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Views and Opinions.

What is Freethought?

What do we of the *Freethinker* mean by "Freethought"? asks a new reader of this journal, and in what sense is thought "free" with us that it is not free with others? Both questions are pertinent, and worthy of attention; but we must go a little way round to answer them. In the first place, it must be admitted that the word "free" as applied to a scientific statement of fact is quite out of place. In science a thing is what it does, and the business of science is to note the "doings" of forces, and express them in terms of natural "law." To discuss whether natural forces are free or unfree is, from a scientific point of view, equal to discussing the colour of a smell or the smell of a sound. But this does not imply that freethought is meaningless. Quite the contrary. Applied to opinion, "Free" has exactly the same significance as it has in relation to such expressions as "a free man," "a free city," or "a free people." We mean in all these cases the absence of external and unessential restraint. "Freethought" says nothing in itself as to the origin of thought, or the laws of thought; all it says is that there are conditions under which thinking is coerced to a foregone conclusion, and there are others where the mind is allowed to operate in accordance with conditions determined wholly by its own nature. "Freethought" is, then, that form of thought which proceeds along lines of its own determination rather than that of authority; and its essential character is the repudiation of the right of any authority to say what form opinion shall take.

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Secular and Religious.

Now, it is specially suggestive that, as a mere matter of history, the first active manifestations of Freethought should have occurred in connection with religion. It was inevitable that this should be so; for there is no other subject in which authority plays so large a part as it does in religion. Even in the earliest times there is no special impulse towards intolerance in secular matters. These are made the subject of discussion among the most primitive societies, and in all discussion difference of opinion is assumed. Ways and means, the desirability of doing or forbearing, are all topics of

discussion among primitive peoples, so long as the subjects discussed are free from the direct control of the gods. But where the will of the gods is concerned discussion becomes an impertinence. All that is necessary is to know their wishes. And when we have the will of the gods laid down in "sacred" books, discussion, from being an impertinence, becomes a crime. Thus, from the beginning, there are two different tendencies at work. In secular affairs there is the tendency to discussion, to a give-and-take attitude of mind, and a disposition to settle opinion in accordance with ascertainable facts, and in religious matters an intolerance which results from fear of offending the gods. These two features can be detected right through history. Even to-day there is a great difference between our discussion of secular and of religious affairs.

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Christianity and Civilization.

In passing, it is significant in this connection that the first form of democratic government of which we have any clear account should have occurred in freethinking, sceptical Greece. But in both Rome and Greece the measure of toleration of difference in opinion was greater than has ever existed in this country. In Rome, to the very end of the Pagan rule, there was no legislation against opinion, as such. The holders of certain opinions might find themselves occasionally in an uncomfortable position, but it had to be upon grounds other than what was afterwards known as heresy. There existed no law against freedom of opinion, and readers of Mr. Lea's *History of the Inquisition* will recall his account of the tactics adopted by the Church in order to introduce the Christian policy of persecution. So effective was the action of the Church that centuries later we find announced as a daring discovery a principle which the Roman people had never questioned. And in Greece the development of free opinion was equally marked. Theories of Materialism and Atheism were propounded openly, and no people were ever more devoid of intolerance than the Greeks. The gods were satirized in poems and plays, and criticized in philosophies. Persecution was not unknown, but, as Professor Bury says, it was never organized. There was no organized and powerful Church to fight, and an ancient Athenian would have laughed out of existence the Christian theory that the forcible suppression of heresy and heretics was the highest of duties. We have to-day succeeded in regaining some of the freedom possessed by Old Rome and Greece, and lost through the action of the Christian Church. But if we think of what the world was, and what it is, we can form some idea of what was lost through the triumph of Christianity.

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Religion and Progress.

When the Christian Church assumed control of the Western World, it became inevitable that Freethought should take on a definitely anti-religious form. In the Christian Church, Europe had, for the first time, an organization with the avowed intention of dictating not

merely what men should, but also what they should not think. No greater tyranny than that set up by the Church of the early and Middle Ages has ever existed. In the name of religion it took some of the worst passions of men and consecrated them. The killing of heretics became the most solemn of duties. The greatest instrument of oppression and racial demoralization ever forged—the Inquisition—was fashioned for the sole purpose of rooting out obnoxious opinions. Nothing would have more astonished a citizen of old Rome or Athens could he have revisited the earth a thousand years later, than to have seen men and women condemned to death for expressing doubts concerning things that in his own day educated men and women were laughing at. Nothing would have surprised an ancient Athenian more than to have found at the beginning of the seventeenth century men of science being imprisoned, tortured, and burned for teaching cosmical theories that were being debated in the schools of Athens two thousand years before. It would have seemed to him that the world had gone insane. And so it had. And the name of the mania was Christianity.

* * *

Science and the Churches.

Whichever way men turned, with whatever subject they were concerned, the Church blocked the way. Protestant or Catholic made little difference here. In some respects the situation worsened under Protestantism. At most the Protestant substituted a dead book for a living Church. And Protestantism, for the first time in Europe, made a profession of Christianity a part of the law of the Secular State. Hitherto there had been no law in the European States compelling a profession of Christianity. The State assisted the Church, but the Church was not part of the State. And Protestantism in itself gave no promise of tolerance. In the name of religion Protestants opposed the physics of Newton as Catholics had opposed the physics of Galileo. The geology of Hutton and Lyell, the chemistry of Bayle and Dalton, the biology of Von Baer, of Lamarck, and Darwin tell the same tale. And when the desire for progress took a purely social form there was the same lesson. For while the Roman Catholic insisted upon obedience to the Church, the Protestant was hardly less insistent on the duty of obedience to a State which embodied the Church. The whole force of religion was brought to bear to induce contentment with the existing state of things rather than to the creation of improvements. And if in Protestant States control has not been so easily exercised, this is due to a cause of which Protestantism itself is a partial expression rather than to Protestantism itself. * * *

Freethought and Religion.

It is not, therefore, surprising that, having regard to what has been said, Freethought has come to have a very definite connotation in relation to religious belief. While it still retains its general significance of a protest against the authoritative enforcement of opinion, it has become definitely, and in view of all the circumstances, properly associated with an anti-religious frame of mind. That this should have been so may be taken as evidence that ultimately the stronghold of all forms of tyranny has been religion. Often against their will reformers have been driven to recognize this either in practice or in theory. It is also true that the sense of Freethought, as being definitely anti-religious, has grown up slowly. But this is what one might expect. When the term came into general use, about the end of the seventeenth century, it was used with reference to those Deists who were then attacking Christianity. But as Deism, thanks partly to Christian criticism, gave place to Atheism its

anti-religious character became definitely established. And to-day it is a mere affectation to pretend that the word has, in practice, any other actual significance. Historically, the word stands for a reasoned protest against the imposition of opinion by authority, in actuality it stands for a definite anti-religious frame of mind. It claims the right to subject all religious beliefs to the test of reason. That would be of little value to-day by itself, since all religionists agree to be guided by reason. The value of "Freethought" lies in the assertion that when tested by reason all religious beliefs break down hopelessly.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"The Menace of Materialism."

At the meeting of the London Mission Conference, held a few weeks ago in Queen's Hall, Hull, Mr. George Knight, of Bournemouth, delivered a remarkable speech on the grave dangers which threaten our land through the growing prevalence and power of Materialism. Its chief peril, according to the speaker, lies in the fact that it destroys spirituality. Unfortunately, however, Mr. Knight defines neither Materialism nor spirituality, but employs both terms in an extremely loose, vague, and unintelligible manner. Referring to the long-expected, often brilliantly predicted, but as yet unrealized, revival of religion, he attributes its non-arrival to two causes, namely, the lack of spirituality in the Churches, and the lack of any demands for it on the part of the world. We base our criticism on a column and a half report of the speech in the *Methodist Times* for July 22. Assuming the substantial accuracy of this report, and assuming also that by the "sense of the spiritual" the speaker means the belief in the objective reality of supernaturalism, and by Materialism "the mechanistic conception of life," and the individual and social behaviour to which such a conception naturally gives rise, the first criticism we have to offer is that the whole discourse is based upon an obvious fallacy. Symptoms of the need for a revival of spirituality, we are told, had been clearly discerned long before the War, but the sense of it had failed to dawn. Prior to the War, this world had become so very comfortable for everybody that few felt the need of another; and religious people got into the habit of saying that "if ever a great catastrophe overtook us, then, indeed, would come the sense of need, and God would have his chance." Then follow these amazing passages:—

The catastrophe and the opportunity arrived together, and on a vaster scale than any of us dreamed. To-day we are disappointed with one another—the Church with the world, and the world with the Church. The Church accuses the world of spiritual indifference; the world accuses the Church of spiritual inadequacy. The estimate is true: "Christianity is not in possession in this so-called Christian continent."

God never takes the initiative, and his activity is always represented as being conditioned by purely human factors. The catastrophe and the opportunity duly materialized, but as the sense of need has not yet sprung up, God can do nothing; and if God there be, one feels exceedingly sorry for him.

Now, mark, God cannot avail himself of the glorious opportunity created for him by the most fearful catastrophe on record, which, according to some, was his own "operation," because of "a strangely defective sense of the spiritual" possessed by his own people. Because they do not see him clearly enough, or believe in his power with sufficient ardour, he can neither come to them, nor do anything for them, nor yet redeem the

world. He is entirely in their hands, completely at their mercy, at once their idol and their toy.

Why is the sense of the spiritual so hopelessly defective? Simply because it is, at best, but an artificial product. No one is born with an instinct for the supernatural. Whatever sense of the spiritual, or consciousness of God, anyone may have, is the outcome of a long-cherished belief, and the belief has to be instilled mechanically into the mind in early childhood. Thus, the sense of the spiritual is a something artificially introduced into the mind which the mind never succeeds in completely assimilating. Its constant tendency is to make its escape, and it can only be retained and deepened by a never ceasing struggle. It is in the mind as a foreign, unwelcome element, which the mind ever wants to eject. Mr. Knight tacitly admits this when he says that "the Materialism to which the British temperament tends, and in which the last half of the nineteenth century wallowed, has largely infected the whole of our national life." The verbs *wallowed* and *infected*, as used by the speaker, are utterly inappropriate. It was not in Materialism, but in religion that the latter half of the nineteenth century *wallowed*; and it is not Materialism, but religion, that has largely *infected* the whole of our national life. Materialism appeared, not as a poison, or a disease, but as a remedy for the poison or disease of religion; and we are grateful to know that the remedy is proving highly efficacious. It is gradually but surely working the religious infection out of our human constitution. The consequence is that the revival of spiritual religion, so passionately prayed for, and the conditions of which are so scientifically and laboriously complied with, delays its coming. Why? Merely because natural knowledge is steadily uprooting supernatural belief. Another revival may occur, but its inevitable effect, as was that of all its predecessors, will be to weaken still further the hold of religion on the public mind.

Mr. Knight has not the faintest conception what Materialism really is or stands for. Here is the proof:—

There never was a time when men were more influenced by material things. We are putting our trust in the things that we can touch and handle and see, and the more these multiply around us the greater our danger becomes.

This charge against the age is largely false. It is true mainly in respect to Church members, who are not nearly so interested in supernatural dreams as they used to be. Still superstitious, they no longer grovel in superstition. Still nominally religious, religion is no longer dominant in their lives. That is to say, they are being slowly converted to Materialism. But Mr. Knight is in error if he thinks that Materialists put their trust only in the things they can touch and handle and see. It is true that they have been disillusioned sufficiently to discard all supernatural hopes and fears, but they still love poetry and art, and find deeper pleasure than ever in the contemplation and exemplification of the sentiments of honour, justice, comradeship, and love. Is it not a fact that the majority of those who work for the material, mental, and moral welfare of society are non-religious? In Mrs. Asquith's brilliant *Autobiography*, now appearing in the *Sunday Times*, we read that the London society, in which she has been so conspicuous a figure for many years, "is neither better nor worse than it was in the 'eighties," but that there is "much less religion" in it. Of so-called London society we neither know nor wish to know anything; but is it not an undeniable fact that whatever advance in social and economic reform has been made during the last hundred years has been almost in exact proportion to the decline of religious belief?

There may be much truth in Mr. Knight's strictures upon the present House of Commons. There may not be a Gladstone, a Beaconsfield, or a Bright there just now; but we boldly deny that the deterioration is due to the Materialism of the members, or their disbelief in spiritual standards. We are at a loss to know what spiritual standards are as applied to politics. However, with Parliament and politics we are not now concerned, but rather with purely intellectual and moral issues; and our contention is that Mr. Knight's standard of judgment is fundamentally fallacious. For example, he affirms that "in the lives of multitudes spiritual insight is not keeping pace with material knowledge"; but is he ignorant of the fact that what he calls "spiritual insight," in the religious sense, is an obvious illusion? On the other hand, if by spiritual insight is understood intellectual discernment or penetration, the affirmation is absolutely false; and certainly science gives it no support whatever. Mr. Knight quotes from a book by Sir Oliver Lodge the assertion that "we are blind and dead to much that would appeal to higher beings," which may or may not be true, for we have no knowledge of any higher beings; but whether true or not, it has no bearing whatever on the point at issue. It may be true, as Sir Oliver says, that "a dog in a picture gallery, interested in smells and corners, may represent, as in a parable, much of our own attitude to the Universe" (*Reason and Belief*, p. 100); but that would be no evidence that our intellectual insight does not keep pace with our material knowledge. Surely so far as our knowledge goes we discern and understand. Mr. Knight speaks of the "insatiable craving for gold," but forgets that the overwhelming majority of those who live for gold are deeply religious, the Materialists among them being few and far between. Sir Oliver tells us that "to ordinary popular science the moon is a dead, inert mass of volcanic rocks, without atmosphere, without life, without interest—a severe, dead monotony," but that to poets it has been something far nobler; and the poet singled out by him is not one of the great Christian poets, but Shelley, the Atheist, the apt lines quoted being—

That orb'd maiden, with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the Moon.

The truth is that Materialism, rightly understood, menaces nothing but ignorance, blind faith, shams, and humbugs.

But what is Materialism?

J. T. LLOYD.

Carlile the Courageous.

that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven —
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.
—Tennyson, "Ulysses."

THOMAS CARLYLE'S unaffected tribute to brave Walter Savage Landor, "the unsubduable old Roman," comes to mind on recalling the personality of Richard Carlile. The story of his struggles is a part of the history of Freethought, and it is a rousing romance of a hero fighting at fearful odds against tyranny, and leaving an imperishable name. Carlile's was the true soldier's temperament, supported by the unshakable principles without which no great purpose can be achieved. No misfortune disconcerted him, no defeat cowed his indomitable spirit. He could not be bullied nor frightened, although Freethought was fighting for its very existence. Superstition, effectively disguised in the ermine of the judge and the uniform of the gaoler, was strong in the land, and contemptuous of the little band of heroes and

heroines, whose evangel has revolutioned every branch of knowledge, and rewritten the intellectual history of the world. In the darkest days of the Freethought Movement, Carlile and his colleagues never lost courage, for they knew the longer they lay in prison the greater triumph would be won for the great Cause they had at heart.

Think of it! Richard Carlile himself suffered nine and a half years in prison for championing freedom of speech. His wife and other members of his family, and loyal colleagues, divided among them fifty years' imprisonment. And what a man was the leader, that vivid, vital, radiant, restless, dynamic personality, all aglow with enthusiasm, who diffused energy all about him, and whose very presence caused stimulation.

A son of the West Country, Richard Carlile was self-educated. As a boy, he collected faggots to burn in effigy Thomas Paine, the Guy Fawkes of the period, whose virile writings were in after life to influence him so greatly. For Carlile was twenty-five years old before he began to read Paine, the greatest of all pamphleteers. Henceforth he was the dauntless champion of Freethought and free speech. Taxes were then placed on knowledge, and fine and imprisonment faced all who dared to speak or write of religious or political liberty. England was then ruled by a barbarous and despotic government, but Carlile, a poor man, defied and broke the fetters of press despotism. For, remember, to him the press was not a mere purveyor of news, dirt, and scandal. It was a vehicle of ideas, a pulpit from which the evangel of liberty could be proclaimed with tongue of fire, a trumpet whose clarion note would summon men to the battle against wrong.

Alive in every fibre, Carlile was the very man to carry a forlorn hope to victory. Handcuffed and imprisoned, he roused the public conscience, and compelled the all-powerful authorities to cry "Halt!" It was impossible to suppress him; it was but punching a pillow. Whilst he was under lock and key, his wife was selling the forbidden publications. When she was dragged to gaol, her place was taken by others. When a score of men and women had been forced to prison for selling Freethought literature, the prosecuted books were sold through an aperture, so that the buyer was unable to identify the seller. Afterwards the volumes were sold by a slot-machine, probably the first of its kind.

Among the books sold were Paine's *Age of Reason*, Annet's *Life of David*, Voltaire's works, Palmer's *Principles of Nature*, and other thunderous engines of revolt. When his stocks were seized by the police, Carlile read nearly the whole of the *Age of Reason* in his speech for the defence, and gained additional publicity for the suppressed work by selling reports of his trial. Nor was imprisonment the only punishment inflicted. Fines, amounting to thousands of pounds, were imposed. To annoy his persecutors, Carlile dated his letters from prison: "the era of the carpenter's wife's son." Superior people may lift their eyebrows at such audacity; but the fiery, restless courage which accounted for it is a quality which the world can ill spare. What it can achieve needs no record; it is written on history's page in a life and actions as courageous as any enshrined in the immortal pages of Plutarch. Fighting the hosts of superstition, the victory remained with Carlile. Writing from gaol in the sixth year of his imprisonment, he was able to say: "All the publications that have been prosecuted have been, and are, continued in open sale." What matchless courage! "The sound of it is like the ring of Roman swords on the helmets of barbarians." Small wonder that the two greatest poets of his time, Keats and Shelley, recognized that he was a true hero battling for intellectual liberty.

Carlile's victory was noteworthy. He had succeeded in bringing Freethought from the study of the scholar to the man in the street. His later years were spent in comparative peace at Enfield, where he died in 1843. Twenty-three years after Carlile's death organized Freethought was an accomplished fact, and the National Secular Society was founded, the first President being the able and courageous Charles Bradlaugh. The veteran opponent of superstition was not permitted to pass without an exhibition of Christian charity. At the interment at Kensal Green Cemetery a parson appeared and insisted on reading the burial service: "We want no service over the body of our father," said Carlile's eldest son, "he lived in opposition to priestcraft, and we protest against the service being read." The parson persisted, and the last insult of the Church was hurled at the dead hero. Carlile's brave wife survived him only a few months, and she was buried in the same grave.

Thus ends the record of one who, as Browning has it, was "ever a fighter," strenuous, eager, unsparing, often bitter and hard, but he had, as was said of Byron, "the imperishable excellence of sincerity and strength." Carlile was a born leader who could make men march to victory or defeat.

MIMNERMUS.

Science and the Occult.

VIII.

(Continued from p. 492.)

Advanced investigators of Spiritualism are like sword-swallowers. They can take in with ease what no ordinary mortal can stomach. For in matters of belief, as elsewhere, "*il n'y a que le premier pas qui coute*" (it is the first step that costs). It is all a matter of practice. We in Yozgad had not yet acquired the capacity of an Oliver Lodge or a Conan Doyle, but we were getting along very well for beginners. The stage of "True believerdom" was in sight when my little flock would cease from talking about "elementary details" and concentrate their attention on the "greater truths of the World Beyond." Once a medium has been accepted as *bona fide* he has quite a nice job—as easy as falling off a log and much more amusing. *Experto Crede!*

—E. H. Jones, "The Road to En-dor," p. 24.

THE news obtained through the *Ouija* board at Yozgad was of two kinds—general and personal. The general news dealt chiefly with the War. Any "exclusive" items of news Mr. Jones received in his letters from home was published through the spook-board, and left to "Father Time and the Turkish post to bring corroboration. When corroboration arrived, the spook's statements became evidential. But this was only a small portion of the information given. The rest was guesswork, and the items which turned out to be correct were remembered afterwards as further 'evidential matter.' The rest was set aside as 'not proven,' and forgotten." The spook described a Tank, the fall of Kut, the capture of Baghdad, the great German offensive in North Italy, and more things which were subsequently proved to be correct. The personal news was largely guesswork. "The medium's usual method was to throw out a cap and watch who tried it on, as in the case of Louise and Tony. He then proceeded to make it fit. If he failed, no harm was done, for no special impression was made. The 'fishing' references were simply not understood, and forgotten. If he succeeded, it was another piece of evidential matter. These were bows drawn at a venture."

One of the most successful *coups* was achieved by the Hospital House spook, through the repetition of a long story, told months before, in extreme confidence by the victim, under the influence of the flowing bowl. The medium risked everything on the chance that the teller had forgotten his individual avowal, as confidences given

under the influence of wine usually are forgotten, and he won. "The sitter—hitherto a sceptic—was afflicted with exceeding great alarm and despondency. He approached the two enthusiasts (Edmunds and Munday), who kept the records of the *seances* for the future benefit of the Psychical Research Society, and got the *seance* wiped off the slate! Then he departed—a True Believer!" It was a common trick of both the mediums to store up trivial incidents mentioned in conversations, and then spring them upon the authors some weeks or months later, at a suitable opportunity. Says the author:—

The medium simply waited for the victim to enter the room and then the glass wrote: "Hello, Tom (or Dick or Harry). Here you are. I haven't seen you since we met at the Galle Face," or the Swanee River, or whatever place Tom happened to have mentioned. Whereupon, for a sovereign, the surprised Tom would ejaculate: "Heavens above! that must be old Jack Smith!" The spook then saved up old Jack Smith for a future use. And so the story grew. Next time it would be: "Hello, Tom. I'm Jack Smith. Remember the Galle Face, old chap?"

The "non-evidential" matter also turned out a howling success. We got in some very fancy work in our description of "spheres." Nearly a year later (1918) Sir Oliver Lodge's book *Raymond* reached the camp, and in it was found corroboration for many of our flights of imagination. It was known that none of us had been "spookists" before. So in a sense, and for our camp, even the non-evidential matter became evidential. The resemblances between the utterances of our spooks and the trivialities in *Raymond* were so manifest that the genuineness of our performances was considered proved. Who said two blacks never make a white? Indeed, we were considered to have advanced human knowledge further than Lodge. For not only had we got into touch with the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th spheres, but also with one unknown to other spiritualists—the *minus one* sphere, where dwell the souls of the future generations who have not yet entered this Vale of Tears. There were plenty of "literary" men in the camp. Nobody recognized Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird* in a new setting!¹

As Mr. Jones points out, once the authority of the spook is established, everything comes easy. Then the medium stands in the same relation to the believer that the parent does to the child. The father tells the children a tale about "elephants" or "tigers" or "princesses," or anything he can think of to arouse their interest, and he doesn't go very far without a question; and when that is answered there are two more questions, and the linked answers comprise the story. Nobody questions the credibility of the story, because "father tells it." In like manner, says Mr. Jones,—

What the parent is for the child, the medium is for the "believer." The gentle art, as Hill (my ultimate partner in the game) and I know it, is merely a matter of shifting the authorship of the answers from yourself to some Unknown Third, whose authority has become as unquestionable to the "sitter" as the father's is to the child. Once that is achieved the problem in each case is precisely the same. It consists in answering questions in a manner satisfactory to the audience. I also find there is no fundamental difference in the material required for the "links." Granted the "authority," the same sort of stuff pleases them all alike, children and grown-up "sitters." If you have ever watched a true believer at a sitting you will know exactly what I mean; and if you can describe the palace of an imaginary princess, you can also describe the sixth, or seventh, or the eighth "sphere." But, of course, you must always be careful to call it a "palace" in the one instance, and a "sphere" in the other.²

¹ E. H. Jones, *The Road to En-dor*, p. 42.

² E. H. Jones, *The Road to En-dor*, p. 11.

The method of the professional medium is exactly that of Mr. Jones. The circle is formed, the medium goes into a trance and describes the spirit of an old man with a white beard, or a young man with dark hair, as being present. If anyone has lost a friend or relative possessing either of these characteristics, then they recognize the spirit. If not then others are described until the cap fits somebody, and then a message is delivered, through the medium, that the spirit is quite happy in its new sphere, and the survivors are not to mourn, etc.—the old, old story. In *The Revelations of a Spirit Medium*, we read that a wire gauze mask placed in front of a handkerchief made luminous by phosphorus and projected through the opening of the cabinet was "recognized by dozens of persons as fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, cousins, sweethearts, wives, husbands, and various other relatives and friends." Each one sees what he expects to see, what appeals to his interests the most intensely. What the unprejudiced observer recognizes as the flimsy disguised form of the medium the believer transforms into the object of his thoughts and longings. Only let the form be vague enough, the light dim enough, the emotions upon a sufficient strain, and that part of perception in which the external image is deficient will be readily supplied by the subjective tendencies of each individual. In the presence of such a mental attitude the possibilities of deception are endless.¹

Then, again, the medium has a great advantage over a conjurer in bringing in the aid of religious awe and mystery. In the *Report of the Seybert Commission on Spiritualism* we read that at the regular meetings held in the American cities: "This unaffectedly religious character of these *seances* cannot fail, I think, to strike even the most indifferent." The Report continues:—

The quiet hush; the whispered conversation; the darkened room; the darker drapery of the mysterious Cabinet, with its untold possibilities; the subdued chords of the dim melodeon; the soothing tones of familiar hymns, in which all voices join; the words full of assurance of a deathless life, of immortal love, of reunion with earthly idols, not lost, but gone before only a very little distance, and now present and impatient for the Medium's trance to enable them to return radiant with love and joy—all these conspire to kindle emotions deeply religious in hearts that are breaking under blows of bereavement, and of such, as I have said, the majority of the audiences are composed. Every effort is made by the Mediums to heighten the effect. Before entering the Cabinet to undergo her mysterious trance, the Medium generally makes a short address, reminding the circle that this is a solemn hour, that here is the forecourt of the world beyond, thronged with living Spirits, eager to return, bearing visible, tangible assurance of immortality and of enduring love, and that the mysterious agency, whereby they return, is greatly aided by a sympathetic harmony in the circle, and so forth. The Medium then enters the Cabinet; the curtains close; the light is lowered; the organ sounds some solemn chords, gliding into the hymn, "Nearer, my God, to Thee," which all join in singing. At its close there is a hush of anticipation; and that nature must be unimpressionable indeed, that is not stirred when the dark, heavy folds of the curtains of the Cabinet are discerned to be tremulously moving; and, as they gently part, disclose a figure veiled from head to foot in robes of white.²

The same writer says that, again and again, he has seen men lead round the circle the materialized spirits of their wives. Fathers have taken round their

¹ J. Jastrow, *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, pp. 130-131.

² *Preliminary Report of the Seybert Commission on Spiritualism*, pp. 148-149.

daughters, and widows sob in the arms of their dead husbands, while

Before me, as far as I can detect, stands the very Medium herself, in shape, size, form, and feature true to a line, and yet, one after another, honest men and women at my side within ten minutes of each other, assert that she is the absolute counterpart of their nearest and dearest friends, nay, that she is that friend.

Upon one occasion he was taken to the Cabinet by a woman and introduced to her dead husband; upon returning to their seats he asked:—

"Are you *sure* you recognized him?" whereupon she instantly retorted, with much indignation, "Do you mean to imply that I don't *know* my husband?"

Again at another *seance*, a woman, a visitor, led from the Cabinet to me a Materialized Spirit, whom she introduced to me as "her daughter, her dear, darling daughter," while nothing could be clearer to me than the features of the Medium in every line and lineament.¹

The light is always very dim at these *seances*, and it is made especially dim when a spirit leaves the Cabinet, so much so that he was quite unable to read the numbers on his watch which were unusually large and pronounced.

(To be continued.) W. MANN.

What Have Ye to Offer?

THE hurrying, scurrying, rush for results and rewards that are the hall-mark of the modern world often causes the inquirer into the aims of Freethinkers to pose the question: "What have you to offer?" An answer is at once of supreme importance and of supreme difficulty. A thousand-and-one answers have been given, yet none is entirely satisfactory. One may answer "Truth," but truth is not the end; it is but the beginning. Another may answer "Tolerance," but tolerance is but the shadow of intolerance, and is as hard to bear. But what the inquirer desires to learn is what substance or shadow of pleasure have you to offer. Have you a paradise, a Nirvana, a happy hunting-ground, or the black-eyed maidens of Mohammed? Have you even the prospect of more privileges for the submerged tenth, more purple for the proletariat, which Socialist reformers have to offer? And to these we must answer "No"; we can offer neither privilege nor Paradise.

For *self* we can offer nothing; for *posterity* all. Are we, then, a band of altruists searching for a Utopia that others shall enjoy? No! not altruists, but philanthropists, in the purest sense of the word: we are "lovers of Man." Round our banner are ranged those who can neither be cajoled by eternal bliss nor browbeaten by infernal suffering; those who sacrifice their to-day for their children's to-morrow, and those who see clearly where the only road to freedom lies.

Men shall mock at me imploring them to lay aside their struggles and strivings for wealth, and power, and position. They "take the Cash in hand and waive the rest"; but I tell you that the preservation of self will be the downfall of humanity. And that is what religion, with its heaven and hell, its angels and devils, its harps and pitchforks, offers you. It offers You salvation and damnation to the rest of the world. And the internecine conflicts that this Gospel has engendered has sent millions into oblivion—and shall send millions more. Only on a basis of Social Morality—a morality that is inherent in all animated life can the future of man be built.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

But Social Morality, the chain that bound man to man and tribe to tribe, was broken by the imposition of Deity, the supreme Guide of Destinies, the only Bestower of blood, and the eventual Punisher of Evil. This external Goad has shattered the whole instinctive clinging-together of man, and has made Man the only animal that kills its kind for the mere desire of propitiating something, the existence of which is doubtful.

It is this Social Morality we aim at. This free union of free individuals for the benefit of free humanity. Don't you see, Oh Questioner, that there never can be physical freedom while there exists mental bondage, and that only by attacking the highest can we make free the lowest? Don't you see that every social reform *must* eventually strike at the Supreme Slave-driver? And yet, *we have nothing to offer!* Oh, man, take a lesson from the insect that, in its last stage, spends its few last hours in searching for a safe place to deposit the eggs that shall be its posterity's food. And you talk to me of the necessity of Religious Morality and its creed of Self. Are we less than these insects? Yes, fettered by the morality of God, we are less. We eat, drink, and are merry, and think not of the morrow.

We Materialists offer you the prospect of an "Earthly Paradise." You may not enjoy it, but someone will—your children, or your children's children. It is worth fighting for, worth suffering for, to know you are a MAN, not the slave of non-existent omnipotence. There is your reward, O Brother, and who can offer you a greater?

H. C. MELLOR.

SKY PILOTS.

You have so debilitated the minds of men and women by your promises and your dreams that many a generation must come and go before Europe can throw off the yoke of your superstition. But we promise you that they shall be generations of strenuous battle. We give you all the advantages that you can get from the sincerity and pious worth of the good and simple among you. We give you all that the bad among you may get by resort to the poisoned weapons of your profession and your traditions—its bribes to mental indolence, its hypocritical affectations in the pulpit, its tyranny in the closet, its false speciousness in the world; its menace at the death-bed. With all these you may do your worst, and still humanity will escape you, still the conscience of the race will rise away from you; still the growth of brighter ideals and a nobler purpose will go on, leaving ever further and further behind them your dwarfed finality and leaden, moveless stereotype. We shall pass you by on your flank; your fiercest darts will only spend themselves on air. We will not attack you as Voltaire did; we will not exterminate you; we shall explain you. History will place your dogma in its class, above or below a hundred competing dogmas, exactly as the naturalist classifies his species. From being a conviction it will sink to a curiosity, from being the guide to millions of human lives it will dwindle down to a chapter in a book. As history explains your dogma, so science will dry it up; the conception of law will silently make the conception of the daily miracle of your altars seem impossible, the mental climate will gradually deprive your symbols of their nourishment, and men will turn their backs on your system, not because they confuted it, but because, like witchcraft or astrology, it has ceased to interest them. The great ship of your church, once so stout and fair, and well-laden with good destinies, is become a skeleton ship; it is a phantom hulk, with warped planks and sere canvas, and you who work it are no more than the ghosts of dead men, and at the hour when you seem to have reached the bay, down your ship will sink like lead or like stone, to the deepest bottom.—*John Morley, "Miscellanies."*

The name of Infidel is applied to the best of men; the wisest, the most spiritual and heavenly of our brothers.

—*Theodore Parker.*

Acid Drops.

We are writing this on Tuesday morning, just before going to press, and are, therefore, in ignorance of what the promised statement of the Prime Minister will be like. But it is evident that we are on the brink of a formal war with Russia, as distinguished from the informal war that has been going on for so long. If that war eventuates we have no hesitation in saying that a more unjustifiable one has not been fought for many years. This is not the place in which to enter a discussion on the policy which has brought the country into so serious a position, our purpose in noticing the matter is to call attention to the fact that the churches, so clamorous when their sectarian interests are concerned, and so loud in their claim to direct the moral sense of the country, have remained absolutely dumb in the face of this threatened danger. Their share in the business has been to give voice to all sorts of tales that would serve to mislead the people, and to supply the country with all sorts of misleading information about what is actually going on in Russia. But on behalf of peace, not a word. This is not, be it noted, a question of supporting or condemning "Bolshevism," of the nature of which the ordinary Englishman is completely ignorant. It is a question of leaving the Russians free to determine their own form of government without pressure of any kind from the outside. We could bear with the government of the Czar, we could remain perfectly quiet while Poland launched an attack on Russia, and it is monstrous to drag an already exhausted country into war now that Poland is suffering the consequences of its own inexcusable folly. And hitherto all that our European statesmen have been able to do is to make war, but neither singly nor collectively do they seem to have enough intelligence to make a decent peace.

The Vicar of East Brent, Somerset, has suggested abandoning the harvest thanksgiving festival this year. Perhaps he has in mind the Scotch Elder who explained his absence from a similar function on the ground that as the harvest had been a bad one he didn't wish to approach the Lord in a spirit of sarcasm.

At the unveiling of the statue of Abraham Lincoln in Parliament Square, a hymn was sung with the lines:—

In the glory of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
And he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free.
Poor Abraham Lincoln was a Freethinker.

We have no intention of joining with those who will doubtless cry out that the suicide of Dr. Crawford, of Belfast, was proof of the danger of dabbling in Spiritualism. Spiritualism has not driven nearly so many insane as has Christianity, and its consequences have not been nearly so mischievous. And it may well be that certain things attract the unstable temperament rather than the irritability resulting from these things. All the same, the fact that Dr. Crawford was of that particular type does afford some ground for examining his conclusions concerning Spiritualism with the greater care. When a man's mind easily loses its balance, he is more likely to be the dupe of his prejudices and predispositions.

We do not wish what we have said about Christianity to be misunderstood. In a general way insanity may be said to result from overtaxing the brain. And the overwhelming majority of Christians we have come across are not at all likely to run risks in that direction.

General Booth is alarmed at the tone of Labour throughout the world. He says that when he reads his Bible he finds the command, "Six days shalt thou labour," and people will not act up to it. The Bible is as out of date in this respect as in others. We usually work ourselves about seven days a week, but we cannot blame others who find five days enough. But doubtless, if people would work six full days each week, and spend the seventh praying, the world would be much better—from the General's point of view.

"I want every man and woman in this hall who can swear that they have been in touch with their departed dead to stand up," said Sir Arthur Conan Doyle at a Spiritualistic meeting at the Holborn Restaurant the other day. And nearly all of them stood up. Wonderful! Why, we have seen more than double that number in a single meeting ready to swear that they have been in touch with Jesus. Sir Arthur evidently does not realize that to swear one has a belief, and to prove the belief to be soundly based are two different things. Sir Arthur thought the incident possessed extraordinary significance because the assembly was made up of educated people. Perhaps Sir Arthur will next inform us what superstition has *not* been supported by educated people at some time or other. His notions of evidence are decidedly peculiar, and they explain much.

The authoritative way in which newspaper writers say the absolutely wrong thing imposes upon all less informed than themselves. Thus, a leader writer in the *Daily Telegraph* for August 4, referring to the demand of a congress of coloured people that the white man should leave them to govern themselves, decided that this could not be, as Africa had always been governed by whites, or other non-black races, and added, "so the tale has gone on through the centuries." Winwood Reade called the story of Africa the *Martyrdom of Man*." But Winwood Reade did nothing of the kind, and the remark shows inexcusable ignorance of so well-known a book. Reade's *Martyrdom of Man* is really a sketch of civilization, and is a record of man's martyrdom to the twin superstitions of war and religion. Africa is merely used in the book as an illustration.

It would not, possibly, have done for the *Daily Telegraph* to have told the truth about this matter. And, indeed, Winwood Reade's is a case that illustrates the working of religious bigotry. Winwood Reade made some very important discoveries in Africa, and a very high compliment is paid him by Darwin in a foot-note in the *Descent of Man*. But one may pick up history after history of African explorations without finding his name mentioned. It has suited the game of religion to put in the forefront missionary men and explorers who have mouthed Christianity, and to suppress men of Reade's opinions. Hence the story of Africa is written nowadays without reference to Reade, except when it is written by men who show independence of mind, even when writing history.

Winwood Reade's case is an illustration of many others. How often, when one is reading of the development of modern democracy, does one find recognition of the work and influence of men like Paine and Godwin, and the band of Freethinking reformers at the opening of the nineteenth century. Their names are generally ignored, and some milk-and-water echo of their teachings, coming through the mouth of a writer of the Charles Kingsley type, selected as the type of a great reformer. One day, perhaps, someone will arise with the courage, the time, and the ability to do justice to the band of Freethinkers to whom we have referred, and who, more than any other group, laid the foundations of the modern world.

The Rev. Lynn Harold Hough, Ph.D., D.D., President of the North Western University, Chicago, is with us once more, occupying prominent pulpits in London and the provinces. He is famous for his endless quotations, real or imaginary, and for his incorrigible optimism. In a sermon which appeared in the *Christian World Pulpit* for August 4, he says that "many people have been ready to celebrate the obsequies of religion," and then declares that what the alleged coffin contained each time was not a corpse but a seed. With the utmost facility President Hough idealizes Christian history. Every now and then, he admits, Christianity, through well-defined causes, has fallen upon evil times; but it soon recovered lost ground, and marched on to greater victories than ever. This is a purely fanciful picture drawn by a man whose wish is ever father to the thought.

President Hough warns us that "historically it has been a dangerous thing to arrange for the obsequies of religion," because of the amazing recuperative powers it possesses; but more amazing still is the quality of the reverend gentleman's argument, which is at once wonderfully ingenious and essentially fallacious. It is true that "we are living in an age of unrest and confusion and disillusion." Civilization lies about our feet a complete wreck; but this collapse is the best thing for religion that could have happened, because it supplies it with its most golden opportunity.

This may be an ingenious argument, but it is, at bottom, equally disingenuous. Nearly thirty years ago the late Robert Buchanan, the distinguished novelist and poet, startled the public by a declaration of his complete renunciation of the Christian religion, and assigned his reasons for such a step. At once, all the pulpits of the land rang with bitter denunciation of such a wicked action; but the chief argument against the man of letters was that Christianity and civilization were so vitally and indissolubly linked together as cause and effect that the disappearance of the former would necessarily involve that of the latter. Dr. Hough, however, thinking that the fall of civilization is an accomplished fact, has the temerity to regard this catastrophe as Christianity's grandest opportunity. He holds a professional's brief for religion, and is resolved to argue it against all odds. Can such conduct be honest?

The credulity of Christians generally and of clergymen in particular is almost miraculous. In the *British Weekly* for August 5, we are informed by a London Presbyterian minister, on the authority of another Presbyterian minister, now dead, that President Lincoln "was in the habit of attending the mid-week evening prayer-meeting in Washington at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church." The dead minister is reported to have continued thus:—

Very quickly the "place-hunters" found this out, and beset the President at the church. He regretfully told the minister that he must give up coming to the meetings. "No, Mr. Lincoln," said the minister, "you need not do that. You can sit in the vestry in the dark with the door open, and hear all that is said." "Well, Doctor," said Lincoln, "I will do that; I do not care to hear the men talk at the meeting; but I do love to hear them pray."

Then the London Presbyterian minister adds, on his own unverified authority: "One of the secrets of Lincoln's power was prayer." Lincoln was cruelly murdered in 1865, and that strange story sees the light in 1920. We have it on the written testimony of those who lived on most intimate terms with the great President that he never made any confession of faith in Christ, nor had any belief in the religion that bears his name. How men will lie to the glory of God!

At a meeting in connection with the Roman Catholic Congress at Liverpool, Cardinal Gasquet said he lunched recently with Mr. Lloyd George, and he was "clamorous that Catholic records of Wales should be published." He also said that the Welsh people were still Catholic at heart, and had never assimilated the Reformation. We do not think that anyone is inclined to take Mr. Lloyd George as an authority on history, about which subject he appears to be profoundly ignorant, and we may leave his late Nonconformist friends to deal with his statements about the Welsh people. There is little enough in either direction for them to be proud of. The only good thing about Protestantism, when compared to Catholicism, is that it is less coherent, and its divisions tend to minimize its capacity for evil. The Roman Church is only what the Protestant Church would be if it had the chance.

But if Cardinal Gasquet correctly represents Mr. Lloyd George, the expression comes as a warning that may well be taken in time. For after having started as an upholder of rabid Nonconformity, it would seem to indicate that the Prime Minister is now ready to conclude a deal with the Roman Church—perhaps in the hope of saving the political situation. And if that be so, it is only one more instance of how useful politicians find religion as a means of drugging

or dragooning the people. And to that end no religion is quite so useful as Roman Catholicism. We are at present witnessing one "deal" with the Churches in the matter of education; perhaps we may see another on a more extended scale.

The Bishop of Milwaukee, U.S.A., came all the way to London to tell us that God and man have always been playing hide and seek with each other. "God is ever trying to reach down to man, and man is ever shutting out God by a barrier of sin and unbelief." When God seeks man, man runs away from him and conceals himself among the trees, and when man cries out for God, God hides himself behind the black clouds of mystery. This is sheer nonsense; and yet when a man can dress it up in the fine feathers of rhetoric, he commands crowded congregations and enjoys a big salary. To such an extent are we still a priest-ridden people!

Bishop Welldon says "there is no increase in the railway fare to Heaven." Maybe! But the dear clergy are charging more for funeral services, and, after all, we have never heard of any rush of intending passengers.

A daily paper editor calls the lotus "the seal of the god Confucius." These charming editors are so kind-hearted that they will even deify the Gaiety chorus.

Professor Soddy, of Oxford, says "the most fervid mystic could hardly truthfully maintain that Christ or Buddha or Mahomet, to say nothing of their professional interpreters or misinterpreters, ever guessed at the secrets of the life-cycle which modern scientific research has revealed." This is Oxford mixture, but it will pass.

Mrs. Asquith is writing her Autobiography in the columns of the *Sunday Times*, and in the instalment for August 1 she tells of a dinner party at which she met Huxley. She says that Huxley began "by saying God was only there because people believed in him, and that the fastidious incognito 'I am that I am' was His idea of humour! I felt vexed and shocked when he ended a blasphemous tirade by saying he did not believe any man of action had ever been inspired by religion." We should much like to know what was the character of the "blasphemous tirade," and are inclined to think Mrs. Asquith's memory must have misled her somewhat. We quite believe that Huxley would have spoken much more freely about religion at a dinner party than in public, but so, we think, would Mrs. Asquith. And if Huxley really said that no man of action was ever inspired by religion, that was simply stupid. For men are inspired by anything and everything. Quality is a quite foreign quantity in that connection.

Christians pretend to rely upon the efficacy of prayer for material benefit, but, usually, it is found that the most time-honoured advertising wheezes are used. At Hove, Sussex, the local Salvation Army corps left envelopes at the houses with a printed intimation: "Kindly put your gift inside. God bless you!"

Billy Sunday, the base-ball evangelist, has, according to the American papers, accepted nomination for the Vice-Presidency of the United States. Fortunately there is no sign that the United States will accept Billy.

In his Jowett Lecture, M. Paul Sabatier, the distinguished French Protestant divine, makes the significant admission that the Churches are "historic creations," whose origin we know. During the War all the Churches, Catholic and Protestant alike, proved dismal failures. While frankly asserting this, M. Sabatier maintains that a new religious atmosphere was created by and persisted throughout the War; but it must be borne in mind that his attitude towards Christianity is similar to that of Matthew Arnold and Mrs. Humphrey Ward, and that to him religion means little more than patriotism and social service.

To Correspondents.

C. LEWIS.—Truth is the conformity of ideas with facts. Facts—real facts—are both persistent and insistent, and, in time, will claim recognition as against assumed facts. That is what we meant when we said that given time truth will ultimately triumph over falsehood. The statement does not touch, save in a very indirect manner, the question of pessimism or optimism.

W. SKEATE.—Thanks for document, a copy of which we already possess. We may comment on the matter next week.

J. B. STUBBS.—You will find in our list of publications the answer to your question. Mr. Cohen's *Deity and Design* deals specifically with the question of deity, as does his *God and Man*, and he hopes soon to issue a larger work on Atheism and Theism.

MARY LESTER.—We did not know the lady you name, but she was evidently an admirable character. It is always interesting to come across those who knew some of the great fighters such as Bradlaugh. It brings one into a kind of living relationship with what has been, and Bradlaugh had the capacity for evoking profound friendship in both men and women. That is, perhaps, the greatest compliment to his innate worth.

D. MACCONNELL.—The passage you send us from the introduction to the *Masterpiece Library of Short Stories* is unadulterated rubbish. We do not know who Edward Wright—the writer of the essay—is, but if he is responsible for the stories selected, we should be very sorry to house a selection of his choosing. The man who sets out with the assertion that the Bible is the greatest literature in the world, and who thinks that there is greater dramatic force in the New Testament than in the Old, is hopeless. He is merely repeating the stupidities of the Salvation Army or the Christian Evidence platform.

R. B. F.—We do not of necessity endorse the opinions of all our contributors. Each article is signed, and each writer is responsible for his own views. And we do not consider it a wise or justifiable policy to interfere with a writer's expression of opinion—so long as it is properly expressed.

E. C. MATTHEWS.—Thanks for copy, may comment on it in our next.

S. SHARP.—See "Acid Drops." One day when we can enlarge the *Freethinker* we may devote a couple of columns weekly of clerical utterances without any sort of comment. It would form a very interesting study in psychology.

J. F. HAMPSON.—Thanks for pamphlet. Will prove very useful. *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.

Lambeth Borough Council has decided to ask the L.C.C. to allow games to be played in the parks on Sundays. We are pleased to record the fact, and we wonder for how long will the people submit to be shut out of their own playgrounds by a number of councillors who are terrified by the more bigoted of their constituents.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton is writing in the *Daily Telegraph* on "The New Jerusalem." In the course of the article he has something to say of Mohammedanism, about which his information appears to be of the English guide-book order, and

seems to be penned with a desire to make Christianity stand out favourably by contrast. Mohammedanism, he says, belongs to the desert, as though that were more applicable to Islam than it is to Judaism or Christianity. But it is said with a purpose, for "Wherever there is chivalry there is courtesy; and wherever there is courtesy there is comedy. There is no comedy in the desert." Marvellous! More than marvellous, when one remembers that "chivalry" came into Christendom from the Mohammedans; and when we recall the *Arabian Nights* with its comedy and wit. Really Mr. Chesterton should get some friend versed in Arabic to give some specimens of the humour, and comedy, and pathos of Eastern literature—particularly that associated with the Mohammedan peoples.

A logical and consistent element in Mohammedanism, says Mr. Chesterton, is vandalism. He instances Saladin using some of the stone of the Pyramids to build a fortress, and adds: "there was little in them of that double feeling, full of pathos and irony, which divided the hearts of the primitive Christians in presence of the great Pagan literature and art." Mr. Chesterton surely presumes too much on the ignorance of his readers. Mohammedanism can at least plead that it never wiped out a civilization as did Christianity. It was Christians who could see no better use for some of the finest architectural monuments of antiquity than to use them as quarries for the building of Churches. It was Christians who stamped out the art, and literature, and science, of a whole civilization, and under whose rule populous cities became howling wildernesses. When it comes to a contest in vandalism no other system can compete with Christianity.

Of course, we are not constrained to defend Mohammedanism as a religion. All religions are bad—more or less, but the claim that Christianity, so far as it possessed power, has been more favourable to civilization than has Mohammedanism, will not bear investigation. Compare the modern Roman with the ancient one, the modern Greek with the ancient, and let anyone say what 2,000 years of Christianity has done for them? Each became progressively worse as Christianity gained a greater hold on them, and if they are not to-day worse than they are, it is because other forces have operated with some degree of regenerative power. But Mr. Chesterton is writing for a Christian audience. For that audience only one thing may be said, and Mr. Chesterton says it.

We are asked to announce that the Glasgow Branch of the N. S. S. has arranged for a ramble to Blanefield on Sunday, August 22. Members and friends should meet at Killermount car terminus at 11 30 a.m. All should bring their own rations. We hope that the weather will be good-humoured, and, with this condition, a pleasant day is assured.

The summer—such as it has been—is going, and we shall soon have with us the lecturing season. We know that some of the Branches of the N. S. S. are looking forward to a strenuous campaign, and we hope to hear before long that all are filled with the same determination. Many of the war-time obstacles are still with us, and some of them are intensified, but it is useless sitting down and folding one's hands in face of them. Had we been that way inclined, the *Freethinker* and all associated with it would have come to an end before the War concluded. And we want to see the whole Party animated by the one desire to press forward. Any help that headquarters can give will be given promptly and readily. And the columns of this paper are always open for any news that will help the Cause. It makes, and never has made, any charge for its services in this direction.

We should much like to see both the North and the West of England more active. Newcastle should have some public lectures before the autumn is over, and both Bristol and Cardiff should be able to form Branches of the Society. Freethinkers in either of these places who can do anything to help this forward might communicate with Miss Vance, at the N. S. S. offices. Some lectures might then be arranged, and a start made.

The Bible and the Koran.

(Continued from p. 502).

We will take first the matter of temperance. In my pamphlet entitled *Bible and Beer* I have gone, I believe, with great thoroughness into the question of how far the Bible favours or discommends drinking. Readers who wish to study the subject carefully should master the information and arguments I have there advanced. For the present, I content myself with remarking how absurd is the attempt to found Teetotalism on the Christian Scriptures. Jesus Christ himself drank wine with his disciples. At a certain marriage feast he is said to have turned a vast quantity of water into a more exhilarating beverage. Saint Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake. In the Old Testament the Jews are told that they may spend their money on whatsoever their souls lust after, on oxen, sheep, wine, or strong drink (Deuteronomy xiv. 26). Solomon, the wisest of the sons of men, and the supposed author of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, says:—

Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more (Proverbs xxxi. 6, 7).

According to this text, the poor and unhappy should drink themselves into a state of oblivion. Nor is the prescription confined to the unfortunate. Here is another text:—

Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart (Ecclesiastes ix. 7).

In some respects the Bible might be called the drunkard's text-book. But how different is the Koran! Mohammed put drinking and gambling together as twin curses, and forbade them absolutely. In the second chapter of the Koran he says:—

They will ask thee concerning wine and lots: Answer, In both there is great sin, and also some things of use unto men: but their sinfulness is greater than their use (Sale's translation).

Some think that this text only forbids drinking to excess and too frequent gambling. But the general opinion is that even the moderate use of strong drinks by the Mohammedan is absolutely unlawful. There is a more explicit text in the fifth chapter of the Koran:—

O ye who believe, verily wine and gambling and statues and divining arrows are only an abomination of the Devil's making; avoid them; haply ye may prosper (Lane-Poole's translation).

To say that a man is a Christian is to tell us nothing as to his conduct. To say that a man is a Brahmin is to tell us, for one thing, that he does not eat anything that is killed. To say that a man is a Mohammedan is to tell us, for one thing, that he does not drink intoxicants. Even the Sultan of Turkey—weak as he is, and therefore cruel—is extremely abstemious in eating and drinking, and never takes any liquor stronger than coffee; while more than half the Christian princes of Europe know what it is to go to bed “elevated,” and to wake in the morning with a sour stomach and a heavy head.

Mohammed, like most other religious teachers, enjoined almsgiving. Old Testament passages on this virtue will readily occur to the reader's recollection. In the New Testament, at least in the teaching of Jesus, it is carried to excess. According to the Prophet of Nazareth, we should give to everyone that asketh without discrimination, and the counsel of perfection he gave to an honourable young man was to sell all he had and give to the poor. In the Koran we find the following:—

They will ask thee what it is they must give in alms. Say: Let what good ye give be for parents, and kinsfolk, and the orphan, and the needy, and the son of the road;

and what good ye do, verily God knoweth it.....If ye give alms openly, it is well; but if ye conceal it, and give it to the poor, it is better for you.

Upon this and other texts the Mohammedan doctors have based an elaborate system of charity. Alms are of two kinds—legal and voluntary. The former is exacted, sometimes in money and sometimes in kind; the latter is left to a man's own determination, but he cannot enter Paradise if he neglects this duty. “The Mohammedans, therefore,” says Sale, “esteem almsgiving to be highly meritorious, and many of them have been illustrious for the exercise thereof. Hasan, the son of Ali, and grandson of Mohammed, in particular, is related to have, thrice in his life, divided his substance equally between himself and the poor, and twice to have given away all he had: and the generality are so addicted to the doing of good that they extend their charity even to brutes.” In one way or another, a Mohammedan, unless he is too poor to spare anything for the less fortunate, is expected to expend about a tenth of his means in relieving the needy and miserable.

Saint Paul, in the noblest passage of his writings, eulogized a higher form of benevolence than almsgiving, and said that it was useless to give all his substance to feed the poor if he lacked charity. Mohammed also taught that “kind speech and forgiveness is better than alms which vexation followeth.” In the Table-Talk of Mohammed—a collection of sayings ascribed to him—there is the following:—

Think not that any good act is contemptible, though it be but your brother's coming to you with an open countenance and good humour.

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

Christian charity has too largely taken the form of death-bed benevolence. A man gave away in this world what he could not take with him to the next. No doubt this is the characteristic of human nature. At any rate, it is a very ancient phenomenon, for we find it censured in the Table-Talk of Mohammed. “A man's giving in alms one piece of silver in his lifetime,” he says, “is better for him than giving one hundred when about to die.”

We have already quoted Sale's remark, that the Mohammedans extend their charity to the brutes. This was written the better part of two hundred years ago, at a time when there was little humanity shown to the lower animals in England. The exclamation of St. Paul, “Doth God care for oxen?” is in striking contrast to some touching passages in the Table-Talk of Mohammed. We read there of an adulteress who was forgiven because she once drew water from a well in her boot, and gave it to a dog who was holding out his tongue for thirst. Also of a man who brought Mohammed a present of some young birds, whose mother had fluttered about her brood, so that the man had to put her into the carpet with them. “Put them down,” said the prophet; and then he addressed the man in this manner:—

Do you wonder at the affection of the mother for her young? I swear by Him who hath sent me, verily God is more loving to his servants than the mother to these young birds. Return them to the place from which ye took them, and let their mother be with them.

Mohammed told his followers to fear God in respect of animals, to ride them when they were fit to be ridden, and to get off when they were tired.

(The late) G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

The Nature of Morality.

GENERALLY speaking, an action is deemed moral if its effects, immediate and remote, give a balance of happiness, and immoral if its net result is unhappiness. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule: for example, needless abuse of the powers of the body is not invariably considered wrong; whilst among certain sects of Christians honest doubt, or rejection of their dogmatic teachings, is still denounced as immoral. But, such anomalies excepted, "the ultimate standards by which all men judge of behaviour are the resulting happiness or misery."

Yet this criterion of morality is often only tacit; the religionist avowedly disapproving of a wrong action not so much because of the suffering which he sees that it entails, but because he conceives it to be an act of disobedience to a divine lawgiver. And even where religion scarcely touches the imagination, the average man and woman is not sufficiently accustomed to abstract reasoning to realize vividly how any action, right or wrong, "generates consequences, internal and external, that go on branching out more widely as years progress," and which must be pleasant or painful according as the act in which they originated was good or bad. Where the connection between cause and effect is relatively simple—as in the deleterious results that follow excessive drinking—there is a realization of the unavoidable nature of the harmful effects of viciousness sufficiently forcible to be an effective deterrent with most people; but it is rarely recognized that this law of causation holds for all conduct; that every action is the cause of an endless chain of consequences, which *must* be conducive to happiness or to unhappiness according as it is wise (or moral) or unwise (or immoral).

Yet, unless we are prepared to maintain that there can be an effectless cause, or that there is no necessary connection between a certain type of causes and their effects, we are forced to the conclusion that not only do immoral actions lead to inevitable, unpleasant consequences, but that the painful result is in exact proportion to the folly of which it is the effect.

Inductive verification of the principle thus deductively established is possible. Alike in the individual, who by abuse of his constitution brings upon himself ill-health, pain, and premature death; or who by continual selfishness alienates his friends; or who by repeated utterance of untruths comes to be regarded with mistrust and disgust by those with whom he comes into contact: alike with a social class, which, as the miserable French aristocracy, or the corrupt Russian bureaucracy before the revolutions, pays a frightful price for their long-continued indifference to the sufferings of their unfortunate compatriots; and alike in the case of societies, where, for example, the justifiable nationalism of a virile people develops into an aggressive imperialism, brings them into armed conflict with neighbouring peoples, from which contest they emerge enervated and impoverished, as, among modern States, did Spain, France, and Germany; or, as in the case of the empires of antiquity, where a chattel-slave economy renders a considerable part of the population of the State largely indifferent to the fate of the political system of which they form a miserable and unimportant part, and, together with the callousness and low level of morality which such an economic system inevitably produces, renders the social system so unstable that it easily falls beneath the attacks of less civilized, yet relatively free, peoples; alike in all these cases (which are typical of classes) one may trace the invariable destructive effects of wrong conduct.

Indeed, in many cases of individual morality, one can perceive a rough quantitative relation between wrongness of conduct and its natural punishment. The greater the selfishness of a man the fewer his friends, and consequently, the smaller the amount of the enjoyment that social intercourse brings, is his: the individual who, at every opportunity, seeks to obtain an unfair advantage over his fellows, suffers similar deprivations, in proportion as he is mean in spirit: of two men of equal constitutional strength, addicted to excessive drinking (or to excess of any kind), the one who is most incontinent suffers the direst ills: the tradesman who charges an exorbitant profit loses more customers than his neighbour who charges a high, but more reasonable, rate: the unpunctual man suffers losses and inconveniences in exact proportion as he is given to the vice: and so one might multiply, *ad infinitum*, these cases where a rough quantitative relation between wrong-doing and its penalty is obvious.

Moral conduct, then, is the guidance of actions so that they may be in harmony with natural laws. Those lines of conduct which bring pain and unhappiness are those which violate some law of Nature. Among the simple, physical transgressions this truth is immediately plain; but it holds no less of the most complex cases, where the connection of cause and effect is more difficult to ascertain.

Generations of social discipline have (among other things) been weeding out those individuals least prepared to respect the rights of others, or least able to subordinate their passions to communal needs, whilst a keen intersocial struggle has steadily extirpated those communities in which the smallest amount of human sympathy (*i.e.*, community of feeling, making for communal action, and the subjection of the individual to the society), has been developed. And it is certain that this selective process will continue so long as there is humanity and society. Those societies, the constituent members of which possess the smallest amount of the distinctively human qualities, self-control, and sympathy for others, will, other things equal, always stand least chance in the intersocial struggle for existence. And through this struggle for survival, the progress, which we term moral advance, is assured.

Yet man, being a rational being, may in some degree affect social evolution—may adapt the laws of social growth to his own ends, as he does those of inorganic and organic nature—may mitigate or supplement the natural method of progress from the relatively inferior to the relatively superior through the inexorable destruction of certain varieties by the use of his powers of foresight.

If morality is the guidance of conduct in conformity with natural laws, it follows that the wider the knowledge of such laws the greater will be the inclination to act in accordance with them.

It is, however, easy to exaggerate the influence of a knowledge of science over conduct. Daily experience shows that it is not sufficient for an individual to know that a certain line of conduct will have deleterious results in order for him to renounce it. Medical men are not invariably less given to excesses than those with no knowledge of physiology and pathology. The truth is that a man is as much an emotional as a rational creature; indeed, the foundations of morality are emotional rather than rational. The sympathy which a civilized man naturally feels for his fellows, a sympathy which induces him, almost unconsciously, to subordinate most of his desires to the requirements of the community, which usually causes him to accept, without question, the opinions and prejudices of his age, is the outcome of a feeling of community between him and his

neighbours, a craving for friendship and approbation, *i.e.*, proceeds not from his reasoning but from his emotional nature.

Obviously, then, a mere extension of specialized knowledge is not going to exercise a profound direct effect over conduct, whatever indirect effects it may work by its modification of the social structure. "Knowledge is foresight, and foresight is power," Comte truly remarked, and power can as easily be abused as used wisely: a knowledge of chemistry can as well be used by the poisoner as by the chemist.

But, happily, a knowledge of science, when it ceases to be limited to one or two subjects, and becomes almost a philosophic study of nature, has a powerful, direct, emotional, effect, upon the student:—

By accumulated experiences the man of science acquires a thorough belief in the unchanging relations of phenomena.....in the invariable connection of cause and consequence.....in the necessity of good or evil results. Instead of the rewards and punishments of traditional belief, which people vaguely hope they may gain, or escape, spite of their disobedience; he finds that there are rewards and punishments in the ordained constitution of things; and that the evil results of disobedience are inevitable. He sees that the laws to which we must submit are both inexorable and beneficent. He sees that in conforming to them, the process of things is ever towards a greater perfection and a higher happiness. Hence he is led constantly to insist on them, and is indignant if they are disregarded" (*Herbert Spencer, Essays on Education*).

Moreover, as the same writer has elsewhere pointed out, (*Essay On the Origin and Function of Music*), the culture of the fine-arts (and in particular music) develops human sympathy:—

If we consider how much both our general welfare and our immediate pleasures depend upon sympathy, we shall recognize the importance of whatever makes this sympathy greater. If we bear in mind that by their fellow-feeling men are led to behave justly, kindly, and considerately to each other.....that the difference between the cruelty of the barbarous and the humanity of the civilized, results from the increase of fellow-feeling; if we bear in mind that this faculty which makes us sharers in the joys and sorrows of others, is the basis of all the higher affections.....that in friendship, love, and all domestic pleasure, it is an essential element; if we bear in mind how much our direct gratifications are intensified by sympathy.....how, at the theatre, the concert, the picture gallery, we lose half our enjoyment if we have no one to enjoy it with us; if, in short, we bear in mind that for all happiness beyond what the unfriended recluse can have, we are indebted to this same sympathy;.....we shall see that the agencies which communicate it (*i.e.*, all the production of art) can scarcely be overrated in value.

By the extension of a general culture, by the establishment of a conception of education as, not primarily a sharpening of teeth and claws for the industrial struggle, but as "a preparation for complete living," as a general development of the mind and body, we may hope to enhance the moral susceptibilities of mankind, to give a new dignity to the individual human being, to engender an operative conception of his duty to his fellows, to arouse a desire for and supply the means of attainment to a healthier and happier civilization.

W. H. MORRIS.

The epithets "Infidel" and "Atheist" have been used against almost every man who has ever done anything new for his fellow-men. The list of those who have been denounced as "Infidel" and "Atheist" includes almost all great men of science, general scholars, inventors, and philanthropists.—*Andrew D. White*.

The Mourning Habit.

ALTHOUGH the French Sunday is far more "respectable" than ours, and one sees very little of the "parson, he will come, looking glum, and talk of Kingdom Come, damn his eyes"—still, in the matter of mourning for the dead, the French are well in advance of us.

At the slightest provocation the men will rush for a black band on the arm; and for a second cousin's husband, girls will go into full mourning dress with alacrity. Not only do they wear the mourning, but they take active steps to make themselves as miserable as possible, just as we do on Sundays in England.

Quite recently, in this little town in the South of France which I inhabit, one of the brothers of a family of three, who had been in delicate health for some time, succumbed. The surviving brother and sister at once settled down to cut themselves off from the most innocent pleasures—such as tennis, boating, and any other form of healthy recreation. The sister is not going to play tennis again this year; the brother may possibly resume going out in his canoe next November, but certainly not in an outrigger until 1921.

A large family of females who live near me—consisting of the grandmother (sometimes playfully described as the "Old Dragon"), grandma's two widowed daughters, each with some daughters, totalling seven in all—have recently had a loss. As usual this summer the whole lot of them went down to the seaside. One night the "Old Dragon" passed quietly and peacefully away in her sleep, at the age of eighty-four. The rest of the family of daughters and granddaughters immediately brought the old lady home, had her buried with all ceremony, and having abandoned their holiday at the seaside, have now settled down to from six months to a year of deep black, looking glum, no tennis, and no smiling in the street.

A young man was engaged to be married. His father died suddenly. He therefore put off the marriage for a fortnight. A month later I, quite innocently, offered him a rose to put in his button-hole. He proudly refused it, pointing to the black band on his arm.

The whole idea of making ourselves as miserable as we can on the death of friends or relations is a sign of the superstition in which we are all more or less steeped. When the young, our nearest and dearest, are cut off, we cannot help grieving; but when the old, who have lived an active and useful life, pass over to the other side, we should grieve just as little as we can. Which of us, if asked beforehand, would wish our dear ones to be as miserable as they can when we die? One of the greatest consolations of the atheistical creed is the faith that after death, at all events, we shall be all right. Wearing mourning is a farce; a habit founded on superstition, adding gloom to a world which produces its own gloom in plenty without our active assistance. Whatever grief we feel is within us, and it is more dignified not to show it more than we can help; certainly not by wearing that most depressing colour—the delight of the ecclesiastics—black.

Y. C.

Atheism was supposed, and is even now supposed, to be the negation of all moral principle, of all moral foundations and bonds: if God is not, all distinction between good and bad, virtue and vice, is abolished. Thus the distinction lies only in the existence of God; the reality of virtue lies not in itself, but out of it. And assuredly it is not from an attachment to virtue, from a conviction of its intrinsic worth and importance, that the reality of it is thus bound up with the existence of God. On the contrary, the belief that God is the necessary condition of virtue is the belief in the nothingness of virtue in itself.—*Feuerbach*.

God's Book and Nature's Book.

SIR MARTIN CONWAY, the famous climber, was brought up on old-fashioned Bible lines. In his recent book, *Mountain Memories: a Pilgrimage of Romance*, he tells how, as a boy, he journeyed with his parents and sisters to Zimmerwald, in Switzerland, how he gloried in the scenery, and how he was bored by family prayers:—

Every morning, at slow leisure, after a rather late breakfast, and even on the finest days, my father gathered us into his room for Bible-reading and exposition, lasting often upward of an hour. My impatience under this trial and the effort to hide it were almost unendurable. When at last the books were closed, I flung out into the open, bating Bibles and religion and bursting with desire for Nature, careless of promised heaven or threatened hell, and just longing to get away and wander anywhere out of the constraint of home surroundings.

On the other hand, he delighted in nature-study:—

I always loathed games, as I did class-rooms and church services and all the places and occasions when we had to conform to rules. The fact that one was taught languages made one rush hungrily to science, and all that I ever learnt at school was self-taught in play-time. Hence the joy of astronomy. It could only be cultivated by breaking rules. Bed-time come, the lights out, and everything quiet, I used to creep downstairs again, get out my telescope, and spend hours finding double-stars, nebulae and star-clusters, or drawing the momentary aspect of Jupiter's ruddy belts and watching the passage of the shadow of his moons. Saturn had his turn, and one morning just before sunrise I found Mercury and beheld his slender crescent trembling in the air currents of dawn (pp. 23, 24).

Educationalists might draw a profitable lesson from Sir Martin's experiences.

F. J. G.

Correspondence.

THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF G. O. WARREN. TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—If it were true that man is "an animal run to brain," or ideality, there might be little to amend in the always interesting and suggestive Warren articles. But, indeed, social mimicry plays a vast part in what he terms "public opinion." The weight of custom, custom unrevised even by philosophers or jurists, is another "force" amounting to "second nature." How common it is to see the look of resentment in the face of the average intelligent, highly respectable citizen when a thoughtful person proposes to apply the touchstone of analytic, historic reason to laws, whether marital or agrarian! The general conclusion that must be drawn, I think, even from the type of facts adduced by Major Warren, is the comparative mental torpor of the average. Again, in dealing with taxation, the point to be made about the enforcing of payment is that society is based upon economic "force"; that force will be used even to cancel the freedom of the individual who is unable to honour the "fundamental law," namely, monetary status. I remember a preacher, more sagacious than our Freethinker in this connection, showing only too lucidly from the text, "How much better is a man than a sheep?" that, in the existing society, Humanity, with all its attributes of mental freedom, love, genius, etc., was subservient to and socially inferior to property. If the jaded preacher wants a good modern theme, let him discourse upon The Modern Society—man worshipping and immolating himself upon the works, the wealth, of his own hands. And as Major Warren seems to have forgotten so much, there is also a strange insensibility on his part to the complexity of human evolution, the forces of suffering, of toil, of discipline, of tyrannies—material and mental, the forces of innate resistance to progress, to change, against which the reformers and the Warrens of all ages must reckon with.

Obviously, the Warren philosophy suffers from too implicit a faith in the ripeness of all men and women for the reign of Freedom. Quite as obviously does Major Warren lose sight of the difference between personal and social psychology and needs.

Regulation is as fundamentally necessary for social health and wealth as freedom is for personal development. It is only within a hundred years or less that it has been seriously attempted to apply Reason to Social Order. And those who have thought most and done most in this field will tell you, as the foremost French economist¹ says frankly, that the force of the desire for social pre-eminence "over" others is a primal factor in wealth production. Such a force puts itself above reason and will not be reasoned with. Therefore, Major Warren would say, "educate these social tyrants in freedom and reason." Ah! does tyranny generally vanish that way? No. Besides, there is a certain type of reason which operates in the mind of ruling castes and their satellites—we see it to-day—that obtains a sway against the reason of "the sons of freedom." The Warren philosophy will never be enforced with a dilemma. Along with that philosophy we shall see—

Right for ever on the scaffold,
Wrong for ever on the throne.

In the throes of social evolution no such unanimity of reason is to be looked for, *no painless rebirth*. A child so glorious as Freedom will not step into the world with the frictionless ease of a syllogism.

PROLETARIUS.

MR. SAFFRONI-MIDDLETON.

SIR,—I have a great respect for the literary judgments of your contributor, Mr. Underwood, who usually hits the nail on the head every time. I owe to him the delightful experience of a first acquaintance with George Meredith, whom I had before regarded as too "high-browed" for my taste, and also with Herman Melville. I see from his latest "Writers and Readers" article that Melville is outdone by Mr. Saffroni-Middleton. I remember reading some time ago a book of South Sea sketches by this writer—I think it was called *Wine-Dark Seas and Tropic Skies*. It seemed to me bright and vigorous impressionism, but in creative power far below Melville. To me, as no doubt to many of your readers, it would be of interest to know precisely upon what Mr. Underwood bases his very large claim for his modern Homer of the South Seas.

P. SYMONS.

A PROTEST.

SIR,—Referring to Mr. Underwood's article on G. W. Foote in your current issue, is it not somewhat a matter of regret that he should go rather out of his way to pen supercilious comments on Messrs. Watts and McCabe? Keeping within the bounds of "graceful Arnoldian persuasiveness," I will only characterize the phrase "super-fatted matter," as at least very questionable in taste.

And with what Mr. Underwood considers Mr. McCabe's dogmatism and heavy-handedness, surely the degeneration of present times, the inevitable corollary of the past six years holocaust, and the Churches part therein, are not times that call for "Arnoldian persuasiveness" or "looser hold of principles." Mr. McCabe lacks neither scholarship nor courage, and I see little difference between him, the Foote of the past and the Coben of the present, save that he lacks the vital courage that would enable him to sacrifice not only much but ALL for the sake of a still firmer hold of principles.

To me Mr. McCabe is as much Freethinker and Atheist as any, as are many of his confreres. It cannot be, therefore, that a "Looser hold of Principles" prevents him from so labelling himself, and to prefer to remain among, and adopt the label of, the "Respectables." Oh, the pity of it.

R. B. F.

PROGRESS ON TYNESIDE.

SIR,—We are progressing steadily, there are evidences that the younger element is becoming more and more interested in our cause. It is probable that our future lecture arrange-

¹ Professor Charles Gide.

ments will cover a comparatively wide area. Such an effort would, undoubtedly, tend to bring together and co-ordinate our somewhat scattered forces. We will hold a meeting at 3 Thompson Street, Tyne Dock, on Sunday, August 15, with the view to deciding a line of action. Will those in our district please communicate, or, if possible, attend personally? There is work and to spare for all units; let us hope that none will hang back. The need for the furthering of our principles was never greater than now. Grave problems all around us await solution. Freedom of thought and its expression is the most powerful equipment that democracy can possess.

J. FOTHERGILL.

Seaside Sounds.

THE niggers make strange noises on the sands,
And pull grimaces horrible to see.
Then there are several military bands,
That mix each other's noises blatantly.
Between the pauses in this dreadful din,
The ear is wooed by gasping gramophones,
That make the unbeliever think of sin;
Of red-gilled devils grinning on their thrones!
But, give these things their due, you will not hear
An uglier noise upon the crowded beach,
Than that which strives of "God's great Love" to teach,
And seeks to raise the pallid flag of fears.
The children's ceaseless laughter and their capers,
The penny postcard fiend with horrid "views,"
The man who shouts out, "All the daily papers!"
And thinks that you are pining for the "news."
These are sweet music when compared with that
Which cries aloud against the joy of life;
The noise that emanates from something fat,
With bleary eyes and tongue that warbles strife.
This is the ugliest thing that seeks the sea,
And rants against the waves that dance and splash,
Babbling forth the putrid, old-world trash
That grips the earth in ancient slavery.

ARTHUR F. THORN.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JULY 27.

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Lloyd, Moss, Quinton, and Samuels; Miss Kough and the Secretary.

Minutes of last meeting read and confirmed. Monthly cash statement presented and adopted.

New members were received for the Plymouth and West Ham Branches, and for the Parent Society.

An application was received from the Maesteg Branch for an opening lecture for the Winter Session. The application was granted, and the arrangements left in the hands of the General Secretary.

Further correspondence concerning the coming International Freethought Conference at Prague was received, and it was agreed that the Society should be represented.

This being the holiday season, only routine business was transacted.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

A clergyman.....can hardly ever allow himself to look facts fairly in the face. It is his profession to support one side; it is impossible, therefore, for him to make an unbiased examination of the other. We forget that every clergyman with a living or curacy is as much a paid advocate as the barrister who is trying to persuade a jury to acquit a prisoner. We should listen to him with the same suspense of judgment, the same full consideration of the arguments of the opposing counsel, as a judge does when he is trying a case. Unless we know these, and can state them in a way that our opponents would admit to be a fair representation of their views, we have no right to claim that we have formed an opinion at all. The misfortune is that by the law of the land one side only can be heard.—*Samuel Butler, "The Way of All Flesh."*

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): 6.15, Mr. W. H. Thresh, "Spiritualism."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.30, A. D. McLaren, A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15 and 6.30, Mr. E. Burke, A Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, R. H. Rosetti, A Lecture.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—Ramble to Mill Hill and Elstree. Conducted by Mrs. Clements. Meet at entrance to Brent Garden Village, Nether Street, Church End, Finchley, at 11.

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

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Plymouth Chambers, Old Town Street, Plymouth): Thursday, August 12, at 8, A Special Meeting, when Important Business will be considered. All Members are earnestly requested to attend.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (3 Thompson Street): 6.30, To consider proposed Tyneside Lecture Campaign and other business.

LADIES, your turn this week. Maids', size 8, High-Class Serge Costumes, four only, price 100s. Girls' Navy Robes, edged white, 39 in. length only, price 22s. Girls' Saxe Serge Pleated Frocks, 30 in. length only, price 30s. Grey Twill Sheets, extra large and extra heavy, price 24s. per pair. Excepting the Sheets, we have only a few of each of these lines, and early application to secure them is essential.—MACCONNELL AND MABE, New Street, Bakewell.

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Company Limited by Guarantee.

Registered Office: 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

Secretary: Miss E. M. VANCE.

THIS Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up.

All who join the Society participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are eligible for re-election.

Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

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