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Views and Opinions.

The Advance of Atheism.

There are two items in my weekly batch of cuttings that are connected, though separate. One is from the *Church Times* on the alleged fundamentally religious nature of the people, the other from a discussion at the Truro Diocesan Conference on the spread of Atheism. In the latter case the Rev. W. G. Kerr made the flesh of his hearers creep by telling them of Socialist Sunday-schools that use a catechism in which the first question is, "Is there any God?" and the answer, "No, there is no God." We do not know of any Socialist Sunday-school in which such a question is asked, and such an answer is given, nor do we believe that any exists. We imagine that Mr. Kerr was exercising the clergyman's privilege of saying the first thing that came into his head and which he thought would serve his purpose. Socialists in this country are not usually in a hurry to say anything that will offend Christians, the tendency is in quite the other direction. Most of them, particularly the political Socialists, appear to be mortally afraid of the parson, and one would respect them more if their fear of the black army was less manifest than it is. On the other hand, one imagines that the real grievance of the clergy is not that Socialists are teaching their children Socialism, but that in their Sunday-schools they are not teaching their children religion. The clergy are not at all afraid of Socialism plus Christianity. They have no doubt of their capacity to handle that. It is Socialism—or any other ism—minus Christianity they dread. For that leaves them out in the cold, and bringing up children without Christianity robs them of their clients in the future. And the anxiety of the clergy to teach children Christianity is due to the desire to get them as clients when they reach maturity. To lose sight of that fact is to lose sight of the vital issue.

Religion and Life. * * *

The Bishop of Truro, with a little more sense of responsibility, doubted whether this particular catechism was in use, but said there was no doubt "that efforts are being made at this moment to train young Atheists quite plainly, simply, and straightforwardly." Again, that statement must be taken with a little qualification. The training in Atheism is coming not so much from direct instruction as it is from life. I have before pointed out that the desire to teach the

child religion, the fear that it will grow up without religion, are quite modern phenomena. Necessarily so. While religious beliefs have an organic relationship to current life, there is no need to bother about the religious instruction of the child. It cannot escape it. There was, for example, no need to impress upon people living in the 15th century the teaching that the hand of God was to be seen all around them. They saw little else. The conception of the supernatural was then part of the very air they breathed, and the difficulty was to get it out of their minds, and to regard the most commonplace of happenings as a consequence of natural law. But when the conception of the supernatural no longer forms part of the current thought about nature, we are faced with an altogether different position. Life, instead of enforcing religious teachings, insensibly undermines them. Left quite alone, and fully subject to the play of current knowledge, men and women would not to-day grow up with a belief in religion, and a consequence of that is that the clergy must, if they would retain their position, see to it that belief in the supernatural is artificially cultivated. You cannot make men and women religious by merely exposing them to the play of current life and thought. You can make them Atheists by this method. It is not Socialist Sunday-schools that are "plainly, simply, straightforwardly" making people Atheists. It is life that is doing this. It is not the activity of Atheists that is the chief enemy of the Churches. It is science, culture, all that we mean by civilization that the Churches must fight if they would triumph.

* * *

Another Myth Abandoned.

Substantially, this is admitted by the *Church Times*. The leader writer in that journal takes hold of a statement of a *Times'* writer that "Among the mass of the people there is no lack of desire for a more effective spiritual experience. They are fundamentally religious," and meets it with a flat denial. He says, sorrowfully, "We wish we could think that the great mass of the people is fundamentally religious," but "it is well to look facts in the face, and if this is done, it is unlikely that belief in the fundamentally religious nature of the great mass of the people will survive. Such belief is the forlorn child of a wish, not an induction from experience." We congratulate the *Church Times* on its courage in disowning this much used stupidity about the essentially religious nature of the people. They are nothing of the kind. If they were there would not be needed so elaborate a machinery to get them to take even a formal interest in the subject. The people are not essentially religious, but we are all born ignorant, and it is this essential ignorance that is seized upon by religious agencies and utilized to their own interests. And until people know better, it is not a matter of great difficulty to get them to express themselves in a terminology framed by the Churches. There is nothing that cannot be expressed as religion if one wills. A stomach ache may be a judgment from the Lord or the consequence of eating green gooseberries. It is a question of point of view,

and the point of view here is determined by the stage of culture at which we have arrived. At a sufficiently low stage everything is expressed in terms of religion. Gradually, with the development of culture, the religious explanation begins to recede into the background, with a promise that presently it will disappear altogether. But we are all born in ignorance, and fashioned, where possible, by cupidity. And until we have got rid of that ignorance the cupidity of the priest finds us easy prey. It is getting rid of the initial ignorance, and getting rid of it in the right way that is the important issue.

* * *

The Ultimate Enemy.

The last couple of sentences lead us to the heart of the subject. All religion—true religion—is supernaturalism, and all supernaturalism is rooted in ignorance. Of that there is room for no doubt whatever. Whatever be the status of the believer, high or low, learned or ignorant, one has but to probe his reasons for believing to come upon that fact. The belief in the supernatural is just one side of the absence of a knowledge of natural causation. And that finds its origin in the inevitable ignorance of primitive humanity. Man explains the world around him in terms of the world within him. He sees himself reflected in the forces of nature and endows them with his own passions and intelligence. Hence the riot of gods and ghosts that meet us in primitive society. But the return journey has to be made, and in the case of a growing number, is now complete. The completion of the journey may be delayed with many, but against their will, or without their will, they are bound to undertake it. For it is not merely the work of a society, or of a movement, or of a number of men that the Churches are fighting. Their ultimate enemy is life. Every advance in knowledge, every addition to our understanding of nature, every improvement in our appreciation of human history makes for the decay of religious ideas. That is why all over the world the decay of faith keeps pace with the advance of a genuine scientific culture. It saps the ground on which religion stands. For there is not, and there has never been any basis for belief in the supernatural other than that of ignorance. Religion is born of ignorance and fashioned by fear, and to these two things it makes its most constant and most enduring appeals.

* * *

A Word to Socialists.

A final word on these Socialist Sunday-schools. I do not know that they teach children Atheism directly, I take it that the real complaint is they do not teach them religion. And we may also take it that the desire of those who send their children to these schools is that they shall be rescued from the clutches of the priest, whether the priest is handling the child himself, or using the school teacher as a substitute. But the Sunday-schools have the children for but one day in the week, the other schools have them for five, and, therefore, if the children are to really escape the priest, something must be done to protect them during the larger period. Are the Socialists doing this? I do not think they are. How many of them withdraw their children from religious instruction in elementary and secondary schools? I am sure that the number is not large or there would be many more withdrawn than is at present the case. If all Socialists were to withdraw their children from religious instruction in schools a very great step would have been taken towards realizing the ideal of a complete secular system in all State supported schools. And if this were done, any feeling of strangeness on the child's part at being withdrawn would disappear. It is when only it stands alone in a school that it feels strange. But given two or three as companions and all feeling of the unusual

dies. I suggest, then, to Socialists that if they are intelligently in earnest in their desire to rescue their children from the priest and to bring them up so that they are able to consider social problems with a sufficiently unprejudiced mind, it will not do merely to take them on Sunday out of the range of those interests to which they object. They must not merely believe in Secular Education, they must do something to achieve it. Let them prove to the public and to the government that they intelligently understand what they are after by availing themselves of their legal rights in withdrawing their children from the religious instruction to which they object. That will help to encourage the demand for justice in the schools, it will help to encourage independence of thinking in the child, and without a sense of justice and the capacity for independent thinking we are likely neither to get justice done nor to maintain it if by some chance it happens to be established.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Nature and God.

By Nature we understand all that exists, the entire physical Universe, including man. Some poetical conceptions of Nature are exceedingly beautiful, however vague, as for example that by Schelling, according to which "Nature sleeps in the plant, dreams in the animal, and wakes in the man"; but for our present purpose we prefer Darwin's scientific definition: "I mean by Nature only the aggregate action and product of many natural laws, and by laws the sequence of events as ascertained by us" (*The Origin of Species*, p. 99). With that definition all subsequent men of science have been and are in substantial agreement. Sir Ray Lankester regards Nature "as a vast and orderly mechanism, the working of which we can to a large extent perceive, foresee, and manipulate so as to bring about certain results and avoid others." "For myself," says Huxley, "I am bound to say that the term Nature covers the totality of that which is. The world of psychical phenomena appears to me to be as much part of Nature as the world of physical phenomena, and I am unable to perceive any justification for cutting the Universe into two halves, one natural and one supernatural." That extract is a note to the Prologue to *Controverted Questions*, published in 1892. Emerson declares that "Nature is the incarnation of a thought, and turns to thought again, as ice becomes water and gas"; but for the truth of that statement there is not a particle of evidence. The Universe had been in existence for millions of years before the slightest trace of thought became perceptible in it. Thought is one of the products of Nature, and makes its appearance late. It is customary to affirm that in man we see Nature at its highest and best. We stand on the summit of the Universe, and are subject to all its laws.

Now, the question is, where does God come in, and what work does he do? According to the Bible, "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handywork," but that teaching is based upon imagination rather than upon actual facts. God is sometimes described as a Being who at once fills and transcends the Universe, its Maker and its Ruler. As a matter of fact, however, there is nothing to show that the Universe was ever made at all, or is being ruled. Existence seems to be eternal, without beginning or end, but perpetually changing its form and accidents in conformity to laws inherent in itself. Nature, as such, is impersonal, though we are in the habit of personifying it. "A. T. S. J." contributed to the *Christian World* for June 9 an article entitled "Nature and Faith," in which he not only personifies Nature, but brings into it a foreign personality of infinite

power and wisdom, who is responsible for all its activities. Without him, the writer claims, Nature is inexplicable; but does the introduction of such a Being make natural facts one whit more explicable? The writer of the article says:—

The swallows are back in the eaves above my window, and I wonder how they find their way. Perhaps He who made a path for the lightning has drawn the fly-lines for the birds. Some of the facts about bird migration seem to be past human understanding, and only to be explained by instinct. But what is that?

That is the sort of sentimentalism the pulpit and the religious press deal in continually. They treat mere fancy as fact, and dream as reality; and they pretend to be horribly shocked if anyone dares to cast doubt upon the soundness of their judgment. And yet every preacher and religious writer must know that those who study Nature most see least of God in it. Besides, do not these supernaturalists understand Nature sufficiently to perceive that if God is in it so also is the Devil, and certainly by far the more conspicuous of the two? In the Universe as we know it there is more evil than good, more injustice than justice, and more cruelty than kindness. This is an incontrovertible fact, but does any supernatural believer imagine that God is the author of both?

"A. T. S. J." once heard a lecture on the planets by "a brilliant astronomer," who "left his own subject to speak of things further out than the stars." That anonymous astronomer, however brilliant, overstepped the bounds of knowledge when he digressed to discant upon purely imaginary objects. All students of Nature are aware how altogether wonderful it is; but to the overwhelming majority of them all its fascinating marvels are wholly natural. As this writer says: "It is bewildering." Yes, it is, indeed, bewildering, but there is no trace whatever of the theological miracle in it all. Yet "A. T. S. J." exclaims: "There is a miracle everywhere," but we also exclaim fully as confidently: "There is no miracle of the theological order anywhere." Naturally, a writer in the *Christian World* would require to explain himself if he employed the word miracle in a non-theological sense. Without any such explanation "A. T. S. J." most inaccurately quotes a verse from Whitman's poem on *Miracles*, surely well knowing that the poet had no faith in miracles as theologically understood. To him miracles were what they etymologically signify, wonders, marvels. When Shakespeare says, "that miracle and queen of gems," he does not mean that the queen of gems is supernaturally produced, but that it is a marvel. But take the following:—

The antagonism between religion and science is little more than a sham fight. I made the friendship of science early. In the old schooldays we had a science master who wore a velvet coat. He made an adventure of chemistry and physics, like the *Hispaniola* going out to Treasure Island with John Silver on board. Later on, in an apparatus room full of retorts and air pumps and sparkling coils, we had a teacher (an Anglican rector, he was) who used to discuss Apostolic Succession with us, and mix it up with the theory of optics and Kepler's laws. It made science very familiar to us, and both these masters hung the masterpieces of science in our minds like Aladdin's lamp. And now, when I hear of startling discoveries, I think of the risks we took in the apparatus room, and I go on with my work.

Comment is needless, and the extract is cited for the simple purpose of pointing out how utterly unqualified a person so trained in science must be to discuss intelligently the conflict between religion and science. His calling it "a sham fight" shows his incapacity even to understand it. It is anything but "a sham fight"; it is rather a life and death struggle, and already it is perfectly clear that supernaturalism has been fatally wounded and that its end is approaching.

With the sheer pietism of the article we are not in the least concerned except to observe that it is of the ordinary evangelical type. But when the writer asserts that "knowledge of Nature helps faith," we feel bound to criticize the assertion. Does a knowledge of the terrifically cruel struggle for life still going on in Nature—"Nature red in tooth and claw"—really help faith in the justice and goodness of God? With an exceptionally intimate acquaintance with Nature, Professor Huxley was irresistibly driven to the conclusion that "if this world is governed by benevolence, it must be a different sort of benevolence from that of John Howard." A God who ordained, or even permitted, the indescribable horrors that accompany the struggle for life would be a monster, not a God of love. It was this fact that led Newman to admit that "it is a great question whether Atheism is not as philosophically consistent with the phenomena of the physical world as the doctrine of a creative and governing power." "A. T. S. J." acknowledges that the Creator is so veiled in Nature that "it is even possible to miss him." The truth is that he is so veiled that such men as Darwin, Tyndall, and Huxley, who devoted their lives to the investigation of the phenomena of Nature, failed to discover the least sign of his presence. Even in the quotation from Newman supplied by the writer of the article it is stated that "what strikes the mind so forcibly and so painfully" in the study of God's relation to Nature, "is his absence (if I may so speak) from his own world." With such facts in mind how can anybody believe and teach that "a knowledge of Nature helps faith." It is not and cannot be true.

"A. T. S. J." concludes by saying that "faith and knowledge, both must grow"; but does not history disclose the fact, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that faith wanes in proportion as knowledge waxes? Professor Huxley puts it thus:—

Men are growing to be seriously alive to the fact that the historical evolution of humanity which is generally, and I venture to think, not unreasonably regarded as progress, has been, and is being accompanied by a co-ordinate elimination of the supernatural from its originally large occupation of men's thoughts.

Even Sir Thomas Browne was fully convinced that "there are, as in philosophy, so in divinity, sturdy doubts and boisterous objections, wherewith the unhappiness of our knowledge too nearly acquainteth us," which Sir Thomas succeeded in conquering on his knees, but which to-day, in the majority of instances, eventuate in the loss of the belief in God and his providence and in the happy adoption of Secularism as the true philosophy of life. Atheism is infinitely preferable to Catholicism, though Newman escaped the former by his flight to the latter. That is to say, Newman silenced the voice of Reason by bowing his knee to external Authority. We, on the contrary, repudiate all external authority and acknowledge the rightful sovereignty of enlightened Reason.

J. T. LLOYD.

Jehovah is particularly savage towards females. He cursed a woman for eating an apple, and instead of killing her on the spot, he determined to torture her every time she became a mother. A friend of his—and we judge people by their friends—cut a woman up into twelve pieces, and sent them to various addresses by parcel's delivery. Another of his friends, called Menahem, made a raid on a certain territory, and 'all the women therein that were with child he *ripped up*.' Jehovah himself, being angry with the people of Samaria, promised to slay them with the sword, dash their infants to pieces, and *rip up* their pregnant women. No doubt he fulfilled his promise, and he would scarcely have made it if he had not been accustomed to such atrocities.

—G. W. Foote.

Buchanan's Day.

June 10, 1901.

Hail to the steadfast soul
Which, unflinching and keen,
Wrought to erase from its depth
Mist and illusion, and fear!

—Matthew Arnold.

On the anniversary of Robert Buchanan's death-day it is the habit of the poet's friends and admirers to honour his memory by placing flowers upon his imposing tomb in St. John's Churchyard, Southend-on-Sea. It is a pretty custom, redolent of our French neighbours, and the annual arrival of Buchanan's day reminds us once more of the fascinating personality of the poet.

Robert Buchanan always bulked largely upon the literary horizon of his own day. He was not only a poet, but an accomplished dramatist, a successful dramatist, and a slashing critic. Even during the most strenuous part of his career he never forgot his high aims; he always put good work into what he did. Once, perhaps, in one of his articles, he uttered something like a cry of despair. He quoted the biting line from Alfred de Musset, "The dead young poet whom the man survives." This line, pregnant with meaning, and sad in the extreme, would apply to so many writers who have started on their careers full of enthusiasm, but who have outlived their early ideals. Buchanan, notwithstanding his strenuous career, was always full of enthusiasm, and he retained his youthfulness to the last.

In Browning's expressive phrase, Buchanan was "ever a fighter." Cradled in poverty, he fought his way at the pen's point to an enviable position in the world. Much of his tenacity he owed to his father, who was a Chartist and a militant Freethinker in those far-off days when it was dangerous to hold advanced views. Young Buchanan came to London and commenced that struggle with fortune in which he was ultimately victorious, although his early privations left a deep impress on his sensitive nature.

The privations were real. Once, whilst waiting in a publisher's office, Buchanan fainted for want of food. Nor was it an isolated instance. David Christie Murray has told us that, in those days, when pressmen had not ceased to be pariahs, in a group of well-known journalists, himself included, each admitted having had, at one time or the other, to sleep in the open air, or, at "The Hotel of the Beautiful Star," as he wittily phrased it. Henry Murray recounts that at one time he was compelled to share a room with another man, and, when money was short, they had only one suit of clothes between them. Since the other man was the bigger, and that suit was his, it was a case of David in Saul's armour.

Buchanan had a good conceit of himself. One publisher said: "I can't stand that young fellow. He talked to me as if he were Almighty God, or Lord Byron." Buchanan had the defect of his qualities, but he won the fight unaided. A literary Ishmael, every man's hand was against him. This position had its advantages. Buchanan kept his sword sharp, and he always struck hard. His appearance in the literary arena always meant real fighting. When he attacked Christianity it was in no half-hearted fashion. He threw himself against the personality of the Nazarene, and penned in *The Wandering Jew* the most tremendous indictment of Christ in English literature. In the dialectical encounter which followed, Buchanan held his own bravely, and his opponents left the arena hurriedly. Always a most humane and sensitive man, his objections to the Christian superstition were as much ethical as intellectual. He often got some very startling effects in his writings by the union of in-

tellekt and emotion. Listen to this description of "God in Piccadilly":—

Poisonous paint on us, under the gas
Smiling like spectres, we gather bereaven,
Leprosy's taint on us, ghost-like we pass,
Watched by the eyes of yon pitiless heaven!
Let the stars stare at us! God, too, may glare at us
Out of the void where He hideth so well—
Sisters of midnight, He damned us in making us,
Cast us like carrion to men, then forsaking us,
Smiles from His throne on these markets of Hell.

The same idea is elaborated in a striking sonnet addressed to "Our Father in Heaven":—

Oh, Thou art pitiless! They call Thee Light,
Law, Justice, Love, but Thou art pitiless.
What thing of earth is precious in Thy sight
But weary waiting on and soul's distress?
When dost Thou come with glorious hands to bless
The good man that dies cold for lack of Thee?
Where bringest Thou garlands for our happiness?
Whom dost Thou send but Death to set us free?
Blood runs like wine—foul spirits sit and rule—
The weak are crushed in every street and lane—
He who is generous becomes the fool
Of all the world, and gives his life in vain.
Wert Thou as good as Thou are beautiful
Thou could'st not bear to look upon such pain.

This mocking attitude annoyed the Christians exceedingly. They saw quite clearly that the underlying ethical appeal would be a more dangerous weapon in his hands than any mere intellectual test. Here is another example:—

Oh, what have sickly children done to share
Thy cup of sorrows? Yet their dull, sad pain
Makes the earth awful; on the tomb's dark stair
Moan idiots, with no glimmer in the brain;
No shrill priest with his hangman's cord can beat
Thy mercy into these—ah nay, ah nay!
The angels Thou hast sent to haunt the street
Are hunger and distortion and decay.
Lord that mad'st man, and send'st him foes so fleet,
Who shall judge Thee upon Thy judgment day?

He was as outspoken in his later works as in his earlier ones. The judgment of Jesus in *The Wandering Jew* is as impassioned as Swinburne's "Lines before a Crucifix":—

With all the woes of earth upon thy head,
Uplift thy cross, and go! Thy doom is said.

Buchanan always rated his poems more highly than any of his other work. Certainly his vivid personality came out in his poems more clearly than in his prose. He had a keen sense of the joy of life. His passion for nature, his enjoyment of existence, was at the very root of his objection to the Christian superstition, and he has voiced his passion and his joy in most melodious language. Nothing came amiss to him. He blew all things to melody through the golden trumpet of his genius.

This brave-hearted Pagan was buried in the loveliest month in the year, whilst the fragrance of the June roses was in the air. The lilacs were still lingering and waving their white and purple plumes, the laburnums dropping their golden chains, the may perfuming the ways, and the thrushes singing in the tree-tops. The poet lies there always, within sound of the sea he loved so well. As the queen of the months returns, our thoughts go to the grave of one of the most romantic and striking personalities of our time, who, to use the beautiful lines of Shakespeare carved upon his tomb:—

After life's fitful fever, sleeps well.

MIMNERMUS.

What are you going to give us in place of the religion of Christianity? If a counterfeit bill is presented at a bank and payment refused, is it asked what is to be given, in its place, to the holder of the counterfeit.—Robert G. Ingersoll.

Atheism and the Emotions.

If we grant to the intellectual nature of man the right to expand, and to seek in scientific research the satisfaction to which it is entitled, surely we must grant likewise to the emotional nature of man the right to expand, and to seek satisfaction in religious belief. For that scientific knowledge which is adequate to the demands of the intellect cannot satisfy in a like manner the demands of the emotional nature; and in asserting the rights of the intellect *at the expense of the rights* of the emotional nature, as Rationalism does, we are arbitrarily limiting the expansion of human life, for we are seeking to nourish the emotional nature of man with food unsuited to its wants, thus leaving its hunger unsatisfied.—G. Chatterton-Hill, "*Heredity and Selection in Sociology*," pp. 523-4.

I HAVE placed the above rather long quotation at the head of this article because it gives expression to a mode of attack which is frequently directed against Rationalism in general and Atheism in particular. Even the "Religious Rationalist" is considered by many religionists, of the orthodox type, to be a man who deals very wickedly with his emotional life, while the Atheist is looked upon as a being who has killed his emotions.

When this method of attack is not the outcome of sheer ignorant stupidity, it is one of the most underhanded methods that can be used, and is a fit compliment to the capacity for vilification of those who use it. It is on a par with the attack on the morals of Atheists and is used, not because there is reliable evidence of lack of emotional life among Atheists, but because of the calculated psychological effect of the introduction of the question of emotionalism.

To conjure up a metaphysical Atheist, devoid of all emotional life, is a most effective way to blind the average reader, even of such a ponderous work as *Heredity and Selection in Sociology*, to the possibility of a real Atheist having any emotional life whatsoever. Not only so, the intellectual and imaginative work of constructing such an unemotional Atheist enables the writer to drown all feelings of humanism, which might otherwise go out to a fellow man, in a sea of self-righteous emotion; a sea that is deep enough to drown all the best in human nature, when religion demands, but is too shallow to drown the worst asperities of the religious critic.

At the back of nearly all religious criticism of Atheism there is the assumption that the Atheist is not a man in the ordinary sense of the term. He is considered to be an animal that is devoid of moral sense and lacking in the finer emotional susceptibilities. As if holding one particular view of the universe, rather than another, makes a person any the less a man.

The religionist fails, or refuses, to realize that interpretations of the universe, whether in the form of religious views, as expressed in theologies, or in the form of atheistical views, as expressed in secular or natural philosophies, do not determine whether a being is a man or not. Interpretations of the universe, whether religious or non-religious, are not primary determining factors in human life, they are products of the relationship which exists between man and the rest of the universe; they are summaries and records of the efforts to understand the universe which have resulted from that relationship. Whether a man is a religionist or an Atheist but indicates his attitude to the universe; it tells us nothing of his emotional and moral life.

From experience we may say that, in the main, the attitude of the religionist is surcharged with emotionalism, to the over-limitation of the intellectual life, while the attitude of the Atheist implies the supremacy of reason, with an endeavour to adjust the emotional side of human nature to the facts of life as seen in the light of reason.

There is no justification for the charge that Atheism

prevents the full development of the emotional nature. Atheism seeks to prevent the over-development of the emotions by bringing them under the control of reason, as far as possible. The mind should be so trained to face the facts of life as to make serious detrimental outbreaks of emotionalism impossible, both in the life of the individual and in the life of society. It is when the emotions usurp the place of reason that no effort is made to grasp the facts of life in an adequate manner, and the individual is carried on waves of feeling, first in one direction, then in another, with little or no consistency. Acts of brutality, directed against men whose lives and opinions are not approved, are commended with fervour under the plea that such men deserve all they get, while retaliation, by way of the same kind of brutal treatment, is appraised as the most outrageous inhumanity.

To the Englishman who permits his emotions to carry him away at times when reason needs most to be applied, a body of Englishmen applying fire and sword to the homes and lives of people who are not prepared to let England have all her own way is a body of heroes helping to carry on the divine mission of the Empire.

If the friends of those whose homes have been destroyed and whose lives have been taken should retaliate by destroying the homes and lives of Englishmen they are the greatest scoundrels who ever lived. An Englishman killing a Turk, for the benefit of the British Empire, is a man of fine and glorious patriotic spirit. But a Turk killing an Englishman is a monster of iniquity. It does not occur to the emotionalist that the Turk, from his point of view, is just as patriotic as the Englishman and that, patriotism for patriotism, the one is as good as the other.

The same has too often held good with regard to religious emotionalism, it being a matter of history that religionists have gloried in their own work of destroying the property and lives of other sects while vilifying the other sects for indulging in counter-destruction. As if the use of fire and sword by one sect were not as much to the glory of God as their use by other sects.

It is not to be denied that the application of reason to the problems of life often results in misunderstanding and the formulation of wrong theories, followed by wrong action. All this is natural enough, but the man whose attitude towards the problems of life is rational stands a better chance of correcting both theory and action than does the man who takes up an emotional attitude.

It is because the emotions, when allowed unrestrained sway, in the life of the individual or of society tend more often than not to be ultimately destructive, that they need to be under the control of reason. The thoughtful man should have no difficulty in illustrating this fact from everyday life. It is not the elimination of the emotions that Atheism teaches, but their proper control. No hard and fast laws for the control of the emotions can be laid down, but if every human being tried to acquire a rational habit of facing the facts of life, racial experience would in time produce an adjustment of our emotional life which would become a racial inheritance. This would be a gain rather than a loss. If human beings were not so easily swept hither and thither by waves of emotion, our emotional life would be of greater value than it is in many respects at the present time. It could be less easily worked upon by those whose desire is to exploit human emotions, whether in the interest of Church or State, and instead of a vast fund of emotion being expended for the benefit of supposed gods and saints, a much more profound, if smaller, fund would intermingle and soften the efforts of reason to rectify the mistakes of human striving.

That so many men and women should find in religion the chief sphere of their emotional life is but

testimony to the fact of the vast majority of men and women having failed to realize the value of the emotions in human life.

It is part of the work of Atheism both to teach the necessity of rational control of the emotions, and to work for a humanizing of the emotional life as against its waste in the sphere of religion. At the same time, Atheism does not deny the right to any man to seek emotional satisfaction in religious belief and ritual as so many religionists assume. Every man has a right to satisfy the demands of his emotions in his own way, provided it is not to the detriment of others. And Atheism asks the same freedom for the Atheist as is granted to the religionist, claiming at the same time the right to advocate what is believed to be the necessity for control of the emotions in the interest of human betterment. If, after spending much of his emotional nature, under rational control, in the everyday incidents of life, any man has a fund of emotion for discharge, he may find ample opportunities in the spheres of music, literature, art, and science, without spending it on the supposed denizens of another world. The benefit to be derived from seeking emotional satisfaction in music, literature, art, and science, whether by way of constructive effort or simply in contemplating and enjoying the work of others, would be in the humanizing effect which it would have on those who now seek satisfaction in other-world-ism.

In time these spheres of human activity would reflect, less and less, the striving after the so-called "divine," and would become, more and more, sources of inspiration as records of our efforts to cultivate human nature.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

Out of the Wreck.

WHAT does it feel like to be an alien enemy? This is a dainty psychic problem, and the eight months, August, 1914, to March, 1915, which I spent in Berlin as a "free" man, gave me an excellent opportunity of exercising my mind on it. I accepted Fate with as stoical an apathy as I could command, and among the occupations which lent a little diversity to the dreariness of those months, were several attempts to translate into English verse those passages of Lucretius which have always appealed to the Freethinker. After an eventful history, which comprises a most unwelcome visit from the Spartacists to my old quarters in Berlin, two fragments from the work of those far-off days have just come to hand. Such as they are I now offer them to the reader. The first shows us Epicurus and Religion face to face. He first defied her and her threats, and tore down the veil of fear woven by ignorance of Nature's laws. The second passage depicts the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and as the tide of indignation rises higher and higher, culminating in that imperishable line,—

Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum,

we almost fancy ourselves standing in the judgment hall of humanity and hearing the poet consign Religion to the dust of her own charnel-house.

EPICURUS.

When men before the eyes of men lay grovelling,
cast down
Beneath Religion's noisome yoke, whose head and
hideous frown
Showed forth from heaven threatening us mortals
on the earth,
One man first stood against her, one man of Grecian
birth.
He met the Tyrant face to face, dared gods and
thunder's roar,
Nay, his will by these waxed stronger and urged
him on the more
To break firm Nature's portals, for he conquered
her the first,

The flaming walls of ether passed and every barrier
burst;
The Illimitable traversing with mighty mind and
soul,
What can be and what cannot be he saw throughout
the whole,
Returns to us triumphant with knowledge of the
cause
Of Nature's universal plan, her fixed and changeless
laws:
Religion's trampled upder foot and in the dust is
trod,
His victory exalteth us the equals of a god.

THE SACRIFICE OF IPHIGENIA.

I pray thee, banish inward fear that Reason may
beguile
To thoughts of dark impiety, to pathways that defile;
Far otherwise the truth is,—Religion's self ofttimes
Is pregnant with iniquity, with foul and heinous
crimes.
Ye know how once at Aulis did the chieftains of the
train
Of chosen Grecian warriors the Trivian's altar stain
With blood of Iphianassa. Soon as the band was tied
Around her maiden tresses the same length either
side,
She saw before the altar her father downcast stand,
She saw the blade hid from her and held in priestly
hand;
In tears her countrymen looked on; with terror over-
come
Upon her knees to earth she sank, before her slayers
dumb.
Availeth nought the hapless maid in this dark hour
and dire
That she the name of father first gave her royal sire;
She's lifted to the altar by manly hands and strong,
But not the altar ringing clear and loud with bridal
song
For one just ripe for love's embrace, she pure but
impure they,
To her own father's bloody stroke she fell the sad-
eyed prey,
That so the fleet be wafted with favouring breeze
divine—
And all these deeds of infamy, Religion, they are
thine.

A. D. McLAREN.

Acid Drops.

The new Constitution of the Polish Republic has some very good things in it, but it is like the curate's egg, good only in parts, and in view of what has occurred one may imagine that the liberal portions of it will be more honoured in the breach than in the observance. By Article 3 freedom of conscience and of religion is guaranteed to all citizens, but, on the other hand, no one may evade the performance of public duties by reason of his religious beliefs. By Article 114 the Roman Catholic religion is given chief position among the religions of the country, which is too vague to be safe. Article 120 provides that "Instruction in religion is compulsory for all pupils in every educational institution, the curriculum of which includes instruction of youth under 18 years of age, if the institution is maintained wholly or in part by the State or by self-governing bodies." We daresay that is one of the consequences of the Roman Catholic religion occupying a favoured position in the State. But the benefit of freedom of conscience with religion being taught compulsorily to all children and the Roman Catholic Church in power is not likely to be very great. In effect Poland may be expected to be as reactionary as Roumania, which has also had very liberal provisions in its laws, but which has consistently refused to carry them into practice.

"The world is largely ignoring organized Christianity." *The Challenge* (May 25) assures us that the reason of this worldly attitude is the shallow yet wide-spread view that the bases of the Christian faith have been undermined by modern investigation." We like the expression "bases of the Christian faith," for a religion so fundamentally constructive should have a base of some kind. The same issue of *The Challenge* declares that, though the vast majority of Church people "violently disapprove" of the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed, "so

simple a matter as the emendation of these verses cannot be carried out." *O sancta simplicitas!* This very month there is to be a conference of Protestant Christians to restate the "fundamentals" of "the faith once delivered to the saints." Barely a generation ago these "fundamentals," derived from documents of unknown authorship, disputed date, and uncertain meaning, were supposed to comprise such doctrines, essential to salvation, as the fall of man, the atonement, and a resurrection of the physical body. The best witness to the cardloads of learned rubbish written to expound them is the penny box at any second-hand bookseller's in the Charing Cross Road. For the man in the street to-day these doctrines have no interest whatever, and belief in God and a future life is well on the way to the same scrap-heap. That is why the clergy, while vehemently denouncing "materialism," are driven to such highly spiritual devices as candles and incense, to say nothing of flaring bill-posters or other forms of advertisement.

Two hundred and fifty Roman Catholic pilgrims left Victoria Station recently for Lourdes, the notorious French shrine. This should be a very pleasant journey at this time of the year, and profitable to the Catholic Church.

The late Rev. Prebendary Auden, of Church Stretton, left £44,366. He will never swing through the gates of the New Jerusalem.

The Bishop of Exeter declares that "the greatest scandal to the Church of England is the sale of livings." His lordship may comfort himself with the reflection that the scandal has always existed in the Church.

On the morning before he left England the Crown Prince of Japan received at the Japanese Embassy a deputation from the British and Foreign Bible Society, and graciously accepted a copy of the Japanese Bible, bound in scarlet morocco and suitably inscribed. The Prince's impressions of the book, if he reads it, should be profoundly interesting. He might recall that in the very month in which it was presented to him, there was considerable dissension in Christian countries concerning the exact meaning of some of its teachings, and he might also reflect that, after all, the version presented to him is not that accepted by the majority of Christians in the world. Again, it might occur to him that simultaneously with this solicitude for the soul of himself and his people, there is renewed agitation in our own Dominions in favour of excluding all Asiatics, including the Japanese. A writer in the *Nineteenth Century* for March appears to defend this exclusion, and declares that "White Australia is the vision of a great ideal." Of course we are not concerned with the political aspects of this question, but the Christian organizations send missionaries to Japan, and extravagant claims are put forward on behalf of Christianity as "the universal religion." Is there any conclusive evidence that Jesus Christ himself was a white man?

The Rev. A. H. Gray, D.D., tells us that once upon a time religious teaching in Scotland "consisted in giving an elaborate account of a complex scheme of salvation." Those were the palmy days of the theologians in "Caledonia, stern and wild." We have heard of one who preached for a solid hour on "The Decrees of the Almighty?" "Ah, meenister," came the reply, "the congregation, "Now, Jock, what are the decrees of the Almighty?" "Ah, meenister," came the reply, "the Almighty kens that best himself!"

At the annual meeting of the office bearers of the Glasgow United Free Church, the Rev. R. H. Strachan, of Edinburgh, emphatically urged the necessity of teaching modern views concerning the Bible. "This point of view would bring out of the word God a splendour and power that even they who had known it so long never realize that it possessed." Yet many of our orthodox Christian opponents still declare that our work is purely destructive! It would be interesting to know why the Higher Criticism, which was the cause of nearly all

Germany's trouble, is to effect so much good in Scotland. "Inspired revelation" was once defined as "a pack of lies which God guarantees to be true," and some of our modern apologists appear to admit that this definition was true at one time.

This subject is of peculiar interest not only to the active Freethinker but to all who take an intelligent interest in the history of religious systems. It will be remembered that the general comment of both the daily and the religious Press in regard to Canon Barnes's outbursts, was that the remarks were justified because the results established by science had now reached the masses. What else is this but a roundabout way of proclaiming that it is no part of the clergy's business to preach the truth to the "common people" until the latter have already learned it from other sources? No wonder candidates for holy (!) orders nowadays attract attention as specimens of mental stature.

The Bishop of Woolwich is an exceptionally bold man. Whilst Job frankly confesses his utter inability to attain to a knowledge of God, his lordship has recently had the hardihood to deliver a sermon on "The Dimensions of God's Love." What next?

Dr. Orchard admits that there exists a general dislike of the Church, but he fails to penetrate to the root cause of that dislike. Thoughtful people dislike the Church, not for what it is, but for what it pretends to be and is not; not because of what it does, but because of what it claims to do and does not. In reality the Church is the most fraudulent institution in existence.

Only two people attended a special service at St. Paul's Church, East Moseley, although people were invited to go in boating attire. The vicar had better extend an invitation to folk in bathing costumes. He might have better luck.

Mrs. Lloyd George says that there are Sunday-school scholars in Wales aged between seventy and ninety years. And the poor, old darlings think the same at seventy as they did at seven years old.

We are fairly used to the census now in European countries, but it is just as well not to forget that the first census in England was taken as recently as 1801. During the Middle Ages, and until the eighteenth century, Christian prejudice was pointedly directed against any "numbering of the people." According to the last chapter of the second book of Samuel, David's sin in counting the people was punished by a pestilence which destroyed 70,000 men. This chapter has been the subject of libraries of exegesis—word of blessed memory!—especially hinging on the question, What was the nature of David's sin? It could not have been the mere taking of a census, for that was provided for in the Jewish Law. Besides, the census of the population had already been taken repeatedly. That there could be so vast an interest in the subject is one of the fruits of belief in sacred books, and very conclusive evidence of the constructive nature of religion.

There is nothing objectionable in an advertisement in itself, but one would think that this government of ours might have refrained from using the back of an official notice of the census for advertising a Sunday newspaper. The few paltry thousands it brings in cannot be of great moment to a government that squanders its millions on little wars, and can, out of the Parliament alone, employ nearly 200 as ministers and their officials. Perhaps it comes of assuming that mere business men are the best type to manage the affairs of a country. Anyway, we should have thought that even a business government might have seen the advisability of conducting a census with some approach to dignity.

"General Booth will conduct the wedding of Adjutant Bernard Booth and Captain Jane I. Lowther, Central Hall,

Westminster, on June 11. Reserved Tickets, 2s. 6d." For this piece of news we were indebted to a large notice-board in front of a new building in Blackfriars Road. The present leader of the Salvation Army has as keen an instinct for business as his father had. This organization, however, is not exceptional in its appreciation of the conditions in which the modern soul-saver is obliged to work. The recent Roman Catholic procession in Southwark was described in a local newspaper as "most impressive." Of course it was to those that like to be "impressed." We live in an age in which the secret of success is to know how to display your wares.

It is very seriously and very sorrowfully that Edith Pearson writes of "England's Religion" in the *Catholic Times* (May 28). "Religion is moribund." For this condition of things there are various causes, among them divorce, and the craze for amusements, and the neglect of religious duties even on Sunday. The Roman Catholic Church is the perfect Home whose portals are ever open to receive the wayward. "The country once so happy and beautiful in the sunshine of religion and the sweet incense of the Catholic Church"—is gliding down the slope that does not lead to the sunshine of Abraham's bosom. Souls were very precious in those days, and heretics could be dealt with by what lawyers call "summary jurisdiction" in the shape of a threat of excommunication. If this failed of effect there was the law *de hæretico comburendo* under which obstinate offenders could be roasted to cinders, with the hope of more to follow in the next world.

A journalist in a religious paper has made the claim that Canon Shuttleworth was the pioneer of popular Sunday music in London, having begun it in 1884 at St. Nicholas Cole-Abbey Church. This is pure nonsense. The Sunday League, started and long worked almost exclusively by Freethinkers, was active for many years before that. But you generally find Christians ready to claim anything, even when it clearly belongs to the "infidels."

Four women, placed on probation for a year, were ordered to attend Church every Sunday by a Chicago magistrate. This seems a canny way of filling up the fast emptying places of worship.

The spread of the woman's emancipation movement is producing strange results. A nun living in a Roman Catholic community in London has been summoned as a juror to the High Courts, and the call has agitated the priests. A Bill in Parliament is being drafted by the Catholic Union to grant exemption to women in nunneries.

Jezreel's Temple, near Chatham, built as a place of worship by a quaint sect, has been opened as a general shop. This seems appropriate. Formerly, brimstone was advertised in the building; now it is sold there.

The gymnastics of sparrows are under the care of Providence, but, apparently, human beings are not so fortunate. In less than a week five children have committed suicide in New York City from worry about school work. Last year, in the United States, no fewer than 12,000 persons took their lives, and as many more made attempts at suicide.

The Lord Chamberlain has refused to sanction the production of the play "Mecca" on the ground that it would offend the religious susceptibilities of some people. If this quaint policy is pursued, we shall have the famous song, "the Star of Bethlehem" altered to "The Star of Bethnal Green."

J. H. B. Masterman, M.P., preaching in St. Martin-in-the-Fields, indulged in the most foolish form of dogmatism. He spoke of the Holy Ghost with the familiarity of the closest intimacy, in fact, as if he knew him infinitely better than he knows any human being

whatsoever. Besides, he said things which he knew to be untrue. For example, "Of course, matter is not real. We all know that." Being an educated man Mr. Masterman must be aware that there is a school of philosophy called Materialism. We do not all know that matter is not real, and in saying the contrary the preacher deliberately misled his hearers. He has a perfect right to be an Idealist, but he has no right to claim all thinkers as Idealists. Such conduct is arrogance based on a lie.

In Protestant countries the Roman Catholic conscience is a supersensitive instrument, far "too pure to behold iniquity." When Leopold, of Congo fame and blessed memory, passed to glory, one of our Romanist organs declared that it was "not concerned with his politics," and several of the same high-minded custodians of "the faith and morals" are still justifying the murder of Francisco Ferrer. Under the ineffable Habsburgs, whose connections with the Vatican were always notorious, Austria long basked in "the sunshine of religion," and when they and their satellite aristocracy just before the armistice craved peace on any terms that would salvage some of their feudal privileges, it was to Rome that they appealed for succour. When Russia was prostrate it was the devout Czernin who negotiated the infamous Brest-Litovsk Treaty which prolonged the war by at least six months. Even Protestant Germany, whom our English Catholics hold up to execration as a standing example of the fruits of Luther and the Reformation, always fell back on Papists like Hertling and Erzberger when a piece of work of a particularly cynical nature had to be handled. Our latter-day Catholic revivalists are admirably equipped to bring back the lost "sunshine of religion" to Great Britain. We say nothing of Ireland.

The Maharajah of Bikanir has offered 1,000 acres of land to the American Methodist Foreign Missions Board. The Missions Board will probably represent this as an instance of the Maharajah's devotion to Missions. As a matter of fact it is given for the purpose of serving as a site for a demonstration farm and agricultural college. The Maharajah believes that one of the pressing needs for his people is the production of food, and for this reason is quite prepared to run the risk of their conversion to Christianity. It is a form of "rice" Christianity on a large scale.

Dean Inge declared recently that most of the Labour leaders in this country were probably in foreign pay, and would only receive money so long as they kept stirring up trouble. Asked to give definite facts in support of his allegation, the Dean said he had nothing further to say. We should say not. It is coming to something if a clergyman is to be called upon to prove all that he says about his opponents. The clergy have, by practice and precedent, the right to say what they think fit about those to whom they are opposed, and it is a piece of impudence of Mr. Henderson's to ask for proof. If parsons are to say nothing but the truth, and proved truth at that, the whole ecclesiastical system will collapse.

Father Degen complains that "the modern Eve is as certain and as full of talk as ever." But ladies are not so loquacious and dogmatic as parsons.

Among the many pieces of humbug connected with the Salvation Army the "Anti-Suicide Bureau" deserves a very prominent position. The Bureau depends upon people who wish to commit suicide coming to the Army and asking its advice on the matter. And the Army reports that thousands of men and women have been persuaded not to commit the happy dispatch. If we had come across the same idea and the same statement in a comic opera we should all have had a laugh and would have been done with it. But that people can take such a howling absurdity seriously helps to explain the prevalence of Christianity. The notion that a man who had serious intentions of committing would go to a Bureau to ask what the officials thought about it surely touches the limit. We must really congratulate the Salvation Army on its faith in the gullability of the public.

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.

"ANNOYED."—There is no justification for the individual you name having written to you for money, either as a loan or as a gift, on the ground of having done work for the N. S. S. We should be obliged if anyone to whom similar communications have been addressed would write either to us or to the Secretary of the N. S. S. before replying. We have had whispers of this from other quarters, and if we hear more may be compelled to publish the name of the person concerned. But we trust that this amount of publicity will prove sufficient.

H. MORRIS.—Legally, the Church of England not being a corporation does not hold property and possesses none. The parson, bishop, or other has the property of particular churches vested in him for the time being. The whole of these independent properties are vested in the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who apportion the values of the different livings, etc. Crown lands were originally given to the king, who paid the expenses of the executive out of the income derived therefrom. Gradually, however, the privilege of paying the executive was given to the people while retaining the burden of the income. In the same way the land originally given to certain noblemen carried with it the duty of providing an army when needed. Here again the aristocracy have cheerfully borne the burden of the revenue from land while giving the people the honour of paying for the army.

INGERSOLL.—We agree with you that the alleged "Sinn Fein Oath" is a very obvious "fake." It is beyond us that people should credit their enemies with being such arrant jackasses as to print such things and then leave them about so that they get full publicity. There have been scores of such productions during the past three or four years, and exposures do not seem to rob them of their charm to a certain class of people. We referred to Guy Aldred as a Communist only in relation to the charge which is now made against him. We are aware that he is a Freethinker and is not slow in attacking Christianity. We are, as we have said, against all such prosecutions and regard them as a covert attack on opinion. His being held in prison for such a lengthy period while awaiting trial is an outrage on the name of justice. Bail should have been allowed. Perhaps, if he next tries a financial swindle bail will be permitted, and he will be treated with all courtesy.

O. A. KELLER.—We are obliged for cuttings. But why not send them direct to this office? We agree with you as to the nonsensical nature of the connexion between crime and an absence of religious instruction. All statistics run in exactly the other direction.

A. E.—A written communication to the head teacher that you wish your child withdrawn from religious instruction is all that is required.

C. TOWSON.—There may be a God. Certainly, so there may be pigs that fly, or circles that are square, but we do not believe there is the first, and we cannot conceive the second. Would it not be sensible to ask what evidence there is for a belief, instead of discussing a number of maybes?

J. M. GIMSON.—Thanks. Quite good.
The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to the office.

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.

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."

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

The Secular Society, Limited, is publishing this week through the Pioneer Press a pamphlet by Mr. J. T. Lloyd on the subject of "God-Eating: A study in Christianity and Cannibalism." It is, we think, the most interesting pamphlet that Mr. Lloyd has written, and will be found full of information to all who are interested in the evolution of Christian doctrines. The doctrine of the Eucharist is the central doctrine of Christianity, and Mr. Lloyd traces very carefully, briefly, but quite thoroughly the history of this doctrine in Christian history, and its development from primitive religious cannibalism. We cannot think of any pamphlet that could be better handed to a Christian friend, and there are not many that a Freethinker could read with equal profit. The pamphlet is published at sixpence, printed on good paper, with neat coloured wrapper, and we hope that everyone of our readers will hasten to secure a copy. Postage will be 1½d. extra, but it can be ordered through any newsagent if desired.

Mr. Mann's *Modern Materialism*, also issued by the Secular Society, Limited, a book of about 200 pages, is now being printed and will be issued as early as it can be finished. In this matter we are at the mercy of the binders and the machiners. The trouble is that, the trade is so bad some of these firms are only working half time, with the result that we have to wait longer than if they were busy. It sounds paradoxical, but it is true. During the war they were too busy to get the work done quickly. Now they are too slack, with the same result. One way and another things are kept decidedly "messy."

Mr. Whitehead's meeting in Regent's Park last Sunday was one of the largest addressed here this summer from our platform. The subject was "Christ Criticized," and at the conclusion there were plenty of questions and some opposition. All this was ably dealt with by the speaker, who appeared to make an impression on several inquirers.

The Birmingham Branch has arranged for a "Ramble" to-day (June 19) to Dudley. Members and friends participating are invited to meet at Colmore Road tram terminus at 2 o'clock. Tea will be provided at a moderate charge.

A correspondent sends us the following from Lieutenant-Colonel A. B. Ellis's *The Land of the Fetish*, 1897:—

At breakfast the preacher came in accompanied by two girls about twelve or thirteen years of age. We asked if he required anything, and he said "No;" he had come to do a little business with us. We then inquired what that business might be, and after beating about the bush he informed us that as Anamaboe was rather a dull place for Europeans he thought we might like to buy these two little girls, and, if so, we could have them for £4 apiece. Whenever I meet such creatures I am moved to anger, and restrain myself only with difficulty. Little children in England give their scarce pence to aid the "poor missionaries," and people who can ill afford to be charitable contribute their mite to further the promulgation of Christianity among heathen negroes, while scoundrels like this preacher batten upon the subscriptions thus raised, live in the best house in the village, acquire authority and wealth, and lead a happy life of idleness and vice.

If all the activities of the missionaries, white and black, were made public, there would be a great opening of eyes at home. Few of those who subscribe to these missionaries are aware of the trading enterprises in which they indulge. The picture of the missionary spending his time, Bible in hand, preaching to the natives is a gross caricature of the facts. Altogether the Foreign Missionary movement is one of the most colossal impostures that we have.

We are asked to announce that the Malthusian League has arranged a number of meetings on "Birth Control for Workers." There will be a series of meetings for women from June 20 to 25, daily at 3 o'clock, and meetings for men and women on the Monday and Tuesday evenings at 7.30, and on the Saturday afternoon at 3 p.m. All the meetings will be held at 84 Blackfriars Road. Admission is free.

Pages From Voltaire.

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN A SAVAGE AND A BACHELOR OF ARTS.

I.

[A Governor of Cayenne, returning to France from Guiana, brought with him a savage who had a good share of natural understanding and spoke French fairly well. The following is a conversation between him and a Bachelor of Arts of Paris.]

Bachelor.—I take it, Mr. Savage, that you have noticed that a number of your country people pass their lives all alone; for we are told that this is man's natural way of living, and that the social group is merely a state of artificial depravity.

Savage.—As a matter of fact I never saw any of these people you speak of. Like other species of animals, man seems to me to be born for society. Each species follows the dictates of its nature, and as for us, we live all together in a community.

Bachelor.—How! in a community? Why, then you must have fine walled cities, and kings who keep a court. You have theatres, convents, universities, libraries, and taverns, have you not?

Savage.—No; but have I not often heard it said that in your part of the world you have Arabians, Scythians, who never knew anything of these matters, and yet are nations of some importance? Now, we live in much the same way as these people, neighbouring families assist each other. We enjoy a warm climate, and therefore have few necessities; food is plentiful; we marry and beget children; we bring them up, and then we die. This is just the same as with you, a few ceremonies excepted.

Bachelor.—But, my good Sir, then you are not a savage?

Savage.—I do not know what you mean by the word.

Bachelor.—Nor, indeed, do I, now that I come to think about it. But let me consider for a moment. Why! What we call a savage is a man of a surly, unsociable nature, who avoids company.

Savage.—I have mentioned already that we live together in families.

Bachelor.—We also apply the epithet *savage* to those beasts that roam wild about the forests; and hence we have carried over the name to men who live in the woods.

Savage.—I go into the woods sometimes, for the same reason as you do—to hunt.

Bachelor.—But tell me, do you sometimes think?

Savage.—It is impossible to do without some kind of ideas.

Bachelor.—I am very curious to know what your ideas are; what do you think of man?

Savage.—Think of him! Why, that he is a biped animal with an aptitude for reason and speech, and using his hands much more dextrously than the monkey. I have seen several kinds of men, some white like you, some copper-coloured like me, and others black like those that wait upon the Governor of Cayenne. You have a beard, we have none; the negroes have wool, you and I have hair. It is said that those who live in your more northerly climates have white hair, whereas that of America is black. That is all I know about man.

Bachelor.—But your soul, my dear Sir? Your soul? What idea have you of that? Where does it come from? What is it? What does it do? How does it act? Where does it go to?

Savage.—I know nothing of all this, for I have never seen the soul.

Bachelor.—Very well then! Do you think that brutes are machines?

Savage.—They seem to me to be organized machines endowed with feeling and memory.

Bachelor.—But tell me now, Mr. Savage, what it is

you think that you yourself possess above those brutes?

Savage.—The gifts of a very much superior memory, a much larger share of ideas, and, as I have already told you, a tongue apt to form many more sounds than those of brutes; with hands more capable of executing, and the faculty of laughing, which a long-winded disputant always makes me exercise.

Bachelor.—But tell me, if you please, how came you by all this? What is the nature of your mind? How does your soul animate your body? Do you always think? Is your will free?

Savage.—What a number of questions! You ask me, how I came to possess what God has given to man? You might as well ask me how I was born? For certainly, since I was born a man, I must possess the things that constitute a man in the same manner as a tree has its bark, the roots and its leaves. You think that I ought to know the nature of my mind. I did not give it to myself, and therefore I cannot know what it is; and as to how my soul animates my body, I am just as ignorant of that too. In my opinion, you must first have seen the springs that put your watch in motion before you can tell how it shows the hour. You ask me if I always think? No, for sometimes I have half-formed ideas, in the same way as I see objects at a distance, that is to say, confusedly; sometimes my ideas are much clearer, just as I can distinguish an object better when it is nearer; sometimes I have no ideas at all, as when I shut my eyes I can see nothing. Lastly, you ask me, if my will is free? Here I do not understand you; these are things you are perfectly well acquainted with, no doubt; therefore, I shall be obliged by your explaining them to me.

Bachelor.—Yes, yes, I have studied all these matters thoroughly; I could talk to you about them for a month on end, and without your understanding a word of what I was saying. But tell me, how do you know good and evil, right and wrong? Do you know which is the best form of government? Which is the best religion? What is the law of nations, the common law, the civil and canon law? Do you know the names of the first man and woman who peopled America? Do you know why rain falls into the sea; and why you have no beard?

Savage.—Upon my word, Sir, you presume too much on the concession I made just now, that man has a more developed memory than the brutes; for I can hardly remember the many questions you have asked me; you talk about good and evil, right and wrong; now I think that whatever gives you pleasure, and does harm to no one, is good and right; that what harms our fellow creatures, and gives us no pleasure, is abominable; and what gives us pleasure, but at the same time hurts others, may be good in regard to us at the moment, but is in itself both dangerous to us, and wrong with regard to others.

Bachelor.—Do you live in society with these maxims?

Savage.—Yes, with our relations and neighbours; and without much labour and annoyance we quietly attain our hundredth year; some, indeed, reach a hundred and twenty; after which our bodies serve to fertilize the earth that has nourished us.

Bachelor.—You appear to me to have a clear understanding; I have a strong desire to puzzle it. Let us dine together, after which we can philosophize with method.

Englished by GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

PREDESTINATION.

There was a young man who said "Damn,
It annoys me to think that I am
Predestined to move
In a permanent groove—
I'm not even a bus—I'm a tram!"

The Miner in Fiction.

¹ *The Underworld*, by James Welsh (Herbert Jenkins).

THE word "fiction" is too comprehensive. Works of a very serious nature in the form of the novel are confounded with books whose sole aim is to amuse or to beguile the tedium of a journey. Mr. Welsh's book, *The Underworld*, which has met with such a large sale is given to us as a serious study of the miners and their people, but far from being true to life, it is a work of "fiction" in the worst sense of the word. It is hardly conceivable that an astute publisher like Mr. Herbert Jenkins could see in it anything but a work chock full of all the popular tricks, characters, situations, and fake literary craftsmanship of the romantic "usual thing" type for the ignorant public, and a potential good seller.

The opening paragraph gives the whole book away. Nellie, the wife of a miner lying ill, is knitting industriously. It is late at night, but she insists on sitting up, saying, "I'll no be very long noo Geordie. If I had this heel turned, I'll soon finish the sock, and that'll be a pair the day."

If publishers' readers could knit that part of the work would go back for revision. Think of it, my women readers who knit socks. The author gives us a picture of a harassed working woman with an invalid husband and four little children to care for, and the usual domestic routine, and tells us she can knit a pair of socks in a day! Not only that, but they are fancy pattern socks, of different coloured wool. Now, if Mr. Welsh can produce a woman in this wide world who can get through this work inside twenty-four hours (allowing nothing for sleep), I'll cheerfully hand over £10 to any miners' fund, and give Mr. Herbert Jenkins the opportunity of giving me the first refusal of my next novel.

It may be asked, what does it matter whether she does a pair in an hour or a week? It certainly is of no consequence whether Zane Grey's horses do four or forty miles an hour, but when a book has in its preface the statement that "the things of which I write are the things of which I have first-hand knowledge," we certainly don't like to be compelled to disbelieve in his characters in the first three lines of the story. The opening chapter proves conclusively that the author knows less than nothing about knitting, and if his women folk were so awkward that they habitually dropped stitches and "ripped it all down again when the pattern was wrong," heaven alone knows how long the socks would take, what they would look like, or who would be foolish enough to pay for such workmanship. Certainly the children waiting on the completion of the socks, and their delivery and payment before they could get bread in the morning, would be "gey hungry," I'm thinking.

There is some "fine writing" about the balls of wool dancing about the floor.

They advanced and retired like dancers, touching hands when they met, then whirling away in opposite directions again; they side-stepped and wheeled in a mad riot of joyous colour just as they were about to meet; they stood for a little facing each other, fainting from side to side, then were off again as the music of her misery quickened, in an embracing whirl, in an ecstasy of coloured flame, many shaded yet one; then, at last, just as the tune seemed to have reached a crescendo of spirit, she dashed her work upon the floor as she discovered another blunder, and burst into a fit of passionate weeping.

Doubtless this is all very pretty—I don't care for effervescence without the ginger ale—but it would be a slovenly knitter who would have her wool on the floor, and as for two or more balls at a time playing jig-saw puzzles all over the place, why that's worse and worsted.

As I kept on reading this book—all the time regretting the good half crown I had spent on it—I experienced that weird theosophical sort of feeling that I had read all this before. And, of course, it was so, but the phenomenon was explainable in quite a natural way, for after two minutes cogitation I had puzzled it out.

Years ago, in a Glasgow pantomime, there was a very funny comedian who made his first entrance with a grotesque looking toy dog. With his every subsequent appearance he had a slightly larger animal of the same breed, but he always protested that it was "the s-s-same dog." As the performance proceeded, the dog grew bigger and bigger, but still it remained the "s-s-same dog." Well, Mr. Welsh's book is the s-s-same story as Patrick McGill's *Children of the Dead End*, and that work is the s-s-same as many a hundred before it.

McGill's story begins with the socks yarn (no pun intended), a pair a day in addition to cooking, washing, caring for a family, and reciting the rosary. The son grows up, goes to school, and strikes the schoolmaster. The son of Nellie, the lightning knitter does the same thing in *The Underworld*. Both heroes are in love, and in each case the young lady compromises herself with another man, disappears from home, returning only to die, after treating us to pathetic speeches from her death bed. Gourock Ellen, the naughty lady in the Irishman's book, displays her legs immodestly, and Mag Robertson does the same thing at the pit-head. There are many other points of similarity, but I have no thought of plagiarism in my mind. The navy poet and the miner poet are both Socialists, both have some connection with Scotland, and evidently it is a case of great minds working in the s-s-same grooves.

I have never read anything so hopelessly idiotic as the story of how Mysie "gaed wrang," and all her adventures after she finds herself *enceinte* to the wrong man. Mysie, brought up among precocious youngsters who (egged on by their parents) sing bawdy songs outside the houses where the women do not observe strictly their marriage vows; Mysie, who worked at the pit-head, hearing daily vulgar chaff and obscene jests; Mysie, who three weeks after their meeting, with no one to consult or advise her, is sure of her condition and discusses the situation with her betrayer; Mysie is featured as a simple-minded, soft mark, who doesn't know how to buy a railway ticket! *The fellow—who is a student in Edinburgh—takes rooms for her, provides a kind, motherly housekeeper to look after her, and promises her marriage. Surely Mr. Welsh knows little of Edinburgh, for the Grassmarket is the last place in the world a well-to-do young man would take rooms in, and his "good housekeeper" creation wouldn't put her foot in such a low quarter, let alone speak civilly to a girl "in trouble."*

To dodge the wedding, Mysie falls into a fever, and is ill six months; then falls into two more fevers, in fact she makes rather a habit of this fever stunt. The doctor comes, shakes his head, prescribes a bottle (for the fever), and takes himself off. As the months have flown past, our author tells us that Mysie gets thinner and thinner!

After nine and a half months in this interesting condition (I have carefully computed the time from the book), Mysie suddenly takes a resolve to go home.

Assisted by a street *gamin*, who takes her hand, leads her to the station and buys her ticket, Mysie makes the train journey. Then, in a terrible storm, she walks a few miles over the moor to the old home. During this walk, *for the first time in nine and a half months*, she feels the "soft stirring of little limbs beneath her heart"!

Of course, she gets there and just arrives in time to hear plainly (through the closed window) her father

and mother lamenting her absence. Says the old dying father ".....I'd swap Heaven and my chances of salvation, wife, jist to see her sitting here on the fender as she used to sit." The astute reader will have guessed that this is the cue for the girl who took the wrong turning, so Mysie falls into the room, then into their arms, then into a fever, and so to bed (Pepys). She awakens with everybody weeping around her, she explains things beautifully, makes them join hands, etc., then takes another fever.....the last painless Fever which the great Doctor Himself alone can cure.

Mr. Welsh does the "usual thing" so well that I am sure the miner poet must have taken a full correspondence course in authorship. I think Max Pemberton, Louise Heilgers, and Arthur F. Thorn have given him tips. He certainly is a master at using *clichés* and platitudes, and all the old, old, tricks of the mere word spinner. His book is so devoid of originality that it would have been a marvel had it not been accepted. His characters are utterly unreal. I refuse to believe that the miners of Scotland are such white-livered skunks as to tolerate a fellow like Black Jock in their midst—the gaffer who corrupts many of the women (with the full knowledge of their husbands), and murders a man whose wife resisted his advances.

Much of the book treats of Socialism and introduces Robert Smillie, and the late Keir Hardie. The author tells us how the miners are sceptical and antagonistic to this new fangled social gospel, but, of course, Hardie and Smillie, with their eloquence, their earnestness, their sympathetic understanding, etc., etc., carry the men with them, but—we don't get the speeches, that did the trick. Well, I know something about the Socialist movement in Scotland twenty-five years ago, and some of the meetings I have been present at, where these well-known men were speaking (or advertised to speak), were by no means peaceful gatherings, and that's putting it pretty mildly.

I must tell a hitherto unpublished story of Keir Hardie. I was in Paris shortly before the outbreak of the war. One night I was a guest at a club where they were discussing international Socialism. A member said to me that it was a pity that no leading Socialist in Britain was of the working class. I at once instanced Hardie. But no, said the comradie, Hardie is of the bourgeoisie. I protested, and others came into the discussion, all maintaining that the late labour celebrity belonged to the upper or middle classes.

At last, an old, much travelled Frenchman was appealed to. He set all doubts at rest. Speaking very deliberately he delivered himself of the following: "Monsieur is right, for when I was in Angleterre, thirty years ago, comrade Hardie was spoken of as one who had been a miner."

I have brought this story in, as I feel that the "son of the soil" racket is being worn a bit thin. The navy poet, and the miner poet are terms that would court ridicule if extended. Think of the plumber playwright, the fishmonger philosopher, "Ballads of a Barber," "Sonnets of a Scavenger," "Rhymes of a Rivetter," etc. After all, the book's the thing, and it doesn't matter the heel of a navy's boot what occupation the writer had before he climbed out of wage slavery. Calling themselves miners, butchers or tailors is merely working the old "sympathetic turn." "After all, it's not bad for a working man" is what they expect from the critics, but there are some of us brutal enough to say: "If your work can't stand on its own merits, clearly you have no vocation for literature."

That a grocer could write more convincingly of his calling than one who is a professional man of letters is by no means true. If all men possessed observation, insight, and the ability to estimate the characteristic differences occasioned by vocation and surroundings, surely the miner who spent his life among miners

ought to give us something good about them. But I have lived near Wigan (God help me), and cycled through Prestonpans (as quickly as possible), so that I know something about coal-mines, still I don't honestly think I could do anything as bad as *The Underworld*.

Mr. Welsh, being a poet, is great on Nature and the moor. I got awfully fed up with this moor. I didn't see how it was restful to a poor miner, it seemed to be positively overcrowded with dicky birds. Although in my actor days I frequently got "the bird" I am not an ornithological expert; but it seemed to my reading that everything wearing feathers, from a wren to an eagle, chirped or piped, or trilled, or warbled, or sang to his mate incessantly amid the purple buds of the heather and wild thyme, and late hawthorn blossom. "Brooding curlew (a sleepy miner would have used another adjective), a faint sigh from the plover, wild rasping cry of a lap-wing, even songs of merle and mavis....." He omitted the crowing of canaries, the jabbering of jackdaws and the dulcet tones of the corn-crake. A soft spot this for a doss. No feather bed needed—just lie down on a few birds.

I have described the characters as puppets, but Robert Sinclair would require that word abbreviated to suit him. At the age of twenty-one he is the father confessor for the whole village—he is so wise. He has a tip about himself, "he knew he possessed talents far above the average of his class" is the opinion of this prig, who was as ignorant as Dick's hatband. The mother, too, is some character. Although she burst into passionate weeping when the balls of wool didn't do the Tango Scissors correctly, when her dead husband is brought home, she sheds no tear but just looks "that vexed like"! Oh, yes, I know, silent grief, too deep for words, the s-s-same stunt.

I have not space to point out all Mr. Welsh's faults in the use of words. His iteration and reiteration of phrases is a trick as old as the moor. I think that was what Louise Heilgers taught him. "Oh, Mysie," cried Robert, with breaking heart, and the stars answered, "Oh, Mysie," and all the birds sang "Oh, Mysie," the sad refrain was echoed by the tom-cats. "Oh, Mysie," murmured the straddle-bugs, and the wind sighed, soft and low, "Oh Mysie,"

Oh, Herbert, Oh, Jenkins, Oh, Bindle, Oh, my half-crown.

I have mentioned Patrick McGill. That writer has given us work of surprising quality. Some of his chapters in the novel referred to, are literary gems. I do not wish to confuse him with the author of this book under review. There is, however, one point of similarity. Mr. Welsh may be the miner poet, he certainly is a navy novelist.

J. EFFEL.

Einstein and Orthodoxy.

If it is true that Professor Einstein has really retained belief in the barbarous superstition which once afflicted the minds of the gifted race to which he belongs, we can only suppose that he has never allowed his mind to deal with the subject. It may be recalled that the "Christian" Faraday did the same, and remained nominally a Sandemanian, never allowing his mind to question religious problems, by which course he secured freedom from persecution, and leisure to carry out investigations in which alone he was interested. Beyond doubt, he would have accepted and "worshipped" Jupiter, Buddha, or Mohammed, upon similar principles, had he been born in the days of their influence.

This is not belief, it is acquiescence, and the truth or falsity of a prevailing religion receives no sort of confirmation, or, indeed, criticism, out of its passive acceptance on the part of men distinguished in other branches of learning.

TAB CAN.

Correspondence.

DR. LYTTTELTON'S CHALLENGE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Hands' question as to the destiny of the honest Atheist in the after life—"presuming there is one"—is a gratifying symptom of a wish to find common ground instead of the much commoner wish to prove somebody else wrong. If we can succeed in finding common ground we are encouraged to believe that we are on the track of truth and not of lies. If, on the other hand, we succeed in proving a multitude of our fellowmen are fools—and some of your writers are quite keen on this task—we only could infer that we are all alike wandering in mists and error; setting up painted bubbles for ourselves to worship but for others to prick.

You may remember I said long ago that many Atheists are Theists without knowing it. You seemed to think this was an insult. A schoolboy of my acquaintance once recited a piece of French on the Speech Day so well that a visitor patted him on the back, saying, "Why, I could almost have mistaken you for a Frenchman." He nearly swore! Now, why is Mr. Hands interested in this question? It is because he has a latent belief that there may be an after-life. If he were *genuinely convinced* that there is not, the question would be merely a waste of time. One of the reasons why I read the *Freethinker*—not quite all of it—is its vehemence of language, which reveals unconsciously the writers' Theism. For we never *denounce the non-existent*: nor even the believers in the non-existent. They are a harmless folk. But we do *denounce the believers* in a doctrine which we are trying to *oust* from our minds and cannot. Similarly, when someone tells me I have been a fool I am not angry with him if I am sure he is mistaken: but only when I have a lurking suspicion that he is right.

The doctrine that an honest protester against distortions of truth, even if he goes too far, is to be plunged directly after death into "eternal fires" for his torture, is a ghastly, a monstrous perversion of truth. It was taught by the powerful-brained Calvin. But notice, it would never have got hold of many leading nations were there not in all of us an instinctive recognition of the malignity of sin. There must be that to account for the hold of these dread doctrines on mankind. Truth is so manifold that I hesitate to say any affirmation is wholly a lie, though a denial may be, and often is.

I can only just outline an answer to the question. All sin is rejection of truth knowingly. Christians have taught so many lies (Calvinism *inter alia*), that many so-called Atheists are merely people who have never known the truth. But for all who cling to a lie knowing it or suspecting it to be a lie, *damnation has begun*, and if after death they go on choosing the lie rather than the truth, they will remain damned. But there is nothing in Scripture which teaches that a change of mind after death is impossible. Thus the more a man has learnt of Theism or Christianity the greater his responsibility. But even an enlightened Atheist may sin against his own convictions by fixing his attention only on the falsehoods Christians have taught, not on the truth of Christianity which persists in spite of them. Lastly, damnation is terrific because men may prefer it to salvation. The pain of it will be mental, and curative. What makes Hell Hell is not the pain, but the persistence of the wrong choice.

E. LYTTTELTON.

SIR,—Dr. Lyttelton's rejoinder is hardly worthy of him. He challenged Freethinkers to choose one of three answers, formulated by himself, to the question as to the origin of the universe. I choose one, *viz.*, that, as an origin of all things is a contradiction in terms, it cannot be known. Dr. Lyttelton's criticism of my answer is, I think most of those who read it will agree, purely verbal and unreal. I said, "We shall never know how the universe came into being," just as we shall never know how many angels can dance on the point of a needle, or whether a Snark is a Boojum—and for a similar reason. Surely that is plain. Dr. Lyttelton next asks me "if I think the universe exists." The answer is in the affirmative. I presume that Dr. Lyttelton intends to argue that if it exists it must have come into being. This, however,

does not follow, for reasons I have already stated. With regard to the question of the character of Jesus, I note that Dr. Lyttelton "never said" the character was perfect as recorded. Perhaps I may be pardoned for assuming that, as a clergyman of the Church of England, he, at any rate, thought so. I contend that not only is the character of Jesus, as recorded, not perfect, but that it is not even "the noblest ever recorded." Those of Buddha, Epicurus, Epictetus, Spinoza, and many others I should place higher, because while enjoining and practising decent conduct and consideration for others, they made no claims to Messiah-hood or divinity, and showed a far greater tolerance to the views of those who differed from them than is recorded of him who said, "He that believeth not shall be damned."

ROBERT ARCH.

SIR,—May I ask Dr. Lyttelton how he would word his challenge for those of us who think it unwarrantable to assume that the universe ever "came into being," and who think Jesus Christ mythical, not historical, and who do not admire him in any case.

W. JAMESON.

THE HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS.

SIR,—Can anything be more delightful than the Evangelical meekness and Apostolic exhortation with which "Unorthodox" begs me to study my Bible more carefully and critically as well as his "unanswerable" replies? How beautifully all the difficulties have now vanished—how wondrously harmonious are now the Gospel accounts of the Resurrection! It does seem a pity that "Unorthodox" is not hailed as the greatest champion of Christianity that ever lived, because, in truth, nobody else has ever managed to do what he has done. Perhaps, however, other Christian champions are not quite as satisfied as he is over his success, and judging from his latest effusion it is not altogether impossible that they are right. Let us see. The great point "Unorthodox" makes is that the visits to the tomb were "at *different* times by *different* persons" which "permits them to *see, hear, and do different* things." I say that the accounts are of the *same* visits at the *same* time and they hopelessly contradict one another simply because the writers were trying to record a jumbled lot of impressions taken from the Lord knows whom or what, and so constantly added to and re-edited, that thousands of books written by thousands of scholars, have so far failed utterly to elucidate the text—except to give up the "glorious angels," the "risen saints," and all the other silly fables surrounding the "risen Christ."

I proved clearly in my letter that the Gospel writers were recording the same (supposed) visit, but by once more pointing out that the A.V. is a faulty translation "Unorthodox" thinks he has made the "difficulties" again vanish away. He has done nothing of the kind. Dr. Weymouth in his *New Testament in Modern Speech* translates Matt. xxviii. 1, "After the Sabbath in the early dawn....." which I submit is *after* the "while it was still dark" of John, so that the Matthew visit was not the first. If "dawn" should be translated "drew on" (which I do not admit) my contention still holds good, especially as I am quite as good authority on this as "Unorthodox." In any case, the time stated in all the Gospels is so indefinite that dogmatically to give the hour and minute is simply absurd and has about as much justification as the time given by some pretentious Christian to the exact hour and minute of the Creation. The *different* times are, in spite of their vagueness, real *contradictions*. Now for the *different* persons. If my opponent means anything by this phrase, he means us to understand that the visits to the tomb were by a fresh set of people every time, or in other words, the visit in Mark which in one letter he says is the *fifth* and now says is the *first*, but "the fifth visit in order up to that time." Fuddled arithmetic is not in my line, but let us examine the visits again, using the new nomenclature. Matthew says (first visit, first in order of time) "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary" came and saw the stone rolled back from the door. John says (first visit, second in order of time) Mary Magdalene saw "the stone taken away from the sepulchre." But it had already been rolled away, so will "Unorthodox" explain two things? Did the stone go back after the Matthew visit, and is the John visit by a different Mary Magdalene? The next visit was by Mary Magdalene (a different one?) with Peter and John (first

visit, third in order of time) and as Peter went into the sepulchre the stone was certainly away. The next visit (the first visit, the fourth in order of time) was by the women of Luke whose names are given at the end of the visit and includes Mary Magdalene (still another?) and they also found the stone rolled away. The next visit in Mark (the first visit, the fifth in order of time) was by Mary Magdalene (was this also another one?) Mary the mother of James and Salome, so unless "Unorthodox" wishes us to believe that on these five visits a different Mary Magdalene is meant, I put it that I have proved conclusively the totally *different* persons theory is not true, as she came every time. And yet she with the other women actually said, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" in the Mark visit. Could anything be more idiotic? Not only that, although Mary Magdalene knew perfectly well that Christ had risen, she had even spoken to him, yet she actually goes to the tomb with the women of Luke with spices to anoint him! One hesitates to credit her with such crass stupidity, but one can't help doing so to those who believe such twaddle. The Gospel writers meant to narrate, of course, the same events, and vague and uncertain traditions caused them to fall into the silly contradictions which mark every step of the resurrection story.

"Unorthodox" tells us that "omissions from their records is not evidence that they did not know" when referring to the hopeless ignorance of the Gospel writers on most important matters. And putting on one side the evidence of Bishop Porteous and his *sixty* soldiers with reference to the earthquake which no other writer in the New Testament mentions, I will conclude with that marvellous aerial flight dignified by the name of the Ascension. Of the four writers who give us a biography of Jesus who would you suppose ought to narrate the wonderful miracle—the men who actually saw it or the men who didn't? Well, Matthew and John who were Jesus's own special apostles were on the spot and *saw* it and they say *nothing* about it. Mark and Luke who were *not* there, who only got their information from other people, tell us all about it. Of these two, Mark's is acknowledged to be more or less spurious or a late addition, and as for Luke's, well, he got it from Paul who got it from—the Lord knows whom. And on the strength of "he was parted from them and carried up into heaven"—third hand evidence—people like "Unorthodox" and millions of others believe in such a palpable fairy tale as the Ascension! My space is out, but the contradictions are still there and will be there as long as the Bible lasts. And I will deal with the "heaps more," if the Editor will allow me, another time.

H. CUTNER.

[We must again ask correspondents to be brief in their communications, as our space is very limited. We do not like "cutting" letters, and the only alternative is non-insertion.—Editor.]

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Company Limited by Guarantee.

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Secretary: Miss E. M. VANCE.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30. Discussion: "The March of Ideas," and Social.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, Dr. John Oakesmith, "The Ideals of a Political Realist."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. A. D. McLaren, "The Failure of Christianity."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Regent's Park): 6, Mr. J. Darby, A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15 and 6.15, Mr. Corrigan, Lectures.

COUNTRY.

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