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Views and Opinions.

Is It Blasphemy?

To speak of God as half-witted will sound like terrible blasphemy to pious ears, and were it made one of the counts in an indictment for committing that offence, one can picture the judge and jury shuddering when the counsel for the prosecution read out the phrase. For my own part, however, I cannot see why one should not have the same liberty to call God half-witted as one has to call him all-wise. After all, praise and blame are equally critical estimates on whatever they are passed. True both these judgments cannot be correct, but that does not affect their character as judgments. And if the believer will persist in giving his deity human qualities, he must not, at least he ought not, object to the unbeliever criticising the exercise of these qualities as he would those of plain John Smith. But as it happens, the expression “half-witted” is not mine, nor does it belong to any other infidel. It came from a character of unquestioned piety, whose effigy clasping a huge Bible to his breast, gazing upward with a look strongly suggestive of an attack of indigestion used to figure largely in religious publications for the young. The phrase belongs to no less a person than Martin Luther, and it will be found on page 249 of Michelet’s life (Bohn’s edition) of that famous Protestant hero. Luther gave it as his opinion that in certain respects Satan would get the better of “poor half-witted God,” and events proved Luther to be not far from the mark. Luther lived at a time when there was more genuine belief than there is to-day, and consequently men could express their feelings with much greater courage. To-day religious belief is so much of a pretence with so many, that they are afraid to let themselves go for fear they should overstep the bounds of decorum.

* * *

God’s Plan.

And now, having sheltered myself behind the religiously respectable figure of Luther, let us see if, after all, he was so very far out in applying the term half-witted to the Christian deity. In ordinary circumstances we gauge a man’s wisdom by three things—by the plan he proposes to put into execution, by the materials he has at hand for his purpose, and by

the skill with which he manipulates them. In the case of the deity we may reduce these three canons to two. As the Christian believes that his god created the materials and endowed them with all the properties they possess, these same qualities are as much evidence of his wisdom, or lack of it, as is the execution of the plan the universe is supposed to express. What, then, was the plan embodied in the divine scheme of creation? According to the Westminster Confession of Faith, and in this matter it not unfairly represents the whole of orthodox Christianity, God made the world for the benefit of man, and made man for the benefit of himself, “to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.” And Milton—who knew as much of the subject as anyone else—said that God, anxious to make up for an absence of worshippers, resolved to create—

.....out of one man a race
Of men innumerable, there to dwell
Till by degrees of merit raised
They open to themselves the way,
And Earth be changed to Heaven and Heaven
to Earth,
One kingdom, joy, and union without end.

* * *

What Happened?

Is it possible to congratulate the deity on the success of his plan? What is it that really happened—that is, if we may accept the traditional account of the course of events? Man is made for the glory of God, but, apparently, it is the devil who gets him in the larger numbers. God provides all the material, and the devil gets all the profit. Man is declared to be good when God finished him, but in the end turns out so bad that a general clearance has to be made, and the head of the selected few who are saved from the universal deluge, gets gloriously drunk as soon as possible after the earth is once more fit for human habitation. Finally, the devil seems to be getting so much the better of things that one-third of the deity has to be sacrificed to the other two-thirds in order to gather in a few for the “greater glory of God.” Something evidently went wrong with one part of the “plan.” Other parts did not fare better. The world was made for the benefit of man. It is a very modest criticism to say that it might have been better designed. Not half of it is habitable by him, and of the part that is a large area has had to be made so by human labour, millions having died before that could be accomplished. “The Lord,” said a clergyman, preaching in a broken and lilly district, “made the whole world in six days.” “Possibly,” said one of the congregation, “but he might have put in an extra day or two in this district, straightening things up a bit.” And unless one credits God with the deliberate intention of plaguing man, it must have been sheer want of thought that led to the creation of the many diseases with which he is plagued. The germs of disease could not have created themselves, and it is not pretended that the devil had a hand in their appearance. If the world was created for the benefit of man, one can only say with a famous king of Castile that it doesn’t seem beyond the bounds of wisdom to suggest a better arrangement.

God's Curios.

The "plan" of the animal world certainly suggests a justification of Luther's phrase. About half the known forms of life are parasitic, and a very large number can only live by destroying others. Man is at the mercy of quite a number of minute organisms, and it certainly seems the height of stupidity to make the world for the benefit of man, to elaborate so wonderful a structure as the human frame, and then place it at the mercy of a microbe. And even if we take man's relations to others we find him filled with passions that make living with each other a matter of more or less difficulty. Some years ago there happened in connection with Messrs. Barnum and Bailey's show one of the strangest quarrels on record. The cause of the row was the wording of the bills advertising the "freaks." A meeting of the animated curiosities was held and some pretty plain speaking done. The india-rubber skinned gentleman said that he represented a superior type of being, the lightning calculator asserted that he had more intelligence than those who paid to see him, and the whole collection went on strike until some less offensive title than "Freak" was found for them. There were also suggestions from the public to end the dispute, and among others it was advised that "God's Curios" might meet the situation. The suggestion was not adopted, but it was an admirable one. For from the Theistic point of view these people were as much God's creation as were those who paid their money to see them, although it would puzzle the believer to say where the wisdom lay in making a man without arms, or another with a skin several sizes too large for him. Perhaps there might have been some way of utilizing the collection as an aid to faith. If it had been purchased as it stood it could have been sent round to the Churches, and parsons might have proved the whole to be God's handiwork by defying anyone to think of ordinary intelligence perpetrating such a satire on existence. It would have been evidence that—

God works in mischievous ways
His blunders to unfold.

* * *

God and His Revelation.

There is the same want of wit displayed in the revelation that God has been pleased to give to man. A revelation of truths that could not otherwise be discovered, and told in such a way that there would be no mistaking its meaning would be acceptable and useful. But the Bible, while tolerably rich in fancy has been deplorably weak in facts. As a work of imagination it probably equals *Burke's Peerage* or an official report during war-time. As a catalogue of facts it has very grave deficiencies. There is no book in existence the precise meaning of which is so much in doubt, or concerning which there is so much dispute. An ordinary human reviewer who is unable to make his meaning clear is advised by all sensible critics to give up writing until he has acquired the art of clear expression. As an author the Christian deity cannot be pronounced an unqualified success. He has produced a book the meaning of which is the source of constant dispute, or if success is to be associated with it, it can only be by its having been the cause of more trouble in the history of mankind than any other. It is the same if we take those people whom he selects to do his work. The clergy of the established Church announce that they are "inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit" when they are ordained. The rest of the clergy also affirm that they are called by God to the work. Can anyone seriously say that the degree of wisdom shown in this selection is such as to make one marvel at its sagacity? Really, if the deity has shown wisdom in the selection of them it must be because he imagined

that an overdose of intellect would quite unfit them for their work.

* * *

A Last Chance.

Looking at the matter all round, it cannot be said with fairness that Martin Luther was very wide of the mark when he spoke of "half-witted God." He may have been guilty of blasphemy, but blasphemy has never been defined as consisting of speaking untruthfully about religion, but only speaking about it in a way that the religious man in authority does not like. Luther's phrase explains far more than do the elaborate explanations of God's conduct that are given by the professional expositors of his will. If the whole scheme of creation is what the orthodox Churches declare it to be, if the world was made for the benefit of man, if the Bible was written for his guidance, if the clergy were selected because of their fitness to act as the guides of the people, then one must confess that the wisdom of God is of a very questionable character. Given the power, and even human wisdom as it is might have planned a better scheme; nay, human wisdom has planned a better scheme and is all the time working it out. Of course, it may be that God has nothing to do with any of these things. It is possible that the clergy may have selected themselves, and then placed the responsibility on one who is not able to defend himself against the charge. As the old lady said when the missionary was giving her a harrowing account of the sufferings of Jesus, "Let us hope that it is not true." So let us hope that God may not, after all, be responsible for the world and for man. For non-existence is the only adequate defence against what it is alleged God has done. There is just the possibility that the Atheist may be right. And in that case we are able to relieve the Christian deity from Luther's charge of being half-witted by relegating him to the region of exploded myth.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Religion and Psychology.

DR. J. FORT NEWTON, for a short time minister of the City Temple, London, but now pastor of the Church of the Divine Paternity, New York, recently preached a sermon on "The Grace of God," which appeared in the *Christian World Pulpit* for July 6. The text is 2 Cor. xii. 9, where the Lord is represented as saying to Paul, with reference to some complaint from which the apostle suffered, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The discourse begins with an extravagant eulogium upon the Bible. Among the countless myriads of books with which the world teems, there is not one worthy of a moment's comparison with God's Book, written by men under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. This is pre-eminently "a Book of Life, not merely a book about life." As an example of its superiority Dr. Fort Newton offers its treatment of Paul. To this Paul, according to his own account, were granted visions and revelations of such exceeding greatness as had not been vouchsafed to any other man. Naturally, the temptation of such an inordinately privileged person would have been to boast; but to prevent him from thinking too highly of himself, or from being exalted over much, a thorn was sent to pierce his flesh—an instrument of Satan to discipline him. This, of course, humiliated him considerably, and three times he entreated the Lord, praying that it might leave him; but the Lord's answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my power is made perfect in weakness." According to the reverend gentleman Paul's experiences, as related in this twelfth chapter of 2 Corinthians, illustrate the ideal perfection of the Bible. To us, on the contrary, those alleged incidents in the life of the apostle, assuming their

historicity, rather show that heaven behaved very shabbily towards him. Of what advantage could those amazing visions and revelations have been to him or anybody else, when he was forbidden to make any practical use of them in daily life? Was it kind and fair to catch him up even to the third heaven and afterwards sling him down into the valley of desolation and suffering for the remainder of his life? It was easy enough for him, with his supreme faith, to persuade himself that the grace of God sufficed him in all situations, however desperate and painful; but did it save him from any trouble, peril, or suffering? On his own showing his life was crowded with distressful experiences—violent storms, cruel conflicts, bitter disappointments, heart-breaking persecutions. The grace or favour of God never once came to his rescue when subjected to the hatred and scorn of his innumerable enemies. Comparing himself with others he could thus speak:—

In labours more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labour and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness (2. Cor. xi. 23-27).

Dr. Fort Newton says that for Paul Grace and Christ became interchangeable terms in the language of his faith. To the question, what is grace? St. Augustine returned the answer: "I know until you ask me; when you ask me I do not know." The preacher, also, confesses his ignorance. In general literature grace means beauty, elegance, and to grace anything is to add dignity and honour thereto. In theology the term signifies the unmerited love and favour of God in Christ. To be saved by faith is to be in a state of grace. Manning tells us that "the grace of God is the life of the soul, as the soul is the life of the body." Dr. Fort Newton describes it in the following grandiose language:—

It is the eternal power of God, his living love in which we "live and move and have our being," everywhere present, always active, enswathing, sustaining all human life, equally the long reaches of history and the separate motions of each mind; a wonder hardly guessed by us, waiting to do "exceeding abundantly" above all we can ask or think. Many-sided, inexhaustible, accessible, unwearied, unwasted, and infinitely beneficent, it is not possible to say that there is any "higher gift than grace," or to describe the Grace of God as anything other than God himself, by whose power we live every moment, who is our fullness and in whom alone we are complete—"the love that moves the sun and all the stars," and, no less, the redeeming mercy which surrounds the limitations and liberties, the disasters and deliverances of life.

The reverend gentleman himself admits that "all this seems rather vague," while we venture to pronounce it practically meaningless. It is the language of a man whose delight it is to envelope himself and his congregation in a mantle of dense mist, and from beginning to end the present discourse is nothing but a glorification of such a theological garment. This is peculiarly characteristic of the Protestant pulpit as distinguished from the Catholic. At first, repudiating the infallibility of the Church it fell back upon and emphasized the infallibility of the Book; but now in most of the vast number of Protestant sects, the claim to any kind of infallibility has been abandoned. Dr. Newton often waxes extremely merry in condemnation of the dogmas of the Church, forgetful of the fact

that he, too, has his dogmas, the only difference between his dogmas and those of the systematic theologian being that the latter are intelligible without being intelligent, while the former are neither intelligible nor intelligent.

With a smattering of science and a fairly wide acquaintance with literature, the modern Protestant divine is of necessity an emotionalist, especially when in the pulpit; that is to say, he is an emotional not an intellectual believer, and naturally all his appeals are to the emotions rather than to the intellects of his hearers. That is pre-eminently true of Dr. Fort Newton. It was a characteristic of his London ministry, as it seems to be of his New York one. His peculiarity is that instead of *arguing* he *dogmatizes*, emotionally. As an illustration take the following: "Many pious folk are alarmed at the study of the psychology of religion, as if it somehow leaves God out." Does he make an attempt to allay that alarm? Yes, but only by this dogmatic assertion: "Far from it." He does not even try to justify that dogmatic statement by any argument. The truth is that psychology has nothing at all to do with God, because God is not one of the facts of consciousness, with which alone psychology is concerned. It is well-known that all modern psychologists treat religious experience as abnormal, but its subjective reality is denied by none. On this point the teaching of William James has been grievously misunderstood and wickedly misrepresented. In his celebrated treatise, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. James, while admitting the reality of religious experience in its many forms, by no means affirms the objective truth of religion, or the reality of the supernatural. Communion with supernatural beings may be a perfectly genuine experience, even though supernatural beings do not objectively exist. Religious experience is a real, though abnormal, fact of consciousness, and the emotional exaltation that accompanies, or is induced by, it is in exact proportion to the strength and intensity of the belief in the supernatural. Dr. Fort Newton is wrong, psychology *does* leave God entirely out, but deals very fully with the *belief* in God, tracing it to its origin and minutely following the various evolutionary processes through which it has reached its present status in the Christian religion. In this matter the sciences of anthropology, sociology, and psychology are most closely related and play into one another's hands with the utmost ease and beauty. As a result of their respective discoveries, the conclusion is intellectually irresistible that every form of supernatural religion is rooted and grounded in superstition, and has been a hindrance rather than a help to the social progress of the race. Even Dr. Fort Newton must concede this point. He is also aware and has admitted in correspondence, that Atheism is, to say the least, not an obstacle to the formation of the highest and noblest moral character. J. T. LLOYD.

Annie Besant.

The Bible is that great cord with which the people are bound; cut this, and the mass will be more free to appreciate facts instead of faiths.—Charles Bradlaugh.

THE periodic appearances of Mrs. Annie Besant at public meetings must often cause some of the older Freethinkers a pang of regret, for her secession from the Freethought movement a generation ago was a real and unmistakable loss to the Army of Human Liberation. For fifteen stormy years this gifted woman was in the very forefront of the battle for liberty, and those of us who were then young and ardent regarded her much as the fervent Royalists of France esteemed Marie Antoinette. She was a queen among women. In those far-off days women speakers were uncommon

on Freethought platforms, and Mrs. Besant was a charming lady and a rare and accomplished orator. Moreover, she was cultured to the finger tips, though she carried her weight of learning gracefully. Brought up amid the ease and luxury of a middle-class home, she never flinched at the call of duty. Matriculating at London University, she took the Bachelor of Science degree, with honours. Her knowledge of French was turned to capital account, and she translated Jules Soury's *Religion of Israel* and *Jesus and the Gospels*, and Ludwig Büchner's works. As a debater and orator she had no serious rival of her own sex, and some of the foremost women speakers on the Temperance and other platforms seemed commonplace in comparison.

Thrust into leadership by her rare talents, she was forced into journalism by the accident of her position, but, even in the narrow way of propaganda, she, like her illustrious colleague, Charles Bradlaugh, found time to encourage genius. He, it will be recalled, introduced that shy genius, James Thomson, the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, to the reading public; whilst she published Bernard Shaw's novels, long before that brilliant writer had stormed the bastions of success.

It is one of life's little ironies, that whereas Mrs. Besant has been so largely regarded by the public as a leader, she has in reality been as much a disciple as any of the rank and file. She has sat at the feet of so many teachers, such as Dr. Pusey, Dean Stanley, Charles Voysey, Moncure Conway, Thomas Scott, Charles Bradlaugh, Madame Blavatsky, the Fabians, to mention a few names that can be recalled readily. After thus boxing the compass of belief, she still finds numbers of well-dressed and apparently educated people, who regard her as the last of the oracles, and who wait upon her lightest words.

What is the secret of her hold on such large numbers of people. The explanation lies, we think, in her bright and forceful personality, and also in her gift of oratory, which is very remarkable. How vividly do her speeches come through the mist of the years! When she was at the meridian of her extraordinary power she was easily first among women speakers. There was none like her. When she chanted, in a voice as sweet as a silver bell, the Galilean's requiem, or retold in awed accents the piteous story of Giordano Bruno, or when she pleaded for greater liberty for men, women and children, the audiences cheered themselves hoarse in their admiration of her consummate oratory. She was a rare and accomplished artist, and played on her audience as a musician plays on an organ. At her farewell address at the old Hall of Science, London, after fifteen years' devoted service to Secularism, she made a most moving speech. Some of her audience actually broke down, and grey-haired men were not ashamed to be seen in tears. For, in those far-off days, Annie Besant was one of the most fascinating and impressive speakers it was possible to listen to.

It was nearly half a century ago that Mrs. Besant discovered her gift of speech. She was then the young wife of a Church of England minister, the Rev. Frank Besant, brother to the famous novelist. One day, being alone in the church, where she had gone to play the organ, the idea seized her of mounting the pulpit and delivering an address to the empty benches. "I knew of a verity," she wrote afterwards, "that the gift of speech was mine, and that, if ever—and then it seemed so impossible!—if ever the chance came to me of public work, this power of melodious utterance should at least win hearing of any message I had to bring."

It was no idle boast. Her golden tongue has won a hearing for so many causes; but the fact emerges that her best and most lasting work was done for militant

Freethought. In estimating her remarkable career, this part of her past looms very largely, and overshadows the smaller interests that succeeded. Paradoxical as it may seem, this rare and gifted high-priestess of a latter-day superstition seems fated to pass through life and to leave no lasting vestige save that memorable time when she gave fifteen years of her splendid powers to the cause of Secularism.

MIMNERMUS.

Bible Poetry.

As long as human beings have been able to express their deepest feelings in articulate and rhythmical language there have been poets in the world. But poetry, like all other fine arts, is a development. At first it is simplicity itself, but with the varied experience of mankind it grows and changes until as a complex and complete whole it captivates the head and enthral the heart of humanity. The painter appeals to our sense of beauty in colour, the sculptor to our idea of the beautiful in form, the musician to the same sense in sound, while the poet uses all the arts of fancy and language to arouse in us a recognition of the beautiful in sentiment.

The aim of all art is to give pleasure, not necessarily to impart truth. The poet can do no more than express his own physical and mental states, and therefore poetry can be only the mirror of natural phenomena and of imaginary creations as they appear to the mind of the writer. The wider and loftier his knowledge of nature and his faculty of imagination, the greater the pleasure he experiences and imparts. As Shakespeare says in a passage of rare beauty:—

The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth
to heaven,
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

—*Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act v.

Works of art have this advantage over many things which afford us temporary pleasure—such as money, rank, health, sensual enjoyments, etc.—that they remain behind to be enjoyed by thousands who know nothing of their authors, but who may understand and appreciate their gifts long after their eyes have ceased to roll in "fine frenzy."

It would be manifestly absurd for any man who desires to be absolutely fair to affirm that the Bible contains no poetry, because every reader must know that poetical expressions are scattered throughout the pages of this so-called sacred book; and most diligent students would acknowledge that some excellent poetry may be found in such books as Job, Proverbs, Isaiah, and several of the minor prophets. But as a Freethinker I contend that such poetry as may be found in the Bible is perfectly human, often of a very faulty character, both in expression and sentiment, even after it has been improved by successive generations of revisers. For what critic, with any judgment, can believe that the translations which we now have of the Old Testament represent exactly the ideas of the ancient writers? Even the plays of Shakespeare have undergone frequent revision to bring certain expressions contained in them more in unison with modern ideas. But a dramatic author has to make his characters express ideas and sentiments to which he himself is entirely opposed.

This, however, cannot be said of the Bible poets. All the sentiments, whether good or bad, which they committed to writing must be regarded as their own, except, perhaps, in the various passages in the poetical symposium contained in the book of Job. Indeed, the sentiments, in a sense, were more than their own. The

voice was the voice of man; the emotions and language were the emotions and language of man; but the motive power and inspiration were of God.

God used alike their sombre moods and joyous moods to reach the depths of the human soul, at least, so we are told by theologians. But if such a theory be reasonable, ought we to expect the inspired poet to breathe the spirit of revenge? It is well enough for David to exclaim: "Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever..... Who giveth food to all flesh, for his mercy endureth forever" (Ps. cxxxvi. 1, 25). But when the poet proceeds to describe those whom he calls Jahveh's enemies, he reveals a narrow and cruel spirit. For example, take this passage:—

Set thou a wicked man over him and let Satan stand at the right hand. When he shall be judged let him be condemned; and let his prayer become sin. Let his days become few and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg; let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath, and let the strangers spoil his labour. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let his name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his father's be remembered with the Lord; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out (Ps. cix. 6-14).

These are the expressions of an inspired poet! How different these revengeful lines from Portia's eulogy of mercy in *The Merchant of Venice*:—

The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven,
Upon the place beneath; it is twice blessed;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown:
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings.
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice.

From the inspired Bible poet to the uninspired playwright, what an evolution!

We learn truth by contrast, and we are enabled to judge how far man has travelled along the line towards civilization by reference to this thoughts, whether expressed in poetry or prose. A low idea of human nature, an intolerant spirit towards those from whom we differ, dogmatism on things doubtful, are signs of the small and uncultivated mind.

Dryden says:—

A tyrant's power in rigour is express.

And the harsh character of the Bible poet is shown in the cruelty and vindictiveness of his appeals to Deity to avenge himself by torturing his enemies. If the poetry of the Bible were really God inspired, we should expect not only to find it perfect in style, in expression, soaring to the loftiest heights and sounding the profoundest depths of philosophy—giving us, indeed, the noblest truths in the loveliest dress—it would be incomparably superior to the poems of profane writers. Such, however, we do not find to be the case. Of human nature the Bible poets understood very little, of natural phenomena they knew even less. Consequently, they sang not the divine song of human liberty, nor did they extol the labours of the reformer, the struggles of a people striving to be free. But they sang the song of war, of strife, of passion, of hatred, of malice and of murder. They sang of victories which their God had given them over their enemies and composed hymns of praise in honour of a God whom Shelley describes as: "A vengeful, pitiless, and almighty fiend, whose mercy is a nickname for the rage of tameless tigers hungering for blood."

Now let us take an example of the crude ideas of Deity which permeate the poetical parts of the so-called sacred volume:—

The burden of Egypt. Behold the Lord rideth on a swift cloud and shall come into Egypt; and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom (Isaiah xix. 1, 2).

Here, again, we have the religious method of vindicating the claim of eternal justice.

Now let us note how the Hebrew prophet and poet proposes to deal with unbelievers. Observe:—

Now go write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come forever and ever. That this is a rebellious people, lying children that will not hear the law of the Lord; which say to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits; get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us. Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, because ye despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. And he shall break it as the breaking on the potters' vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare; so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a shred to take the fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of a pit (Isaiah, xxx. 8-14).

This is a fair sample of Biblical poetry. There may be some better and some worse, than these verses, but at any rate we may say that modern poetry breathes a better spirit and is expressed in language that appeals more powerfully to the intellect and emotions of mankind.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

A Novelist as Apologist.

INTELLECTUAL absurdity and moral monstrosity are common, in different degrees, to all forms of historic Christianity. Some are more vulnerable intellectually, others morally. The Catholic Church, though its dogmas are intellectually contradictory, is a little difficult to attack frontally on this ground, owing to the avowed refusal of its defenders to admit the competence of reason to adjudge its claims. A damning and destructive case, however, can be made out against Catholicism on moral grounds; and the historical record of the Church notoriously will not bear inspection. We may sum up the case briefly when we say that the main historical count against the Catholic Church is that it has set a frightful example of persecution to the death for mere differences of opinion; that the methods of that persecution, including as they do torture and burning at the stake, have been unprecedentedly barbarous, and that their prevalence has only declined in so far as the political power of the Church has declined.

No answer has ever been given to this indictment. Catholic apologists have filled pamphlets and books with quibbling and evasion on the subject. Their favourite expedients are to pretend that executions for heresy were the work of the State and not of the Church—a hollow hypocrisy; to blacken the character of the victims by alleging, e.g., that the Albigenses were immoral, that Bruno was a charlatan, etc., and finally, to divert attention by dwelling on the

¹ The cynical formula for burning at the stake is well-known. The ecclesiastical court handed over the victim to "the secular arm, praying that he may be punished as mercifully as possible, and without the shedding of blood."

persecutions of Catholics by Protestants—the method of *tu quoque*, and valid only against Protestants.

The most readable specimens of Catholic propaganda in recent times are, perhaps, the historical novels of the late Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson. They deal chiefly with the Tudor and Stuart periods. Father Benson is skilful in angling for sympathy. He loves to relate the life-history of an imaginary Catholic hero, young, devoted, and adventurous, who is seized by the minions of Elizabeth, is racked into a jelly, and wins a crown of martyrdom by vivisection at Tyburn. It was therefore with great curiosity that I picked up Father Benson's *The Queen's Tragedy*, dealing with the reign of Mary Tudor, to see how he would deal with the other side of the picture. The result was to confirm my opinion that Catholicism had no case. I do not think a single soul will be reconciled to the Church by reading *The Queen's Tragedy*.

The hero is a very unpleasant young gentleman called Guy Manton. Father Benson is careful to tell us that "he was not fervently religious." As far as I could gather, he supported the Catholic religion because it was "the thing" in those days. To-day he would have been "Church of England." Nevertheless, he works himself up into a frenzied approval of the burning of heretics, talks about "the insult to our Lord," and at the burning of Latimer and Ridley, when he sees a man hang gunpowder round the victims' necks—

"Then Guy understood, and torn by passion, he cried out—'No powder,' he shouted."

From which you will gather that, if he was not "fervently religious," Master Guy Manton was at all events no sickly humanitarian. And—mark the significant fact—Father Benson, a *modern* Catholic priest, expects his readers to like him.

That of Latimer and Ridley is the only execution actually depicted in the book. In this, Father Benson shows his discretion. These Protestant bishops, who were burnt by Mary, had themselves sanctioned burnings in the preceding reigns, and Father Benson can claim, with reason, that they only got as good as they gave. Moreover, Latimer and Ridley were allowed gunpowder at the stake, so that the author is able to avoid extreme horror in the description, horrible as it is. But Father Benson is silent about the hundreds of lesser people—simple tradesmen, many of them, and women—who were also burnt in that short but hideous reign. There is a sort of grim, unconscious humour in his one reference to obscurer victims:—

"There were some more burnings. Flower, the monk who had taken a wife and preached heresy, was burned in Westminster for stabbing the priest as he gave Holy Communion.....Cardmaker, the married friar, after the withdrawal of his recantation, suffered at Smithfield with Master Warne, the upholsterer."

Father Benson's method is here to blacken the victims. There are three to blacken. One stabbed a priest; a second recanted and then withdrew; the third was an upholsterer! After all, upholsterers are not really human.

The most nauseating feature of Father Benson's book is the slobber and false pathos lavished on "Bloody Mary" herself. This queen, as is well-known, married Philip II of Spain, and was unhappy in her married life—though not unhappier than thousands of modern victims of our abominable divorce laws, of whom, not being crowned heads, nobody takes much notice, and whose relief is consistently obstructed by the Catholic and Anglican Churches. Mary also suffered from dropsy, which prevented her from having a child, and eventually carried her off. Father Benson dilates on her miseries till we are tired. The last chapter is given up wholly to this wretched woman's death-bed, served up with "Domine Jesu" and "Agnus Dei" *ad libitum*. Dying of dropsy in

one's bed is not bliss, but it is not so bad as burning at the stake, which she served out to others.

Considered as historical novels, Father Benson's works are as distorted in one direction as Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* is in the other. The sixteenth century is an interesting period. A good novel based upon it, and written from a Freethought point of view, would be worth reading. Certainly few periods are so well calculated to point the Freethought moral. The reigns of Henry, Edward, Mary and Elizabeth are one long tale of man's inhumanity to man in the name of religion. Underlying the storm and fury was the social fact of the break-up of the old mediæval system, based on feudalism and priestcraft, and the emergence of the new bourgeois system, based on commercialism and private judgment. Henry and Elizabeth, though they did not know it, were assisting at the birth of modern capitalism. Mary, with her diseased bigotry, was trying to resuscitate an order of things that was dead. Neither party to the struggle had any notion of liberty or toleration as now understood. Even Sir Thomas More, who preached toleration in his *Utopia*, burnt heretics as Lord Chancellor. If we wish to find in that evil age the germs of a humaner conception of life, we must look away from courts and chancelleries, and note how Copernicus and Galileo were digging the grave of Biblical cosmology, how Rabelais and Montaigne were stirring a side-wind of ridicule against established tyrannies, and how Bruno courted martyrdom for a liberty of speculation as foreign to Geneva as to Rome. If any Freethinker feels called to the task of reconstructing the past in the form of fiction, he will have here materials in abundance.

ROBERT ARCH.

Trouble in Heaven.

THERE'S a story they tell of a sulphurous smell
That burst into Heaven one day,
And the sulphurous fumes burnt the delicate
plumes
Of the cherubs who wandered that way.

So a council was held and St. Peter compelled
The cause of the trouble to show,
Whereupon soon he found quite a hole in the
ground
That led to the regions below.

Quick a message hell-bent to the devil was sent
Demanding he make the repairs.
But the devil denied 'twas his place, and replied
He'd but mind his infernal affairs.

After lengthy debate on this question of state
'Twas at last with great wisdom decided
The best lawyer to hire in the Heavenly choir
And by his better judgment be guided.

Then St. Peter forthwith bade an angel named
Smith
That he set out at once on a journey,
Make inquiry complete down each golden-paved
street
And return not without the attorney.

Long Smith searched in his might every mansion
of light
To bring forth that attorney well fitted
But reported in grief while he did find one thief
Not a lawyer was ever admitted.

HOWELL, S. ENGLAND.

If people, when they speak of Christianity, include the virtues common to all religions, they should not give Christianity credit for all the good that has been done. There were millions of virtuous men and women, millions of heroic and self-denying souls before Christianity was known.—Robert G. Ingersoll.

Acid Drops.

We see from a review of Mr. R. J. Campbell's new work on the life of Christ that he thinks the Angel of Mons story is "probably true." In view of Mr. Machen's public declaration that he invented the story, and had not a vestige of fact to build it on, the opinion is illuminating. It shows that when a man is dealing with religion truth has no value whatever. Anything will do that serves his purpose. Not that there is anything more wonderful about the Angel of Mons than about the angels of any other place. The only thing is that in this case we know the inventor of the story, and he did not live long enough ago to get the reputation of being inspired or favoured with miraculous visions. Had Mr. Machen lived long enough ago he might by now have been credited with a whole gospel all to himself, and good Christians would have sworn to the veracity of the gospel of Saint Machen.

Mr. Bottomley illustrates the same point. In the second issue of the new Sunday paper he returns to the question of a future. This time his article is about—well, it is about three columns in length, but one does not need to say anything when writing on a religious subject. But the article professes to deal with the immortality of animals, and we agree with him that many of the animals better deserve immortality than some men, and that every argument for the immortality of man holds good for the immortality of animals. But having gone so far, and for fear, apparently that some of his religious readers will be hurt—for Mr. Bottomley is still under the curious delusion that it is religious people who read Sunday papers—Mr. Bottomley rounds on "Mr. Materialist" for saying that "my faithful friend" is to perish miserably, to "die like a dog." But Mr. Bottomley knows quite well that it is the Christian and not the Materialist who uses the expression to "die like a dog," as though a good dog was not as worthy of immortality as anyone else. "Doth God care for oxen?" comes from the New Testament, not from the *Freethinker*. Mr. Bottomley's growing religion appears to have a bad effect on his sense of accuracy. And it seems strict truthfulness and religion are quite impossible companions. And also, all who read Sunday papers do not attend Church. So there was no necessity to heave that brick at the Materialist.

At the Labour Party Conference at Brighton last month, one of the side-shows was the meeting arranged by the League of Faith and Labour. The Rev. Dr. Orchard appealed for the association of Christianity and Labour, and Mr. Noel Buxton urged the vital necessity of rebutting the false charge that Labour was anti-religious. Mr. Buxton has found a mare's nest. We are not aware that anyone ever contended that the Labour Party is more anti-religious than any other political body. In a report of some remarks made by a Labour candidate at a recent by-election, Jesus Christ is referred to three times in about a dozen lines. Even a section of the "capitalistic" press said that it was "somewhat nauseating." What Freethinkers contend is that when the toiling masses were politically impotent, they were nothing but "the army of the night" as far as this world is concerned. True, they had immortal souls which were a very real asset for the Church and the privileged class. Now that the worker is demanding more attention to the claims of his body he is a "materialist."

The recent prolonged drought has drawn attention to the petitions for rain in the Church of England Prayer Book. In this volume there is also a special prayer for fine weather. These close resemblances to the practices of so-called heathen "rain doctors" should make the drowsiest Christian a little sceptical, but for the fact that there is no soporific like a dose of religion.

A witness at Clerkenwell County Court described a man as "mad-drunk, so drunk that he thought he was Napoleon and struck the lamp-post because it would not salute him." This is a fine example of the effects of drunkenness, but thousands of persons, spiritually in-

toxicated, have excelled this. They have even said their prayers before the statue of a man who never lived at all, and believed in the chance of a favourable reply to their petitions.

According to the *Daily Mirror* the Home Secretary is to be asked whether a prisoner describing himself as an Atheist is to have an Atheist representative in lieu of a prison minister. If the question is asked the reply would probably be that there are not enough Atheists in prison to justify the appointment of such an official. Up to the present the prison authorities make every allowance for their usual patrons, who are nearly all followers of some religion or the other. Indeed, if all the Christians stayed out of prison, the buildings might be let for storage warehouses. They are the most regular patrons, and arrangements are fully made for them.

There is a cause for everything if we only look long enough for it. And we now know, thanks to the *Daily News*, why England lost the test match. It was, says Mr. G. A. Eaton, in a letter to that paper, because the team was selected on the "Lord's Day." Now wouldn't it have been more dramatic if the Lord had done something to the men who were doing the selecting while they were at the job? Anyway, it is no use blaming the players for the defeat, or praising the Australians for the victory. It was the Lord who bowled them out.

It looks as though all those who wish to acquire any of the Pioneer Press Publications would do well to order at once, for the signs are that we shall soon be wiped out. At least that is the inference we draw from a speech made before the British Israel Congress by Mr. D. Davidson on July 8. This gentleman announced that he is about to issue a work on the Great Pyramids that will prove the truth of the Bible, and will satisfy sceptics. In that case our work will be finished and our publishing offices closed. But there is time to order before the book is published.

The tract distributor is not nearly so ubiquitous in London to-day as he was twenty or twenty-five years ago; but he can still be met with occasionally on the Embankment and in a few other places. The latest call to salvation which we have seen, entitled "In the Air or not in the Air," is dated May, 1921, and announces that it belongs to the "Air Raid Series—47th Thousand." It is quite reminiscent of the earlier warnings of the awful consequences of unbelief, which are contrasted very solemnly but bravely with the joys awaiting the elect. The meeting place of the latter with the Son of God will be in the air; but it will be no use trying to get there by aeroplane, because only those provided with "spiritual bodies" can endure that "divine atmosphere." Our daily papers have been asking recently, with impatient indignation, Who pays for the Communistic and revolutionary literature circulated in England? We should be much more interested in knowing who pays for the thousands of such leaflets and pamphlets as the "Air Raid Series."

The Hell idea is worn out. We propose, as a substitute, that all people should be compelled to read the daily papers. The three articles in the *Daily Mail*, July 2, 1921, are fine samples of journalistic bilge—written by barbarians for barbarians. Canada can remember her sacrifice in the great war without a memorial; the public can realize the potentiality of the aeroplane in war without the stupid bombing and burning of a model village, and if the great fight is the best that civilization can produce, then the sooner the earth is pushed into the sun the better. Our newspapers have no love for Nietzsche who said what everyone but intellectual ennuuchs knows to be true: "We mistrust any form of culture that tolerates newspaper reading or writing."

We trust that the University of London will be unable to aim at anything lower than the level of current journalism. Diploma Courses for aspiring journalists are to be given, and we hope that we may have something in the future like a correct version of a chicken crossing

the road. One should only read daily newspapers for amusement—never for facts, instruction, or anything of importance in real life.

The connection between journalism and Christianity! They are both the same. They have as much bearing on life's problems as the man in the moon has on the selling of watercress. As long as Midas dictates the printed word, and journalists obey, we are entitled to be suspicious.

"Kill that fly and save the child," is the instruction on a poster to be seen on Church announcement boards. If Noah had not taken a pair into the Ark.....and wouldn't gardeners be thankful if he had left out other beauties too? Possibly there is a celestial preference this year for greenfly instead of roses.

The *Daily Herald* (July 9) states that a deputation of fourteen women, representing the British Empire Union, waited on the Bishop of London "to protest against the existence in the country of proletarian and Socialist Sunday-schools." One lady—we deliberately use this term in preference to "woman"—said that the schools teach that "God is a word used to designate an imaginary being whom people themselves had devised." The Bishop expressed his willingness to co-operate with an influential body of women "in an effort to ferret out these schools." The tolerant spirit implied in such expressions as "ferreting out" and "protesting against the existence of" distasteful institutions is well worth the attention not only of Socialists but of all who prate so glibly of British liberty and fair play.

If the Socialist Sunday-schools taught children that God is a being "without body, parts, or passions," and that "it is impossible to define God, to locate him, or to picture him," the young pupils would not have been much wiser, nor do we think the Bishop of London would have been quite satisfied with the teaching. Will the Bishop tell us exactly what he knows about God—not what he teaches children about him?

After all, it lies on the face of it that all the gods in the world bar one *must* be imaginary beings. The Bishop himself believes so of all the other people's gods, and all the other people believe it of his god. The crime of these wicked socialists only amounts to adding one more to the heap of admittedly imaginary existences. And one fancies that the Bishop and his deputation of ladies would not grow so indignant about it if they did not have an uneasy feeling that all the gods are matters of imagination. That, we take it, is why they are all so frightened of people disbelieving in them. No one sends a deputation to the astronomer royal if a man does not believe in the moon. The moon remains whether we believe in it or not. But gods come under a different category. They only exist so long as people believe in them. When you cease to believe they expire. And all the clergy know it. That is why they say unbelief is the greatest of offences. The gods can survive anything but that.

"Class for Ladies, 3 p.m.—Class for Young Women and Girls, 8.30 p.m." The Rev. J. N. Newland-Smith says that he knows one church which "cheerfully" makes this announcement on its printed notice of Confirmation classes. The ecclesiastical mind has long done its best to maintain the traditional social values, but in these days of democracy and Labour parties and women's suffrage, this distinction between "ladies" and "young women" is well worth observation. The hours indicated for the two classes seem to show that the "ladies" are those who do no work during the day—the hall-mark of social superiority in England.

Music may sooth the savage breast, but religion appears to have an opposite effect. Serious rioting has taken place at Mysore between Hindoos and Mohammedans. As a Hindu wedding procession was passing a Moslem Mosque its band was playing. The infuriated Mohammedans

attacked the Hindoos; the police were fetched, and in the ensuing battle three persons were killed and many injured.

The Catholic Association is advertising excursion trips to the Lourdes shrine ranging from £12 to £18 10s., third-class and first-class, respectively. The famous firm of Cook and Son also announce trips to Lourdes at £15. Quite up-to-date examples of God and Mammon in double harness.

"It is better to be dull than to be fast," said Bishop Welldon, Dean of Durham. Certainly, dull people make the best Christians.

There will really have to be a commission appointed to settle who did win the war. Mr. Lloyd George is widely advertised as being the one who did the trick. Others assert it was won by the working men—but that was before the era of strikes set in. Then it was attributed to the women, and to various other people and classes. Now the Dean of Detroit, who is lecturing in London, decides that the war was won by Christianity. The only proof he gives is that Christianity is the incarnation of divine love. So the Germans will know how they came to lose. They were overcome by divine love as manifested in the armies of the Allies. We hope they appreciate the dose of Christian love they have been getting.

Providence does not pay much regard to the sacredness of the clerical profession. The Rev. Peter Jones was drowned whilst fishing from a boat in the Menai Straits. When cycling in Roscrea, Father Flannery met with an accident and was seriously injured.

"Fiction loses ground at the libraries" is the headline in a Sunday paper. The accompanying letterpress reveals the fact that at numbers of libraries imaginative works are less read than at any previous period. It is also curious that the Bible, which is so largely fiction, is less read than formerly.

England is not the only country where one can study the various aspects of "Christian unity." The new Czecho-Slovak Church is already divided into three sects all hostile to each other. The majority demand a free religious community devoid of dogmas and sacraments, while a comparatively small group desires union with orthodox Serbia. A third section avows its adherence to the Roman Catholic doctrine, but disclaims the supremacy of the pope. Yet the unity of the Church is one of the "proofs" of its divine origin, and that unity will not last long without submission to some central authority. If you want the perfect organization of your Church and creed you must pay the price—intellectual slavery.

The Church of England Press Bureau, formed to disseminate information regarding Anglican matters in a form which "will be acceptable to the man in the street," is said to have the full authority of the bishops behind it. We do not doubt it. Nor do we think such a bureau will have to fight very heroically to secure recognition and support by our "glorious free Press." One of the leading features of this Press to-day is its consistent practice of ignoring movements and opinions which are distasteful to it; but all its efforts to galvanize life into a corpse cannot arrest the process of decomposition!

An alarm bell on a church collection box was the cause of the arrest of a man at Godalming Roman Catholic Church. The prisoner was afterwards sentenced to three months' hard labour. Observe that it was a mundane alarm bell and not a celestial angel that gave the warning.

The clergy may or may not be "starving," but the bishops do not intend to undergo the blessings of poverty, if they can help it. For the creation of an entirely new diocese in Monmouthshire Lord Tredegar has given a Newport residence for the bishop, and £500 annually towards the bishop's salary, which will reach four figures.

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.

G. F. SAMUEL (Tobago).—Subscription received. Pleased to have your high appreciation of the *Freethinker*, and also of *Theism or Atheism?* The latter work is selling very steadily. It does appear to have supplied a much needed hand-book on the subject, which was our aim in writing it.

J. FOTHERGILL.—We were glad to see those excellent letters of yours in the local press. It is always useful propaganda. Should like to see others at it all over the country.

J. DE B.—Your subscription was duly received, and we are sorry the other matter escaped acknowledgement. We have made good the deficiency, as you will see.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—J. De B. (Cape Town), £2; R. Green, 10s.

H. KILOB (Bengal).—Thanks for pamphlet, but we do not see anything in it that calls for special treatment. There are any number of these infallible proofs of the existence of God, but they none of them seem to stop people disbelieving.

R. GREEN.—The sayings run in the version known to us, "He who knows not, and knows not that he knows not, is a fool, shun him. He who knows and knows not that he knows, is asleep, waken him. But he who knows and knows that he knows is wise, follow him." There is possibly more than one version, and it is usually given merely as an Eastern saying without any author being named. We have placed the ten shillings to the credit of the Sustentation Fund. Thanks for compliments.

H. S. ENGLAND (Chicago).—Pleased to have Dr. Edmunds' high opinion of the *Freethinker*. We know Kirsopp Lake's work. Thanks, however, for the reference.

J. SADLER.—We could have advised more definitely if we had known the particular branch in which you are interested. If you get Bertrand Russell's *Problems of Philosophy* (Home University Library), and Sellars' *Essentials of Philosophy* (Macmillan), these will give you a bird's eye view of the subject. If you can get the reading of James's *Principles of Psychology* you will get a survey of a great many problems put in a very attractive manner. Read also Hart's *Psychology of Insanity* (Cambridge University Press), which will give you a good outline of the new psychology. For an outline of the history of philosophy you cannot do better than consult Lewes' *History of Philosophy*—not the biographical history. There have been later and more exact histories, but none more attractively written.

R. WATSON.—Meslier's *Good Sense* is a work that would well repay reprinting, so far as the quality of the work is concerned. We should very much like to reprint it if we could. We may consider the matter later, anyway. Glad you are pleased with the Volney. It is winning general applause. We do not know how far a collected edition of Bradlaugh's works would be in demand now. It should have been issued directly after his death to command success. In any case the copyright is not ours, and it could only be done in conjunction with his daughter.

M. HEWORTH (Cape Town).—Thanks for booklet. It is a useful little compilation. We understand the author is getting it reprinted.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The United Kingdom.—One year, 17s. 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.

One of our old readers, Mr. A. Aldwinckle, writes to us from France a letter which we print in another column. Mr. Aldwinckle is entitled to his grumble, and it comes from one who wishes the movement well. We note it here so that it may not be thought that when we pointed out the effect of the bad times on our sales we were hoisting a signal of distress. Every paper in the country, we believe, has felt the effects of about four millions of people being wholly or partly unemployed, and we fancy we have felt it less than most. But our position makes us watch these things very closely, and we cannot afford to have the loss on the paper increased if it can be avoided. That is why we were anxious to get our friends to see what could be done to make new subscribers. The falling off, we are sure, is quite temporary, and we shall begin to forge ahead once more so soon as things settle down.

But we have no cause for feeling disheartened. Quite the contrary. During the war the paper pulled through better than any other propagandist organ now issued. It has not raised its price to subscribers by as much as any other paper in the country, and although we took control without a penny of capital behind us, and publishing involved the sinking of three times the capital it did before the war, we have issued about thirty books and pamphlets, and so advanced the publishing side of the movement. We have had to undertake the responsibility for the loan of the capital necessary to do this, but it has been done, and the capital will be gradually repaid. So we think we have every cause to feel gratified with the progress made. Only we do not like even temporary set-backs if they can be avoided.

As to the proposed *Freethinker* Fellowship. We did make a start with this but we found no one who was willing to take on the work of organizing, and so we were obliged to let the matter stand over. If we could have given it our personal attention we have no doubt that it would have been a success, but we have so many other things demanding our time that we were obliged to let this one go, at least, for the present. As the financial position improves we may be able to get more help, and so obtain the leisure for other matters. But our prime effort for the present must be to make the paper pay its way. And we feel convinced that we shall manage that one of these days.

Manchester friends will be glad to learn that the local Branch has been able to secure a hall for a coming winter season in which to hold their meetings. Hitherto the Branch has been holding its meetings in the Co-operative Hall, Ardwick, but that is no longer available for Sunday gatherings. Hence the need for finding a new habitation. We believe the Branch has some scheme on hand for acquiring a hall of its own. We hope it will succeed in doing so. There are plenty of Freethinkers in the district who could help in that matter.

Mr. F. G. Carston, of Spencer Road, Clarmont Cape, Cape Province, South Africa, writes that he is willing to undertake the distribution of propagandist literature, if anyone is good enough to forward the same to him. There should be plenty of useful work to be done in this direction in South Africa.

In his address on "The Churches and Labour" in Regent's Park last Sunday, Mr. R. H. Rosetti read the

resolutions to be submitted at the Labour demonstration organized by the Churches for the 16th instant. His detailed comments on the resolutions were appreciated by the audience, which continued to grow in dimensions during the evening. A good many questions were answered and there was some opposition.

The Myth of Jesus.

III.

(Continued from page 438.)

We may confidently conclude from what we know, and from the laws of human development, that the origins of the fundamental teachings of Judaism not yet discovered in cuneiform literature shall yet be found there. *The doctrine of a coming Deliverer* could arise only in the centre of culture where the prestige of power was no longer what it was in a greater past.—*Professor Hugo Winckler, "History of Babylonia and Assyria,"* p. 158.

WHEN were the followers of Jesus Christ first known as Christians? According to the New Testament (Acts xi. 26) at Antioch, and it is dated in the authorized version A. D. 41. There is no doubt that the name Christian originated outside of Palestine, as, indeed, did the faith itself, and it is as likely that the name originated in Antioch as any other of the Greek speaking cities where Christianity first appeared, but not so early as the year A. D. 41. As Schmiedel, in his article on the name of Christian in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, observes:—

According to Acts xi. 26 the matter seems a simple one; but, with this passage before us, it is remarkable how seldom the name occurs elsewhere in the records of early Christianity. In the New Testament the only other places where it is found are Acts xxvi. 28 and 1 Pet. iv. 16.....Outside the New Testament, according to the exhaustive researches of Lipsius, the name does not occur in either of the epistles ascribed to Clement of Rome; it is absent from Barnabas, Hermas, Polycarp, the pseudo-Clementine Homilies, Tatian, and the *Cohortatio ad Græcos*. The pseudo-Clementine Recognitions, as also the Catholic Acts of Peter and Paul, have it only in a few passages of later insertion; so also with the Gnostic writings. As a word in regular use it makes its earliest appearance in the Apologists—Justin, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Minucius Felix.

It is unnecessary to continue the list of later authors given by Schmiedel who use the word, with the exception of the anonymous *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, which, as we shall see, was a pre-Christian Jewish work altered and adopted by Christians for their own uses.

From the foregoing, the fact emerges that Christians were unknown by that name until the time of Justin, and Justin wrote his Apology about the year 147. That is, more than a hundred years after the alleged death of the founder of the faith. Moreover, in the earliest inscriptions the name is spelled with an e, Chrest not Christ, and as Schmiedel observes, in the above quoted article, the words Chrest and Christ, Chrestian and Christian, had the same pronunciation in Greek. But they had not the same meaning. Mr. J. B. Mitchell, the archæologist, in his scholarly and valuable little work, *Chrestos: A Religious Epithet; Its Import and Influence*, says:—

The former (Christ) signifies "anointed," the latter (Chrest) "good, excellent, gracious." It was consequently by the agadic method evident that he who was anointed (Christ) was good and gracious (Chrest); and that that which the name Christian covered was good, excellent, and in truth, really Christian. This argument is stated in at least five of the eminent of the Church Fathers, embracing a period of 250 years at least. The importance which was attached to it is evidenced by the circumstance

that it is used even by the Latin Fathers, notwithstanding that, in the language wherein they wrote, the pun could not be expressed nor the ambiguity perceived without reference to the Greek (pp. 9, 19).

Justin in his Apology (i. 4) says, "we are indicted by the name of Christians, but now Chrestians is a word kind or good, and such a word surely cannot be a just foundation of hatred." Following Justin the early Church Fathers, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Lactantius and Jerome, all made use of the same pun, or play on words. As Mr. Mitchell further observes:

It is clear that the Christians were accustomed to get the credit of being good and gracious because the word Christian when uttered had the same pronunciation as Chrestian and that it was a very usual thing to write the words Christ and Christian with an e in place of i.

This is confirmed by reference to ancient inscriptions, says the same writer:—

Reference to ancient Christian epigraphy shows this inference to be correct and proves that such was the fact. Careful search through the Christian inscriptions, numbering 1,287, in the fourth volume of Boeckh's *Corpus Inscriptionum*, published in 1877, fails to discover a single instance of earlier date than the third century, wherein the word Christ is not written Chrest or else Chrest.¹

Mr. Mitchell says:—

In a spiritual or mystic sense the word Chrestian was one of the epithets applied to the departed in the sepulchral epigraphy of the Greeks in all ages, pre-Christian as well as post-Christian, and as such is found constantly recurring in the *Corpus Inscriptionum*.²

And the Chrestians, he adds, "were, in fact, the saved or redeemed souls, the Pagan saints." The title was conferred upon those who had left the awful tribunal of Pluto, King of Hades and Judge of Souls, they were "the good," the justified, Chrestians. As Mr. Mitchell remarks:—

It was not possible that this practice of using in the place of Christ the word Chrest, consecrated as it was to the expression of the divine goodness in its most devotional aspect, could subsist so extensively without producing a profound impression on men's minds. The result must have been gradually to attach to Christ Jesus all the significance of that word.³

In passing, we may note that Mr. Mitchell's studies confirm what we have said about the rise of Christianity among the Hellenistic Jews outside of Palestine:—

The classes of society wherein the influence in question would be greatest were Hellenist Jews and the proselytes to Judaism, among whom the vulgar Greek dialect had very generally become vernacular. The extent to which the non-Palestinian Jews used the Hellenistic idiom was great; the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, like the books of the New, was composed in it, and in it wrote Philo and Josephus, as well as Paul. But the other Levantine populations also made use of the Hellenistic dialect, which might be called the *lingua franca* of the period. It is this medley of Greek speaking Levantines, having no connection with the noble Hellenic race, except that of their imperfect speech, which the New Testament and other Jewish writers describe as "The Greeks." Christianity, during the first ages, was almost exclusively recruited from among them. Satisfactory proof of this is furnished by the fact that all the extant inscriptions, of date prior to the middle of the third century, which have been found in the Roman Catacombs, are in Greek, none being in Latin.⁴

Nearly all the earliest Christian inscriptions are in

¹ J. B. Mitchell, *Chrestos*, pp. 12-13.

² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁴ J. B. Mitchell, *Chrestos*, pp. 29-30.

Greek, none in Hebrew, or in Aramaic, the vernacular of Palestine at that time.

It should be borne in mind that these inscriptions are very much more trustworthy than the Christian writings which have come down to us; we have no original documents of the early Christian ages; what we have are copies of copies, which do not reach within several hundred years of the time when they were first written, and the copyists were in the habit of making any alterations, excisions, or interpolations which they thought were necessary, or would rebound to the credit of the faith. On the other hand, the inscriptions remain to-day as they were when first engraved.

The belief in a coming Messiah was not confined to the Jews; it is a belief liable to arise in any country that has risen to a great height of prosperity and then been overwhelmed with calamity. Professor Winckler, the Assyriologist, claims that the idea first arose in Babylonia. George Cormack says:—

It is further maintained that Babylon of all places was the most proper to develop the theory of a coming deliverer. The actual political condition of this city, during the greater part of its history, was a bitter contrast to the doctrinal supremacy which it still asserted. It was, therefore, probable that the priests and the sages should predict a coming restoration by a new Sargon, or a new Hammurabi. The expectation by the Israelites of a second David was but an echo of this doctrine, and it was from Babylon that the suggestion of the Messianic hope travelled to Canaan.*

It must be remembered that Palestine was the Belgium of the ancient world; it was a buffer state between mighty empires, and only maintained its autonomy because it answered the political purposes of its powerful neighbours, and secondly, because it possessed no natural wealth. The nation had in turn to bend the neck to the yoke of the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and finally the Romans; therefore, they had good reason for wishing for the coming of a Messiah or redeemer who would deliver them from the Gentile yoke and scatter their enemies.

W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

"Fairs and Foibles."

Hey-ho come to the fair.—Popular Song.

Like all great men I have my weaknesses, and one of these is a passion for fairs. I love to put aside the dignified demeanour of middle-class respectability and mingle with the proletariat in the revels of the hoop-la and the merry-go-round. To me there is something sweetly seductive in the intoxicating motion of a swing-boat; I always feel like Elisha (or was it Elijah?) of old when he was caught up and borne heavenwards in his fiery chariot. Then there is the cocoa-nut shy! What pen can do justice to the thrills that one experiences in trying to "knock 'em off their perch"? So near and yet so far! For my part I am like an ascetic monk stretching forth his hand to seize Eternal Life (or some such will o' the wisp of his imagination), yet always to find it elude his grasp.

Thus it came about that on a recent hot June day I found myself indulging my pet weakness with several hundred other enthusiasts on the village green. All was jollity, all was fun. I had roared with merriment at the antics of a buxom matron chasing a rolling cocoa-nut "neath the wild mob's million feet," and only ceased to roar when she had soundly boxed my ears. I had spent an hour in a closely packed tent—

the atmosphere of which might have proved too much for even so experienced a steerage passenger as Noah—watching a black-magic merchant perform tricks guaranteed to make Moses "pack up" and go into a respectable pawn-broking business.

But the depth of my fatuity was reached when I bought a dusky gentleman—one Abdul Ahmed, R.A.O.B.—whose claim that "in nature's infinite book of secrecy a little I can read" I was anxious to test. As a result of this visit I am now keeping a sharp lookout for a dark lady who threatens to come into my life at no distant date—probably by way of the scullery window. Before salaaming my way out of the worthy Ahmed's tent I indulged in an argument with him on Fatalism, which caused him to take back the chart he had given me and mark it "firm in argument"!

At last I wended my way homeward, flushed and happy. But the day's adventures were not yet ended, for on my way I happened on the local Salvation Army unit holding an alfresco. Now I have many hobbies, but listening to Salvation Army bands is not one of them. However, so dizzy was I with the triumphs of the day that in a weak moment I yielded, and like the late George Formby (now amusing the gallery boys in Paradise—if there are any gallery boys there)—I "stopped and I looked and I listened."

A ruddy faced gentleman with a shiny red nose and a shiny bald head was announcing to the circle of dear friends ("God bless you") that they only wanted another sevenpence halfpenny "to make it up to eight shillings." I must confess that this upset me right away, it jarred on my æsthetic temperament, so to speak. "Great heavens, thought I, where does this show differ from the ones I've just seen?" It's the same old pocket-tapping stunt, the same old arts and cajolings, the same old wheezes for extracting coppers from the unwilling pockets of credulous fools. I fell to musing and wondering what posterity in the days of the far-off millennium—when man had consigned his gods to the limbo of forgotten things and at last was truly free—would think of all the bombast and buffoonery, the credulity and hypocrisy that paraded itself under the banner of Blood and Fire. Man and his gods, what a tragi-comedy it is; what—I paused in my musings and became aware of a slight girlish figure standing before me. Two blue eyes—set in a pale, delicate face beneath a Dolly Varden hat—were gazing wistfully up into mine. Her lips moved: "Only threepence to make it up to ten shillings"; I heard it as in a dream, and then, how shall I say it?—*I made it up!*

All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

Correspondence.

THE HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS.
TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—“Unorthodox's” last letter calls for a brief reply only. His criticisms of Dr. Weymouth's translation of the New Testament simply prove how contradictory are, not only the “divinely inspired” narratives, but the various versions and translations that have been foisted on us as “God's Holy Word.” I see no reason whatever to except “Unorthodox's” version which is just as faulty, just as biased and just as much of a rigmarole as any other. As far as I can make out after comparing other translations, neither Matthew nor John knew the time of the visit they record, so they contradict each other and the other Gospels, and I am not going to waste another line on this part of the argument.

But after being so thoroughly cock-sure that the “visits” were by different people, “Unorthodox” finds himself now compelled to admit he was wrong, and so very reluctantly concedes that Mary Magdalene *did* take part in the first three visits. Very well, in the first visit

* Cormack, *Egypt in Asia*, pp. 254-5.

she saw a "glorious" angel roll back the stone from the door, and in the second visit (in John) she again saw the stone taken away, though it has just been rolled away! Possibly one of the two angels had shoved it back to confound me, or rather, "Unorthodox." Marvellous narrative! And if she came alone (in John), it is curious that she should use "we" when speaking to Peter and John—unless, of course, this is another faulty translation.

But she did *not* come in the visits recorded by Mark and Luke, says my worthy Christian mentor. Indeed! Of course it is easy to call these eminent authors liars, but quite another thing to prove them so—if, as at the moment, we accept them as official records. Mark says that "Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome" *did* come, and, of course, if Mark is thrown bodily overboard, what is the use of continuing this discussion? The same with Luke who says it was "Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, and other women that were with them....."

And right here I think I ought to raise a word of protest. I entered this discussion to prove that the four Gospel records of the Resurrection hopelessly contradicted each other, and, naturally, I had before me the A.V. and the R.V. So far, all I have got from my opponent is that the texts I take from either of these versions are faulty and any commentator I use is hopelessly at sea. But when he goes to John to prove that Mark and Luke are liars or fools, I must draw the line. I can now understand Mr. McLaren's reluctance to waste any time on a Christian who does not hesitate to even get rid of Mark and Luke if they prove he is wrong. There are dozens of other contradictions I would have been pleased to see "explained" away, but not by telling me *this* translation (whichever I use) is faulty and *that* translator is "biased." For if it comes to studying the original Greek I can only say that I do not know Greek, but I *do* know that *nobody* knows what the "original Greek" text really is. Let me quote Dean Alford, who *was* a Greek scholar. In his Greek Testament he fully admits that it is useless to attempt a harmony of some of the accounts and adds: "We must be content to walk by faith and not by sight." Of course, Dean Alford may go the same way as Mark and Luke, but that a disputant on the harmony of the Gospels imagines he is "winning" or has "won" by the simple expedient of filling columns to prove that every version or translator or commentator his opponent brings forth is wrong, simply shows the utter uselessness of a discussion with anyone who believes the resurrection and ascension twaddle.

I am content to leave the whole matter to the readers of this paper who have at least, I hope, enjoyed the "debate."

H. CUTNER.

DR. LYTTTELTON'S CHALLENGE.

SIR,—I am sorry Mr. Jameson thinks I have been unfair to Mr. Hart. My reason for declining to pursue a particular topic further was not the hope of avoiding a logical confutation—Mr. Hart is welcome to claim a victory if he likes, and any *true* satisfaction he may reap therefrom would be a satisfaction to me also—but a desire not to waste time. Arguing in print is like playing chess, a rather severe exercise of brain faculty which as far as one can tell does no good to anyone, but sometimes tends to heat the blood undesirably. It would do good if it ever convinced anyone of anything, but it never has convinced me and why should I suppose it would convince anybody else? There is no indication of such a thing so far. Hence to Mr. Jameson I must answer that while life is full of uncertainties I hold it to be quite undeniable that for two respectable citizens like him and me to jangle week by week about the eternity of matter would be a waste of time, and the country is in far too anxious a state to justify anyone in wasting time, even if he does not believe in a judgment to come. Disputants are always trotting off the main road down blind alleys. I have said it was my fault that we ever got into this one (or some other), and so it was, but that is no reason for pushing on any further.

But sundry critics have misread what I said about the eternal fires. They have inferred that I deny Hell. No. My sentence was to the effect that a certain doctrine of eternal punishment was monstrously wrong, *viz.*, that an *honest* unbeliever was *predestined* to eternal fires. Mr.

King lectures me not seeing that what he calls the Christian Hell is quite different from that doctrine that Calvin taught. It is very good of him to point out that the texts are still in the Bible, but there are other texts there also, and the reason why there has been a change in our way of thinking is that two sets of texts are now weighed together, whereas Calvin and nearly everybody else, I believe, fixed their minds on the severe texts and ignored the others. Like all our deepest conceptions about anything which can be called infinite, this subject comes to us in the form of a contradiction. Mr. King need not suppose that I was backing the responsibility of the thousands of priests who taught Calvinism. They taught it because they believed it (and so did the lay people), but I should be sorry to say their error was worse than the opposite one—that there is no Hell at all.

Then Mr. King pities me for having a theological bias. I am thankful to say I have, and it gets stronger every day. It is a sure and certain conviction that there is a Being who is the Source and Giver of all that is Beautiful, and True and Good, and those great adjectives I am pretty sure mean just the same to Mr. King as to me. There is no need to pity anyone who is so privileged. But, of course, Mr. King's comment would be the same as Mr. Williams', How can God be the giver of Good when the world is full of ruin and strife, etc.?

This gives me the opportunity of pointing out two fundamental facts which explain the apparent opposition between us. Most Atheists assume that all unhappiness in this world is a proof that God is not good, and that all who say he is don't mind other people being unhappy. But (1) supposing the first object of our being in the world is not that we should be happy but that our characters should be trained? That makes all the difference. Creation is a poor affair if there were no other purpose in it than to make us all have a good time for seventy or eighty years on this planet. But how if the training of character is an immeasurably better thing than what we call happiness, everybody meaning something different? (2) Can any Atheist imagine a better world *for training of character than this one*? All pain, all perplexities, all antagonisms are the very first conditions of character development. Without them, we being what they are, life would be a nightmare, like that of the Lotus-eaters in Tennyson. I give you my word that sooner than lead such a life I would read the *Freethinker* from cover to cover, though it is, of course, to a Theist distressing blasphemy all the more for being apparently honest.

One more point. Atheists often imply that people believe in God because they wish to, and that vitiates their intelligence. Certainly they would be mad if they did not wish to; but as for the intelligence that wish is the condition of our minds grasping any big truth. Darwin was consumed with eagerness to grasp the law of Evolution, and so with all discoverers. By a big truth I mean something to do with infinity in which we all believe, and it is a law of our being that such is realized mainly by the affections. If there is no desire there is no discovery.

Now for the present anyhow I must forbear any more challenges in point. But if any reader *wishes* to have any point made clear and will write privately, I will spare no pains to show him what Theism and Christianity really are.

E. LYTTTELTON.

OUR MOVEMENT.

SIR,—Far from the madding crowd and the thousand and one daily preoccupations of the French capital, in a delightful little village on the Atlantic coast, in a simple furnished cottage let to me by the only Freethinker in the place, I have leisure to reflect upon things pertaining to the Freethought movement at home, and to make, with your permission, a few brief comments thereon.

Whilst travelling down in the train I was pained to read the Editor's announcement of an actual decline in the circulation of the *Freethinker*. This is bad news, and it would be unwise for us to accept and be satisfied with the explanation proffered, *i.e.*, temporary bad times. After all the slogging work which the Editor has put into the paper and the cause it represents since the death of G. W. Foote, the *Freethinker* ought not to know a period of decline, however temporary we may hope it to be. A paper like ours should be one of the very last sacrifices to economy or bad times that a subscriber would make. And

it would be if every reader were made to feel the full significance of the Freethought cause, and if all the possibilities of the latter were more clearly and more persistently emphasized.

I feel that there are more subtle causes of our relative insuccess, and it is these I wish to examine. In the first place, it is not sufficient to get new readers. We must, above all, *keep those we have!* If sales are falling off, some readers are leaving us. Why? Is it not, perhaps, because they do not find amongst Freethinkers what they find elsewhere, *the spirit of fraternity?* Don't forget that the Freethinker is a social animal just like the others. Where is *our* bond of fellowship? A Christian young man leaves his native town for a distant destination. In his new home he knows no one, but he is not friendless. He only has to present himself at the church or chapel door to find friends and welcome. Why? *Because he is a Christian.* That is the spirit of fellowship. A Mason (Anglo-Saxon variety) leaves one town for another. He may be a Christian, Jew, Mohammedan, Buddhist, but he will know where to go to find friends who will meet him with open arms. Why? *Because he is a Mason.* Another Mason (Latin races variety) finds himself on the other side of the frontier. He is in all probability an Atheist, but he knows where to find friends and brothers, although in a foreign country. Why? *Because he is a Mason.* That is the spirit of fellowship.

And now let us see how it fares with a member of the N.S.S. whom fate or inclination determines to seek a complete change of surroundings. He knows there is no branch of the N.S.S. in the town to which he has come. There may be a stray reader or two of the *Freethinker*, but Freethought organization does not provide him with the information, and he may remain ignorant of it for years. He hungers after the companionship of kindred intellects, but *does not know how to find it.* He feels lonely, an intellectual outcast. Why? *Because he is a Freethinker*, and Freethinkers do not cultivate *esprit de corps.* That is *not* the spirit of fellowship.

If organized Freethought in the British Empire is ever to become a vital force the human element must be introduced and the spirit of fellowship encouraged and practised. Nearly a year ago I proposed the formation of a *Freethinker Fellowship* on Masonic lines. I believe the proposal met with some considerable support from the rank and file, and the Editor himself gave it his blessing.

There we remain to-day. And the sales of the *Freethinker* are falling off! Is this really the last word of British Freethought? I should like to know.

A. ALDWINCKLE.

Martin Weatherburn A Tribute.

We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;

In feelings, not in figures on a dial.

We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives

Who thinks most—feels the noblest—acts the best.

—Bailey.

At the recent annual meeting of the South Shields Branch of the National Secular Society one of our members, Mr. John Richards, drew attention to a reference to our late friend Martin Weatherburn. The occasion was the address given on May 31, 1921 by Mr. J. J. Dent, C.M.G., President of the Working Men's Club and Institute Union, Limited, at their annual meeting. In the early part of the speech he said:—

Since our last meeting, too, we have lost a dear friend and colleague by the death of Martin Weatherburn, one of the most genial and cultured workmen we have had as a colleague on the executive of the Union. A charming personality, for whom one could not help feeling a deep affection, he was also a keen, untiring worker on behalf of our movement, and was never tired of helping others at all times. Now that he has gone I may, perhaps, mention an incident that happened several years ago. Talking to a successful headmaster of a London school, I happened to mention Martin Weatherburn's name. He said: "Do you know Martin? I should like to see him again. Will you bring him here? He was more than a

father to me when I was a little kiddie. My father and mother were very poor; father unable to get work in Northumberland, and at one time we were starving. Martin Weatherburn came to our rescue, brought us food and clothing, and paid for fees and books for we boys at school for some years, and helped us all he could. I owe almost everything to Martin Weatherburn. I love him!"

This tribute, quite unsolicited, seems so perfectly fitting to the memory of our late respected pioneer of Secularism on Tyneside, that our members unanimously expressed a desire that it should be enshrined in the pages of the *Freethinker*, in a setting of a few quiet words. We make no complaint that no reference was made to the attitude of Martin Weatherburn towards religion. It may be that this is in accordance with the custom prevailing in the club movement. But there is one thing we have in common, that is the strongly felt need for liberty. The forces that are demanding that great life-giving principle are undoubtedly very strong and insistent, but still somewhat disorganized. The forces of reaction make no mistake on that score. There is a real danger that the forces of democracy tend to subscribe to a certain weakness by allowing little prejudices to prevail. The army that secures liberty will not be constituted of wearisome same-nesses. It will have its grave, and it will have also its rollicking sections. It will be fully representative of that vastly varied life, upon which human thought has only touched the fringe. The usual impatient and narrow outlook is quite inadequate. Sweet fancy seems to allow us, through dimmed eyes, to look questionably at our late friend Martin. His answer seems to be, although accompanied by a merry twinkle of his dark rolling eyes, an approving nod.

J. FOTHERGILL.

Obituary.

Another link with the past was severed on Thursday, July 7, when one of our oldest London members, Thomas Shore, passed away, at the age of 71. His activities had been impaired lately by failing health, and a series of apoplectic seizures hastened the end. The son of a Freethinker he was connected all his life with our movement. An active member of the National Secular Society from 1881, a member of its Executive and one of the original directors of the Secular Society, Limited. An ardent Land Nationalizer, Neo-Malthusian, Anti-Vaccinationist, Co-operator and zealous reformer, an associate of William Morris, he had contributed to the *Commonweal* and to the *Freethinker*. An uncompromising upholder of the rights of Free Speech, in the fighting days of Freethought, at Tottenham, Edmonton and Peckham Rye, Tom Shore carried scars of actual personal conflict with the upholders of the religion of the Prince of Peace. His wife, Mrs. Constance Shore, was his cordial helpmate in all his activities. His four children, all reared and nurtured in the atmosphere of Freethought, and a granddaughter, now being educated in its principles, form a living testimony to a fourth generation of Freethinkers. To each and all of them we extend our most heartfelt sympathy. The cremation took place on Saturday last at Ilford in the presence of his relatives, personal friends and co-workers, including Mr. Frederick Verinder of the English League for the Taxation of Land Values, and Mr. Chapman Cohen, President of the N.S.S. The undersigned, who had enjoyed his personal friendship for forty-years, was unfortunately unable to be present, except in spirit.—E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

We have only to add to the above our personal appreciation of Mr. Shore as a life-long worker in forlorn but splendid causes. During the many years we knew him we always found him deeply and unselfishly interested, not merely in the Freethought cause, but in any cause, where a word in favour of truth and justice needed to be said. No better thing could be said of any man than that he never hesitated to express his difference from his colleagues on any point, nor did he bear malice for whatever difference arose. In the fullest sense of the word he was a *Freethinker*. His family will have left with them the memory of a brave and fearless worker in the cause of reform as a solace to them in their bereavement.—C. COHEN.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JUNE 30.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, occupied the Chair. Also present: Messrs. Corrigan, Kelf, Lloyd, Moss, Neate, Rosetti, and Silverstein; Miss Kough, Miss Pankhurst, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed. New members were received for the Fulham, Huddersfield, Leeds and Swansea Branches and for the Parent Society.

Permission was given for the re-formation of the Huddersfield Branch.

New members having been elected to serve on the Propagandist and Benevolent Fund Committees, the Executive proceeded to discuss the resolutions remitted from the Conference.

Re Motion No. 9 on the Blasphemy Laws: The lines upon which the pamphlet, which the President had undertaken to write on this subject, should run, were discussed and agreed upon.

Re Motion No. 10 on the Rights of Free Speech: It was agreed that the substance of this resolution be sent to the Press with a view to obtaining the names of persons willing to help to form an independent Committee.

The Secretary reported on the Open Air Mission of Mr. Whitehead to South Wales (full details of which have appeared in the *Freethinker*) and that this tour would terminate in Leeds. In consequence of this success and of the renewed applications for Mr. Whitehead's services the Secretary was instructed to make arrangements for a further tour.

It was further reported that a Hall had been engaged by the Newcastle Branch for a lecture by the President, and that application was being made for Stratford Town Hall for a series of lectures.

On the motion of Mr. Kelf, seconded by Mr. Lloyd, it was resolved that the first paragraph of the Immediate Practical Objects of the Society:—

The Legitimation of Bequests to Secular and other Free-thought Societies, for the maintenance and propagation of heterodox opinions on matters of religion, on the same conditions as apply to Christian or Theistic churches or organizations.

be now deleted, seeing that this object has been obtained by the decision in the House of Lords in the now historic case of *Bowman re the Secular Society, Limited*.

It was agreed the pamphlet of General Information for Freethinkers, now in the press, should be issued at once, the price to be 2d. post free.

Arrangements for the Winter propaganda were remitted to the Propagandist Committee. Outstanding printing accounts were ordered to be discharged and the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE.
General Secretary.

On other subjects we find, if not a respect for honest conviction, at least some sense of the amount of knowledge that is requisite to entitle men to express an opinion on grave controversies. But on theological subjects this has never been so. Many men and most women, though completely ignorant of the very rudiments of Biblical criticism, historical research, or scientific discoveries, will, nevertheless, adjudicate with the utmost confidence upon every polemical question; denounce, hate, pity, or pray for the conversion of all who dissent from what they have been taught; assume as a matter beyond the faintest possibility of doubt that the opinions they have received without inquiry must be true, and that the opinions that others have arrived at by inquiry must be false, and make it a main object of their lives to assail what they call heresy in every way in their power except by examining the grounds on which it rests.—*Lecky*.

The Christian church enjoins obedience to the governors of states provided the governors show themselves submissive to her authority; in a word, her priests are a body in the state, whose interests are invariably the interests of the state provided the state takes into account the interests of the priests.—*Voltaire*.

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, A Lecture and Social.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, Dr. John Oakesmith, "Savonarola and Machiavelli."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.15, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, A Lecture.

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

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, Mr. Rosetti, A Lecture; 6.15, Mr. Corrigan, A Lecture.

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