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Views and Opinions.

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The Aim of Spiritualism.

I am not aiming at going over in detail the mass of so-called evidence that is offered on behalf of Spiritualism. My aim is of a more restricted character. It is that of a brief examination of what one may call the residuum of genuine fact when all of a doubtful or irrelevant nature has been excluded. And I think it can be shown that this residuum in no wise points to what the Spiritualist believes it indicates. It is to be borne in mind that what the Spiritualist aims at proving is that we live after death, and that communication between the dead and the living takes place. Anything that does not prove that is, for him, quite useless. He is not concerned with proving that there exists unknown forces in nature, or that man, as man, possesses unexpected capacities. The truth of each of these propositions is conceivable, but they would not benefit the Spiritualistic theory in the slightest degree. And of the larger part of the evidence which the Spiritualist throws at the head of the sceptic one may safely say that it is utterly irrelevant to the point at issue. When we read accounts of a heavy object being moved round a room without the observers being able to detect how it is done, when we are told that by telepathy people are able to communicate with each other apart from the usual channels of communication, or that certain people, sitting under certain conditions, are able to exude some kind of a force that moves tables or other objects, there is not one of these things separately, nor all of them collectively, that prove existence the other side of the grave. If true, they are wonderful, but the wonderful does not prove the supernatural, nor does the fact that one man can manipulate forces of which the majority of us are ignorant, prove that we live again after death. They prove that we have still many things to learn, and no one but a fool would deny the abstract truth of that proposition. But it is just as well to have a clear idea of what it is that we set out to prove, and how far the evidence offered does prove it. Not a little help has been given to Spiritualists by the uncritical nature of the arguments brought against them; their opponents evidently believing that they must disprove everything that was offered whether it had any bearing upon the point or not.

On the Horns of a Dilemma.

Let us assume it as proved that by a number of persons sitting in darkness or in semi-darkness a number of forces, "psychic" or otherwise, are set in motion. In what way can that prove the truth of the Spiritualistic hypothesis? It is part of that hypothesis that whether we are on this side of the grave or the other we are still human beings, neither more nor less. The powers we have here we have there. We are the same persons differently lodged, and John Smith living in "Summerland" only differs from John Smith here as he would living in London and Brighton. And if one human being can "control" another one and set in motion forces that he does not manifest under ordinary conditions, whether one is on this side of the grave or the other, does not seem to make any substantial difference. If, when sitting with another human being, a table begins to waltz round the room, I do not see why it must be due to the spirit of my deceased grandfather rather than to my own influence or that of the other person. If it is not possible in the one case, why is it possible in the other? If a certain result can be achieved by the co-operation of two human beings, one on this and one on the other side of the grave, why cannot the same result be reached by two on this side? In this respect the "proof" of Spiritualism tends to annihilate itself at the moment of achieving success. It is, moreover, being admitted by declared believers that the evidence which satisfied Spiritualists of a previous generation—men of the standing of Judge Edmonds and Andrew Jackson Davis—would not be satisfactory to-day, because we have a different explanation of the facts that seemed to them to prove spirit intercourse.¹ That is, the facts which these men took as conclusive proof of a future life prove nothing of the kind. In this matter we appear to be moving on the plane where anything unusual or mysterious is at once put to the credit of the supernatural. That has been one of the sources of religious belief from the earliest times, and there is no reason for assuming that the end will be different in the particular case of Spiritualism than it has been with many other elements of religious belief.

* * *

Do Scientists Believe?

In this respect, too, Spiritualists are not quite playing the game. When the names of eminent men are brought forward in support of the genuineness of certain phenomena the reader is left with the impression—one feels a calculated impression—that these testimonies as to the realities of the happenings imply an acceptance of the Spiritualistic theory. And that is decidedly not the case. Professor Flammarion, in his *Mysterious Psychic Forces*, devotes a whole chapter to a discussion of the various theories put forward to account for the phenomena by those who accept them as genuine, and himself concludes that to explain what takes place, "The hypothesis of spirits of another order than that of human beings does not seem to be necessary" (p. 421). And it may be here

¹ See *Science and a Future Life*, by Dr. J. H. Hyslop, pp. 13-15.

noted that the original theory of possession, that is, that the spirit of the dead person actually inhabits the body of the medium, is now giving place to the theory that the spirit impresses the mind of the medium by a species of spiritual telepathy. This, however, only lands the Spiritualist in another difficulty. On the theory of possession there was an explanation of the Indian talk and the other peculiar patter of the seance room. On the theory of spiritual telepathy this is reduced to an elaborate make-believe. The medium is simply playing a part. And this is, as we shall see later, what most probably takes place. Once more we are witnessing a repetition of what has so often been seen in the history of religion. The world we live in is the same as that in which our savage ancestors lived, but one does not need to deny the existence of the world in order to reject the savage's explanation of it.

* * *

Do We Get Scientific Evidence?

But it is not altogether a question of mere testimony, but of the right kind of evidence from the right kind of man. No one questions for a moment the honesty of the eminent men who are cited in support of Spiritualism, it is simply unfortunate that, for the greater part, they should have belonged to the class of eminent men who could not carry conviction on this particular subject. They had not the intimate acquaintance with the class of facts that would throw light upon the phenomena before them, and in science there is no authority, as such, there is only an authority in virtue of a knowledge of the matter under discussion. And where we have the same facts observed by two or more different persons without agreement as to what occurred or its meaning, it is absurd to speak of that as scientific evidence. It does not fulfil the initial condition of scientific evidence. And of the overwhelming majority of the eminent men who have spoken in favour of Spiritualism they have been so poorly equipped for the work that they have seldom bothered to get a life history of the mediums with whom they were experimenting—information, that was of vital importance to a genuinely scientific understanding of what was going on. Here and there we get the required information, given in a more or less casual manner, as when we learn of the celebrated Eusapia that her first mediumistic manifestations began at the age of puberty, and that while in the trance state "her face flushes.....she courts caresses," the success of her phenomena causes "agreeable and even voluptuous thrills," "her legs and her arms are in a state of marked tension, almost rigid, or even undergo convulsive contractions." These are, as will be seen, illuminating details, and one wishes there were more of them. Had the scientific men who have investigated Spiritualism compiled a life record of the various mediums that came under their observation their conclusions would have been of a more helpful nature than they are at present. As it is, it is almost pathetic to note the elaborate care taken to prevent the fraud of the deliberate trickster, without taking the least precaution against the unconscious deception of personal pathological conditions. And not only were the precautions taken often valueless against deliberate trickery, they were obviously useless in preventing a misunderstanding of what was actually taking place. Worse than being useless, they helped in their turn to promote misunderstanding, as they gave the outside public the impression that the experiments were conducted under adequate scientific conditions. And that, most decidedly, was not the case.

Fraud or Fancy?

I am not now writing a history of Spiritualism, or pretending to do more than glance at some important

aspects of the subject that are generally overlooked or insufficiently stressed. For that reason I am not dealing with what is known as the physical side of the manifestations—the alleged materializations of spirits, spirit photographs, etc. There are any number of popular works written in that aspect of the subject, and Mr. Frank Podmore, in his various books on the subject, has gone very carefully into the matter.² It will suffice to say here that there is not a single one of the phenomena associated with Spiritualism that expert performers have found incapable of producing, and there is hardly a well-known medium who has not at one time or another been detected in trickery, sometimes the fraud of the common trickster, at other times the deception of those who mistake the operations of their own disordered personality for actual objective occurrences.³ Moreover, the stress laid upon these material manifestations by the critics of Spiritualism, combined with the wonder-loving capacity of the outside public, has given them an altogether undue importance. They are not by any means so common as a mere perusal of the literature of the subject would lead one to assume. I believe it to be the truth that a large majority of Spiritualists have never seen a materialization, or witnessed many phenomena of a material kind, although they are quite willing to take its reality on the testimony of others. It is the facts of their own experience that lead them to believe as they do, and in the absence of other explanations they may be excused accepting them at their face value as proofs of spirit communication. But are they? That is the important question. And one answer to the question is found in the fact that it is possible to parallel these experiences with examples in which there is not the least suggestion of spirit communication.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be Continued.)

The Study of Theology.

THE Catholic party in the Anglican Church is a body to be reckoned with, and the influence exerted by it on the religious thought and life of this country is tremendously strong. It is about the only religious party in the country which can legitimately be described as wide-awake and active. Multitudes of extremely able and earnest men belong to it and serve it with the utmost loyalty. Last week the Anglo-Catholic Priests' Convention was held at Oxford and attended by some 1,200 priestly members of the party. First of all came the celebration of the Holy Communion in the chapel of Keble College. A few hours later the Mass of the Holy Ghost was sung at St. Barnabas', which was followed by a service at St. Mary's, where a sermon was preached by the Bishop of Oxford. The first meeting of the Convention proper took place in the Town Hall, at which the subject discussed was the need and importance of the study of theology. A more appropriate theme for such

² See his *History of Spiritualism, Studies in Psychological Research, The Naturalization of the Supernatural, The Newer Spiritualism*, etc.

³ It is at least suspicious that there has gone on a progressive development in the ways in which these alleged communications with the dead have been carried on. First we have the rage of crude table-tilting. Then, following exposure after exposure, we find that giving way to other methods. Of course, it may be said that the spirits are gaining greater proficiency in their methods of communication, but it is curious that this is the line of development followed in the history of any deliberate delusion. We have to begin with certain simple methods of deception, and as these become known, more elaborate methods are introduced. It may be that the spirits are becoming more proficient; it may also be that the mediums are becoming more expert.

a gathering could not have been selected. Since priests profess to be men of God, nothing can be more essential and indispensable to them than the study of theology, which Newman defines as "the science of God." On this topic the Rev. N. P. Williams read a paper, in which he admitted that while belief in the great verities of the Faith is required of all Catholic Christians, they need not all be theologians. A theologian is one who undertakes to answer "How?" and "Why?" In other words, only professors and priests are required to be theologians, Christians, generally, being only blind believers on priestly authority. As reported in the *Church Times* for July 22, Mr. Williams said that "the priest must be able to teach the orthodox Faith accurately, and that he must know more than he teaches." But what does or can any priest know beyond and above what the man in the street may know? As a matter of fact, the priest's claim to the possession of superior knowledge is utterly groundless and infinitely absurd. As a rule, Catholic Christians are both ignorant and credulous, who pawn their judgment to the Church, or surrender their reason in order to enjoy a sense of false peace and security.

Another speaker was the Rev. C. F. Rogers, Professor at King's College, whose father, Professor Thorold Rogers, was the author of a famous work entitled *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*. Professor Rogers said that his claim to speak was that for the last six years he had lectured on the Christian Faith on Sundays in Hyde Park. He characterized the questions asked as not lacking in seriousness, but claimed that the seriousness of the audience was greater still. The questions are like those of Rosa Dartle in *David Copperfield*; but the seriousness of the audience was not likened to that of any other people. The Professor related a story about the Icenic and the Icene creed which brought down the house, but since that story is not reported we have no means of discovering whercing consisted its relevancy; but as the *Church Times* informs us "the point was that quite half the people across whom he comes in the Park have the most confused minds." Now, as the listeners are so very serious, the natural inference is that the stupid people, afflicted with such confused minds, are those impertinent enough to address awkward questions to the lecturer. But he told his Oxford audience that "quite half the people across whom he comes in the Park have the most confused minds," from which it follows that, unless the serious listeners are exceedingly few in number, quite the half of them cannot show their stupidity by asking questions. And yet, again, we must not lose sight of the fact that "the question most frequently brought up was that of Free Will and Determinism," which is a question indicating some degree of intelligence on the part of those who put it.

The report of the Professor's paper is most discreet. We are told that "he described his methods with great clearness, and their results," but not the remotest hint is given as to what either are. We should like to know on what principle he defends Free Will in its bearings on the character of God and the nature of man, or on what logical and theological grounds, face to face with modern discoveries, he attacks Determinism. Is he not aware that many of the keenest thinkers in the Christian Church have been Determinists, such as Augustine (though not strictly), Albert, Aquinas, Luther, and Jonathan Edwards, as well as a large number of the most eminent philosophers? It is possible, however, that the Professor's hearers in Hyde Park are not all of one mind as to the wisdom of his methods or their wonderful results.

We are in full agreement with the Professor when he expresses the conviction that Catholicism is the most formidable foe that Freethought has to meet to-

day. Protestantism is hopelessly doomed. It is already far gone in intellectual and moral decay. It has no court of final appeal. Its leading representatives are too conscious of the weakness of their case to meet their opponents in public debate. They candidly admit that organized Christianity has proved a gigantic failure; but they still cling to the notion that there exists somewhere a sort of nebulous, undefined, or essential Christianity which has never yet been tried, but which, if once put in operation, would be almost immediately an unqualified success. But in the estimation of Catholics, Roman and Anglican, organized Christianity is of Divine origin and authority, and properly and adequately organized in Churches holding the Catholic Faith. When dealing with Catholicism, therefore, Freethinkers know exactly where they stand and what they are opposing. Dr. Sparrow Simpson insisted at the Convention "that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity was the most reasonable doctrine of God ever offered to the mind of Man." The idea of the reconstruction of theology has been in the air for some time now, but Dr. Sparrow Simpson pours burning ridicule upon it, and affirms that what the world needs for its salvation is not a "reconstructed" Christ, but the historic Christ, who has been at work in the world through all the centuries. Speaking of the demand for reconstruction this dogmatic theologian unhesitatingly stated, as if *ex cathedra*:—

Intellectually considered, the ideas at issue about our Lord are only two, either he was a richly gifted man, or he was eternally God. So with the dogma of the Holy Trinity. Practically, the suggested reconstruction would mean that the Unitarian controversy was at an end and that it had been decided in favour of the Unitarian.

Dr. Sparrow Simpson's argument is thoroughly sound; it is perfectly logical. But our opposition is not to this, that, or the other system of theology, but to theology as such, and with this fact in view we find the study of theology of the greatest possible value. It is only with the history of the evolution of theology in mind that we can get an insight into its true nature. Throughout the ages the Church has been the theatre of the most acrimonious and brutal theological controversies, and we see most clearly how now this party and now that won through and became dominant and cruelly tyrannical. The victorious party invariably attributes its triumph to the direct intervention of the Holy Ghost; but are we to infer that the Holy Ghost changed his theology every few months or years? Was it the Holy Ghost who, at the close of the Nicene Council in 325, inspired the banishment of the Arian bishops, and five years later authorized their restoration? Looking calmly at such strange revolutions today, we are fully persuaded that they were brought about at the dictates of private interests and selfish motives, and not in obedience to a voice from heaven. Theological systems have gained or lost the day, not under Divine guidance, but through the actions of strong, resolute, and often unscrupulous men in the Church. We sincerely admit the zeal and energy of the Catholic party in the Anglican Church, but pity its bondage to the supreme superstition. Furthermore, we are determined to fight it with all the strength and skill at our command. There are Catholics not a few whom we not only respect but love, but at the same time, absolutely free from anger and bitterness and ignoble motives, we declare ourselves the uncompromising opponents of Catholicism, which time after time has had the baneful effect of making lovable men hateful, honest ones unscrupulous, and truth-loving ones prevaricators, for the supposed glory of an imaginary Deity. Fortunately, however, theology no longer wields the weapons it did a few hundred years ago, and in popular favour it is steadily losing ground.

J. T. LLOYD.

Seventy Years for Secularism.

We take up the task eternal, and the burden
and the lesson,
Pioneers! O Pioneers! —Walt Whitman.
More life, and fuller, that we want.—Tennyson.

THE record of the work of the Leicester Secular Society is one of the romances of the Freethought movement. Its story dates back to "the stormy 'forties" of the past century, and is an inspiring record of small beginnings, of struggles, and of ultimate brilliant victory. The original society sprang from a discussion class in the Leicester Mechanics' Institute, a leading spirit of which was George Bown, one of the small band of pioneers who carried the flag of Liberty in those dark days, when pioneers were pariahs.

Among the young men who gathered about him was Josiah Gimson, the father of Sydney Gimson. The intellectual subjects discussed in the class soon became the talk of the town. Afterwards, a school was carried on during the week, with lectures on Sundays, and a lending library was formed. The advanced views of progressive thinkers were discussed constantly, and Leicester thus had the opportunity of listening to new thoughts, and of widening her mental horizon. Out of this evolving institution, which adapted itself readily to changing circumstances, was organized the Secular Hall Company, and the site of the present hall was purchased. In 1881, the year of the birth of the *Freethinker*, the hall was completed from the designs of W. Larner Sugden, an architect, one of whose hobbies was the publication of pretty little booklets of a Freethought character. It is a handsome structure on one of the best streets of Leicester, with ample accommodation for improvement and pleasure.

At the opening a large number of notable Freethinkers were present from all parts. That shy genius, James Thomson, the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, contributed a poetic address at the inaugural ceremony. A few lines are well worth quotation, for they show the vigorous Freethought of the poet, whose talents have won for him an imperishable name in his country's literature. :—

So, all the lands wherein our wandering race
Have led their flocks, or fixed their dwelling place,
To till with patient toil the fruitful sod,
Abound with altars to the unknown god,
Or gods, whom man created from of old,
In his own image, one yet manifold,
And ignorantly worshipped. We now dare,
Taught by millenniums of barren prayer,
Of mutual scorn and hate and bloody strife,
With which these dreams have poisoned our poor life,
To build our temples on another plan,
Devoting them to God's creator, man;
Not to man's creature, God. And, thus, indeed,
All men and women, of whatever creed,
We welcome gladly if they love their kind;
No other valid test of worth we find.
Who loveth not his brother at his side,
How can he love a dim dream deified?

Another illustrious name associated with the Leicester Secular Society is that of Professor T. H. Huxley, the world-famous scientist. Not only was he in agreement with the objects of the organization, but he was one of the financial supporters. In enclosing a cheque in support of the Society, Huxley wrote that it was sent "in evidence of the full sympathy with the objects of the Society." To a request for permission to publish the note, he replied: "You are quite at liberty to publish my note, and I shall be glad if it is of any service." This record places Huxley in complete accord with the principles of Secularism, and should clear away any misapprehension on the subject.

In the hall are portraits of Charles Bradlaugh, George Jacob Holyoake, James Thomson, and Josiah

Gimson. The name and fame of the last named can never be forgotten in the history of this Society, or even in the record of the Secular movement. He was one of the founders, and a most generous supporter. Another name long associated with the Society is that of Frederick J. Gould, one of the most lovable of comrades in the Army of Human Liberation. He was secretary and organizer of the Society from 1899 to 1908, and is still a member, and speaks from its platform. His remarks on the Society and its work are of moment:—

I doubt if any hall in Europe, or America, or elsewhere, quite fulfils for its social environment just such a function, both intellectual and municipal, as this at Leicester. Perhaps it would be difficult now to establish another of like pattern. When it was founded movements which are now strong—labour, free libraries, Sunday lectures, and the non-theological press—were then relatively weak, and eager spirits discovered in the hall at Humberstone Gate a unique centre for learning and discussing new ideas on religion, history, literature, economics, and the rest.

The lesson to be drawn from the inspiring record of Leicester is that "Unity is Strength." Forgetting trivial distinctions in the face of entrenched and wealthy ecclesiasticism, these brave Freethinkers closed their ranks and stood shoulder to shoulder against the enemy. It is precisely because the hearts of these pioneers were aflame with love of liberty that their work has had vital and permanent effect. They deserved well of their generation, for they did their best to hasten the day when the world will be one country, and to do good the only religion.

MIMNERMUS.

The Myth of Jesus.

V.

(Continued from page 486.)

At present, it must be maintained that at the beginning of the second century, while the title "Christ" was known in the like general sense that the titles Caesar, Arcases, Pharaoh were known, Jesus was not existent for history. Not a single witness was then in old age forthcoming to declare, "I was present at the Crucifixion," nor "I knew one who was present at the Crucifixion." —"Antiqua Mater," p. 49.

THE outline of the Gospel story of Jesus is contained in the description given by the prophets in the Old Testament of the coming Messiah and the description of the sufferings of the Servant of God. These form the framework around which other myths and the rites and ceremonies of the Pagan mysteries accumulated.

Jesus is born at Bethlehem because, as Matthew says, "thus it is written by the prophet" (Matt. ii. 5). He was taken to Egypt "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son" (Matt. ii. 15). The story that he was taken there to escape Herod's order for the slaughter of all the children under two years of age in Bethlehem and the surrounding district was an after invention of which history knows nothing.

Afterwards we read, "he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene" (Matt. ii. 23). The writer is so ignorant of Jewish sects that he thinks that the Nazarenes derived their name from a place called Nazareth, whereas, it was the name of a Jewish sect. There is no record of such a place as Nazareth existing at the time of Christ; it only became the name of a place at a later date.

Jesus spoke in parables: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open

my mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xiii. 34-35). The same writer makes Jesus ride into Jerusalem upon *two* asses because "it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass" (Matt. xxi. 4-5). Of course, the Hebrew prophet only meant one ass, but the Gospel writer, in his ignorance of Hebrew literary expression, imagines he refers to two, therefore, he makes Jesus ride into Jerusalem upon two.

In the same manner, after the crucifixion, the soldiers, when dividing the garments, finding the coat to be woven in one piece without seam, say: "Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scriptures might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them and for my vesture they did cast lots" (John xix. 24).

Jesus is made to say "I thirst" to fulfil the scriptures (John xix. 28), and the soldiers refrain from breaking the legs of Jesus "that the scriptures should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken" (John xix. 36). He is also pierced with a spear because the "scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced" (John xix. 37). He was sold for thirty pieces of silver to fulfil "that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was valued whom they of the children of Israel did value" (Matt. xxvii. 9). He is crucified between two thieves, "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors" (Mark xv. 28).

A large part of the earliest apology for Christianity, that of Justin Martyr, is occupied with a detailed presentment of this form of proof. In the absence of all historical proof of the existence of Jesus as a man, Justin falls back upon this proof from prophecy.

Professor Arthur Drews contends that the whole of the events of the trial and execution of Jesus was taken bodily from the Hebrew prophets, and that they were, in the first instance, a description of an annual sacrifice such as we know was carried out by many ancient nations to ensure the yearly rebirth of nature after it had apparently perished beneath the cold of winter. He quotes Sir James Frazer, who says:—

Nowhere were these efforts more strictly and systematically carried out than in Western Asia. As far as names go they differed in different places, in essence they were everywhere alike. A man, whom the unrestrained phantasy of his adorers clothed with the garments and attributes of a God, used to give his life for the life of the world. After he had poured from his own body into the stagnating viens of nature a fresh stream of vital energy, he was himself delivered over to death before his own sinking strength should have brought about a general ruin of the forces of nature, and his place was then taken by another, who, like his forerunners, played the ever-recurring drama of the divine resurrection and death. —(*The Golden Bough*, 1900, ii. p. 196.)

At the same time, says Drews, the sacrificial victim represented a scapegoat who expiated by his death the misdeeds committed during the year. "In this way," says Drews:—

We understand the 53rd chapter of Isaiah: Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself, and opened not his mouth; as a lamb before her shearers is dumb; yea he opened not his mouth. He was cut off out of the land of the

living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And they made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul [? sufferings], and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors.

Commenting upon this Professor Drews observes:—

Here we obviously have to do with a man who dies as an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of his people, and by his death benefiting the lives of the others, is on that account raised to be a god. Indeed, the picture of the just man suffering, all innocent as he is, itself varies between a human and a divine being.¹

The same writer also contends that in the 22nd Psalm we have the viewpoint of the unhappy victim who is suffering upon the gibbet. It commences: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The very words said to have been uttered by Jesus upon the Cross. It proceeds:—

All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.....all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax: it is melted in the midst of my bowels.....They pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones. They look and stare upon me: they part my garments among them, and upon my vesture do they cast lots.

Drews observes upon this:—

When the poet of the Psalms wished to describe helplessness in its direst extremity, before his eyes there came the picture of a man, who, hanging upon the gibbet, calls upon God's aid, while round about him the people gloat over his sufferings, which are to save them; and the attendants who had taken part in the sacrifice divide among themselves the costly garments with which the God-king had been adorned. The employment of such a picture presupposes that the occurrence depicted was not unknown to the poet and his public, whether it came before their eyes from acquaintance with the religious ideas of their neighbours or because they were accustomed to see it in their own native usages. As a matter of fact, in ancient Israel human sacrifices were by no means unusual. This appears from numberless passages in the Old Testament, and has been already exhaustively set forth by Ghillany in his book *Die Menschenopfer der alten Hebräer* (1842) and by Daumer in his *Der Feuer- und Molochdienst der alten Hebräer*.²

It was Paul who first conceived the idea that Jesus was made a sacrifice once for all to redeem mankind from the consequences of the original sin of Adam.

(To be Continued.) W. MANN.

We have found that other religions are like ours, with precisely the same basis, the same idiotic miracles, the same martyrs, the same early fathers, and, as a rule, the same Christ or saviour. It will hardly do to say that all others like ours are false and ours the only true one when others substantially like it are thousands of years older. We have at last found that a religion is simply an effort on the part of man to account for what he sees, what he experiences, what he feels, what he fears, and what he hopes.—*Ingersoll*.

¹ Drews, *The Christ Myth*, p. 68.

² Drews, *The Christ Myth*, p. 69.

The Greatest League of All.

As I object to secret societies and every species of secret business, whether of diplomatists, Sinn Feiners, bankers, or Ku-Klux-Klans, I must object to the secret ritual of Freemasonry, however benevolent the aim of Freemasons may be in theory and practice. Otherwise I might here speak of "The Greatest Freemasonry." The mere circumstance that Freemasonry has a secret code implies that it is an exclusive organization. As I am for openness, so I am also for universality.

People have often debated as to just what is the special virtue in "social progress." It is argued that the year 1921 does not harbour profounder intellects than, say, among the ancient Greeks or Hindus, nor does it witness more essential goodness than that of the Indian Buddha or the Roman Regulus, or the French peasant girl, Joan of Arc. In what sense, then, is 1921 a better year than 1421, or 521 B.C. or 1421 B.C. ? I assuredly think 1921 is better. But why?

The answer, in my judgment, is that wisdom and goodness, while not, at bottom, more real now than in past ages, act now on a broader scale, and in a widening circle. Progress means extending wisdom and goodness (that is, sound sense and kind feeling) to fresh classes and fresh areas. By the phrase "fresh classes" I refer to the abolition of slavery, the more rational and respectful attitude towards women, the finer appreciation of childhood, and a humaner disposition towards the sub-human animals. By "fresh areas" I refer to the spread of a larger understanding, and a friendlier temper in our dealings with foreign nations, and with backward tribes and coloured races. In saying this I am not at all unmindful of the recent grievous world-war. Many of us have ample personal reasons for remembering, with daily tears, that lamentable conflict. But though I wish, with all my heart, that the evolution of mankind had operated on other lines, I still believe that, guided and utilized by the fundamental good instincts of our nature, even the tragic events of the war will expand the frontiers of mutual knowledge and mutual aid. On all sides today, I see the signs, however painful, of that immense effort at adjustment and re-adjustment.

Now, if you look back on the records of man, you will see that at no previous point have the spirits of Reason and Kindness influenced so many classes, and on so immense a geographical field. The other day, for example, I noted in the journals, with peculiar interest, the report of a fraternal visit paid by the British governor of Fiji to the solitary community of 170 or so people who live on Pitcairn Island—one of the remotest spots from the centre of civilization. How such a story (which millions of readers may have passed over with small concern) would have astonished Buddha, Socrates, and Marcus Aurelius! This simple incident exactly illustrates what I mean when I speak of the widening circle. The British governor was not a purer type of man than old Egypt or Persia produced. But he was a symbol of an Intellect and a Heart that move over vaster spaces and with more penetrating flight.

The other day I had occasion to interview in London two well-educated Chinese gentlemen. It was important, for my special purpose, to get on unembarrassed and cordial terms with them as soon as I could. Of course, I knew that they would be, in some measure or other, admirers of the great teacher Confucius.

I drew from my pocket a copy, old and well-worn, of Auguste Comte's *Calendar of the Great Persons of History*.

"You see, gentlemen," said I, opening the *Calendar*, and pointing to a certain page, "that among the names of the Great I cherish the name of Confucius."

They smiled and understood.

I am heartily and enthusiastically in favour of the League of Nations as proposed by Woodrow Wilson, supplemented by President Harding, or waiting for the improvements which will inevitably be made by that ingenious gentleman, Comrade To-morrow. The League is all the more valuable in that it is not Christian. I am delighted to see Christians in it, and not for worlds would I exclude the Archbishop of Canterbury. But I am quite as much delighted to see the inclusion of Jewish Rabbis, Secularists, Buddhists, and Moslems. The invention of this League, which is not yet three years old, has been one of the noblest occurrences in the long line of man's development.

But the Greatest League of All is still being unfolded. Some of us, in a prophetic sense, already belong to it. All races of man move towards the shining consummation. When it is fulfilled, it will render every man at ease with every other, no matter what may be the varieties of colour, language, manners, and habits. The most glorious proof of progress will be the League of Humanity.

F. J. GOULD.

Acid Drops.

At the risk of offending some of our supporters, and with a full sense of the dare-devil nature of the pronouncement, we must say frankly that the story of Jack and the Beanstalk is not accurate. It cannot harmonize with modern scientific conclusions. On re-reading that we seem to have got the matter slightly mixed. It was intended to be a passage from a sermon by Canon Barnes, preached at Oxford before a University Extension meeting. What he actually said was: "I must say frankly that the Genesis narrative is not accurate; it could not harmonize with the modern scientific conclusions. Attempts to reconcile geology and Genesis or Genesis and evolution had failed." But after all, there does not appear to be very much difference in the two statements. The type of mind that can believe in the scientific accuracy of Genesis ought to be able to believe in the historic accuracy of Jack and the Beanstalk. And the orator who thinks he is doing something daring in avowing his disbelief in the one should have an equally Victoria-Cross-like feeling in disowning the other.

To be quite serious, one wonders what one ought to think of the culture or the civilization of a people where it is considered necessary to announce disbelief in the Genesis story of creation as though it marked a daring step forward. If it is so, one can only accept it as proof that, mentally, at least the bulk of Christians are still on the level of the savages. For between the type of mind that created the Genesis story of creation and that which creates the creation stories of savages there is not the least substantial difference. Either humbugs or savages, there seems no other alternative. And the humbug is just as pronounced when we are dealing with those who, while not believing in the story, profess to see something beautiful or mystically moral in it. That is the humbug of timid unbelief as against the humbug of ignorant suspicion.

Canon Barnes said that the Genesis story of creation was free from the grossness of primitive creation stories. That is pure humbug—if one may speak so of the utterance of a Canon. If anyone will refer to the *Folk-lore in the Old Testament* of Sir James Frazer, he will find any number of creation legends as good as that contained in the Old Testament. And Canon Barnes must know that the Babylonian creation story, on which our own is based, is as free from "grossness," whatever that may mean, as is ours. We suspect the sentence to be no more than one of those examples of mental crookedness which in a civilized country must be inseparable from religion in general and from Christianity in particular. But that a man can gain a reputation of a firebrand, and cause a sensation in 1921 for saying that he does not believe in the truth of Jack the Giant-killer ought to be placed on

record as a proof of the low mental level on which the mass of the people move. Future generations may find it handy in helping them to understand how it was that the "Great War" occurred, and the avalanche of nonsense that was poured out to extenuate that return to primitive barbarism.

Commenting on the Irish situation, the only Labour daily relieves itself as follows: "It is a time for thanking God that the conduct of our own nation has ceased to be a scandal and an offence." One sickens at the pietist's vocabulary. The other side can do it so much better. Would it be any loss to the movement if the only Labour daily came out as a religious weekly? Or is the Labour movement as presented by the only Labour daily only a happy hunting ground for the petit-bourgeois?

During the thunderstorms and torrential rains in Italy many churches have been struck by lightning. O! Papa!

The *Challenge* (July 8), in a leading article on "Rationalism and Reality," refers to our recent criticism of its comments on the Athanasian creed. "The *Freethinker*," says our contemporary, "thinks it worth while to cite the remark, apparently regarding it as proof of the break-down of the Christian faith." The tenor of the article is quite in keeping with Christian dialectics. What we pointed out was simply that in one part of the issue of May 25 reunion was strongly urged, while in another part the editorial comments on the opposition to an alteration in the Athanasian creed showed the difficulty of any such reunion. Our contemporary assures us that Spencer, Haeckel and Clodd belong to a by-gone generation, with which the new age is entirely out of sympathy. How much the present generation is influenced by Christian ideas can be seen easily enough from the religious press. Even the *Challenge* has written of late on the dearth of suitable candidates for the ministry.

In its issue of July 22 the Christian organ regrets its error in "attributing the *Freethinker* to the R.P.A.," instead of to the N.S.S., and apologises to both associations. Doubtless they will accept the apology. The pathway of Christian controversy trodden by defenders of the faith is too thickly strewn with insults and apologies to justify any other course.

A decree nisi with costs and custody of the children was granted to the wife of the Rev. Peter Kay, a Nonconformist minister. Miss Jessie Dams, sister to the Rev. W. Dams, of Westminster, was sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment for shop-lifting. The restraints of the Christian religion are not marked in these two cases.

Speaking on celibacy, Canon Lond, of Birmingham, said at Oxford that the efficiency of many priests was hampered by matrimony. This recalls Horace Smith's definition of celibacy as "a vow that a man takes that he will enjoy none but other men's wives."

Beginning on Monday, July 18, the Bishop of Woolwich has held five open-air mid-day meetings in Borough Market, Southwark. A number of Freethinkers attended, asked questions and distributed Freethought literature. At the last meeting, on Friday, by 12.30, the time advertised for commencing, there were forty-two men and women round the bishop's barrow, and at the conclusion perhaps double that number. We mention the fact in order to give some indication of the importance of these gatherings to the public. Our evening newspapers gave a very clear indication of their importance to them. The *Evening Standard* (July 22) devoted over half a column to the last meeting, which it described as "an interested crowd of market men and outsiders." Another journal published a photograph of the bishop addressing a fair-sized gathering of eager listeners. The *South London Press* spread itself over a column of precious space. It was quite impressed by "these very laudable efforts of the

bishop and his colleagues to carry frank and open discussion of Christian principles and beliefs into the very centre and heart of the working man's life." Plucky bishop! Especially so, as he refused point blank to meet a representative of the Freethought movement in a public debate on the subject of the address. As a moulder of public opinion, our independent and incorruptible Press fully appreciates those "moral values" so dear to the English heart.

From the *Catholic Times* (July 16) we learn that the Queen of the Belgians visited Kensal Green Cemetery, in the Catholic portion of which eighty-eight Belgian soldiers, who died in London, are buried. "The Queen advanced to a position in front of the grave, bent low as though in prayer, and after a short service by the Belgian chaplain, the Rev. P. Dierickx, sprinkled the soil with holy water, and then accepted the wreaths and placed them on the graves." Quite a "moving picture." We cannot help recalling the equally devout deportment of that "good Catholic," the late King Leopold, over whose royal remains Cardinal Mercier, boomed so effusively as a courageous servant of God and his Church, pronounced a glowing panegyric. We never heard of any protest from the Cardinal when Leopold and his torturers were at work in the Congo.

The Hyde Park demonstration on Saturday, July 16, to deliver "The Social Message of Christianity" was not a striking success. The *Guardian* assures us that "a vast quantity of nonsense, some of it dismal, some of it emotional, was talked by bishops and other more or less ecclesiastical persons." The Rev. Principal Garvie, D.D., said that "the infinite worth of a man's soul" was one of "the great revolutionary principles to be applied to transform modern society." With its emphasis on original sin, on the next world as a compensation for the evils suffered in this, on future punishment for unbelief, and the virtue of humility, the claim of Christianity to have discovered the "worth of a man's soul" must be quite convincing, even to the meanest intelligence.

Dean Inge (*Evening Standard*, July 21) paints a truly gloomy picture of the Anglican Church and its prospects. "In many dioceses the intellectual standard is so low that the most illiterate candidates (for holy orders) need not fear rejection." The plain English of the whole thing is that those who try to mix superstition and reason are at the end of their resources. Let the genuine Modernists prepare for the final struggle with the Roman Church, the representative of undiluted authority in matters of faith.

Mr. Clement Rogers, the son of the late Professor Thorold Rogers, has been enlightening Anglo-Catholic priests at Oxford with illustrations of "The Unbelief of To-day," drawn from his experience as a lecturer in Hyde Park. Mr. Rogers, we are told by the *Guardian*, delighted the conference." Quite probably. The Anglican organ adds, "The unbelief, it may be guessed, was not of a cultured type." Possibly not, as the *Guardian* understands culture. The denizens of Hyde Park have not been to Oxford, and neither had Jesus Christ and his disciples. If the latter appeared in London to-day they would certainly stand in the dock for defying most of the accepted English conventions. And the established respectability of the Established Church would throw the first stone at them.

The recent Anglican National Assembly stated that the Church was 2372 clergy short. The *Guardian* says that "the real way to fill the depleted ranks is to assure a man that when he takes Holy Orders he is not dooming himself and his family to poverty." In the same issue (July 15) a Mr. D. J. Savory Jones urges the Church to give "ampler facilities to women to speak and preach." According to the New Testament, however, woman is to be silent in the churches, and poverty is a blessing. John Wesley always declared that he would not die worth twenty pounds. But in his day soul-saving was a delight for its own sake.

Nowadays there is not enough sap in any of the Protestant bodies for a good old heresy hunt like that connected with the Robertson Smith episode of a generation ago. The modern rebels are epigoni, which being interpreted means that they are fire-works without any fire. Recent issues of the *Christian World*, however, show that the Rev. F. C. Spurr's orthodoxy is gravely questioned by Mr. J. Mountain and others. "An Orthodox Minister" writes (July 14): "The question in the forefront of the attack on Spurr is, Is the story of the great fish which swallowed Jonah historical incident or is it allegorical?" A direct answer, Yes or No, is demanded. A question like that is what the Mountains in travail offer us in the third decade of the twentieth century and at a time, too, when materialism is hopelessly bankrupt. It should have been reserved for an occasion of supreme spiritual moment.

From the same number of the *Christian World* we learn that Dr. H. S. Fosdick, of the First Presbyterian Church, New York, has been severely rebuked by a section of the religious press in the States for the expression of modern views of the Bible. "The greater sin belongs to those who provide him with such a pulpit," writes *The Presbyterian*. Yet, only the other day the Rev. R. H. Strachan, of Edinburgh, emphatically urged the acceptance of modern views concerning God's word. What is really comical about this sanguinary conflict between the solemn Sairey Gamps of civilization's back-wash and their prancing young rivals, is that the great multitude of men and women look at the antics of both with lofty contempt.

The Rev. Dr. Dakin is said to belong "to the increasing group of Baptist ministers who specialize in theology at German universities." We are sadly afraid that the laurels of German Atheism, which was so useful in England in 1914, are rapidly fading. But our religious press will soon hatch another stunt.

At the Anglican National Convention in July the question of the sale of livings came up for discussion. "Bishops, clergy and laity were all agreed in eager desire that the abuses and scandals should be done away with." A committee was appointed to inquire into patronage, sale of advowsons and tenure of benefices, and to recommend necessary reforms. Some concrete facts in connection with these "livings," as they are happily denominated, are worth noting, if only for the benefit of those whose consciences revolt against the idea of "professional infidels." According to the *Church Times* it was stated that the living of Landewednack, near the Lizard, had been recently acquired "by a party trust." At Fowey, Cornwall, an advowson was sold whose late patron was not informed as to the real purchasers. On discovering the facts he tried to repurchase it, but the new owner was too well satisfied with his bargain. Lastly, some of these "livings" in the Church "as by law established" are actually the property of Roman Catholics and brewery companies.

The Keswick Convention is an annual gathering organized to promote "practical holiness" in the life of the believing Christian. At the recent meeting Rev. F. B. Meyer said: "To me the whole Bible is the word of God, the Old Testament equally with the New Testament." Such an utterance is at least sincere, but it contrasts somewhat strangely with the plea of a writer in the *Guardian* (July 22) not to teach children views of the Bible which are manifestly untenable in the light of modern science and historical criticism. How many of these "advanced" Christians are grateful to the long line of Freethinkers who gave them a new conception of deity and scripture?

The *New Statesman* has earned the gratitude of the community for digging the following morsel out of the advertising columns of the *Morning Post* :—

Preparing for Anti-Christ.—Our Judaized Prime Minister "embraces" alien De Valera, heeding not the cry of Martyrs' Blood! The *Jewish World* approves of Cardinal Bourne! Dark forces behind "British" Industrial

magnates conspire with Labour "Leaders" to enslave the loyal workers to create misery, and to develop Revolution!.....Write to Watchman, 08990, *Morning Post*.

Is this the effect of the heat-wave? One shudders to think of the fate of the Chosen People if men (or women) like the advertiser were let loose on the Gold Coast or in Port Darwin.

Speaking at the Anglo-Catholic Priests' Convention, the Bishop of Oxford said, plaintively, that the clergy were charged with being unreal. The bishop need not be so coy. His colleagues distinguish themselves from other people by wearing sixth-century costumes in the twentieth century; by wearing petticoats whilst other men favour trousers; and by using an artificial method of speech. Is all this not unreal?

"Like most Freethinkers who live to be seventy, Mr. (Bernard) Shaw feels more and more respect for religion." So says Dean Inge. We might add that many people as they get older begin to be more "respectable," particularly when they happen to be blessed with a good income. And yet we hardly think that Dean Inge would be very pleased with the kind of religion professed by Mr. Shaw. But Christianity is becoming so contemptible a thing to-day that its champions are pleased with any sort of lip-homage, whatever be meant by the words used.

"If it is Christianity it is not democracy," said Mr. H. M. Hyndman, speaking at the Social Democratic Conference on Bank Holiday. That should do some of our ex-Sunday-school political place hunters in the Labour movement good. If there is one thing more sickening than another in connection with this class it is their cant about the democratic nature of Christianity.

Honest belief in a God who is really and truly a heavenly father has long been a waning influence in both the individual and the national life throughout Christendom. The *Record* (July 21), however, deprecates "man-made devices" for producing rain, and agrees with Rev. E. A. Phillips that "God will provide in due time, and that he will not fail us in the matter." Only a quarter of a century ago "days of humiliation and prayer for rain," officially proclaimed, were quite common in Australia. It was evidently thought that the dying "cattle on a thousand hills" and the rotting sheep were not sufficient "humiliation" for the Christian God. Since then the engineers have been at work. They have put locks in the rivers, constructed irrigation works, and built huge reservoirs to conserve the water which Providence wasted. All these devices are "man-made."

The same issue of the *Record* contains twenty-seven advertisements from religious organizations and charitable institutions, all of which appeal for funds. With the exception of three of these advertisements, the appeal is not of a particularly manly or dignified character, and often borders closely on the frenetic. If the scientific spirit prevailed in England more than three-fourths of these charitable and semi-religious institutions would disappear altogether. Other interests would probably suffer also, and that is the reason why "our glorious free Press," true to its inherited "moral sanctions," will not accept advertisements of the *Freethinker*, even in the ordinary course of business.

The nineteenth century was marked by a continuous outbreak of Christian prejudice against Freethinkers. In the earlier years the vocabulary of insult was almost exhausted concerning Paine and Shelley, and Byron, in spite of his being a popular aristocrat, was similarly insulted. A recent reviewer says, "every conceivable crime that the ingenuity of man could suggest was laid to Byron's charge." In the later years of the century Bradlaugh and his colleagues, including Annie Besant, were accused of almost every crime in the calendar excepting murder. There was plenty of Christianity and very little civilization.

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.

"UNORTHODOX."—Sorry, but we see no useful purpose that can be served by continuing the correspondence. Going over the same ground time after time is apt to bore readers who are not so interested in the subject as the two parties in the dispute.

E. LECHMERE.—Your letter, with enclosure, came quite safely to hand, and was sent to the proper quarter.

MR. T. DUNBAR writes suggesting that a good way towards forming a Freethinker Fellowship would be for all to join the N. S. S., and then those who desire it could let the Secretary know that they were willing to meet other Freethinkers, and names and addresses could be given on request. He thinks this would be particularly useful to Freethinkers moving into new districts. We think there is a good deal in this suggestion if it were worked out.

M. ROGERS and others crowded out of this issue. Will appear next week.

C. W. MARSHALL.—Thanks for reference. See "Sugar Plums."

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.

A reader calls our attention to the fact that in some of the public libraries belonging to the Borough of Shore-ditch the *Freethinker* no longer appears on the reading stands. We should be obliged if some of our readers would ascertain if this is the case in all the libraries, and would let us know. If it is we may get some of our friends who are residents in the borough to raise the matter before the proper authorities. We are quite ready to send the paper to any public library free, although we see no reason why they should not pay for it. Still, we never allow the question of payment to stand in the way of securing the proper amount of publicity. We send it weekly to quite a number of public institutions, and are quite ready to send it to others.

Mr. J. W. Gott was liberated from prison on July 29. His sentence was, it will be recalled, three months for blasphemy, and three months for sending Malthusian appliances and literature through the post. We commented at the time on the way in which the case was managed, and the refusal to allow the N. S. S. to take charge of it. We tried at the time to get particulars from those who had the case in hand as to what was being done

with regard to the literature which had been seized by the police. Only on July 26 was the information given us that the pamphlets seized had been destroyed by order of the magistrate. As these included pamphlets that were not included in the indictment, we are of opinion that the magistrate went beyond his powers, and had we known in time something might have been done to prevent it. We are told that the pamphlets condemned included *The Mistakes of Moses*, and Mrs. Bonner's *Penalties for Opinion*. We beg to call the attention of all concerned that both these are on sale at the office of the Pioneer Press, and will be sold to anyone who desires to purchase them.

An attempt is being made to form a branch of the N. S. S. at Stockport. Freethinkers in Stockport and neighbourhood are cordially invited to co-operate, and meetings in support of the movement are held at 191 Higher Hillgate on Sunday morning at 11 o'clock, and on Thursday evening at 7.30.

Miss E. M. Vance, General Secretary, N. S. S. writes:

Since the early 'eighties I have been interested in the various efforts to establish some outward sign of the inward mind for Freethinkers, and claim that my persistence launched the present and most successful badge upon the Society. In my prime, my experience of Leagues, Federations, Brotherhoods and Fellowships would have entitled me to a championship against all comers, and several times the more or less ingenious ideas of advertising the *Freethinker* came perilously near to a prosecution. Yet the idea still commends itself to me, and I offer my whole-hearted support towards the formation of yet another bond of union of Freethinkers, which shall include financial help for the paper also, but my past experience and well-considered opinion is that such an attempt could only be successful through the medium of membership of the N. S. S. Our President-Editor is the man at the helm, and we are all bound for the same port; why, then, divide the crew? If fresh introductions are to be made and addresses exchanged, some guarantee will be required. This the N. S. S. could supply. Remember, the enemy is still abroad, *vide* the case of Mr. Hunt. Will the enthusiasts, then, communicate with me as a preliminary to being put in touch with each other. Criticism and suggestions will be equally welcomed.

Now we hope that those who are really interested in the idea of a Fellowship will act on Miss Vance's suggestion.

Usually our readers are quick to point out any error that we make in these columns, but there was one several weeks ago we have had to find out ourselves. It was a reply to an enquiry as to the Encyclical—not "Evangelical"—as it got itself printed of Pope Leo XIII on Socialism. The Encyclical is known as the *Rerum Novarum*. Any Catholic bookseller should be able to supply one with a copy.

Mr. Harold Elliot writes: Referring to "Tab Can's" query in current issue of the *Freethinker*, I fancy the extract he gives is a misquotation of a passage in the first verse of Brownings' "The Confessional." The complete verse runs:—

It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,
Their Saints.....all they fear or hope
Are lies, and lies—there! through my door
And ceiling, there! and wall and floor,
There, lies, they lie—shall still be hurled
Till spite of them I reach the world.

This poem, by the way, is an excellent exposition of the tactics of the "Great lying Church" in the days of its power, and is worth while perusal by any Freethinker.

We take it that Freethinkers who are accustomed to watch pretty closely the development of Labour movements here and abroad will thank us for drawing their attention to a new magazine, the first number of which was published on July 15. This is *The Labour Monthly* (The Labour Publishing Co., Ltd., 6 Tavistock Square, W.C. 1, one shilling). The aim of the editors is to counteract by strategic exposure the organized attacks on Labour by world-wide capitalistic interests, and from what we can see our friends are not likely to

let the enemy down too lightly. In earlier times the oppressor was invariably an avowed and courageous tyrant, now he works in devious and secret ways, his hypocrisy and guile measuring the depth alike of his hatred and abject fear of the unchecked expression of ideas.

The journal, we are told, will record the facts of the Labour movement in each country, and will reproduce important documents and interesting cartoons. It will also do more than merely record facts. Each number is to contain critical articles by well-known men and women in the international Socialist and Labour world, and a special feature will be made of instructive papers on trade union developments in each country. We note that some of its contributors are Henri Barbusse, Max Beer, H. N. Brailsford, Anatole France, Maxim Gorki, K. Radek and Clara Zetkin.

The first number is weighty in matter and uncompromising in method. Mr. G. D. H. Cole writes on the Triple Alliance, Lenin has an article entitled "The Meaning of the Agricultural Tax." This is a translation of a recently published pamphlet, in which he explains his change of policy, or rather, seeks to show that the change is really no change at all. His aim is to make the world believe that the Soviet State is not Communism, which is to be reached only through State capitalism, and, it may be, a measure of private capitalism. This, he claims, is a necessary stage in social evolution toward Socialism, and must commend itself to the pure Marxist. M. Barbusse has an article, "France and the Future," in which he has some well-timed remarks about the introduction of religion and mysticism into the new sociology. "We must guard," he says, "against introducing anything other than reason in the organization of the new order. The terrible experience of past history shows us the great evil which may be done by the intrusion of supernatural power, of which no criterion exists that can be definitely expressed in each mind and conscience." In conclusion he tells us of the frantic efforts made by reactionary officialdom to suppress liberty of the spoken and written word. Mr. L. S. Woolf compares with serene irony the present British policy of "Economic Imperialism" with our former theory of a "Sacred Trust" in our treatment of backward races. As a curious instance of the rise and fall in national moralities he notes that if you want to find to-day the spirit of economic imperialism of Leopold II. of Belgium and the exploiters who twenty years ago converted Belgian Congo into a desert, you must go to Kenya Colony (formerly British East Africa) and Downing Street, and if you want to find a remnant of that spirit of fair play and decent administration which most people twenty years ago considered one of the glories of British colonial government, you must go to Belgian Congo.

The N. S. S. Executive is sending Mr. George Whitehead on another lecturing tour in South Wales. He will commence in Swansea on August 8. We have no doubt but that he will repeat the success of his first tour. We understand that a debate or two with some of the local clergy in the Rhondda district has been arranged.

Just as we are going to press we hear from Mr. Macconnell, of New Street, Bakewell, who is raising a fund for the assistance of Mr. Hunt, mentioned by us in previous issues, that he has received subscriptions to the extent of £33 8. The fund is to remain open until the end of August, not July, as previously stated.

Such as do build their faith upon
The holy text of pike and gun;
Decide all controversies by
Infallible artillery;
And from their doctrine orthodox,
By apostolic blows and knocks,
Call fire and sword and desolation
A Godly, thorough Reformation.

—Hudibras.

The Faithful Malefactor.

III.

(Concluded from page 492.)

THE theologians call the subject of our sketch "the penitent thief," but it seems far more correct to designate him "the faithful malefactor." So far from insulting Jesus, as the other did, he stood up for him, and that at a time when most people would have thought only of themselves, and many would have found relief in aggravating the lot of their companion in misery. Moreover, though he evidently knew what Jesus claimed to be, he did not think the claim false or ridiculous because of the trouble Jesus had got into for making it. In short, he was far more loyal and believing than the apostles. There is not a trace of his coming to Jesus as a penitent, or of Jesus treating him as such. He never cries: "What must I do to be saved?" or, "I have sinned against heaven and before thee"; and Jesus never says, "Thy sins are forgiven," or "Thy faith hath made thee whole." It is true that addressing the other malefactor the faithful one said, "We receive the due reward of our deeds," adding with respect to Jesus, "but this man hath done nothing amiss." Here, however, there is no repentance. The speaker displays an intellectual perception of his case, but he does not display a corresponding state of moral feeling. The note of remorse is wanting, nor is there any sign of regret. This indicates that he felt no compunction, and was not perturbed by his fate. He might use the term "justly" in the sense of "legally," and this would be perfectly consistent with the absence of self-disapprobation, and even with the presence of self-approval. The behaviour of the man finds its counterpart in the behaviour of Jesus. The man shows no contrition and asks no forgiveness. Jesus demands no repentance and grants no pardon. Hence, neither the man feels guilty, nor did Jesus think him culpable. How is this to be explained? Matthew and Mark call the man a *robber*, Luke a *malefactor*. There is no contradiction. As regards robbery, Jesus understood it in a sense unknown to jurisprudence. He reminded a wealthy youth of the commandment against stealing, and explained it by telling him to distribute his property (Mark xx. 17). He bid his disciples "Sell what ye have and give alms" (Luke xii. 33). He showed unmistakable sympathy with a crafty steward who bled his opulent master (Luke xvi. 1). Thus he might regard the faithful malefactor as one who had done useful service in assisting the equalization of possessions by enforced restitution. Moreover, the dialogue between the man and Jesus, although extremely brief, nevertheless suffices to prove beyond doubt their previous intimacy.

The man approaches Jesus like a trustful follower fully acquainted with him and his purpose, whilst Jesus manifests no surprise whatever at his faith, but treats him as a comrade of whom he was sure and in whose company he delighted to be.

The past connection indicated did not escape notice in the early Church, which explained it after her manner by saying that when the Holy Family were in Egypt they passed a camp of robbers asleep with two sentries, Titus and Dumarchus, on guard; that Titus bribed Dumarchus to let the Holy Family pass by unhurt, and that Jesus told his mother he should one day be crucified between these two thieves, the former of them preceding him into Paradise.¹

¹ *Evangelium Infantie Arabicum*, 23 (Tichendorf), Longfellow has the story in his *Golden Legend*:—

When thirty years shall have gone by,
I at Jerusalem shall die.....
On the accursed tree.
Then on my right and my left side,
These thieves shall both be crucified,
And Titus thenceforth shall abide
In Paradise with me.

How had Jesus and the man really become acquainted? Here it is well to remember that among the twelve apostles there was a person called "Simon the Canaanite" in Matthew (xx. 4), and in Mark (iii. 18), but "Simon the Zealot" in Luke (vi. 15), and in Acts (i. 13). Now Canaanite in this connection signifies the same as Zealot, which means one belonging to a certain band of revolutionaries founded, or at least organized, in the early days of Jesus by Judas the Galilaean. They were religious bandits, or theocratic anarchists, who scorned death completely and refused to call any man "lord" (Jos. B. J. 3. 8. *Ant* 18. 1). The fact that Jesus chose Simon the Zealot to be one of his apostles shows plainly that he did not dislike the sect of the Zealots, which, indeed, held similar views to his own teaching. Moreover, Jesus was accused to Pilate by the Jewish authorities of having stirred up the people throughout Judea, beginning from Galilee (Luke xxiii. 5), and there is good reason to believe that he was the same as Barabbas, a man said to have been released in preference to him, although lying bound on the charge of insurrection (Mark xv. 7, Luke, xxii. 19). This person is called "Jesus Barabbas" in some ancient texts and versions of Matthew xxvii. 16,² and Pilate would never have condoned insurrection to punish mere agitation. We take it, therefore, that the faithful malefactor was a Zealot, and, like Simon the Zealot, a disciple of Jesus. The extremists of that party were called *sicarii*, or daggersmen, because they carried a short sword under their cloaks, and used it freely upon occasion. Jesus told his disciples to sell their clothes for swords if they had none (Luke xxii. 36), and one of them drew his sword for Jesus at a very inopportune moment (Matt. xxvi. 51). The faithful malefactor might have killed or wounded someone without Jesus having taken part in the occurrence, which would explain why he regarded his condemnation as just, and that of Jesus as unjust, whilst his belonging to the sect of the Zealots would be sufficient to account for his not exhibiting any repentance. Again, Jesus taught that although he should be put to death, his mission would still be realized by his being taken up to heaven, and sent back with an army of angels to set up the divine kingdom. Both the malefactors were in all probability his disciples, but the one who reviled him had lost faith under the stress of circumstances, whereas the other kept it to the end, and this explains his desire for Jesus to remember him upon attaining his kingdom. A further explanation offered by this theory has regard to the conduct of Luke in substituting "malefactors" for "robbers." He knew that the man's offence was more than robbery, but he did not like to say what it really was for fear lest the Romans might think that Jesus had been no better than his companions on the cross, and that the three of them were all rebels alike in spite of anything Pilate had affirmed to the contrary.³

² The construction of the sentence establishes this reading: "And they had then a notable prisoner called (Jesus) Barabbas. When therefore they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, 'Whom will ye that I release unto you? (Jesus) Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?..... And they said, Barabbas. Pilate said unto them, What then shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?' (verses 16, 17, 21, 22, R.V.). Here two men with the same name are distinguished by-name is applied in each case. The other three Gospels have not a trace of this verbal antithesis, and what is more, the writers seem to have gone out of their way to avoid it. As the Gospels are compilations, it does not follow that a later one is always less primitive than an earlier one in its statements.

³ Cleombrotus, having read Plato on Immortality, hastened to throw himself down from a wall to enter the state of the truly blessed (St. Aug. *De Civit.* B. I. o. 21). It is devoutly to be hoped that the political doctrines and methods of Jesus will never induce anyone to break the head of a policeman in Hyde Park. Passive resistance and the ballot-box offer every facility to attain social rights; and violence would inevitably

One word in conclusion. It was said of Jesus, with respect to Lazarus, "Behold how he loved him!" But his love for the faithful malefactor was greater still. Of his own accord he granted him infinitely more than he ventured to ask. Indeed, if after the silence of these long years he were to call the ever-increasing throng of holy ones who have departed in his faith, and should ask them their desire, there is not one of all that glorious company, confessor or doctor, virgin or martyr, who could crave a nobler promise than that made to the malefactor upon the cross, To-day shalt thou be with me. This thought is tenderly set forth by one who pondered much of "the saint's everlasting rest," yet was fain to yield before the mystery, and humbly say:—

My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim,
But it is enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with him.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

In the Heart of Ayrshire.

FIRST an invocation and a little philosophy, making the best of a bad world, or creating a new one in the multitudinous sensations born of leisure, liberty, and delight, in the leafy month of June; for within is the fountain of good, and it will ever bubble up if thou wilt ever dig; for happiness is more in feeling than in fact, in illusion than in actuality; or if you will, let it be the outer scene alone that inspires, the sylvan glories of the heart of Ayr. But come with me all ye travellers to distant lands, all ye searchers after the Good the True and the Beautiful, here at home, on this perfect day in June. And yet not in garrulous parochial praise of one little country in "a small island off the coast of France," but in the infinite universality of thought and sensation, with a soul rapt and refreshed in and by present and particular amenities, that sees and sympathizes with the larger vision of all the world of nature and of man. Ah, how superb this outer scene and inner vision.

Let the one and the other unfold and mingle as we roll along, up hill and down, on the bare upland, in the bosky vale. Come with me on the tired and dusty wheel; yet not too tired, not too strenuous, taking it easy, in the many blue and shining hours, plus "summer time," of the long summer day; in search of happiness, indeed, yet not chasing its illusive gleam, rather cunningly letting it come to us; a fine art, and a subtle science, yet plain and obvious as the blue dome above, the green earth below. Come with me, mon cher ami, or preferably ma chère amie, my heart's delight, or let me go alone and in the solitudes have troops of friends in memory's and in fancy's train—men and women, old and young—ever the smutty, chubby cherubs of careless noise and glee! friends, joys, loves, past, present, and to come, all the riches of a psychology set free, beloved all these happy hours, when the heart feels good and kind, as the easy silent wheel unthreads those ways unknown; under the gracious umbrage of wayside hedge and tree, in the deeper grove over the feathered and fantastic tremulous shadow-sprays that lie athwart the shining highway. Such solo-cycling, on such a day, in such a scene, is exquisite but selfish. Still, as it is said, absence makes the heart grow fonder, it may be that love, intensifying when apart from, will teach me to repay when I rejoin my kind. Even so at least doth selfishness, as in a mantle, wrap itself in sophistry!

defeat its own end by affording opportunity for crushing retaliation.—C. C. D.

In the one rhyme of mine (which is no rhyme) that has really passed our censor of censors, I had said:—

Until my limbs are weary
They have borne me
Onward, outward, upward,
On the tired turnpike
And the tangent ways.....

Still fond of tangent ways and unfamiliar paths, not quite so wickedly wilful as in other days, but still averse to the dreich monotony of the common road—and the common lot—that thronged and dusty common road that leads to dusty death, I am fain to escape, if only for a day, its inevitable trend and end.

The actual road being traversed (that round the concave Ayrshire coast) was all too fine, easy, and familiar to be interesting or inspiring. The wheelman grew more diffident and undecided; should he return? He had at length left behind him most of his life's dour and daring, often daft enthusiasms, and was now in search of goodness rather than greatness, wisdom than folly, of that peace of mind, so few have found, therefore so precious, that peace above all earthly dignities a still and quiet conscience. But, ah, how very splendid were those other days! those mental and physical, even if violent and aimless, exercises, that have left a fibre in the muscle and the mind, helping both to survive a too premature decay, erecting still, perhaps, the soul and body under the weight of eighty years or more! And how splendid is the intro-rospect; what a splendid instrument is the individual soul of man; what thoughts, feelings, impulses, in those caverns of the spirit, in those hours when it is so good for man to be alone! This is why a man sometimes feels it so difficult to be sociable. He has but now been enjoying such splendid company—oh, no, not his own alone—all logical, and all agreed, unexpressed, because inexpressible. But the subject is infinite. I am forgetting myself. I was now some six miles from the town of Ayr. On my left hand a deep gully between some lonely golden whinny knowes held the wistful eye. Here was something in harmony with the sober seeker's mood. Here was found that involuntary parting of the ways, that subtle line of least resistance that leads to—what and where? The little more, how much of it; the little less, what worlds away. How much may depend on slightest "chance" like this, but which is always *choice*. The little tangent roadway, one of many in those fruitful wilds, was rough and steep, and lonely too. What generations of school children, and adults, had passed and repassed this way, now all was still and silent, I was the Last Man. The hedgerows were lonely, poignantly interesting in their myriad green and tender plant life, the blue speedwell, happily named, inviting me to persevere, the whinny knowes glinting still the golden glory of austerer things. At the summit of the little hill the landscape, and the life, but now—

Sae bleak and bare,
Sae bleak and bare,

were transformed as by magic, and standing beside a castellated gatehouse I surveyed a sylvan valley far spread in the bosom of the hills. The mansion near by was owned by Sir Peter Mackay, of "White Horse" whisky fame, which suggested to me, contrariwise, the pale horseman of another inspiration. The wheel sped ever so easily, silently and sweetly down into this heart of Ayrshire. There was life and beauty all round, but in the midst of my joy I knew the Pale Horseman was cantering ever beside me, as I knew he accompanied, invisible, all the humans that I met. There was ever that faintest shill, those intimations of mortality, those inaudible but inexorable hoofbeats on the pathway from the cradle to the grave. Owe heaven a death, 'tis not due yet, and I would be loth to pay him before his day. Such the pale cast of thought

that besets the realist in the solitudes, but that grows companionable at last; even Death is a good fellow when we know and understand him, when he ceases to be the bogie man of an absurd fanaticism. To-day the Pale Horseman, and the myriad misfortunes and oppressions of mankind he comes at last to soothe and heal, are melted into air, into thin air, lost in those gracious woodlands, absorbed in that azure shining dome. The pensive spirit is on holiday, abandoned to the hedonism of one glorious day. Paradise was lost, and was regained, would be lost and found again and again in all the alternations of sentient life.

Even as these and a thousand other reflections filled the mind the unconscious slippery wheel had borne me into the heart of the valley and it was climbing the further side toward the quaint tree-shaded hamlet of Symington, far from the madding crowd, in that happier "semi-imbecility of the country." Further along I took the road to Tarbolton, made classic by Burns. The fine old castle of Craigie reared its crumbling ruin on the left, the green trees flourishing amidst its roofless walls suggesting Byron's lines:—

'Tis but as ivy leaves around the ruined turret
wreath,
All green and wildly fresh without but worn
and grey beneath.

On a sylvan eminence on the right stands another memorial of barbarism, the tower marking the spot where Wallace was said to stand to see "the Burns o' Ayr burn well." Up and down some miles further on a lovely, lonely road, and I dismount in Tarbolton, between the Crown Inn on the one hand and the Christian Church on the other—sustenance for body and soul. As for my soul, it was more than satisfied with a Pagan shrine; as for the body, though the day was hot, it was neither hungry nor athirst, but in some fine magnanimity of the occasion I thought I would stand myself a drink, and a very little of that nut brown ale helped to paint the further landscapes on the brain. Topping a little rise beyond the village I had, in that far clear azure atmosphere, a quiet enchanting vision, not of the Promised Land, but of the Hills of Memory, the circling hills of infancy and of the old homeland. How impossible it is to describe that vision splendid of deep delight, seen but for a moment, but pictured on the mind for evermore, the solace and the compensation for the ills of life. And I had lived so long, so sadly erred, and come so far; yet the end was but the beginning; I was born again, in a more infinitely precious beginning, under those constant, smiling, blue, eternal hills of home! I sighed a little as I turned to go. The road, a broad and smooth one, in a forest avenue, dropped gently into another valley.

I leaned me to an ancient oak, now walked a little, economising paradise, now stood to admire a venerable larch, a giant monarch of the wood, and plucked a spray of golden broom, and so came to Failford, where Burns parted with his Mary; where a commemorative monument is in course of erection; where just as in the poet's day,—

Ayr gurgling kissed his pebbled shore,
O'erhung with wildwoods thickening green;

Where the river in a broad shallow bend appears briefly in an opening in the woods; where on a rock in midstream some barelegged maidens reminded one of the Muses of Burns:—

Ye glaikit, gleesome, dainty dainties
What by Castalia's wimplin' streamies
Loup sing and lave your pretty limbies,
Ye ken, ye ken,
That strang necessity supreme is
'Mang sons o' men.

Again a little rise, a further dip into the valley, a last short climb, and I was in Mauchline. I called here on a remarkable man, a poet, a really great poet in some ways; a strange, original, ignorant, harsh, musical,

ready, powerful versifier, realist and idealist, fanatic and philosopher, a life-long soldier of the king, now a soldier of Christ in the Salvation Army; believing every word of the Bible (with his own interpretation, of course), but satirizing in his verse churches, ministers and congregations; all are wrong and, at communion, "drinking damnation to their souls"; he alone austere in the right, without the faintest shadow of a doubt; there is no compromise or vacillation here; no one can retouch his poetry, not even the grammar or the spelling; there it must stand; a spade is a spade; one can but wonder and admire, and despair of this human paradox of paradoxes. I am quite sure his like was never known; his poetry has compelled the respect of good critics; it is amazing stuff, and not all on religious subjects. But somehow, splendid as it seemed, wonderful as was the man, neither the man nor his muse breathed the benediction or the inspiration of the journey I had come. The remarkable thing was that such native genius should survive the harsh and narrow conceptions of the religion of "General" Booth.

Ichabod! the glory was departed; the tired familiar turnpike was before me again as I pursued the homeward way. The twilight shadows deepened on the woods and fields, fresh from a sprinkling of rain, as home drew near; soothing but sad, inspiring still, was this end of a perfect day.

A. MILLAR.

Clergy Please Note.

A FREE LESSON IN PUBLICITY.

THE fact that advertising is a vital factor in modern life seems to have evaded the attention of our clerics. However, it seems that at last one of the tribe has awakened up to the advantages of sensational advertising. "Advertising," he says, "pays." This is the thin edge of the carving knife, and developments are expected. Meantime, we give a few tips that may prove alluring. For example:—

Grandfather has neglected the Church for many years. He sits in the corner smoking a corn-cob, and absorbs the local "Argus." Grandfather is what the vicar terms a "backslider"—so is grandmother, who is now learning to make jumpers instead of framing religious texts in rainbow wool—as she used to do. All this is extremely dreadful and must be changed at once. The vicar "inserts" the following advertisement in the "Argus":—

Why be old and miserable when Sunday services at St. Paul's are bright, breezy and refreshing? Better than monkey glands are the ultra-rapid snap-shot sermons of the Rev. Mushwasher. Come on Sunday and know what it is to feel young again. A real cure for sciatica; a certain remedy for old-age hump. Better than Bottomley. Free drinks and baccy in the vestry at half time. A real reviver. You cannot afford to miss this. Christianity up-to-date. None of the old dope. Something absolutely new.

That would fetch the old swell, or we know nothing about advertising.

Again, think of the possibilities in another direction. The Young People! The children of to-day are the grandfathers and grandmothers of to-morrow. The clergy cannot afford to neglect them. The ever extending influence of the Cinema is responsible for the falling off in juvenile attendance to church and chapel. The following "announcement" in the local "Mercury" would very soon put things right:—

A Challenge to the Cinema!

Why pay nincence for two hours of hot hands? Young couples are cordially invited to the twilight services now being held every Sabbath at St. Mary's. Snug tip-up pews a speciality. No glaring lights; no hymns; no standing up; no kneeling down. Everything comfortable. Sermons preached in a low voice—hardly audible. Free acid drops—one for each couple, may be obtained from the verger. Regular attendance secures twenty per cent. off marriage fees. A challenge to the registry office.

This is the kind of thing that will fetch 'em. The clergy are invited to use the above "Copy," but they must make public acknowledgements to the *Freethinker*, otherwise, we shall be forced to place the matter in the hands of our solicitor.

ARTHUR F. THORN.

Correspondence.

DR. LYTTTELTON'S CHALLENGE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—May I be permitted to ask Dr. Lyttelton to tell us in the *Freethinker* what explicitly does he mean by "training character" for an after life? Certainly, character is being daily trained, but it is always for a *mundane existence later on in this life*. Every item in the training is to enable the trained to put himself into a better adjustment with his physical and social environment in this world. Training for an *immaterial* or *incorporeal* existence is to me wholly meaningless. If it has a meaning to Dr. Lyttelton, and if that meaning be expressible in human speech, would he kindly, in explicit terms, tell us what it is?

By the articles now running through this journal (and which, as soon as completed, will appear in book-form), I endeavour to show that every item of which consciousness consists, both in *genesis* and *purpose*, is indissolubly linked or geared with space, time, and physical energy; in other words, that there is not an element in the entire contents of mind which has a shadow of real meaning apart from corporeal existence. What, then, is the training to which the Doctor alludes?

KERIDON.

A CRITICISM OF FREETHOUGHT.

SIR,—I assume that the supporters of the *Freethinker* desire to abolish belief in the supernatural as soon as possible. Accordingly, may I suggest that we examine the anchors which secure religion in society; having done so, we will then discover that religion is a part of modern political government; is, in fact, the most perfect link in the chain of modern society. We find that ruling classes have successfully used religious beliefs in the gentle art of pacifying the people; but what is their attitude towards supernaturalism? They believe in God because they have faith in him, and have faith in him because they believe in him, or vaguely mutter: "There must be something." Propaganda against God is like attempting to empty the sea with an eggcup.

The cause of such a clinging to a discredited dogma is economic in character, and is due to ignorance of science. It results from stunted opportunity to develop a mass mentality capable of intellectual independence. Ah! exclaims the Freethinkers, "All are entitled to opinions on matters political."

I wish to assert that unless Freethought becomes a determined political force and declares war on the present social order, it must return to the eggcup and empty the sea.

Further, in opposition to the foul system prevailing to-day let us not repeat the mistake of H. M. Hyndman who, in criticism of H. Spencer's *The Coming Slavery*, assumed that an antagonist of Socialism was necessarily a supporter of Capitalism; let us not assume that opposition to Capitalism implies support of State Socialism or the strange jargon of any particular revolutionary sect.

In unanimity we should attack the vicious economic system which produces stunted minds for Freethinkers to convert. In seeking to lay the bricks of a new society we need to differ and engage in conflict of ideas, and leave the best of all for public utility. Whatever may be the future state, the present state must go; Freethought must become partisan and attack that which the *Freethinker* A. J. Balfour desires to remain. Unless the barriers to physical health and recreational opportunities are removed there can be no effective progress towards the removal of dogma, and an ignorant mass remains subject to religious wiles. A vigorous mass, healthy in mind and body will kick it contemptuously aside. Otherwise, mere exclusive Freethought advocacy is the delight of a few and unknown by the many, and is, to my mind, but emptying the sea with an eggcup.

FRED TYLER.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JULY 26, 1921.

THE President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the Chair. Also present: Messrs. Lloyd, Moss, Quinton, and Rosetti; Miss Kough, Miss Pitcher, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

The monthly financial statement was presented and adopted.

New members were received for the Leeds and Upper Rhondda Branches.

An official report of Mr. George Whitehead's highly successful tour in South Wales and thence to Leeds was received and adopted, and in reference to applications for his services the Secretary was instructed to arrange for return visits to Swansea and the Rhondda, also to Manchester and other Northern Branches.

A resolution of the Birmingham Branch protesting against the action of the police in the case of Mr. Hunt, and asking the Executive to act in the matter, was read, and after discussion it was resolved unanimously that the Branch be informed that, while deeply regretting that Mr. Hunt should suffer so severely at the hands of his employers on account of his application for Communist literature, the Executive did not see how it can assist in any other way than giving the matter publicity.

Attention was called to the correspondence in the *Freethinker* re the suggested Freethinker Fellowship. It being felt that this could be best accomplished through the medium of the N. S. S., the matter was remitted to the Propagandist Committee for suggestions. The attendance being small in consequence of the holiday season, only routine business was transacted and the meeting adjourned.

E. M. VANCE.

General Secretary.

Obituary.

We regret to record the death on July 21, as the result of a motor accident, of Mr. J. E. M. Robinson, of the N.W. Railway, Rawalpindi, India. Mr. Robinson was in his fifty-ninth year, and for forty years had been an active Freethinker. A devoted husband and father, his loss will be severely felt by his family, to whom we tender our sincere condolence.

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): 8, Mr. Ernest Daley, "The Importance of Atheism."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—Ramble to Watford, Aldenham, and St. Albans. Conducted by Mr. W. T. Wixey. Train from Elephant and Castle, 10.15 (Bakerloo Tube) to Carpenter's Park. Take return ticket, fare 3s. 1d.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.15, Mr. A. D. McLaren, "Some Recent Christian Conferences."

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 and 6.15, Mr. Corrigan, Lectures.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Sunday-school, Pole Lane, Failsworth): Mr. W. H. Thresh, 2.45, "From Savage to Shakespeare"; 6.30, "Should a Parent Tell?"

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES.—Widow Lady suffering loss through failure of Farrow's Bank, having a nice well furnished home and garden would like to share same with agreeable people as paying guests. Every comfort and convenience—or would let part of house with attendance, cooking if desired.—Apply by letter to "W. H.", Chevy Chase, Durlston Road, Kingston-on-Thames.

BOOTS AND SHOES.—Gentlemen, we strongly recommend to you for high days and holidays our 241X Boot. Really high grade in workmanship and material and a smart model, in sizes and half sizes, and the price is only 23/6. Ladies, for a smart Shoe at a moderate figure, try our No. 511 Glacé Gibson, with Patent Toecap and Cable Stitched Welt, at 20/-, in sizes and half sizes. A Shoe we have sold for years, and which has made us many customers. It is a comfortable fitting Shoe for any ordinary foot, but for those requiring extra width our No. 34 Shoe, at 24/-, is unexcelled for ease combined with smart appearance. Unsuitable goods exchanged, or money refunded. Cash to accompany orders. Postage is free.—MACCONNELL AND MABE, New Street, Bakewell.

FOR SALE.—Five Volumes (1900-4) of *The Reformer* (Edited by Hypatia Bradlaugh-Bonner). Well Bound, and in Good Condition. Must sell owing to unemployment. First reasonable offer accepted.—Write H. E., 12 Brunswick Place, London, N. 1.

ANOTHER REDUCTION of 10% (2/- in £) in Suits to measure. Prices are now from £3 12/- to £8 13/- Fit and workmanship guaranteed as before. Sports Coats from 38/- to 63/- and Flannel Trousers 21/- to 31/6, made to your own special measures. High class Tailoring cannot be had anywhere for less money if standard rate of wages is paid for labour. When writing for Patterns and our popular Self-Measurement Chart, please give an idea of the price you would like to pay, so that Cloths may be sent accordingly. Cash to accompany orders. Postage is free.—MACCONNELL AND MABE, New Street, Bakewell.

HOSIERY.—Having to give up my business as a Travelling Draper, and no prospect of resuming it again, through ill-health, I wish to inform fellow Freethinkers I am starting a retail business, and will be able to supply anyone with ladies', gents', and children's hosiery of any description, also boys', youths', and men's shirts in Oxford and Flannelette. Please state colour and size and whether Cashmere, Cotton, or Mixed; all goods supplied on approval and carriage paid, also any particular trade mark.—Address: WM. STURCESS, Kingston Cottages, Highfield Street, Kilby Road, Fleckney, near Leicester.

SUBSTANTIAL REDUCTIONS in Prices of Mole and Corduroy Garments. We are now doing Men's Trousers to measure as low as 15/6, but specially recommend our NIK quality, which for Lined Trousers is now 24/-, and 21/- for Unlined Trousers. Vests and other garments in proportion. Patterns and Self-Measurement Chart free on request. Satisfaction is guaranteed. Cash to accompany orders. Postage is free.—MACCONNELL AND MABE, New Street, Bakewell.

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By CHAPMAN COHEN.

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By **GERALD MASSEY.**

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