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Views and Opinions.

Facts and a Future Life.¹

In writing the series of notes that have appeared on the subject of a future life I have hitherto said little about the supposed facts upon which the belief may be thought to rest. I have been concerned more with presenting a rapid review of the inherent difficulties in the way of the belief being accepted as true, difficulties so great as almost to amount to impossibilities. And a glance at the literature of the subject, even from the sceptical point of view, will disclose the fact that the crushing absurdity of the belief is too inadequately realized. The religious person has so dominated the situation, and for so long, that even Freethinkers are inclined to take their view of the importance and sanity of religious beliefs from religious writers. And that is quite fatal to clear views on the matter. As for religious persons, they are, of necessity, guarded against a due appreciation of the ridiculous character of the belief in survival. As an illustration of the truth of what has been said, one may take a couple of almost current instances. Everyone will remember the merriment caused by Sir Oliver Lodge's son Raymond declaring that they had whisky and cigars in the next world. All Christians were also highly amused at the descriptions given by the Rev. Vale Owen of the occupations of the next world. And yet, all that these two cases exhibited was the inherent absurdity of the belief as a whole. If we live again we must sustain our life on something. And whatever the food may be, it is quite as difficult to think of it existing as it is to think of the spirits manufacturing whisky and cigars. The absurdity does not lie in the particular occupation, it lies in the fact of believing in survival. It is, indeed, straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel to accept the absurdity of man surviving death, and then be reduced to fits of laughter when someone explains that having survived death he will need something to keep him alive. The absurdity of the belief is concealed by its antiquity. The usual assumes an air of wisdom; and it has been one of the aims of these notes to reduce the belief to its native absurdity.

¹ Previous "Views and Opinions" on the subject of "Immortality" appeared in the *Freethinker* for October 24, 31, November 14, 21, December 5, 12, 1920, and January 2, 1921.

Ghosts.

Still, it may be properly asked, What are the facts upon which the belief in a future life is supposed to rest? The question is legitimate, and the chief difficulty lies in the circumstance that the real foundations of the belief and the alleged ones do not coincide. The alleged foundations of the belief have no relation to fact; the real ones are such that no civilized mind would tolerate them for a moment. And even the avowed reasons owe their force to the persistence below consciousness of forms of thought that are disowned the moment they appear above the surface. It is for this reason that the informed critic of the belief in a future life can never quite get rid of a feeling of unreality about the whole performance. He is never in direct touch with the real grounds of the belief, and yet he knows all the time that it is these suppressed grounds which give it whatever actual vitality it possesses. The expressed reasons given for the belief are no more than excuses for its retention. They have about the same amount of reality as have the arguments of a politician who, while really in love with power, persuades himself and others that he is retaining office because of devotion to the welfare of the country. Religion is a veritable playground of ghosts, and when it is not a ghost raised to the rank of a god, it is the ghost of a superstition endowed with the dignity of a logical proposition.

* * *

Body and Mind

What is the basic assumption made by all believers in a future life, whether they be primitive savages or "civilized" moderns? Bishop Butler, living at a time when the scientific case against a future life was far less complete than to-day, put the issue plainly when he said that every argument for the immortality of man proceeded on the assumption that the mind was independent of the body. And certainly the basic fact to be noted is that there is always the assumption that man is a duality. There is the body and there is something else, which while associated with it is independent of it. So far as the belief in survival is concerned, it is this something else—soul, spirit, mind—that is the real person. It uses the body for a certain period, and at death dispenses with it. So far the case is quite clear, and if it were stated clearly by believers, much time might be saved in discussion. But scientific knowledge has grown since the time of Butler, and the consequence has been to force believers into round-about descriptions of their position, while adding much in the shape of words, nothing essential has been added to Butler's statement. Certainly, nothing worthy of being called proof has been produced. A century and a half of accumulated scientific knowledge has entirely failed to produce a single fact or a single scrap of evidence in favour of the dualistic theory. There are a number of assumptions, a host of ingenious theories, forced and uncorroborated explanations of obscure mental phenomena, but no more. The theory of a future life remains now as ever, a vague hope, an expression of faith, an unprovable speculation, and, withal, a useless hypothesis. It explains nothing, and it introduces a number of new difficulties.

The Dependence of Mind.

It is not merely that there are no facts which can be offered as clear evidence of the mind's independence of the body, but such facts as we have in our possession are dead against any such assumption. It may be safely said that of mind as an independent force or thing no one has either knowledge or conception. If anyone tries to think of mind as being, not associated with an organism, but as being without or apart from it, he will soon realize that he has set himself an impossible task. All we know of mind shows it to be, not an independent force, but a very dependent function. It is affected by all states of the body, it is influenced by changes in temperature, by the food we eat, by the air we breathe, by the efficiency of the secretory organs. And, indeed, apart from the activity of the nervous system we can have no conception of mind at all. The formula "No psychosis without neurosis" is accepted by all scientists, and it only says in technical language what I have said above. More, it is only putting into exact language the common experience of all. For we all know how an attack of indigestion will disturb a man's mental equilibrium, or something of the way in which alcohol, or drugs of various kinds will affect mental manifestations. We know, also, that there is a more or less precise connection between brain weight and a display of intelligence. Science is, therefore, telling us nothing that is new when it says that mental phenomena depend upon the action of the brain and the nervous system. It is only summarising the knowledge of all civilized individuals. For no one acts as though they believed the mind to be independent of the body. There is not a medical man in the kingdom who ever acts upon that assumption, or if one were found, he would have precious few clients. In health and disease the connection between nervous action and mental phenomena is of the closest possible character.

* * *

The Appeal to Cæsar.

The piling up of authorities is a poor game, but if one were inclined to indulge in it at length one might fill a volume with nothing but opinions in support of what has been said. I content myself with a single one from the late Professor William James which may be taken as only expressing the generally accepted scientific view. The deliverance is the more striking since it was made in the course of an attempt to say all that could be said in favour of the belief in immortality:—

It is indeed true that physiological science has come to the conclusion cited (that our conscious life is a function of the cerebral convolutions), and we must confess that in so doing she has only carried out a little further the common belief of mankind.....Such special opinions may have to be corrected; yet, so firmly established do the main positions worked out by the anatomists, physiologists, and pathologists of the brain appear, that the youth of our medical schools are everywhere taught unhesitatingly to believe them. The assurance that observation will go to establish them even more and more minutely is the inspirer of all contemporary research.

Professor James might also have gone on to point out that, quite in line with his own favourite philosophy, this theory works, and no other theory does. The theory of the independence of mind explains nothing, and camouflaging it under the name of "soul" makes it of no greater use. We only add to the difficulties we have already, that of an utterly unknown thing which we call "soul," and belongs, as Shadworth Hodgson well says, to that sort of philosophising whose great maxim is "Whatever you are totally ignorant of, assert to be the explanation of everything else."

Proving a Negative.

It is one of the curiosities of the religious mind that while quite ready to accept theories which support religion, without asking for or receiving the slightest evidence, it demands the most absolute demonstration of any theory that is put forward against the religious position. Thus, when the Freethinker, taking his stand on common experience, asserts that mind and body stand together in the relation of organ to function, he is asked to show in precisely what way the two are related. But to establish the *fact* of the relation it is not at all necessary to prove the *method* of the relation. That mind and body are related is a fact patent to all and disputable by none. The problem before us is not how can mind and body be related, but how can they be separated. In asserting a relation between the two the Materialist is only asserting a fact of universal experience. It is the religionist who, finding two things together, asserts that they can be separated, and it is for him to show how *that* can be done. Far from his being able to show how this can be done, he cannot even think of mind in the absence of a body. If he asserts otherwise let him try, and then observe the result. Banish from the mind the conception of a body exhibiting mental phenomena and what you have left is a blank. You can think of a body which does not manifest mind, sleep and death supply us with the material for thought here, but to think of mind in the absence of body is a sheer impossibility. The Materialist is not compelled to show *how* nervous action gives rise to mental phenomena, he merely takes his stand upon the fact that the relation exists, and that it is impossible to think of at least one of the two existing in the absence of the other. And he may argue, in addition, that the assumption that thought and nervous action stand to each other in the relation of organ to function does not run counter to any fact within our knowledge. It explains much and contradicts nothing. On the other hand, the theory of a soul is not alone without a single verifiable fact, but it is in direct conflict with much that we know to be true. An absurdity is invoked to explain a difficulty, and the difficulty itself made impossible of solution until we have cleared away the fog of words and the cloud of misconceptions with which the religionist hides, even from himself, the true nature of the problem to be solved.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Olive Schreiner: Freethinker.

III.

HER WRITINGS.

WALDO and Lyndall are the characters that constitute the life and charm of the *Story of an African Farm*. The others live only by reason of their connection with these. 'Tant' Sannie, the Boer woman, who went to bed in her clothes, was selfish and cruel, ruling her subordinates with a rod of iron; Uncle Otto, the German overseer, was ignorant, superstitious, pious, and servile, but eminently good-hearted; Em, an English girl, whose consumptive father became the second husband of the Boer woman, had yellow hair, a low forehead, and a face full of freckles, but she was honest, generous, loyal, willing to go through life a man's veritable slave. Then there appeared on the scene the most consummate rascal ever painted by any novelist, Bonaparte Blenkins by name, with his enormous red nose, ragged clothes and torn boots, who, by his cunning, hypocrisy, and lies, at once ingratiated himself with the simple-minded old German, and ere long, by his snuffing pretentious piety and evangelical sermon the first Sunday, won the favour of 'Tant' Sannie. He was a man who could not, even by

accident, speak the truth. Ultimately, he supplanted the German as overseer, and his cruelty to Waldo was worse than brutal. In the end his falseness and impudent lying proved his utter undoing. But all these characters owe their presence on the canvas to the fact that they lived on the same farm and at the same time as Lyndall and Waldo, who became in their childhood out and out Freethinkers. Their Freethinking was the dominant factor in their brief careers; and one of the objects of the book is to show that their terrible sufferings and sorrows and disappointments were due to the nefarious influence of the Christian superstition. This fact was conveniently ignored in the majority of obituaries that appeared in both the religious and secular press, and yet no one can read the *Story of an African Farm* with any degree of care without perceiving that it is a direct attack, not upon any one form of religion, but upon all forms of it alike; that is to say, upon supernaturalism itself. It was only by an accident of birth that these children became the victims of the Calvinistic version of Protestantism.

As already stated, Lyndall spent four years at a boarding school, and in this she had a decided advantage over Waldo, who was "an uncouth creature with small learning, and no prospect in the future but that of making endless tables and stone walls"; but they both hungered and thirsted after knowledge, and knocked at every door within their reach, in the hope of acquiring its treasures. Prior to her going away to school Lyndall had said, "When I come back again I shall know everything that a human being can." On her return one of Waldo's first questions was, "Have you learnt much?" She laughed, and made the admission that the knowledge she had culled from different sources was not what she had looked for, nor quite so much. Both had changed during the interval. "You have improved," said Lyndall to her friend and companion. The chief difference lay in the fact that they now consciously met as "wretched unbelievers," who had to bear their own burdens, and could blame neither God nor Devil for what they were and did. She was ridiculing the idea that it was God who sent the little babies, saying:

Of all the dastardly revolting lies men tell to suit themselves, I hate that most.....Men do not say God sends the books, or the newspaper articles, or the machines they make; and then sigh, and shrug their shoulders, and say they can't help it. Why do they say so about other things? Liars! "God sends the little babies!" She struck her foot fretfully against the splashboard.

Then, though so young, she added:—

On their (small children's) lips the phrase means much; on all others it is a *deliberate lie*. Noticeable too, when people are married, though they should have sixty children, they throw the whole *onus* on God. When they are not, we hear nothing about God having sent them. When there has been no legal contract between the parents, who sends the little children then? The Devil, perhaps. Odd that some men should come from hell and some from heaven, and yet all look so much alike when they get here..... It must be very nice to believe in the Devil. I wish I did. If it would be of any use I would pray three hours night and morning on my bare knees, "God, let me believe in Satan." He is so useful to those people who do. They may be as selfish and sensual as they please, and, between God's will and the Devil's action, always have someone to throw their sin on. But we, wretched unbelievers, we bear our own burdens; we must say, "I myself did it, I, not God, not Satan; I myself!" That is the sting that strikes deep.

So far as to the attack on religion, and now I pass on to the attack on the position and treatment of woman. This was made in the first long talk Lyndall had with Waldo after coming back from school. It was really a monologue, for her companion scarcely uttered a

word. She worked herself up into a perfect passion of angry revolt. To be born a woman was to be born branded. "It is not what is done to us, but what is made of us that wrongs us." "I once heard an old man say that he never saw intellect help a woman so much as a pretty ankle; and it was the truth. They begin to shape us to our cursed end when we are tiny things in shoes and socks." Then follows a mordant description of a little girl sitting with her feet drawn up under her in the window and looking out at the boys in their happy play. How she does want to go. Then a loving hand is laid on her: "Little one, you cannot go; your little face will burn, and your nice white dress be spoiled."

Then the curse begins to act on her, and finishes its work when she is a grown woman, who no more looks wistfully at a more healthy life; she is contented.

Now, the writer of the otherwise splendid obituary in the *Nation* maintains that Lyndall's "controversy is not really with men's treatment of womanhood, but with womanhood as created by Providence or Nature or God"; but that is an obvious fallacy. What Lyndall is represented as saying is that the average grown-up woman "fits her sphere as a Chinese woman's foot fits her shoe, exactly, as though God had made both—and yet he knows nothing of either." There are parts of the woman which are not to be used, and in time they become atrophied and drop off. Then we are supplied with examples of the social treatment which has caused woman to become man's inferior. She was not created thus by Providence or Nature or God, but is the product of the limitations and restrictions laid upon her by the foolish and wicked conventions by which society has always been ruled. Men and women "were equals once when they lay new-born babes on their nurse's knees. They will be equals again when their jaws are tied up for the last sleep." What destroys their equality? The selfishness and prejudices of men, which modified and intensified under religious influences, have driven myriads of women to loveless marriages or to prostitution. Said Lyndall:—

With good looks and youth marriage is easy to attain. There are men enough; but a woman who has sold herself, even for a ring and a new name, need hold her skirt aside for no creature in the street. They both earn their bread in one way. Marriage for love is the beautifullest external symbol of the union of souls; marriage without it is the uncleanliest traffic that defiles the world. And they tell us we have men's chivalrous attention. When we ask to be doctors, lawyers, law makers, anything but ill-paid drudges, they say, No, but you have men's chivalrous attention; now think of that and be satisfied.

Lyndall had three ardent lovers; Waldo, whose affection dated from early childhood, but was not expressed in words; the mysterious stranger, whom she met while at school, and to whom she then became engaged; and Gregory Rose, Bonaparte's successor in the overseership, who, though already engaged to Em, her cousin, became irresistibly infatuated with her. To Waldo, on one occasion, she made the following confession: "Waldo, I like you so much, I love you. When I am with you I never know that I am a woman and you are a man; I only know that we are both things that think." The mysterious stranger she did truly love, but only with the lower part of her nature. When she discovered the real character of her passion for him she endeavoured to break with him. For Gregory she had no sexual feeling whatever, and she did not even like him; and yet, in order to get free from the other man, she arranged to marry him in name only. She informed the mysterious stranger of this arrangement. He rushed to her at once, claiming her; and in his presence she could not resist him. She refused to marry him, but offered to go with him and settle down

in the Transvaal. She said to him: "If you were not something more to me than any other man in the world, do you think—? I love you when I see you, but when you are away from me I hate you." He repeatedly besought her to marry him, and her refusal was a mystery to him. He left her in the Transvaal, where she gave birth to a child, which died, and after a long illness she died too.

From Lyndall's refusal to marry the man with whom she consented to live, many readers of the *African Farm* inferred that Olive Schreiner did not believe in marriage, and severely censured her as an advocate of illegal unions. In a long letter to me on the subject, comparing and contrasting her views on marriage with those expressed by Grant Allen and Edward Carpenter, she concluded thus:—

One thing I always find it difficult to understand is how people gather from any of my writings that I think lightly of marriage. I think it to be the most holy, the most organic, the most important sacrament in life, and how men and women can enter into it with the lighthearted indifference they do, has always been, and is, a matter of endless wonder to me. Because poor Lyndall, who died when she was a child of seventeen, found out that she had made a mistake in her relation with that man, and saved herself from turning it into a life-long fornication and prostitution, therefore people seem to suppose I am opposed to life-long and deathless marriage between the man and woman! Because that poor little child of seventeen tried to make right her terrible mistake, and nobly refused to marry a man she did not absolutely love, I have had women of six and twenty write to me as if I could feel it right that they should form temporary unions!!! It was because Lyndall, small child that she was, felt what a sacred and deathless thing true marriage should be that she refused to save her reputation by binding herself for ever to that man.

J. T. LLOYD.

(To be concluded.)

More Parsons in Parliament.

They (the people) have obtained more social justice in one hundred years of disturbed and decaying faith than in fourteen hundred years of undisturbed faith and enormous clerical power.—*Joseph McCabe.*

Should more parsons have seats in the House of Commons? The question is likely to become a live one, for it is proposed to introduce a Bill in Parliament next session to enable clergymen to become members of the House of Commons. The matter has the support of Prebendary Gough, of St. Paul's Cathedral, who thinks that parsons should have the privilege of representing the people in the lower House. He considers that the present state of affairs flouts all democratic principles, and that it would be a good thing to enable the clergy to give to the State the fruits of their experience.

The question is one of the utmost importance to Freethinkers, for it embodies the extension of priestly power in this country. A revival of such power is a grave danger to liberty. Even so late as 1902 a reactionary Government passed an Education Act at the bidding of the Anglican and Roman Catholic priesthood, which threw their schools entirely upon public funds, but shielded them from local public control. At the same time the Act of Parliament destroyed the School Boards in the hope that the new authorities would be more easily subject to clerical pressure. Today the clergy, through their catspaws, are making a fresh demand of the right of entry into the schools of the Nation, and if the Coalition Government should retain power they will make yet further demands.

The time has come to speak quite plainly. The very existence of a clerical caste in this country "flouts

all democratic principles." When the most terrible war in our history was fought, and all men (and even boys) fit to bear arms were forced into the Army and Navy, the clergy, as a caste apart, were exempted from military and naval service. The clergy, too, are already over-represented in Parliament. The Bench of Bishops, forty in number, not only safeguards the interests of the Anglican clergy, but displays hostility to progressive measures. The Established Church, be it remembered, does not include one-half of the worshipping population, yet its ministers hold that the priestly class should enjoy absolute power, and that it is the duty of the ordinary citizen to pay and obey. The extreme priestly theory, of course, is that the State should be subordinate to the Church. It is as plain as a pikestaff that the Anglican Church is not the Church of the people, but the Church of the clergy.

The Church of England has been over-represented in Parliament for many generations by its bishops. The record of their action is its own worst condemnation. When the Great Reform Bill, enfranchising half a million citizens, was brought before the House of Lords, twenty-one Bishops voted against it and two for it. So far as education is concerned, all real progress has been made against the dead weight of clerical influence. To listen to some flamboyant parsons one would imagine that the Anglican Church was the only friend of the workers, and that education was its chief care. The fact is that at the opening of the nineteenth century there was only one person in seventeen of the population attending school. Lord Seckburn, speaking of that period, said "The principle was revered as indisputable, that the ignorance of the people was necessary to the obedience of the law." When a measure of State action for education was proposed in 1839 the Archbishop of Canterbury and nearly the whole of the bishops opposed it. In 1860 a Government inquiry showed that of two and a half million children only one and a half million attended school, and that more than half received an education which was a sham. So it remained until 1870. During a whole century the opposition to real education came from the clerical caste; and even to-day Church schools are notoriously the worst in the country.

The record of the bishops is equally bad with regard to so many reforms. They voted against Catholic Emancipation; against admitting Nonconformists to the Universities; against removing the civil disabilities of the Jews; against abolishing compulsory Church rates; against admitting women as members of London Borough Councils. Two only of the whole Bench of Bishops voted for the suppression of the Slave Trade; one solitary Bishop was present when the Bill forbidding child chimney-sweeps was brought in; none voted for the abolition of flogging women in public, flogging women in prison, or flogging men in the Army and Navy. Two only supported the provision of seats for shop-assistants.

These are but a few examples of the votes of parsons in Parliament, which show Christian ethics in practice in a Christian country by men pretending to be the moral leaders of the people. With such a record the Anglican Church does not command respect in the twentieth century. It is this terrible record of reactionary despotism, coupled with a two thousand years' old superstition, which explains the aloftness of the Church from modern life. The Church of England suffers from the drowsiness of a caste apart from the nation. It is mediæval in its mummeries and mediæval in its ideas.

Today history is being written in large characters. The toiling millions of our population are rising out of wretchedness and debasement, and becoming able to possess themselves of some of the comforts of life. Is this the time to increase the power of a Church which

has a scandalous record in the march of Humanity? To allow more parsons in Parliament is simply to perpetuate the superstitions of the Middle Ages. The State must be the master and not the slave of petticoated priests. The champions of a clerical caste are in the position of a fog complaining of the tryanny of the foghorn.

MIMNERMUS.

Theism or Atheism?

A Review.

MR. COHEN'S new book bearing the above title is itself a review in the proper sense of the term and not one merely in caricature. Most so-called reviews of books are no more than "snap-shots," as from a passing aeroplane at a height of some 15,000 feet; and this one, I feel sure, will prove no exception to the rule. Their chief, if not their sole use, is to draw attention to the fact that such and such a book is being published and perchance to the importance of its contents; and if that be effectively done, by means of this brief notice, the object of writing it will have been fully achieved.

In his review of Theism the author analyses, dissects, probes, and tests virtually every argument ever advanced in support of the existence of a God. And as he enters the lists in the spirit of a true knight, he is as proud of his honour as of his prowess, and would rather court defeat than victory if won without chivalry. He is scrupulous in his care not to misrepresent his antagonist, and is ever ready to acknowledge or even appreciate whatever is relevant, cogent, or true in the apologetic contention.

He begins each critique by stating, usually in the Theist's own words, his opponent's argument or the grounds of his theistic belief. He then subjects it to a microscopical examination and points out its weakness, or exposes its fallacy or irrelevance.

When, however, the weak points in the armour are well exposed to view, he does not spare the foe or stop his death-dealing thrusts till he is well satisfied that no life is left; he then moves on to the next attack.

In some of the chapters the process is not merely a refutation; "pulverization" would be more apposite; for even the resulting dust is blown to the winds.

In chapters I. and II. he examines the god-idea and traces it back to its true origin in the paralyzing fear and crass ignorance of primitive man; and he argues with irrefutable logic that what is error or falsity in conception and birth cannot by any metaphysical sophistry or thimble-rigging be made a truth in "maturity and manhood." If the premises be false no magic can make the conclusion true.

He also shows most clearly and convincingly that the Gods of religion—those with proper names and priesthoods—have as much kinship with the Gods of the Metaphysician—"The Unknowable"; "The Absolute"; "The Ultimate Reality," etc., as "a chestnut horse has to a horse chestnut."

He also emphasizes another and equally important truth, viz., that the god-idea is anthropomorphic in its totality—in mind no less than in body. No greater service could he render the cause; for the unthinking masses are still obsessed with the delusion that if you divest a god of its body and of the grossest attributes of its mind that it ceases ipso facto to be manlike. What a superlative delusion! but the marvel why so few people detect and expose the delusion is more "superlative" still. Why, every attribute of mind is as essentially "cogged" or "dovetailed" into corporeal and mundane existence as a stomach and hunger.

Moreover, the author pertinently points out that the god-idea has "evolved" in exactly the reverse order to that of a scientific principle or truth—from the

definite and concrete to the vague and the abstract. That is, the god-idea tends to vanish from being, whereas a natural truth proceeds from the dim and obscure to the distinct, definite, and concrete.

So far as it was necessary to expose the utter hollowness of Theism, the author's task is finished with chapters I. and II. The rest of the book is needed only for the sake of refuting the "stock-in-trade" arguments advanced by apologists, which are too often and too readily accepted as genuine by the masses.

The task of silencing these sporadic batteries Mr. Cohen performs with an efficiency and completeness that leaves nothing to be desired. To realize and appreciate his fine execution the book must be read; all we shall do is merely to indicate the trend which the argument takes by quoting or summarizing some pregnant key sentence or two.

In chapter III. he deals with the contention that man has an "Intuition of God"—a "religious sense." To this he replies very bluntly that "intuition as a means of discovering truth is a pure delusion"; "that all that can be rationally meant by such a word is summarized experience"; and the chapter is packed with illustrative examples in support of that statement. In his examination of the argument from existence, the author very pertinently points out that we explain the unknown by the known and not vice versa as is the case when we attempt to explain the known existing Universe by a hypothetically existing God. He rightly pronounces such a procedure as "the forsaking of all intellectual sanity."

Incidentally, in discussing this question, Mr. Cohen discloses his masterly grasp of materialistic philosophy. It is marred by no crudity or want of vision. He reckons nothing what name you give to ultimate substance—call it matter, force, ether or what you like, so long as you regard "the state of the Universe at any one moment as the result of all the conditions then prevailing."

The uniformity of Nature he very correctly ascribes to the "persistence of force"—a truth that is indissolubly bound up with the principle known as the Conservation of Energy.

In criticizing the argument from causation, he at once points out that the last link in the chain of reasoning is flawy and wholly worthless. When you postulate God as cause of phenomena, you change, ipso facto, the very nature of your cause which by hypothesis you are debarred from doing. In ascribing a god as cause of material phenomena, you leap from physics to metaphysics and abandon the realm of natural energy for that of magic.

In refuting the argument from design the author shows, with a wealth of well-chosen examples, that if there be a designer it is palpably obvious:—

(1) That he is an extremely finite one, both in knowledge and wisdom; that his design is merely an adaptation achieved only after infinite trials and failures, like one trying to fit a solid into an irregular, complicated and tortuous mould or receptacle.

(2) That he is, moreover, a most callous designer: he brings infinite legions into life and kills forthwith all those that do not fit—a process he appears to delight in, for he has repeated it annually, and oftener, for at least one hundred million years.

(3) That the "higher type" towards which he is said to be working is higher only in the art of slaughter, or in avoiding that fate. In other words, the Divine designer curiously resembles a Roman Emperor who took such keen interest and delight in the gladiatorial method of slaying, and whose degree of enjoyment in watching the gory combat was in proportion to the extent to which the struggle was protracted through skilful display of death-dealing thrusts—or briefly, in proportion to the "height" of the "type" engaged!

And obviously man is the designer's "highest type"; for he is, far and away, Nature's premier slayer.

In the chapter dealing with the disharmonies of our nature the author, with true insight, observes that we need not go in search of disharmonies, as it is implied in the very idea of advancement or progress; that it is the mal-adjustment between the organism and its environment which engenders the very impulse which urges man to seek for social betterment and make for progress.

To the contention that the god-idea itself has undergone an evolution like all else, Mr. Cohen gives the coup de grace by showing that, *intellectually*, the god-idea is a vanishing quantity—not an evolution, but a de-evolution, from a most concrete concept to a mere abstraction. And, *morally*, that the god-idea acts as a kind of mirror, reflecting faithfully at every stage man's own moral features. That it is man who moralizes his gods and not *vice versa*.

Our author makes "mince meat" of the argument that the tragic nature of the evolutionary process is a disciplinary measure, by showing that the individual who suffers and dies benefits nothing himself by it. It is those at the end of the series who reap the benefit, and who did nothing to deserve it.

Modern man receives a true "revelation" from the past of his race; the names of the gods who revealed it are Pain and Death; the prophets who received it were the living witnesses of tragedy and failure throughout the ages; and the channel by which it reaches each new born is human speech, and the process is called "training and education."

Mr. Cohen pertinently demands why did not God—the Divine Father of the race—provide man at the start with the wisdom taught him by tragedy and suffering, and save, thereby, all the infinitudes of misery, agony, and woe, which a lack of it has inflicted upon his. Is it possible to conceive of a being in a more pitifully desperate need of a guiding revelation than was primitive man? Why then did the "merciful Father" mock him throughout the ages with a travesty of one—one that only intensified the wretchedness of his plight.

In chapter IX. he deals directly with the problem of evil, and very rightly draws attention at the start to the fact that the problem is a self-created one—that it arises out of the belief itself. For unless we accept the world as a product of a good and wise God, there is no problem of evil for us to explain. That to me seems an impregnable position; and as Dr. E. Lyttleton holds the diametrically opposite view, viz., that a belief in God *solves* it instead of creating it, I invite him, with all due deference, to peruse and reply to this section of the book, especially as the "freedom of the will," behind which the reverend gentleman takes shelter, is fully dealt with by a past-master of the subject.

Our author follows Professor Sorley and Canon Green to all their "dug-outs" and does real execution with showers of well-directed "hand grenades."

In chapter XII. he examines Herbert Spencer's Deity—"The Unknowable," and shows that as a God, it is quite worthless. He finds no difficulty in showing that there are in reality two Spencers: The Metaphysician and the Scientist, and that the two proceed along parallel lines which, of course, never meet. They do not hold out even the false promise of an *asymptote*, ever approaching but never meeting.

From the first page to the last the book displays evidence of wide reading, deep thinking, rare insight, and a patient marshalling of fact and argument. The author's well-known lucidity and raciness of style, coupled with his soundness of judgment, imparts to the book a characteristic value. The work is, on the subject, a thesaurus which a Freethinker can ill afford to be without. It is, moreover, particularly free from that *ipse dixitism* which commonly destroys, or mars,

the value of books which purport to argue and reason. It deserves to become a classic on Atheism, and I have little doubt but that its desert will be realized.

KERIDON.

A Sociological Study of Religion.

II.

(Continued from page 22.)

WHEN we pass from religion in general, to religion in particular, we find the same lack of agreement among recognized sociological authorities.

Says Professor Giddings of Christianity:—

The successive world-empires of Persia, Macedonia, and Rome prepared the way for the Christian conception of universal brotherhood. So long as this conception was nothing more than an esoteric affirmation that all men are brothers, because they are children of one Father, it made but little impression on the social mind; but when by the genius of St. Paul it was converted into an ideal, into the doctrine that all men through a spiritual renewing may become brothers, the new faith underwent a transformation like that which converted the ethnic into the civic conception of the state, and Christianity became the most tremendous power in history. Gradually it has been realizing its ideal, until, to-day, a Christian philanthropy and a Christian missionary enterprise, rapidly outgrowing the esoteric sentimentalism of their youth, and devoting themselves to the diffusion of knowledge, to the improvement of conditions, and to the upbuilding of character, are uniting the classes and the races of men in a spiritual humanity (*Principles of Sociology*).

Benjamin Kidd in his *Social Evolution* and *The Science of Power*, grows even more enthusiastic as he surveys the role played by Christianity in "Western Civilization."

Having discovered that "no greater mistake can be made than to imagine that there is anything in evolutionary science at the end of the nineteenth century to justify" the conclusion that religion will slowly die out as knowledge becomes disseminated throughout all strata of society, and that "According to the laws which science herself enunciated these beliefs must then be expected to remain to the end a characteristic feature of our social evolution"; he proceeds to excogitate the astounding fact that "The history of our Western civilization was largely but the life-history of a particular form of religion and of wide-extending and deep-seated social movements connected therewith". Developing this theory, he urges that,—

The conclusion towards which we seem to be carried is, therefore, that the function of these beliefs in human evolution must be to provide a *super-rational* sanction for that large class of conduct in the individual, necessary to the maintenance of the development which is proceeding, but for which there can never be, in the nature of things, any *rational* sanction.

And "No form of belief is capable of functioning as a religion in the evolution of society which does not provide an ultra-rational sanction for social conduct in the individual." And, again,—

A religion is a form of belief, providing an ultra-rational sanction for that large class of conduct in the individual where his interests and the interests of the social organism are antagonistic, and by which the former are rendered subordinate to the latter in the general interests of the evolution which the race is undergoing. We have here the principle at the base of all religions.

He next proceeds to contend that,—

In the religious beliefs of man we have not simply a class of phenomena peculiar to the childhood of the

race. We have therein the characteristic feature of our social evolution. These beliefs constitute, in short, the natural and inevitable complement of our reason; and so far from being threatened with eventual dissolution they are apparently destined to continue to grow with the growth and to develop with the development of society, while always preserving intact and unchangeable the one essential feature they all have in common in the ultra-rational sanction they provide for conduct.

These quotations are taken from *Social Evolution*. In his last book, *The Science of Power*, he also emphasized the importance of the Christian religion to Western Civilization. According to him, "It has slowly enfranchised the world around him....." (i. e., "the essentially pagan European"). "It is bringing into the rivalries of life on terms of equality with him every class and substratum of his societies, every race of man on the planet."

The opinions of Lester F. Ward are diametrically opposed to those of Kidd on this particular point:—

"Without speculating upon the influences of Christianity, and later, of Mohammedanism in Asia," he says,—

Where the people were less enlightened, and where the form of religion, probably, did little either to elevate or degrade them we will turn our attention to Europe, where, especially in Greece and Italy, literature and the arts were in a high state of cultivation. The question then is, in what respect would the civilization of Europe be different from what it is to-day had the Grecian polytheism remained unmolested by Christianity and all other forms of faith?

Greece and Rome maintained toward the national religion an attitude quite analogous to that which Germany, France, Great Britain, and America present now toward Christianity. The masses believed and went through the ceremonies, while the philosophers and school-men stood aloft and remained indifferent to religion, appearing to consider it beneath their notice, just as now the rank and file observe the forms of the Church, while the most cultivated, and notably, those engaged in scientific investigation, are for the most part indifferent to religion, and do not feel called upon to divert any time from their pursuits to its consideration.

There were indications, then, that the bonds of religious restraint were about to fall from the people, and the light of knowledge to be admitted to all, just as now we see the forms of religion more and more ignored, and education further and further extended. But Christianity rekindled the religious zeal, proscribed philosophy, abolished the schools, and plunged the world into an abyss of darkness from which it only emerged after twelve hundred years. Ignorant of what would have happened if this had not happened, nothing is left but to regard the advent of Christianity as a calamity. And, if we look at the history of Christianity, we find that its activities have been so intense and its deeds so violent that it has been almost impossible for thought to obtain foothold. Mohammedanism was no better, but its field of operation has been less unfortunate.

Perhaps this presentation of diverse views of the social function of religion has proved bewildering to the reader. In the remaining portion of this monograph, therefore, I shall endeavour to show the inter-relations of theological systems with economic and political systems, and the social plexus generally; and shall attempt correctly to estimate the social value and function of religion.¹

W. H. MORRIS.

(To be continued.)

¹ The opinions of two more writers on sociological subjects, Paul Lafargue and Professor Veblen, will be considered in a later section, when their views can be more appropriately introduced.

Acid Drops.

We do not know what the object of Mr. J. F. Grein is in proposing to introduce a Bill into the House of Commons which will enable clergymen to become Members of Parliament. We do not suggest that they have not intelligence enough for *that* job, as judging by the average member, anyone outside an idiot asylum, and many within, would be quite suitable. Mr. Grein may have no more than some political electioneering move in view, but to be just he should accompany the suggestion with the proviso that the clergy should be prohibited from receiving any kind of State patronage or support. If that were done there would be neither reason nor justice in preventing the clergy becoming Members of Parliament. But while they are receiving State support they must not object if they are subjected to some inconveniences as State servants. Or, perhaps, Mr. Grein has some deep laid plot which aims at making Parliament even more ridiculous than it is at present.

Poor Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has just escaped a very grave danger. He says that the Presbyterians in Australia prayed that he might never reach there, which meant, we take it, that he might be drowned. Sir Arthur says that they were "rotten prayers." Well, but does Sir Arthur know of any that are better? Sir Arthur also says that the people of Australia lack Spirituality, which means, we suppose, that they are not jumping at his Spiritualism. Perhaps this may lead Sir Arthur to make a really serious study of the subject, instead of spending his time on discussing the insanity of correspondence with ghosts, and the superficial absurdity of its being all a case of false wigs and manipulating fingers and toes.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's story of photographs of fairies has been corroborated by a Southend lady who says that she often sees them in her garden. We are the more inclined to believe it because we heard of a man in our own locality who had seen snakes climbing up the walls of his bedroom.

An old woman applied at the Thames Police Court the other day for protection against a ghost that annoyed her. She said that it used the most awful language, and then it seemed as though someone put a battery on her head. The magistrate said the Court had no jurisdiction over ghosts, and commended her to Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. They might reply that they had enough of their own absurdities without being burdened with those of other people.

Mr. Horatio Bottomley, despite his conversion, has not forgotten all his Radicalism. Commenting on the statement of Alderman Bradley, of Southend-on-Sea, that Shakespeare is unfit for children to read, the editor of *John Bull* writes pointedly: "If the Alderman takes this objection to Shakespeare, why does he not take it against the Bible, which is as full of 'fancy pieces' as his own head is full of wool?"

The Rev. J. Lowe, for forty-four years vicar of Haltwhistle, Northumberland, left £86,465. The Rev. E. T. Birch-Reynardson, of Skipton, left £23,013. The Rev. J. R. Corbett, of Wanstead, Essex, left £2,686. The Rev. H. Howard, for forty years rector of Malverley, Shropshire, left £3,120. Thus do the clergy disobey their Master's injunction concerning the laying up of treasure. We tremble to think where they will spend eternity.

A curious item appeared in the *Daily Mail* for January 4. It stated that on the reappearance of Constantine in Athens the streets resounded with cries of "Christ is risen," his picture was carried about while "an idolatrous cortege sang Easter hymns; palms were borne before him in blasphemous reminiscence of Palm Sunday." The connection between the worship of God and that of a king does not strike us as being at all wonderful, and if the *Daily Mail* journalist had been better informed he would not have marvelled at it either. Kingcraft and Godcraft

are two branches from the same stem, and the same type of mind favours both. Even with us there is a very close connection between the type of mind that is very pious and the one that is very "loyal." When the "loyal" Englishman sings "God save the King," he assumes the same reverential attitude that he does when he is saying his prayers. And to watch a number of men and women standing at attention while a band plays the national anthem is to see exactly the same mental characteristics exhibited that one may see in church during the saying of prayers. The Greeks were simply illustrating the close connection between the two types of mind. The connection is quite well-known to students of the subject, and it explains why all over the world there is so close a connection between King worship and God worship.

The scramble for titles is another indication of the same barbaric mentality. And it is worthy of note that during the war period, with its reversion to a lower culture stage, there was a perfect epidemic of title giving. They were thrown about by the sackful. People must have been pleased to get them, or they would never have been given. One was only surprised to find them taken by many who did accept them. If they were given for genuine services to the State, one could understand their being given and valued. But they are not, everyone knows that they are bought, or are given as a bribe in the majority of cases. And they bribe, in a way, even those who do not receive them. For while one man likes to hear himself addressed as Sir This, or Lord That, the other likes to refer to "my conversation with Sir— or Lord—. What is needed is for decent men to refuse to accept these titles, now that they may be had by practically anyone with enough money to purchase one. Either that, or they should be publicly sold, with a proper scale of charges, and anyone should be at liberty to buy them at a post office as one takes out a licence to keep a dog or put a servant in livery. There would be a good sale—for a time.

The Loughborough Town Council has refused to let the Town Hall to the Labour Party for a Sunday meeting, one of the opponents to it remarking that they were the guardians of the moral interests of the town and could not do it. What a pity it is that these Christians are not made of better material. They are, apparently, such poor weak things that their morals, such as they are, will be seriously undermined if a lecture is allowed to be given on a Sunday. Might it not meet the case if the civilized portion of Loughborough were allowed to do as they pleased, and all the Christians locked up from Saturday night till Monday morning with the Town Council to keep guard? A very poor place must Loughborough be!

The Rev. W. M. Scott, a Dundee parson, says he believes in emigration for some people. We propose that he (and some of his colleagues) set the example.

The Sunday concert question is being debated in the Southend press very vigorously. One of the correspondents has the following very pertinent remarks. "The Rev. Mr. Gowing, of Prittlewell, has made his appearance before that mixed assemblage, the Borough Council, as a narrow-minded tradesman-parson. In the company of a Nonconformist fellow-tradesman, he opposed bands on the Pier whilst his, and his fellow-conspirators' shows were on. How preposterous! If the bands are unholy at any hour, they are unholy at every hour. They cannot be unholy from 11 to 12, and sacrosanct from 10 to 11."

"The Messiah in Prison" is a headline in a daily paper. There is nothing to shout the odds about, some "messiahs" have been in lunatic asylums.

A London newspaper claims that Sarah, the donkey that has made over 2,000 appearances in "Chu Chin Chow," is the most wonderful ass in the world. We do not want to disparage the great Sarah, but modestly point to the very distinguished donkey who carried the Trinity-in-Unity into Jerusalem. This seems to us the *perfect ass*.

As Christmas Day fell on a Saturday, many actors and actresses were deprived of one day's salary. One management enclosed with the depleted salary a Christmas card. You can always trust some Christians to add insult to injury.

We commented last week on Mr. Clynes' remark that the last war was a Christian adventure at the side of what the next one will be, by saying that the last one was a Christian one. Now a reader sends us a pastoral letter by an Aberdeen minister in which the war is called a Christian crusade. That was issued over a year ago, and we expect that by this time a great many of the clergy are a little sorry that they impressed upon the people the Christian nature of the conflict. For ourselves, we never had any doubt of it. The way in which the Government suppressed news and issued lies was eminently Christian. The method adopted of educating the people to the war by a systematic brutalization of character was quite in accord with the age-long policy of the Christian Church. The suppression of free speech and personal liberty, the slanders issued against anyone who differed from the conduct of the war, the letting loose of armies of spies, all these things recalled the tactics of the Christian Church in the days of its greatest power. There has not been since the Crusades so Christian a war. Let us hope that *the next one* will not be quite so Christian.

In their reports of the Chelsea Arts Club fancy dress ball, held recently in the Albert Hall, few newspapers had the courage to refer to an item in the programme which the *Daily Telegraph*, however, dealt with as follows:—

It represented the earliest religious ceremony of which authentic record remains, and was called "The Origin of Christmas." This is what occurred. At a moment which was supposed to be the brink of dawn, Aurora, the Goddess of the Morning, clad in a rosy veil, emerged from the entrance of the Temple, and, attended, by her priestesses, approached the altar, over which hung a large golden disc. After a pause of intense stillness, the goddess struck the altar, and immediately *the true Deity, the Sun*, [*Italics ours*] appeared above the horizon, his first rays reflecting dazzlingly from the polished surface of the golden disc. Aurora's rosy veil evaporated, and the priestesses commenced to sacrifice fruit and flowers at the altar's perpetual fire. The business of the disc was no mere invention; the plate was a reproduction of a small golden replica of the original found in Ireland. The priestesses, who belong to the Chelsea School of Art, were chosen for their beauty, according to the ancient prejudice, and it was said that they had paid such strict attention to the minutiae of the rite that they had all gilded their toes.

The *International Review of Missions* says that one mission in Japan has been approached by large industrial companies with regard to their conducting work among the workpeople employed. We are not very much surprised. What would surprise us would be if the workpeople themselves were to ask the missionaries to come and preach to them. From the employers' side the move is quite understandable. The workpeople are getting restless, and some new form of "dope" may be required. And when it comes to inducing habits of mental docility, there is no other dope in the world quite so efficacious as is the Christian variety.

Parish magazines are sometimes breezy reading. The Vicar of Eaton Socon, Huntingdonshire, has been giving his parishioners "beans." In the course of his cheery message he says, "What I will not tolerate is impertinent interference and 'bossiness' on the part of female or male." Eaton Socon must rival Sweet Auburn as "the loveliest village of the plain."

We are told that the Lord chasteneth those he loves. Pastor Miley, of St. Paul's Church, Detroit, Michigan, should be able to hit the sawdust trail with his testimony. As he was leaving his church with the communion cups to set out for home, a crowd mistook him for a thief, and he was severely beaten.

"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

THE purpose of this Fund is to meet the deficit incurred owing to the excessive cost of printing and paper, and to provide a balance to meet fresh deficits until such time as prices approach a normal level. The sum of £1,000 is being asked for. This Fund will close on January 31.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

Previously acknowledged, £837 2s. 8d. T. H. Green, 10s.; D. F. Gloak, £1 7s. 6d.; R. Murison, 10s.; L. C. £1; J. G. Finlay, 10s.; T. Fisher, 10s.; J. W. F. (Birmingham), £3; W. P. Pearson, £1 1s.; 17th Lancers, 2s. 6d.; J. Thackray, 2s.; R. Bell, (second subscription), £5s.; Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Clowes, £1 1s.; P. and J. P. (second subscription), £2; F. Aberdeen, £1; Grateful Freethinker, (third subscription), 6s. 9d.; W. Challis, 5s.; W. Theobalds, 5s.; W. T. Newman, 2s. 6d.

Total, £850 1s. 8d.

PROMISED, provided the total sum raised reaches £1,000, including the amounts promised:—"Medical," £25; "In Memory of the late Sir Hiram Maxim," £50; Mr. J. B. Middleton, £10; J. Morton, 10s.; R. Proctor, £1; National Secular Society, £25; F. Collins, 10s.; T. Sharpe, £1 1s.; J. Breese, £3; A. Davis, £2 2s.; J. W. Hudson, £1; Collette Jones, £5; T. C. Kirkman, £2; G. J. Dobson, £1.

Total, £127 4s.

O. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

January 16, Barnsley; January 23, Birmingham; January 30, Glasgow.

To Correspondents.

Those Subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that the renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

H. HAYNES.—It is the best policy to follow your own thoughts in every case. Sensible thoughts if they are not your own will be of use to you, as it is only by making them your own that they can be of service. A man is "free" when he is allowed to follow the promptings of his own nature without being forced to a particular course by external force. There is no other meaning to the word.

R. WOOD.—Letter to hand, but it is rather late to return to the matter now. You may have an opportunity of raising the same point in another connection, later.

FELLINGSIDE.—Thanks for good wishes. We are not taking a rest, and do not see any chance of doing so. Still, we are quite well, and that is the main thing, and we may as well wear out as rust out. It is a far more interesting method.

H. A.—We are very sorry to find that our forecast as to the growth of Prussianism as a consequence of the war has been so completely borne out by events. At no period of British history during the past three centuries was there so little concern for real freedom in this country as there is at the moment. The people are ready to submit to anything so long as it is "by order." Even the terrible business in Ireland, with its exact duplication of the German methods in Belgium, is passed over in comparative silence. The situation makes it clearer than ever that the one thing that will permanently improve things is the lifting of the intelligence of the country to a higher level. In other words, a good dose of Freethought, with the application of an informed and enlightened mind to public affairs.

S. KNOWLES.—Thanks for New Year's greetings; glad you are taking an extra copy for 1921. Hope that it will be the means of making many converts.

DEFOE (S. C.).—(1) Your cheque was for £1 inclusive. Book is being sent. (2) If the Freethought Fellowship matures, it might lead to something of the kind about which you enquire. (3) We should not be in a hurry to purchase

quantities for a while. Prices may fall a bit. (4) You would have to scout for copies in a second-hand booksellers. We are flattered by your appreciation of our work.

T. E. GREEN.—Shall be pleased to convey your regards to Mr. Moss.

E. F. GLOAK.—We have no doubt but that whenever help is required you will be willing to do your share. We expect that your pious friends think they are complimenting you in calling you a Christian. That seems quite a lofty degree of excellence—to the Christian. But the elevation is built up mainly of conceit and impudence.

D. A. ARCHIBALD.—Thanks for circular. See "Acid Drops."

J. G. FINLAY.—We do not think the different translations are so important as are the variations in many of the MSS. Much of the English translation is of a "convenient" order, that is, it is strained to favour the traditional view.

R. BELL.—Thanks for reminder. We have inserted it all right this time.

S. C. CLOWES.—Thanks for redemption of promise. We all have to work for the Cause in the best way circumstances admit. The important thing is that we should all do something. The index will be sent as soon as printed. We expect it to be ready by the end of the month.

J. A. REID.—We agree with what you say about the *Telegraph*, but it is not the only paper that is afraid of Atheism. And the fear of Atheism is only an expression of the deeper rooted fear of being associated with an uncompromising position.

ARTHUR HIGH.—Thanks for calling attention to error. Will bear it in mind.

F. W. HAUGHTON.—Quite a good story. Congratulations.

J. BREESE.—Sorry to hear of your wife's indisposition. Hope she is now better.

W. S. GODFREY.—Will look up the article. Thanks for reference.

W. J.—We should welcome a drastic criticism of our *Theism and Atheism*, but we cannot invite anyone to do it. If anyone cares to do so our columns are open to them.

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 (January 16) Mr. Cohen lectures in the Miners' Hall, Barnsley, at 3 and 7. The meetings appear to have been well advertised, and as these are the first special lectures in Barnsley for many years there should be good meetings. They will, at least, have the quality of being something new to the inhabitants. Arrangements have been made to provide tea for visitors from a distance, and if these drop a postcard to the Branch secretary, Mr. H. Irving, 48 Sheffield Road, they will help in making the arrangements quite satisfactory. Next week Mr. Cohen lectures, evening only, in the Repertory Theatre, Birmingham.

There were two very good meetings at Manchester on Sunday last, a striking feature of which was the number of newcomers. Mr. Cohen's addresses were followed with close attention and evident appreciation, and were followed

by many questions. There was also excellent singing from Miss Horne. Miss Williams accompanied on the piano, and Mr. Monks officiated as chairman.

As we announced last week, a Social Evening has been arranged by the N. S. S. Executive to take place at South Place Institute on January 18 at 7 o'clock. There will be dances, music, songs, and a brief address from the President, Mr. C. Cohen. The price of the tickets, with refreshments, will be 2s. and 4d. entertainment tax. There are only a limited number of tickets available and application must be made to Miss E. M. Vance, the society's secretary, at 62 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4. The "Social" is open to all N. S. S. members and their friends.

We are glad to learn that Mr. McLaren's address on his experience in Germany attracted a very appreciative audience at the St. Pancras Reform Club on Sunday evening. To-day (January 16), a debate will be held between Mr. Palmer and the Rev. G. Ward on the proposition "That Spiritualism is superior to Secularism." Full particulars will be found in our guide notice.

We are quite sure that many of our readers will read the following with considerable pleasure. It comes from a very well-known editor of a very widely known and old established paper, and is the more interesting as the writer is not prepared to go all the way with us in our Freethought:—

DEAR MR. COHEN.—As the year closes I should like to send you my best wishes for 1921, and my personal hope for the successful continuation of your courageous work for truth. I find the *Freethinker* educational and stimulating, and I have to thank you and your colleagues for many helpful articles. Whilst I do not always concur, I recognize your moderation and your sincerity, and you may find it some encouragement to know that at least one of your independent readers willingly testifies to the influence you have upon him.

One does not work for appreciation, but it is acceptable when it comes unasked, and from those able to form an opinion.

Mr. W. H. Thresh will be the lecturer to-day (January 16) at the Friars Hall, Blackfriars Bridge Road (No. 236). His subject will be the first of two dealing with evolution. To-day's subject is "Stars and Worlds." The lecture will commence at 7 o'clock, and admission is free. We hope there will be a good attendance. There should be if Freethinkers would make these meetings well known among their friends.

We are glad to say that Mr. Cohen's work, "Theism or Atheism," is, up to the present, selling more rapidly than anything he has yet issued. It appears to have satisfied a felt want, and we have no doubt but that it will take its place as a standard work for Freethinkers. The question of the belief in God is so often dealt with by timid unbelievers in a way that gives encouragement to thpists, that we imagine many are pleased to have a work that handles the subject with the gloves off.

Our old contributor Mr. Walter Mann writes, after reading Mr. Cohen's *Theism or Atheism*, "It is the best and most comprehensive statement of the case issued. It takes the place as a standard work which I hope will never go out of print. You have left nothing more to be said." All we need say is that the book was intended to be comprehensive, and to serve as a handbook on what is, after all, the master superstition. And until men and women get that superstition out of their heads, their claim to be mentally emancipated rests on very slender grounds indeed.

Glasgow friends will please note that Mr. J. Glen will lecture, under the auspices of the local Branch, at 297 Argyle Street, Glasgow, to-day (January 16) at 12. Subject: "The Mischief of Ignorance." The lecturer will not be able to plead lack of material.

The Origin of Christianity.

The real *historical* conception of the origin of Christianity is of recent date. So long as the problem was approached with the presupposition of the Church belief, it was impossible. If the origin of Christianity consisted in the descent of the second person of the Deity from heaven to earth, in his becoming man in the body of a Jewish virgin, in his bodily resurrection after dying on the cross, and his ascent to heaven, then the origin of Christianity is a *complete miracle*, incapable of any historical explanation.....Such a Christian origin could only be the object of faith, not of historical knowledge.....The more unbiased the consideration of the sources of early Christian history in their relation to the allied phenomena of the history of the period, the clearer becomes the persistent conviction that the origin of Christianity is not to be conceived as merely the resultant of the one person Jesus, but that it is the product of a powerful and many sided development of the ancient world in which various factors had long been at work.—*Professor Pfeleiderer, "Christian Origins," 1906, p.p. 9-19.*

The vast majority of Christians in this country, and, indeed, in all Christian countries, are taught to believe that the Christian religion originated in the teachings of Jesus Christ, who was born on December 25, 1921 years ago. That the heathen and pagan world lay in a spiritual darkness and moral depravity indescribably vile and brutal. That upon that day angels suddenly appeared in the sky proclaiming a new reign of peace and goodwill—incidentally, it may be mentioned that Jesus afterwards definitely repudiated this announcement by declaring (Matthew x. 34) "Think not that I come to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace but a sword." A prediction which has been amply verified by the event—Further, we are assured from the pulpit, that Jesus Christ brought "Life and Immortality to light" and revealed an entirely new religion.

The whole history of the world has been written to support this view of Christianity. False witness has been suborned, all evidence to the contrary has been suppressed. The pagan world, before Christ, has been painted in the blackest colours and as sinking under the weight of its own immorality into the deepest abyss of degradation.

The same methods of wholesale lying, of suppression of the truth, of libels on the characters of their critics, pursued by the great Mercantile Trusts of America—as revealed by Mr. Upton Sinclair in *The Brass Check*—have been the practice of Christian historians from the time of Eusebius, the first Christian ecclesiastical historian of Christianity, who wrote his work under the patronage of Constantine the first Christian Emperor, down to the present time. With this difference, that the Trusts bought up the papers opposed to their interests, whereas the Christians pursued the more economical, and more effective policy of burning their opponents.

However, the Churches have no longer the power to dispose of their critics in this summary fashion. The truth is now established. No educated person to-day believes the pulp story of the immorality and degradation of paganism before the advent of Christianity. The histories of Dill, Milman, Merivale, Friedlander, Lecky, and all reputable modern historians, give the lie to these Christian libels, as the researches of Frazer, Drews, Robertson, Sharpe, Boscawen, and a host of other comparative mythologists have exploded the falsehood of the uniqueness and originality of the Christian faith and morality.

It has been conclusively proved that Christianity revealed absolutely nothing unknown to the pagan world, either in morality or religion. That, as a matter of fact, Christianity itself was a mere rehash of previously existing teachings and superstitions, most of which, and those considered by Christians the most vital and distinctive, had been in active existence thousands of years before the alleged advent of Christ.

The only claim to originality Christians can make good is that of a bigoted intolerance of all other religions except their own.

The Cross itself, now the distinctive symbol of Christianity, is without doubt the oldest religious symbol in the world. The Rev. Baring Gould devotes a chapter to the Cross in his *Myths of the Middle Ages*, in which he shows that "the Cross was a sacred sign long before our Saviour died on it." He tells us (p. 364) "Long before the Romans, long before the Etruscans, there lived, in the plains of Northern Italy, a people to whom the Cross was a religious symbol, the sign beneath which they laid their dead to rest.....they trusted in the Cross to guard, and may be revive their loved ones whom they committed to the dust." He also tells us that M. Des Verges calculated that the great development of Etruscan civilization took place "more than 1,040 years before our era," and these Cross-worshippers lived "long antecedent to the time of Etruscan civilization." He also cites the verdict of De Mortillot, who, in his book on *Le Signe de la Croix avant les Christianisme*, declares "that above a thousand years before Christ the Cross was already a religious emblem of frequent employment."

Professor Burrows in relating the startling discoveries—by Sir Arthur Evans—at Knossos in the Island of Crete, of the palace of King Minos, and of the Minoan civilization which flourished before the rise of the Greeks, and from which they derived their culture, tells us that "The square, equal-limbed marble cross that we find in the snake-goddess chamber at Knossos suggests the reason why the Greek world has always preferred that shape for the Christian symbol, as opposed to the Western 'Latin' cross, with its longer upright."¹

And this is not all, for Professor Burrows tells us "Mr. Evans believes that the Snake Goddess was not the central object of worship in Middle Minoan III. shrine, but the marble cross." Sir Arthur Evans—he was knighted for his discoveries—is the highest authority on the subject, and he dates the end of early Minoan III. culture at 3000 years before Christ!

That the Cross was venerated by the ancient Egyptians, we have the express testimony of the early Christian historians, Sozoman and Socrates. The latter, relating the intolerant zeal of the Christians in destroying the pagan temples, relates that: "When the temple of Serapis was torn down and laid bare, there were found in it, engraven on stone, certain characters which they called hieroglyphics, having the form of crosses." Both Christians and pagans claimed them symbols of their religion. "Whilst this point was controverted amongst them, some of the heathen converts to Christianity who were conversant with these hieroglyphic characters interpreted that in the form of a cross to signify the *life to come*. This the Christians exultingly laid hold of as decidedly favourable to their religion."² Why the Christians should exult over the fact that the Cross was a symbol of the "life to come" long before the time of Christ is not clear.

Mr. J. D. Parsons, in his able and scholarly little work *The Non-Christian Cross* (p. 15), observes:—

As we shall see in the chapters to come, there was a pre-Christian cross, which was, like ours, a symbol of Life. And it must be obvious to all that if the cross was a symbol of Life before our era, it is possible that it was originally fixed upon as a symbol of the Christ because it was a symbol of Life; the assumption that it became a symbol of Life because it was a symbol of Christ being in that case neither more nor

less than a very natural instinct of putting the cart before the horse.

Mr. Parsons, moreover, writes as a Christian, and in the course of his work makes the candid admission that: "Several questions naturally arise at this point of our inquiry, and it is not easy—nay, it is impossible—for us Christians to honestly dispose of all of them and yet retain our cherished opinions upon this matter" (p. 72). W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

The Gospel of Labour.

This we command you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.—*St. Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians*, II, 3, 10.

It was only after a lengthy search in a Concordance that I was able to locate this much quoted text. I had an idea that it was connected with the story of the Fall in Genesis, but a perusal of that interesting effort of the imagination corrected my hazy conceptions. I found that the ancients who constructed this myth had much clearer notions of the value of work than the wandering tent-maker. Adam was condemned to labour as a punishment. Throughout the Old Testament there is no sign that the Israelites differed from their Deity in their estimate of work. Their lot in Egypt was apparently not ameliorated by lofty reflections on the dignity of labour. This attitude of mind was not peculiar to the Jews. It was general throughout the ancient world. Primitive man has always been averse from work. It is difficult even now for white traders to convince lazy savages that labour is an essential preliminary to eating. And aristocracies, both ancient and modern, have rejected the personal application of this dogma. They have banquetted on the best of life without being troubled by scruples as to such a qualification.

What had worked this stupendous change in man's psychology and enabled Paul to enunciate his curious doctrine that if a man will not work, neither shall he eat? This maxim is a significant indication of the character of the religion he founded, and the class of people he was addressing. It must be borne in mind that the Roman Empire represented a huge social parasite on the world, its administration consisting of ruthless skill in financial exploitation. According to J. M. Robertson, the lowest rate of interest charged by the "publicani" was 12 per cent., and he mentions that "the notoriously conscientious Brutus, of sacred memory, lent, or backed a friend who lent, money to tribute payers at 48 per cent." Paul's doctrine of work would have fallen on deaf ears had he been addressing any but the lowest classes, who had accepted their daily tasks as they accepted life. The long and bitter discipline of slavery had modified man's nervous structure, and adapted him to concentration, and prolonged effort. By this stern education only, the civilizations of the past, which were all based on slavery, were rendered possible. The mental transformation was complete and found utterance in Christianity, rightly called by Nietzsche "slave-morality." Man was forced to toil, and he sought to rationalize this harsh necessity until he evolved the absurd statement that if he does not work, he has no right to eat.

It was reserved to Christian theology, which has invariably served the people as an "opiate boon," to lay stress on the holiness of work. English pastors have not neglected to enlighten their flocks on this point. The "vagabonds," for whom the Poor Laws were first framed, had it scared on their memories by a liberal application of hot branding irons. The work-houses erected all over England bear eloquent testimony to the readiness of the monied classes to teach

¹ R. M. Burrows, *The Discoveries in Crete*; 1907; p. 115.

² Socrates *Ecclesiastical History* (Bohn's Edition), p. 279. See also Sozoman *Ecclesiastical History* (Bohn's Edition), p. 333.

the aged and idle poor their duty. The horrors of the industrial era would not have been so patiently borne had not the disinherited of the earth been mentally inoculated with the moral necessity of toil. This formed part of the stock-in-trade of the political economists, and was a text on which the dullest of preachers was wont to wax eloquent. Arguments were invariably clinched with an appeal to Biblical authority, and the saying "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat," has passed into a proverb. In order not to form too glaring exceptions to the busy world around, it has become the fashion for all, even Royal personages and financial magnates, to pretend to hustle and lead strenuous lives. To question such a tenet nowadays is scarcely decent. You are asking your hearer to strip himself of his inherited conceptions. Yet, occasionally the truth slips out. "One of the commonest characteristics of the successful man," says Mr. Arnold Bennett, "is his idleness, his immense capacity for wasting time." If you unmask the truth in that way, Mr. Bennett, what lure can be held out to induce the worker to plod along patiently and uncomplainingly?

That Paul's economics are fundamentally faulty, is fully demonstrated to-day by the large and ever increasing army of unemployed. These are anxious to work, but society by restricting credit refuses them facilities. Must they, therefore, starve? They demand only the "Right to work," which means, to exist. The right to leisure, to live a full life—such claims, though justifiable, are not formulated.

Again, this defective social system is maintained only by persistent colossal waste. Why glorify toil which is devoted to such an end? But unfortunately, men are only too thoroughly imbued with Paul's idea. There is no rebellion, widespread and organized, against the performance of the drudgery of the world by obsolete and wasteful methods. The unemployed are forced to seek work while their masters control credit and fix prices. But at least let us drop the pretence that labour in itself is meritorious.

There has recently been published (and fallen still-born from the Press) a remarkable book by C. H. Douglas and A. R. Orage, entitled *Credit-Power and Democracy*. In its small compass is contained a clear analysis of the foundations on which society rests, and incidentally the Pauline doctrine, which has proved so useful to financiers and their ilk, is thoroughly exploded. It is shown that so nicely is the financial machine, under which we live and move and have our being, adjusted to extract the utmost from the many for the benefit of the few, that there is no proportionate connection between effort and success. The mysterious workings of finance, whose hidden force determines the life of everyone of us, are here laid bare. Those who cannot read aright for themselves the meaning of the twin phenomena—the unemployed or surplus labour, and the warehouses filled with unsaleable products of surplus goods—should turn to this book and learn facts vital to the preservation of civilization. Unemployment and high prices are effects of which the cause is to be found in the control of credit, the life-blood of the community, by private interests. Hence production is deliberately kept down, or diverted to non-essential purposes, because it does not suit those in control to allow goods to circulate except at a profit to themselves. But the worker, who constitutes the main market in any country, is growing continually less able to make an effective demand, partly because prices are fixed to include capital costs, partly because the growth of scientific knowledge is gradually displacing human labour by the machine. The astounding anomaly thus presents itself, that science, which is ready to relieve man, and give him leisure, is cold-shouldered and thwarted by the very men whose existence should be benefited thereby.

The authors of this little book have revealed the extent of the power wielded by finance, and they follow their skilful dissection of economic processes by drawing up in detail a practical scheme, by which the community which has created credit, should administer it in the interests of all. This scheme has been boycotted not merely by the Press (that was to be expected when Publicity is controlled chiefly by big business), but by the Trade Union "leaders." On being placed before them, they have ignored it on various pretexts, some alleging "lack of time!" But in America the idea has met with a less chilling reception. An American correspondent of the *Nation* recounts how the officials of the International Association of Machinists, grasping the need of a more effective weapon than the strike, turned their attention to finance. At the port of Norfolk the employers announced that they would run their plants only on non-Union or open-shop lines. With the workers' savings, the Union officials managed to buy a mortgage on the largest plant, and thus forced their employers to capitulate. But the banks threatened to refuse credit unless the open-shop was resumed. The Union officials then assured the employers that so long as they stood for Union shop principle and paid the Union scale, the Machinists' Association would give them all the credit they needed. They won a complete victory. Their real opponents had not been the employers, but the interests able to grant or withhold credit. With control of credit went control of the Labour policy of the machine shops.

The Association has now opened a bank, inviting deposits from the general public. Other Unions are considering the foundation of similar institutions, and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers has already put it into practice. It is hoped to establish a chain of strong Labour Banks able to compete for the control over industry that the control of credit gives.

It is difficult to over estimate the importance of such a step. It indicates that Labour is no longer "Blind, fit but to be led by pain," but that intelligence is solving the problems which force found insoluble. If credit can be controlled in the interests of the community, then Science can be fully utilized to confer leisure on all men. Work will be minimized, production multiplied a million fold.

The fetish of work for work's sake will be finally overthrown, and the Pauline injunction will be regarded with the contempt it deserves. The primary necessities of life being satisfied with the minimum of labour, man's creative and inventive energies will be directed in channels congenial to each individual. Rejoicing in his mental freedom, he will be enabled to shake off the hypocritical constraint imposed on him now only too often by economic necessity, of conforming, at least outwardly, to a religion, whose teachings buttress all the abuses which an industrial system is capable of producing.

I can hear a faint crow

Of the cock of fresh mornings, far, far, yet distinct.

Imprisoned humanity open will throw

Its fortress gates, and the rivers of gold

For the congregate friendliness flow.

Then the meaning of Earth in her children behold;

Glad eyes, frank hands, and a fellowship real;

And laughter on lips, as the birds' outburst

At the flooding of light.

FRANCES PREWETT.

RIGHT OF INDIVIDUAL OPINION.

It was at last permitted to proclaim aloud this long unacknowledged right, of submitting all opinions to our own reason, that is to say, of employing, for the attainment of truth, the only instrument that has been given us wherewith to discover it. Every man learnt, with a kind of pride, that nature had not absolutely destined him to believe on the word of another.—*Condorcet*.

Correspondence.

DOES TRUTH REMAIN ?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am not a metaphysician, and would like the opinion of some of your readers, who may be more versed in that study, as to whether we are entitled to ascribe a real, if abstract, immortality to truth irrespective of the pressure or absence of a perceiving agent. I know that it will be replied, that truth is merely a word denoting the correct adjustment of the perception with the thing perceived, and that it is meaningless otherwise. Yet some reflections seem to point to a different conclusion. For instance, until the advent of Darwin mankind was unaware of the part played in the past by natural selection, was ignorant of the real nature of its own past, and had a quite erroneous view of the universe. Through Darwin we "discovered" much of the truth on these matters. Similarly, through Newton we "discovered" the laws governing the motion of bodies in space and by the application of those laws we can reconstruct the actual position of the heavenly bodies in the past, and can say, thus it was in A.D. 600, such an eclipse occurred in 450 B.C. Thus the past of our world, organic and inorganic, is being "discovered" by us more and more thoroughly. Now the question arises, were these truths existent or non-existent before they became known to us? Surely they were existent; and if so, in this abstract existence of truth is our only valid form of immortality. No less a thinker than Spinoza, in his *Ethics*, champions the same idea, declaring that whatever changes occur, whatever things begin and end, it remains true that they were thus and thus: that I have been a villain or an honest man, that I have thought rightly or wrongly; that, in short, all things past are fixedly and for ever a part of truth. There is in this thought a real stimulus to individual effort, a real consolation for unmerited failure. Immortality, in the sense of Spinoza, consists in the perception of immortal things. It is not duration, but identification and acceptance. And if an abstract immortality may reasonably be attributed to truth, to all truth, we are greatly widening the sphere of our perception of immortal things, and so making more easy the contact of the perishable individual with the imperishable whole. It seems to me that the most uncompromising Freethinker can accept such a mode of immortality without fear of introducing the supernatural; but if I am caught in the toils of obscurantism, I shall be grateful for correction and release.

H. TRUCKELL.

CHRISTIANITY AND LIFE.

SIR,—It is to be hoped that your correspondent, Mr. Worsnop, will continue reading the *Freethinker*. At the present time his attitude towards Freethought is precisely what mine was some ten years ago, and strange to say, was caused by a friend sending me the *Freethinker*. I got to that stage where, like Mr. Worsnop, I failed to realize that Christianity is, as Chambers Dictionary has it, the teaching and Doctrines of Jesus. Your correspondent blithely says: "Let us put aside for the moment the Virgin Birth, Resurrection, and Ascension." I may frankly challenge him to call himself a *Christian* if he does so. It is just here where all the misunderstanding arises. If Mr. Worsnop puts aside all those rags and patches of the Gospels, and claims the ethical teachings of Jesus as his ideal, the differences between himself and a Freethinker would be practically nil. But if we come to the teaching of Jesus, do we find it new? By no means. The golden rule of which your correspondent makes so much (and rightly so) was enunciated by Confucius ages before Jesus. Many people never think of this. But I sincerely trust Mr. Worsnop will continue reading the *Freethinker*, for he will discover, as I did, that its aim is not to destroy anything that is true and good, but at the same time remorselessly attacks cant, hypocrisy, and lies.

J. BRERSE.

SIR,—Mr. Worsnop is evidently a thinker, so I would respectfully suggest the following for his consideration. If men are such imperfect creatures morally, the reason is clearly that their Maker made them so: they did not make themselves. If they are not attracted by the

"divine message," that must be because they fail to appreciate it. If a god made men blind, where would be the justice or sense in blaming them for not seeing the sun or trees? It is only people with a musical ear who can delight in music. Such an ear is inevitably attracted by "a concourse of sweet sounds"; it looks like a strange inversion of our old friend the argument from design, that God should have sent down divine music (called a Gospel) to ears unattracted by it! In thinking upon this subject I have often been amazed at the astonishing discrepancy between the statements of the Bible and the results of the Gospel. Christ is reported to have said: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Also: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." As for Jehovah, Daniel states that "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?" And so on. Yet, Mr. Worsnop states that the work of this Omnipotent Being is a disappointment. Christians claim to have all the power of the universe behind them (stupendous thought!); Freethinkers claim no such powerful backing. Yet now the honest Christian has to acknowledge failure—which, as far as dogma is concerned, is greatly due to the success of Freethought. We used to be told that Freethinkers objected to God's government of the world because His just and righteous methods would not suit them; now it is the Freethinker who cries aloud for God to interfere, and it is the Christian (like Mr. Worsnop) who objects. Can Mr. Worsnop see no difference in such interference to prevent him suffering for his own wilful misdoing (in the case mentioned) and interference to save innocent people from the results of other's iniquity? For example, to protect a little child from death by burning, or from falling a victim to a brute in human form? Space forbids more.

J. G. F.

[Written on reading that a priest, for many years a vicar in East London, died and left Seventy Thousand Pounds.]

I.—The Parish.

Thou mazy miles of meanest, fetid ways,
Thou warren foul of dark and noisome dens,
Through which God's buoyant breeze but rarely plays,
Where sunshine seldom smiles on reeking pens:
Thou teeming shameful groaning roost of Wrong,
Where goulsh half-damned babes from writhing wombs,
Unwelcomed come: nor join the dancing throng,
But laughless loveless grope to find their tombs:
Thou art the replica of every age:
Of Babel, Thebes, of Carthage, ancient Rome
Where priest-tricked hordes in Mammon's vassalage—
Divine, dumb beasts—endure their prison-home:
Where Virtue, Beauty, Hope in woe expire,
And life's grey ash, sweat, tears, and blood make mire.

II.—The Priest.

Such sorrows should have stung a brazen heart:
Fired the clay elods to eager, love-strong strife:
Grief should have banished mesmerizing art:
Stark need compelled men to the selfish life:
Would not thy gold have numbed a little pain—
Dulled the fierce hunger-pangs that minds confuse—
That goad the babes to sell themselves to shame?
Needst thou have miser-hoarded all thy dues?
Thou art true spawn of the vile vampire brood
That mocks men's woes with antique mummeries—
Shameless though shadowed by the Awful Rood—
Whose lives make lies of all their litanies—
Whose cunning creeds make darkness darker far:
Scoffers at Christ, whose hangmen still ye are!

III.—Priests.

Is there one moment, since that far off time
When Man, the brute, first felt the urge of God,
To strive from mud to man, to soul from slime,
From brute to brother; climb to Christ from clod.
Is there one step in all his pilgrimage
But one low height to which he has attained
When priests have helped him to his heritage?
What owes he them, of all his toil has gained?

Unholy traffickers in Holy Things—

Do they not blind men with their cunning creeds?
Have they not blessed a myriad tyrant Kings?
Have they not feasted while the world's heart bleeds?
Light they made darkness, fearful lest men see?
Christ they hanged, lest He give men Liberty.

H. J. G.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 4, 1921.

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

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

New members were received for Birmingham, Manchester, South London and the Parent Society.

Complete details of the recent Tyneside propaganda being now to hand, it was resolved to make a further grant of £5 to the South Shields Branch.

The Secretary reported a very favourable opening to the new course of lectures at Friars Hall, Blackfriars Road, in spite of inclement weather, and was instructed to arrange a second course for February.

It was also reported that Stratford Town Hall had been booked for a lecture on March 20.

The Secretary's report *re* the arrangements for a Social and Dance to be held at South Place Institute on Tuesday, January 18, was adopted, and it was resolved that the time be from 7.30 to 10 p.m., the dancing be interspersed with vocal music, and the proverbial "few words" from the President. The cost of tickets, including light refreshments, would be 2s., plus the entertainment tax. N. S. S. members would be entitled to introduce a friend, so far as accommodation would permit.

It was resolved that an expression of sympathy be conveyed to Miss Kough, who was reported to be recovering from her recent accident.

Further business details and correspondence having been dealt with the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

N. B.—May I again remind members that all subscriptions to the N. S. S. became due on January 1.

Obituary.

ARTHUR ROBERT BROWN.

Few men were better known on the Norfolk Broads than Mr. A. R. Brown, who died at Gt. Yarmouth on December 28. He answered the call of the sea in early life and in 1882 fitted out a small boat and sailed it single handed from the Tyne to Yarmouth. At that time the "land of the Broads" was an unknown land, and Mr. Brown started a business in letting yachts and boats for hire. When he retired, some ten years back, he fitted out his well-known boat the "Spray" and on it spent the greater part of the evening of his life. He was a consistent Freethinker, and the interment took place at Caister on January 3, in the presence of a few intimate friends, one of whom, Mr. A. H. Smith, delivered a suitable address.

P. E. RUMBELOW.

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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. W. H. Thresh, "Evolution—Stars and Worlds."

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road) : 7.30, Mr. Jenkins, "The Bible-God."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH, N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, off Kentish Town Road, N.W.) : 7.30, Debate: "That Spiritualism is Superior to Secularism." Affirmative, The Rev. George Ward; Negative, Mr. T. F. Palmer.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. 9) : 7, Mr. C. Ratcliffe, "Determinism—A Plea for the Bottom Dog."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2) : 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "The Place of America in the New World."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Stratford Engineers' Institute, 167 Romford Road, Stratford, E.) : 7, Mr. E. Burke, A Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

ASSOCIATION OF ENGINEERING AND SHIPBUILDING DRAUGHTSMEN (Mersyside Branch) : Thursday, January 20, H. H. Harrison, M.I.E.E., "Automatic Telephony."

BARNESLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (Miners' Hall) : Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "What is the Use of Christianity?" ; 7, "Do the Dead Live?"

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Shop Assistants' Hall, 207 Argyle Street) : 12 noon, Mr. John Glen, "The Mischief of Ignorance." (Collection.)

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Youngman's Rooms, 19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds) : 6.30, Mr. H. Bertnelle, "Marxism."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (3 Thompson Street, Tyne Dock) : 6.30, Branch Business; 7, Mr. R. Chapman, "Olive Schreiner: Her Life and Work."

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(Late Headmaster of Eton College)

AND

CHAPMAN COHEN
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Principles and Objects.

Secularism teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

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