illuminating question:—

Have you ever thought of the awful and astonishing fact that our Lord knew that what I must call the severity, as well as the graciousness, of his message was making the mass of his countrymen worse, rather than better?

The curious thing is that at the back of the right reverend gentleman's mind lies a great and undoubted truth, namely, that majorities are seldom right; that the true social reformers have always been rebels against existing evil conditions, tyrannized over by the privileged classes; or, in the Bishop's own words, that "the great moral forces which ultimately have moved men have proceeded from smaller groups of people, desperately in earnest, prepared for great adventure, giving all for all." This is an absolutely incontestable truth of history; but it is not in any degree whatever a truth for which the Church has ever stood. It has been its invariable custom, since it came to power under Constantine, to crush minorities with the most brutal cruelty. We hear and read a great deal just now about a reign of terror in Russia under an extreme Socialist Government, which is said to be the outcome of the Atheistic views held by those in power; but have the Christians forgotten the long and gruesome story of a much worse reign of terror in Russia when the Greek Church was supreme in that sad land; how the prisons were always overcrowded, and how typhus decimated the poor prisoners, most of them untried; how in 1908, for example, there were from four to fifteen executions every day, and how in the first three months of 1909, the executions totalled 235; and how men and women were sent to Siberia in their thousands for daring to utter a word against the horrible tyranny of Church and State? Has his lordship never read *The Terror in Russia*, published in 1909 by the Parliamentary Russian Committee, or Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, both of which show conclusively that Russia under the Bolsheviks is no worse off, to say the very least, than it was under its Christian Emperors? But what the Eastern Church stood for in Russia, that the Western Church, in all its forms, has stood and still stands for wherever it has had the power. It has stood for intolerance and persecution, as its records, prepared by its own sons, abundantly prove.

Bishop Gore attributes views and opinions to Jesus which are not found in the Four Gospels, views and opinions, that is, which happen to be his lordship's own. For example, it is not reported in the Gospels that Jesus "would most of all rebuke that silly notion that it does not matter what a man believes, so long as his life is right." Well, does the Bishop really think that it does matter so very much? Once upon a time a prominent Wesleyan asked Henry Ward Beecher, "What objection have you to our theology?" "None whatever," replied the great preacher, "except that you are excessively loyal to it. For example, your teaching includes falling from grace, and your people practice it with a vengeance." Now, if certain people who cherish beliefs which the Bishop would pronounce false, yet succeed in leading highly noble and useful lives, what harm do the false views do to them? That there are such people is beyond doubt, the only doubt being whether the Bishop's estimate of their beliefs is correct. We are convinced that he is mistaken. He speaks in the name of Jesus:—

Our Lord knew that in the long run, in spite of all the strange inconsistencies which you see in individuals and

in classes between their nominal beliefs and their real lives, yet in the end how men behave one to another will depend on what they believe about God.

Whatever "Our Lord" knew, he never gave expression to such a notion, which is as false as "that silly notion," so vehemently denounced by the preacher. Whilst practising the most fiendish species of intolerance and persecution the Church believed and taught that God is love. That belief had no effect whatever upon its treatment of minorities, nor did it exert the least influence on the attitude of Jesus towards his enemies, especially the Scribes and Pharisees, whom he cursed in the wildest, bitterest, most stinging terms at his command. Indeed, the Bishop almost contradicts himself when he states that "what our Lord taught was not a certain abstract doctrine about God, which men might apprehend intellectually, and afterwards might or might not apply in their lives." Then he adds:—

No, it was the opposite. What he taught them was a life, a life involving a doctrine, based upon a doctrine, no doubt, but first of all a life.

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

The Dust of the Drama.

Authors who have influence are merely those who express perfectly what other men are thinking; who reveal in people's minds ideas or sentiments which were tending to the birth.

—Joubert.

THE recent popularity of attempts at dramatizing the lives of great men and women adds a new terror to death, for few such attempts have been made with knowledge and sympathy. In such instances as *Abraham Lincoln* and *Pasteur*, there was much that was incongruous, but the grotesque treatment of a great writer in *Madame Sand* showed a painful absence of understanding. Liberties were also taken with the other "immortals," Alfred de Musset, Heinrich Heine, and Chopin. Even poor Pagello was dragged from the tomb. Never before in one play was there so reckless a presentation of caricatures of famous folk. Nor was it kindly done. To put these people solid on the stage, to turn them into comic creations, to make them, French, German, Pole, and Italian, alike speak lines of the most fulsome and fearful sentiment, couched in the rich American language, was an artistic outrage, and a libel on the illustrious dead.

"George Sand" was a really great writer, and she should have been beyond the reach of vulgar buffoonery. Long ago, Sainte-Beuve, the prince of critics, placed her at the head of the then living French writers. Gustave Flaubert, a most fastidious author, addressed her as *chère maitre*. How far "Madame Sand" deserved the exact place indicated by the foremost of her contemporaries we cannot venture to determine, but her name has since been inscribed in letters of gold among the Olympians.

The life-story of Amantine Dupin, better known by her pen-name of "George Sand," is a veritable romance. She was a descendant of the famous Marshal Saxe, a natural son of Augustus of Poland, and one of the bravest of Marlborough's companions-in-arms. Little Amantine was brought up by a grandmother, and a tutor who held Voltairean views. During her early years she had no religious teaching. Some stories, impartially told her, of Jupiter, Christ, and other mythical personages, were all the theology that she remembered at this time. At the age of ten, with the precocity of genius, she had invented a god of her own, but this deity was dethroned as she grew older. Unfortunately, the young girl was sent to a convent school at Paris to complete

her education. The Christian superstition was there presented in its most winning form by the nuns. After two years' pressure the poor girl was on the verge of ruining her life by taking the veil. Her grandmother became alarmed, and removed the girl not a moment too soon. The nuns had done their work well, and Mdlle. Dupin's faith and her wish to renounce a life of which she knew nothing persisted long after the gates of the convent had clanged behind her.

Amantine was not like other girls. Soft-hearted she may have been; hard-headed she undoubtedly was. Her mind was too virile to be permanently affected by priests' opium. Her first shock came from reading Chateaubriand's *Genie du Christianisme*, a book, unwittingly, recommended by her unsuspecting and uncritical confessor. She found the ideas so antagonistic to her preconceived views founded on the *Imitatio Christi*, that she was led finally to doubt the truth and unity of a religious system which could thus be expounded in two different senses. She then glided gently and imperceptibly into Freethought.

Family troubles supervened. Her grandmother died, and her home was broken up. Her father's family quarrelled with her mother's relations, and her mother, who should have been her best friend, proved to be the worst guardian possible to such a girl. Deserted by her kindred, Mdlle. Dupin wrecked her happiness on a marriage of convenience. Only eighteen years of age, she married a man who got drunk, kept low company, and was a beast. He found his wife's cleverness a nuisance. After nine years of torture, the unhappy wife procured a judicial separation and the custody of her two children. During these wretched years she suffered as a woman, she learned as an artist. She lost her trust in so many things. Like *Candide*, she was disillusioned by the logic of facts.

As a novelist, "George Sand" is inferior to Balzac. Her stories are too didactic to be perfect. Novels with a purpose have been effective and, at the same time, artistic. Voltaire, whose swift live pen was always wielded in the service of liberty, wrote many masterpieces filled with propaganda. His *Candide*, in spite of its obvious purpose, remains the wittiest book in the world. Rousseau, who flamed his social views over the universe, influenced men through the medium of prose fiction. In a lesser degree this is true of Bernardin de St. Pierre, Chateaubriand, and even Charles Dickens. "George Sand," aiming at the same power, inserted in her stories masses of reverie. Her language is beautifully rich and pure, and her sentences full and melodious. She never runs her thoughts to death, but leaves the reader with plenty of food for future thought. Especially is this noticeable in *Spiridion*, in which she attacked the Christian superstition, and in *Consuelo*, which championed the cause of woman.

A great woman, Mdlle Sand was free from the effusive egoism so common with Continental writers. There was a touch of the Stoic in her nature, and she soared above the uneasy vanities of her contemporaries. Indifferent to luxury and fame, she did her work bravely. Intellectuals welcome in her a sister who did pioneer work. Like our own "George Eliot," she must be judged with forbearance. With all the inevitable drawbacks of her womanliness, this gifted woman fought the battle for Freedom. Why should her memory be insulted by associating her with a knockabout farce? She was an artist in her own French tongue; why should she be made a motley to the public view? Her first and last claim on us is, indeed, genius. Instead of making a mock of her memory, the best is to read her works, and to be grateful that we have had such a genius at all.

MIMNERMUS.

Do Women Need Religion?

Her religious bias, which was possibly her safeguard as a woman against many temptations, and her support in many hours of trial, became in politics and especially in the French politics of her epoch, a grave, even a fatal, peril.—T. P. O'Connor on the Empress Eugenie, "Daily Telegraph," July 12, 1920.

COVENTRY PATMORE once lamented that attention to realities seemed to be the last effort of which the minds, even of cultivated people, are capable. His complaint seems peculiarly applicable to the present day, in the light of the above passage from T. P. O'Connor's Memoir of the Empress Eugenie. Here we have one of our foremost publicists carelessly giving expression to a fallacy which could never have gained currency among a community trained to accurate thinking. But the belief that religion serves to keep women good and pure is so widespread that few would venture to challenge it. And yet the grounds for such an assumption are slight, resting as they do mainly on the impudent assertions of preachers and parsons, who have to justify their existence in some way.

Men, finding such a gap between their actual and ideal, had recourse to a priesthood to remind them of what they should do. So sharp was the struggle between the state of nature and the state of grace, that the dogma of original sin was invented to account for the delinquent's waywardness. This was washed away by the rite of baptism. Apparently it failed in efficacy, and erring man could then take advantage of the scheme of Atonement, his sins being obliterated by a bath in his Redeemer's blood. This repulsive system of theology was an easy method adopted by men, instead of laboriously working out their own salvation by clear thought and good deeds. By this means they could make the best of both worlds, now indulging in their dearest sin and then, by a mere act of faith, calling on their God to bear their guilt.

These serio-comic creatures not only solemnly accepted this hotch-potch of doctrines, but they also bade their women seek that road to salvation. Now, all man's theological dogmas are alien to the nature of woman, since the struggle between sense and spirit on which they are founded scarcely affects her. There is no such gap between her actual and ideal as in man's nature.

All is beauty

And knowing this, is love; and love is duty.

What further may be sought for or declared?

Browning's lines are embodied in the life of woman, who, by her motherhood, is enabled to live harmoniously, reconciling love and duty. As for man's theories, the dogma of original sin outrages all her maternal feelings. No mother would subscribe to the infamous doctrine that consigns an unbaptized innocent to infernal and everlasting torment. The ceremony of churching, invented by a masculine priesthood to "purify" mothers after childbirth, is an insult, not only to women, but to humanity. Again, every mother who has had to adjust the conflicting claims of her offspring would revolt against the injustice of punishing the innocent child while the guilty one escapes scot-free. And yet such is the immoral teaching of the Atonement! Passing in review the various items which make up the Christian faith, it seems that only the doctrine of the Incarnation (which, according to St. Thomas Aquinas is "the exaltation of human nature and the consummation of the Universe") would be likely to find favour in women's eyes, for does not every mother think her goose a swan?

There is nothing noble nor inspiring in the medley of contradictory rubbish comprising the scheme of salvation put forward by the Church. How is it possible, then, for men to claim that its influence keeps women good and pure; or, in the words of "T. P.," is a "safe-guard against many temptations"? Why do they continually, in Gulliver's eloquent paraphrase, "say the thing that is not"? Partly, no doubt, the explanation lies in the disconcerting facility with which any statement is accepted, if it is only repeated often enough. The mass of mankind are but too willing to play an obsequious Polonius to an astute priest-Hamlet, and their opinions have no more consistency than the shapes they profess to see in the clouds.

There is, however, a slight apparent foundation for this assertion. The Church would have died of inanition long ago if it had not wound itself round morality. No institution can survive unless it supplies some vital need, and the preposterous doctrines of the Church could never have been foisted for any length of time on the "wild, living intellect of man," had they not been coupled with morality. In primitive groups certain rules of conduct were enforced and strengthened by supernatural punishments and rewards. Among primitive minds, such as constitute the scanty congregations in our churches and chapels of to-day, it is an accepted axiom that the Freethinker must be "wicked," and that church-goers have a monopoly of all the virtues. But if the influence of Holy Mother Church was so necessary to preserve man from committing crimes and excesses, it was still more essential that woman "the organ of the devil," as one of the Christian Fathers courteously called her, should be brought within its pale. Men have always been somewhat afraid of the unreasonable wild strain in women—witness the lurid history of witchcraft. Consequently, savage penalties were imposed on her should she venture out of the destined path. The Church tied the indissoluble marriage-knot which bears hard chiefly on the woman. Just as rulers have allied themselves with the Church to keep down their rebellious subjects, so have men availed themselves of her powers to keep their women in the safe and well-worn road of tradition and convention. Even now, if a woman is devout, they think it a praiseworthy trait in her, although they may have freed themselves from the shackles of theology.

"This unhappy combination of religion and morality," as Jung describes it, must be dissolved. Morality deals with conduct—the relationship between human beings. It is fluid, rising "from the clear to the loftier clear." What is right in one age is wrong in another. By endeavouring to lay down hard-and-fast rules of conduct the Church has acted as a handicap on human progress. And popular writers who, in the present day, laud her influence over women, are but playing to the gallery.

The claim that the Church has kept women good and pure cannot be justified. The records of the celibate clergy, the nunneries, the confessional, and even of the "lap-dog breed" of parson at the present day, give the lie to that statement. The fatal effects of the Empress Eugenie's religious bias on the lives of thousands of Frenchmen are traced out by "T. P." himself, and her own salvation was dearly bought at such a price. The woman who needs religion "as a safe-guard against many temptations" and as "a support in many hours of trial," is not fit to take charge of her own soul, and for such weaklings the Church may still be a refuge. But youthful generations in ever-increasing numbers pass her by. Strong in their virility, which she would emasculate, and in their self-reliance, which

she would sap, they march forward to create new worlds:—

Open horizons round,
O mounting mind, to scenes unsung,
Wherein shall walk a lusty Time;
Our Earth is young;
Of measure without bound
Infinite are the heights to climb,
The depths to sound.

FRANCES PREWETT.

Writers and Readers.

A NOTE ON G. W. FOOTE AS A MAN OF LETTERS.

SUCCESS in journalism, I am told by those who ought to know, depends largely upon your dexterity in linking up what you are moved to say with something that has, or is likely to have, been impressed upon your reader's mind. That being so, the fortieth birth year of this journal, which was founded by Foote, and which even now, in hands so different, bears something of the distinctive mark of his genius and fine taste, is, I venture to think, no bad excuse for a few random reflections on his position as *the* man of letters of Free-thought. I have no doubt that my readers have felt more or less unconsciously the immense difference between Foote's handling of a subject and that of other Freethinkers. It lay in this, that Foote was born with the temperament not only of the thinker—and he had a surprisingly logical mind—but also of the artist. He was pre-eminently an artist in expression, with a carefully trained and critical sense of the value of words and phrases alike for the mind and the ear, a sense which we feel must have been educated by a loving study of our literature from Chaucer to Meredith. Now, it will be admitted, I take it, that the outstanding figures in the Freethought Movement have been vigorous thinkers, who have phrased their convictions and conclusions in strong, plain English for comparatively uncultured hearers or readers. Or they have been what used to be called "orators"; that is, they were garrously eloquent in the thin, undistinguished manner of an Holyoake, or seriously longwinded and elephantine, in the super-fatted manner of Charles Watts.

Coming down to our own time, there are those of us who find Mr. Joseph McCabe a little too dogmatic, a little too heavy-handed, where a graceful Arnoldian persuasiveness, a looser hold of his principles, would have been more effective. It is curious that Goethe should have had as little influence on his manner and philosophy of life as had Walter Pater on those of his biographer. Mr. Robertson, who does not hide his Atheism under the cloak of Agnosticism, is capable of fine prose when he is not building up an angular, if imposing, pyramid from a mass of theories and facts in his heaviest German manner. The conclusion of his study of Spencer in *Modern Humanists*, certain pages in *Montaigne and Shakespeare*, and the whole of his admirable little introduction to Elizabethan Literature point to the artistic possibilities underlying the immense weight of his erudition. The present Editor of this journal owes what he has of literature to his intellectual relations with Foote; yet his real strength lies in a never-failing supply of ideas. The artistic element in his work, however, makes itself felt in an admirable co-ordination of ideas, a sovereign clarity of exposition and expression, and a careful elimination of everything not relevant to his argument. This sense of proportion is, unfortunately, not always carried over to the style. But, on the whole, there is not a little that is excellent in it; and, for my part, I share Remy de Gourmont's inability to dislike very much the style of any writer whose thinking I admire.

Foote's range of reading in English literature was as wide as Mr. Robertson's, although for some periods, the Elizabethan particularly, he had not that command of detail which makes Mr. Robertson's work invaluable to the student. On the subject of Shakespeare, Foote was orthodox. Not being a lawyer or a schoolmaster, he could not see that there was any need to look around for an aristocratic figure to put in the place of the Stratford plebeian. He had a high-handed way with the serious, if rather stupid, people who

reject the Stratford man because he cannot be made to fit in with the absurd claims of a Knight or a Churton Collins. For Foote, as for the poet's peers from Ben Jonson to Swinburne, there was no problem, no mystery except that of genius. But it would seem that poets and men of letters are prejudiced, and the verdict in the case must be given by twelve average uneducated men who will be prepared at a venture to rule out the later and finest plays if the evidence be against these. I can imagine the gesture of contemptuous impatience with which Foote would have dismissed the latest heretic who has discovered the real author in an Elizabethan Earl of Oxford. Like Coleridge and Hazlitt, Foote absorbed the poetry of Shakespeare. The doubtful work he rejected by a process of æsthetic elimination peculiar to his literary temperament. His subtle insight into the great plays, into the working of the poet's mind, made his occasional appreciations of the world's greatest play-writer very precious even to those of us who had, in our youth, the privilege of the literary guidance of Mr. A. C. Bradley.

The individuality of Foote's mind, and, if I may put it so, its naturally aristocratic bias, made him an admirer of exceptional genius in our literature. I recall with pleasure the occasional talks I used to have with him in my youth. He would come down to a Northern town to lecture on the Sunday, and the Saturday evening was given over to mutual enthusiasms. One time I brought with me a copy of the poems of John Donne, whose genius I imagined I was the first to discover. I found, of course, that Foote had been there before me, that he knew Donne's best poems by heart, and had an intimate acquaintance with his difficult but splendid prose. That evening he gave me a lesson in interpretative criticism, in what Pater called *appreciation*, which I regard as my first introduction to the art of letters. He read to me a number of the poems, and the emotional vibration of his voice, his subtle feelings for verse-rhythms, his evident intellectual sympathy with the poet's philosophy of life, helped to convert my jejune enthusiasm into mature admiration. I can recall even now the gusto with which he read this passage from the *Satires* :—

Tho' Truth and Falsehood be
Near twins, yet Truth a little elder is.
Be busy to seek her; believe me this,
He's not of none, nor worse, that seeks the best.
To adore or scorn an image, or protest,
May all be bad. Doubt wisely; in strange way,
To stand inquiring right, is not to stray;
To sleep, or run wrong is. On a huge hill,
Cragged and steep, Truth stands, and he that will
Reach her, about must and about must go,
And what the hill's suddenness resists, win so.
Yet strive so, that before age, death's twilight,
Thy soul rest, for none can work in that night.

The strange, exotic beauty of Donne's lyrics took on a new loveliness when they were interpreted by the caressing tones of Foote's voice. Never was there a stronger intellectual affinity than this between the Elizabethan Dean and the modern Atheist.

An intelligent interest in Donne is no bad criterion of a critic's appreciation of English letters, and for that reason one is not surprised to find that Foote has a first-hand acquaintance with writers distinguished for originality of matter or manner. To hail a new writer or re-discover an older one who has been neglected or misunderstood is alike the privilege and pleasure of outspoken criticism. Foote's mental independence, critical acumen, and infallible taste stood him in good stead here. He was the first, I believe, to call attention to James Thomson's (B.V.) prose which some of us are inclined to set just a little higher than his verse, fine as that undoubtedly is. Thomson has not yet taken the place he deserves in Victorian criticism, although Mr. Saintsbury has condescended to praise his studies of Shelley and Blake, but, of course, not without certain academic reservations, Thomson being an outsider from the standpoint of the Tory Professor.

Herman Melville was another of Foote's prime favourites, and that at a time when the excellence of his impressions of

South Sea life was unrecognized both by the critics and the reading public. I can imagine the pleasure he would have had in stories of our modern Melville, Mr. Saffroni-Middleton, who, in some respects, is more imaginative, and is certainly more of a creative genius than the earlier writer. I here recommend those of my readers who have enjoyed *Typec* to buy Mr. Middleton's *South Sea Foam* (1919) and *Gabrielle of the Lagoons* (1919).

Few people, nowadays, are likely to turn to the books of William Smith, a thinker of ability, who worked out some original ideas in ethics and the philosophy of belief. *Thorndale; or, the Conflict of Opinions* (1857), and *Gravenhurst; or, Thoughts on Good and Evil* (1862), although cast in a form (philosophic dialogue) which, for us, is curiously antiquated, are even now worth careful study. Foote knew these books intimately, and it would not be difficult to trace their influence on Foote's style. Yet another indication of Foote's bias to intellectual aristocracy is his appreciation of Samuel Butler (of *Erewhon* fame). Butler has a disconcerting and irritating effect on the average reader. Irony confuses him, and he cannot understand that cynicism is a sensitive man's protection against a brutal world.

I even do not think I am far out in suggesting that Foote's enthusiasm for Meredith's poetry and fiction was prompted to a certain extent by his gratitude for the kindly interest of a master in the work of a disciple. To be treated as the intellectual equal of Meredith would certainly have turned the heads of stronger men. But Foote knew as well as any of us the defects in the master's style, and conception of fiction. But he left others to stress them and dwell only upon the supreme characteristics. Who of us would dare to say that he was not more than justified when we recall Meredith's achievements. I cannot agree with Foote that he is a greater novelist than Thackeray, Dickens, or George Eliot, much less can I agree with him that he alone has not shirked the problem of sex in fiction. Such a contention is pure partisanship, an excess of eulogy in a writer who was not given to uncritical admiration.

Foote had the average educated Englishman's acquaintance with foreign languages, a modicum of German and Italian, and a good working knowledge of French. He knew his Voltaire, and Bayle, and Diderot well, and seems to have had an amateur interest in the less austere side of French literature, in Casanova, the *conteurs galants* of the eighteenth century, and the amusing, if naughty, Catulle Mendès. For those of us who know human nature the contrast is not surprising. Be that as it may, Foote was a patriot in literature. He could not see that our novels and criticisms were worse—in some respects he found them better—than our neighbours. I remember that once in his presence (I was young then) I was foolish enough to exalt M. Anatole France at the expense of our own writers. For every excellence in M. France he pointed out much finer qualities in our own, and ended by putting M. France quietly in his place, denying his ability to write a novel, admitting his pre-eminence in the peculiarly French art of the philosophic short story, noting his impressionistic criticism as not better than our own, and finally sizing him up as à sort of diluted Renan, or a French counterpart, if you prefer it, of Mr. Bernard Shaw.

I shall supplement these notes on Foote's naturally aristocratic taste in letters by noting in my next article the qualities in his style that point to the same aristocratic bias.

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

For my part, with the manifold directions in which my nature moves, I cannot be satisfied with a single mode of thought. As poet and artist I am a polytheist; on the other hand, as a student of Nature I am a pantheist—and both with equal positiveness. When I need a God for my personal nature, as a moral and spiritual man, he also exists for me.—*Goethe*.

Acid Drops.

There are fashions in absurdity, as in most other things. And there seems quite a craze just now for parsons to deny the existence of Atheists and Atheism. The Rev. W. T. Kitchen, who was speaking at Hull on July 24, made two remarkable statements. One was that to many who frequented public-houses "religion is still the deepest thing of all." That is an assurance for which many religious people will not exactly thank him. And he went on to say that "I have never met a real Atheist. These men (the frequenters of public-houses) have a high ideal for the Church." Now, if Mr. Kitchen has spent his time looking in public-houses for Atheists, we are not surprised that he has been snowed under with people who believe in Christianity—although he might have found an Atheist there. But if he really wishes to meet an Atheist, we think we could oblige him with a fair number in his own Rhondda Valley, where he is in business as a teacher of the Gospel. He must know his neighbours very badly not to have come across *some* Atheists. We have had hundreds of them at our meetings in that locality.

The *Christian World* suggests that a war memorial should be something that is genuinely Christian. What is the matter with a life-size model of Uriah Heep? Or, say, Heep and Pecksniff with the Bishop of London pronouncing a benediction on them.

In ten years the number of United Methodists has decreased by 9,760. But the real decrease is greater than that since the figures take no notice of the increase in population. Still, the figures do help us to realize the true inwardness of the cry for reunion. For Christians to forgo the luxury of a fight there must be something serious afoot, and the impetus in this case is the growing weakness of the faithful.

There was a motion in the House of Lords last week in favour of a fixed date being settled for Easter. The motion was subsequently withdrawn, but it is curious that such a move should have been made. Anyway, the incident may set some people wondering how it happens that the supposed anniversary of an actual person's birth alters from year to year. Of course, the answer is that it is not the anniversary of a real person at all. It is an astronomical anniversary, and the movable date gives away the whole game. Whoever heard of a birthday of a man or woman being fixed by the phases of the moon? If Christians could only be brought to understand their religion they would not require the arguments of the *Freethinker* to prove it to be a myth. It has myth written all over it.

The King was to present prizes to the winning yachtsmen during his visit to Scotland, and it was arranged that it should be done on a Sunday. The Scottish Sabbath Protection Association wrote to the King protesting that this was a desecration of the Sabbath on "the Christian Clyde." The King was weak enough to yield to the protest, and the prizes were distributed on the Saturday. We are sorry that the King had not the strength that was displayed by his grandmother, who, when the bigots protested against Sunday bands, continued to have them playing at Windsor in spite of the complaints of the pious. Pity that kings are not allowed to have opinions of their own on such matters.

The subscribers to the Westminster Abbey Fund includes the names of some very eminent Christians. We notice those of Sir Marcus Samuel, Mr. Isaacson, the Proprietors of *Punch*, three stamps from "a child," and 100 guineas from Samuel Montague & Co.

The Bishop of London has proved to an astonished world that the longer he draws his salary of £200 weekly the deeper he is financially embarrassed. He has also told the public that the clergy are "starving." Hence it is an unexpected pleasure to find in the subscription list to the Westminster Abbey Fund that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have donated £10,000; the Rev. W. M. Furneaux,

£25; the Dean of Westminster, £200; Canon de Caudle and Mrs. de Caudle, £150, and Archdeacon R. H. Charles, £100.

Bishop Mamm, of Southern Florida, does not think much of the Lambeth Conference. Nearly 300 bishops met in London and tried to deal with world problems. The result, he added, was inadequate, and the world knew it. Just so! The cream of the joke, however, is that the three hundred bishops, who made a mess of the job, are supposed to be supported and guided by Omnipotence.

A writer who calls himself The Pilgrim has been contributing a series of articles to the *Daily News* on the Quest of Cheerfulness. From the very start it was perfectly clear that the object of his search could only be found in one place and way. He visits ever so many theatres, music-halls, cinemas, and dancing halls, and finds that gloom, despair, pervades them all. Whether he imagines these visits or actually pays them is wholly immaterial, the only point that matters being that he set out on the quest fully resolved not to be cheered where the crowds found both laughter and joy. At last he sees a man in a tremendous hurry, and, on recognizing, follows him to his home. Breathless he drops into a chair, and asks, "Why have we been walking so quickly?" "O," says the man, "must get home before the boy goes to bed. He likes it. Expects me, you know." Then a blue-eyed boy, in his pyjamas and a red dressing gown, bursts into the room just to say good night to his father, and he even insists on kissing The Pilgrim, in consequence of which The Pilgrim is mightily cheered and suffused with joy.

But that is not all. After kissing the Pilgrim, the blue-eyed boy, without giving him any warning, blurts out: "I've just been saying my prayers. You know, God doesn't say anything—but he's a very good listener, don't you think?" The Pilgrim answers: "Yes, old chap, he's a very good listener." Fancy a boy of six giving expression to such a sentiment, and an experienced Pilgrim being cheered up by it! It sounds very much like a piece of fiction designedly invented, and written down for so much per line. There is a distinct air of unreality about it all, from the first article to the last.

And yet, unwittingly, The Pilgrim presents us with a vivid exposure of the whole doctrine of prayer. *God doesn't say anything, but he's a very good listener.* God never interrupts those who address him, which greatly encourages them. He never challenges any of their statements, or calls them to account for them. God is eternally silent in his heavenly retreat. He gives absolutely no sign that he hears, or that he is there, even.

The Pilgrim shows his hand in the passage devoted to Dean Inge (*Daily News*, July 26). He pokes fun at the Gloomy Dean, and thinks it a great joke that he ever thought of applying to *him* for a cheering up. Is not the Dean "a parson with ideas"? Has he not declared "the cause of Peace could hope for nothing from organized Christianity"? The Dean opens men's minds, which is far better than to open bazaars. Is not this cheering? This is a paradox which The Pilgrim successfully resists, and then flies for refuge and comfort to the blue-eyed boy who prays to an unresponsive, silent God. Thank you, Mr. Pilgrim; your funny articles have added to the gaiety of nations, and rendered enormous service to the cause of Atheism. Your mask was by no means perfect.

George Horsley, a seventy-years-old gardener, was killed by lightning near Berwick-on-Tweed. This is one of Providence's little jests, for the unfortunate man was not even a Secularist lecturer.

The Knights of the Blessed Sacrament—it is astonishing how often one finds the religious and military ideas working together—met in full force at South Bank, Teesdale, and the speakers were in agreement that Protestantism was on the decline. We also believe that to be good news, but for

reasons different from those of the speakers referred to. But, within its degree, it is no more true of Protestantism than it is of other forms of religion. Roman Catholicism is also on the decline, and the Greek Church shows the same thing. We believe that the growth of Freethought in the new States that the War has set up has been most marked, and, indeed, every advance that is made in any direction inevitably leads to a weakening of religion. And that is the bottom fact all the Churches have to face—to which they obstinately close their eyes.

The Manchester Sunday-school Union is making an appeal for funds, and comments on what it calls "the developing competition of Secular Education." We are very pleased that it feels the competition, and hope that it will feel it the more as time advances. We are quite certain that the rescue of the child from the clutches of the priest is the most important work that lies before all educationalists and reformers. Until that is done, any progress that may be made is more or less insecure. The anxiety of the Churches to keep their hands on the child should tell its own tale to all who read events with an intelligent eye.

In a leading article, dealing with the Anglo-Catholic Congress, the *Daily Mail* says: "Modern science is not hostile to religion." This may be owing to the fact that scientists will not trouble their heads about such legends as those of the "Virgin Birth" and "The Ascension," but the *Daily Mail* gives no inkling of such a solution. And, happily, people have other means of information than young journalists fresh from elementary schools.

A man was charged at Old Street Police Court the other day with stealing. He threw himself on the mercy of the Court with the remark that on the morning previous he had recited the Lord's Prayer "Lead us not into temptation." Perhaps he was also relying on "The Lord helps those who help themselves." At any rate the Lord did not keep him out of temptation, and he now has four weeks to meditate on the folly of trusting to the Lord.

The Rev. Mr. Morgan Gibbon, of London, speaking at the meeting of the International Council of Congregationalists, recently held in Boston, U.S.A., indulged in highly theatrical rhetoric. Admitting that the world is in ruins, he excitedly asked: "What could Mohammed do? What could Buddha do? What could Russia do? What could France, bled white, do?" Of course, they could do nothing. That was self-evident. Then came the triumphant, but needless, query: "Where can the world look but to Jesus Christ?" As a matter of fact, the Western world has been looking to Jesus Christ for many centuries, with the fearful result that it is in ruins. Is it not self-evident, even to Mr. Gibbon, that the broken, ruined condition of the world is an irrefutable evidence that Jesus Christ is a colossal failure?

The *British Weekly* publishes in each issue a short prayer, and the one found in that of July 22 is extremely characteristic, all its petitions being of a woefully demoralizing and degrading character. One is: "Make us ever distrustful of ourselves," than which a more humiliating petition could not be framed. No wonder the religion which encourages such disastrous self-depreciation is losing its hold upon the minds of the people.

Mr. Wilberforce Allen, speaking at the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, made the mournful confession that their Churches "are not producing that type of character on a broad basis which gains the respect of outsiders." We congratulate Mr. Allen on having the courage to say, within what has almost always been said without the Church. He also went so far as to declare that "the Churches were full of men who patronize the Almighty." Mr. Allen is described as the youngest member of the Conference.

A periodical devoted to cinema affairs asks that more laughter-raising films may be provided. We suggest that

someone screens the story of Noah's Ark, or Jonah and the Whale. If properly produced, the results should be sufficient to make the lions in Trafalgar Square wag their tails in enjoyment—and these quadrupeds are more substantial than the lions that smirked at the prophet Daniel.

Pinner Church has celebrated its six hundredth anniversary, and the clergy are still repeating the same old "chestnuts" that their predecessors did all those centuries ago.

The celibate Father Bernard Vaughan has been attacking mixed bathing as being immoral, and he includes family parties in this indictment. What a mind he must have! It would do him good to have a pastorate in Equatorial Africa.

UNITY.

It is reported that one of the Bishops at the Lambeth Conference said they were not equal to the task of dealing with the many serious problems which confronted them, and that the public were also of this opinion. He suggested calling into consultation the Christian Scientists.—*Vide Press.*

My Brethren, when I look upon
Our work in Europe—
Starvation, murder, chaos, and revolt—
Humanity upon the rack;
I feel we are unequal to the task
Of reconciling facts
With Christian theories;
My weary spirit faints beneath
The heavy burden I must hide
Behind this holy mask;
For strange to say, the masses have lost faith
In our pre-eminence—
The mystic lore of other days
Has lost its spell;
They turn deaf ears to all our tales
Of heaven and hell;
And all the killing we have done,
Or sanctioned,
Has not unsealed their eyes
To the glory of the life that lies
Beyond the skies;
They cannot see the beauty of our God,
Reflected in our lives—
They are intent on carnal things—
Wages, children and wives;
How shall we gain our prestige back?
In former days, I must admit,
I thought the Christian scientist unfit
To commune here;
But we must progress with the times—
I feel it is our duty to call in
The members of this sect,
For we may gain from them
Some useful hints, to resurrect
A world entombed in sin.

PERCY ALLOTT.

How You Can Help.

GET your newsagent to display a copy of this journal in a prominent position.

Show or hand your own copy of the paper to a friend who is not acquainted with it. It is surprising the number of new readers that can be made in this way.

If you do not file your copy, leave it in train or tram-car when read.

Send us on the name of anyone to whom you think that specimen copies of the *Freethinker* would be acceptable. We will see that they get them all right.

Send us any suggestions you have to offer as to the way in which our circulation may be increased.

To Correspondents.

W. MATCHAM.—Sorry that we cannot spare space for the publication of an article of the length you name. But if you can compress the salient facts into the space of a letter of, say, half a column in length, we will insert it. We are quite with you in your protest against the cruelty involved in a great deal of what is called sport.

A CORRESPONDENT writes: "Among the goods mentioned in the French *Journal Officiel* of June 27, giving a revised list of certain things liable to luxury tax, are 'Religious Articles—if the sale price exceeds 30 francs each.' It is feared in religious circles that this decree will lead to the fine old vintage Communion ports, at 40 francs the bottle, being superseded by the 'vin ordinaire' of the country. On the other hand, the manufacture of cheaper—but still serviceable—J.C.'s, etc., will be stimulated."

C. H. HUNTLEY.—Much obliged for cuttings. They are always useful.

H. R. WRIGHT.—We are led to believe that they already take or have copies of the paper. We must leave it to the judgment of possible advertisers whether they use our columns or not.

C. R. TAYLOR.—We will send on the books in the course of a few days. Do you wish to sell them? We should be pleased to purchase in that case.

HUBERT STONE.—Thanks. Will try and find a corner in some subsequent issue.

P. ALLOTT.—Received with thanks. Will try and publish in a week or so.

H. EMSDEN—Probably not consciously lying. The truth appears to be that with Christians certain lies concerning Freethinkers have become standardized, and these are repeated by believers without much thought on the matter. It is one of the examples of the demoralizing influence of Christianity on the average intelligence.

D. MACCONNELL.—Thanks for offer. We shall be glad to see a copy of the publication.

A. C. ROSETTI.—We are pleased to get the news. We congratulate you both most heartily. Hope the youngster will thrive rapidly and have a happy future.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

A case came before the Weston-super-Mare magistrates the other day in which a witness—a woman—refused to take the oath. The magistrate ordered her to leave the box. The woman promptly retorted, "I can speak the truth without doing that"—taking the oath; and we are quite certain she could not have been further from the truth without the oath than many are with it. Now, the magistrate was not bound to help the woman by suggesting that if she did not wish to take an oath she might affirm, and the woman does not appear to have been conversant with her rights in the matter. But the magistrate was certainly not assisting the course of justice by ordering a witness to stand down who objected to the oath. And it is the actual duty of the court officials to assist witnesses to the best of their ability. We

hope to see one day that officials, instead of pushing a more or less dirty book under every person's nose, will inquire whether they wish to take an oath or to affirm. They might even ask, "Do you require the help of God to tell the truth, or can you tell the truth without his assistance?"

The conditions for lecturing this season do not look like being too easy, what with the increased fares and other things; but we hope that the N. S. S. Branches are going ahead vigorously with their preparations for the lecture platform. Any help that can be given from headquarters may be relied upon, but it is essential that the work shall not be allowed to lag behind. We have not reaped all the advantages that might be reaped by the slump in the Churches, and we ought to take full advantage of the situation. The next year or two look like being a critical period for many advanced movements, but we have every confidence in the one for which we are all fighting.

We are pleased to say that quite a large number of friends took advantage of our offer to supply a copy of the *Freethinker* for thirteen weeks at a reduced price. We feel sure that it has been capital propaganda, and now that the offer is, for the present at least, withdrawn, we thank heartily those who have so willingly joined in the effort to make the paper better known. A larger circulation is the only certain way of making the paper self-supporting, and until that is done we shall be always discontented—cheerfully so, we hope, but discontented all the same.

We see from the *Newspaper World* that the number of papers that have further increased their price since January is now 457. All the old halfpenny papers in the North of England are now three-halfpence, and there are whispers of a still further advance in the price of papers generally. We regard the matter with some interest, not to say concern, as may be imagined, as it foreshadows a still higher cost of production. Prices are still rising, and we had to meet a considerable rise in the price of the paper on which the *Freethinker* is printed when a new consignment was delivered the other day. And there seems no finality to it. As it is now nearly a month since there was a rise in wages, we suppose that another is about due.

The discussion between Mr. Cohen and Mr. Leaf on *Does Man Survive Death?* is in the press, and will be on sale by September 1. The published price will probably be 7d. Considering the steady advance in the cost of printing, the price is a low one, and it should have a large sale. Mr. Cohen has also ready a work of some size, and we think we may say of some importance, on *Theism and Atheism*, which we also hope to have ready very shortly. There are other works which the Pioneer Press also has in preparation, and about which announcements will appear in due course.

The Egyptian Galleries.

ON Saturday, 24th inst., a party of over fifty were assembled in the portico of the British Museum, to be conducted round the Egyptian Galleries by Mr. F. W. Read, who so kindly volunteered his services.

The party were first conducted to the Rosetta stone, inscribed in hieroglyphic, Demotic, and Greek characters, which first gave the key to the deciphering the picture writing of the Ancient Egyptians. A tour of the galleries followed, in which we had the most striking monuments of that ancient civilization pointed out and explained. The final object of interest was the *Book of the Dead*, dating from some thousand years B.C., which Mr. Read explained in detail.

The party was too large for convenience, but the extraordinary interest of the subject, and the intimate knowledge of it shown by the lecturer, maintained the crowd in continually increasing numbers to the end of the tour.

Mr. Read is heartily thanked for the treat he gave us, and, it is hoped, that it is not the last time that the *Freethinker* readers will be able to take advantage of his kindness and his learning.

J. L.

The Month of "Mary."

For a long period I have been the happy possessor of one of Wells' "Time Machines," and it is my pleasure to sit astride and switch back or forward as fancy dictates. I took a run forward a few evenings ago, and found myself in the year 20,000. In this year the world was re-named Merica, the different nations being abolished, and all Government placed under one head, the chief citizen of Merica. I was presented with a newspaper issued by the Government gratis through its news-distributing section. Each citizen being compelled to accept same and read its contents under pain of losing his vote.

This is the only paper in existence, and is filled with essays on topics of the time and orders in council for the guidance of the citizens. There is no foreign news, there being no foreigners, and advertisements have long been abolished as immoral. It would be sad reading for the bishops, etc., of 1920, as from what I gathered, the idea of religion was swept away by the force of absolute knowledge of everything which was daily proclaimed through its columns. An article on "Ancient Civilizations" attracted my attention in the *Utopian*, as it is called. This was one of a series contributed by Citizen Whitehouse. I regret not having seen those previously printed. In the article the writer deals with what he describes as "the almost forgotten island of Britain." Citizen Whitehouse said: Strange as it may sound to Merican ears, there was a glimmering of culture and knowledge in the days of which we speak, though it can be imagined that without the aid of the knowledge at our command, and our glorious achievements, it was of the lowest type in each case.

We who now escape the hottest days of summer by the usual vacation on the moon will hardly credit that this resort was looked upon as unapproachable by the unlearned inhabitants of the Old "World." Curious as we find some of the customs and beliefs of this time, however, the field of enquiry which yields the most astonishing results is that of "Religion," a term difficult of translation to the present generation. Most of the records having been destroyed when the people rose against the old order of things, our knowledge is incomplete. Some ideas may be formed by the perusal of the recently concluded investigations made by the Government department which controls "History, Ancient; sec. 1, World." From the fragments of proof that have come to light, it appears that it was the custom to believe in "gods," that is persons, or ideas supposed to possess abnormal powers.

These "gods" the people clamoured after, and it was part of the ritual to witness the gods at work on the cinema screen. My readers will remember I dealt with the subject of this "cinema" in my last article. I need only recall that the scientists were far behind in this method of production, using mere mechanical means, while we, of course, simply subdue our subconscious mind until it produces the visions we wish to see, and when we so desire. These "gods," then, were worshipped under various names, and, as we find further back than this period, people eating their gods; so we read that at this time it was the custom to "mob" them. They would congregate in thousands when one of their gods appeared in public, and endeavour to tear him or her to ribbons in their exuberance; such was their faith. To gaze on the features of their gods was considered the height of ambition.

There were greater gods and lesser gods; but accounts occur of one named "Mary," and it seems clear that

this was one of the chief deities. Several documents bear this out. There was in existence for thousands of years a party who were called "Catholics," and their literature abounds with reference to this "Mary." Indeed, they allocated one whole month in their calendar to her, and called it "The Month of Mary." Now, the meaning of this word is shown to be "universal," and when in contemporary records we find the term "The world's sweetheart" applied to this deity, we may safely assume that here was one of the greatest, if not the chief, of the ancient "gods."

We find also mention made of "chaplains," a body of men with some religious duties (exactly what their functions were is lost in antiquity). These were evidently followers of the god "Chaplain," or, so some authorities have it, "Chaplin." It is known that at this period existed a god called "Charlie the Chaplin," no doubt a mis-spelling of the word "chaplain," and undoubtedly the god or patron saint of all chaplains.

There were deities too numerous to mention, but each had his peculiar influence over the multitude, which was not happy unless appearing ridiculous in its adoration.

Evidence is daily brought to light giving insight into the curious creeds of this most peculiar people, and it is hard for the younger generation to realize that it was once possible to attribute greatness to anyone other than the citizen, or to imagine these poor, ignorant savages making a claim to any civilization which was actually originated by the Great and Glorious Merica.

My time machine being very finely adapted to carry only my weight, I was reluctantly compelled to leave my copy of the *Utopian* behind.

J. DRISCOLL.

Science and the Occult.

VII.

(Continued from p. 469.)

The conditions under which the phenomena are offered for observation are unhappily almost always such as entirely to preclude any satisfactory examination, and in many cases even the use of the ordinary senses is denied. *Most unfortunately*, also, the conditions are usually those which will most tend to further and aid imposture and fraud. Spirits who can only appear in the dark and only to those who already believe or are predisposed to believe, who, when they do appear, reveal nothing of any importance to mankind, nothing that was not either known before or might readily be guessed or is entirely unsusceptible of proof so that assertion or denial is alike vain and useless, such spirits will always appear suspicious.—*Report of Committee on Mediumistic Phenomena, "Proceedings: American Society for Psychical Research"; 1887; p. 234.*

THE next, and last, test was to alter the position of some of the letters on the board, unknown to the mediums. Now, as Mr. Jones worked from his memory of the original position of the letters on the board, and, being blindfolded, could not see the alteration, this test should have proved his downfall. And so it would but for a little carelessness on the part of the testers. Says the author:—

Those who still remained sceptical were completely puzzled. Our success was due, of course, to the cause which makes all spooking mysterious—inaccurate and incomplete observation. In the first place, Alec Matthews had been guilty of a bad slip. He was certain that he had kept the board in his possession and that the mediums could not have seen it. He forgot he had come into Gatherer's room before the *seance*, to ask some question about a hockey match, and had carried the new board in his hand. I was sitting in the corner. He stayed in the room, standing near the door, for

perhaps fifteen seconds—just enough for me to run my eye round the board. After Alec left Gatherer twitted me on being very silent, and asked if I was "homesick." I was memorizing the new position of the letters.¹

Those who write about the frauds of Spiritualism are often told—I have been told myself more than once—that all the phenomena of Spiritualism is not due to fraud; that there is a basis of fact for much of the phenomena which the hypothesis of fraud cannot explain. But it is upon this slender basis of fact that the fraud is established, and it is the fraudulent phenomena, and not this slender basis of fact, that is pushed before the public to advertise Spiritualism. Sir Conan Doyle publicly declares his belief in the frauds of Home and the Fox Sisters, of Slade's performance before Zollner, of Florrie Cooke's deceptions on Professor Crookes, and those of Eusapia Palladino before Mr. Carrington. These are the things that are shouted from the house-tops, that startle and impress the open-mouthed, credulous public, not the slender basis of fact lying at the bottom of it all. And while these frauds are brought as proofs of the reality of Spiritualism, it is the plain duty of the Rationalist to attack them and show them for what they are.

Those who think otherwise remind us of the advanced clergymen who deprecate attacks on the Bible because "We know all about it beforehand, and it is waste of time and out of date," etc. Yes, we know all about it, but the general public do not, and the general public have neither the time, opportunity, nor, generally speaking, the qualifications for studying the matter for themselves. It is this general public that needs enlightenment upon the subject.

Mr. Jones goes to the very root of this matter of the "basis of fact" in the following pregnant quotation:—

It is particularly easy in a question like spiritualism to allow fallacy to creep in. There is a basis of curious phenomena which certainly exist and are recognized by scientists as indubitable facts. But the investigator must be careful, *in every instance*, to assure himself that he is in the presence of the genuine phenomenon, and not an imitation of it, and, as a matter of fact, this is sometimes impossible to do. Thus there is no doubt that the glass will move without the person whose fingers are resting on it exercising any force consciously. In the early day of honest experiment, we had satisfied ourselves on this point. It was within the experience of all of us. Many of us (I myself was one) could move it alone, without conscious effort; and before long we came to expect the movement to take place, and to regard it as the natural consequence of placing our hands in a certain position. When I began to move the glass consciously there was no outward indication that any change had taken place, and nobody could prove I was pushing it rather than "following" it. Nevertheless, the investigators were no longer in the presence of the genuine phenomenon, though they thought they were.

From the knowledge that the movement of the glass could be caused by an unconscious exercise of force, to the belief that the *rational* movement of the glass was caused in the same way, was but a small step. It is a step which many eminent men have taken after years of patient investigation. My friends could hardly have been blamed had they taken it at once. The fact that they saw fit to test the "mediums" and failed to discover the fraud does not prove they were fools. It does show that at least they were moderately careful, and it should be noted that the reasoning by which they led themselves astray was well based on facts. The trouble was it did not take into consideration *all* the facts that were relevant.²

For instance, they argued, if we blindfold the mediums and then turn the board round, they will not know the true position of the letters, and will be unable to guide the glass to them. But they overlooked the fact that man possesses a sense of touch as well as a sense of vision; therefore they neglected to search the board for any private marks, and failed to observe Mr. Jones' left thumb feeling for them on the edge of the board; two failures of observation—failures, it may be added, that nine hundred and ninety-nine people out of a thousand would have made. Again, when the position of the letters was altered on the board, they overlooked the opportunity the medium had of seeing the board during those all-important few seconds.

But to return to the "basis of fact" in Spiritualism. As Mr. Jones shows, it is impossible to distinguish between the genuine and the fraudulent, where the one ends and the other commences. It is the same with the phenomena of the trance medium. That there is an element of fact in some trance mediumship is doubtless true, because we have cases in our asylums of people with a double personality—people who are themselves one day and somebody else another day, just as the trance medium claims to be inspired by one spirit on one occasion and by another spirit on another occasion. But it is quite beyond the power of science to tell at any given moment whether it is a true case of double personality, or whether the medium is merely masquerading as under the control of a spirit. And it is just these phenomena that it is impossible to test that the Spiritualist takes refuge in.

After the last organized test, the investigators were satisfied. The foundations of belief had been laid, the rest was absurdly easy. Our author says:—

It was extremely interesting from a psychological point of view to notice how the basic idea that they were conversing with some unknown force seemed to throw men off their balance. Time and again the "Spook," under one name or another, pumped the sitter without the latter's knowledge. It was amazing how many men gave themselves away, and themselves told the story *in their questions*, which they afterwards thought the Spook had told *in his answers*.

Mr. Jones gives an example. One night the Warnews Spook, who had been occupying the stage, had just announced his departure, and was asked to send someone else. The new Spook arriving the following communication transpired:—

"Who are you?" said Alec. As he spoke the door opened, and Antony came in and stood close to my side.

"I am Louise," the board spelt out.

I felt Antony give a little start as he read the message. Without a pause the Spook went on:—

"Hello, Tony!"

"This is interesting," said Tony. (That was give-away. No. 2). "Go on, please. Tell us something."

I now knew that somewhere Tony must have met a Louise. That was a French name. So far as I knew he had not served in France. But he had served in Egypt. One night, a month or so before, in talking of Egyptian scenery, he had mentioned a long straight road with an avenue of trees on either side that "looked spiffing by moonlight," and ran for miles across the desert. It had struck me at the time that there was nothing particularly "spiffing" about the type of scenery described; nothing, at any rate, to rouse the enthusiasm he had shown, and his roseate memory of it might have been tinged by pleasant companionship. Remembering this, I ventured to say more about Louise. Nothing could be lost by risking it.

"You remember me, Tony?" asked the Spook.

"I know two Louises," said Tony, cautiously.

"Ah! not the old one, *mon vieux*," said the Spook. (Now this looks as if the Spook knew both, but a little

¹ E. H. Jones, *The Road to En-dor*, p. 35.

² E. H. Jones, *The Road to En-dor*, pp. 25-26.

reflection shows that, given two Louises, one was quite probably older than the other). Antony was delighted. "Go on," he said. "Say something."

"Long straight road," said the Spook; "trees—moonlight."

"Where was that?" asked Tony. There was a sharpness about his questioning that showed he was hooked.

"You know, Tony!"

"France?"

"No, no, stupid! Not France! Ah, you have not forgotten, *mon cher*, riding in moonlight, trees and sand, and a straight road—and you and me and the moon."

"This is *most* interesting," said Antony. Then to the board: "Yes; I know, Egypt—Cairo."

"Bravo! You know me. Why did you leave me? I am in trouble."

This was cunning of the Spook. Tony must have left her, because he had come to Zozgad without her. But Tony did not notice. He was too interested, and his memory carried him back to another parting.

"You told me to go," said Tony. "I wanted to help"—which showed that he hadn't!

"But you didn't—you didn't—you didn't!" said the Spook.

Tony ran his hand through his hair. "This is quite right as far as it goes," he said, "but I want to ask a few questions to make sure. May I?"

"Certainly," said Doc. and I.

He turned to the board (it was always amusing to me to notice how men had to have something *material* to question, and how they never turned to the Doc. or me, but always to the board. Hence, I suppose, the necessity for "idols" in the old days).¹

After several more questions had been answered by the Spook, mainly by knowledge given in the questions themselves, the *seance* came to an end, and Tony took Mr. Jones apart and declared he had never seen anything so wonderful in his life, and told him the whole story of Louise:—

"Next day he told everybody interested that as soon as he came into the room the blessed glass said 'Hello, Tony! I'm Louise.' Whereas the Spook said, 'I'm Louise,' at which Antony started; and *only then* did the Spook say, 'Hello, Tony!' The startled movement which provided the link was forgotten, and the simple inversion of Tony's memory—putting 'Hello, Tony!' before 'I'm Louise,' instead of after it—made it impossible for the outsider to discover the fraud. With the lapse of a little time, his memory played him further tricks. A month later he was convinced the Spook had told him the whole story straight off, with all the details he gave me afterwards in his room."—(Pp. 39-40).

That is the way these Spiritualistic marvels grow, gathering a little here, and a little there, like a rolling snowball, until the finished story bears no resemblance to what actually occurred.

In my previous article, the "some friend"—who suggested turning the circle of letters face downward—should read "some fiend." I had a similar experience with these two words once before; upon that occasion I failed to correct it in the proof. This time I did not fail, but it got through all the same.

When I have nothing to do I shall write a treatise on "fiends"; in two parts, the first dealing with fiends in general, the second—if I can obtain sufficient paper—on fiends in printing offices.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

Matter and its movement are the ultimate factors to which all things may be traced, whilst they themselves can be traced no further. They are the great X and Y, whose eternal and illimitable process constitutes the universe.—*Buchner*.

¹ *The Road to En-dor*, pp. 36, 37, 38.

The Backslider.

NICOLAS was a farmer in a big way, and was very rich. Moreover, he was industrious, avaricious, and wicked as only a genuine old country farmer can be. But he had been converted at the age of forty-five, was a partaker of grace, and one of the most brilliantly shining lights in the local branch of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Morals. Not that the conversion made much of a change in his mode of living except in so far as to make him even more stingy. Every year he had to subscribe to the funds of the Society, and the subscription had to be made up by increased economy, and make it up he did, tenfold.

The prayer meetings, however, he attended regularly during the busiest of harvest times. But the servants and employees had to stay at home and work. The chief thing was that he himself should be on good terms with the Almighty. Sometimes he would lead the congregation in prayer, and there were even occasions on which he could be induced to preach. He was by no means an orator, but he harped as well as he could on the same old theme, which he varied indefinitely, viz., the baseness and sinfulness of human nature and the infinite grace of God. In the spiritual brotherhood he was held in great esteem, perhaps mostly because of his wealth. When itinerant preachers arrived, he had to invite them and entertain them, though it grieved him painfully. He made frequent excuses to leave the table, simply because he could not bear to see them eat so much.

During a number of years, however, everything went well for Nicolas. His riches abounded, and so did the spiritual and temporal respect in which he was held. People used to look up to him as to a prophet, and he treated everyone mercifully. Only when any audacious person dared to approach him with a request for a loan would his ire be aroused, and on such occasions he used a rather worldly language. How could anyone imagine that he had money to lend! He who had a hard struggle to support himself and family! And during such hard times, too!

As everybody knows, the times are always hard for people who do not want to help.

On principle, he never gave anything to beggars except when a member of the brotherhood happened to be looking. But even this was not of much consequence, because of a doctrine which was warmly advocated in the brotherhood to the effect that good deeds, being mostly inspired by vanity, were in reality evil, and therefore condemnable. To ensure one's spiritual welfare, it was therefore safest not to indulge in good deeds, not even charity! In fact, the sect seemed to have been instituted specifically for stingy farmers.

But however firm Nicolas was in his faith, and however much he trusted in the grace of God, things would sometimes happen which disturbed his religious equilibrium. Since he already possessed out of worldly goods all that he was capable of desiring, he seldom asked God for anything in particular. But one summer, after a long spell of drought, he asked God for rain. This he continued with for weeks, but no rain came. Then Nicolas began to think, not much but just a little, and his thoughts were altogether sinful.

Now, it is a deplorable climatological fact that there is, at least in the eastern part of the country, a dry season during the spring and early summer. Only when the grass has been cut and is expected to dry does the rainy season commence. Nicolas could not help thinking that, to have been brought about by an all-wise God, this was a most curious state of affairs. Whatever

could be God's intention with such a topsy-turvy arrangement?

Anyhow, this year nothing helped. Not even the dry hay seemed capable of drawing the rain from the sky. The grain crop was threatened with destruction, and things were looking very black. Nicolas continued to pray, but to no purpose. There was particularly one small wheat-field which occupied Nicolas' thoughts during his sleepless nights. During the spring this wheat provided a glorious sight; it was green and fresh, and promised big loaves and juicy buns in abundance. Now it was about to dry up, which filled Nicolas with grief.

One night, being unable to sleep, Nicolas dressed himself and left the house. He gazed at the starlit sky, on which not the tiniest bit of cloud was to be seen. Even the familiar cloud-bank in the west made itself conspicuous by its absence. This meant less hope for rain than ever. Nicolas entered a tool-shed and fetched out a large hand-squirter, dragged it down to the field, fetched up water from the well, and commenced to squirt. It was hard work, but he kept it up for a couple of hours. The field was long and narrow, and bordered the road, so that, by shifting the implement along the latter, he could cover the whole field, and the poor withering wheat stalks received at least a refreshing douche. The next evening a servant assisted him, and they kept the watering up for three hours. This was continued for a whole week. A marked improvement in the state of the wheat was the result. Finally the rain came, and this crop, at least, was saved, thank God!

Well, how did the matter really stand? Was it God or was it himself who saved the wheat? It was an insolent, sinful, blasphemous, hell-begotten thought, but it persisted. Within every religious person there is the seed of doubt. This seed has commenced to germinate in Nicolas, and "help yourself" was a phrase which henceforth continually rang in his ears.

But Nicolas remained to all appearance the same God-fearing man as before, and would doubtless have continued to do so had he not had a very sinful and impious nephew. This nephew, the son of Nicolas' brother, had been to college and was now expanding his knowledge at the University. The mere fact that Nicolas' brother had been foolish enough to send his son to College was in itself inexcusable. Nicolas teased his brother about it every time they met. "Whatever use is a College to a farmer's son? Isn't there enough soil for him to plough? Think of the money it costs! Isn't it maddening? Didn't Nicolas' sons, one of whom was bailiff and the other chairman of the Borough Council, get on splendidly on mere board-school education?"

In fact the brother did not dare to tell Nicolas how much his son's studies cost for fear it might send him crazy.

Add to this that the young student had abjured the faith of his fathers, and that in his youthful innocence he did not feel the necessity of keeping his heterodox ideas to himself. At twenty years one is inclined to sing out, and the student sang out even against his dominating uncle. They quarrelled continually, and always about religion. Both were short-tempered and inclined to be abusive, and the result of their discussions remained at zero or even below. The only positive consequence was to fill Nicolas with an inextinguishable hatred of and contempt for his nephew.

Such was the state of affairs when once they entered into a heated argument about whether the Japanese could ever expect to enter the Christian heaven. Nicolas, as a true Christian, declared that the Japanese

would have to be converted to Christianity, firstly, in order to become civilized in the true sense of the term, and, secondly, to become entitled to eternal bliss. The student, however, contended with great emphasis that the Japs had no use whatever for Christianity; that they were highly civilized already; that they had acquired their civilization without the aid of Christianity; and that Japan was never likely to become a Christian country. As for the eternal bliss referred to he considered that so extremely problematic that no sane Jap would ever dream of accepting Christianity on that account.

This, particularly the expression that the Japanese had no use for Christianity, made Nicolas wild with rage. He reviled his nephew in very offensive language, and suggested that he was out of his mind. The nephew on his part returned the compliment and had a great deal to say about humbugs, charlatans, hypocrites, and rogues, etc. He declared religion to be merely a mask, a disguise wherewith to cover up all kinds of base inclinations and uncleanness.

From this day forward the two antagonists did not recognize one another. They became enemies for life. At least was this the case with old Nicolas, who implored God every night, during a decade, that he would in his grace let the Devil take his nephew. He did not, it is true, make use of this particular expression, but such was the purport of his prayers. At all events he asked God specifically to strike his godless, blasphemous nephew with diseases and adversities of every kind.

And, indeed, for a long time it looked as if God really answered the prayers, because the young man met with a long array of sorrows and adversities, many of which he brought upon himself. He led a rather riotous life, contracted a nervous ailment, neglected his studies, and was at the brink of perdition.

The old Nicolas rejoiced in his heart and praised God for having answered his prayers. He did not forget either to deride his old brother over the son's misfortunes whenever he met him.

But the wheel of fortune suddenly turned in favour of the young man. He secured an advantageous situation, and, moreover, entered on some very successful business speculations which in a short while made him many times richer than his uncle, who was now about eighty years of age. Finally, he became the managing director of a big concern, and built for himself a large residence in his native village. This was much more than his old uncle could bear. God seemed to have mocked him, and he became a renegade and heathen. The seed of doubt and unbelief implanted in him had suddenly grown into a big tree. Ungodly, irritable, and avaricious, he lived on for a few years. Then he had a quarrel with a neighbour about a ditch, and was ordered by the court to pay damages. This served as the proverbial straw which breaks the camel's back. Forsaken by God and a victim to adversity, he could not face life any longer, and one dismal winter morning he put his head through a noose and hanged himself.

ALBIN YTTERLUND.

Translated from the Swedish by A.D.

CREATION.

No longer I'll complain
That knowledge brings no joy,
That all the art I gain
Is cunning to destroy.
Destroyers, we create;
Creating, we undo.
All things that now are great
Out of destruction grew.

—Douglas Colt, "The New Beginnings."

Correspondence.

FOOTE'S TABLE-TALK.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In recording "Table-Talk" what an opportunity is given to pour out quantities of journalistic gush making the subject of it a superman or—a plagiarist. All the smart sayings, however worn and ancient, and by whomsoever uttered, are put into his mouth. Foote's "Table-Talk," by "Mimnermus," of July 4, can hardly be said to be an exception to this. I have read the article two or three times, but fail to find anything that has not been common property for years. The very first *bon-mot* "Mimnermus" treats us to was at least fifty years old when Foote died, and must have been particularly smart for a lad of sixteen. However, on reading over again the other day the article on Swinburne in *Satires and Profanities*, I came across the following passage: "were it not for Mr. C. H. Bennett, one would say that there was no blood at all left in Mr. Punch when the great Leech dropped off. The article is dated 1866. A. G. B.

SIR VICTOR HORSLEY.

SIR,—I think there are many Freethinkers who would prefer to have seen put on record testimony to Sir Victor Horsley's Christianity rather than his Agnosticism. Horsley's support and practice of vivisection are well known to those who interest themselves in this subject, and it is to be regretted that the wider and humaner view in regard to our treatment of animals which usually accompanies the rejection of a morally stifling creed was not shared by him.

V. WILSON.

COLERIDGE ON GHOSTS.

Define a vulgar ghost with reference to all that is called ghost-like. It is visibility without tangibility; which is also the definition of a shadow. Therefore, a vulgar ghost and a shadow would be the same; because two different things cannot properly have the same definition. A *visible substance* without susceptibility of impact, I maintain to be an absurdity. Unless there be an external substance, the bodily eye cannot see it; therefore, in all such cases, that which is supposed to be seen is, in fact, *not* seen, but is an image of the brain. External objects naturally produce sensation; but here, in truth, sensation produces, as it were, the external object. In certain states of the nerves, however, I do believe that the eye, though not consciously so directed, may, by a slight convulsion, see a portion of the body, as if opposite to it. The part actually seen will be common association seem the whole; and the whole body will then constitute an external object, which explains many stories of persons seeing themselves lying dead. Bishop Berkeley once experienced this. He had the presence of mind to ring the bell, and feel his pulse; keeping his eye still fixed on his own figure right opposite to him. He was in a high fever, and the brain image died away as the door opened. I observed something very like it once at Grassmere; and was so conscious of the cause, that I told a person what I was experiencing, whilst the image still remained. Of course, if the vulgar ghost be really a shadow, there must be some substance of which it is a shadow. These visible and intangible shadows, without substance to cause them, are absurd.—Coleridge, "Table Talk."

Obituary.

We regret to record the death, after a long and painful illness, of Mr. R. E. Mason, in his sixty-first year. Mr. Mason was a highly-respected member of the South London Branch of the National Secular Society, being a convinced and consistent Freethinker. He was cremated at the West Norwood Crematorium on Friday, July 23, when a Secular Service was conducted. We extend to the bereaved family our sincere sympathy in their loss.

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.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): No Meeting.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): No Meeting.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15 and 6.30, Mr. H. B. Johnson.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. Burke, A Lecture.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—Ramble to Stoke Common and District. Conducted by Mr. N. Lidstone. Train from Marylebone, 10.25. Take return ticket to Gerrard's Cross (3/4½).

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Youngman's Rooms, 19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds): Every Sunday at 6.30.

The LEEDS BRANCH

OF THE

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Appeals to all Freethinkers in Leeds and District to join them in making a strong and healthy Branch in Leeds. Meetings are held each Sunday evening, at 6.30 p.m., at Youngman's Fisheries, 19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds, where all Freethinkers will be welcomed.

Freethinkers visiting Leeds please note.

MR. ARTHUR B. MOSS, the well-known and popular Freethought Advocate, is open to accept Engagements to Lecture in London and the Provinces, commencing September next. He is also open to give Dramatic Recitals from the works of Shakespeare, Shelley, Tennyson, Hood, Buchanan, and other favourite poets.—For Dates and Terms please address 42 Ansdell Road, Queens Road, Peckham, London, S.E. 15.

FOR SALE.—*Encyclopædia Britannica*. Ninth and Tenth Editions; 35 vols.; Cloth; in good condition. £9 9s. A Bargain.—Address, c/o Miss Vance, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

BRITISH GOVERNMENT SUITS. Sizes now left are especially suitable for Youths and Small Men. The price is 63s., which is less than the mere making up of cloth to-day. Satisfaction is guaranteed.—Particulars from MACCONNELL & MABE, New Street, Bakewell.

DO you use or buy Attache Locks? If so, buy from a fellow-Freethinker. I can supply you in 5 gross lots at 85s. per gross. Any quantity.—Send for Sample to R. A., c/o Freethinker Office, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

BIRTH.

ROSETTI.—On Saturday, July 24, to Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Rosetti, at 92 Whitelake Avenue, Flixton, Manchester, a daughter.

Pamphlets.

By G. W. FOOTE.

CHRISTIANITY AND PROGRESS. Price 2d., postage 1d.
 THE MOTHER OF GOD. With Preface. Price 2d.,
 postage 1d.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SECULARISM. Price 2d.,
 postage 1/4d.

THE JEWISH LIFE OF CHRIST. Being the Sepher
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