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Views and Opinions.

Praying for Rain.

In China (Tsangchow district) there has been a great dearth of rain. And after standing it as long as they could, the inhabitants decided it was time something was done. So a pilgrimage was made to a famous well, and a celebrated rain-producing tablet brought back in solemn state, which, after having been duly exhibited and honoured, did the trick. The rain fell, everyone is happy, and the fame of the rain-maker is greater than ever. The story has all that subtle humour about it which appeals to the mind of the average journalist, and it has been reproduced in most of the papers I have seen. And the thing is so supremely absurd. The idea that prayers and petitions before a rain-making tablet can have any influence on the weather is delicious in its extravagance. It could never occur to people in this Christian country, and the fact of it occurring in China is enough to justify all our missionary activity there, and almost enough to justify the demand for a few more "concessions" from the Chinese Government. Prayers and the weather! Absurd! You might as well pray to an old bedstead, or to a worn-out washtub. So will agree every Christian in this country, and he will, in quite obvious sincerity, thank God that he is not as these heathens are. It is a glorious thing to have a religion, a religion that does, at least, protect one from believing that rain can be produced by praying before an iron tablet. That, as the man in the street would say, is the limit.

* * *

Ready for Emergencies.

Now we in this country are far above praying to a piece of old iron in order to secure rain. We are far too rational for that. When we have had a prolonged dry season we solemnly offer up prayers in church and chapel to "God," and then, if the rain comes after we have prayed, we have no doubt that it is an answer to our petitions. And the proof is obvious. For there was dry weather before we prayed. And the rain came afterwards. No religious mind would ask for a more complete demonstration than that. Moreover, in the prayer book of the Church of England, which is the only legally authorised manual for the purpose, there is the following prayer for rain:—

O, God, heavenly Father, who by thy Son Jesus Christ has promised to all them that seek thy kingdom and the righteousness thereof, all things necessary to their bodily sustenance; send us, we beseech

thee, in this our necessity, such moderate rain and showers that we may revive the fruits of the earth to our comfort.

Now that is quite clear and precise, and not without even a sly humour or a cautiousness worthy of the proverbial Scot. For it will be noted that the Lord is quietly reminded that he is to send "moderate showers," and is not to overdo it. Probably long experience of the Lord and his ways has proved to those that "seek thy kingdom" that when rain has been withheld and the Lord is reminded of his shortcomings, he is likely to overdo the thing, and drown where he should only moisten. That contingency is, indeed, expressly provided for in prayer No. 2 on the list, which advises God that although he did once in the time of Noah drown the whole world, and, "although we for our iniquities have worthily deserved a plague of rain," yet he is advised to draw it mild, and send only as much as is good for us. The pious man is thus armed at all points. He is prepared for all emergencies; and if the Lord should so far forget himself as to send a deluge when it is a shower that is asked for, or a drought when moderately fine weather is demanded, he can reply with the old Scotch divine who prayed for wind and was rewarded with a tempest which scattered his sermon all over the church, "Oh, Lord, I asked thee for a gentle sougling, lispig breeze; but a breeze such as this is d— nonsensical." There are limits even to the ass-like patience of conventional piety.

* * *

A Sensible Proposition.

A few years ago there was a discussion between a Chinese official and a Christian minister on this same subject of prayer. The parsons had been poking fun at a Chinese praying wheel. The Chinaman pointed out that it was a reasonable economy of time and energy. He said, with that bland humour which we are told is characteristic of China, that they had discovered that a prayer written on a slip of paper, and then placed in a box, and turned a certain number of times, was quite as effective as a prayer said in the other manner. Christians did not believe this, but he suggested a simple way of settling the question. This was to formulate a definite prayer for a definite purpose, and he guaranteed that the praying wheel would prove itself as effective in producing rain, or in stopping it, as would the Christian method of vocalisation. That was a definite and a sensible challenge, but the parsons would have none of it. And now I can imagine some other Chinaman, who sees some of his fellow-countrymen held up to ridicule because they have tried to get rain through the instrumentality of a sacred piece of iron, issuing a similar challenge. Is not the piece of iron as valuable in getting rain as asking the heavenly Father to send some, but to be sure that he does so in a moderate manner? So far as we are concerned the odds seem about equal in either case. One ought not to allow a mere fancy for voice over iron to stand in the way of a scientific experiment. When the country next needs rain, let us try the plate of iron in place of the prayer, and I have no doubt but that if we have sufficient patience to wait the rain will come as well by the one method as the other. At any rate, it is worth the trial.

Rain Doctors.

We can understand why we have this petition for rain in the prayer book, for rain-making is one of the oldest and most important functions of the primitive parson. Sir James Frazer, in that encyclopædia of primitive and other religious absurdities supplies us with numerous examples of this. From the very earliest times to the present it has been the function of certain people to see that the rain came at the proper time, or at least before it was too late to prevent a catastrophe. In the earliest times this takes the form of securing rain by a form of compelling magic. Later, when knowledge had advanced sufficiently to make the compulsion ridiculous, petition takes its place. Sometimes the consequences are amusing. Thus as recently as 1893 the people of Sicily had been for six months without rain. Things were looking very serious, prayers were offered in all the churches, the people were exasperated with their saints. At Palermo they dumped St. Joseph in a garden so that he could see for himself how much rain was needed. Moreover, they threatened to leave him there altogether unless he did something to justify his existence. At Caltanissetta they took the golden wings off St. Michael, and gave him wings of cardboard in their place. At Licata they stripped St. Angelo of all clothing, put him in irons, and threatened to hang him unless he brought rain. And really there seems more courage and common sense behind these practices than there is at the back of the practice of praising God for all he does, whether what he does is good or bad. The one is at least the revolt of a man, the other is the stupid adulation of a slave. Nowadays our priests do not claim to make the rain; all they do is to ask for it—to hope that it will come. They have retained the profits of the work, but have given up the duties. Like our landed classes, who have got rid of all the duties that formerly went with the private ownership of land, while keeping all the privileges and profits of ownership, the priests see to it that if common sense takes away from them the power of rain-making, they shall retain the profits that came from the occupation.

* * *

All Nonsense.

These poor, ignorant Chinese! And these poor savages! But, after all, are they really more ignorant, or more benighted than our believing Christian? Is the praying wheel or the sacred iron plate any more ridiculous than our own prayers or our prayer book, which seems so to count on the vagaries of God that it provides, one after the other, two prayers, one asking him to give less rain and the other to give more? And on top of it all, when it asks for rain, appends the warning, "Now, don't lose your head, but be 'moderate.'" It is a wise worshipper that knows its own God. It is a meticulous taste which, amid the wholly absurd, distinguishes such fine shades of the ridiculous. We confess ourselves incapable of such subtle distinctions. We can see no vital difference between bringing rain through the medium of a piece of sheet iron and inducing rain by voicing complaints in an expensively built church. A God who attended to his business would need neither the one nor the other. He would have designed an irrigating scheme that would have put the rain where it was needed, and not first of all parch the earth, and then half drown it when people called attention to neglect of duty. The whole thing, as the Scotch preacher said of the wind, is "D—nonsensical." But we suppose that when a people are nonsensical their God will be nonsensical likewise. Nonsense calls unto nonsense, and in the aggregation of stupidities religious faith thrives. The only way to get a sensible God is to get sensible men, and when men get sensible enough they will get rid of Gods altogether.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

God's Knowledge.

THE REV. A. E. GARVIE, M.A., D.D., chairman of the Congregational Union and Principal of New College, London, is one of the most learned men in the Christian ministry. Born in Russian Poland, he was educated first in Poland, and afterwards in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Oxford. While still comparatively young, he became Professor at Hackney and New Colleges, and is now Principal of the latter college. Of course, to a theologian, as such, erudition is of no advantage whatever, for theology is not a science dealing with objective facts, but with subjective fancies. According to the dictionary, theology "treats of God, including the being of God, the attributes of God, the doctrine of the Trinity, and Creation and Providence"; but every thinking person is fully aware that those are subjects concerning which no knowledge is obtainable. Principal Garvie knows no more about them than the most ignorant savage. In the *Christian World Pulpit* for September 29 a sermon appears which the Principal recently preached in New College Chapel. It is entitled "The Comfort of God's Knowledge," and it starts with the admission that human knowledge is incomplete and imperfect, full and true knowledge being found alone in God. Indeed, as Dr. Garvie says, "Theology has always affirmed God's omniscience"; and, of necessity, "God's omniscience involves God's foreknowledge of all future events, even the free acts of human persons." Thus to define the Divine omniscience, the Principal declares, is to commit an error, though no other definition is honestly possible. God's knowledge cannot be complete and perfect unless it covers all events, past, present, and future. To deny this is to limit the omniscience; and yet the Principal does deny it, saying that "it is impossible to conceive how, if the act is fixed in God's foreknowledge, it can really be a free choice of the human will." We agree, but are bound to point out that the denial is really a denial of God's omniscience. Many present-day theologians limit the Divine omnipotence in the same way. Dr. Garvie offers the following ingenious explanation of his position:—

God knows a morality as it is, the actual as actual, and the possible as possible; if he knew the possible as actual, he would not know it as it is. If God can in making man so limit his universal activity that acts are possible which are not his acts, but the free acts of his creature, we are entitled to assume that, even if a limitation of this knowledge is involved, and it is by no means clear that such a limitation is involved, he will so limit his knowledge that he will know man's free acts as they are, as possibilities before they become actualities.

The peculiarity of that explanation is that it does not explain. To a genuine believer in God's omniscience no explanation of the difficulty is possible. Dr. Garvie says that the war has converted Mr. Wells to a conception of God and the practice of religion; but Mr. Wells' conception is condemned as inadequate and largely false. The God his mind has adopted is finite, and in every sense limited, possessing neither absoluteness nor eternity. The Christian God is at once absolute, infinite, and eternal.

Like all his brethren, Principal Garvie speaks of God as if he possessed intimate knowledge of him. The facts of history seem to discredit the belief in such a Being, and our divine is forced to make apologies on his behalf. Admitting that his omniscience has its limits, he says:—

That does not mean that God is uncertain as to the world's final issue. We can be sure God would not have assumed the responsibility of Creator had he not in himself all the moral and spiritual resources to fulfil his purpose as Saviour; but a knowledge of the goal and the course does not involve a knowledge of

every step by the way.....God will bring his world home to himself; but he recognizes man's free action as helping or hindering, as hastening or holding back his purpose, and he adapts his activity to the changeful ways of man's action.

Does it not strike the Principal as passing strange that God's work as Creator should need to be rectified by his mission as Saviour? There is no real escape from the conclusion that, according to the Christian scheme, the world was so badly made at the beginning that almost immediately it required to be re-made, for which purpose the Redeemer came. Curiously enough, the Creator and the Saviour are one and the same Being, but not the same Person. Creation was the Father's task, salvation the Son's, assisted by the Holy Ghost. But the fact that stares us in the face is the dismal failure of both Creator and Redeemer. Dr. Garvie, like most theologians, puts the whole blame upon man, whom God is supposed to have endowed with the perilous privilege of free agency, in the exercise of which he is more powerful than his Maker, and can frustrate his eternal purposes. Free agency is really a theological device to exonerate the Creator from the load of blame that would otherwise be resting upon him. That the freewill idea is such a device is proved by the fact that it is a theological idea only, unrecognised by the overwhelming majority of scientists, and that some divines even are thoroughgoing Determinists. And why is it that man alone is credited with the possession of freedom of the will? God is not, nor Christ, nor any of the lower animals, and it is attributed to man in order to relieve God of all responsibility for the evils that are so rampant in the world. God would save the world, if he could, but he cannot, because man's free action hinders him, and even thwarts his holy purpose. In the end, we are assured, God's purpose will be fulfilled, and man's will brought into complete subjection to and harmony with his own; but the question is, why not now? If God is destined eventually to overcome man's free action and win his affection, why did he not do so in the beginning, and so prevent the countless catastrophes and tragedies with which the world has been cursed in all ages? Dr. Garvie's answer is that man's obstinacy and stupidity and self-pride made it impossible for him to carry out his purpose. If this is true, how can God have foreknowledge of the world's final issue? If man is stronger than God to-day, what proof can be adduced that he will not continue to be the stronger to the very end?

Our conclusion is that Principal Garvie's doctrine of man is in the highest degree derogatory to God, and that his conception of God dishonours man. If the Christian God exists, man throws infinite discredit upon him; and if man is sinful and selfish, as Dr. Garvie describes him, God knew when he made him what he would inevitably become; and yet his Maker is represented as being frightfully angry with him for being and doing in accordance with the nature bestowed upon him. God knew that freedom of will would prove his utter ruin, and yet, fully aware of what the result would be, he gave it to him. Thus Dr. Garvie disparages both God and man, and makes it logically and morally impossible for the latter to intelligently believe in the former.

Nothing is easier than to assert that God's knowledge is immediate, intimate, exhaustive, and infallible; but nothing is more difficult than to verify the assertion. The Bible tells us that "no man hath seen God at any time," and we are equally convinced that no one has ever heard his voice. Assuming the accuracy of the creed when it describes the one living and true God as a Being "without body, parts, or passions," we naturally infer not only that he is incapable of thought and action, but that he does not exist at all. Dr. Garvie may repudiate the creed's definition; but does not he

himself pronounce Mr. Wells' conception inadequate because it excludes "the element of the Divine absoluteness, infinity, and eternity"? To call God the Absolute is to make him an object of belief merely, but certainly not an object of knowledge. Mansel well says: "The Absolute cannot be conceived as possessing consciousness at all, nor as containing within itself any kind of relation, nor as one and simple, out of all relation." Equally impossible is it to conceive of an infinite and eternal Being who, being pure spirit, occupies no space, and who, as such, can neither think nor act. How utterly absurd it therefore is to affirm his omniscience, or his possession of any degree of knowledge whatever. In fact, Atheism is the only rational creed. Though a clergyman, Mansel had the courage to write that there is a contradiction in supposing the Absolute and Infinite to exist; a contradiction in conceiving him as one and a contradiction in conceiving him as many; a contradiction in representing him as active, and a contradiction in conceiving him as the sum of all existence. And yet Mansel declares that from all these glaring contradictions "no conclusion can be drawn in favour of universal scepticism." In his Bampton lectures, entitled *The Limits of Religious Thought*, he employs Reason to demonstrate the irrationality of all religious philosophies; and yet he degrades and insults Reason by expressing his belief in the irrational on the sole authority of the Bible. The main difference between him and Principal Garvie lies in the fact that the latter seems to regard his belief in God as essentially reasonable; but we would like to know on what ground of reason he believes, for example, that "no secret can be hid from God," or that "there is no sanctuary of the soul from which he can be excluded." Can he produce any evidence that God's knowledge "is the knowledge of love"? Cain believed in God's knowledge of him, but to him it was not the knowledge of love. Wherever he went the eye of vengeance followed him. What sign is visible in the world that God has ever loved it? Nay, more, what token can be found anywhere that a God of justice and love exists? Dr. Garvie is convinced that there is only one sin that can damn the world, namely, the sin of unbelief in God's grace; but we are equally convinced that the sin that has, on the whole, done most harm in the world is the sin of belief in and dependence upon supernatural intervention in human affairs, and that deliverance from this sin is possible only by the practical as well as speculative adoption of the creed of Atheism, because it is the only creed that enables a man to fall back upon and develop his own resources.

The so-called "comfort of God's knowledge" is purely illusory. The only true comfort comes from self-knowledge, from cultivating by putting into daily practice the social instinct, from the study and knowledge of Nature and her laws, and from a ceaseless effort to live close to Nature's heart. J. T. LLOYD.

The Church of the Ignorant.

If we live thus tamely,
To be thus jaded by a piece of scarlet,
Farewell, nobility.—*Shakespeare.*

Clericalism, behold the enemy.—*Gambetta.*

THE Roman Catholic Church pays very great attention to Press propaganda. Owing to the activity of its numerous journalistic satellites, their priests are pushed into public notice at every opportunity. One week, Fleet Street is flooded with photographs of Archbishop Mannix, and the next week, selected groups of the crowd around Brixton Prison, with priests in the foreground, will be on the editors' tables. Nor is letterpress neglected. Regular lists of titled converts to the

Roman Catholic faith are sent to the newspapers, and the speeches of cardinals and the superior clergy are regularly reported. Every occurrence is pressed into the service of the Catholic Church. If a controversy rages in any newspaper, local Catholics join in the fray and voice the views that they wish ventilated. All is grist that comes to their mill. The result is that the average reader of newspapers is under the illusion that the Roman Catholic Church is growing in influence and prosperity, and is still a live force in public affairs.

A short time since a paragraph went the rounds of the Press stating that contingents of Scottish pilgrims to the shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes had returned to Glasgow, and many miraculous cures were reported. Does it not conjure up a picture of stern Caledonians being converted to the Catholic faith? Yet, it may safely be assumed, that the majority of those pilgrims were Glasgow Hibernians. Sober North Britons are as little likely to spend time and money on our Lady of Lourdes as they are to take Cook's excursion tickets to pay homage to the Holy Carpet of the Mohammedans.

The riddle of Lourdes is sooner read than some of the older miracles. At the village of Lourdes, France, in 1858, a peasant girl, fourteen years old, named Bernadette Soubierious, declared that the Virgin Mary had spoken to her. Naturally, the distinguished visitor spoke fluently in French, and these were the extraordinary words she used: "Go to the fountain; eat of the grass beside it; pray for mankind; tell the priests to build me a chapel; I am the Immaculate Conception!" It may seem passing strange that any person should speak two thousand years after her alleged death, and that she should describe herself as a theological dogma.

It is not altogether unaccountable. Only a short time before the Pope had issued a bull declaring this particular dogma to be an article of Roman Catholic faith, and charging with heresy those who disbelieved it or opposed it. A "miracle" supplied a known want, for it served to emphasize the dogma. The disordered imagination of an ignorant girl supplied what was needed, and the Roman Catholic clergy did the rest.

So well was Lourdes advertised that within six months it was almost as well known to the Roman Catholic "faithful" as shrubby Margate to the jaded Londoners. It is estimated that 150,000 people had by that time visited the so-called sacred spot. And millions have visited the place since. From the point of view of the inhabitants this modern "miracle" was worth while; for the tiny village blossomed into a good-sized town. A special line of railway was constructed, and hotels and restaurants sprang up like mushrooms in a meadow. There were whole streets of shows where glass beads and other ecclesiastical toys and ornaments were sold at fancy prices. This is how the cult commenced of Our Lady of Lourdes, which was to spread all over the Roman Catholic world.

This childlike credulity is simply wonderful in grown men and women. To study it is to essay an inquiry into the psychology of a crowd, and an ignorant one at that. Let there be no mistake on this point. Roman Catholics are not allowed to read any books or publications criticising their religion. They are told that by doing so they are in grave danger of eternal damnation. Colporteurs of Protestant Bible societies are molested in Catholic countries, for a zealous Catholic will no more read a non-Catholic version of the Bible than he would read Ingersoll's *Mistakes of Moses*. No Catholic may even become a Freemason, because the priests object to other secret societies than their own. If a Catholic young man attends a Freethought lecture, he sins more grievously than if he stole his employer's money. The one sin can be repaired; the other leads to loss of faith—and Hell.

Even the priests are ignorant, with the exception of the higher clergy. In the United Kingdom a large number are recruited from the Irish working class. Mr. Joseph McCabe, who was a priest for years, has told us that "of science, history, and philosophy, in the modern sense, they, as a rule, know nothing. The system of philosophy to which they devote one or two years is a weird, semi-mediaeval mass of word-spinning, of no use whatever in modern life....." Though I was professor of philosophy for four years, and had studied under Cardinal Mercier at Louvain, I remained ignorant of the very names of the chief English, German, and American thinkers of the time."

The Church of Rome is the church of the ignorant. The countries in which it flourishes compose the tail-end of civilization. Poland, and some of the Central-American Republics, are almost entirely illiterate. Not much better is the educational level of the Catholics of Spain, Portugal, Italy, Catholic Canada, the rural districts of Austria, and Belgium. Even in Germany, England, and the United States, the vast majority of the Catholics are the least educated of the community. In plain language, the Roman Catholic Church represents lowest culture in modern civilized society. It marches at the tail-end of the procession of humanity, and pretends to be the vanguard of Light; a proceeding which caused Thomas Carlyle to dub it, "The Great Lying Church."

MIMNERMUS.

Science and the Occult.

XIII.

(Concluded from Page 630.)

In my opinion, persons who profess to be able to act as mediums between the dead and living are persons, assuming them to be honest, who can put themselves in a sort of hypnotic trance, which enables them to be impressed by the thoughts and wishes of their clients, as the hypnotized subjects are impressed by the thoughts and wishes of those who operate on them. The hypnotized subject will interpret these thoughts and carry out these wishes in strict accordance with his own personality and education; and so does the medium.....So long as we can explain phenomena by familiar experiences it would be a mistake to regard them as supernormal or occult. It is a peculiar fact that the messages supposed to come from spirits are generally in harmony with the thoughts of those who have come to receive them.....and the very fact that the message is in such harmony with what the visitor expects still further increases that person's credulity and conviction of the reality of spiritualistic phenomena.....Persons become intoxicated with spirits of that nature as others do with spirits of another kind.....I confess that I have seen victims of both, and that the one addicted to material spirits is the easier to treat.—Dr. Bernard Hollander. "Spiritualism"—A Symposium. Edited by Hauntly Carter, 1920, pp. 268-269.

AFTER leaving the cathedral, Mr. Philpott explored the village of Cholula, and satisfied himself that there was no such institution as described by Mrs. Piper there. Moreover, he found that it was quite impossible for such an institution to exist in the country unknown to the authorities. As he points out:—

Each State had in it a Jefe politico, an official somewhat like a United States marshal, only the Jefe politico had almost unlimited powers. He was higher in authority than the elected Governor of the State, and had at his command the military forces which were stationed in the State. In addition, his minions were in every village and town of the State, and they furnished him with reports of the conditions in their localities each day or week as the case might require.....The Jefe politico or his bureau knew every building and every adobe hut in his district, and I found that even the flimsiest adobe huts in the country districts had numbers on them. So it will readily be seen that when this man turned on the wheels of his bureau to find anybody he was usually successful. In fact, I found that because of this bureau it would be

more difficult to hide at that time in that part of Mexico than in the United States.¹

And all this machinery was placed—through the letter he bore from the U.S.A. Secretary of State—at Philpott's disposal. No obstacle was thrown in his path, every house or building, public or private, that he wished in investigate was thrown open for inspection. Everybody wished to help in finding the missing Connor and the mysterious Dr. Cintz and his institution, but no trace of such institution or man could be found, or, indeed, had ever been heard of. His search was no more successful than the two previous searches of Mr. Dodge and Dr. Sparhawk. For the very sufficient reason that they were the dream creation of Mrs. Piper's trances.

After some more fruitless investigation of the district, Mr. Philpott decided to discard the guidance of the spirits and investigate the matter with the aid of mere common sense.

His inquiries commenced at the American Hospital in Mexico City, where Connor was taken. He saw Mrs. Netterburgh, the matron, who was surprised at his errand, as she thought the matter had been satisfactorily settled at the exhumation of the body. However, she was perfectly willing to tell all she knew of the case. Mr. Philpott learned that Connor had been in charge of the head nurse, a Miss Smith, who he had never heard of before; she had left the hospital about a month after the death of Connor, had since been married; her present whereabouts were unknown. The two previous investigators were so obsessed with Mrs. Piper's controls that they never sought to trace the head nurse, or troubled about her at all.

It will be remembered that Mrs. Piper, or her spirits, declared that Connor was taken away from the hospital, and the body of a patient named Welsh, who had died in the hospital, was dressed in his clothes and buried in his name. But an examination of the hospital register disclosed the fact that no patient of that name was in the hospital during the time of Connor's stay. Then, again, if they buried Connor in Welsh's name, whom did they bury in place of Welsh?

Mr. Philpott was then taken to the room in the contagious ward where Connor had died. It contained only one small window, with iron bars, through which no person could possibly manage to squeeze through, and to reach it they would have had to scale a nine-foot wall. If Connor was taken away he must have been taken out by the public entrance, with the connivance of the hospital staff, and what had they to gain by it? Would any hospital allow a patient, dying of a highly infectious fever like typhoid, to be taken away in this fashion?

Again, if, as Mrs. Piper's controls asserted, the motive of the abductors was to hold Connor captive for ransom, how was it that, although two years had elapsed, no demand had been made for the ransom?

On the other hand, if the object was to obtain the jewels Connor was supposed to possess, surely they would have taken the jewels without cumbering themselves with the body of a dying man. As a matter of fact, Mr. Philpott discovered that all the jewels the poor young fellow possessed were a few cheap opals and a ring with an opal setting. And opals were a drug in the Mexican market at that time. Mr. Philpott says he bought a dozen or more of them for five dollars. Connor had no money with which to buy valuable precious stones, all the money he had was the wages he earned during the ten weeks he worked in Orrin's Circus, and Mr. Orrin said that he usually drew his wages in advance.

By an extraordinary piece of good fortune Mr. Philpott succeeded in discovering the whereabouts of the

missing head nurse. She remembered the case perfectly. He was very ill when brought to the hospital, and in a few days the nurse saw that there was no hope of recovery; he grew weaker and weaker, and she was with him when he died. She described him as "such a quiet, nice young man that you could not help but like him," and concluded by signing the following statement:—

This is to certify.....I attended the said Dean Bridgman Connor in the capacity of nurse at the time, and I was at his bedside when he died from the effects of typhoid fever. The exact time is on the chart. When I saw he had breathed his last I notified the matron of the institution of the fact. The body lay in the room for some hours, and was then removed to the morgue near the contagious ward of the hospital, from which it was removed next day for burial to the American cemetery near by. To these facts I solemnly swear. (Signed) Mrs. HELEN SMITH WINN

February 24, 1897.

With these indisputable facts Mr. Philpott returned to tackle the experts who declared that the hair and teeth from the exhumed body were not Connor's. He was able to prove that in extreme cases of typhoid the hair does change as in Connor's case, and also to overthrow the verdict of the dentist. His task was finished; his case was complete. Mr. Philpott sums the case up as follows:

Every bit of the fabric which had been built on Mr. Connor's dream by Mrs. Piper and her "controls" went to pieces, crumbled as I proceeded with my investigation.....I talked with the people who had known him and worked with him, with those who had tended him in his illness, with the woman who had closed his eyes in death, with one of the men who had carried the body to the grave, and with the superintendent of the cemetery, who saw that the grave was closed on the mortal remains of Dean Bridgman Connor. Then I faced the professional men who had examined the hair and teeth, and broke down their testimony.

Surely that was enough. There was no missing link in the chain of evidence that I established to prove that Dean Bridgman Connor was dead and that he "slept" in the American cemetery in the city of Mexico. And I could find absolutely no shred of evidence to prove that he had been seen alive—in other than in a dream and by Mrs. Piper's spirit "controls"—after his corporeal death in the hospital.

The actual—the proved—evidence contradicted Mr. Connor's dream and Mrs. Piper's "controls" at every point. The facts could not be made to fit the fanciful theory that had been built on Mr. Connor's dream. But every bit of the information given by Mrs. Piper can be traced to the actual knowledge of someone present at the "sittings" or to the suspicions based on this knowledge, or both jumbled together.²

And how did Dr. Hodgson take the result of the investigation? Very badly, indeed; it completely upset him. He had confidently expected that this dramatic case would furnish all the proof necessary to convince the world of the truth of Spiritualism. He had hoped to thrill the world with a new Revelation through what might almost be regarded as a miracle, and in a moment the great dream was shattered, and along with it the reputation of the world-famous Mrs. Piper.

At first he ridiculed and cast doubt on Mr. Philpott's work, finally declaring that if he had the means he himself would go to Mexico, find Connor alive, and bring him back. Upon which the proprietor of the *Globe* offered to defray his expenses, and the offer was published in his paper, but Dr. Hodgson never took it up, but after some investigation he had made into Mr. Philpott's work in Mexico he had the decency to apologize to him for the statements he had made. Then

¹ Philpott, *The Search for Dean Bridgman Connor*, pp. 108-109.

² Philpott, *The Search for Dean Bridgman Connor*, pp. 242-243.

he gave it up, and maintained a studious silence upon the subject ever afterwards.

Spiritualists can choose which explanation they will, either the spirits were responsible for this mass of falsehoods, or Mrs. Piper was herself. In any case, the statements were worthless.

W. MANN.

Freethought and Buddhism.

(Concluded from p. 631.)

II.—THE SOUL AND IMMORTALITY IN BUDDHISM AND FREETHOUGHT.

IMMORTALITY is so ambiguous a word, being never defined, though it can be made or assumed to mean half a dozen different things, that the use of it is altogether to be deprecated. The whole question of the soul and immortality is a superfluous one, and due to the slipshod way our English thinkers transform and develop the misuse of words. Mortality means liable to death, an almost universal property of organic matter. Immortality therefore means not liable to death. As Lucretius well put it in one of his sonnets, and "Death once dead there's no more dying then." In other words, a person is immortalized by death, whether his personal soul, like his personal form, is completely annihilated, or, according to the Christian idea, one or both continue psalm-singing for ever and ever.

In this connection it is worth recalling what primitive Buddhism and also modern, uncontaminated Buddhism really teach.

An early record says a lady asked: Does the Blessed One assert that after death the Blessed One ceases to exist? Reply: The Blessed One does not assert that after death the Blessed One ceases to exist. Question: Does the Blessed One assert that after death the Blessed One does not cease to exist? (Rejection of this proposition in the same form as the first.) Note the studied evasion of anything conveying the idea of personality in the two questions and answers. The idea of immortality is a good example of the vast metaphysical cloud castle which loose thinking and the slipshod use of words build up. It is not too much to say that nine-tenths of our abstract "sciences" have really no meaning whatsoever. It is a curious disease of the human mind that it tends to magnify the limited ideas, of which from the nature of the case it is only capable, into mystic forces, thrones, dominations, principedoms, etc., of infinite power and capacity. I will cite only two instances: (1) The science of ethics or morality: *Mos* simply means custom. We have the name of the most likely mythical Jewish law-giver, Moses, in almost the same form over most of our London pawnshops, and this word is as likely as not the real origin of the mythical Moses, as well as of *Moss* the cryptogram, and of *moos* (German for jam), and perhaps of many other names. Thus a word that originally meant little more than "etiquette" has been blown up into a science which is supposed to have the most momentous consequences for the welfare of the whole human race. The only persons that may be benefited by all this useless crabs' blather are our printers' devils.

The other equally striking instance is the word "Titan." The Titans rapidly became the gigantic earth powers of the material world in rebellion against that spiritual but sympathetic old reprobate Zeus or Jupiter—the father of the shiny ones. Prometheus, also a mythical being, evolved out of the primitive, and therefore sacred, Aryan fire stick, with which these primitive savages "made" fire by whirling it; the Pramantha or Prometheus in a hole in a piece of soft wood also became a kind of idealized Titan—a colossal figure of tragedy who suffered for his rebellion to Deity

in his war for the emancipation of suffering humanity. The Titans were, however, originally nothing but temple slaves in the Dionysian cult, and were daubed over with white plaster of Paris. In fact, they did the comic business as buffoons and mountebanks in the annual vintage orgy, when a boy was sacrificed and orgiastically eaten. They seem, indeed, to be the originals of our present clowns and Jack Puddings. Matthew Arnold, therefore, unconsciously hit the mark when he affectedly styled the drunken, stupid, and bloodthirsty English, the Titans (*light 'uns*), weary with the burden of Empire.

So much for the genuine Buddhist ideas regarding God and immortality. The Buddhists have, indeed, carried out their sceptical freethinking to its logical conclusion far more thoroughly than our modern Free-thinkers. The latter imagine the personal soul as a real something destroyed by death. One of the chief aims of Buddhist dialectic is to demonstrate that there is no such thing as a personal permanent soul at all, and that the variable impermanent one is a mere—I had almost said optical—illusion, as though one should ascribe an innate personality to a cart. Perhaps the best illustration of the Buddhist idea of the personal soul is an original one of my own, viz., that it is a purely relative conception, just as the perception of colour is, which for all that it is most difficult not to imagine as a permanent inherent attribute of the coloured object viewed. Seeing that the personal soul is a mere illusion and has no real existence, its disappearance at death cannot indicate the annihilation of the real constituents of which we are composed; in fact, we are incapable of the idea of annihilation; not that that negatives the possibility of it. "We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep," and H. Spencer's ".....the idea so difficult to realize that in death we shall not even be aware that we ever existed" are hackneyed quotations that may help even the unimaginative to realize the summum bonum, the Nirvana, or blowing out of the flames of existence of Buddhism. Genuine Buddhism, indeed, expressly denies any sort of reunion of friends and lovers in the sweet by and by. But if the other summum bonum is so far above conscious earthly existence, why should we regret the extinction of the latter for our friends and relations any more than for ourselves? The Christians will cry out indignantly, but all these solicitations for a sweet by and by of friends and relations to hob and nob with eternally are really dictated by the incorrigible passion Christians have for worrying and annoying their friends in this life, and the desire to have an excuse for the wars, capital punishments, bullyings, exploitation, and cannibalism which are a direct consequence, and which were indispensable to such small amount of felicity as Christians are capable of enjoying or permitting one another in this life. Buddhism, in fact, expressly denies any sort of future life, but not a future state of what was once man, and I do not see how any clear-headed Freethinker can deny it either. In a human society beautiful as a Greek statue gallery, in surroundings full of peace, harmony, and joyous unopposed passion, the sentiments of love for all organic being and of the unity of life will render joyous also the thought of the unity of death from which this life's transient semblance of an impersonal transcendent nothingness far surpassing it springs and into which it will return.

Genoa, September 9, 1920. W. W. STRICKLAND.

It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief, if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind as to subscribe his professional belief to things he does not believe, he has prepared himself for the commission of every other crime.—Thomas Paine.

Mr. Dill's Deity.

MR. DILL is a pious man; he reads a small, religious periodical entitled *The Wrath to Come* with intense interest and keen delight; he derives a real mental ecstasy from the perusal of this periodical; it constitutes his sole intellectual pabulum. No daily newspapers for Mr. Dill; no works of fiction; no stories of travel; no lives of great men—nothing like *that!* Mr. Dill is on the safe side of the road; he knows just exactly where he stands; there is no mystery about life for Mr. Dill; he has caught hold of the "everlasting rock": his soul is anchored to "eternal truth."

Mr. Dill lunches daily at the same small eating-house; he sits in the same chair, eats the same kind of meal, and pays his bill with exactly the same kind of easy care. Life flows through the smooth personality of Mr. Dill without interruption; it is not a painful process; yet, upon his pale, wrinkled countenance there lurks an anti-social frown. His eyes are small, deep set, and sharp; his nose is high-bridged, thin, and tapering; his skin is sallow and repulsive.

Mr. Dill has no topics for normal conversation; he never thinks about life; all his thoughts centre upon the Deity. Day by day he moves in the same velvet groove of non-existence; he moves with an entire lack of dramatic friction; life has no sharp corners for Mr. Dill. Observation, interest in human life, sympathy with mortal suffering; these things have never contrived to spoil the exquisite complacency of his silky existence. A single man, living in two rooms, he makes no friends.

Mr. Dill's eyes are fixed clearly and steadfastly upon the divine remoteness of God. So intensely, in fact, does Mr. Dill concentrate upon this objective reality, that, to some extent, he has himself derived something of God's contempt for the normal world of men, women, and children. By continuous communion with the Deity, Mr. Dill has developed a divine armour which protects him from the sinful world in which he finds himself forced to exist.

Mr. Dill has faithfully and successfully worshipped his "God"; his prayers are long, reiterant, wordy, and devout. But the frown; the rigid, expressionless countenance; the non-emotional eyes; the repulsive angularity of his darkly clothed body—Mr. Dill is unconscious of these things. He is unconscious of himself; oblivious of the mere external manifestations of his "immortal soul." Such mortal details do not exist for Mr. Dill. He is remote from the world: he has caught the little finger of "God," and holds tight. Yet there is a curious magnetism in his vacuous personality. There is an unpleasant feeling that Mr. Dill does not possess a real flesh and blood body. It is impossible to conceive him in the nude. One feels that, like "God," he would be enveloped in a protective cloud of fiery smoke; no human eye could nerve itself to look upon him; no human eye could nerve itself to look upon "God"!

Mr. Dill is a minute portion of "God," but he does not appear to be a portion of humanity. Perhaps this distinction is fundamental; but, in any case, something very terrible has happened to Mr. Dill. He has fixed his small, beady eyes upon a very distant relation—a deity whose existence matters not to the world of human realism, and, in consequence, the lustre of life has departed from Mr. Dill's cadaverous countenance. Little children are afraid of Mr. Dill; dogs glance at him with suspicion.....

He is sitting over there in the corner by a window that overlooks St. Martin's Lane. Propped up in front of him against the cheap crucifix leans a small religious periodical, *The Wrath to Come*. Mr. Dill's eyes move slowly and reverently across the page; occasionally he

drinks carefully from his mug of cocoa, at which times his small eyes appear to contract from the world.

Sitting opposite are two robust-looking men of the working class; both are in khaki, and the younger has been wounded in the jaw. Neither of them notice Mr. Dill; they are engrossed in a somewhat vulgar, yet pertinent, discussion upon the respective fighting values of the American and Portuguese armies. Mr. Dill does not hear their conversation; his whole being is concentrated upon the religious periodical that stands up like a protecting wall between him and the two soldiers opposite.

Their vulgar conversation continues: they have just been demobilised. Military discharge papers are produced and mutually examined. Then follow "souvenneers." Jerry match boxes; fruit knives manufactured from old shell cases; useless scraps of dirty paper money from Belgium, and a small plaster image of the Virgin Mary found in a demolished estaminet near Menin. This last article is placed upon the imitation marble-topped table. She stands a little higher than Mr. Dill's religious periodical; his eyes look upon her face, but without recognition—he does not know the mother of "God"! ARTHUR F. THORN.

Acid Drops.

The absurd doctrine of the Fall of Man is still exercising the attention of the men of the Stone Age, thanks to Canon Barnes having said that he does not believe in it. The curious thing is that no one, we should expect, ever thought that he did believe in it—no one, that is, with the slightest pretence to education. But what created the stir was he said he did not believe. And that makes a very great difference. Christians nowadays do not care what you disbelieve, so long as you do not say anything. They can stand any amount of hypocrisy; what they cannot stand is honesty. Everyone knows that there are scores of parsons and thousands of Church attendants who do not believe Christian doctrines, but no one bothers so long as they play the hypocrite, and pretend to believe. But when someone blurts out a little of the truth Christians feel they must protest against so unusual and so un-Christian a practice.

Still, there are some clerical antiquities who appear to take the belief quite seriously. The *Eastern Daily Post*, for instance, prints a report of a sermon by the Rev. D. J. Martin in Trinity Church, Norwich, in which are advanced four reasons why we ought to go on pretending to believe in the Fall of Man. The first is that the Bible tells us that it is so, which is a very convincing reason for anyone who already believes all the Bible says, whatever it may happen to say, but not of much value to anyone else. The second is that there are similar beliefs in different parts of the world, which to anyone who considers the duplication of an absurdity proofs of its reasonableness is also very convincing. The third is that geology tells us of the lost glories of a remote past, which has about as much to do with the Fall of Man as horse chestnuts have to do with the origin of chestnut horses. The last reason is that man has a curious bias towards evil. And that is so mysterious in its supposed implications that we are silenced. But if that is a fair sample of the intelligence of the British clergy the level is even lower than we were inclined to think. And if the British public take that kind of thing seriously there is little cause for surprise at the social and political condition of the country being what it is.

The Rev. J. W. Cheshire, of Newland, Worcestershire, died whilst kneeling in prayer before an altar in his own house, and the Rev. H. A. Williams, a Leeds clergyman, was killed whilst cycling. The men of God do not appear to have had preferential treatment from "Father."

Cholera is rife in Korea, and the *Japan Times* says that great difficulty is caused by the religious Koreans, who

object to cremation and hide the bodies of cholera victims in their homes. Evidently, less religion would be good for the Koreans.

A London daily paper says that a movement is on foot for a strike by the Church of England parsons. We hope it materializes. There should be at least one jolly Sunday in the year in Merrie England.

Mayflower Day was celebrated at Westminster Abbey, and the old heretics were held up as shining examples before three congregations. There were some negroes in the Abbey audience. Perhaps they imagined their ancestors went to America in the *Mayflower*.

Mrs. Asquith, in her reminiscences, says that General Booth the First wanted her to ride down Rotten Row in one of the Salvation Army bonnets. As the lady demurred, the wily old General said, "Christ did not mind being ridiculous." But riding a donkey in the streets of Jerusalem is child's play compared to riding down Rotten Row, dressed like Charley's Aunt, and with a society journalist and camera man every dozen yards.

A census of Europeans in the Union of South Africa gives the number of Atheists as 246, Freethinkers 493, and Agnostics as 508. We should hesitate to take that as anything like the number of Freethinkers in the Union. At most it is only the number that do not mind the world knowing what they are. The number of Europeans there is given as 1,421,781, and we should calculate that the number of Freethinkers cannot well be less than ten per cent. of the whole. But Christians see to it that every inducement shall be given to lead a man or woman to keep their dissent from Christianity away from the public.

We see from the *Los Angeles Examiner* that the Church of St. Monica is to provide hot biscuits, honey, and butter for all who attend certain of its services. Now, that is quite a good move. Presently we shall have the churches throwing in a pair of boots or a suit of clothes, or perhaps paying those who attend according to the length of the sermon. Churches must be filled somehow.

When the war broke out, and, for that matter, while the war was on, the *Freethinker* stood almost alone in pointing out to the public that there was a price to pay for what was going on. We said over and over again that no country could engage in war without experiencing certain results. War at any time was brutalizing, and invariably left a people, conqueror and conquered alike, worse morally and socially than it found them. That was a teaching which the Christian clergy, if they had been anything better than a pack of time-serving opportunists, should have heartily endorsed, and even initiated. What they did was to join in the chorus of war propaganda and preach up the war as a source of moral and religious elevation. They joined in the cry that everything connected with the war was "splendid." The "boys" were splendid, the women were splendid, even the children were splendid when they were used in the schools to send a prepared message to the soldiers asking their fathers and brothers to "stick it." No attention was paid to the fact that there was going on a course of systematic brutalization of the public mind, and that one day the price for it would have to be paid.

When the war was at end the bill was presented in the shape of an increase of crime, in the number of brutal assaults, in a general coarsening of manners, and in a considerable amount of social unrest. And the clergy, instead of seeing in this the normal consequence of the five years of brutalization through which the nation had passed, have been talking at their conferences of the immorality of the people as a result of Christianity losing its hold on them. That is sheer nonsense. When the war was on they refused to face the facts, and now that the war is over the facts are facing them, and they do not like it. And even now they have not the courage to tell the people the obvious truth, that war, whether avoidable or

unavoidable, involves brutalization and social demoralization, and cannot well have any other effect. Soldiers are the last to deny this. They have been through it, and know how steadily the process of coarsening and brutalizing went on. The notion that you can keep men for years killing and raiding, that you can teach them to regard life—their own included—as the cheapest of things, without making them the worse for it, is the very wildest of doctrines.

But for own part we are no more inclined to take the clergy as guides when they are moaning over the growing "immorality" of the people than we were inclined to look up to them when they were singing their hymn of hate. The demoralization will pass because the causes of it will pass. Social life will exert a cleansing influence now, as it has done before. For, after all, the good qualities that were displayed on the battlefield, the courage, the comradeship, etc., were not born of war; war did but exploit these socially born qualities, and, as experience has shown, wasted and weakened them in the using. War wastes our moral reserves as it wastes our economic ones. The man who does not realize that is simply blind to all that is going on around him. We feel warranted in saying what we have said because it was our teaching during the whole of the war period. And in that we felt that we were only acting up to the best Freethought tradition. Pressure was brought to bear upon us to join in the war propagandist chorus, but it is a tradition of the *Freethinker* to speak its mind on all subjects.

The late Canon Rawnsley, of Grasmere, left £60,511; the Rev. H. L. Elliot, of Halstead, Essex, left £9,458, and the Rev. A. C. Johnson, of Capel St. Mary, Suffolk, left £10,227. None of these unfortunate men will flap around the Great White Throne.

Mrs. Thelma Bamberger, who was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment at the Old Bailey, had a highly pictorial career. As the daughter of an evangelist, she certainly exemplifies the beautiful results of a Christian upbringing.

It seems that there are five miles of surrendered German warships in the Forth. They have been surrendered in the interests of the peace of the world. Accordingly they are to be sold to some of the smaller naval Powers, such as Brazil and Chili. That is the way the peace of the world is promoted. It will make it easier for these smaller Powers to have a naval scrap, and we must have a good-sized navy to look after those we have supplied with the material for having a fight. Still, we won the war that was to end all wars.

There is one lesson that our missionaries might bring back from China. Alone among the nations of the world the Chinese have seriously held the ideal of peace. They have been alone in teaching that war is a curse and that the life of the soldier is a degradation. It is true that we are doing our best to cure them of such teachings, but we are certain that until the West is sensible enough to take the same line it will have no right to call itself completely civilized.

Canon Barnes declares that Evolution cannot account for Jesus. Indeed! Evolution accounts for the Jewish Christ as well as for all the so-called pagan Christs. It accounts for all the gods from Jupiter to Mumbo Jumbo. The Canon had better try again, and extend his reading beyond the pages of the *Sunday Companion* and the parish magazines.

The clergy take money with both hands, but they are very reluctant at parting with it, as organists, choir-masters, and vergers can testify. Hence the following carefully-worded advertisement will raise a smile among those who know:—"Laymen (Church of England) still wanted in the great industrial centres—Fair wages to suitable men." It is quite safe to say that the "fair wage" is not equal to a bishop's salary.

Our Sustentation Fund.

OUR Sustentation Fund is making good progress, and we continue to receive numerous letters that are cheerful and inspiring reading. There is also a fairly general expression of opinion that the offer of "Medical" should be accepted, and the paper relieved from financial worry for the next two or three years by the raising of the sum of £1,000. Personally I feel assured that that would mean the end of all appeals, as by that time the paper would be paying its way. Quite a number of subscribers have promised to contribute again towards raising the full sum, but I am unable to add their names to the list of promises, as no definite sums are named. However, readers will see by this week's list what has been done. Mr. C. Rudd, whose cheque was acknowledged last week, says that if the scheme materialises he will be able to send a further contribution. Mr. Williams, of Liverpool, hopes that the suggestion will be carried out, and suggests that friends in various areas might undertake the raising of definite amounts. Mr. and Mrs. Morison write: "It is up to every reader to support the paper at this time. We shall send another subscription so soon as the £400 mark has been reached." We have also a promise from a very staunch supporter of the paper of the substantial sum of £100 if the £1,000 can be realized, and £6 from Mr. A. W. Coleman, making £226 in all, in addition to what is actually subscribed.

Mr. F. E. Willis writes from Birmingham: "Permit me to record my earnest appreciation of the manner in which, in spite of all obstacles, you keep the flag of Freethought flying. The paper is more than ever an intellectual treat, the hope of ardent thinkers, and the uncompromising foe of all forms of orthodox superstition." Mr. J. Bingham writes from Belfast, where they have some religion: "When I know that our most popular local paper is published at three times its pre-war rate, and that two others have ceased to exist, I can understand what uphill work you must have."

L. C. writes making several suggestions as to increasing the usefulness of the *Freethinker*, all of which we have noted. One of these is that *Freethinker* readers might start a correspondence class dealing with Freethought subjects. That is a good suggestion, but I must say of that, as I have said in "Sugar Plums" of the *Freethinker* League, it would have to be run by the readers themselves. I have my hands too full at the moment to take on extra duties. Otherwise the closer the bond between readers the better. We do feel that the paper might be made a much greater power in the country than it is at present, and anything that helps it to become so is increasing the power of the principles for which it stands. It is the one journal that keeps the fighting side of Freethought before the public, and the more influential it becomes the better.

Pressure on our space prevents our noting further some of the letters received. Perhaps we may do so in our next issue.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

Previously acknowledged, £263 9s. 6d. Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Morison, £1 1s.; H. Mason, 10s. 6d.; "Old Soldier," 10s.; "B.," 10s.; A. G. Lye, 10s. 6d.; H. L. and H. P. Blyto, 10s.; F. E. Willis, 10s.; A. J. Watson, 5s.; G. Price, 7s. 6d.; Mrs. C. M. Renton (second subscription), £2; H. Boll, 10s.; W. H. Blackmore, 5s.; Kathleen and Anthony, grandchildren of the late G. W. Foote, 10s.; W. Bailey, £1; Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Finney, £1; J. Bingham, 8s.; A. D. Corrick, £2; Wallace Allen, £1; Dr. A. W. Laing, £7; Mr. and Mrs. R. Green, 30s.; Margaret Campbell, 2s. 6d.; R. Mayston, 2s. 6d.; T. Borland (Glasgow),

10s.; Four Grimsby Readers, per F. Berman, £2; Mrs. A. Capon, £1; R. Young, 10s.; Harrit Baker, 5s.; W. Wearing, 10s.; E. Truelove, 10s.; F. W. Haughton, £10; J. Hudson, £1; W. Macfarlane, 10s.; Dr. C. R. Niven, £1 1s.; Blea Tarn, 10s.; J. Brodie, 3s.; L. C., £1 1s.; G. Smith, £1 10s.; Members of Barnsley Branch N. S. S., £3; H., 2s.; C. Howard, 5s.; Robert Polworth, 2s. 6d.; A. Machin, 5s.; Per A. Millar, 9s.; F. Collins, 15s. 6d.; J. O'Connor, £1; J. Rigby, 10s.; W. K. Huty, £10.

Total, £321 2s.

PROMISED, provided the total sum raised reaches £1,000, including the promises.—"Medical," £50; "In Memory of the late Sir Hiram Maxim, £50; Mr. J. B. Middleton, £20; "A Friend," £100; A. W. Coleman, £6.

To Correspondents.

A. VANDERHOUT.—It is not necessary for all to be in the "firing line" to be of service. The firing line is only efficient in proportion as the non-firing lines are strong. That is one lesson of warfare that all learn—except militarists, who never learn anything that is worth mastering.

J. H. TURNER.—We do not for a moment believe that people do "restrain their evil tendencies" because of belief in a hereafter. The impression that this is the case is contradicted by facts. If it were the case, and, unless we assume that Freethinkers are naturally superior to Christians, it would follow that those who do not believe are worse men than those who do. And that is certainly not the case. Strictly speaking, nature is neither perfect nor imperfect. These are qualities which we create in measuring natural happenings by our own self-created standards.

W. H. BLACKMORE.—Thanks. We are all fellow-sufferers. We happen to live in a district that is top of all England for rates. We can say truly, "We lead, others follow."

MRS. C. M. RENTON.—Thanks for second contribution to the Fund. Our friends are coming along splendidly. Chesterton deserves all he gets. His trouble is the ordinary journalistic one, that of feeling impelled to express an authoritative opinion on any subject that comes along, whether he knows anything about it or not. That class of person never seems to recognise the difference between knowing a subject and understanding it.

JOIDA.—No live animal could continue in a cavity 40 yards below the surface unless something in the nature of a miniature tunnel existed for the passage of air and moisture. Quite a number of tales to the contrary are about, but they are without foundation in fact.

M. DESHUMBERT.—Grote's *Analysis of Religion* has been republished at least once, a copy of which we possess. It might bear reprinting, but not at the moment, when printing is so terrifically dear. Thanks, however, for the suggestion.

A. W. COLEMAN.—Thanks for cuttings. It is poor stuff, but what can one expect when people will discuss with serious faces beliefs that do not belong to civilized thought at all.

R. M.—Thanks; we are keeping well. We have neither time, inclination, nor cash to be otherwise. Doctors' fees have advanced, and even funerals are dearer than they were. We could not agree to the suggestion you make while we are compelled to ask for help to keep the paper going.

R. DRISCOLL.—Surely there are other ways of dealing with irreclaimable criminals than killing. And there is the point of view of the effect of capital punishment on those who inflict it as well as on those who suffer it. The argument from the trouble of keeping the criminal at the public expense might well be met by the retort that as society is responsible for the appearance of the criminal it is, after all, only keeping its own. None of us have any sympathy with crime; it is a question of how to treat the criminal.

R. GREEN.—Pleased to have your appreciation and that of your wife's of the *Freethinker*. We appreciate the wish expressed at the close of your letter, but we prefer things as they are, at present.

A NUMBER of letters are held over until next week.

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

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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:—

The United Kingdom.—One year, 17s. 6d.; half year, 8s. 9d.; three months, 4s. 6d.

Foreign and Colonial.—One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

To-day (October 10) Mr. Cohen lectures in the City Hall Saloon, Albion Street, Glasgow. The lectures will be at 12 o'clock and 6.30. The hall is a very comfortable one, and we are expecting to hear of crowded meetings. On Monday evening Mr. Cohen visits Paisley, but has not yet received the name of the hall or the time of meeting. On Tuesday evening he visits Falkirk, and returns to London on Wednesday.

On Sunday next Mr. Cohen visits Manchester. He will lecture in the Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, afternoon and evening. We hope that our friends will see that the meetings are made known among their Christian acquaintances. There is nothing like personal advertisement in such cases.

At its last meeting the Executive of the N. S. S. had before it the question of organizing in and around London during the coming winter. One difficulty is the securing of suitable halls. This is not an easy task, as so many places are now taken for purposes other than lecturing. Some arrangements have already been fixed, but more can be made. To that end we shall be obliged if *Freethinker* readers in any part of London and suburbs will co-operate. Those who know of suitable halls will oblige by sending on all information to Miss Vance, the N. S. S. secretary, at the Society's office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C. We hope that all interested will get to work at once. Many helpers will make the work easier.

We are pleased to see that the South Shields Branch is going ahead with its organisation of work on Tyneside. It has been neglected there too long. A full week's lecturing has been arranged for Mr. Lloyd, which includes two Sundays—if we may count two Sundays in one week. That is a very good start, and we hope that all friends in the district will see that this experiment receives the support, financial and moral, that it deserves. We should also like to see so important a centre as Newcastle-on-Tyne once more active. It has been quiescent for some years, and we are quite sure that the public there are ready for the propaganda if it is only set going.

Those Freethinkers who are on the look-out for a book to send to their friends will find in *An Intimate View of Robert G. Ingersoll* by I. Newton Baker (New York, Farrell, 7s. 6d) something that will answer their purpose. The work was originally prepared as a memorial for the Ingersoll family, soon after the death of the Colonel. It is now issued for a wider public. The volume examines Ingersoll from all sides, and is a worthy tribute to one of the most human men that ever lived. Mr. Newton gives his readers enough selections from the writings and speeches of Ingersoll to enable those who are not acquainted with his works to appreciate their power, and we expect to awaken a desire for closer acquaintanceship. The book should have a good sale on both sides of the Atlantic.

In another part of this issue of the *Freethinker* will be found a letter from a very old and staunch friend of this journal, at present resident in Paris, advocating the formation of a *Freethinker* Fellowship. We have every sympathy with such a move, and the bond between *Freethinker* readers is, we think, strong enough to make such a League a success. We have received from another friend two designs for a button that could be worn as a sign of identification, and when we get others we will try and select one that we consider most suitable. But on the question of a League of *Freethinker* readers we have only at present to make two observations. The first is that we think the money entrance might well be dispensed with. It is a bond between readers, and it should be quite a voluntary one. The other is that Mr. Cohen is quite unable to take any part in it that would involve more labour. He is already doing as much as he can, perhaps more than he ought, and until the *Freethinker* is able to pay for something in the nature of regular help, he has his hands full with work that cannot be put off. But the idea of a League is a capital one, and we have no doubt that it would be a success. The columns of the *Freethinker* would, of course, be at its service for all necessary publicity. It remains for those who take an interest in the project to push it forward.

We are glad to learn that Mr. Lloyd had fine meetings at Failsworth on Sunday last. There was a record collection, and, we think, another record in the "naming" of two babies, Annie Warren and Joan Milner. We understand that the two initiates refrained from expressing any opinion on the proceedings, and we have no doubt all were relieved at that.

Mr. Moss opened the West Ham Branch's winter lectures with an address at the Engineers' Institute on Sunday last. There was a very appreciative audience, and the opening meeting augurs well for the season.

The Swansea Branch N. S. S. has arranged a Sunday evening popular concert for October 10. The function will be held in the Elysium, High Street, and tickets are 1s. and 1s. 6d., plus entertainment tax. There is certain to be a good attendance, and we are sure the rest of the evening will be quite up to standard.

Mr. Cohen has received so many letters congratulating him on his thirty years' service in the Freethought movement that he is forced to take this method of thanking all who have written. One need not work for appreciation for it to be welcome when it arrives unsolicited. It then acts as thanks for the past and inspiration for the future.

Fettered Thought in Sex Problems.

RECENT correspondence in these columns brings again into prominence the widespread and oft-repeated opinion that, in sexual morals, man is relatively more vicious than woman. Such opinion has no more scientific justification than the yet more pernicious one—universal in Biblical times and by no means uncommon to-day—that woman is an inferior and impure being, unfit to enter a place of worship or even tread on "sacred" ground—a creature whose very touch pollutes.

Havelock Ellis, in his *Psychology of Sex*, gives ample scientific proof that in affairs of sex neither side has any legitimate claim to a monopoly of vice or virtue, it is six of one to half a dozen of the other. To enter into a tirade against man's passions is to tilt against the cosmos. Throughout the whole gamut of animal life, and to a considerable degree throughout plant life also, sexual passivity is the predominating feature of the female, sexual aggressiveness of the male organism. Nor is this general principle confined to the complete cell community constituting the mature individual, it extends to the very threshold of sex and

evinces itself in the germinal units from whose fusion each one of us takes his or her being. Some twenty to thirty summers prior to the wooing of the maid by the man intense and tragic love dramas were enacted by his and by her ancestral cellular elements. As principal performers on the stage in this microscopic world of reproductive units were, on the one hand, a single, relatively large, passive, sluggish, well-nourished, spherical organism, not unlike the oophore or unfertilised egg-cell of the vegetal world. Such was the heroine of the piece, the virgin female cell, doomed shortly to die unless a something lacking was forthcoming, a something that would, besides conferring on herself renewed lease of life, also confer the capacity to produce in the incredibly short space of a few months over sixty trillion cell descendants. On the other hand were several very minute, hungry, elongated organisms rushing hither and thither in feverish eagerness, ever searching, searching..... These little cell-like individuals, resembling in appearance and corresponding in function to the antherozoids or spermatozoids of the plants, were the male cells. Presently one of them wandered within the chemotactic sphere of influence of the female cell and, orientating himself straight for her, he literally plunged head foremost into the depths of her substance. In this last act his individuality perished; he was lost in her being, and the curtain drops over a true love sacrifice that has few parallels in the macroscopic world.

The chastity of woman, her modesty, coyness—coquetry—attributes she shares with her humbler sisters among the lower animals—even the becoming blush that mantles her cheeks at the bare mention of sex, are all part of her sexual armoury for subjugating the male and bringing him to heel, and it is this capacity to evoke in him a greater ardency and more stable and sustained devotion that gives these secondary sexual characters their great survival value. Man also, in common with other males, possesses his corresponding characters in the shape of pugnacity in the presence of rivals, display of prowess before the female, more ravenous sex-hunger and more obtrusive amorousness. All such male sexual characters owe their origin and being to natural selection. They are what they are because pleasing to the opposite sex; indeed, it is to the instrumentality of the female they owe their existence. The struggle between males for the satisfaction of the sex instinct through possession of the female consists not only of a contest with weapons of brawn and brain, but, in addition, of a definite *selection* on the part of the female, who yields herself only to the mate of her choice. From which we see that some of those very characters in man, such as his relatively intenser sex concentration, that certain women writers affect to deplore, have been evolved in him by woman. Without woman's biologic influence man would lack his salient characteristics, he would not be man; it is woman who has made him what he is, she is the *dea ex machina* of natural selection. The gentler sex have consequently the remedy—if they really wish to apply it—in their own hands, but fortunately for humanity the average woman appears to be fairly satisfied with the average man. There is no blinking the fact we are animals, with the instincts of animals, one of which is the sex impulse. When man attained a level of mentality that enabled him to realise he had evolved into something higher than the mere beast of the field, he, with his reason, might have stamped out his sex instinct. But that way lay the end of genus *Homo*. Instead, therefore, of adopting so suicidal a policy, he idealized the sex impulse, leavening his physical passions with higher emotions and harmonizing the insurgent call of sex with cleanliness, fitness, honour of women, love of children, and social self-respect. Failure to obey the sex impulse entails race suicide, failure to honour it entails reversion to the brute level.

The reasoning of some persons that the purposive restriction of the family is wrong because it is against nature is bad logic and worse physiology. If I may be allowed to personify what is in reality but a complex system of environmental forces I would like to point out that nature intended man to be naked and polygamous, whereas he is compelled—at any rate in this country—to wear clothes and be satisfied with one wife at a time. Man drains his houses and towns, where nature ordains the accumulation of filth. By surgical interference he saves the lives of thousands annually whom nature has sentenced to immediate death. Why, then, when man possesses a means of circumventing the wasteful demands for progeny of an insatiable ogress who cares only for "type" and is so "careless of the single life," should he not use that means? Again, to throttle the sex instinct is to abort the sex glands and impoverish those highly elaborated chemical compounds, the *hormones*, that give to man his splendid virility and to woman her exquisite and charming femininity. Enough evil already exists from repression of the normal sex instinct. Hysteria, religious mania, and other neuroses are, in the majority of cases, but the outward and visible sign of unsatisfied mate hunger; prudery is almost invariably but camouflaged sexual desire.

To the present writer it would appear that most, if not all, of the avoidable evils of the day are directly traceable to fettered and faulty thinking. We spend years training the youth of the nation *how* to use their muscles, but we do not teach them *how* to use their minds, and think correctly. It would well repay the nation to endow a university chair for teaching the laws of correct thinking. It is wrong thinking that winks at the sexual delinquencies of one partner while censuring those of the other with the utmost severity. It is wrong thinking that entails under-production of food and over-production of mouths to eat it. The constant cry on the part of a celibate clergy to be fruitful and multiply, and the blindly obedient response to that cry on the part of the masses, are both due to wrong thinking.

C. M. B.

Plotinus, The Labourer, and Dean Inge.

THE above title may appear at first glance as ridiculous as the request of one of Mr. Bernard Shaw's characters for "a Bible and six oranges." Furthermore, the mew of a cat may not seem to have any connection with the music of the solar system—

The smallest orb which thou behold'st,
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubims.

Gothic architecture may be male, and Greek architecture may be female; the former Dionysos—the latter Apollo. Man may be the former and woman the latter, but if philosophy is not a unity, then it only exists as an excuse for pomposity, a long beard, or shaggy eyebrows. At this time of the year, autumn sunlight after rain appears to have a peculiar effect on trees and all beautiful objects of nature. It gives to them a transparency—it is akin to the feeling that one has on exclaiming "I saw it in a flash"—it is a degree of consciousness, it is intuition. In walking through the slums of London, a sensitive being *feels himself* the sores on the faces of underfed and neglected children, loathes the abominable, needless, and senseless noise, and his own body and mind become a register of universal pain, or universal joy—but the latter is not yet. Without any love for paradox (some assert that truth is found in paradox) we take the above trinity as our subject, hoping to illuminate, desiring to sublimate the three, and fearing—nothing, if we fail.

DEFINITIONS.

Plotinus (204-270 A.D.): A philosopher, who valued truth above riches.

The Labourer (Stw-Utin¹): A man, without whom, the human world would fall to pieces.

Dean Inge (of no consequence to this article): A man without whom, and his tribe, mankind might get up from its four legs. A well-paid Jeremiah; a peevish man whose business has fallen into disrepute, whose income is not assessed according to "turnover" or "output"; has written and lectured extensively on Plotinus. Has never been known to strike. From lecturing on Plotinus has turned to lecturing the workman.

As a student, abiding for a little while in a house not of his own making, nor asking, in the first place, to dwell in it, we have fallen under the enchanting spell of Plotinus. He is a nexus between East and West, and when one has cast away the stupidities of Christianity, his speculations invite attention—with this proviso, that he will not ask you to divest yourself of the only creditable garment a man may wear—the plain coat of common sense.

We would remind our readers of the open tribute paid to Freethought in the *Freethinker* by Meredith. In the new Bohn edition of the *Select Works of Plotinus* there is a dedication to Meredith by Thomas Taylor, the translator. Marsilio Ficino (1433-99) devoted many years to the translation of this remarkable man's works, but he endeavoured to reconcile the revelations of Christianity with the intellectual beauty of ancient Greece, which was an attempt at sublimation. Coleridge and Emerson came under the spell of Plotinus. What, then, is the magic of Plotinus to compel the attention of minds so diverse? Meredith would not have esteemed it an honour to receive a dedication from some ecclesiastical writer who had written a book demonstrating that the ex-Kaiser was anti-Christ or Theosophy the seven-headed beast of the Bible. Such works find their resting place in the twopenny box of the second-hand booksellers—in company with a lot of trash written for steaming heads during the late war. As we do not find cackling geese at "The Banquet," so we shall not find tremendous trifles exercising the minds of the truly great—whose works to us are a precious inheritance, and compensate us for the penalty of being alive. It would be a labour of love to us (though, we fear, a trial of endurance to our readers) to take the select works of Plotinus seriatim, and point out what we consider to be pure gold. This is not our intention. Our immediate object is to demonstrate that where Dean Inge teaches and lectures, he might have done better by learning—that where he delivers himself in the language of our modern money-rakers and pitiful tools of a hellish economic system he falls short of the lofty ideals of Plotinus, who saw the universe as a unity. Let good Europeans endeavour to see the world as a community—with Palestine providing a little gaiety and a tremendous weight of tragedy—not to be repeated.

Mr. G. R. S. Mead states in his preface: "If we search Plotinus for evidence of any actual influence of Jewish and Christian phraseology, we search in vain." Once again, bearing in mind the intellects that Plotinus has attracted, may we not rightly ask, is not this a man to be known? Shall we look at him through Christian spectacles? Shall we look at him through the eyes of Dean Inge, who shows, by despising the Shudra Caste, that he is in a false position in society? Shall we look at him through the eyes of a rival philosophy that hid itself from the light of common sense in the subtleties of Athanasius—a *cul-de-sac* of Bedlam?

Modern priests were best fitted to fight in the great war. We have written it many times before, and shall do so again. Their direct contact with their Lord, their holiness, their knowledge, all combined to render them fit candidates for seeing the next world. Hewers of coal and tillers of the soil had scant leisure for this preparation; many thousands of them now find in foreign lands the peace they could not find at home. If Dean Inge served in the war as a combatant, it is only what he should have done. If he did not, and his acquiescence to the system morally bound him to do so (as proved by his libel of the workman), then he was afraid of the time described by Plotinus as "that period which is no less the dread of the vulgar than the transport of the philosopher"—in other words, of death. Physical incapacity was no excuse; or as a last resort he should have left the Church—gone on strike. In this respect the hard, implacable, and serene view of Plotinus is too high for Christian principles. Here one is maliciously reminded of Villon's *Ballade*, with its refrain:—

There's no treasure like life at one's ease.

In his introduction, Thomas Taylor writes:—"Philosophy, indeed, as it is the most noble and liberal of all pursuits, ought never to be separated from noble birth and exalted rank. It is naturally allied to everything great, and is calculated to confer dignity, even on greatness itself. It exalts the majesty of the monarch, stamps nobility with true grandeur, and raises the plebeian to immortality." Our present-day values are based on capitalistic standards. It is not what a man is, but what a man *has*. And the Dean has fallen up to the neck into this quagmire of squalor. His letter, which we² quoted, might have been signed by Lord Soapsuds, or the Earl of Mexican Oil, or the Duke of Pork and Beans, or any other human symbol connoting an accretion or monopoly of the earth's produce. We have a right to suspect that something is wrong when Privilege and Priest speak with the same voice. And like Menippus, in Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*, we grasp Mercury's hatchet to chop off undue lengths of beard and eyebrows to prove that it is not necessary to be a philosopher to lecture on one. And with suspended judgment, we venture to hope that the smell of "patchouli" was not present at the Dean's lectures, as was the case in Bergson's drawing-room discourses. "No man," writes Blake, "can think, write, or speak from his heart but he must intend truth," and we credit the Dean with as sincere a desire for truth as any man's outside the church. But his own words condemn him to a return to the Shudra Caste, from whence by work and service and good deeds he may rise again with greater merit to a position that he fails to morally hold. If this be unfair, then, may we suggest, that ecclesiastical property and ecclesiastical revenue from coal mines have something to do with the spleen of the Dean? We are afraid that, like many more of our modern admonishers, he is railing at the effect without troubling to look for the cause; any writer or public speaker can do this standing on his head—look at our glorious array of daily papers, what are they all but the bunglers and botchers of society, purveyors of political fiction, and the despair of men who aspire to be statesmen in a degree never dreamt of by the Napoleons of journalism who worship the Calf of Gold with strawberry leaves round its ears. WILLIAM REPTON.

(To be continued.)

A sceptic is nothing but a man finding his way, oftentimes, to a higher level. He is a man who is forsaking rubbish, with the object of getting hold of the substance. He is a man who will not eat hay, but wants fresh grass. H. W. Beecher: "Evolution and Religion."

¹ Since Time was—Until Time is not.

² The Claws of the Church.

Correspondence.

THE FREETHINKER FELLOWSHIP MOTTO:
"THE BEST OF CAUSES."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Re that £1,000 mark and the practical and generous proposal of "Medical" in your issue of September 26, and, coming to grips with the whole problem of the financial stability of the *Freethinker*, I venture to throw out the following suggestion, for what it is worth, for the consideration of all those of our readers for whom the best of causes is something more than a casual intellectual diversion.

If my opinion finds confirmation, and is adopted, two things will result: (1) Something new will be created in the movement which was not thought of when the Garden of Eden was being planned, and (2) the financial position of the *Freethinker* will be automatically put on a sound footing without any special appeals.

I propose the formation of a *Freethinker* Fellowship on the following main lines (subject to modification after general discussion):—

OBJECT: To bring all earnest Freethinkers together in closer fellowship, with a view to rendering mutual service whenever possible, and demonstrating in a general way the existence of an *esprit de corps* amongst Freethinkers. The spirit of comradeship and loyalty should pervade all members in their relations one with another.

MEMBERSHIP: Open to all readers of the *Freethinker* who conscientiously feel themselves qualified and who will pledge themselves morally to adopt an attitude of sympathetic helpfulness and social preference towards all fellow-Freethinkers in general and Fellowship members in particular.

QUALIFICATION: Membership to be split up into three categories: Associates, Fellows, and Masters. For the amount of the subscription we take the figure of £5, as a basis, and proceed as follows:—

Associates to pay 10s. per annum for a period of ten years. Fellows: £1 per annum for five years. Masters: £5 down. In any case, a total contribution of £5 having been attained, an Associate or a Fellow automatically becomes a Master.

In order to provide for the numerous millionaires in our movement a fourth grade might be introduced, optionally, that of Benefactor; this name would be applied to those members who subscribed over and above the £5 necessary for full membership.

The *Freethinker* Fellowship would not clash with the N. S. S., as the latter is a body bent upon propaganda, or the preaching of our principles, whilst the Fellowship would stand for the *practice* of them amongst ourselves.

The organisation of the Fellowship could be reduced to its very simplest expression, and have its headquarters at the *Freethinker* office. The running expenses would be insignificant (the cost of an artistic receipt and membership form, postages, etc.).

A well-known Freethinker might be asked to accept the honour of becoming honorary president, for one year, or a number of years. In order to encourage the spirit of fraternity, the honorary president, or any other member, might have the right to propose an Associate or Fellow for the grade of Master, without further payment of subscription, as a reward for conspicuous service in the Freethought cause. Details to be worked out subsequently. Such are the broad lines of my suggestion.

A. ALDWINCKLE.

WOMEN AS SAVIOURS.

SIR,—Will you allow me, as a regular reader during the last twelve months, to express my very keen appreciation of your excellent paper, the *Freethinker*, and, at the same time, to tell you with what delight I look forward to your weekly contribution?

It is easy to recognise in your articles the same fearless condemnation of the shams and hypocrisies of religion, the same lucidity of thought and of expression, the same delightful caustic wit, with which those who have been fortunate enough to hear you lecture are familiar. Your paper is the one, above all others, whose weekly advent I anticipate with the greatest pleasure.

I have been trying lately to take my little part in spreading Freethought propaganda, and this is what I am doing. One of my chums here is an Indian barrister, who has several younger brothers still at college in India. I hand some of my copies to him, and he, in his turn, sends them to his brothers, who read them, together with their friends. I also have an Indian friend in Ahmedabad, a lecturer in zoology, a Freethinker, but who did not know of the existence of your paper. He is delighted, and will, I hope, shortly subscribe. They all agree that India offers a splendid field for this propaganda, more especially amongst the well-educated Indians.

With regard to the discussion on Neo-Malthusianism, I should like to dispute the suggestion made by Miss Prewett, that women, as a whole, reject this doctrine. It is perfectly absurd to depict man as a being full of brutal, bestial passions, while woman is merely the passionless victim. Any woman of normal sexual development possesses sexual passion in much the same proportion as a normally developed man, and this quite apart from any maternal instinct—which instinct is enormously exaggerated! It is still more absurd for a modern woman of freethinking principles to deprecate sexual indulgence (as if she were a bishop hurling forth denunciation!), when it is the natural outcome of a perfectly natural and healthy instinct. As Mr. Cutner so aptly remarks, "Contraception is of immeasurably more gain to women than to men"! (Miss) BEATRICE BROWN-DIXON.

SIR,—Frances Prewett holds up an ideal, and, from woman's point of view certainly, a condition not to be sneered at. But she does not tell us how this ideal can be attained. With woman, herself, it rests undoubtedly, but how can woman, especially in the married state, claim to be mistress of herself until she be economically free?

Whilst married women depend for their very existence on their husbands, so must they sexually be enslaved. Look into your hearts, married women, and gainsay if you can my contention of prostitution in marriage as well as out of it. With woman's helpless dependence on her husband, she finds herself forced to bear and bring into the world unwanted children, desired neither by herself nor her husband. Hence contraceptives. But the use of these does not tend to ennoble sexual relationship, or relieve the situation as far as women are concerned. This latter point is purely psychological, by the way.

I would solve the problem by giving all girls—just as we give our boys—careers, to be continued even though assuming wifehood, and perhaps motherhood.

(Mrs.) F. P. WALTER.

ATHEISM AND GOD.

SIR,—I consider that Mr. E. Egerton Stafford has done real service to clear thinking in drawing attention in your issue of September 26 to the logical unsoundness of Bradlaugh's Atheistic defence. I never could see any argumentative point or force in it. KERIDON.

GOD AND EVIL.

SIR,—What does Dr. Lyttelton say to the argument of the article on "Responsibility: The Guilt of God," which appeared simultaneously with his letter? Does he seriously hold that facts of the nature therein enumerated are not evils, if caused or allowed by a conscious Being? Surely they look much worse on this theory than on the Atheistic.

As for the evils we bring on ourselves, does not Dr. Lyttelton's theory involve, as you said in the discussion, that "God gave man freedom to wreck his life, without the judgment to avoid disaster"? W. JAMESON.

I have always distrusted chimeras. Nothing is less wholesome for men and nations than illusion; it stifles effort, it blinds, it is the vanity of the weak. To repose on legends, to be mistaken about all realities, to believe that it is enough to dream of force in order to be strong—we have seen well enough to what terrible disasters such things lead. The people are told to look on high, to believe in a Higher Power, and to exalt themselves to the ideal. No, no! That is language which at times seems to me to be impious. The only strong people are those who work, and it is only work that gives courage and faith.—*Emile Zola.*

Branch News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.—It was a pity that an unfortunate shower should have diminished the attendance at St. Pancras Reform Club on Sunday last, when Mr. A. D. McLaren gave a most excellent address on "The Constructive Side of the Freethought Movement." Mr. McLaren is an enthusiastic Freethinker, and conveys his enthusiasm to his subject. The address was carefully thought out and well planned, and Mr. McLaren speaks from personal experience of work in the Freethought movement in England and abroad. At the close of the lecture, the speaker paid an affectionate tribute to the memory of Bradlaugh, and spoke of Bradlaugh and Abraham Lincoln as the two greatest men of the nineteenth century. On Sunday next, October 10, Mr. Friedberg will take the affirmative and Mr. Eagar the negative in the debate, "Is Labour Fit to Govern?" Will all members make an effort to attend?—F. AKROYD.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S.—We commence the season's lectures on October 17 with a visit from Mr. Cohen, and intend, as nearly as possible, to have fortnightly lectures up to end of January. Owing to increase in hire of hall the meetings will be held in the Small Hall throughout the season. The new branch is now in its fourth year, and, although making steady progress, much more could be achieved if all the members would personally give better support to the work in the direction of attending the lectures and bringing along a friend. However, we are hoping for a good rally to welcome our President on the 17th. First Social will be held on October 30.—H. BLACK, Hon. Secretary.

FREETHOUGHT ON TYNESIDE.—The plans for our autumn lecture campaign are now completed. Our pioneers have been at work, and it only remains for our friends and those interested in the movement to rally round, and make Mr. Lloyd's visit a rousing success.

There is much to justify a presumption that the tide of Freethought is at the flood, and if it is taken now—the opportune time—it may lead to fortune.

Religion has no message for the modern age; something more real and vital is needed. Humanistic education is the need of the hour. Dreams of empire and traditional assumptions are at a discount. Secularism can undoubtedly cater for the urgent requirements of modern life. It seeks to "dignify labour," and claims that "happiness is man's proper aim." Mr. Lloyd will lecture at South Shields on October 17, Greenside on the 18th, New Herrington on the 19th, Jarrow on the 21st, and Hebburn on the 24th.

It might considerably help the movement if those in the various districts who are desirous of giving assistance would communicate with R. Atkinson, 38 Milton Street, Greenside; Mr. H. Boll, 14 Railway Terrace, New Herrington; Mr. J. Carr, 37 Frobisher Street, Hebburn; and with J. Fothergill, 3 Thompson Street, Tyne Dock.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON SEPTEMBER 30.

The President (Mr. C. Cohen) in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Lloyd, Moss, Neate, Quinton, Rosetti, and Samuels, Miss Kough, Miss Pitcher, and the Secretary.

Minutes of last meeting read and confirmed.

Monthly financial statement presented and adopted.

New members were admitted for the Birmingham and Leeds Branches and for the Parent Society—13 in all.

The President reported successful visits to Swansea, and prospects of increased propaganda in and around that neighbourhood.

A report was received from Birmingham giving particulars as to hiring of halls and propaganda generally during the winter months.

The Secretary reported that the instructions of the Executive had been carried out, and Fulham Town Hall engaged for a preliminary lecture in November; also the Trade Union Hall in Blackfriars Road for all Sundays in November.

It was further reported that Mr. A. B. Moss would visit Sheffield on October 24 on behalf of the Executive.

Several suggestions to the distribution of literature, etc., were remitted to the Propagandist Committee.

It being the anniversary of the day on which Mr. Cohen commenced his platform work for the movement, the Executive were unanimous in congratulating him upon his thirty years' successful work as a speaker, and later as a writer for Freethought, and in wishing him many more years of continued usefulness in the cause.

Various routine matters having been transacted, the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

THINK AND LET THINK.

Do you know that every man has a religious belief peculiar to himself? Smith is always a Smithee. He takes in exactly Smith's worth of knowledge—Smith's worth of truth, of beauty, of divinity. And Brown has, from time immemorial, been trying to burn him, to excommunicate him, because he didn't take in Brown's worth of knowledge, truth, beauty, divinity. He cannot do it, any more than a pint-pot can hold a quart—or a quart be filled by a pint. Iron is essentially the same everywhere and always, but the sulphate of iron is never the same as the carbonate of iron. Truth is invariable, but the Smithate of truth must always differ from the Brownate of truth.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Mr. Saphin, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH, N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, off Kentish Town Road, N.W.): 7.30, Debate: "Is Labour Fit to Govern?" Affirmative, Mr. F. Friedberg; Negative, Mr. A. Eagar.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S. W. 9): 7, Mr. C. Ratcliffe, "Social Injustice—Secular Solutions."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, H. W. Nevinson, "A Glimpse of America."

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