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Views and Opinions.

Our Early Ancestor.

Some American millionaires are fitting out an expedition for anthropological research work in Africa, and the *Daily News* wonders why millionaires should be so interested in the subject of scientific research. Well, to our mind, that is a strong redeeming feature in the character of the American millionaire, and we wish that our own millionaires were more prone to the same form of dissipation. Some excellent research work is being done in America at the cost of these same millionaires, and these endowed institutions show a readiness to accept new views, and a desire to acquire knowledge that is fast putting them in front of ourselves. My own bookshelves bear testimony to the excellence of the work achieved, and the number of magazines devoted to special subjects published in America would lead one to believe that the American public is a better educated one than our own. And I should say that in America the output of original works dealing with philosophical problems is much larger than it is at present with ourselves. After all, there is something in the taste for pure research, and the quest for truth considered merely as an end in itself. It has an elevating effect on character; ultimately it is even a "paying proposition," and if there is a justification to the mind of the British public for anything it is that. We are far too Christian not to have a firm faith in the "prophets," although we think of it with a slight altering in the spelling.

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Recovering Lost Minds.

The immediate object of the expedition is the search—so says the *Daily News*—for what is known as the "missing link," and that journal remarks with considerable truth that what would be far more interesting than the recovery of the bony framework of our remote ancestor would be the discovery of its thought and feelings, and the way in which it looked at life. With that I quite agree, but the quest is not quite so hopeless as the *Daily News* seems to think. By a process of what is partly an appeal to actual facts, and partly scientific divination based upon these same facts, we are able to recover many of the lost feelings and ideas of our semi-human progenitors. The instruments and methods of science are far more effective than the *Daily News* seems to appreciate. And in this case the instrument of research is nothing more elaborate or more recondite

than that by which we gauge each other's thoughts and estimate each other's motives. When I see a man laugh I assume that he is pleased; when he frowns that he is angry. And all that it means is that, seeing the same results, we are justified in inferring the same causes. Whether we argue from effects to causes or from causes to effects, we are applying the same instrument of research. And if that instrument is reliable in the case of animals and humans that are living, it must be equally reliable with animals and humans that are dead. For it is certain that identical structures imply identical functions. And that means that if we are acquainted with the structure that functions, and the conditions under which it functions, it is comparatively easy to arrive at the nature of the product. And because of this it is not nearly so difficult as the *Daily News* thinks to recover glimpses of the mentality of our early ancestor. Nay, it may even be that our very religious contemporaries might find many illustrations of it without going outside the walls of its own offices.

* * *

An Exercise in Psychology.

Now, in all thinking there are two main factors. There is the animal or human brain, and there is the "food for thought" in the shape of the existing knowledge of the world. Given an exact knowledge of the quality and extent of these factors, the question of what the thought will be like is little more than a problem in mathematics. Of course, in the case of our early ancestor we do not possess anything like the exact knowledge that would enable us to give elaborate details as to what his thoughts were, but we do know enough to be able to give an account of the general character of his thinking, mainly because of our knowledge of animal psychology, and because of what we know of the mentality of those tribes of men who are nearest the semi-animal form from which the human race sprang. And as we can trace the story of civilization back from ourselves to them, it is certainly warrantable to continue the tale back further still, and thus, with the aid of imagination, catch certain modes of thinking at their birth. So, when the *Daily News* says that what we would all like to have is, not merely the skeleton of this primitive ancestor, but an account of the thoughts and feelings "of this semi-human animal that climbed and fought and struggled, and was hungry and thirsty and tired, and frightened and vicious to its enemies, and kind perhaps to its little ones, far back in the abyss of time," I agree, and I think that we may easily acquire some of this knowledge, and by the same means and on the same grounds as we assume it to have been hungry and thirsty, angry or pleased.

* * *

The Power of Fear.

Now, there are two things that we may safely assume of this very early ancestor of ours. The one is that he possessed the quality of fear, the other that he possessed—the critical reader will excuse this way of putting it—the most profound ignorance. Thus, of the two factors of thought, the brain was of a low and relatively simple type, and the knowledge of the world

was also of a most rudimentary character—hardly above that possessed by a very young child of to-day. It lived in a world of which it knew very little—next to nothing of a definite character—a world in which there was plainly a deal of which to be afraid, one that was full of strange forms and unfriendly forces. By day or by night, waking or in sleep, all sorts of queer and unaccountable things were constantly happening, and those who have watched the behaviour of animals in the presence of strange movements, or the conduct of children in the presence of the unknown, or have watched a child when awakened from sleep oppressed by a bad dream or cheered by a pleasing one will be at no loss to divine in a general way what the world must have looked like to this semi-human ancestor of ours. The one certain thing to him must have been that the world was alive. The wind that roared, the thunder that growled, were the voices of angry beings it were well to steer clear of. And he hid from them, as animals and children—and even some adults—still hide when they pass through similar experiences. When the forces around him were not angry, he probably troubled very little about them, for fear is with undeveloped brains often a far greater incentive to mental activity than its absence. The undeveloped mind passively accepts and enjoys the agreeable things that come along, but it is active in its endeavours to avoid the unpleasant ones. The old Greek who said that fear first set man philosophizing understood this, and undoubtedly fear lies at the root of all religious thinking. That is why religion, with that harking back to the primitive—that response to the “Call of the Wild”—that is one of its most persistent characteristics, still dwells so much upon “God’s anger.” The Gods fatten on fear as a blood-sucking usurer does upon the folly of his clients, and in both cases the interest demanded far outweighs the value of the services rendered. When man arrives at the stage of being able to examine the Gods he begins to lose his fear of them, and Gods who are not feared are but poor things. They exist mainly as indisputable records of their own deterioration.

* * *

The Raw Material of Religion.

But as surely as we have reason for believing that this semi-human ancestor felt hunger and thirst and pleasure and pain, just so surely, and upon identical grounds, we are warranted in forming some notion as to what it thought about the world. And one of its most persistent convictions was that the world was full of living beings with whom it paid to keep on good terms. These dangerous personages were never seen, save in sleep, but that added to the terror they inspired. *Pithecanthropus erectus* had no very definite theory as to the nature of these fearsome beings; he had not yet evolved to the level of a Church Congress, to the formulation of a creed, or to the muttering of prayers. There would just be the same kind of cowering, the same kind of ineffective snarling that is seen with a dog when it is faced by a terror that it cannot quite comprehend. But vague though these imagined shapes were, they formed the raw material out of which all the religions in the world have since grown, the matrix in which the Gods were stamped. Even the Gods have to begin somewhere, and we know enough of them to say fairly definitely that they began their existence here. Poor *Pithecanthropus* must not have been a very pleasing or a very dignified object to look at, but he was a great inventor. He really invented the stuff from which the Gods were made. Without him we might have all gone to the grave without knowing there was a God to worship. And if the Church Congress was properly appreciative of benefits received, it would pay reverence to a gigantic figure of him as the author of its being. If we cannot say of him that he emulated the fabled task of Prometheus in bringing

fire to man by bringing the Gods from heaven to earth, we can certainly say that he took the Gods from earth and established them in heaven.

* * *

Two Great Discoveries.

There were other things that *Pithecanthropus* and his descendants had to discover in the strange world in which they found themselves, in their journeying to the thoroughly human stage. And some of these are now so much a matter of course that we have ceased to think of them as discoveries, but take them as eternal and ever-present facts. Birth and death are two of these things. Man had to discover the nature of both. He saw that with the birth of a child a woman was an ever-present factor, but what else played a part? That had to be found out, and the first guess was that the child was a joint product of a woman and of some of the innumerable ghosts with which early man believed himself to be surrounded. Many peoples are at this stage still, and the legends of divine births are evidence of the more primitive form. The woman was a fact, the man was only an inference arrived at after many generations had passed. That is why in all the legends of “divine” births it is only the father who is dispensed with. The mother is always in evidence; and the Church Congress should do an extra kow-tow to our suggested statue for having laid the foundation of the belief in the Virgin Birth of Our Lord. So also with death. We know death as a natural fact. Our early ancestor only knew of it as an occurrence. There seemed no reason why man should not keep on living, or why he should not repeat the daily experience of waking again after a sleep. But he did not always repeat that experience. Sometimes he slept and awakened, but sometimes he slept—and remained asleep. Gradually the reason for this emerged. It was because some enemy had killed him by magic, or the spirits were angry; in any case, the death was ultimately due to some of the cloud of supernatural influences that were always at work. And, here, dreams came in as useful. For they proved that there was something in man that could get out during sleep. It, therefore, got out at death. It had gone to another place, and could not get back. And so, to answer the second question, man’s voyage of discovery led him to the after life. And that, too, we have still with us, greatly modified in form, but the same in substance, and bearing unmistakable indications of its origin.

* * *

A Great Inventor.

On the whole, if one measures things by their beginnings instead of by their ultimate forms, one is inclined to count that poor, despised *Pithecanthropus* as the greatest inventor of the ages. He really invented the Gods; he invented the after life; he gave us the beginnings of the doctrine of a virgin birth; he introduced the material for a priesthood; he provided the occasion for a Church Congress. He is the true spiritual parent of the Athanasian Creed, and of the Westminster Confession of Faith. He is not without honour, in fact, but he is destitute of reverence in name. For the Church Congress does not mention his name save in derision, and even the *Daily News*, which champions so many of his ideas, and which gladly opens its columns to the effusions of the modern custodians of his views of the world, can only refer to him as a “Thing,” a form of depreciation not at all lessened by his being given the dignity of capital letters. For, after all, it is the first step that counts; and in the elaboration of religion it was the first step that was all important. And the really important step was taken in the brain of poor *Pithecanthropus* when he tried to reckon with a world of which he was so dreadfully ignorant and so terribly afraid. His semi-mute gropings formed the real origin of the Lambeth Conference, the Wesleyan Methodist Congress, and a

nearer prototype of a Salvation Army gathering. And mere gratitude demands that these assemblies should open with some form of public recognition of this indebtedness. "In the name of *Pithecanthropus*" would be a far better opening to the creeds than the one of "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"The Menace of Materialism."

MR. GEORGE KNIGHT delivered a remarkable speech at the Hull Wesleyan Conference, which was afterwards reported in full in the *Methodist Times*, and reviewed in two articles in this journal. In its issue of October 14 the *Methodist Times* devotes its leading article to "The Menace of Materialism," in which allusion is made to our criticism. Of course, our contemporary, being a journal devoted to the spread of spiritualistic doctrines, cannot be expected to commend Materialism to its readers. It favours us with the following definition:—

Materialism may be popularly described as that view of life which leaves God out of all account. Practically, it is the negation of the idea or fact of God. Thus, there is a scientific Materialism and a practical Materialism, though the one in the long run obviously affects the other. Scientific Materialism looks at the universe, and finds no room for God in it. Practical Materialism is living one's life without God.

That is as good and fair a definition as a theologian can give; but the writer is entirely mistaken when he asserts that "the belief in scientific Materialism has long been on the wane." As a matter of fact, scientific Materialism is a rapidly flowing tide. As Mr. Hugh Elliot well says: "While in philosophy there have been elements and tendencies of all kinds, in science there has only been one tendency—that towards Materialism." Mr. Elliot is a scientist of high standing, fully qualified to express an opinion on this point. He says further:—

The history of scientific discoveries is a history of Materialistic successes; for no scientific discovery has ever been made that is not based upon Materialism and mechanism. There can be no mistaking the trend of science, and there appears to be no object in citing here the facts, which can be read in any history.—*The Illusions of Professor Bergson*, pp. 167-8.

The writer of the article is equally mistaken when he declares that as an interpretation of the universe Materialism is out of count. There are thousands of scientists who never dream of any other interpretation. It is false to represent Professor Tyndall as having at any time repudiated the scientific Materialism upon which he contributed so excellent an essay. The following quotation is made from his *Apology for the Belfast Address*:—

I have noticed during years of self-observation that it is not in hours of clearness and vigour that this doctrine (Material Atheism) commends itself to my mind; that in the presence of stronger and healthier thought it ever dissolves and disappears, as offering no solution of the mystery in which we dwell, and of which we form a part.

Taken out of its context, that statement might be regarded as a repudiation of Atheism; but the context gives it a totally different import:—

Christian men are proved by their writings to have their hours of weakness and of doubt, as well as their hours of strength and of conviction; and men like myself share, in their own way, these variations of mood and tense. Were the religious moods of many of my assailants the only alternative ones, I do not know how strong the claims of the doctrine of "Material Atheism" upon my allegiance might be. Probably they would be very strong.

The *Methodist Times* is guilty of woefully misrepresenting Materialism. There is no truth whatever in the assertion that Materialists "must not even dream of a better time coming," or that they deny that man has fallen, but affirm that man cannot rise. It is perfectly true that Materialists, as well as Christians, may be the victims of pessimism; but that is the fault of their temperament, not of their creed. Many Materialists known to the present writer are whole-hearted optimists; and certainly there is absolutely nothing in Materialism to cool their ardour. While there is no room or need for God in it, it by no means follows that to be without God is to be without hope. To say that "if there is no future hell in Materialism, there is a very present one," or that "this life is indeed a vale of tears," is to betray complete ignorance of what Materialism stands for. Evidently the *Methodist Times* does not know many Materialists. James Thomson, the poet, was constitutionally a pessimist, but his friend, Charles Bradlaugh, was constitutionally an optimist to whom to live was joy. The leader-writer is quite wrong in his estimate of Mr. Edward Clodd and his "most sepulchral gloom." We have utterly failed to discover any melancholy pervading the works of that well-known author.

A Christian minister is incapable of doing justice to Materialism because of his supernatural belief. He claims to be a messenger from God. He professes to be able to tell his hearers what God thinks and does and requires them to think and do from day to day. Someone asked Mr. Evan Roberts, the Welsh revivalist, "How do you know that God exists?" and his answer was, "I have just had an interview with him." To such a man, the denial of the divine existence is rank folly, and the Materialist cannot shine as a good man. Practical Materialism "may or may not deny God, but it certainly ignores him"; and to ignore him is as heinous a sin as to deny him. But the minister is a dupe of superstition. He does not know God, nor has he the right to speak in his name. The belief in him has never justified itself in daily life, never borne fruit in the amelioration of the conditions of society. If you compare average Materialists with average Christians, the comparison will not redound to the discredit of the former. And yet the leader-writer has the audacity to say:—

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Materialism, according to the Bible, is rank folly. The root meaning of the word "fool" is "to wither." Practical Materialism means the withering of the best qualities of our nature, the destruction of all high instincts, the degradation of being, personal, social, national, and international. It is the blight on the crops of life; it sows tares among the wheat.

Only a blind fanatic can write such sheer nonsense as that. There is not a word of truth in it, and we can only characterize it as a most wicked calumny of multitudes of the best and noblest people on earth. Thousands of eminent men in the scientific world are avowed Materialists; but in the estimation of the *Methodist Times* they are destitute of good qualities and high instincts, of whom Lowell is made to say:—

They pass me by like shadows, crowds on crowds,
Dim ghosts of men that hover to and fro,
Hugging their bodies round them like thin shrouds,
Wherein their souls were buried long ago.

Towards the close of his article the leader-writer ignores the facts of life, and indulges in an angry and vulgar tirade against Materialism:—

We need not search for evidences of the blight of practical Materialism. They are not far from any one of us. We have only to open our eyes and look. We saw them in the great war; we see them in the after-effects of the war. We see that practical Materialism, with its pernicious influence, stands in the way of all true progress. It is responsible for the

huge contrast between the modern Dives and Lazarus, for many of our social evils, for the ineffectiveness which is so apparent in our schemes of reform. If allowed free course it will play havoc with any party, as indeed it has already done with some.

The *Methodist Times* is evidently "out" to damn Materialism at any cost. But what have the Churches been doing? Is not Dives an honoured member of many a Wesleyan communion, and is he not largely responsible for the non-chapel going of Lazarus? What have the Churches done to further true progress in any country? We are prepared to prove that social reform is and always has been the result of the spread of scientific knowledge. Buckle has demonstrated the truth of that statement beyond the possibility of doubt. Materialism is a theory of the universe merely, in which there are no ethical elements at all. To call it "narrow" or "unsatisfying" is wholly to misjudge it. As Mr. Elliot says:—

I fail to see the slightest grain of accuracy in the criticism. We know what life it, with its art, its morality, its beauty and ugliness, its goodness and badness. All these things are just the same in fact, whatever may be the theories which we form of them. Nature is just the same Nature, whether our theories of it are materialistic or spiritualistic. There are a certain number who used to think that man is degraded by his descent from apes. Why they should think so is a puzzle to those whose minds are philosophically orientated, for the nature of man is exactly the same whatever our theories may be. He is just the same man, whether he is descended from apes or gods. So, too, Nature is not altered a particle by the discovery that it is organized into a Materialistic scheme.—*Modern Science and Materialism*, p. 208.

J. T. LLOYD.

Shakespeare's Scepticism.

Others abide our question, thou art free.—*Matthew Arnold*.

Shakespeare was in the genuine sense, that is in the best and highest and widest meaning of the term, a Freethinker.—*Swinburne*.

ORTHODOX folks repeat, like parrots, the statement that Shakespeare was a Christian. They wish to claim the great writer as one of themselves, and from time to time publish books and pamphlets of special pleading, which would have brought blushes to the face of an Old Bailey advocate. More or less plausible disquisitions, as numerous as "quills upon the fretful porcupine," have been issued to demonstrate that Shakespeare belonged to almost every church in Christendom, the principal exceptions being the Unitarian Body and the Salvation Army. Even the Spiritualists have plucked up courage, and claimed Shakespeare as one of themselves. Now, the unexpected has happened, and the Rev. W. G. Tarrant, a Unitarian minister, has claimed the great dramatist as a very religious man, who, in his most exalted moments, had a sneaking fondness for "Nothingarianism."

The Rev. Mr. Tarrant is modest. His pamphlet, *Shakespeare and Religion* (British and Foreign Unitarian Association, Essex Street, Strand, W.C.), is priced at a penny, and is also given away for purely propagandist purposes. The pamphlet is the work of a man who has read Shakespeare's works, and its scholarship is sound. But it is an example of misdirected energy, and criticism, sharp as Shylock's knife, soon pricks the Unitarian bubble. Shakespearean commentators are adepts at bringing startling meanings out of the master's text, as a conjurer brings eggs, birds, and rabbits from a hat. This attempt, however, to prove the author of *Hamlet* and *King Lear* a Unitarian Christian easily surpasses them, and leaves the unfortunate reader gasping.

Let Mr. Tarrant ponder the facts. Mary Arden, Shakespeare's mother, came of a Roman Catholic

family. The presumption is that she was herself a Catholic, but there is no evidence. Shakespeare's father is not so doubtful. He was a member of the Stratford-on-Avon Corporation during Queen Elizabeth's reign, and he must have conformed to the Protestant faith. Therefore, it seems that young Shakespeare was brought up under a probably Catholic mother, and a father who was a professing Protestant. Shakespeare was not educated as a Catholic. He was so ignorant of Catholic ritual that he makes Juliet ask the friar if she shall come "at evening mass," and no Romanist could have made this mistake. *King John*, obviously, is not the work of a Papist. The purport of *Love's Labour Lost* is to show the uselessness of vows. The duke, in *Measure for Measure*, playing the part of a priest preparing a criminal for death, gives Claudio consolation. Not a word of Christian doctrine, not a syllable of sacrificial salvation, and sacramental forgiveness, is introduced, and the omission is most significant. Moreover, Shakespeare's poems and plays are full of eloquent passages directed against the celibate ideal. In a wonderful line in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he pictures the sad sisterhood of the cloister:—

Chanting faint hymns to the cold, fruitless moon.

Elsewhere he refers to something being as fit "as the nun's lips to the friar's mouth, and other significant passages might be quoted.

What is equally important is that Shakespeare was no Puritan, no conventional Reformation Protestant. He seems to say with Mercutio, "A plague on both your houses." He never hesitates to make his own puppets jest at Biblical subjects, or to treat with irreverence the most sacred features of the Christian faith. No really religious man could have penned the flippant blasphemies of Sir John Falstaff. Remember, for example, how the fat knight ridicules hell: "I think the Devil will not have me damned, lest the oil that is in me should set hell on fire." Nor is this flippancy peculiar only to Falstaff. King Richard the Second compares himself to Christ. He has "three Judases, each one thrice worse than Judas." Jesus, "in twelve found truth in all but one, I, in twelve thousand, none." In *Twelfth Night*, where Olivia says of her brother, "I know his soul is in heaven, fool," like a bullet comes the saucy answer, "The more fool you, madonna, to mourn for your brother being in heaven." In *Henry the Seventh*, the royal hunchback says blasphemously, "You shall sup with Jesus Christ to-night."

Not contented with iconoclasm, Shakespeare is often Secularistic in his outlook. Helena, in *All's Well That Ends Well*, says:—

Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie
Which we ascribe to heaven.

And Timon of Athens tells us, sardonically, that gold "will knit and break religions." Shakespeare's views on death amply prove his heterodoxy. Recall the dying words of *Hamlet*: "The rest is silence," and the speech of the Duke in *Measure for Measure* silencing Claudio's fear of death:—

The best of rest is sleep,
And that thou oft provokest, yet grossly fearest
Thy death, which is no more.

Had we only the plays to refer to, it were sufficient to prove Shakespeare's heresies. In the sonnets, where the Master unlocks his heart, orthodox dogmas are thrown to the winds. Old Omar Khayyam might have chanted Sonnet xxix:—

When in disgrace with fortune and mine eyes,
I all alone bewep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate.

Who but a Freethinker could have written "deaf" before "heaven"?

Need we go on quoting? The scepticism of Shake-

spere is "four square to all the winds that blow." In his masterpieces, Shakespeare deals with the deepest issues of life, but he does not point to the Cross as a solution. In an age when religious wars and schisms convulsed Europe, and in England, where Roman Catholicism was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with Protestants, it is remarkable that the permanent direction of his mind was Secularistic. It is well, for his puissant personality and splendid genius is the interpreter of "the soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come."

MIMNERMUS.

Agnosticism.

If by an Agnostic we mean one who knows nothing of the existence or character of God, everybody is an Agnostic. The most learned Christian divine knows no more about God than the most ignorant savage. For it is universally admitted that at the present time a God is not physically demonstrable, and, further, that we cannot scientifically know anything that is not capable of physical demonstration. And if an Agnostic is one who knows nothing of a conscious personal life after death, then everybody is an Agnostic. For, unless the most important alleged phenomena of Spiritualism are true, no religious person knows anything whatever about the future life, because there is no way to know anything of so-called spirit life except through physical demonstration. What is called the "spiritual sense" must be entirely discarded, for if anyone says that he possesses such a sense it is impossible for him to prove that he does. But this is not what Agnosticism means as that word is generally used among Agnostics themselves. An Agnostic is one who will neither affirm nor deny the existence of a God or the reality of personal existence after death, and who asserts that both God and immortality are unknowable. If this be a fair statement of the Agnostic position, then surely it is self-contradictory. For it asserts that we know nothing of God or the alleged spirit life, and also that both are unknowable. Thus it postulates unknowability of things about which it declares that we can know nothing.

The Agnostic declares that we are necessarily ignorant of everything beyond the physical universe, and discourages investigation in that direction as hopeless. Yet he permits himself to hope that there may be a God and a future life. Colonel Ingersoll once said: "In the night of death hope sees a star, and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing." If this is to be taken as a representative Agnostic utterance, we have the curious anomaly of one who declares a certain realm to be unknowable, and yet who says that hope looks over into that realm and sees a star, and that love hears the rustle of a wing. In one way it seems to me that the Agnostic position is unwarrantably positive, for no one is justified in putting any limit to what men may, at some future time, come to know. The stock of human knowledge is so constantly increasing that the limits to it are quite unknown. And, except in this particular way, the Agnostic position is too indefinite. What men are asking is whether there is a God or not, and whether we are to live after death or not. If anyone can answer these questions affirmatively, and furnish some proofs, men will listen to him eagerly. If anyone can answer them negatively by showing the invalidity of the proofs adduced, men will listen to him reluctantly, but will have to accept his answer. But if anyone replies: "I do not know and do not wish to be pressed for an answer, because either way I may be wrong, and, besides, the whole thing is unknowable anyhow, though hope sees a star and love hears the rustle of a wing," men will turn away from him as having nothing worth hearing to say. Modern science declares that we have no sources of information but the

five senses, and with these senses, aided by the most accurate, delicate, and powerful instruments, scientists have explored the universe far enough to know that whatever other worlds there may be they are substantially like our world, and the more they explore the further they get from finding a God or a soul, so that we are justified in asserting that the non-existence of either has been scientifically demonstrated. Demons and witches were once almost universally believed to exist, but modern science does not hesitate to declare positively that no such beings exist. Why? Because with all its investigations it has failed to find any, and the ancient belief in them can be fully explained psychologically. Thus it becomes clear that there is no logical position between absolute submission to the Pope of Rome and Atheism, and the only reason why all Christians are not Roman Catholics and all scientists are not Atheists is because neither one nor the other is logical and brave enough to accept the conclusions involved in their premises. Agnosticism is a half-way house between authoritarian religion and Atheism, and it will never be permanently occupied, because men are ultimately logical. Before very long, among those who are halting between Rome and Reason, there will be no Agnostics. Some Agnostics will become Supernaturalists, of one shade or another, and some will become Atheists, for Agnosticism is but a temporary fence on which men have climbed to escape the ecclesiastical bull on one side and the materialistic bull on the other. As I look, then, upon the religious problem of to-day, it seems to me that the Jehovistic or the Theistic position is quite untenable unless you are willing to rely upon a fabric based on an unproved assumption. The Agnostic position is also untenable, because on the one hand it is unscientifically bold and on the other unscientifically inexact and timid. The Atheistic position is logical and sound, provided always that the conclusions of science as to matter and its motions are correct. But there is some reason to believe that many of these conclusions are not correct, and many discoveries may yet be made which will necessitate a considerable revision of the present scientific creed. Towards this theoretically possible new light it is right that we should always keep our faces turned. Upon the Church in all its branches I think it safe to turn our backs. From Agnosticism we may as well turn our ears, for it has nothing to say. In Materialism we logically must, and safely may, rest, awaiting further scientific discoveries, and, speaking for myself, hoping that in some way or another I may be cognisant of how the human race will develop socially in the far future. It is certainly preferable to be annihilated than to run the risk of going to a horrible hell or a ginger-bread heaven, but, nevertheless, I would much like to know how society will be constituted a thousand years hence.

It makes no difference in conduct what one believes about a future life, for each of us must seek his own happiness in any case, and he is wise who recognizes that he can best attain his own happiness by making others happy.

I would lose all respect for myself if I could be content with a belief based on the shabby grounds of Theism, in all its varieties, but I would like to live long enough to see some scientific basis for a belief that man is not simply matter. I care nothing about seeing Colonel Ingersoll's star or hearing the rustle of a wing, as I care nothing about the golden streets and pearly gates of the New Jerusalem, and yet I can feel the thrill of Tennyson's words:—

Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
No life that breathes with human breath
Has ever truly longed for death.

'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
O life, not death, for which we pant;
More life, and fuller, that I want.

G. O. W.

Luther Burbank's Belief.

FIND a thorough evolutionist, especially a Darwinian evolutionist, and you have generally found a Free-thinker. There are evolutionists who admit the natural origin of all species up to man, and others who allow the evolution of man physically, but credit his mind, his reason, and his "soul" to God. The complete evolutionist is a monist, who finds that the mind of man, as demonstrated by Haeckel, is equally with his body a result of development.

Some years ago, in 1913 to be exact, Luther Burbank, who because of his experiments in the production of new species of flora has been called the Plant Wizard, gave his opinion about Darwinism. It was at a time when in the minds of persons who perhaps knew little about either, something called the law of Mendel was taking the place of what Darwin taught regarding heredity. Burbank did not scoff at Mendel, but he said: "Read Darwin first, and gain a full comprehension of the meaning of Natural Selection. Then read the modern Mendelists in detail. But then—go back to Darwin."

A questionnaire, the form of which is elsewhere accounted for by its originator, Miss Louisa Brunzell, of San Francisco, was sent to Mr. Burbank, as to other men of science, with a view to ascertaining the attitude of the "wizard" toward the Christian religion. His replies are what we expected and what we might expect from the rest were they equally candid. We quote the questions and the answers by Mr. Burbank:

Question.—Were you ever, or are you now, a communicant of any church? If so, what denomination?

Burbank.—No, although I attended church regularly until I was forty, also Sunday school—the last twenty years, however, more for the social benefit than otherwise. Was brought up a Baptist and attended Baptist and Methodist churches until I was forty.

Q.—Do you believe in the divinity and miraculous conception of Christ?

B.—I do not; there is no proof of it, either natural or otherwise.

Q.—Is it your opinion that prayer is answered by an intelligent being from without?

B.—I do not believe that prayer has been or ever will be answered by any intelligent being from without. There is absolutely no proof whatever of this, though it may be very comforting to some to believe this myth.

Q.—Do you think that the sole value of prayer consists in its effect on the person praying?

B.—Mostly. Sometimes it might prove of value to others.

Q.—Has science taught you that heaven and hell do not exist?

B.—The common orthodox heaven and hell do not exist. They could not exist if there were an all-powerful and just ruler. No criminal could be as cruel as the God who would consign human beings to a hell.

Q.—What is your opinion of the Bible? Is it the word of God or of man?

B.—Without the shadow of a doubt the work of man, being a history of the lives of ancient tribes reaching up towards civilization, and constructed mostly unconsciously by men both good and bad.

Q.—Do you assume that the soul of man ceases to functionate at death?

B.—In other spheres, I do. Its influences will live in humanity—will live for good or bad for all time. We actually live in the lives of others.

Q.—Do you agree with Büchner that "the brain is the seat of the soul"?

B.—A very difficult question to answer in a few words. The brain, if we include the whole nervous

system, is the soul. Millions of souls functionate, through heredity, through our own personal ones.

Q.—Would you say that matter and force govern the universe rather than a supreme being?

B.—Matter, which in its last analysis is force, governs what we know of the universe.

Q.—Can you harmonize the Christian faith with the laws of nature?

B.—In part, though this requires more than a "Yes" or "No." It is a faith grown up in our heredity, and has been an important factor, even though it does not harmonize with the laws of nature.

Q.—Can you say with Darwin that "Agnostic would be the more correct description of my state of mind"?

B.—Yes, with reservations.

Q.—Have your labours in the field of science and research caused you to alter your earlier opinions on religion?

B.—All my work in the field of science and research has come through a change in my earlier opinions on religion. Growth is the law of life. Orthodoxy is the death of scientific effort.

Q.—What facts of nature substantiate your views?

B.—The evolution and development of man and his civilization through his own efforts, and only these.

Q.—Is life after death proved or disproved by science?

B.—It has never been proved or disproved, but it is rapidly, in my opinion, being disproved and so accepted by most intelligent people.

Q.—What, in your opinion, has given rise to religious beliefs?

B.—Probably two things: First, the desire to extend our present life; and second, the desire of its teachers to be supported by those who labour.

Q.—Is religion of any value in the conduct of human affairs?

B.—There is no possible doubt that it has been and, like a police force, will be in the future to those who are not able to govern themselves, especially in their relations toward others.

Further remarks: The thousands of religions which exist and have existed are stepping-stones to a better adaptation to environment, and are one by one being replaced by the clear light of science and knowledge—in other words, as the fables of childhood are being supplanted by a better understanding of the facts of life.

Truthseeker (New York).

LUTHER BURBANK.

FREETHOUGHT ON TYNESIDE.—Autumn Lecture Campaign.—Mr. Lloyd has completed his lecturing tour of our district, and it is considered, on the whole, to have been very successful. A wide area has been covered, and some new ground opened out. The lectures at South Shields were well attended, but a very noticeable feature was the evidently enlivened interest. At Greenside the venture was completely justified, the position of Freethought at that place seems perfectly secured. It is rare that one has such an experience at a meeting; it was "alive" in the fullest sense. Our eyes are all turned to Greenside and district; it promises much. New Herrington was likewise very satisfactory, and while this was also new ground, there were many old friends of the cause from surrounding places, which gave one an impression of "oldness" in contradistinction to the experience of "newness" at the first-mentioned place. At Jarrow and Hebburn the numerical attendance left something to be desired, but this only proves the need for further organization. The results of the effort cannot, of course, be estimated immediately, but there was much to show that there is a steadily growing interest in our cause. The old attitude of bitter antagonism was never in evidence. The questionings brought home to us the vast importance of our work. Might I again appeal to all and sundry throughout the district to give us of their best? We have done some work, and it can only be continued effectively if the means are forthcoming.—J. FOTHERGILL, 3 Thompson Street, Tyne Dock, South Shields.

Ships That Pass.

The greedy sea is the destruction of those who go in ships.—*Horace.*

In the majestic gloom of midnight on the summer seas, strange, phantom ships fade over the horizon. Where are they going? Whence coming? Are they ships, or only mangled clouds huddled between sea and sky? No answer comes, but the imagination pictures bellying sails carrying the ships away far into the mysterious, to calm at last in some golden haven of a tropic isle.

Such is religion, a something voyaging for ever from nothingness to oblivion.

Reality knows nothing of the port it makes. But every now and then some ancient mariner comes with strange tales of fluttering wings of strange seraphic hosts, and golden harps and glassy seas where we may heal us of our grievous wounds. People listen and wonder and believe.

Yet at times someone asks, "Who is this gabbler? Has he travelled in these lands he tells us of? Surely he has been amongst us all his life, is one of us, has lived as we, seen the same sights, walked the same muddy streets, and surely he too shall moulder into dust as our fathers have? Dreams! dreams!! dreams!!!" And yet the people look with longing eyes to the phantom ships that pass.

They yearn for the golden harbour and burn with love for the harbour master, who, tradition says, lived for a time a life like theirs.

What! is there so much love in the world that it may be poured upon a phantasm? Do men love men so well that this residue can be spared for phantoms? Must we make death our lodestar?

Away with your dreams! Mankind, awake! What return has Christianity given for two thousand years' omnipotence? Wars, wars, wars. The chronicle of the Church began in blood, and its every page is stained with the gore shed by its votaries.

Peace on earth and goodwill towards men! A high message and noble. But Christians have failed to act up to it, and the omnipotent God, who wills and determines all things, must be an idol that wallows in blood.

Cast down the image. Cease prattling your printed prayers. They are useless. What is your longing for God? A misinterpreted psychological phenomenon. You don't need a God; you need a truer knowledge of yourself and your fellow-men.

The idea of God was conceived in ignorance, has existed through ignorance, and shall die with the death of ignorance.

Knowledge, through the natural sciences, will kill religion. But, till now, natural science has been cramped by unnatural boundaries. Ever new obstacles have been set up against its progress, but the time will come when all inquirers will be able to say as Laplace said when Napoleon queried the absence of any reference to God in his *Mécanique Céleste*, "I have no need for such an hypothesis."

The phantom ships of religion are sailing their last voyage. Their gossamer sails and cracking spars show up like spiders' webs against the morning sun of knowledge, but ere that orb has climbed to its meridian, the shadowy barks that tyrannized free access to the Eldorado that lies beyond shall have faded into nothingness. The new world shall lie open for men to discover.

H. C. MELLOR.

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All who really live in this European world of ours—not merely vegetate in sad or spiteful contemplation, a drag on the life of others, but live actively and healthily—have fallen away from the Church, and live their own lives apart from her.—*Count Tolstoy.*

Acid Drops.

The question of what is to be done on the anniversary of Armistice Day appears to be now engaging the attention of some folk. The Chaplain-General to the Forces writes to the *Times* suggesting that two minutes' silence should again be spent in "looking up and acknowledging with gratitude Almighty God who gave us the victory." Chaplain Taylor, like the rest of his craft, always has his eye to business. Whether it is rejoicing or sorrow it must always be arranged so as to bring more trade to the clerical warehouses. We expect, however, that by this time the war is far enough behind us for some to ask what it is we have won, and, at all events, what on earth we have to thank "Almighty God" for. Why, he couldn't even prevent the coal strike. He certainly didn't help with the crops; and quite as certainly he permitted several millions of people to be killed. And now Chaplain Taylor suggests we should thank him for what he did! No wonder Heine said that Christianity was a capital religion for cripples, and Dod Grile that Christians and camels were the only two animals that took their burdens kneeling.

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Writing in the *Methodist Recorder*, the Rev. A. T. Guttery says "most of us have learned to accept the proved results of science." So far as Methodists are concerned, they manage to hide that knowledge only too well.

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The Cardiff Police Committee has refused a cinema license for a Nonconformist chapel. As Free Churchmen object to the Sunday opening of cinemas, it seems like rough justice.

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At Oxford University degrees have been conferred on women for the first time. The world moves, indeed. This is the University which expelled Shelley, and canonized General Booth the First.

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The late Rev. T. H. Waller, of Waldringfield, Suffolk, left £23,162; Prebendary Northcote left £7,632; Canon Griffiths left £2,839; the Rev. C. E. L. Wright, of Folkestone, left £73,169. These four wills, all announced within a few days, show clearly that the clergy are not all destitute.

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Gillingham Corporation is said to have offered £2,500 for Jezreel's Temple. It was built by an old soldier named White, who proclaimed himself a Messiah, and assumed the name of Jezreel. The building cost £44,000, and was to be the refuge of the faithful when the end of the world came. Superstition never failed in this world from want of money; it was always want of sense that killed it.

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The winter tract season is now upon us: great activity is to be observed in the direction of the "Stirling Tract Enterprise," an apparently flourishing concern, which publishes the most priceless piffle ever run through a linotype. In a recent number of *Good News*, a precious little four-page magazine (woodcuts all complete), we find an insane article upon the subject of children's games. This is a sample:—"Blind Man's Buff: Satan puts bandages over our eyes to prevent us seeing God." "Touch: I touch you, and you touch someone else. Has Jesus touched you? Then you touch someone else." Well, it is evident that *somebody* has been "touched"! Mr. Peter Drummond, who founded the "Stirling Tract Enterprise," has "touched"—and very effectively, too. Contributors to *Good News* all seem to have been "touched"! "Touch" is a splendid game, and nobody plays it better than professional Christians.

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A converted collier, who has become a parson, writes to the *Daily Mail*, saying "I really think I am the most unhappy creature on God's earth." This is because he is paid only £250 per annum. But why does not the poor man return to the "coals," instead of threatening people with "coals" in the next world.

Because of the cost of its upkeep, the Bishop of Lichfield is leaving his palace for a smaller residence. The yearly income of the bishopric is £84 weekly, so the Right Rev. Father-in-God will not be nearer starvation than his dear brother, the Bishop of London.

The Rev. Frederick Kopfman, a New Jersey parson, has been using strong language concerning New York. He says he found "the Devil at his best" in that place. New Yorkers need not put on frills, however. Parsons have said the same thing of nearly all the towns and villages of the world, from Brisbane to Brighton.

The Rev. Arthur Pringle writes to the *Christian World* protesting against the syllabus of lectures of the Central Y.M.C.A. He points to the prominence given to such subjects as the Second Advent, and asks if that is the kind of topic in which the post-war young men are interested. Of course it is not, but Mr. Pringle ought to know that it is not the aim of any branch of the Christian Church to give lectures on subjects that would be at all "dangerous." He surely doesn't expect them to lecture on the coal strike, or Mesopotamia, or Ireland, or India. The purpose of these Christian organizations is to lead young men into "safety" by fixing their minds on "higher" things. And they are quite safe in discussing the "Second Coming of our Lord." Hence the readiness with which these things are financed. We should have imagined that Mr. Pringle would have known this well enough, being in the business. But it is evidently a case of outsiders seeing most of the game.

The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge has published a series of books, entitled "Pioneers of Progress." One volume is devoted to Florence Nightingale, who was a heretic, although the biographer forgets to mention the fact. And heretics are supposed to have a tropical time in the hereafter.

Mr. Charles Alexander, the vocalist of the notorious Torrey-Alexander Mission, and the composer of "The Glory Song," died at Birmingham. His appearance among the heavenly choir should be sensational.

Canon Peter Green says "the Cross (of Christ) is too large and concrete a fact to be expressed in any formula." Doubtless, the Canon remembered that its fragments are strewn over the churches of Europe.

The *Christian World* complains that the ground rent placed by the Commissioners of Lands and Forests on the site of Regent's Park Chapel is extortionate, and thinks that there should be leasehold enfranchisement for places of worship. In a general way we should agree that leasehold rents are extortionate, and the present position of the ground landlords would hardly be tolerated in any other country in Europe. But we fail to see why the *Christian World* should ask for preferential treatment in favour of churches. Our contemporary professes to believe in the equality of all opinions before the law and to be against the State endowment of religion. It says that the work of the Church is valuable. That is quite a matter of opinion. At any rate, other organizations might also plead the same reason for a share in State endowment. We fancy that all the *Christian World* means by religious equality is that no Church is to get more from the State than dissenters do.

General Townshend is standing for the Wrekin Division of Shropshire, in place of Mr. Palmer, who has just died. We have nothing to say on the merits of the General as a prospective member of Parliament, save that he must indeed be poor if he does not come up to the Parliamentary standard. But we observe that he is backed by Mr. Bottomley, who, in reference to the late member, says, "By the mysterious will of God Mr. Palmer has been called away." It will be remembered that Mr. Bottomley's outburst of religion at the beginning of the war underwent a very marked diminution when it was found that the predicted revival of religion did not eventuate. And by the present manifesto we gather there are a cer-

tain number of religious people in Wrekin who are likely to be caught by a timely display of pious language. We are, of course, unable to say whether Mr. Palmer was sent for so hurriedly by God because he was dissatisfied with his Parliamentary work, or because he wanted his help in heaven. Mr. Bottomley would doubtless be able to supply all information on that head.

The *Evening Standard* (London) says: "London's Sunday is not quite so hopeless as it was, but there is still a deplorable deficiency of intellectual amusement and recreation." We hope our contemporary will hammer this into the heads of its readers.

At Hucknall Torkard, Nottinghamshire, two shopkeepers have been fined for selling cigarettes and sweets on Sundays. Throughout the Continent of Europe Sunday is the one real holiday of the week. Yet Englishmen are prone to look down upon foreigners.

The *Daily Mail* says that "the Church (of England) seems to be strangely careless of the fact that its ministers have to live." Thirty-nine bishops of the Established Church share £180,700 annually, and the salaries of the higher clergy, duly set out in Crockford's *Directory*, show that Mother Church is not so careless as our contemporary imagines.

A service for seafarers was held at St. Paul's Cathedral recently. Presumably, on this occasion, the Apostles were referred to, discreetly, as fishermen—and not Labour leaders.

The Bishop of St. David's says that a great deal of the time of the clergy is taken up with financial business in order to increase the "spiritual efficiency" of the Church. But that is quite wrong. The New Testament teaching is that they should do nothing of the kind. They should take no thought for the morrow, and their Father in heaven will clothe them as he clothes the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. Of course, it may be that the clergy have noted the way in which he clothes the birds of the air and the flowers of the field, and would prefer not to trust him altogether in that direction. We must admit that, if that is so, the conclusion reflects some credit on the judgment of the dignified clergy.

If we were religious we should feel inclined to say "Thank God for the House of Lords," for at present it seems to be the only part of Parliament that has the slightest regard for what used to be called English liberties. The House of Commons, in its complete subserviency, passed the Emergency Powers Bill, leaving it in such a state that anyone might have been arrested and indefinitely imprisoned without trial on a mere official order. It was left for the Lords to insert the proviso that there should be no fine or imprisonment without trial. Fifty years ago a Bill of that description would have roused the country from end to end. But we have to-day conquered Prussianism—or have we only annexed it?

In a notice of the recent Church Congress, a London daily paper editor asks, plaintively, "Has religion ever really been given a chance?" The innocent lamb! There are 50,000 professional advocates of religion in this country, without counting Sunday-school teachers and amateur evangelists.

"We oppose Sunday theatres," said the Rev. P. Dearmer at the Church Congress, "not because they are wrong, but because they employ labour, and deprive people of Sunday rest." Indeed! The clergy themselves employ organists, choristers, vergers, and other folk on Sundays, and deprive them of rest, on most inadequate wages. The higher clergy travel in motors on Sundays, and labour is employed in driving them. The reverend gentleman had better turn to the page in the Bible showing the so-called Ten Commandments—and try again.

"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

I am sorry that an indisposition, from which I have now quite recovered, prevented the publication of the further subscriptions to the Sustentation Fund. But it will be seen from the list now published that the total is steadily mounting, and it is quite evident that our readers are determined to see that "Medical's" offer, which led to the attempt to raise a total of £1,000, shall be grappled with. It will be seen that less than £300 now remains to be raised, and I fancy that can be done, and the fund closed well this side of Christmas. One of the subscribers, Mr. A. S. Learie, suggests that if readers would send only half of what the *Freethinker* has saved them in pew rents the money would soon be forthcoming. Well, if that were done, it would be forthcoming many times over, and we might easily have in hand enough to build new offices, to say nothing of a motor-car for the editor.

Seriously, though, it would relieve us of considerable anxiety if we were able to see the financial road clear for the next three years, and most probably for ever, for if prices come down by then, I feel tolerably certain that will be the position. And goodness knows there are enough things to worry about, without using up one's energies in worrying over financial matters. Work, when it is congenial, never hurts. It is the other thing that plays the deuce.

It will be noted that this week's list contains an acknowledgment of £25 from the National Secular Society, with a promise of a similar sum should the total reach £1,000. This is the first time that anything of the sort has been done, not, I think, because the will to do it was not present, but because the Society has never before been in a position to contribute. The proposal was made by the Propagandist Committee, and I was quite unaware that anything of the kind was to be done until the matter came before the Executive. It was voted in recognition of the services rendered to the Society by the *Freethinker*, and I may as well take the opportunity of pointing out that the *Freethinker* in no wise benefits by the legacies that may happen to come to the Society. The *Freethinker* stands on an independent footing, and it receives no grant, subvention, or payment of any kind from either the National Secular Society nor from the Secular Society, Limited. It gives its services free, and makes no charge for advertising space or for the insertion of Society news. Its columns have always been at the services of the movement. The paper and the Society are, after all, two branches of the same work. I can only add that I fully appreciate the action of the Executive in this matter, and am sure that its members all over the country will also appreciate and endorse the action taken.

It will also be seen from the list of promises that they are also mounting. It would be larger, but I cannot place there those who have merely promised to "come again." Others have already sent, and some of these appear as "second subscriptions." But we have reached the point where the amount to be raised about equals the amount promised, so that from now every pound subscribed is worth two. It is not everywhere to-day that one can say money has doubled in value. I feel, therefore, that we shall be able to call for the redemption of all promises before long. There are always a number who put off sending till the end, but I should like to see the Fund closed as far this side of Christmas as is possible. Funds are to me much like medicine. They are made necessary by painful conditions, they are not over nice in the taking, and one wants them put out of the way as soon as possible. I hope that this last sentence doesn't sound ungrateful or inappreciative, but I fancy *Freethinker* readers will understand me well enough not to draw wrong inferences.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

Previously acknowledged, £399 os. 3d. National Secular Society, £25; A. S. Learie, 5s.; R. Ewing, 2s. 6d.; D. McDonald, 2s. 6d.; W. Graham, 2s. 6d.; Captain J. Latham, £3; D. Leyland, 2s. 6d.; J. Molyneux, 2s. 6d.; J. W. English, 5s.; G. Smith, £1; E. Daly, 5s.; S. Robinson, 2s.; F. Collins, 10s.; Two Miners, 6s.; T. Baron, 10s.; Thomas Dixon (second subscription), £2 2s.; R. Sharpe, £1; E. Parker (second subscription), 10s.; F. E. Monks, £1; Dr. C. R. Niven (second subscription), £1 1s.; Swansea Branch N. S. S., £2; S. Clowes (second subscription), 5s.; Blea Tarn (second subscription), 4s.; A. J. Watson, 5s.; A Working Widow, £2 2s.; J. R. White, 2s. 6d.; G. G., 10s.; J. G. Finlay (second subscription), £1; J. G. Dobson, 5s.; Failsworth Secular Society, £1 1s.; J. Brodie (second subscription), 3s.; Blea Tarn (third subscription), 4s.; W. E. Hickman, 5s.; H. M. S. Butler, 5s.; S. S. Leech, £2; C. S., 5s.; C. F. Simpson, £1 1s.; L. E. Owen, 21s.; J. Simpson, 2s. 6d.; R. Lloyd, 2s. 6d.; E. Marron, 2s. 6d.; A. Johnson, 1s. 3d.; Mrs. S. E. Dobson, 10s.; Mr. E. Dobson, 10s.; A. J. Freeman, 2s. 6d.; T. Vine, 10s. 7d.; D. Richards, 4s. 6d.; "Scrutator," 16s.; A. Brooks, 5s.

Per Mrs. L. Gair—Mr. and Mrs. Jones (Porth), £1 1s.; Jack Baker, 10s.; Jack Baker, 2s.; J. Gair, Jun., 5s.; Mr. and Mrs. Evans, £1 1s.; S. Holman, 5s.; Branch Bae, 5s.; Mr. and Mrs. J. Gair, £1 1s.; Miss Scott, 10s.

Per J. Fothergill—J. L. Carr, 2s. 6d.; J. W. Arnett, 2s. 6d.; J. Hutchinson, 2s. 6d.; Mr. and Mrs. J. Fothergill, 5s.

Total, £458 6s. 1d.

PROMISED, provided the total sum raised reaches £1,000, including the amounts promised:—"Medical," £50; "In Memory of the late Sir Hiram Maxim," £50; Mr. J. B. Middleton, £20; "A Friend," £100; A. W. Coleman, £6; "Working Journalist," £3; X. Y. Z., £10; J. Morton, 10s.; R. Proctor, £1; National Secular Society, £25; F. Collins, 10s.; H. Black, £1 1s.; T. Sharpe, £1 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. S. Clowes, £1 1s.; J. Breese, £3.

Total promises, £272 3s.

To Correspondents.

J. F. JACKSON.—Thanks for cuttings, which are always useful. We hope that your distribution of the paper has resulted in our getting more regular readers. Our circulation ought to be easily twice what it is. And we know that the readers are there, if we could only get at them.

SCRUTATOR.—Certainly, all our thinking is ultimately derivable from primitive man. The distinction, however, between that and religion is that in the one case the bases of the conclusion—that is, the religious one—are now seen to be quite unsound, and the method of reform is rejection or displacement; in the other case—that of art, literature, etc.—their bases are sound, and the method of advancement is by way of perfecting or improvement. It is the difference between the attempt to secure good crops by incantation, and by studying the conditions of growth. There is no hope by the one road, there is every hope by following the other.

A. WESTON.—Mr. Cohen will deal with other aspects of the belief in immortality as opportunity offers. It was, indeed, in response to requests from several readers that he dealt with the topic in "Views and Opinions" for October 24 and 31.

T. DIXON.—Thanks for donation towards the £1,000. In sending the cheque instead of having your name on the list of promises, you are backing your opinion that the £1,000 will be realised. And it really looks as though you will be right in your forecast.

W. H. BLACKMORE.—We note your approval of the proposed *Freethinker* Fellowship. We are thinking of arranging for a meeting of all who are interested, and then something definite may be adopted. Due notice will be given of time and place. As you say, it would be a boon for many readers to correspond with each other, and, in addition, might strengthen the movement in many ways. We do live too isolated an existence, and strengthen the hands of the enemy by our own detachment.

J. G. FINLAY.—Thanks for second subscription to Fund. The Lambert criticism of Ingersoll is a very poor affair. We are not sure whether Ingersoll ever made any reply to it.

J. R. WHITE.—If everyone did what he or she could for the paper one part of our troubles would be at an end for ever. And as we have said before, there is a great truth embodied in the story of the Widow's Mite.

S. BETTS.—We intend republishing the Bible Romances and the Bible Heroes, as well as other things that are out of print, so soon as we can. But one has to think of the question of capital, and publications cannot be issued with the same ease that they could before the war. We are doing what we can as rapidly as we can. We do not know if any of our readers have copies of *Bible Romances* and *Bible Heroes* for sale. If they have, they will probably reply to this paragraph.

C. F. SIMPSON.—Whichever way is most convenient to yourself will be agreeable to us. We will act as you suggest in your letter. Thanks for subscription to Fund.

G. T. K.—Letter received, but will it not be better to let the matter rest where it is till there is something definite to report?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—

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 (November 7) Mr. Cohen gives the first of the course of lectures that has been arranged by the N. S. S. Executive at the Friars Hall, 236 Blackfriars Bridge Road. The hall is very easy of access. It is only a few minutes' walk from Ludgate Circus, and 'buses reach it from all parts. Blackfriars Bridge Station, District Railway, is the nearest station. We bespeak the help of our London readers in getting the hall crowded out. Above all, let them bring a Christian friend with them. The hall is four doors to the south of the bridge.

Mr. Lloyd, we are pleased to learn, had good meetings at Manchester on Sunday last, and his lectures were, as usual, highly appreciated. An excellent musical programme was added to the proceedings by Mr. and Mrs. Hampson. To-day Mr. Lloyd visits Leicester, and lectures in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, at 6.30. Leicester friends please note.

In spite of the wretched weather and the many counter-attractions in Birmingham on Sunday last, there was a very good and highly appreciative audience in the Town Hall to listen to Mr. Cohen's lecture on "Do the Dead Live?" The address was listened to with the closest attention throughout, and there were a few questions at the close. The chair was admirably filled by Mr. Willis, who has recently been appointed a Justice of the Peace. We are pleased to see that Mr. Willis, in spite of his many interests in other directions, loses none of his interest in Freethought. And, indeed, the local Branch needs all the local support it can get. It is fighting a very uphill fight, and local friends should see that it is not wanting in either the sinews of war or propagandist help.

All nature lovers who are also readers admire, and even love, the work of Richard Jefferies. But it is perfectly true that he would never have loved nature as he did had he not been more than a mere observer of nature's ways. He was really a thinker, with his own views of the world, of man, and his strange superstitions and customs. The Freethought side of Jefferies' thinking has been very considerably minimised by most, and there is all the more reason to welcome *The Life-Worship of Richard Jefferies* by our esteemed contributor, Mr. Arthur F. Thorn. The work will be reviewed at length in a later issue of the *Freethinker*. For the moment we will only add that the booklet is printed by the Pioneer Press, it is done on excellent paper, with coloured wrapper, and is adorned, by permission of the London Stereoscopic Company, with a fine portrait of Jefferies. The work is issued at 1s., postage 1½d. The work deserves, and we hope will have, a wide circulation.

Mr. A. B. Moss visits Birmingham to-day (November 7), and lectures in the Moseley Road Baths Assembly Rooms at seven on "Freethought in the Churches." The Assembly Rooms is a new departure of the Branch, and we hope that all will endeavour to see the new move set off in good style.

Under the auspices of the North London Branch of the N. S. S., Mr. Guy Hayler, president of the World Prohibition Federation, is to deliver an address. Admission is free, and discussion will follow the address. North London Freethinkers will note the time and place.

A little while ago we commended to the study of our readers a closely reasoned attack on Theism in the shape of a small pamphlet by Mr. W. S. Godfrey. We have now before us a book of poems by the same writer, and Freethinkers who know a good thing in literature when they see it should add it to their collection of modern verse. It is called *Memories, and Other Sonnets* (Grant Richards). As a metrical vehicle for the capturing of impression, thoughts, and emotions which for some reason or other refuse to go into prose, the sonnet-form has been cultivated assiduously in the past; but now it seems to have fallen on evil days, our younger poets and amateurs of verse disdainfully regarding it as old-fashioned, and the sonneteer as an abject slave of the rotund tradition. Yet it is not improbable that the sonnet-form will be practised when our modern Bolshevist forms have joined all the preceding outlandish crazes. However that may be, it used to be the key with which the man of thought unlocked his heart. We are old-fashioned enough to cherish the excellent sonnets of Charles Strong, of Charles Tomlinson, of E. C. Lefroy, and now their small volumes have a good companion in Mr. Godfrey's excellent "handful of pleasant delights." They reflect admirably the temper of the writer, his earnestness, his wide sympathies, his depth of thought, his saving grace of humour, and admirable detachment of the artist. We quote one sonnet called "Justice, not Charity." It is from a section entitled *On the Commonweal*, and will give the reader an idea of what he may expect to find:—

Discredited is Charity—the mask
Is torn from the impertinent pretence;
The world's astir, with an awakened sense
Of a more fit, more honourable task.
The favoured and the fortunate who bask
In all the elegance of opulence,
And deem their doles a grace, are ushered hence;
The people now demand, and cease to ask.
The earth belongs to man—its every child
To its abundance is a rightful heir,
The disinherited and the defiled,
With new insistence claim their common share;
Unequal laws by privilege compiled
Must cease, and yield to justice, everywhere.

We wish we had space to quote some of the sonnets in the last section, *On Life and Death*. One or two of these are pretty certain to find their way into the anthologies.

We noticed Mr. Godfrey's pamphlet, *Theism Found Wanting* (Watts & Co., 1s. 6d.) on its first appearance, but the pamphlet well deserves a second note. For it is a carefully thought-out argument, presented without passion, of part of the case against Theism. Mr. Godfrey

writes with all the warmth—and yet without passion—that comes from one who has had experience from within. For Mr. Godfrey was himself once a clergyman, and may be therefore credited with a knowledge of the way in which the belief in God appears to the average believer. It is paying the essay but a poor compliment to say that it leaves very little of the usual arguments for Theism—it would be impossible for it to be otherwise with anyone who understood the case, and certainly so with one who writes with the force that Mr. Godfrey does. But the whole essay has a dignity and a restraint that makes it peculiarly impressive. Theism is well drawn as both morally repulsive and intellectually impossible. Mr. John M. Robertson contributes a "Foreword" to this edition.

A meeting will be held on Saturday evening, November 6, at eight o'clock, at 214 Lillie Road, Fulham, to make arrangements for Mr. Cohen's lecture on the 28th. We hope that all in the neighbourhood who are interested will be good enough to attend.

A Short History of the Art of Writing.

IV.

(Continued from p. 699.)

ONE other system of writing deserves mention—the curious Ogam or Ogham alphabet used by the ancient Irish, the Gaelic races of Wales, and some other Celtic races. Ogams are usually found engraved on stone monuments, chiefly in Munster and the south-west of Ireland. Like Runic characters, the organic characters consist almost exclusively of short, straight lines, placed vertically and obliquely, or in various other positions around a central horizontal line, thus making it easy to engrave them on some hard surface. Some scholars hold that the system was derived from the Runic; others that it is an adaptation of the Roman.

In every highly-developed system of writing, there has been a continual endeavour to reduce the length of time taken in reproducing vocal sounds by signs. Mention has already been made of the Egyptian hieratic and demotic hands: but it is not until we come to the Greeks that we find a system that can rightly be designated Shorthand. Proof of the use of Shorthand by the Greeks is furnished by the Oxyrhynchus contract (A.D. 155), discovered by the Egypt Exploration Fund in 1904. By this contract a municipal officer apprenticed his slave for two years to a shorthand writer, to be taught his art.

As early as the fourth century B.C. there were systems of writing in which words could be expressed by signs or groups of signs, occupying far less than the word did in longhand characters; but such systems appear to have merely systems of shortened and not of Shorthand writing. Certain words of Diogenes Laertius have been taken to imply that Xenophon wrote Shorthand notes of the lectures of Socrates; but here, again, it is probably only some system of abbreviated longhand that was employed.

In an inscription found on the Acropolis at Athens, and attributed to the fourth century B.C., is the description, or rather a portion of the description—for only a fragment of the inscription remains—of a system whereby certain vowels and consonants could be expressed by strokes placed in various positions. As already stated, this is probably only an exposition of a system of shortened writing, and not of a system sufficiently speedy to keep pace with speech.

Another discovery bearing upon the subject is a waxen book, consisting of seven wooden tablets, coated on both sides with wax. It appears to have been the exercise book of a Shorthand student, and its pages are covered with symbols, which in places are repeated again and again, as though for practice. But until these symbols are deciphered, we cannot dog-

matically say that we have here an example of true Shorthand writing.

Shorthand was in general use in Rome for reporting political speeches, and for taking notes of correspondence, the symbols being written with a stylus on wax tablets. Tiro, the slave of Cicero, to whom his master gave his freedom, was a noted writer of Shorthand, and gave his name to a Shorthand system known as the Tironian. It consisted of a complex group of letters and arbitrary signs, in no way founded on the alphabet.

The Christian Fathers employed many Shorthand secretaries; and after the fall of the Roman Empire the art seems to have been practised by the Franks for some time.

By the tenth century all practical acquaintance with the Shorthand systems of Rome had faded away; and the art cannot be said to have been revived until late in the sixteenth century.

England was the birthplace of modern Shorthand. It is a curious fact that the revival of Shorthand writing coincides with the Reformation; and on this account it has been suggested that systems of abbreviated writing were invented in order to be used in reporting the discourses of the reforming preachers. It is certainly significant that the systems of rapid writing of that period contain many signs to denote phrases common to the Bible, and frequently employed by religious preachers.

In 1588, Dr. Timothy Bright, a doctor, and later a clergyman, published the first English book on Shorthand. His *Characterie, An Arte of Shorte, Swift, and Secrete Writing by Character*, was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth, by whom he was rewarded with a Yorkshire living. The modern would-be Shorthand scribe may well be thankful that he did not live in that age, for Dr. Bright's system contained over 500 symbols.

W. H. MORRIS.

(To be concluded.)

Psychological Complexes.

In the preface to the first edition of his *Psychology of Insanity*, reprinted in the 1919 edition, Dr. Bernard Hart states that he is unable to accept much of the psycho-analytic teaching of Freud.

At the same time he claims that "many of Freud's fundamental principles are becoming more and more widely accepted, and the evidence in their favour is rapidly increasing" (p. 7).

As one of the doctrines which Dr. Hart discusses is that of "Psychological Complexes," I propose to subject it to a brief analysis.

On page 60, Dr. Hart says:—

Chance has no more part in psychology than it has in physics. Every thought which flits through the mind, however casual or irrelevant it may seem to be, is the only thought which can possibly result from the various mental processes which preceded it.

But he makes no attempt to ground his psychological determinism upon the biological processes of the nerve system as affected by stimuli from the external world.

His *Psychology of Insanity* is an attempt to solve psychological problems on exclusively psychological grounds, as if a man's psychic life were a kind of independent system.

Dr. Hart says on page 17, when dealing with the psychological conception:—

It regards the conscious processes occurring in insanity as the actual phenomena with which it is called upon to deal. Its ultimate aim is the discovery of convenient "laws" which will shortly and comprehensively describe these *conscious processes*. In this case the laws will contain nothing but psychological terms—terms of brain will find no place therein.

Which, as we shall see, means that psychological problems are to be solved by tracing them to other psychological problems that are left unsolved.

This method, to my mind, detracts from the scientific value of psycho-analysis as a whole.

A "complex" may be defined as "a system of connected ideas, with a strong emotional tone, and a tendency to produce actions of a certain definite character" (p. 161).

That is, a man may have a hobby such as photography, and the body of ideas, with their emotional tone, connected with photography, will cause him to read an article on photography whenever he sees one in a newspaper, and to make every effort to turn the conversation to the subject when in company with his friends (see p. 61).

Such a "complex" is described as one of the "causes which determine the behaviour of the conscious stream" (p. 62).

On page 63, Dr. Hart admits that a complex is not constantly active, and only becomes so under given conditions. In other words, a "stimulus" is required to rouse the activity of the complex.

But the "conditions" are treated rather as incidental than fundamental, and the "complex" as a fundamental cause, instead of being treated as the product of the man's brain activity under the stimuli of certain factors in the man's environment. The existence of the complex is assumed as primary instead of being traced to its origin.

This may not seem very important in the case of a man with an enthusiasm for photography, but the importance of the difference, which it makes in the formulation of a scientific psychology, reveals itself when we come to deal with complexes of a more serious nature.

To my mind, there is no difference between the assumption of a "complex" as the explanation of a man's conduct, and the assumption that a man's "will" explains his conduct on a given occasion.

Just as a man's "will" at a given moment is a resultant of a long series of actions and reactions which a man and his environment have had upon one another, so, also, is a "complex" a resultant. Neither is a fundamental determining factor.

If a man has a "God" complex, can we claim to have made a satisfactory scientific analysis of his psychology if we halt at the conclusion that his "God" complex dominates a large number of his actions, and refuse to trace the "God" complex to its origin? I think the answer must be in the negative. Especially when we remember that the "God" complex has played a large part in man's social evolution, and the tracing of it to its origin has been one of the most fruitful results of anthropology, comparative mythology, and comparative psychology.

That a man "may be altogether ignorant of the causes which are really determining his own mental processes" (p. 64) is true. But to trace the "mental processes" to the existence of a certain complex is but to reveal to the man the connection between the "mental processes" and a certain psychological fact of which he may or may not have been previously conscious.

It leaves the problem of the man's psychological development untouched.

The complex itself is but part of the man's "mental processes,"¹ the latter being the outcome of the activity of his nerve-system, including the brain, under the stimuli of his environment.

The example of the party politician (pp. 64, 65) who

¹ I have accepted the phrase "mental processes," although I would rather say "psychic processes" when the phrase is to cover the unconscious as well as the conscious. To me, a "mental process" is a conscious process, while a "psychic process" may be either conscious or unconscious.

settles his problems under the influence of what was once called "party-bias," but is now called a "political complex," only indicates the main problem that awaits solution. It is not presenting a satisfactory solution to say that his "political complex" determines a man's political thinking and action.

The existence of the complex in the man's mind is the chief problem requiring solution. Complexes don't drop into a man's mind from the sky.

A certain complex may prevent a man from following a line of argument to its logical conclusion, but the discovery of the existence and activity of that particular complex, on the part of the psycho-analyst, does not solve any fundamental problem of the man's psychological make-up, even if it throws light on his habit of squaring an argument in defiance of obvious facts.

In the case of the politician with a "party bias" or "political complex," the problem can only be solved by tracing the complex to the determining factors which have caused his brain to produce such a complex. And the solution lies in the study of the man's social upbringing and economic conditions, assisted by a knowledge of his hereditary psychological tendencies, and of the physiological condition of his brain and nerves.

On page 73, Dr. Hart quotes the case of a man who, while walking with his friend in a village, expressed extreme irritation on hearing the pealing of the church bells.

To the man the tone of the bells was unpleasant, the harmony ugly, the total effect disagreeable. "The friend was astonished, for the bells in question were famous for their singular beauty."

By skilful questioning the friend found that both the man and the clergyman wrote poetry. In a recent criticism the man's poetry had been unfavourably compared with that of the clergyman.

The result of the psycho-analysis of the case was this:—

The rivalry complex thus engendered had expressed itself indirectly by an unjustifiable denunciation of the innocent church bells. The direct expression would, of course, have been abuse of the clergyman himself or of his works (pp. 73-74).

This is put forward as a satisfactory elucidation of the man's attitude towards the church bells. Is it a complete psychological analysis of the case? Why should the analysis stop short at the rivalry-complex?

The latter seems to me to be the very psychological factor which calls for a more complete analysis. But a complete analysis would lead to Materialism, and I am inclined to think that "psycho-analysis" is the refuge of many who wish to avoid Materialism without being too theologically minded. It is an attempt to interpret mental processes, not in terms of brain physiology, but in terms of other and often more obscure mental processes.

Would it not be just as astonishing to find that the man, who writes poetry, has formed a rivalry-complex concerning a person, who also writes poetry, as it is to find the pealing of the church bells annoying him, except for the assumption that it is more natural for a man to form a rivalry-complex than it is for him to dislike the pealing of church bells which happen to be famed for their harmony.

Many another man, on finding his poetry unfavourably compared with that of the clergyman, would have admitted the justice of the criticism. How did this man come to fail to do so?

This problem appears to me to be more fundamental in importance than the "aversion to the pealing of the church bells" problem.

If Dr. Hart and the "psycho-analysts" cannot trace the formation of complexes to their origin, or at least indicate the possible factors which have brought

about the formation of given complexes, their psychology must remain deficient in scientific value.

A "complex," like a "soul," may cover a multitude of sins; and the tracing of a certain psychological fact to a vicious complex is as enlightening as the tracing of it to a wicked soul. The one term becomes, as much as the other, but a name for a half-way home of refuge in incomplete analysis, when treated as standing for a fundamental fact.

It is only when the term "complex" is used to describe a psychological phenomenon, which is recognized as a resultant requiring interpretation in terms of the functioning of the nerves and brain, which has given rise to the phenomenon, that the term has scientific value.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

Correspondence.

WAS ABRAHAM LINCOLN A CHRISTIAN?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—If "Truthseeker" were to read John E. Rems-
burgh's *Six Historic Americans*, I don't think he would
find much difficulty in answering the above question.
Remsburgh sifts the whole evidence, both for and
against, with the greatest care, and conclusively proves
that Lincoln was *not* a Christian. To do this, he brings
forward Lincoln's most intimate friends and relatives as
witnesses, and they are all in practical agreement as to
his rejection of everything that can be called Christian.
For instance:—Herndon, his law partner and biographer,
says: "I became acquainted with Mr. Lincoln in 1834,
and I think I knew him well to the day of his death.....
About the year 1834 he chanced to come across Volney's
Ruins and some of Paine's theological works.....Volney
and Paine became a part of Mr. Lincoln to the end of his
life.....In 1835 he wrote out a small work on Infidelity,
and intended to have it published. This book was an
attack upon the whole grounds of Christianity, and
especially was it an attack upon the idea that Jesus was
the Christ, the true and only begotten Son of God, as the
Christian world contends. (Herndon describes how this
book was destroyed.).....Mr. Lincoln found other works—
Hume, Gibbon, and others—and drank them in. He made
no secret of his views, or concealment of his religion.
He boldly avowed himself an Infidel. When Mr. Lincoln
was a candidate for our Legislature he was accused of
being an Infidel, and of having said that Jesus Christ was
an illegitimate child. He never denied his opinions, nor
flinched from his religious views.....Mr. Lincoln ran for
Congress in 1846. In that contest he was accused of
being an Infidel, if not an Atheist. He never denied the
charge—would not—'would die first.' In the first place,
because he knew it could and would be proved on him,
and in the second place it was true to his own convictions,
to his own soul, to deny it. When Mr. Lincoln left
for Washington, I knew he had undergone no change in
his religious opinions or views. He held many of the
Christian ideas in abhorrence.....he did not believe the
Bible was a special revelation from God.....did not believe
in miracles.....all his speeches and remarks in Washing-
ton conclusively prove this." Much of what Herndon
says above is admitted by the testimony of over a hundred
witnesses, men and women who knew Lincoln personally
and intimately. Lamon, another biographer, considered
"Lincoln's rejection of Christianity a grave defect of his
character," but his evidence concerning Lincoln's unbelief
is complete and unanswerable. Colonel Nicolay, another
biographer and Lincoln's private secretary at the White
House, in a letter written May 27, 1865, just six weeks
after Lincoln's death, says:—"Mr. Lincoln did not, to
my knowledge, in any way change his religious ideas,
opinions, or beliefs from the time he left Springfield till
the day of his death." Mrs. Lincoln, the wife of the mar-
tyred President, says:—"Mr. Lincoln had no hope and
no faith in the usual acceptation of those words." Now,
what is the explanation of Lincoln's Theistic utterances?
Simply that of *habit*. A good many Freethinkers I know
use the words "God" and "Jesus" just as they use
"Jove" and "Jupiter." This disposes of the "Truth-
seeker's" first example (which, by the way, is not cor-

rectly quoted—chapter and verse wanted, please). Rems-
burgh quotes Judge Usher as showing how the word
"God" came to be inserted in the final Proclamation of
Emancipation. Lincoln had his original draft printed and
given to each member of his Cabinet. Usher then pointed
out that ".....it ought, I think, to make some reference to
Deity." Lincoln said:—"I overlooked it. Some refer-
ence to Deity must be inserted." Probably something of
the sort took place in other Addresses of Lincoln's, which
settles "Truthseeker's" second example. The value of
the third can be judged by his reference to Joshua Speed.
This man, an orthodox Christian, says:—".....when I
knew him in early life he was a skeptic." "Truthseeker"
should give full authority to prove that Lincoln ever
changed. As for the fourth example, given thirty years
after Lincoln's death, it can join the other apocryphal
utterances Christians are so anxious to father on the dead
Freethinker. Lincoln may have believed in a sort of
attenuated Theism, but that is all. Voltaire, Paine,
Gibbon, were all Deists, but they detested Christianity.
So did Lincoln, and that is good enough for us.

H. CUTNER.

RESPONSIBILITY.

SIR,—Assuming that Mr. Peabody refers to the article
which I wrote under that title, I am glad to say that in
respect to the enormity of the cumulative villainy per-
petrated by man against sentient life I am in the most
absolute agreement. And, further, I consider that the
guilt of God, if there be one, reached its climax when he
allowed essentially rapacious animal life to become self-
conscious. Moral evil in all its horror of agony and
anguish was an inevitable consequence.

Nevertheless, I was guilty of no logical omission by not
alluding to it. Formal logic bids one to keep to his
"text." And my text was, "That the bulk of *human*
suffering did not spring from the *will* of the sufferer." And,
therefore, that apologists of the divine character
have no justification in pleading freewill as an exte-
nuating factor.

The only omission made, relevant to that text, was that
all domestic animals are liable to many forms of deadly
disease, and that man suffers in consequence. The para-
graph was omitted on account of the great length of the
article. I may add that it was written in consequence of
the endorsement which Dr. E. Lyttelton gave to the old
freewill apology in a letter to your paper some four or five
months ago, and which, by a strange coincidence, he re-
peated in the very issue in which my article appeared.

Had I been at home when I wrote it, I should have re-
ferred to the letter and given the Doctor's *ipsissima verba*.
KERIDON.

A CORRECTION.

SIR,—Owing to the vagaries of the post I should like to
ask a little indulgence from readers of my concluding
article; "Plotinus, the Labourer, and Dean Inge." On
page 693 they will read Pantanjali and Sutras respectively
instead of what your almost human linotype machine has
presented. This machine has also played a trick with
Mr. Underwood on page 701, line 5—the lady's name
should be Behn. On looking through this letter you will
see that I have caught the trick of Christian argument—
like the devout, I blame the machine—the world—what,
did the hand of the compositor shake?

WILLIAM REPTON.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON OCTOBER 28, 1920.

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

Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

New members were received for the Leeds and West
Ham Branches and the Parent Society (six in all).

The Propagandist Committee's report was received, and
its recommendations adopted. Upon these it was resolved
to ask Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, and others to write fresh
leaflets for the Society, and, on the motion of Mr. Neate,
it was agreed unanimously that £25 be contributed to the
Freethinker Sustentation Fund and a further £25 if the
£1,000 now being asked for was received.

An application from the Barnsley Branch for assistance towards a lecture was granted, and reports of good meetings in South Shields, Greenside, New Herrington, Jarrow, Hebburn, and Sheffield were received.

A preliminary draft of the proposed Trust Deed was read, and, after discussion, it was resolved that a final draft be prepared and presented at another meeting.

E. M. VANCE, General Secretary.

Obituary.

We regret to have to record the death of a well-known North London Freethinker in the person of Mr. N. J. Evans. Mr. Evans was very active as a Freethought propagandist, both by method of personal discussion and by the distribution of literature. He was uncompromising in his opinions, and ready to express them at all times, the keener the fight the greater the enjoyment. During the war he took a keen interest in the distribution of literature among the troops, paying for quantities to be sent by others, as well as sending himself. The war dealt him a cruel blow by the death of his son, of whom he entertained great hopes, and who appears to have been an unusually intelligent young man. From that blow he never seems to have quite recovered. He had been in indifferent health for some time, and it was without surprise to his friends that the end came when it did. In accordance with his wishes the body was cremated the Golder's Green Crematorium in the presence of a large number of friends. An address was delivered by Mr. C. Ratcliffe, who paid a very high compliment to the character of the deceased.

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.

FRIARS HALL (236 Blackfriars Road) : 7, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "The Collapse of Christianity and the World's Peace." (Silver Collection.)

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road) : 7.30, Mr. Shaller, "Reminiscences."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH, N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, off Kentish Town Road, N.W.) : 7.30, Mr. Guy Hayler, "Prohibition."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. 9) : 7, Mr. A. Hyatt, "Christianity, Sun Worship."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2) : 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "World Credit as a Moral Power."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Stratford Engineers' Institute, 167 Romford Road, Stratford, E.) : 7, Mr. H. Spence, B.Sc., "Recent Views on Heredity."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Moseley Road Baths Assembly Rooms) : 7, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Freethought in the Churches."

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