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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

Views and Opinions.

The Happy Atheist.

The geological record is filled with the remains of extinct species of animals. Once they roamed in full lustiness of life, and perhaps lorded it over weaker kinds. Then came a change of conditions, or the arrival of a more powerful competitor, and the older form disappeared, the only use remaining for them not materializing for millenniums after they were dead. If the geological record is a catacomb of discarded forms, the theological one is not less so. That, too, is full of types that once filled the stage, types that gradually die out, and whose only use now is to instruct the living as to the character of the dead. And among these extinct forms in the theological record one of the most striking is the wicked Atheist. I do not mean by that the Atheist who does something wicked, living in a Christian environment he may well, in some instances, fall into the habits of those around him. I have in mind the Atheist who is wicked because he is an Atheist, or an Atheist because he is wicked. A blend of the two formed the original type as pictured in religious literature, and he had a lengthy, a flourishing, and, to the religionist, a useful career. He was held up at religious meetings, and pilloried in religious literature for the edification of the devout and a warning to them not to stray from the fold. He became an Atheist because he was naturally bad; he gloated over the deeds of villainy he performed, and, useful to the very end, when he died he passed away shrieking for forgiveness to the God whose commands he had ignored. He had a long career in the religious world. Peace be to his ashes. He served the Christian Church long and faithfully. One is surprised that the Churches never combined to erect a monument to one who had served so well the sermoner and the tract writer. But then they have never erected a monument to the Devil, and he served them much better.

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Discovering Reality.

Then by degrees a change set in. The world experienced "piping times of peace." Atheists became more numerous, with the result of their being better known. From being a curiosity they became a mere abnormality, and gradually lost even that claim to special notice. They were known and observed, and the remarkable discovery was made that if they were not better than other people they were certainly not worse. While they lived they were not conspicuous examples of villainy. When they died they failed to rouse the neighbourhood with their shrieks, and they never—well, hardly ever—sent in hot haste for a parson or a district visitor to explain to them the kind of hell to which they were journeying. So by degrees the wicked Atheist passed away, one may assume deeply regretted by a certain class of evangelical preachers. Then, instead of blackguarding the Atheist the Christian began to slobber over him, or to sympathize with him. It was such a pity that so intelligent and so good a man should be an Atheist. And his Atheism was explained as being due, not to any defect in his character, but to want of spiritual development, or to some environmental accident. He had been over-devoted to mere science, or he had met with some poor types of Christians, etc. In any case, whatever the cause, the Atheist was to be treated as an erring friend rather than as a social outcast. Atheists were not to be cursed, they were simply to be pitied. And as an Atheist I do not like the latter type of Christian nearly so well as the older sort. I prefer the Christian that bites to the one that snivels. One can meet the sturdy persecutor with a determination as strong as his own. One can laugh at the slanderer. But the snivelling, sympathetic Christian gives one the impression of having touched something morally unclean.

* * *

Puzzled Piety.

Now to one with a due appreciation of the psychology of the religious mind it will not be difficult to believe that to the fervent Christian the present day Atheist is much more objectionable that the legendary type that has ceased to figure in the religious world. I have not the least doubt but that the Atheist of the sermon and the tract was far more welcome than the one of actual experience. An Atheist who lived up to the character so obligingly marked out for him by the Christian, even though he did not exist outside the evangelical tract, was an accommodating sort of a being. A wicked Atheist the Christian could tolerate, even love. He quite fitted in with the Christian scheme of things. But an Atheist who was not a blackguard! What on earth was to be done with him? He was a living disproof of the Christian theory. Of course, it might be argued that this was only a display of a still further degree of devilishness. He was not bad because he meant his goodness to be a still more diabolical attack on the Christian faith. He was trying to prove the uselessness of Christianity by demonstrating that a man could be as good without it as with it. And the villainy of the plot lay in the fact that Atheists were getting so well known the Christian's power of retort was fearfully limited. The Atheist of the tract was dead beyond the possibility of redemption. Even the dying Atheist was gone. The will to "lie for the greater glory of God" was as strong as ever; it was the opportunity to do so with success that was wanting.

A Last Hope.

Only one thing remained. The Atheist was not wicked, but perhaps he was miserable. Perhaps there was still a chance to present Atheism as being born of misery or despair. And one way to get this impression home is never to talk of Atheism without attaching some sort of qualifying term. Atheism by itself must not be noticed. It must always be "blank Atheism," or "hopeless Atheism," or some kind of Atheism that is suggestive of misery. And in the pursuit of this end, the clergy are obligingly helped by those half liberated intellects, or half developed intellects, who whenever they have occasion to refer to the fact that they no longer believe in Christianity accompany their statement of unbelief with an expression of sorrow that they can no longer accept Christian teachings. But even this is wearing thin. For, again, the fully fledged Atheist does not live up to the picture. Where he ought to be miserable he is happy. Instead of regretting the loss of his old faith he announces that he is very glad to have got rid of it. And, above all, instead of being grateful to the Christian for his sympathy, he damns his impertinence, and suggests that it is the latter who is in need of commiseration. He has the impudence to say that the Christian is in the position of a man with a boil on the back of his neck and wondering how other men can get along without the comfort of a poultice.

* * *

Atheism and Harmony.

But there really does not seem any pressing reason why the Atheist should be either wicked or miserable. For when all is said and done the Atheist is only imitating, on a more comprehensive scale, the conduct of the believer in God. The great offence of the Atheist is that he puts God on one side. But all of these believers put someone's God on one side. I do not know how many Gods there are in the world, but the supply is very generous. And it is certain that the Christian puts all of them on one side as delusion, with the single exception of one—his own. The fault here of the Atheist is that he is too amiable among his many enemies. He goes among these believers in the Gods and he finds himself in general agreement with them, and so gets into trouble. He aggrees with the Brahman that the Christian God is a myth. He agrees with the Christian that the Brahman God is a myth. He agrees with them all, and he is rounded on by them all for his amiability and catholicity. It is true that in this agreement he does not put up any God of his own, but there does not appear to be any need for that. Besides, that would make the Atheist an element of discord instead of harmony. At any rate, there is no reason why the Atheist should feel depressed because he rejects a number of Gods. That puts him in line with the rest of the religionists. Nor need the fact that he does not put in a new God of his own bother him; for here again he may claim the companionship of millions of believers, who are also without a real God in the eyes of the rest of the pious crowd.

* * *

Courage and Facts.

The Christian is not merely perplexed at the sight of a happy Atheist, he is annoyed. He loses his temper and calls him names. We do not agree with him, therefore we are different from him. And being different we are consequently worse. If we are happy as Atheists it is because we lack the fine moral development of the Christian. It is the happiness of a pig wallowing in his stye, the comfort of a debased nature finding comfort in its own degradation. The Atheist hears it all and he remains unmoved. He declines to be miserable, just as he declined the earlier invitation to be criminal. And he has the advantage over the Christian of knowing what the "joys" of religion are like and how much they are worth. Difficulties, problems, sorrows he may still have, but they are the inevitable consequences of existence, not the gratuitously manufactured difficulties of a wholly unnecessary theory. He does not play the coward by seeking refuge in God, and his mental life is purer and stronger as a consequence. He has no need to confuse his moral sense with attempts to explain why a God who ought to prevent injustice permits its existence, and so gains here likewise. The Atheist's problem is not to justify the world but to understand it, and rule it in the interests of a better life. His happiness is neither the vacuous enjoyment of the fool nor the short-lived enjoyment of the rogue. It is the expression of a disposition that has ceased to torture itself with foolish fancies, or perplex itself with useless beliefs.

Chapman Cohen.

What is Christianity?

It is a radical mistake to regard the Gospel Jesus as the founder of historic Christianity. The religion which he is supposed to have introduced did not differ essentially from that taught by the Old Testament prophets. He brought no new religion into existence. There is nothing new even in the Sermon on the Mount. The Fourth Gospel, it may be claimed, contains original ideas concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ, but it must be borne in mind that the originality of this document is the strongest argument against its authenticity. Its Jesus is an entirely different character from that of the Synoptists; but not even in John's Gospel do we find the Christian religion, except as a germ. We may go further still and affirm that historical Christianity is not a New Testament product. In fact, neither Jesus nor Paul can be called the founder of Christianity, though there is much more of the latter in it than of the former. Even in the Pauline Epistles all we see is Christianity in the making. Jesus was a Jew; but the Jewish nation rejected both him and his teaching. Harnack says that "there is hardly any fact which deserves to be turned over and pondered so much as this, that the religion of Jesus has never been able to root inself in Jewish or even upon Semitic soil." Various attempts were made by several apostles to uproot Judaism and put the rising new religion in its place. That was the mission which the Jerusalem Church endeavoured to fulfil, and in the interest of which the apostle James wrote his famous Epistle. Indeed, this Epistle was addressed "to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion," and its contents are not characterized by a single un-Jewish element. According to many theologians, the aim of the pillar-apostles was to Judaize what later on was called Christianity: but their success was extremely small. Their greatest opponent was the apostle Paul, who, though himself a Jew, carried his Gospel to the Gentiles. As Dean Inge puts it:—

> Students of the New Testament have not yet realized the importance of the fact that St. Paul, who was ready to fight to the death against the Judaizing of Christianity, was willing to take the first step, and a long one, towards the Paganizing of it.—(*Outspoken Essays*, p. 228.)

Paul's share in the making of Christianity exceeded that of any other man, and, as Dr. Inge observes, "historically, his type of Christianity was the origin of Catholicism, both Western and Eastern; though it is only recently that this character of the Pauline Churches has been recognized." He also adds that "it is impossible to guess what would have become of Christianity if he (Paul) had never lived; we cannot even be sure that the religion of Europe would be called by the name of Christ." Now,

Catholicism signifies the doctrines, system, and practice of the Church universal, or, the doctrines, system, and practice of the Roman Church. Christianity and Catholicism were for ten centuries synonymous terms. There was only one Church serving at once as the custodian and instrument of Christianity. Outside of the Church there was no salvation; and in practice, getting saved meant joining the Church. Christ never went outside the gates of Zion, and no one could find him without leaving the world behind. In other words, Christianity and the Church were practically identical. Dean Inge, however, tells us that Christianity and the Church are by no means identical, and that most Christian dogmas are not to be interpreted literally, but symbolically. At present such doctrines are denied by the majority of the people, or treated as being of no importance. The Dean says.—

> The mass of the people asks for a religion without the Cross and without the Resurrection, a religion which might well be summed up in the lines of Burns :—
>
> The social, friendly, honest man,
> What e'er he be,
> 'Tis he fulfils great nature's plan,
> And none but he.

This is very genial and jolly, but it is not Christianity.

What, then, is Christianity according to Dean Inge? Clearly it is not what the Catholic Church has always believed it to be, as is seen by the following significant passage: —

> We must admit frankly that we cannot go back to the very crude eschatology of the past. St. Paul reminds us that "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God has prepared for them that love him." And modern science, especially astronomy, has made the very notion of a theological topography absurd. It is no loss from the Christian point of view; but rather more has gone with it than the average man and woman recognize. We can no longer believe in a localized heaven and hell; and I cannot pretend to myself that the belief in a resuscitation of our bodies stands where it did. And do not the pictures of splendid rewards and ferocious punishments belong to a bygone conception of retributive justice? We must accustom ourselves to think of our immortality in a more spiritual manner; and we must not shrink from admitting that we know very little indeed.

As a matter of fact, the Dean goes to the length of asserting that the theologians of the past, who regarded the doctrines of the Church as literally true, were slaves of superstition. Paul started the process of Hellenizing Christianity, with the result that the Incarnation, for example, got to be regarded statically, as a fact in past history. To the so-called Modernists in the Catholic Church, Christ is an object of belief, not of knowledge. As Laberthonniere says: "He introduces into us the principles of that which we ought to be. That which he reveals he makes in revealing it." "In other words," comments the Dean, "Christ, and the God whom he reveals, are a power or force rather than a fact." The Dean is convinced that "it is otherworldliness that can alone transform the world"; but to him "the other world" is not a physically existing world somewhere beyond the stars, but a spiritual world within spiritually-minded people. He does not believe that Christ rose bodily from the dead; and yet he pins his faith in "the power of the Resurrection," declaring it to be the only thing that can save civilization. In a recent sermon he said that the people "who knew that they had difficult problems to face, resented being told that heaven—somewhere among the stars—was their home."

The Dean's conception of Christianity is far more absurd than the one he condemns as "superstitious and childish," nor will it in the slightest measure prevent the spread of Secularism, as he vainly imagines. Christianity is either literally true, or not true at all. The Dean's theology is more unbelievable, if possible, than the Church's; but from both alike the only rational refuge is in Secularism, which the Dean misunderstands and misrepresents and falsely declares to be bankrupt. It is not Secularism that is bankrupt, but Christianity. In the commercial world, bankruptcy implies failure. A merchant becomes a bankrupt when he is unable to meet his obligations, or cannot pay his bills, that is to say, when he has failed. But Secularism has never been tried yet, and until it has its chance, it cannot legitimately be pronounced bankrupt. Even figuratively it cannot be so described. It is neither hopelessly disabled nor discredited. But Christianity has been on trial for nigh two thousand years, and it has never justified its claims nor fulfilled its promises. Indeed, Dean Inge himself affirms that "the Church has lived by its monopolies and conquered by its intolerance" (*Outspoken Essays*, p. 32), which clearly means that as a social and moral regenerative agency it has been a total failure. Realizing this, the Dean wonders whether or not it proves that the faith hitherto held "is itself bankrupt and incapable of exerting any salutary influence upon human character and action." Consequently, he dismisses the faith of the past as "superstitious and childish," and as inevitably leading to Secularism. In our opinion his own faith is more "superstitious and childish" still, the advocacy of which is bound to hasten the triumphant advent of Secularism as the true philosophy of life.

J. T. Lloyd.

The Shadow of Dante.

> King who hast reigned six hundred years.
> —*Tennyson.*
>
> Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea.
> —*Wordsworth.*

An exhibition of books, manuscripts, and works of art relating to Dante held at University College, London, in commemoration of the sixth century of his death, recalls a reputation almost without a parallel. By the general suffrage of the literary world Dante's place has been assigned among the three greatest masters of his art. Yet comparatively few people know intimately the writings of the greatest Italian poet. Thousands of books, in many languages, on Dante and *The Divine Comedy* have increased to such a point the difficulty of studying his works that, to the bewildered reader, tossed on the perilous waters of contradictory commentary and subjective criticism, nothing is left but to take shelter in the safe haven of conventional admiration.

What wonderful changes have taken place in Europe since Dante's time. Poets have rushed, comet-like, across the literary horizon, lightened the darkness for a moment, then as rapidly departed. Their songs, their message, even their names, have been forgotten. Dramatists have provided fun and tragedy for the public of their time. Most of their names are lost to memory, and even their plays have ceased to attract. Time is merciless, and strews the poppy of oblivion over all but the worthiest. Dante is one of the select few. He has had but one superior during the centuries since his death, and that is William Shakespeare, the greatest name in the world's literature.

Of Dante's life but little is known. Even before his death he had come to be the subject of many flourishing legends. It is well nigh impossible to make out exactly what he did. So deep is this obscurity, that his stature gains from the uncertainty an unreal proportion like that of a tall man in a mist. Dante Alighieri, "the voice of ten silent centuries," was born in Florence in the thirteenth century. He was

of noble birth, and had a passion for knowledge. He learned all that the schools and universities of his time could teach him "better than most," fought as a soldier, did service as a citizen, and became chief magistrate at Florence. While young he met Beatrice Portinari. She made a great figure in his life, and a greater in his immortal poem. He married another, "not happily." In some Guelph-Ghibelline strife he was expelled the city, and ate the bitter bread of banishment. Without a home, he turned to the world of the imagination, and wrote *The Divine Comedy*, one of the most remarkable of all books, and died, not old, at the age of fifty-six.

Dante's masterpiece, *The Divine Comedy*, consisting of the three parts, "Hell," "Purgatory," and "Paradise," forms an epitome of the Christianity of the Middle Ages, a very different thing from the invertebrate and decadent substitute which is to-day known, facetiously, as the Christian Religion. The poem was written in an age of Faith, and Dante was a firm believer. His uncompromising realism brings vividly before us the full extent of the credulity of those far-off days in which Paganism and Christianity were intermingled. However strange, however grotesque, may be the appearance which Dante undertakes to describe, he never shrinks from describing it. His similes appear the illustrations of a traveller. Dante even introduces Virgil as his guide to the Infernal Regions. He compares the precipice which led from one circle to another in Hell to the rock which fell into the Adige on the south of Trent. The place where heretics were confined in flaming tombs resembled the cemetery of Arles. He puts Francesca da Rimini, whom he had nursed on his knee as a child, among the damned, "imprisoned in the viewless winds, and blown about the pendant world." Count Ugolini is introduced among other sinners. His own loved Beatrice, the lode-star of his chequered life, continuously appears and reappears throughout the poem. Dante was all imagination, but he wrote like Hakluyt.

The power of Dante's genius carries everything before it. Such transcendant originality of conception is alone rivalled by old Homer and divine Shakespeare. For his having adopted the popular superstition in all its extravagances we no more blame Dante than we criticise Homer because he uses the Pagan deities, but *The Divine Comedy* is none the less a reliable mirror by which we may view mediæval Christianity. There is an air of grief and sound of lamentation over all this lurid and unlovely conception of life. A monster sits in the seat of deity and rules a terror-stricken world. Dante shows us horrors on horror's head. He points to hell after hell, each more abominable than the last, round every species of petty offenders. He pictures in unforgettable language the torments of the lascivious, the unbaptized, the gluttons, the avaricious. Some are tossed in furious winds, some are lying in filth under a constant hailstorm, others are punished in burning tombs, whilst numbers are tormented in rivers of blood. Except in the writings of the unbalanced Fathers of the Church and Christian theologians, few have ever had such ideas of filth and corruption. The tender human emotions of the man are strangled by this hideous theology. The gloom of the Infernal Regions tinges even the flowers of Paradise and dims the glories of Heaven.

The Christian superstition, of which Dante sings with such power, is now in the melting pot; but it matters little to *The Divine Comedy*. The daring imagination, the artistry of the great genius of Italian literature can never stale, for there are few lines of the poem without those superb felicities of speech which tingle the blood. The essence of Dante's greatness lies as much in his splendid language as in his potent imagination. His reputation has outlasted empires, kingdoms, and commonwealths. Nations degenerate, cities become desolate, great soldiers and statesmen fade into mere name, but the supreme glory of a great intellect survives the centuries, and clothes an illustrious name with immortal glory, which grows in lustre through the ages. Transcendant genius has made the name of Dante Alighieri ever illustrious, and his greatness is as secure as the everlasting hills.

Mimnermus.

The Relativity of Knowledge.

II.

(Concluded from page 294.)

Re-cognition.

As already intimated, the cardinal strand of relativity in the fabric of knowledge is the mental act of recognizing the like amid the unlike—of becoming conscious or aware that a present sense-impression or sensation is like the revived or resuscitated image of past ones. This is the basic fact of consciousness, which enables mind, as intellect, to be instrumental as means of preserving the life of the organism. Pain or discomfort is the corresponding primary element in the domain of feeling or emotion. It was this capacity of becoming aware of discomfort and of likeness that made the emergence of animal life a possibility.

In the sub-human or animal world this capacity is now innate or instinctive; in man, however, it is virtually all acquired through one's own experience. Mind, as intellect, is practically non-existent in the human infant. The only bit of external world—the special domain of intellect—that exists for the new-born babe is the mother's breast, which it recognizes by means of its tactual sensations—a recognition which acquires meaning by being instinctively linked up with the muscular mechanism involved in the process of sucking. And even this fragment atrophies as soon as the material need of it vanishes. But as its external world of instinct disappears another emerges into being. Through the incessant repetition of the same or similar sense-impression a miniature world of *re-cognized* objects comes into existence. At first it is mainly, if not solely, a recognition of individuals—the mother being the first to become a recognized object. Then, by dint of ever-increasing familiarity, other members of the family become "known" objects. Then, as this faculty of recognition grows in discriminating power, the recognized individual is succeeded by the recognized "class." For the child now recognizes objects not as individuals but as members of a class—as "gee-gees," as "bow-wows," as "moos" or "dickies." This is quite a revolutionary extension in the application of the power. It is almost a new departure, for now it has become a relation of likeness, not between a present sense- impression and the image of past ones, but between the external objects themselves—the mind acting only as a gauge of reference.

The classifications made by sight are soon confirmed by one of the other senses. The child soon learns to recognize a sheep by its bleat, a cow by its low, a dog by its bark, and a horse by the tramp of its hoofs.

Let us now cross the line which separates the animal mind from the human. The recognitions hitherto considered are as often due to instinct as to reason. For in the animal world recognition is the psychic thread by which every creature picks out its path of safety along the perilous maze of life. But we now come to consider modes of grouping which are uniquely human.

Man's distinguishing characteristic is reason—a word which merely epitomizes the fact that in him

animal consciousness has become self-conscious, and that he has thus become aware not only of sensations and sense-impressions as such; but of the relations existing between them. In virtue of this awakening, the human mind can take survey of its own field and study its contents in their relations to one another. These interrelations will form our subject of study as we proceed. We are now, however, concerned only with the fact that man can isolate or abstract in thought any one sensation, and include under it all things which affect him in that particular way, however much they may differ in other respects. So objects may be classified as black, white, red, heavy, hot, nutritious, poisonous, transparent, hard, soft, etc.

Such abstractions are usually described as qualities, attributes, or properties, as if they were something resident or inherent in the object. For example, sweetness is generally considered as a quality immanent in sugar or honey. We now know, however, that the sweetness is in us and not in the substance, and the same is true of every other subjective effect. What the object possesses is a capacity to affect one of our sense-organs in such a way as to give rise to the particular sensation through its parting with, releasing, or absorbing energy according to the nature and purpose of its function. In much the same way we isolate and abstract in thought the beneficial or injurious effects of our actions or conduct upon others, and classify accordingly. Hence, we have a class of just acts, legal acts, kind acts, wrong acts, etc., covering between them the whole field of morals, customs, and convention. Justice, cruelty, or kindness indicates a uniformity in behaviour in exactly the same way as sweetness or bitterness does in substance.

Even in speech, recognition plays a cardinal part; no meaning is ever awakened in the mind by any word, phrase, or sentence until its sound or symbol is first recognized. Again, in our daily routine of activity and toil every movement and action is based upon the recognition of something—quality, a class, or an individual.

Even poetry owes its charm and power of gratifying the mind to the pleasurable thrill of recognition. By the free use of the figures of speech it enables the reader to cognize a likeness, resemblance, or analogy between things or events widely different and unlike. The mind, under the suggestive spell of simile and metaphor, discovers, where it little expects it, some well-known quality or trait, and that often as suddenly as a familiar landscape scene is revealed by a lightning flash.

Again, this relation of likeness is observed in abstract numbers in a singularly perfect form. It is not a mere similarity, but an equality or identity. For example, a number of objects or units, say ten, is identical quite irrespective of what the objects in themselves may be; and the difference between that number and any other number is absolute. This cognition of equality or difference is the basis of all mathematics. From first to last it is to find out some unknown number on the assumption of equality.

The meaning of a "unit," another conception equally fundamental and essential to the science of mathematics, save to that of geometry, will be considered when we come to discuss the relations of space.

Man's greatest triumph, however, in the exercise of this faculty of mind was achieved in the detection of similarities which were hidden from every sense we possess, but which, as the result of observation, experiment, and logical inference, were discovered by mind's eye. For example, what similarity could be observed between sugar and soot, or between the sea and the air, or between a star and the earth, or between a candle burning and a nail rusting? And yet in all these cases, and in tens of thousands more, man has proved the existence of similarities or identities which enabled him to assign them to the same class or classes of similar things.

Now, as the result of exercising this mental faculty for some thousands of years upon the multitudinous diversity of phenomena of which the world around us consists, every object and force within it, from the rocks beneath our feet to the stars above us; from the giant forces which churn and lash the seas into fury; which make the earth tremble, or which hurl from its volcanic bowels streams of liquid fire, to the gentle and silent forces which make the grass grow or the human brain to think—all this vast mass of heterogeneity and diversity has been enrolled and grouped into classes and sub-classes called sciences; and, whether they are co-ordinate or subordinate, each class is held together only by the psychic cord of similarity. And just to the extent that man has succeeded in thus grouping physical and vital phenomena has he a sense of "knowing" them. The *un*classified, the strange, and the odd is an "unknown," and as such it disturbs our equanimity and contentment; but the moment we discover a likeness in it to something familiar, a feeling of a mysterious satisfaction comes over the mind.

Thus the basic element of knowing a thing is the fact that it is *like* something with which we are already more or less familiar. Or in the case of groups of apparently different and distinct objects with each of which we are more or less acquainted, our knowledge is extended when, on account of some discovered likeness, we include the less in the more familiar, as when the stars became suns, and planets, earths; or when the rotundity of suns and planets could be assigned to the same cause as that which rounds the dew-drop. Not that we are one iota nearer to comprehending or understanding the ultimate nature of the "something" which is the sun or planet, or of that other "something" which rounded them both into spheres.

Keridon.

Rhyme and Reason.

Much is permitted in poetry that would never be tolerated in prose; and there is some reason for this, as a ballad or poem may possess musical quality, rhythm, or other charm in itself sufficient to justify its existence. One rarely knows, or cares, about the words of what is known as "grand" opera, but the songs of the people ought to be regarded as an expression of current ideas set in beautiful form, rather than a hash of outworn moralities served up in words possessing neither rhyme nor reason.

In an age where the art of the novelist and short story writer has reached such high level, maudlin copy-book virtues, and an almost entire absence of anything that rings true to life are the characteristics of our song literature.

I was present recently, in an industrial town in the north, at a "popular" concert, which was presided over by a local labour councillor who was something of a wit. After a young lady had sung "Auld Robin Gray," the chairman caused considerable amusement by calling for questions and discussion! Now, although this was meant facetiously, why, when true criticism, constructive as well as destructive, has done so much to improve the work of the writer of prose, why should we refrain from criticising verses when allied to music?

Bernard Shaw, in placing Ibsen's morality, as a whole, above that of Shakespeare, gives us what may be termed the "morality" test of a work of art, surely a good standard to be applied to songs.

Many tried favourites were sung at the concert I have spoken of. The vocalization was uniformly good, the sentiments expressed were stupid in the extreme, and hopelessly out-of-date. I should say "Tom Bowling" is about the worst sea song ever written. What would Joseph Conrad or Jack London have said to such a virtuous, objectionable prig? On the concert platform the sailor is either a Sunday-school hero or a milksop. I have no wish to argue that sea-faring folk are irreligious, but love of truth compels me to say that, faced with impending disaster, sailors would not be chanting hymns in a slow drawl. It may be nice to picture Jack singing "Queen of Angels, Queen o-of Angels" for about a quarter of an hour when his ship was doomed, but it is unthinkable in real life. Few sailors die at sea, yet "The Sailor's Grave" has to be "within the depths that oft to triumph called him." This must be forgiven, for what poet would have a warrior die in hospital when he could "like a soldier fall" gloriously on the field of battle? But admitting that the sailor does die at sea, and does get buried there, is that any reason why he should be roared at and adjured to rest in peace? "Sleep on thou mighty dead" is a kindly wish, but when bellowed by powerful lungs to the accompaniment of a full brass band, is scarcely soothing to the poor sleeper. A sailor is generally supposed to have considerable agility in life, but the author of "A Sailor's Grave" makes him an acrobat after death. "...From the wave thou'll *bound*" reminds one more of a circus than of the resurrection.

Longfellow's "Village Blacksmith" is a mixture of Pecksniff and Josh Bounderby. What a canting humbug the fellow is! If it were not for the thought of his brawny arms—probably overrated—I should like to kick him. "He owes not any man." No sympathy with extravagance and luxury. Always live within your means, says this hero. "My grandfather had twenty-four children, and never earned more than sixteen shillings a week, and they never wanted for any comfort," I think I hear him saying. It is, however, just possible that the local "general merchant" does not give credit to blacksmiths. Devoutly religious, he attends divine service regularly. At the thought of his wife (now happily dead) he weeps, and, disdaining the use of a handkerchief (being 'umble) wipes away the tears "with his hard rough hand." Good old manual labour. How well does "The Village Blacksmith" uphold its dignity.

The alleged humorous songs of the concert platform are altogether too pathetic. Sometimes a ballad that did duty on the music halls in the 'eighties is heard at a "popular," but as a rule, the comic element has to be what Mr. Wells calls "nace." Fancy an audience of adults listening patiently to:—

> If you've nothing more to tell me,
> Oh, miller, let me go,
> For my mother's making girdle cakes,
> And waits for me, I know.

Then try to imagine the fate of the singer who tried that sort of thing at a music hall.

At the concert the "entertainer" scored the success of the evening with the following chorus:—

> Wake up, Johnny, wake up John,
> Wake up, Johnny, put your trousers on;
> It's half past five and the morning's fine,
> This week you must make some overtime.

It grieves me that men and women who, all their lives, have had to commence work at such an early hour, can see any humour in what is a real tragedy for poor Johnny. His better half was a very mercenary female, and her economic dependence on the labour of Johnny is quite shameless. Evidently John "missed mornings" and had to be cajoled out of bed by the thought of good weather, but nevertheless, he has my sympathy. From the feminist point of view, however, it may be urged that Johnny was kindly treated, his wife being already up to assist his departure, but I submit there is no direct evidence to support this contention. She may, quite conceivably, have been singing in bed, her only idea being to get him out so that she could comfortably enjoy a good rest before breakfast. As she distinctly makes mention of the necessity of putting his "trousers" on, Johnny could not have been altogether of slovenly habits like Diddle-diddle-Dumpling. I firmly believe his repugnance to commencing work was due to a refined nature, coarsened by contact with an unsympathetic partner.

Altogether, this is a sordid story of a nagging wife, a toil-worn husband, the clash of temperaments, and the cruel factory system. Most decidedly, it is no subject for merriment.

Love songs are either "heroic" or grotesquely flattering. Burns is a great offender here, an expert at soft soaping, at making great and absurd pretensions. "Her neck was like the swan," "The lass sae neat and clean"—fancy a sweetheart being flattered because she was not dirty! "I'd lay me down an' dee" is the sentiment of one who would not chop wood or clean the fan-light to please his wife.

I have said enough, I think, to prove that questions and discussion after popular songs would do the art of song writing an immense amount of good.

J. Effel.

An Art Treasure.

As I sit by the fire at midnight, in a favourite attitude and vigil of mine, with my classical nose pointed pensively towards the smouldering embers, peering, as it were, over the bars of fate, warmed and comforted by that sober heat and chemistry so wonderfully preserved through a million years, a myriad million years, through time infinite, eternal, reanimate at the moment here and now,—

> The faggots crack and the clock's dull tick
> Are the only sounds I hear.

Come with me, my strenuous friends and Freethinkers, and all reformers, that rave, recite, and madden o'er the land, come with me, on my enchanted ship of Reverie, and sail with me to the golden shores of far away, yet near at hand, and all about your doors. The gentle breeze is come at last, and fills the silken sails, and poppied scents are blown from faery lands forlorn!

The voyage is begun, it is also ended, in that it is an attitude of mind not a change of place. Yet how far and fast the spirit travels, or rather it has travelled, going and coming, going and coming, to and from all the shores of thought, knocking at every gate of the infinite circling inane, receiving no answer, no faintest echo from beyond the closed portals of the unknown. Resigned at last to its limitations, it sets about a more intensive and rational exploration of the knowable universe, and finds there infinitely more than sufficient to satisfy the most ardent and ambitious spirit of man, and in the natural inversion of a chastened mind is troubled no more with an unknown "beyond," but concentrates upon the, also unknown, yet knowable here and now. Man know thyself, said the sage. The proper study of mankind is man, said the poet. The later, greater poet, Shelley, speaking of poetry—and reverie is poetry in the making—says, it—

> makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the world; it arrests the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations of life, and veiling them, or in language or in form, sends them forth among mankind, bearing sweet news of kindred joy to those with whom their sisters abide—abide because there is no portal of expression from the caverns of the spirit which they inhabit into the universe of things.

Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man.

All is silent, the gaslight is turned down, the charred faggots lisp and crumble in the grate, all the others are asleep, thought voyages into the past, and back again, revisiting those islands of the blest, dwelling now so tranquilly in still and solemn seas, reflecting blue and dappled skies, seen again with a newer, truer, deeper, more poignant, yet more pleasurable interpretation and appreciation, all crudities expunged and razed, steeped in the settled glamour of the past. Such visions one may have when resting in those caverns of the spirit, through those magic casements opening on the foam. All is silent, or only the noises heard that make silence musical, the voices of the night, the window blind rustling in the airy suction, the wind sighing outside the walls, in doors and chimneys, a distant watertap trickling somewhere; heard also the low deep tone of the sea, throwing "that thin faint line upon the shore." More bustling grows the wind, louder its sad and solemn yet inspiring voices. Soothed and enriched, well satisfied at last, and quietly resolved the watcher rises to retire, and as he turns, an old print, a round picture in a square gilt frame—perhaps now quite a valuable antique—priceless to him at least—catches his eye, as it has done nightly for many years. It arrests his step again, as though it were something new and novel, and is, indeed, another magic casement, with a perspective of suggestion far transcending its simple composition. Its central objects are, a brilliant kingfisher, sitting on a mossy rock, beside a huge tree trunk, with massed greenery all around, and in the lower background a torrent leaps and cascades among some opposing boulders. That was all; yet immediately he walked again beside that very river, saw that beautiful elusive bird, that rock and tree, and all the corollary of memory's simple dream—the house on the hill, the hazel glen on the brae, the summer house our family genius made of moss and wattles (he was the "original" Freethinker, by the way—what a strange, inexplicable being in that bucolic neighbourhood!), the semi-circular, alluvial holm by the "brawling coyle," with its alder-fringed stream, and the dark bushy brae beyond it; to the right, up stream, the quiet brown moors, outlined against the infinite blue horizon; to the left, the sylvan landscape of Coila and the Ayr; the glorious pictures, seen from the homestead, as the sun set beyond Goatfell and the sea; and shining through all, the soft endearing radiance of the mother's smile—oh, heart of hearts, oh, smile that lit the world, that alone could make the desert blossom like the rose. And there was desert enough in that sweet life, but in its rich inestimable gift from mother Nature there were dower and flower, to soothe and sustain her—and others—to the end, yea, to the bitter end. She rests in her unvisited tomb, but that intensely throbbing brain, though sadly encumbered, beats in the living still. Those mothers need no monuments, they live again in their offspring, in the hearts of all who knew, and loved, and were loved by them. Bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh, these are the living monuments of those kindly dead; scarred, defaced, unworthy it may be; but in life those mothers were unresentful, they are unresentful still! They seem to smile, and hope, and forgive from their quiet tombs!

Thus memory and conscience doth make lovers, worshippers, heroes of us all. A noble mother, said the poet, must have bred so brave a son.

These are good and happy thoughts, but, as a kind of more beautiful and reasonable "extreme unction," hear Thomas Paine—in surely the finest passage even he has written—on another kind of comfort:—

> Memory, like a beauty that is always present to hear herself flattered, is flattered by every one. But the silent and absent goddess Forgetfulness has no votaries, yet we owe her much. She is the goddess of ease though not of pleasure. When the mind is like a room hung with black, and every corner of it crowded with the most horrid images imagination can create, this kind, speechless maid Forgetfulness is following us night and day with her opium wand, and gently touching first one and then another benumbs them into rest and then glides away with the silence of a departing shadow.

Andrew Millar.

Acid Drops.

The *Church Times* is greatly alarmed as to the effects of the present agitation in India on the position of Christianity in that country. It thinks these may easily result in the emergence of a "brown Christianity" which rejects all associations with Europeans. For our part as Christianity has never obtained any serious hold on India, once Christianity is divested of the prestige which it gains from being the religion of the British, and once certain bribes are withdrawn from "rice Christians," we are inclined to think that the career of Christianity will be about ended. Religiously, Christianity has nothing to offer India that it has not already got. It has its own forms of the Christian legends, and can outdo them in that direction. It has also its own different schools of morals which can offer as good as the Christian can bring. And when we come to the educated classes in India it is certain that Christianity can no more capture them in India than it can capture the educated classes at home. Those who know India know that these things are so. It is only the stupid people who think of the Hindoo as a savage, and the interested classes who value the missionary movement for business and other interested reasons who believe, or profess to believe otherwise.

It would be a fatal thing, says the *Church Times*, if in India Christianity should be considered apart from British political aims. But whom would such an event be fatal to? If Christianity has no political aims in India, there should be nothing disastrous in the natives considering Christianity apart from politics. Here at home it is the claim of the Christian Churches that Christianity is above and apart from politics. Of course, we know that this is not so, but such is the claim. Abroad many races have found to their sorrow, notably the Chinese, that politics and the missionary movements are more or less closely concerned. It seems injudicious for the *Church Times* to have written as it has done. Perhaps it is a warning to the Government that the missionaries are in need of a little more support from them than they are getting at the moment. We fancy that the present Government would not be above voting a sum of money to them on the ground of their alleged services to the empire.

Religion is sometimes said to be bankrupt, but it is rare to find the clergy have "the brokers" in. Refusing to pay fines, the Bishop of Montaubon, France, had his front door broken down by bailiffs and goods seized. How are the mighty fallen!

Mr. C. T. Hallinan, writing in the *New Statesman* with reference to Thomas Paine's portrait in the National Portrait Gallery, said: "I tried to conceive of the clamour which would arise in theUnited States if an attempt were made to place Paine's picture in a national collection." This is not saying much in favour of the Benighted States.

Twenty people were killed and many injured by a tornado at Braxton, Hattiesbury, U.S.A. . This is a somewhat grim commentary on the Lord's prayer.

Dr. Maldwyn Hughes, one of the most popular Wesleyan Methodist preachers, sorrowfully confesses that "the Cross has fallen into the background in our theology and in our lives." That is true enough, but Dr.

Hughes does not seem to realize why it has done so. As interpreted by the Church, the Cross represents and commemorates the most stupendously unjust and immoral event in the whole history of the world. The Church itself is at last beginning to learn that its interpretation is false, with the result that the orthodox doctrine of the Atonement is no longer believed, and naturally no longer preached. It is not even in the background to-day; it has gone overboard, and can never be recovered.

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Dr. Hughes is mistaken in thinking that the Cross ever has been a beneficent factor in social life. All that he says about the transforming power of love is perfectly true, but in its application to the present industrial crisis, which was the subject of the reverend gentleman's sermon, it should be borne in mind that love has its conditions, in the absence of which it cannot operate. The industrial crisis is caused by what is believed to be the lack of equitable economical relationship between employers and employed. Its cry is for justice. Injustice slams the door in love's face. To the bottom dog the Cross has always recommended submission, humility, resignation, trust in inscrutable Providence.

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Dr. Hughes declares that the only way out of the present situation is by getting back to Christ. We have heard that cry, "Back to Christ," for the last fifty years, and absolutely nothing has come of it yet. The true cry, however, is not Back, but Forward, forward to genuine Humanism; forward, through justice and fairplay to real brotherhood. Christ has had his day, and failed. Let the Gods depart that Man may have his chance.

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According to the *Daily Chronicle* (April 28), a conference is to be held on the 18th instant to inaugurate a National Movement towards a Christian Order of Industry and Commerce. It will "proclaim the principles of service, fellowship, and duty as the true basis of industry." Being interpreted, this means that the modern man is not much concerned about the salvation of his soul, and consequently the Churches are desperately anxious to save themselves. At one time they offered the discontented worker a promissory note to be cashed on the other side of the river, and it served beautifully to divert his attention from the inequalities on this side.

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On May 3 the same paper reported that preliminary arrangements had been made for a great world congress of Church leaders to discuss how the message of Christianity, as it bears on international relationships and industrial life, can be interpreted to the world. This effort, manifesting itself in the third decade of the twentieth century, ought to be appreciated by othodox Christians acquainted with the history of their religion.

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In connection with the two preceding paragraphs a statement made by Rev. J. H. Rushbrooke (*Christian World*) is worth noting. Among the members of the little "English colony" that used to meet outside the American Embassy in Berlin in the early days of the war Mr. Rushbrooke was a familiar figure. He has just visited many countries on the Continent affected by the war, and announces that the Baptists now have religious liberty "as the result of the war." In Rumania, however, a decree on the question of full religious liberty "breathed a spirit of intolerance more fitting to three centuries ago," and was only annulled when the Rumanian Government was notified that public opinion in Great Britain and the United States would be outraged. These two nations are in the habit of carrying a big stick. But what a comment on Christian freedom! Rumania is Roman Catholic. But under the old régime there was no more tolerance in Protestant Germany, where it used to be declared that "the chief end of man was to glorify the Hohenzollerns."

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Dean Inge is not always gloomy. Speaking at a dinner of the London Society, he said that instead of putting up hideous war memorials, we might have celebrated our success by destroying some we have. For victories we might have sacrificed Charing Cross Bridge and the Albert Memorial. The dean need not have stopped at these monstrosities. Some of the ugly and useless churches might have been sacrificed also.

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The Bishop of London is down in the dumps. In an interview in the *Observer* he says that statistics show that fewer people attend church to-day than twenty years ago. This frankness is truly enbarrassing.

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An Anglican archbishop took part in the deliberations of the Baptist Union for the first time in history recently, when the Archbishop of York gave an address on "Christian Unity" at the Bloomsbury Central Church. A few generations back any archbishop would have seen that the Baptists were put in the water—and kept there.

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At the annual meeting of the Church Missionary Society the Archbishop of Canterbury said that those in authority had come to see that "missionary work was a force they could count upon for information and help in the things for which they were responsible." No one who has closely studied missionary work will doubt that. In the main, the missionary societies are parts of the armies of occupation, the forces of permeation that prepare for what those in authority are after. And there are very few places in which the missionaries are active in which the rights of the natives are not steadily whittled down to nothing at all. For generations the missionary movement has been largely the moral cloak for the piratical enterprises of the European nations. And the better educated native populations with which they deal are getting alive to the fact. Certainly the Archbishop is correct, but it is rather rash of him to let the cat out of the bag in this manner.

—

Public Welfare is the name of a bright little monthly sheet issued at Richmond for the purpose of looking after the affairs of the district. The first issue contains a "live" criticism of the Rev. R. F. Horton's address on the relations of Christianity to business. The writer of the article says:—

> It is not without reason that the very "Church" which comes most intimately into contact with the "lower orders"—that is the Salvation Army—is able to get subscriptions amounting to over £150,000 from BUSINESS HOUSES. It is a large sum, but when one realizes that it enables thousands of Christian orators to impress upon the poor the teaching "take no thought what ye shall eat" one recognizes that "Christianity is sound business," though in a different sense from that in which Dr. Horton quoted the vulgar author of that remark, Mr. Lloyd George. The Salvation Army makes no secret of the implications of this doctrine, for they ask for these business subsidies on the express ground that their preachers are a considerable factor in "allaying unrest." This they undoubtedly are, for their message is equivalent to saying to the struggling wage earners—"take no thought of the cost of living."

There seems quite an unusual amount of "horse-sense" about that.

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The Vicar of East Finchley has been complaining that his people do not give to the support of the clergy as they ought. That is quite a domestic matter, although it may be suggested that perhaps the congregation are assuming that the Lord may work a miracle in order to support his representative. The Vicar seems to have a fancy that something like that is the case, because he says that, if the clergy were to sell their possessions and give them to the poor, other people would not do likewise, and that would make them a class apart, and he is against class distinction. So the Vicar hangs on to what he has purely in the interests of common brotherhood. The Vicar also said that people pointed to the fact that Christ was poor, but he asked, "Was that his proper state, and was he poor now?" The East Finchleyites will have to be smart to catch their vicar napping. He is ready to imitate Christ, but it is the real Christ, the present Christ, not the one who just flits through the pages of the gospels.

For the "Freethinker."

A WEEK ago we were calling attention to the persistent misrepresentation of the *Freethinker* by journalists and others whenever they feel compelled to refer to its existence. Generally, the policy is to ignore its being, which is, we must admit, the safer plan when one is dealing with something that cannot be silenced, and to which no effective answer is possible. But this policy of silence, misrepresentation, and boycott is injurious to the circulation of a paper, and the consequence is that the difference between what the circulation of the *Freethinker* is and what it might be is one that is always before us. And frankly, we are not content with things as they are. They ought to be much better, and they could be much better. It is a question of ways and means.

Soon after the death of our late editor we made a special appeal to all our friends for new readers. They worked so well that there was a material increase in the circulation of the *Freethinker*, and that meant, of course, an extended sphere of usefulness. This welcome addition to the circulation of the paper enabled us to pull through the war-period in a way that we think pleased our friends, and astonished not a few of our enemies, who were anticipating that with the war, and the death of its old editor, the terrible *Freethinker* would soon disappear.

Well, it did not disappear, and there is no likelihood that it will. But we are not getting on so well as we should like, we are, in fact, just now, standing still, and that we do not like at all. We want to be moving on all the time, we ought to be moving on all the time, and we are certain that, if our friends decide it shall be so, we can move on all the time. The *Freethinker* has never had a tenth of the circulation that it might easily have if it were only brought to the attention of the public as it ought to be.

Now there are only two ways in which this can be done. One is by extensive and costly advertising. For that we have not the means and are not likely to have, short of that long expected millionaire turning up and providing the funds. And what little we do in the way of advertising is only scratching the surface.

The other method of increasing circulation is for all our friends to take a hand in the game. That will involve a very little work, and no expenditure whatever. We are quite sure that there is not a single reader of this paper who could not, within the next week find one new subscriber if he seriously set himself the task. We are in constant receipt of letters from all sorts of readers saying how pleased they are with the *Freethinker*, and we have had very tangible proof in the handsome assistance they have given that this is no empty parade of words. We have been compelled to ask for money and it has been given generously. Now we are asking for a little work, and we hope that this will be given with no greater stint.

Briefly we are asking two things. One is that each of our friends will make up his or her mind to get at least one new subscriber within, say, the next month. The summer is on us and that gives an excellent chance of meeting new people. The next is that, as we may have overlooked some chance of getting this paper into new hands, we shall be glad to have suggestions from all and sundry as to what they consider the best way of getting the *Freethinker* before the public. Many heads are better than one, at least they should be more fertile in devising means of accomplishing the end that we have all in view. A postcard containing suggestions is all that is needed; we shall be able to develop any fruitful suggestion that reaches us.

One other point. The *Freethinker* is supplied to the trade on sale or return. There is, therefore, no obstacle in the way of any newsagent who will display the paper. One of the largest wholesale distributors in the country, Messrs. W. H. Smith and Son, have the paper on these terms, and they send it to all their shops and railway bookstalls on these terms. There is every convenience for supplying the *Freethinker* to the trade; all that is needed is to break down whatever prejudice exists against it. And the most effective way of doing this is to get the paper better known.

So we ask all our friends to get to work at once. We keep our readers once we get them. The job is to get them. And we are certain they are to be got. It is your work, *our* work to see that we get them. And we hope to be able to report progress before the summer is over. CHAPMAN COHEN.

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.

E. A. PHIPSON.—Sorry, we cannot agree with you. It is impossible to permit correspondents to send letters of unlimited length, although we do try to determine the permissible length by the importance of the subject. And with most the less the space permitted the more effective the communication.

D. J. M.—The existence of such a drug is a pure superstition. Do not allow anyone to impose upon you by any device of that description.

A. WILLIAMS.—Sorry, but unable to use verses. Why not try putting your ideas into prose. We do not think you will succeed in the form of verse.

J. JONES.—We are placing the £1 to the credit of the Sustentation Fund. We quite appreciate the spirit in which you write.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: T. A. Matthews, 5s.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—J. Jones, £1.

E. T. N.—It is a standing rule that we cannot publish letters unless we receive the name and address of the writers. This need not be for publication, but only for our own information.

UNORTHODOX.—We have great demand on our space for the next two or three weeks, and you must compress your communication if it is to be inserted.

The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to the office.

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. 6.; half year, 8s. 9d.; three months, 4s. 6d.

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

Only by making the ruling few uneasy, can the oppressed many obtain a particle of relief.—*Bentham.*

Sugar Plums.

To-day (May 15) the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society will be held in the Dockers' Hall, Swansea. There will be two business meetings, at 10.30 and 2.30. These meetings are for members of the N. S. S. only, who will be expected to have their cards of membership with them. If any are forgotten, members should send in their names to the General Secretary. In the evening there will be a public demonstration in the Elysium, at which the President will take the chair. Mr. Lloyd, Mr. A. B. Moss, and Mr. A. D. McLaren will be among the speakers. We do not know how the restricted train service will affect the attendance, but we are hoping to see a good muster present in spite of the unfavourable circumstances. Other announcements concerning a luncheon for the delegates and members, etc., will be made at the Conference itself.

Members who are attending the Conference, and who reach Swansea on the Saturday evening, may get any information they require from the Reformer's Book Shop, 60 Alexandria Road which is quite close to the station. Room No. 5 at the Dockers' Hall has been reserved for the use of delegates and friends on the Saturday evening, and both the President and the General Secretary will be there from seven o'clock. The Secretary will be specially pleased to meet all those South Wales friends who are interested in the proposed summer outdoor propaganda, and who may have suggestions to make. If all lend a hand this should be the beginning of a big forward movement for South Wales.

Some time ago we received an advertisement of certain publications issued by the Bakunine Press, of Glasgow. The advertisement was duly inserted, and there, so far as we were concerned, the matter ended. But that advertisement had a curious sequel for one of our readers, the particulars of which we take from his letters and an account published in the Nuneaton *Observer*. This man, Mr. W. H. Hunt, was employed at the Haunchwood Colliery as under-manager. Seeing the advertisement, and wishing to know something of the topics discussed in the advertised publications, he sent for some of them. Mr. Hunt is, we understand, neither a propagandist, nor a member of any political organization. He was simply desirous of reading something about the Soviet system and kindred matters. Soon after sending his money for the publications the Glasgow office was raided by the police, and immediately after that Mr. Hunt was called into the manager's office, a copy of the letter he had sent to the Glasgow Socialist headquarters read to him, and he was forthwith dismissed.

That appears to be a plain unvarnished statement of the facts of the case, and I do not think it possible to conceive anything of a more infamous character. The action of the colliery officials is bad enough, but worse that that is the fact of their being in possession of the letter. *How did that happen*? there seems only one of two ways possible. Either the letter must have been opened by the postal officials, or it must have been seized by the police when they raided the Socialist headquarters, and one or the other must have sent a copy of the letter to the man's employers. For the authorities to open a man's private correspondence is bad enough. But that is now so common that we have almost ceased to notice it. But that, in addition, copies of these letters should be sent to one's employers, and his discharge secured, not because he has done anything wrong or illegal, but merely because he wished to read something which the authorities think he ought not to read, is a position of affairs that is a disgrace to any country in the world. If the facts are as stated nothing that we can say can add to the infamy of the situation.

If we had a House of Commons different from the one we possess we should hope to see the matter taken up there. Fifty years ago if this had occurred that would have been done and with some effect. But this House of Commons, with its self complacent inefficiency and self applauding impotence, is beyond hope. It cares nothing for liberty, and consequently does nothing for it. And bit by bit, under one pretext or another, one guarantee after another of public liberty is restricted or wiped out. Each of the political parties, the Labour Party not less than the others, seems to strive for political power with the aim of curtailing the freedom of individual members of the public. We have won the war, and we have, as a result, annexed some of the German colonies and almost the whole of the spiritual possessions of Prussia. A huge army of officials sit directing all the details of our life, and officialism once established is one of the most difficult of all forms of social parasitism to remove. To-day it is becoming a literal truth that no man's personal liberty is safe. The question is how much farther will matters go before there arises a body of men and women sufficiently devoted to freedom to say, without regard to any political party or theory, that this sort of thing must stop? At present we see no sign of any such development. It is a case of which party shall have the chance of playing the Prussian.

An account of another case that reaches us illustrates further the degree to which in this country personal rights are being threatened by the reactionary wave which at the very beginning of the war we warned our readers was bound to come. In March last Mr. Guy Aldred was arrested in London and taken to Glasgow on a charge of sedition. On the justice of the charge we desire to make no comment. That is clearly a matter to be settled in the courts. The thing that does call for comment is that Mr. Aldred is not to be tried till July, and during all that time he is retained in prison, bail being refused. Now there seems no justification for this, short of the desire to punish by imprisonment whether a conviction is secured or not. It is a case of heads I win, tails you lose. There is no question, either, of the accused man failing to appear if bail were allowed. We believe we are right in saying that in none of these cases where bail has been allowed has there been any default. Remand on bail, with an undertaking not to repeat the offence until after the trial, would have met the case, and is all that can reasonably be required.

We do not accept Communism, and we hold no brief for it. But we are concerned, the *Freethinker* has always been concerned, with the right of every opinion to expression. It is that which appears to be in danger at the moment, and that concerns all men and women who have any regard for freedom and public decency. We remember the late W. T. Stead saying at a Freethought meeting, that he stood up for the right of Freethinkers to commit blasphemy, and championed their right the more heartily because he did not agree with their opinions. And that is the real test. A worm will wriggle if it is trodden on; but the test of whether it is a super-worm or not is whether it will wriggle when another worm is trodden on. And one cannot avoid the conclusion that at present the authorities appear to be engaged in a campaign against particular opinions to which they have an objection. And we Freethinkers value the right to free expression too highly not to feel perturbed when we see it threatened in any direction.

There seems a perfect mania for persecution at present all over the world. One of our readers, Mr. A. C. Everett, a man of 72 years of age, who writes us from Room 14, 67 Kukui Street, Honolulu, has been for some time trying to get a living by typewriting. But he has been "incautious" enough to place on the wall of his room a motto, "There is no God—Death ends all." But in Honolulu the missionaries have it pretty well their own way. And the result is that Mr. Everett has been informed by some of this profession that until he removes this motto and ceases to avow himself an Atheist they will see that he gets no more work. Unfortunately they appear to have nearly succeeded in their object, and the poor old man sees his only means of getting a livelihood slipping away from him. Christianity has not improved, it is, in fact, incapable of improvement. As we have often said, the only way to mend Christianity is to end it. The only safe religion is a dead one.

To our mind these occurences only serve to emphasize the importance of the work that is being carried on by the *Freethinker* and the N. S. S. The value of a movement that shall stand for freedom of thought, independent of ulterior purpose, or careless of any special party or opinion, was never so great as it is to-day, when liberty is so seriously threatened. It is true that so impersonal a view appeals only to the few, but our liberties have been won by the few and preserved by their watchfulness. We may say of these times as Paine said on a famous occasion, that they try men's souls. None know who may be the next object of attack. The more reason that all should be prepared for the conflict that is bound to come sooner or later. The hope of the world lies in Freethought They who do not see that have not read aright the lesson of the times.

Open-air Speaker writes :—

> At the conclusion of last Sunday's meeting two inquirers asked where they could obtain Freethought literature. One of them had never even heard of the *Freethinker*. If our outdoor speakers everywhere mentioned the N. S. S. and *Freethinker* they would be giving publicity to a phase of our organized work of which the "man in the street" knows but very little.

Writers and Readers.

Mr. Chesterton's "Orthodoxy" and a Critic.

For the Freethinker who has an intelligent interest in modern letters there is, on the whole, no more attractive writer than Mr. G. K. Chesterton. He is a man of genius with an original outlook on art and life, and that supreme gift of expression which compels the respect of those of us who are wise enough not to demand an inflexible consistency of attitude and opinion. If I were addicted to the jargon of so-called scientific literary criticism I should be tempted to call him a "dynamic" writer, which is, perhaps, merely a pretentious way of saying that he is very much alive. Now, a live man is something your serious rationalist will not, or cannot, understand. I remember that some while ago Mr. Arnold Bennett, an ingenuous commercial novelist, tried to comfort his fellow-believers in the gospel of reason with the assurance that the intellect of poor Mr. Chesterton could really only be second rate because he had no use for the theory of evolution. Nothing could be more amusing, or more instructive, to anyone who knows the work of these two writers. The mere acceptance of evolution, I am afraid, will never convert a second rate into a first rate mind, and a man of genius is not less a man of genius because his philosophy of life does not happen to be ours. I have no need to remind my readers that Mr. Chesterton has a number of delightful fantastic stories to his credit, of which one, *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, is a stroke of genius; that he is far and away the best literary critic we have; that he is a poet whose songs in praise of good ale and innkeepers, and in contempt of "grocers" and ascetic rationalists bring joy to the heart of every Englishman who is not a degenerate and fanatic drinker of water. What more, indeed, can any reasonable man want?

There are some people, I believe, who would have an all round higher opinion of Mr. Chesterton if he were not an out and out supporter of orthodoxy. I confess that I, too, might have a keener enjoyment of his sprightly paradoxes if he had used them in the service of heterodoxy. But after all, his attitude to religion does not alter my opinion of his creative genius. What is more, he brings to the discussion of religious problems a quite refreshing energy. He is not afraid to mention Bradlaugh and Holyoake and even Foote, and to show us that he has more respect for them than for hazy modernists and semi-rationalizing theists. His little book on *Orthodoxy* is a particularly brilliant attempt to lift up the criticism of religion to the level of interesting journalism, to revitalize it by an extra strong dose of personality. If it raises more problems than it solves it really does serve to introduce important questions to the average man, and it has brought down on Mr. Chesterton a lively, witty, and malicious opponent in the person of Mr. Alan Handsacre whose *Authordoxy* (John Lane, 5s. net), is attracting a good deal of attention at the present moment. I cheerfully recommend it to those of my readers who find pleasure in a display of dialectical skill. It reminds me, in some respects, of Mr. Ernest Newman's witty and scarifying disposal of Le Gallienne's *Religion of a literary man*, or Mr. Archer's criticism of Mr. H. G. Wells as an innovator in religion.

Mr. Handsacre begins by saying that this book is no more a serious exposition of Rationalism than Mr. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy* is a serious exposition of Christianity. But although his criticism of orthodox belief is by way of a "vague and personal commentary" on Mr. Chesterton's book it does succeed in putting the whole case for Freethought in an admirably clear and attractive way, in just the way the average man can understand. At the outset he is not to be taken in by the confidence trick as practised by Mr. Chesterton. He exposes it in this way. "Mr Chesterton," he tells us,—

> discovers that I have a notion that Christianity is repressive, that it lacks humour, that it prefers to prepare for the joys of what seems to be a very disagreeable place called heaven rather than to delight in the solid happiness of human life. Knowing this, he gains my confidence at once by his exuberant cheerfulness and his hilarity. Then his scheme is to turn the tables on me. He will try to convince me that the real kill-joy is the unbeliever; that the deadly, serious people who never do silly things are readers of the *Freethinker*, and that the Christian is the jolliest chap in the world.

Now I am willing to admit that it is not impossible that you may find if you look far enough a kill-joy like Mr. Chesterton's Higgins; but he no more represents Freethought than Mr. Chesterton himself represents Christianity. Many Freethinkers of my acquaintance are fond of beer, I myself am very fond of it, when it is good. But it is a part of Mr. Chesterton's little game to assume that the critic of religion is always a crank, and that the Materialist is, what the Christian only pretends to be, a miserable sinner. He also suggests, in the slanderous way of the old apologists, that Freethought destroys the moral balance, loosens the sexual relation and makes only for selfish pleasures. Unfortunately for Mr. Chesterton the facts are against him, and Mr. Handsacre rejoins in this way :—

> If Mr. Chesterton will make out a list of people during the last century or so who have been working to uplift and brighten the lives of the people of England, he will find that the unbelievers are in the majority.....and he will find by a reference to criminal statistics that most of the people in prisons are believers.....And if it be answered that the Christian who is a criminal is not a Christian, it may suffice to reply that the Rationalist who is a roué is not a Rationalist.

What Mr. Chesterton does is to get you to accept his premises. When you have done that you have no choice but to admit that his conclusions are logically drawn. In fact, as Mr. Handsacre points out, he uses his reasoning faculties to prevent reasoning. He is as brilliantly, wilfully and logically wrongheaded as the notorious French apologist for the Roman faith, Louis Veuillot, who wrote a chapter in his *Odeurs de Paris* to prove that there is no truth in the saying that cleanliness is next to godliness, and that dirty people are the most devout.

Mr. Handsacre's method of critical refutation is to deal with Mr. Chesterton's various objections to Freethought as they come up, in order of chapter. The advantage to the reader is that he is not worried with sporadic references, as he would be if the ideas were discussed under philosophic captions, and what is more, the critic is better able to compress what he has to say into a reasonably small number of pages. It is amusing to watch him prick with the pin of witty commonsense the charming paper baloons of rhetoric and paradox which are sent up so gaily by the Peter Pan of journalism. In his second chapter Mr. Chesterton makes the old unreal distinction between the imagination and the reason, and then proceeds to dogmatize. "Imagination," he tells us, "does not breed insanity. Exactly what does breed insanity is reason." Whereat the average man rubs his eyes and wonders if they have not played a trick with

him. "He has heard," says Mr. Handsacre, "of *religious mania*, but he has never heard before of the madness of being too sane.....To say that reason breeds insanity is the same as to say that it is the heart that breeds heart disease, and that exactly what does cause blindness is sight." It is clear that a man who has no nose cannot very well suffer from nasal catarrh.

> The fact is that the rational conduct of mental processes is the safeguard of sanity. The poet who goes mad is the poet who treats poetry as mathematics. The mathematician who goes mad is the mathematician who treats mathematics as poetry. The religious maniac is a person who tries to treat religion as a matter of reasoning. And the only Atheist I ever heard of as a madman was an Atheist who attempted to treat Atheism as a religion.

Another objection to reason is not only that it is a form of insanity, but also that it leaves no room for wonder and awe. Mr. Chesterton, it seems to me, is unlucky in his illustration, if it is not, as it may be, a stroke of malicious irony. "Mr. McCabe," he tells us, "understands everything, and everything is not worth understanding." If it is meant seriously, it is altogether wrong. Mr. McCabe is too serious a Rationalist not to know that there are many things which are, and must ever, remain mysteries to him. I am certain that he is well aware that it is impossible for him really to understand the immense vitality of the Renaissance period in Italy, or the genius of Goethe, or the talent of Mr. Bernard Shaw. No! Mr. McCabe, I can assure Mr. Chesterton, has a sense of humour which prevents him from taking himself too seriously.

The reason, says our apologist for orthodoxy, not only breeds insanity, foolish omniscience, but it also breeds inhumanity. Torquemada and the Spanish inquisitors, Judge Jefferies and Oliver Cromwell had in them more of the milk of human kindness than had Hobbes and Hume, Beccaria and Voltaire. Mr. Chesterton and his fellow believers may think so, but the facts are against them. Materialistic determinism gives a deeper, a more plangent human note to ethics, it widens our sympathies, encourages an all embracing charity, awakens compassion; indeed, it does quietly and unassumingly all that supernaturalism claims that it alone can do. "Did materialism," says Mr. Handsacre,—

> involve the loss of humanity in Holyoake? Has it distinguished the political and public career of Lord Morley that he lacks humanity? Is it not known to every man who has tried to do work for the benefit of his fellows that the moment he gets inside any humanitarian movement he discovers that its leading spirits are men and women animated by purely human motives, and working along Secular lines, and that the religious people as a body hold aloof?

I do not intend to anticipate the reader's pleasure by quoting any more of the wise and witty things he will find in Mr. Handsacre's book. If he gives me credit for knowing a really good thing when I read it, he will beg, borrow or buy the volume (I shall have more respect for him if he buys it), and tell me if it comes up to the expectations I have tried to raise.

George Underwood.

For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he rises and hopes to get to heaven, and climb above the clouds; but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconsistent, descending more at every breath of the tempest, than it could recover by the libration and frequent weighing of his wings, till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant and stay till the storm was over; and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing, as if it had learned music and motion from an angel, as he passed sometimes through the air, about his ministries below. —*Jeremy Taylor* (1613-1667).

Science does not persecute. It does not shed blood—it fills the world with light. It cares nothing for heresy; it develops the mind, and enables man to answer his own prayers.—*R. G. Ingersoll.*

Correspondence.

THE WORM TURNS.

To the Editor of the "Freethinker."

Sir,—One or two letters from your readers have shown me the kind of perplexity which troubles many minds about the truth of things, and I wish to take advantage of your invariable courtesy by trying to answer them, not so much as hitherto in defensive argument as by something of a challenge. Plenty of challenge has been showered on me: why should I not offer some in return? It is obvious that some Atheists have a strong bias against any theory of spiritual existences of any kind, not only of Angels, Devils, etc., but of a First Cause of the Universe. Others are against any idea of a God who has any control of the world now. Most of what I would say concerns the former view, but some of it the latter as well. We are constantly being startled by new evidence of law in the universe. It is evidence of a scientific kind, such as no one who is not daft can doubt when it is fairly put before him. Now much of that law is mathematical. I mean that wrapped up in and underlying all sorts of facts of Nature are profound mathematical truths which material objects obey in their movements, their growth, their decay.

> The law of gravitation with its ratio of the inverse square is mathematical; the numerical laws of chemical combination are mathematical; the geometrical angles of crystals, and curves of flowers, the numerical vibrations of sound, of heat, of light, are mathematical. The first guiding principle of all the sciences is the conviction that the phenomena are governed according to the laws of the understanding.

So writes a physicist. Now there are three positions to take up in view of these facts. (1) To assume that a Being with a mathematical mind made the Universe. (2) To assume that we shall never know how it came into being. (3) To assume that the thing we call matter, or atoms, or electrons met together at some remote epoch and agreed by a kind of universal suffrage to regulate their movements for ever by mathematical laws so complicated that it has taken mankind thousands of years to begin to understand them. Now this means that any human being who hopes, however faintly, that we are progressing in knowledge of the Universe is bound either to (1) or (3). The question I wish to put to your readers is this: On what grounds is (1) ruled out as stupid? For in *The Parson and the Atheist* Mr. Cohen says, if I remember right, that all forms of Theism seem to him stupid. Something would be gained if we understood why. I would define stupidity as an unconscious contradicting of one's own convictions. I cannot see where any ordinary meaning of the word is applicable to (1). I should, myself, hesitate to apply it to (3), for in truth, I would not give that opinion any other name than sheer, stark lunacy. (Probably Mr. Cohen has dealt with this matter in his book, but I have not yet had an opportunity of reading it.) But what about (2)? I think I am right in saying that no writer in the *Freethinker* would accept (2), because all of them preach the mechanical view of the Universe, denying all unseen agencies, spirits, souls, etc., and even free will. But this is not to refrain from explaining the Universe because it is unknowable—that would be (2)—but it is an attempt to explain it mechanically, and that is (3). Indeed (2) is hardly profitable for anyone with a mind at all. I therefore invite all Materialists to consider the following facts, and in connection especially with what Mr. Cohen has written lately that consciousness is a *function* of matter. An eminent physiologist has laid it down, after careful experiment, that all fatigue begins in the mind. Moreover, we all know that the state of the mind makes the whole difference to the muscles and nerves. Would it not then be truer to say that matter is a function of mind rather than the opposite? But mind, I suppose you would agree, is not material. Where are we then? Again: what can a Materialist say to this deliberate statement of one of the greatest of living physicists, Dr. J. S. Haldane: "In identifying stimulus and response with physical or chemical cause and effect, the mechanistic theory makes a gigantic leap in the dark"? An Atheist may say that a Theist makes a similar leap. Perhaps he does. But

why is one leap to be called stupid, the other the sign of "advanced" thinking? Again: in the November 28 number of your paper there was an excellent article signed G. O. W. soundly rating people who are indifferent to the miseries and privations of many of our fellow countrymen. I cannot imagine any of your readers dissenting from the indictment. But from the materialistic standpoint it is wholly meaningless. If there is no such thing as a law higher than inclination then G. O. W. has no ground for accusing the indifferentists or anyone else. If a man chooses to be indifferent why should he not be? If on the other hand there is a law higher than inclination under which we are to love one another, who made it or revealed it, and why should A, B, or C be scolded because they only obey it as far as they choose? One more. A large proportion of Atheists would allow that Jesus of Nazareth was a noble character. It is perfectly certain that he based all good living on a growing knowledge of God. He distinctly laid it down as the first object of every human being to "love God with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength." But if there is anything admirable about this teacher how can his central principle, the one that informed every word he uttered and guided every moment of his life, be dismissed as utterly stupid and superstitious? E. Lyttelton.

"SCOTCHMEN."

Sir,—It is not usually supposed that to speak of "Caledonia, stern and wild" contains any disparagement of that country, nor yet reference to its people as "canny" and "hardhearted" (is not their cherished emblem the thistle??), so that when mentioning the fact that most public schoolteachers hail from that nation I had no more idea that in referring to them in their typical character I should cause resentment than if I spoke of a "bluff, stolid" Englishman, or a "headstrong, excitable" Irishman. But a Scotchman is unco' touchy about my personal allusion, and as he generally has a bee in his bonnet, such as the exact spelling of his patronymic (Mac, Mc, or M'), the reference to his country, exclusively, as N.B. (a sign that rather belongs to New Brunswick), or his animosity towards the good old English word "Scotch," one is pretty sure to roil him somewhere. To use the plural noun "Scots" as an adjective, thus causing confusion with the word in its correct sense, is a peculiarly needless affectation, originating seemingly from a fad of Sir Walter Scott's, and can never be English, as it is contrary to all analogy, and, indeed, we might as well say "Englis," "Iris," "Wels," or "Duts." Of course, Scotchmen can all themselves what they please, just as they are quite free to speak of our monarch as "King of Scotland," but I decidedly object to having an oddity like this forced on to me, while, since I have been an enthusiastic philologist for fifty years and, as Mr. McCabe did me the honour to say, am the most particular in my expression of any man in England, I would no more demean myself by adopting such a solecism than imitate those fashionable vulgarities which are corrupting our language into ungrammatical "journalese." It is regrettable that, instead of using their preponderant influence over press and school to propagate these puzzling and peeving pedantries, our Caledonian writers, teachers and officials do not endeavour to improve the undoubted faults in common parlance on this side the border. Thus they might make some effort to restore the proper sound of *r*, at least in names of places in Scotland, so that children might be brought up to say Aberdeen, not Ab'deen. This all the more as they will be obliged to acquire the trill whenever they learn another language, and it will thus save them future difficulty. The same may be said of the *ch* in *loch* (W. *bach*, Ger. *ach*, Du. *slecht*, Gr. and Sp. *x*). I certainly never said or implied that *all* Scottish men, or schoolmasters were cold and stern, but, the national character being what it is, they cannot be expected to be specially gentle, and our experience of them in their ubiquitous official capacity, from cabinet ministers down to pedagogues, proves that they are made of as hard stuff as anyone. Moreover, they consolidate their power by association, and whereas no Englishman will favour another on that ground only, a Scotchman wall always give the best chance to a "brither Scot." It is an inexplicable fact that whereas the public are extremely mild and indulgent to the aggressor, particularly when he is the stronger party, and one is called to order at once if venturing to describe his action in proper terms, the victim becomes the butt of general blame and contempt, so that, if a weak and defenceless child is injured for life or even driven to its death by some savage or thoughtless teacher, the criminal must only be referred to in the most deferential manner, while punishment, or even reprimand, is seldom administered. I certainly have no patience with this spineless mode of thought, and consider that what we need, if things are to improve, is plain language and decided action. It is the weak who need sympathy and protection not the strong. Therefore, whatever the nationality, rank, or influence of a tyrant, he should be ruthlessly exposed, even if it involves a shock to his own delicate sensibilities, and an occasional application of the "unwritten law," as suggested by Mr. Effel, would infallibly have the most salutary effect on the ineffable cads and ruffians who assault other people's children, placed with them in a fiduciary capacity, and therefore entitled to scrupulous solicitude and justice. Cruelty to animals is justly condemned, but cruelty to the helpless young of our own species is surely the most unnatural and fiendish crime possible, and should be visited with the severest penalties. But the public, and especially parents, whose grievance is not their own, but that of their children, are so tolerant, forgetful, and even careless of official tyrannies, that it is well-nigh impossible to get the most shocking atrocities so much as noticed, much less investigated and punished. Though quite needlessly suspicious of any dealing with their children in their own presence, yet "out of sight, out of mind," and while they are away are at any stronger person's mercy. Evacustes A. Phipson.

CHRISTIAN SOPHISTRY.

Sir,—Referring to your editorial remarks upon the way Christians sophisticate, I enclose a report of a sermon by the Bishop of London on Temperance, bringing in the story of the raising of Lazarus. You will notice that the Bishop says this story seemed to him the one that must be literally true. Is this because of Martha's remark: "Lord, he stinks already, for he has been dead four days." Then the Bishop refers to the National Drink Bill as being the gravestone that has pressed down the nation for years. Years ! !—not four days. What an unfortunate simile! How we must "stink" to foreign Marthas ! ! Then he refers to the national poverty, but never a word about the £8,000 spent on the appeal of Archdeacon Wakeford, or the flood of pictures in the daily papers of Society weddings, Episcopal gatherings, and other luxurious revellings. Then he says that there is no reason why we should not settle all industrial disputes and once again lead the world in purity and religion (inferentially, if we adopt prohibition). Does he mean that America now leads the world in purity and religion? Are there not more unemployed there than here? He comments upon the relationship between drink and sexual "sin," but does not mention that the duty on the sparkling wines of the wealthy has been taken off, so that we should expect an increase in Society divorces. Perhaps, however, he only means the beer and spirits of the industrial classes, for was not Bishop Timothy enjoined by Archbishop Paul of Tarsus to take a little wine? So, probably, one may take alcoholic liquors if he is cultured, religious, or rich. Certainly, from the point of view of dividends, if the workers were prevented from buying beer and spirits their labour could be bought for less wages, and Britain's diminishing returns bolstered up for a few years longer. But why does not "Winnington" start winning over his own clerical subordinates. Are they all total abstainers yet? What of the tithes derived from barley? What of the alcoholic Sacramental wine, the exhilarating perfume which fills the vestry with the spirit, and makes the choir sing the psalms with greater fervour. One Whit-Sunday they will sing as follows:—

> The Lord awaked as one out of sleep, like a giant refreshed with wine; he smote his enemies in the hinder parts. (The sex of the "enemy" is not defined.)
>
> In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red, it is full mixed, and he poureth out of the same. As for the dregs thereof, all the ungodly of the earth shall drink them and suck them out.

After this sermon by the Bishop of London, can he or his clergy, his choir or his congregation do otherwise than feel that either he is or they are sophisticating the truth when they sing the above verses in the morning and evening of the fifteenth day of the month? Chorister.

Obituary.

Tyneside friends will regret to learn of the death of Mr. Jas. Blackhall, who died at Gateshead on April 23 after six weeks illness. Deceased, who had been nearly fifty years with the Prudential Assurance Company, was in his 74th year. For the past eighteen years he was a steadfast member of the Newcastle Branch N. S. S., whose members will greatly miss this kindly and loyal worker in the cause of intellectual emancipation. Fully conscious to the last, he expressed a desire for a Secular funeral, which was complied with by Mr. R. Mitchell reading Austin Holyoake's service in the presence of a large number of relatives and friends. J. G. B.

It is with heartfelt sorrow and regret that we record the death of Mrs. Alice Taylor, wife of our esteemed Treasurer, Mr. Henry Taylor, which took place on the morning of the 3rd May, following upon an attack of acute pneumonia. The deceased lady was in her 63rd year, and was to entertain Mr. Cohen on his visit here on May 1. She had been connected with this school from infancy, and was a constant attendant up to her death. She has entertained at her home nearly all the prominent men in the Freethought movement and had, during her life laboured strenuously in the work of our school. The Choir, Dramatic Society, Ladies Sewing Class, and Class Teachers have had, in turn, her ever willing help. In times of trouble and sickness she was ever responsive with succour and assistance, and her death will be deplored by a large circle of friends. To her bereaved husband and relatives we offer our sincerest sympathy and condolence. The interment took place on the 6th inst. at Failsworth cemetery. Mr. James Pollitt, late superintendent of the school conducted the Secular Service, giving a most effective and moving address to a large concourse of mourners. J. Smith.

President, Failsworth Secular School.

We are sorry to record the death of Robert Bell, of Aberavon, who died at the Aberdare Hospital on Monday, May 2, of pneumonia. The deceased gentleman was 55 years of age. The death of his only son in the late war contributed greatly to the break-up of his fine constitution, and the Freethought party has lost a stalwart who contributed silently and generously to the cause of mental freedom. Mr. W. H. Powell, of Mountain Ash, officiated at the graveside. We extend our sympathy to Mrs. Bell in her great loss. J. T.

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 post card.

LONDON.

Indoor.

Metropolitan Secular Society (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Discussion and Social.

South Place Ethical Society.—No Meeting.

Outdoor.

Bethnal Green Branch N. S. S.—No Meeting.

North London Branch N. S. S. (Regents Park): 6, Mr. George Whitehead, "Christianity and Social Progress."

South London Branch N. S. S.—No Meeting.

COUNTRY.

Indoor.

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

Swansea Branch N. S. S. (The Dockers' Hall, High Street, Swansea): Annual Conference. Public Meeting in the Elysium at 7 o'clock in the evening.

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