

The FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN · · · EDITOR 1881-1915 · G. W. FOOTE

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper.

VOL. XLI.—No. 34

SUNDAY, AUGUST 21, 1921.

PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions.

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Spiritualism and Another World.

Cases of dual and multiple personality are very numerous, and they well illustrate all, or nearly all, the phenomena that we meet in connection with trance mediumship. They also throw light upon the question of the trickery which is so often manifested in connection therewith, without this trickery being the product of the medium's normal consciousness. One instance of the pranks of this secondary personality has been given in the case of the Rev. Ansel Bourne, but the case of "Helene Smith," as described by Professor Flourney, illustrates another aspect of the same phenomenon. Helene Smith had been a quiet, dreamy sort of a child, having occasional visions, but in other respects appearing quite normal. Just before she was thirty years of age she was induced to attend a spiritualistic circle and soon displayed all the characteristic phenomena of mediumship. She was "controlled" by a number of famous personages, but her most striking case was when her spirit was transported to Mars. She gave Professor Flourney a very circumstantial account of the inhabitants of the planet, their habits, dwellings, etc., and even went to the length of constructing the elements of a Martian language. It was the kind of performance that would have sent Sir Arthur Conan Doyle into ecstasies of admiration, and would have been more convincing even than his photographs of fairies. Unfortunately for the spiritualistic theory, Professor Flourney was made of different stuff. He analysed the case at great length, side by side with an examination of the subject's history. As a result he was able to show that all Helene Smith was doing was reproducing by means of automatic writing the products of her reading and day dreaming for years past. Even the Martian language was modelled, as might be expected, on the French tongue. Had the subject been English the Martians would have spoken a different language. It should be pointed out that there was no suggestion of conscious imposture on the part of the normal Helene Smith. The investigator was simply dealing with the tricky, dramatizing, secondary personality.

* * *

Which One Will Survive?

Hypnotic subjects provide numerous cases of dual personality, and, indeed, hypnotism is one of the

commonest methods of tapping the whole region of the unconscious. Professor Janet's case, Leonie, is a well-known one in this connection. In her normal self she is described as a serious and rather sad person, very slow in her movements, and timid in manner. When hypnotised an entirely different character is manifested. She is gay, noisy, and restless, and is described as possessing an enormous number of recollections of people and places. In this state Professor Janet was able to distinguish three distinct personalities, described as Leonie 1, Leonie 2, and Leonie 3. Finally, we may cite the celebrated case of "Miss Beauchamp," as described by Dr. Morton Prince.¹ Miss Beauchamp came to Dr. Prince for professional treatment in 1898, and in the course of his experience of the case Dr. Prince was able to clearly define and to trace the development of three distinct personalities. Each of these appeared to live its own life, with its own cluster of memories, and each showed on its re-appearance the persistency of characteristics such as is manifested by the ordinary medium when the "controls" show themselves. There was not in this case the slightest suggestion of spirit intercourse. The manifesting personality simply referred to itself in the same way as does a normal personage, but it is quite clear that had this case been in the hands of a Spiritualist we should have had all the usual jargon inflicted on us. In a further study of the case, contributed to *The Journal of Abnormal Psychology* for September, 1920, Dr. Prince goes into a detailed examination of the symptoms, tracing the origin of these secondary personalities, and from a study of Miss Beauchamp's life decides that they were a reversion to the complexes and reactions of her early years, a recrudescence of sentiments long suppressed, with the addition of perceptions and thoughts that had gathered round them. The building up of these personalities is discussed, and not the least interesting part of the article is the information that he eventually healed the psychological fracture, and that the intruding characters were laid to rest.

* * *

Tricks and Traps.

It is not necessary to further multiply cases. They are all marked by certain broad features. To begin with, there is, in the absence of suggestion from those around, no pretence on the part of the secondary personality that it is anything but what it is. But there is a great readiness to take suggestions and to act on them, and there is a carrying on from one appearance to the next of the experience gained. In relation to the subject's normal power there is considerable dramatic talent, which enables it to act up to the character it takes on, but always in terms of previous knowledge. That is why we are quite certain that some of the Red Indian spirits we have come across have never sat round a camp fire, and that the philosophers we have conversed with would have greatly benefitted by attendance at a course of popular University Extension lectures. Next, the secondary personality emerges

¹ *The Dissociation of a Personality; A Biographical Study in Abnormal Psychology*, 1910.

and is re-absorbed into the main stream of consciousness, or suppressed, a phenomenon that is quite in accord with the theory of dissociation, but hardly in line with that of Spiritualism. There is also, it is important to note, during these manifestations an excessive sensibility of certain of the senses (hyper-æsthesia) which may enable the subject to detect sights or sounds not appreciated under normal conditions, and at the same time there may be a dulling of certain senses (amnesia) which leaves the person incapable of reacting to special stimuli. These are also well marked symptoms of the hypnotic state. Finally, there are pronounced automatisms, the better known and the ones with which we are now chiefly concerned being automatic writing and crystal gazing.²

* * *

The Nature of Mediumship

Now, to anyone who reflects on what has been said, it will be plain that we have here a substantial explanation of the phenomena that meet us in trance mediumship. It will also explain why so few medical men or psychologists who are familiar with the proper lines of investigation give their support to the Spiritualistic hypothesis. I may well put the position in a rather lengthy quotation from Professor James:—

In "mediumships" or "possession" the invasion and the passing away of the secondary state are both relatively abrupt, and the duration of the state is relatively short, *i.e.*, from a few minutes to a few hours. Whenever the secondary state is well developed no memory for aught that happened during it remains after the primary consciousness comes back. The subject during the secondary consciousness speaks, writes, or acts as if animated by a foreign person and gives his history. In old times the foreign "control" was usually a demon, and is so now in communities that favour that belief. With us he gives himself out at the worst for an Indian or other grotesquely speaking but harmless personage. Usually he purports to be the spirit of a dead person known or unknown to those present, and the subject is then what we call a "medium." Mediumistic possession in all its grades seems to form a perfectly natural special type of alternate personality, and the susceptibility to it in some form is by no means an uncommon gift in persons who have no other obvious nervous anomaly. The phenomena are very intricate, and are only just beginning to be

² One set of conditions making for dissociation is thus described by Dr. Prince: "Particular emotional states, like fear or anxiety, or general mental distress, have the tendency to disintegrate the mental organization in such a way that the normal associations become severed or loosened. Thus it happens that a mental shock like that of an accident, or an alarming piece of news, produces a dissociation of the mind known as a state of hysteria or 'traumatic neurosis.' Such states are characterized by persisting loss of sensation, paralysis, amnesia, and the so-called stigmata, which are now recognized to be manifestations of the dissociation of sensory, motor, or other images from the main stream of consciousness. A doubling of consciousness is thus brought about. The dissociated images may still be capable of functioning, more or less independently of the waking consciousness, and when they do, so-called automatic phenomena (hallucinations, tics, spasms, contractures, etc.) result. Sometimes the mental dissociation produces a complete loss of memory for long periods of the subject's life; when this is the case we have the fundamental basis for alternating personalities, of which this study will offer many examples.....Finally, when the neurasthenic systems have been repeatedly awakened by an emotion, they form a habit, or what I have called an association neurosis" (*Dissociation*, p. 22). Again, "It was shown that in hypnosis the memories of past experiences were associated among themselves, systematized, and preserved, as if in the memory of a second personality. Janet, experimenting still further.....showed that the lost memories could be recovered in the waking state by the process of abstraction and automatic writing. The memorial images, therefore, were not obliterated, but were merely dissociated from the waking personality. It required only a device to awaken the systematized memories, dissociated from the personal consciousness" (p. 259).

studied in a proper scientific way. The lowest phase of mediumship is automatic writing, and the lowest grade of that is where the subject knows what words are coming, but feels impelled to write them as if from without. Then comes writing unconsciously, even while engaged in reading or talk. Inspirational speaking, playing on musical instruments, etc., also belong to the relatively lower phases of possession, in which the normal self is not excluded from conscious participation in the performance, though their initiative seems to come from elsewhere. In the highest phase the trance is complete, the voice, language, and everything are changed, and there is no after memory whatever till the next trance comes. One curious thing about trance utterances is their generic similarity in different individuals. The "control" here in America is either a grotesque, slangy, and flippant personage.....or if he ventures on higher flights, he abounds in a curiously vague optimistic philosophy-and-water, in which phrases about spirit, harmony, beauty, law, progression, development, etc., keep recurring. It seems exactly as if one author composed more than half of the trance messages, no matter by whom they are uttered. Whether all subconscious selves are peculiarly susceptible to a certain stratum of the *Zeitgeist*, and get their inspiration from it, I know not, but this is obviously the case with the secondary selves which have developed in spiritualistic circles. There the beginnings of the medium trance are indistinguishable from the effects of hypnotic suggestion. The subject assumes the role of a medium simply because opinion expects it of him under the conditions which are present; and carries it out with a feebleness or a vivacity proportionate to his histrionic gifts (*Principles of Psychology*, vol. i. pp. 393-4).

(To be Continued.) CHAPMAN COHEN.

Constructive Secularism.

THE charge frequently preferred against Freethought is that its aim is destruction, and that at best it is severely negative in its character. That there is a certain amount of truth in the accusation is simply beyond dispute, and in the circumstances this is wholly unavoidable. Secularism is a philosophy of life, but it cannot secure popular acceptance as long as supernaturalism occupies the field. Consequently, the first object of Freethought propaganda is the complete overthrow of the prevailing superstition, and this can only be achieved by convincing the public that supernaturalism is absolutely false, being founded upon an ignorant misinterpretation of certain natural phenomena. Necessarily, therefore, the initial work of Freethought must be destructive. Its first duty is to attack and demolish whatever stands in its way. But it is maintained that to assail supernaturalism is equivalent to making an assault upon morality. That is a radical error. That there are moral elements in the Christian Faith is an incontrovertible fact. To these we do not object in the least; it is to their association with supernatural sanction that we demur so strongly, and our desire is to sever that connection to the decided benefit of morality. It cannot be too frequently and strongly emphasized that our opposition to Christianity is based solely on its supernaturalism, our contention being that the supernatural, being merely a creation of the imagination, cannot be of any real service to any cause, and in the past its influence has been almost wholly deleterious to the highest welfare of professing Christians.

For that reason, we repeat, Freethought is bound to be, at first, at once a destructive and negative agency. It has to demolish Christianity just as Christianity in its turn had to destroy Paganism. Now, Christianity suppressed Paganism by brute force, at the point of the sword. There were times when conquered races had to undergo Christian baptism or be slain, and so to pre-

serve their lives tens of thousands became nominal Christians. But the appeal of Freethought is to reason not to force, and its sole weapon is argument, not the sword. To become a Freethinker, a person must renounce Christianity and begin to live by the rule of Nature, rather than by the so-called rule of God. Christianity and Freethought, then, are alike in that they both pull down in order to set up, destroy in order to construct. What they desire to bring about is the repentance and conversion of those to whom they address themselves. The Freethought missionary urges his hearers to repent of their attachment to the Christian Faith, and then to turn round and adopt the positive creed of Secularism.

Now comes the all-important question, what do Freethinkers mean by Secularism? I accept the ordinary definition, namely, that it is a philosophy of life in this world, without reference to any other. It involves the emancipation and glorification of morality. Morality is released from its subjection to the will of God, and rendered a purely natural affair, with both its origin and sanction in the social nature and requirements of animals living in groups. It is freely admitted by all that the morals of animals below man have no connection whatever with Deity, and derive no sanction from any source other than the necessity of their social life. Holyoake, who claims to have been the first to call himself a Secularist, maintains that Secularism is founded on human considerations only, and is entirely different from Atheism. He tells us that in his last debate on the subject with Charles Bradlaugh he denied its association with Atheism:—

My argument was that a man could judge a house as to its suitability of situation, structure, surroundings, and general desirableness, without ever knowing who was the architect or landlord; and if as occupant he received no application for rent, he ought in gratitude to keep the place in good repair. So it is with this world. It is our dwelling place. We know the laws of sanitation, economy, and equity, upon which health, wealth, and security depend. All these things are quite independent of any knowledge of the origin of the Universe, or the owner of it. And as no demands are made upon us in consideration of our tenancy, the least we can do is to improve the estate as our acknowledgement of the advantage we enjoy. This is Secularism.—(*Fifty Years of an Agitator's Life*, Vol. II., p. 294.)

We beg to differ fundamentally from the distinguished agitator's views as to the unimportance of the Secularists' attitude to the world. No one lives rent free in a house not his own. If our dwelling place, the world, has an owner we cannot possibly ignore him and live as though he did not exist. A Secularist must, above all things, be an honest man. If there is a God who made and owns the world we certainly owe him duties. It is true that Holyoake himself was an Atheist, but his plea was that people who were not Atheists might yet be Secularists. It is true enough that multitudes of believers in God are practical Secularists, but that is because they are wickedly disloyal to their creed. We go further and concede that the principles of Secularism do not directly necessitate a formal subscription to Atheism; but we do firmly hold that a Theist, however lukewarm, can never blossom into a warm hearted advocate of Secularism. "I think," said Bradlaugh, "that the consequence of Secularism is Atheism"; but he added that "clearly all Secularists are not Atheists." Our view is that Secularists cannot be quite honest, and certainly cannot be zealous and convincing advocates of their philosophy without being convinced Atheists.

Secularism, then, is a philosophy of life such as Buddhism and Confucianism in their virgin purity were. Good and evil are relative terms, the meaning of which arose and has matured in history. They are

terms applicable only to individuals who live in society. To an individual living in complete isolation they would convey no meaning whatever. In other words, as Nietzsche says, morality is the herd instinct in actual expression. His words are:—

By morality the individual is taught to become a function of the herd, and to ascribe to himself value only as a function. As the conditions for the maintenance of one community have been very different from those of another community, there have been very different moralities; and in respect to the future essential transformations of herds and communities, states and societies, one can prophesy that there will still be divergent moralities. Morality is the herd instinct in the individual (*Joyful Wisdom*, pp. 160-1).

Christian moralists speak of conscience as the voice of God in man. Shakespeare shows the absurdity of that view in the famous lines:—

My conscience has a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale
And every tongue condemns me for a villain.

The voice of conscience is different in different individuals, and often totally at variance with itself in different countries and religions. We believe that Nietzsche is right again when he describes the conscience as the voice, not of God, but of the herd. He says:—

For a person to be himself, to value himself according to his own measure and weight—that was once quite distasteful. The inclination to such a thing would have been regarded as madness, for all miseries and terrors were associated with being alone. At that time the "free will" had had conscience in close proximity to it, and the less independently a person acted, the more the herd instinct, and not his personal character expressed itself in his conduct, so much the more moral did he esteem himself. All that did injury to the herd, whether the individual had intended it or not, then caused him a sting of conscience—and his neighbour likewise, indeed, the whole herd. It is in this respect that we have most changed our mode of thinking (*Ibid.*, pp. 161-2).

Thus Secularism is at once destructive and constructive. It abolishes all superstition, gets rid of God, Christ, and the unseen world, withdraws attention from eternity in order to concentrate it on time. Once the supernatural disappears, the natural is seen in its true perspective. Things are right and wrong not because God has so ordained, but because they affect society beneficially or injuriously. Right conduct tends to build up and improve the herd, and wrong conduct is so-called because it injures society. Nothing whatever is right or wrong in itself, but in its influence upon all concerned. Such is what we consider the true philosophy of life. But it cannot get fully established and be allowed free course until the supernatural myth has been driven clean out of the field.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Passing of Edgar Saltus.

I would rather have written *Salammbô* than have built the Brooklyn bridge. It was more difficult, and it will last longer.

—Edgar Saltus.

THE death of Edgar Saltus, the American novelist, at the age of sixty-three, removes a picturesque character from the literary arena. He was an author with a reputation on both sides of the Atlantic, and he was an American only in the sense that Henry James was one. There was nothing provincial about Saltus, and in thousands of pages he revealed his cosmopolitan culture and sympathies. With Thomas Paine he could have said, proudly, "the world is my country." An artist to the finger-tips, Saltus called for recognition

as much as D'Annunzio, Maxim Gorky, and others, for whom so many British altars flamed in worship.

Characteristically, Edgar Saltus began his literary career with a book on Balzac. It was brief, bright and imbued with the spirit of the matter. A year later he showed another facet of his genius by writing *The Philosophy of Disenchantment*, a remarkable exposition of the teachings of Schopenhauer, Hartmann, Leopardi, and other thinkers. This work was followed by the brilliant and illuminating, *The Anatomy of Negation*, a book which alone would have made the reputation of a lesser man. The prefatory note was piquant and personal:—

The accompanying pages are intended to convey a tableau of anti-Theism from Kapila to Leconte de Lisle. The anti-Theistic tendencies of England and America have been treated by other writers. In the present volume, therefore, that branch of the subject is not discussed. To avoid misconception, it may be added that no attempt has been made to prove anything.

Unlike so many philosophic works, the book was a real success. In a note to a later edition Saltus said:—

In brief, it was the writer's endeavour to divest his reader of one or two idle preoccupations, and to leave him serene in spirit, and of better cheer than before.

All Saltus's books are thought compelling. As an essayist he stood in the front rank, his *Pomps of Satan* being a work of unflagging interest. Instead of fantasy and the world of dreams, the author gave us society and the world of reality. Instead of pathos and bathos, we had cynical criticism, and the style was a glory of epigram. The subjects were varied and curious, such as *The Gilded Gang*, *Vanity Square*, *The Golden Fold*, *The Toilet of Venus*, and described the foibles and failings of modern society. There was acid, too, in the criticism. His cutting description, "The Benighted States," as he called the Great Republic, was not a compliment. New York he drenched in vitriol:—

Never, perhaps, except in the Rome of the Cæsars, has there been gathered together in one city a set so rich, so idle, so profoundly uninterested in anything save themselves.

This was the manner in which Edgar Saltus hurled out his gibes and his epigrams. All that easy zest, that curling his tongue round the subject, that freedom from enthusiasm, were possible only to a man who simplified his life by dividing it well, and not by cultivating one side at the expense of another.

As a novelist Saltus justified his reputation. His stories form a collection which almost merit his claim to be the English Balzac. In his work, *Mary Magdalene*, he produced a most successful and daring reconquest of antiquity that has been attempted of recent years. In it he reconstructed a Bible legend, just as Gustave Flaubert presented a story of ancient Carthage in his *Salammbô*. All Saltus's novels were provocative. *Mr. Incoul's Misadventure*, *The Truth about Tristram Verek*, *Eden*, *A Transaction in Hearts*, *Madam Sapphira*, to name but a few, form a notable collection which challenged the idols of the circulating libraries, and beat them with pure artistry.

Edgar Saltus was endowed with the blood-royal of literature. In one of his novels, a principal character is made to say: "I would rather have written *Salammbô* than have built the Brooklyn bridge. It was more difficult, and it will last longer." This characteristic remark presents his fine ambition in a sentence. A poet at heart, Saltus proved his claim in many passages of beautiful prose. We quote the following daring and eloquent passage:—

The Orient is asleep in the ashes of her gods. The star of Ormuzd has burned out in the skies. On the banks of her sacred seas, Greece, hushed for evermore, rests on the divine limbs of her white immortals.

In the sepulchre of the pale Nazarene, humanity guards its last divinity. Every promise is unfulfilled. There is no light save, perchance, in death. One torture more, one more throb of the heart, and after it, nothing. The grave opens, a little flesh falls in, and the weeds of forgetfulness, which soon hide the tomb, grow eternally above its vanities. And still the voice of the living, of the just and the unjust, of kings, of felons, and of beasts, will be raised unsilenced, until humanity, unsatisfied as before, and yet impatient for the peace which life has disturbed, is tossed at last, with its shattered globe and forgotten gods, to fertilize the furrows of space where worlds ferment.

A many-sided man of genius, Edgar Saltus relished the panorama of life. He loved the old-world garden where Horace smiled at Rome; the midnight supper-table where the smiling Voltaire challenged the best wits of Europe; the chateau of brave old Montaigne, or the beautiful river haunts of Walt Whitman. Saltus showed us that the American can compete successfully with the culture of the admired Continental writers. He was a philosopher, a poet, a critic, a novelist, and that rare thing in our populous world of laborious penmen, a really fine writer of English, the finest language in the world.

MIMNERMUS.

The Myth of Jesus.

VII.

(Continued from page 419.)

If Jesus was a great, impressive, commanding personality.....Galilee, the exclusive scene of the personal ministry of Jesus, should, and indeed must, have been the principal theatre of the first activity of the Galilean disciples; there should have been proclaimed first of all the gospel of the resurrection, there wrought the first miracles of the new spirit, there formed the first congregations, there established the first churches. Thence, in an ever-widening circle, the waves of the gospel mission should have issued and spread themselves all over the empire. But what are the facts in the case? They are all reversed as completely as possible! With the departure from Galilee for Jerusalem, Galilee vanishes from the horizon of the Scriptures, never to appear again.....Galilee is deserted and forgotten completely and forever; no gospel is preached there, no church founded, no letters addressed to the saints. The disciples proclaim their message in Jerusalem, in Cæsarea, in Antioch, in Joppa, in Crete, in Corinth, in Thessalonica, in Galatia, in Rome—yea, everywhere, but not in the one place where of all places in the world the proclamation would have been most natural and most effective.—*Professor W. B. Smith, "Ecce Deus," pp. 170-1.*

PROFESSOR DREWS arrives at the same conclusion as Mr. Parsons; he says that by the Latin word "crux" which we translate "cross"—

the Romans understood any apparatus for the execution of men generally, without thinking, however, as a rule of anything else than a stake or gallows (*patibulum, stipes*) upon which, as Livy tells us, the delinquent was bound with chains or ropes and so delivered over to death.....the piercing of hands and feet with nails, at least at the time at which the execution of Jesus is supposed to have occurred, was something quite unusual, if it was ever employed at all.....The only place in the Gospels where there is any mention of the "marks of the nails" (John xx. 25) belongs, as does the whole Gospel, to a relatively later time, and appears, as does so much in John, as a mere strengthening and exaggeration of the original story.¹

John was only seeking to "fulfil the scriptures," to wit, the 22nd Psalm, "They pierced my hands and my feet." In the Epistles—which were written before

¹ Drews, *The Christ Myth*, pp. 146-7.

the Gospels—it says expressly, "Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree" (Acts v. 30), and repeats the same expression again in chapter x. 39. In chapter xiii. 29 we read, "They took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre." Not a word about a cross, or crucifixion. Again, in the first Epistle of Peter, we read: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (ii. 24). Also in Galatians (iii. 13).

Professor Drews considers that—

the crucifixion of Jesus corresponds to the hanging of Attis, Osiris, and so forth, and that the idea of the gibbeted gods of nearer Asia called forth and fixed the Christian view.....we possess representations of the execution of Marsyas by Apollo, in which the God has his rival hauled up on a tree by ropes round his wrists, which have been bound together.....It is not difficult to conclude that Attis, too, or the man who represented him in the rites, was hung in the same manner to the stake or tree-trunk and thus put to death. Thus it seems that originally the manner of death of the Jewish Messiah was imagined in the same way, and so the heathens, too, called the new God in scorn "the Hanged One" (Drews, *The Christ Myth*, p. 148).

There is no doubt that in some of the ancient pagan Mysteries a kind of passion play was performed, of which the central feature was the sacrificial death of a god, by hanging or fixing to a tree. As Mr. Legge points out, the first Christians, the Gnostics, were well acquainted with these Mysteries; he says:—

There seems no doubt that the earlier Gnostics continued to attend the mysteries of the Chthonian deities in Greece and of their Oriental analogues, Osiris, Attis, Adonis, and the like elsewhere, while professing to place upon what they there saw a Christian interpretation.....The Gnostics brought with them into their new faith the use of pictures and statues, of incense, and of all the paraphernalia of the worship of the heathen gods. Baptism which, among the Jewish community in which Christianity was born, was an extremely simple rite, to be performed by anybody and entirely symbolical in its character, became an elaborate ceremony which borrowed the name as well as many of the adjuncts of initiation into the Mysteries. So, too, the Agape (love-feast) or common meal, which in pre-Christian times was, as we have seen, common to all Greek religious associations unconnected with the State, was transformed by the Gnostics into a rite surrounded by the same provisions for secrecy and symbolizing the same kind of sacrifice as those which formed the central point of the mystic drama at Eleusis and elsewhere. Both these sacraments, as they now came to be called, were thought to be invested with a magical efficacy, and to demand for their proper celebration a priesthood as exclusive as, and a great deal more ambitious than, that of Eleusis or Alexandria (F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, Vol. II., pp. 21-2).

Mr. Legge, in a footnote, points out that the early Christian Father Clement of Alexandria "seems to have been initiated into most of the heathen mysteries then current." And we must always remember that the Gnostics were in existence long before the Christians. Mr. Legge devotes three chapters of his learned work to the pre-Christian Gnostics.

Paul, in his Epistles, again and again refers to his knowledge of the Mysteries, and claims to be an adept in that knowledge. The author of the article, "Mystery," in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, observes that,—

when in 1 Cor. xv. 51 he (Paul) introduces a piece of his characteristic gnosis concerning the last day with the words, "Behold, I tell you a mystery," one feels that here he is a mystagogue speaking to a circle of mystæ; and in the many passages where he introduces the idea of "a mystery" in connection with the Gospel he proclaims, the derivation of his language from the mysteries so eagerly resorted to by the

heathen who were seeking salvation can hardly be mistaken.....and in 1 Cor. iv. 1 Paul claims to be recognized by all, not only as a servant of Christ, but also as a steward of the mysteries of God.

Mosheim, the ecclesiastical historian, says:—

The profound respect that was paid to the Greek and Roman mysteries, and the extraordinary sanctity that was attributed to them was a further circumstance that induced the Christians to give their religion a mystic air, in order to put it upon an equal footing, in point of dignity, with that of the Pagans. For this purpose they gave the name of mysteries to the institutions of the gospel, and decorated particularly the holy sacrament with that solemn title. They use in that sacred institution, as also in that of baptism, several of the terms employed in the heathen mysteries, and proceeded so far, at length, as even to adopt some of the rites and ceremonies of which these renowned mysteries consisted.²

There is no doubt that the Christians derived the sign of the Cross from the same source where it was used to seal the elect, as we shall show. Professor Drews says:—

In all private religious associations and secret cults of later antiquity the members made use of a secret sign of recognition or union. This they carried about in the form, in some cases, of wooden, bronze, or silver amulets hung round the neck or concealed beneath the clothes, in others woven in their garments, or tattooed upon the forehead, neck, breast, hands, etc. Among these signs was the cross, and it was usually described under the name "Tau," after the letter of the old Phœnician alphabet. Such an application of the Cross to mystic or religious ends reaches back into grey antiquity.³

We shall give further proof of this in our next.

(To be Continued.) W. MANN.

The "Vision" of Dante.

DANTE, the author of the *Divine Comedy*, in which he visualizes Hell, Purgatory and Paradise, has now been dead six hundred years and some of our leading "intellectuals" thought fit to honour his memory by indulging in a memorial dinner a little time ago. Lord Bryce delivered a "brilliant" speech on that occasion, in which "he rejoiced to think that the revival of interest in Dante afforded some hope that he will be what he ought to be—the best interpreter of mediæval life and thought, no other writer helping us to understand the spirit of the Middle Ages half so well."

I think this tribute to the Italian poet is open to criticism, and much as we of to-day may be inclined to sympathize with Dante and his dolorous moods on account of the strange and peculiar mentality of the age in which he lived, we cannot refrain from a feeling of almost indignant censure on those who gathered round that festive board for eulogizing the poet Dante, that fearful vendor of hideous "nightmares" and brain-storms second to none in the history of this unfortunate world. Poets like Edgar Allan Poe, and Francis Thompson have likewise probed the depths and passed on, leaving a wail and a dirge behind them. These, like Dante, were "unhealthy" men in more respects than one, and a feeling of deep sympathy arises in me when I think of poor Beatrice, beloved by a liverish Dante, and the "Lost Lenore" who was mercifully rescued by Death from the ghoulish embrace of the drink-sodden Poe.

Anyone of a healthy mood and a rational turn of mind may possibly reach the end of *The Hound of*

² Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History* (Edition, 1844), p. 56.

³ Drews, *The Christ Myth*, p. 149.

Heaven by Francis Thompson, but it is very probable that the feelings engendered by its reading will necessitate a bath, a sharp walk in the country, and at least two or three chapters of Rabelais before the bad taste can be got out of one's mouth. These men are dismal types likely to be met with in every age, but surely one would imagine in these enlightened days, when the workings of Nature are more clearly perceived and Science has done so much to remove the shadows from the pathway of Mankind, that the correct attitude would be to relegate them to an oblivion shared by the "witch doctors" of West Africa and the other classes of fanatics who have left a slimy trail on the early history of the world. Of course, I may be wrong.

Mayhap, 'tis I that slime the trail
And on thy head, great Dante, shower abuse,
And thou, good Bryce, who dined him well and full;
Perchance 'tis on my soul the hideous stain doth lie.
For I have strayed on shingly beach and tossed
My hair to every breeze that blows from summer sea.
And e'en ventured forth in scant attire
A dainty Argosy on the rising tide.
A vision fair! That well might steal the glance of
Bunyan,
The tinker bold, who left his wife and 'cumbrance
And "Vision" saw in Bedford Gaol, erstwhile
That fleas did bite him. I hope 'twere so.
Avaunt!! Such men are cabbage, and as such
Should grow fast rooted in one spot'till
Ordeal by boiling should consume them.
And still I float upon the waters. High on
The headland where men curse deep when "bunkered"
I see them pause with upraised "niblick"
To smile, comment, and gaze on me.
And more withal. They draw me nearer to their ken
With focussed crystal turned with many a gasp
Of breath as my fair image is reflected there.

This "Canto" of mine may not live as long as the dismal dirges of the woeful Italian, but its spirit is more in harmony with present intellectual development, seeing that the unfortunate "Devil" has now been dead for a long time. Dante paid this much abused Personage a visit, and in Canto xxviii. he describes conditions which he found in Hell, where the "damned" seemed to have had a very bad time indeed.

Who, e'en in words unfettered, might at full
Tell of the wounds and blood that now I saw,
Though he repeated oft the tale? No tongue
So vast a theme could equal, speech and thought
Both impotent alike.....

A rumdlet, that hath lost
Its middle and side stave, gapes not so wide
As one I marked, torn from the chin throughout
Down to the hinder passage; 'twixt the legs
Dangling his entrails hung, the midriff lay
Open to view, and wretched ventricle,
That turns th' englutted aliment to dross.
Whilst eagerly I fix on him my gaze,
He eyed me, with his hand laid his breast bare,
And cried: "Now, mark how I do rip me! Lo! I
How is Mohammed mangled! before me
Walks Ali weeping, from the chin his face
Cleft to the forelock, and the others all
Whom here thou seest, while they lived, did sow
Scandal and schism, and therefore thus are rent.
A fiend is here behind, who with his sword
Hacks us thus cruelly, slivering again
Each of this realm, when we have compass round
The dismal way, for first our gashes close
Ere we repossess before him. But say who
Art thou, that standest musing on the rock,
Haply so lingering to delay the pain
Sentenced upon thy crimes?" "Him death not yet,"
My guide rejoined, "hath overta'en, nor sin
Conducts to torment; but, that he may make
Full trial of your state, I who am dead
Must through the depths of Hell, from orb to orb
Conduct him. Trust my words for they are true."
More than a hundred spirits when that they heard,
Stood in the pass to mark me, through amaze
Forgetful of their pangs." Thou, who perchance
Shalt shortly view the sun, this warning thou
Bear to Dolcino; bid him, if he wish not
Here soon to follow me, that with good store

Of food he arm him, lest imprisoning snows
Yield him a victim to Novaro's power,
No easy conquest else.....

Another shade,
Pierced in the throat, his nostrils mutilate
E'en from beneath the eyebrows and one ear
Lopt off, who with the rest through wonder stood
Gazing, before the rest advanced, and bared
His windpipe, that without was all o'ersmeared
With crimson stain.

Dante found others raving in the Infernal Regions with
tongues cut out, and one—

Maimed of each hand, uplifted in the gloom
The bleeding stumps, that they with gory spots
Sullied his face and cried; "Remember thee."

Some went about carrying their heads in their hands.
That may be quite feasible, for after a heavy supper of
boiled pork or a couple of bottles of "old and crusted"
any poet would be able to see and give off the
following:—

Without doubt
I saw, and yet it seems to pass before me,
A headless trunk that even as the rest
Of the sad flock pass'd onward. By the hair
It bore the sever'd member lantern-wise
Pendent in hand, which looked at us and said
"Woe's me!" The spirit lighted thus himself
And two there were in one, and one in two,
How that may be he knows who ordereth so.

This part of the Canto is a glorious joke. The boiled
pork and the fumes of the "very old" have reached
Dante's verse-chamber with a result that Lord Bryce—
and others who think with him—consider such hideous
"brain-storms" most interesting additions to the in-
tellectual equipment of the future. It is a foolish con-
tention to state that Dante has given us a perfect
impression of the mentality of the Middle Ages, and it
is worthy of note that in the Canto I have quoted the
poet mentions one Dolcino who, though living in the
same atmosphere of religious tyranny and gloom,
broke away fearlessly and went out into the world to
enjoy the sunshine and the melody of the birds.
Dolcino was a friar, belonging to no Regular Order,
who, in 1305, contrived to raise in Novaro a large
company of followers by declaring himself to be a true
apostle of Christ and advocating a community of
property and of wives, with many other such heretical
doctrines. He was followed by more than three
thousand men and women, who lived among the
mountains, and I sincerely hope they enjoyed them-
selves and had a good time. This lasted for two years,
till many of them fell victims to their former religious
fears and left him. In the end, through failure of
food and the effect of Papal opposition against him, he
was taken by the people of Novaro and burnt, with
Margurita his companion, and many others who had
dared to follow the counsels of Nature in preference
to the dictation of the greatest mental coercion the
world has ever known.

Dolcino was possessed of singular beauty and
eloquence, and one can picture him and Margurita as
they rambled along Life's happy pathway, romantic
pioneers of that fuller and larger outlook on Life which
has ever been the aim and ideal of the Art and Litera-
ture of every age. It is very evident, therefore, that
there were men and women, even in Dante's time,
who saw with clearer vision and realized the pos-
sibilities of Life, their very record and achievement
passing the limitations of the Italian poet's depth of
observation, as he distinctly infers in the Canto that
their conduct will ultimately consign them to hell with
the other "unfortunates" of his liverish imagination.

AGNES WERDON.

Eternal sleep is better than eternal pain. Eternal
punishment is eternal revenge, and can be inflicted only
by an eternal monster.—R. G. Ingersoll.

Acid Drops.

Some of our newspapers are working themselves up over what they call the marvellous recovery of Germany when compared with the position of those countries who count themselves as the victors in the war. We should not be at all surprised to discover that there is considerable truth in the recuperation of Germany. Nor can it be denied that the Allies have thoughtfully taken every care to make it easy for Germany to recover. They have relieved her of the crushing burden of maintaining a huge competitive army and navy, and also of the expense of a monarchy. They have, by taking away her colonies, prevented the Germans from developing their energies abroad, and so forced them to the task of internal development. Meanwhile, our burdens are heavier than ever, and our stupidity in not seeing the position with open eyes is as great as ever. The more one studies the tactics of those who won the war, the less one is surprised that the insanity of the European war should have transpired.

And, not for the first time, we draw attention to the fact that the clergy, who were so eloquent and industrious in urging the world to the continuance of war, on the ground that the defeat of the German Army would mean the end of war and of the villainous competition in armaments, are silent when they see the world treading the same old path which can only end in the same old way. One might have thought—did one not know the Christian clergy so well—that after their active advocacy during four years of warfare they would have had the decency to at least warn the world against the policy that is now being pursued. But, as ever, they are at the service of the vested interests of the country, and are the very last to indicate to the people the road of common-sense and national sanity.

There has been a great deal of talk lately about the "horrible" teaching current in Socialist Sunday-schools, and the secretary of the British Empire Union tries to make the public shiver by sending to the press the following, which he cites from the *Socialist* :—

Parsons, priests, and popes who tell us of the brotherhood of man seem to forget that figs do not grow on thistles.....Christianity is doomed.....Like the handloom, religions will be placed in the museum of antiquities by the urge of a new environment in which it is useless.

We assume the genuineness of the above, and congratulate the *Socialist* on having had the courage and the candour to state what seems to us so obvious a truth. After all, the brotherhood of man has least real existence where Christianity is strongest, and the deposition of Christianity by the slowly maturing forces of modern life is one of the plainest of contemporary facts. Whether that be a good thing or a bad thing the fact is undeniable, and to our mind it is a fact that is pregnant with possibilities of progress and human happiness.

The question of the Socialist Sunday-schools, and the alleged anti-religious teaching given in them, cropped up in the House of Commons last week. Sir W. Davidson asked the President of the Board of Education whether these schools, where blasphemous teaching was imparted to the children, were located in buildings subsidized by the State. Mr. Fisher replied that he was not aware of any such cases. Colonel Wedgwood asked the President if he was aware that the ethical teaching carried on in the Socialist Sunday-schools was as much deserving of the assistance of the Government as other forms of religious doctrines. At this stage the Speaker intervened and ruled that the question was one to be debated outside the House.

We have before us two cards containing statements of the principles taught in these schools. The first is issued by the National Council of British Socialist Sunday-school Union, and the second by the Glasgow and District Socialist Sunday-school Union. In the latter there are eight questions and answers, all of a purely economic nature, except the seventh: "On what principles does Socialism rest? Socialism rests on the great principles of

Love, Justice and Truth." The other card gives ten "Socialist precepts," all of them purely ethical, except the seventh, which declares that "All the good things of the earth are produced by labour." After reading the "precepts" very carefully we are bound to say that the only ones which appear to us antagonistic to Christian teaching are: "Love learning, which is the food of the mind"; "Make every day holy by good and useful deeds"; "Stand up for your rights and resist oppression"; "Observe and think in order to discover the truth. Do not believe what is contrary to reason, and never deceive yourself and others."

We are only concerned with these declarations in so far as our own principles are involved. It is entirely opposed to the spirit of equity to grant State-aid to the teaching of the doctrines held by every religious sect in the community, and to persecute schools where the above-mentioned precepts are taught. In the same way we protest against the hampering of free speech, no matter who may be the victims of the exercise of arbitrary power by the authorities.

"The Church of Christ and the faith of Christ are passing through a great trial in all regions of the civilized world, and not least among ourselves. There are dark clouds on the horizon already breaking, which may speedily burst into a storm." This is not a quotation from a speech delivered at any of the recent Church conferences. It is taken from the Archbishop of Canterbury's charge to the clergy in September, 1880. It is, however, interesting to compare the utterance of forty years ago with the general tenor of the recent speeches. Do the latter contain anything new, or any old idea presented in a new light?

The Rev. Harrington C. Lees, vicar of Swansea, in a letter to his parishioners, puts in a claim for Swansea as the cathedral city in the new diocese. The key-note of his whole plea is the "added prestige" which a cathedral will confer upon the town. How do cathedrals and prestige accord with Christian humility? The vicar declares that remoteness from life and its centres used to be courted by the Church, but that now it should be avoided. "An atmosphere of beatific drowsiness may be the literary conception of a cathedral city, but it is not the mind of Christ or the mind of the Church in these days." How does Mr. Lees or anybody else know the mind of Christ "in these days" except so far as the New Testament seems to indicate it? The recent divorce law amendment admittedly runs counter to the teaching of Christ on this question. The same may be said of the whole modern outlook on life and its problems. A spiritual guide whose "kingdom is not of this world" affords precious little help towards the solution of twentieth century problems.

A report that the Church of England was compiling a new hymn book, and that some hitherto popular compositions were to be omitted, has provoked considerable discussion in a section of the Press. The *Evening News* declared bluntly that "modern hymn writers have generally failed to distinguish between hymns and religious poems." The objections to some of the "sacred songs" in the current hymnals are nothing more or less than signs of the times. No hymns or religious poems of high literary value have been written since Newman's "Lead kindly Light," and it is more than doubtful whether such lyric energy as modern conditions permit, will in the future be spent upon the doctrines of Christianity. Could such a genius as John Milton arise to-day, would he write another *Paradise Lost*?

A newspaper paragraph states that at Notre Dame Church, Leicester Square, a mass was held for the repose of the soul of the late manager of the Ritz Hotel. An advertisement in the *London Catholic Herald* (August 6) announces that an association of secular priests of the dioceses of Westminster, Southwark, and Portsmouth, offer up the holy sacrifice of the Mass 2,020 times annually for the souls of all who are buried in St. Mary's Cemetery, Kensal Green, and St. Patrick's Cemetery, Leyton. "Single Interment (all fees included), £1 1s." The Right

Rev. Frederic Edward Ridgeway, Bishop of Salisbury, who has just died leaving £16,807, directs that a sum of money shall be set aside "for an annual celebration on All Souls' Day at which prayers shall be offered for the souls of my wife and myself."

We commend these facts to the serious notice of those Christians who are perpetually declaring that we destroy but never construct. Much has been written of the persecution carried out by the Church in the visible form of fire and dungeon. This is nothing to its persecution of the mind, which begins with infancy and follows its victims to the very privacy of the grave and beyond. *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor*, it was fear that first made gods in the world. And the same world is still largely ruled by the same influence.

Dr. Clifford is asking the Free Churches to devote a year to the revival, among their members, of the lost sense of responsibility for "personal evangelism." The idea is to avoid "conventional, mechanical, and sensational methods," and to get back into the Churches "the feeling that evangelization is a rank-and-file business." It certainly is. That is precisely the reason why a Wesley or Whitefield, or even a Spurgeon could always be relied upon to arouse in men and women of a certain type serious reflection on the salvation of their souls. Roman Catholics can do so even in these degenerate days. But they can also work miracles. A "progressive revelation" is a poor soul-saving device where the masses are concerned.

The *Daily Herald* (August 6) says that the Kenya Colony (British East Africa) is threatened with a movement similar to that organized to hold down the negroes in the United States after the Civil War. According to a Reuter telegram from East Africa, "a secret organization has been set up by the white settlers of Kenya, in order to resist by every means the claims of the Indian settlers to equal status." The idea of evangelizing the whole world used to be popular in England, especially as trade began to spread in the direction of the heathen, and the view that Christianity is to become "the world-religion" is still held in some quarters. Nearly twenty centuries of evangelization have produced attractive ideals of brotherhood at home. Those ideals transplanted to Africa and India, with the addition of regulations governing the colour-line, mark a still higher stage in Christian evolution.

The *Times* (August 1) publishes a telegram from its Toronto correspondent which throws a sinister light on the profession of religion as a factor in social hypocrisy. A new religious organization, The Church of the Cult of Omar, has been disbanded owing to the exposure of the fact that its whole object was to secure permits for the purchase of liquor from the Government under the pretence that it was "for sacramental purposes." The *Times* calls this fraud the "fruits of prohibition." Doubtless our leading daily detests prohibition much more than it does superstition.

Distributing the awards at Brighton College recently, Lord Leconfield confessed that he had never won a prize at school. "It has been ordained by the Almighty that I should not have to earn my own living, and it is a very good thing for me." The decrees of the Almighty are no doubt highly convenient for men of rank and quality. Others may safely be left to work out their own salvation in this world and in the next. Nevertheless, in these days of prattle, by lords and bishops, about the dignity of labour, it is a refreshing novelty to come across such a frank utterance as Lord Leconfield's.

The clerical protests against sending explosive bombs up above with a view to breaking up the drought have evoked a very pertinent letter from Mr. Henry Hess, who was for some time resident in the Transvaal. He tells us that when the same thing was proposed there President Krüger was so antagonistic to it that he threatened to resign. Mr. Hess thereupon addressed to Krüger, through

the local Press, an open letter asking the latter to explain the difference, on religious grounds, between sending dynamite into the earth to bring up gold and sending it into the sky to bring down rain. Perhaps the President thought that the sky was the special preserve of the gods, but that he was quite competent to look after the mines himself.

In parts of Mexico there has also been a prolonged drought, and in June Mexico city had to be put on a water ration. The same month the image of the Virgin was removed from the small village of Los Remedios to the cathedral in the capital, where it was exposed while devotions were held to end the drought. "Thousands followed the image to the cathedral, where a solemn ceremony was presided over by the Archbishop of Mexico." Most people would find little in common between the Bibliolatry of poor old Krüger and the Mariolatry of the Mexicans. Yet at bottom superstition is one and the same. Fortunately for honest folk it assumes different and rival forms.

If the Modern Churchmen's Congress at Cambridge has not succeeded in satisfying the demand for "a reasonable presentation of Christianity" it has at least enabled the *Daily Telegraph* (leading article, August 11) to show the modern world the high standing of English journalism in the matter of scientific and general knowledge. "There is Canon Barnes, who maintains that a man may be a sound Christian and a convinced Darwinian at one and the same time, as, in fact, Darwin was himself." This is, indeed, "a gem of purest ray serene," far more brilliant than anything produced by the recent conferences themselves. We shall have something more to say about it next week.

The *London Catholic Herald* (August 6) is quite jubilant because at the recent Anglo-Catholic Priests' Convention at Oxford, attended by a thousand English clergy, the opening function was "pontifical high mass," and the Bishop of the diocese preached the opening sermon in the University church. We do not know whether those who play at being Catholics prefer the patronage or the sneers of their Romish friends, but the attitude of the *Herald* is noteworthy. "These good men" are "moving towards individual conversion for many of themselves, and working, perhaps indirectly, for the conversion of this country to the One Faith and the One Church." Perhaps the sooner they are safely lodged there the better.

Here is a story for the hot weather. An inquisitive rustic saw, for the first time, two Catholic nuns in full war-paint. Asking who they were, he was told they were "Sisters of John the Baptist." His face broadened to a grin as he replied: "My word! They look it."

The Baptist Association for Carnarvonshire has resolved to urge all the Churches in that country to insist on total abstinence and to debar publicans from membership. It is nothing new, however, for "publicans" to be bracketed with sinners.

"The earth is the Lord's," says the old adage, but the landlords have many fingers in that particular pie. Two-thirds of the capital invested in agriculture is held by landlords, says the Duke of Northumberland. What a comment on Christian brotherhood! And Christian Socialism!

Bishops do not command the respect they once did. The *Star*, for instance, has this caustic comment on a prominent ecclesiastic: "Bishop Wellton, who has been talking about feminine fashions, is not the maker of the famous paper patterns."

According to the Bishop of Chichester there is a shortage of candidates for ordination in the Church of England. The number is 2,372 short of what is required. A daily paper assures its readers that this decrease is not due to lack of "spiritual ardour." Is it possible that it is due to an anxiety concerning the "loaves and fishes?"

To Correspondents.

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

H. WILLIAMS (S. Wales).—See "Acid Drops."

R. W. CRACKBOW (Ceylon).—Thanks for newspapers and cuttings.

J. BRESE (Birmingham).—Letter and cuttings received. Much obliged.

R. G. HASTIE.—Your high opinion of our articles on Spiritualism is much appreciated.

"OBSERVER," IRVING LEVY, F. O. M. MACAULAY, BEATRICE E. KIDD, and others.—Obliged to hold over till next issue.

J. DRISCOLL and B. GREENWOOD.—Thanks for cuttings and other items.

H. IRVING (Barnsley).—Letter and book received. Thanks.

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

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. George Whitehead reports an even greater success than before in Swansea. Crowds are larger, more interest is displayed, and there is an improvement in the monetary receipts. The meetings have been held chiefly on the sands, and last Sunday's has been declared to have been the finest ever held outdoors in Swansea. Mr. Whitehead will be at Pontypridd from the 18th to the 21st, and then at Ferndale till the 28th. The prospect of his debate at Ferndale, on the 25th, with Mr. Evan John Jones, M.A., Lecturer at Cardiff University, is exciting considerable local interest. The subject is, "Is Christianity an Enemy to Labour?"

The West Ham Branch of the N. S. S. has arranged for an outing to Hainault Forest on Sunday, September 4. Mr. H. Spence, B.Sc., will act as guide. Trains leave Forest Gate at 9.30 a.m., and those joining the party must change at Ilford. The fare is 1s. return. Members and friends will bring their own lunch, and tea will be arranged. The Branch cordially invites all Freethinkers and their friends who can attend this gathering to do so, and asks them to book the date now.

Writing in the *Guardian* (August 5), J. Howard Swinstead, D.D., says that he has had experience of outdoor work at the Marble Arch, and he urges the continuance

of propaganda on similar lines in the churches during the winter months. Special services should be held, at which questions would be invited. It should also be notified that there would be no collection. Is this piece of news a "Sugar Plum" or an "Acid Drop"?

In the same issue "Chercheur," referring to the recent proposal to create an "intelligence department" to serve the Anglican Church, says that such an institution already exists in Great Smith Street, and costs £700 per annum. Undoubtedly a powerful pillar of the Church to-day is the publicity given to its activities by the daily Press. This publicity, of course, goes hand in hand with a strict boycott of all news relating to aggressive Freethought propaganda.

Despite this boycott earnest workers in our cause will find various means of assisting in publicity work. One of our readers who attended the last of the open-air meetings recently held by the Bishop of Woolwich in Borough Market, Southwark, distributed among the audience about forty back numbers of the *Freethinker*. He assures us that the eagerness with which a copy of the paper was accepted was most noticeable. If our outdoor speakers would take every opportunity of mentioning the *Freethinker* at their meetings, they would be helping in a practical way to advertise it.

Among the leaflets issued by the "Bund der Atheisten," Berlin, the one in favour of the complete secularization of the school, written by Lilli Jannasch, strikes us as being a particularly powerful appeal. The Republic stands on the threshold of a new age, it can rear a higher state-system in which there will be no compulsion on conscience in the matter of religion. "Hitherto in Prussia liberty of conscience has existed only on paper." It is precisely on moral grounds that the secularization of the whole school-system is demanded. "The denominational school is completely at variance with the needs of modern life. It is modelled upon a by-gone age, and is consequently not in a position to give our children the moral equipment which they need to fit them for the life and conditions of the present day." One of the stock cries of the opponents of purely secular schools is "Morality in danger." Lilli Jannasch shows very forcibly that the real danger to moral development is the warping of the child's plastic mind by false doctrines taught as the highest spiritual truth, and by the creation of artificial and spurious "virtues" which only cumber the pathway that leads to a healthy humanism.

"Viator" writes: My peregrinations of late brought me to Newman Street, off Oxford Street. No 14 has had some interesting associations. It was once occupied by Edward Irving and his supporters of the Catholic Apostolic Church, and afterwards by Dr. Perfitt's "Theists' Free Church," which later became transformed into the Independent Religious Reformers. Irving was the subject of a celebrated heresy hunt, as a result of which he was "removed from his pastoral charge" in the Church of Scotland. His son, Martin Howy Irving, who died not long ago, was for many years Professor of Classics in Melbourne University. Most of the obituaries in the English newspapers gave his second name as "Harvey." Such is fame! Perfitt purported to present a Christ "detached from all theological misrepresentations." He was such a man as Mr. R. J. Campbell might have admired at one time. I may add that the premises in question are now occupied by the Clifton Galleries, and according to a notice in the hall last week a Dance Club is about to be formed there.

Answering a correspondent's inquiries concerning English editions of Volney's *Ruins of Empires*, the editor of the "Question and Answer" column in *John O'London's Weekly* (August 13) says: "I do not think there is any English edition in print." We beg to point out that this is an error. There is an excellent English version published by the Pioneer Press, price 5s., postage 3d.

The Clerical Conscience.

The Church clung to the doctrine of Eternal Punishment because it seemed a necessary excuse for the existence of the Church. The ministers said: "No hell, no atonement; no atonement, no fall of man; no fall of man, no inspired book; no inspired book, no preachers; no preachers, no salaries, no hell, no missionaries; no sulphur, no salvation."—R. G. Ingersoll.

NOTHING but ignorance, a low form of selfishness or a mistaken sense of duty can keep a man in the clerical profession. It is no place for an honest man. There are men there who try to be good, but they have no business to be there, and they could not stay there were it not that the clerical conscience, as a rule, is such a worthless guide to manliness. The average parson is cursed with one fatal weakness, even when he is above working only for the "loaves and fishes." He thinks it is right to do wrong to prevent injury to the Church, or to escape what he calls a weakening of his influence.

For example: when Archdeacon Wakeford was charged with an alleged moral offence there were many of the clergy who regretted that the matter was exposed because it was a scandal to the Church. It was a pity if he were really guilty, but even so the affair should have been kept quiet for the sake of the sacredness of "the cloth."

In the same way many a parson will fawn upon and flatter his rich parishioners because money is necessary to make the Gospel go, and so it is politic that the "man of God" should always approach Sir Gorgias Midas on the soft side. The men who crack the whip over the parsons, as a rule, are ignorant, arrogant, ill-bred parvenus, whose society the parson would not endure if they were not wealthy. The parsons know that it is wrong that such men should dictate the policy of the Church, but they submit because they say it would weaken their influence to break with these purse-proud parishioners.

This makes clear the queerness of the clerical conscience. The average parson is not knowingly and intentionally a fraud, a hypocrite; he is merely a politician. He is always doing things of which a man with a decent sense of self-respect should be ashamed. But he is not ashamed of them because he loves Jesus and he is satisfied that the cause of Jesus will prosper better if he moves in the best society and dines with the wealthy. He is willing to make any sacrifice for Jesus' sake. He will forgo the pleasures of poverty, which his master described when he said: "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," because if he were poor he would lose his influence. He will deprive himself of the joy of telling the truth (and it is a joy, beyond almost anything else), because if he did not lie, to a certain extent, and keep back the truth, to a still greater extent, Mr. Banker or Mr. Land Lord, or some other respectable and orthodox thief would be lost to the cause of foreign missions, and a comfortable income would be lost to him.

Now, it is their queer clerical conscience that permits so many men who mean to be honest and upright to remain in the pulpit when they should not be there another hour.

Look at the situation. The present Christian creed teaches the infernal doctrine of eternal torture in hell for all those who reject the plan of salvation, and even for those who have never heard of it.

Well, there are plenty of parsons who despise that doctrine almost as heartily as I do. Why, then, do they not, as honest men, come right out squarely and say that they think this creed is a chain of lies, resign their pulpits and leave the Church? That would be the manly thing to do. But, no; it is much pleasanter for them to hold on to their positions and salaries and go to work like a gang of politicians to get a few

changes made in the official creed, so that it shall not be such a lying document as it is now. How can an honest man make or accept a compromise about what purports to be the truth about a God and a future world? An honest man never compromises when a principle is at stake.

But there are parsons who really believe that blasphemous and disgraceful creed. They are the scraps left over from earlier ages—men with twentieth century bodies and sixteenth century minds; metaphysical freaks that should be set up in theological museums. And, indeed, that is where they often are, for the Church has a queer fashion of making theological professors of all her old fogies. When a parson is so far behind the times in thought and methods that he can no longer succeed as a working parson, they embalm him in a theological professorial chair, and give him the job of manufacturing new parsons. This explains the curious phenomenon that some of the most conservative parsons are those who have just graduated from a parson factory.

These relics of past ages, these unburied dead men, are slowly getting under the sod, but a goodly number of them still infest the haunts of the living. They are the men who think that women should keep silence in church and ask their husbands if they wish to know anything; who think that wives should meekly obey their husbands, and that children can only be taught to be good by a birch rod or a leather strap. They are the men who think that burglars and pick pockets should be imprisoned and that land and currency thieves should be honoured; that men who murder their fellows with knives and pistols should go to the gallows, but that men who kill their fellows by starvation wages and slums should go to Parliament; who think it is a sin to doubt that a whale swallowed Jonah and a virtue to believe that their God sends all honest Freethinkers to everlasting hell.

What are such parsons to do when their old creed is revised and a few drops of blood wiped from the lips of their precious cannibal God? How can they honestly accept the new or emasculated creed? These men are the only genuine Christian parsons, and it is hardly fair for the new men, with their chicken-hearted speculations, to force their alterations into the good old bloody creed. But no doubt when the creed is revised the old fogies will accept the new creed along with their old salaries, just as the progressive men now accept the old creed by adapting their consciences to the financial and political necessities of the case. The Jesus whom these men profess to worship lived in poverty and died on the gallows rather than turn a hair's breadth from what he believed to be right; these men become wretched time-servers rather than give up their luxuries and their respectability.

The plain fact is that the Church is simply an ecclesiastical political party, and its creed is simply a theological political platform. The clerical advocates of revision of the creed say that a wise policy demands it, and that the future prosperity of the Church depends on it. This is exactly the kind of reasoning that would come from the leader of any political party if he were explaining that a change should be made in the platform.

It is not a question of what is true or false. It is wholly a question of what will keep money flowing into the treasury of the Church; of what will keep the "party" workers together; of what will prevent the party workers of some other sect walking off with the "prosperity" of their own particular sect. The whole thing is one great system of sham and humbug, as all politics is.

All this is true, not because the Church is the Church, but because she is an organization in which the majority rules by force or by rewards and discipline, in which there are offices to fill that confer

wealth on the holder or enable him to gratify low ambitions. Any such organization for religious, social or political purposes works evil and only evil. There are a few good persons in all such organizations, or rather, persons who try to be as good as they can under the circumstances. But all organizations for the above purposes are necessarily bad, because they subordinate truth to a creed or platform. They sacrifice principle to low ambition. They turn honest men into time-servers and hypocrites.

Why is it so difficult to make people understand this? Surely it is plain that true religion is a thing for each man's own conscience and needs no Church. Truth needs no creed. It is too subtle to be caught and too large to be crammed into a form of words. The true preacher can make a pulpit for himself without depending upon wealthy parvenus for support or truckling to respectability to maintain his influence. Society needs no government by politicians, priests, trickery and violence.

If you have any religion avoid the Church, for she will spoil it. Let it come out in your conduct. If you have discovered a truth you need not try to lock it up in a prison of words. It will not get away from you. If you know a God, as some men say they do, listen to what he whispers in your ear and proclaim it openly, whether the millionaires like it or not. If a real God has spoken to you, you can rest assured that the millionaires will muzzle you if they can. If you love your country and your fellow men and know what is for their good, tell it to them, and practise what you preach, but, as you value your own liberty and self-respect, have nothing to do with politics. Shake off the shackles of the organized Church and the organized State and be simply an honest truth-hunter, truth-speaker and truth-doer.

G. O. W.

Drummond of Hawthornden.

1585-1649,

I, who am not a literary man, propose, and presume, for a change, to offer readers a literary article; subject, as above, one, perhaps, all too familiar to the élite among Freethinkers, to men like Mr. George Underwood, and all those well-skilled, scientific gentlemen who weekly stun the groundlings with learning's dull despair. It may be interesting to these select and elevated spirits to note how the ordinary man may blunder accidentally upon the serene Parnassian heights and classic valleys, how he appreciates them, and how much good they may do him. The laird of Hawthornden was Scotch—note that ye Englishers—but he wrote in the Shakespearian tongue, and was no proletarian in pedigree, or learning, or philosophy; even rare Ben Jonson *walked* from London to Scotland to pay him his respects—of which more in its place—and thus was created one of our closest links with the actual Shakespeare.

I had as usual been hurrying through the week-end accumulation of periodical matter—in the *Glasgow Times*, the *London Daily Herald*, the *Forward*, the *Freethinker*, and nameless others, trying to be wise, seeking a path in the jungle, a ray of light through the dim boughs at the forest's end that still hide the promised land; noting in the process human love and hate, wisdom and folly, peace and war, battle murder and sudden death; the denial or the death of love in society divorces; but pondering most the political, industrial, moral, and rational outlook, all darkly ominous, but still forlornly hoping for the dawn, at least for the broken light of better things. Thereafter to the doorstep to view the passing of another perfect day in June, plus "Summertime," over the solemn

trees and grey gable and dimly glowing windows of the near N.W. horizon, lit so late with that still quiet lingering twilight glow, with that soothing charm and silent serene rebuke of the madding crowd of mankind, in select society as in the social swarm. It was bedtime, but not time to go to bed—so thought the reluctant noisy gamins in their play, and so thought I, so sweet the solemn hour, so dim and sweet the dear illusion of the skies. Returned to my corner chair under the lamp, with little wish to read, I selected a book from a hundred lying about, a substantial volume of Scottish Poetry, expecting to find as before the weary iteration of rhyme and pious platitudes of the minor muse, but feeling also, as before, I might discover here and there a gem of purest ray serene, to me, at least, some dead man's thought to fit the living hour, when, lo, I read the following sonnet:—

I know that all beneath the moon decays;
And what by mortals in this world is brought,
In time's great periods shall return to nought;
That fairest states have fatal nights and days.
I know that all the Muses' heavenly lays
With toil of sprite which are so dearly bought,
As idle sounds, of few or none are sought;
That there is nothing lighter than vain praise.
I know frail beauty's like the purple flower
To which one morn oft birth and death affords;
That love ajarring is of mind's accords,
Where sense and will bring under reason's power;
Know what I list, this all cannot me move,
But that, alas! I both must write and love.

Surely, in sound and sense a perfect sonnet! Listen to the sure sweet music of that "I know, I know, I know!" knowing his own, he knew the heart of man.

By Jove, thought I, and cried aloud, here at last is poetry equal to Shakespeare's own, and more fitted to my particular mood and fate. The writer had felt like the reader, the only difference—a vast one, he admits—that this poet had found that perfect expression from the "caverns of the spirit" denied to most. With no lapidary skill, but only with that touch of nature (and of art) that makes the whole world kin, I had recognized this perfect gem, and turning to the maker's name found full corroboration, or, at least, another sublime illusion. Even in a poetical panegyric (of fulsome adulation, or simple and sincere regard) addressed to "the wisest fool in Christendom," King James the Sixth, artistic felicity does not fail him, even if:—

.....the mountains.....
.....in unusual pomp on tiptoes stand,
And, full of wonder, overlook the land!

while the rivers,—

Which drink stern Grampus' mists or Ochils' snows:
Stone-rolling Tay, Tyne, tortoise-like that flows,
The pearly Don, the Dees, the fertile Spey,
Wild Severn, which doth see our longest day
The Irish Rian, Ken, the silver Ayr,
The snaky Doon, the Orr with rushy hair.

And many more:—

And as they meet in Neptune's azure hall,
Bid them bid sea-gods keep this festival.

So loyal poet greets his goodly, godly king, and wrote we with a hint of malice or of scorn we might add:—

To-day the Lord of all forgoes his claims,
And equal greets the lord our god King James!

But no, Hawthornden was a sensible fellow, as his history proves, and his honest, solid fame outshines the conventional sycophancy of his day or ours. He has been acclaimed by Drayton, Hallam, Campbell, Southey, Hazlitt, and many more. Says Hazlitt:—

Drummond's sonnets, I think, come as near as almost any others to the perfection of this kind of writing, which should embody a sentiment, and every shade of a sentiment, as it varies with time and place, and humour, with the extravagance or lightness of a momentary impression.

Ben Jonson, during his visit to Drummond, alluded to all the contemporary poets and dramatists, but most singularly of all, speaking without reverence, says:—

Shakespeare wanted art, and sometimes sense; for in one of his plays he brought a number of men, saying they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, where is no sea near by an hundred miles.

While Drummond, describing Jonson as with quaint candour, left it on record that Ben,—

was a great lover and praiser of himself, a contemner and scorner of others, given rather to lose a friend than a jest: jealous of every word and action of those about him, especially after drink, which is one of the elements in which he lived; a dissembler of the parts which reign in him; a bragger of some good that he wanted (lacked?); thinking nothing well done, but what either he himself or some of his friends have said or done. He is passionately kind or angry, careless either to gain or keep; vindictive, but if he be well answered, at himself, interprets best sayings and deeds often to the worst. He was for any religion, as being versed in both; oppressed with fancy, which hath overmastered his reason, a *general disease in many poets*. In short, he was in his personal character the very reverse of Shakespeare, as surly, ill-natured, proud and disagreeable, as Shakespeare, with ten times his merit, was gentle, good-natured, easy, and amiable.

All of which reveals to us a very human, and, with all his rare genius, a very common type of individual in his habit as he lived, full of that personal egotism and sceptical judgment of others that comes of communion with the greatest, together with a wise, ripe, quick, assured, yet often quite unjust, habituated, select nobility of mind; something excusable, always admirable; amusing also, as one smiles to think that perhaps Ben came north, not so much to kindle at the flame of the Scottish Muse as to display the lightnings of his own inspired mind!

But, as we know, Jonson could praise as well as blame. He allowed that—

Hawthornden's verses were all good, especially his epithaph on Prince Henry; save that they smelled too much of the schools, and were not after the fancy of the times; for a child,—

said he—

may write after the fashion of the Greek and Latin verses, in running;—yet, that he wished for pleasing the king, that piece of "Forth Feasting" (to James VI) had been his own.

After an extensive stay in the Continent and travels between Paris and Rome, during which he collected a large library of the best Greek and Latin authors, and the works of the most esteemed modern writers of France, Italy, and Spain (which was later presented to the Collection of Edinburgh) the "Scottish Petrarch" returned to his native land, just prior to the royal tragedy of Charles I. Says the editor, James Grant Wilson:—

A more lovely spot for a poet's retreat we never saw in or out of Scotland. "Classic Hawthornden," Sir Walter called it. Within a small space are combined all the elements of sublime and picturesque scenery, and in the immediate neighbourhood is Roslyn Castle, one of the most interesting of Gothic ruins.....

Having taken this, perhaps, presumptuous peep at those poets of the past, I stand at my door again, as nightly, to see "the light of setting suns," the light of other days, of ages remote, or say, ten thousand years ago, when the same sun rose and set, on the same spot, in the same way, on what a shaggy scene and savage race, or lost city and civilization, but here it shone for certain, and that history is true. So the infinite lies before us and behind us, with us the ex-

quisite twilight hour—mingling of light and shade, austere yet benignant, clear yet dim; the outer symbol of the inner calm and cultured ripened spirit of man; as the night wind stirring in the dusky grove murmurs the *music* of the world, opposed to its discords, that harmony Poetry has sought all down the centuries as flowers have sought the sun.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Pages From Fontenelle.

DIALOGUES OF THE DEAD.

CHARLES V. AND ERASMUS.

Erasmus.—Make no doubt of it! If there is any superiority of place among the dead, I shall not be obliged to give way to you.

Charles.—But, tell me, why should you, a grammarian, a mere scholar, or to give you the benefit of your highest claim, a man of wit, why should you take precedence of a prince that was the master of the greater half of Europe?

Erasmus.—Throw in America, and I am not a bit more alarmed. Your greatness was a mere conglomeration of lucky accidents, as anyone who puts himself to the trouble of sorting out all the parts could prove to you at once. For example, if your grandfather Ferdinand had been a man of his word, you would have had scarcely a foot of land in Italy; and if other princes had had enough intelligence to believe in the antipodes, Columbus would not have applied to him, and America would not have come under your rule; if, after the death of the last Duke of Burgundy, Louis XI. had looked closely into what he did, the heiress of Burgundy would not have married Maximilian, and the Netherlands would not have descended to you; if Henry of Castile, your grandmother's brother, had not a scandalous character among the women, or if his wife's virtue had been above suspicion, her daughter would have passed for his own, and the kingdom of Castile would have escaped you.

Charles.—What you say is most alarming. It would appear that I came very near to losing Castile, or the Netherlands or America or Italy. At least one of them, if not all.

Erasmus.—It is not a subject for jesting. If there had been a little more wit in one of your ancestors, or a little more honesty in another, it would have cost you dear. Your grand-uncle's impotence, the wantonness of your great-aunt, both contributed to your position and fame. A solid structure is thus built up on a collection of hazards.

Charles.—I don't know how I am to stand up against so vigorous an attack as this. I allow that you sweep away all my greatness and all my titles.

Erasmus.—Yet these were the ornaments of which you boasted, and I have swept them away without exertion. You will remember how the Athenian, Kimon, having captured a great number of Persians, put up for sale their clothing on one side of the way, and their naked bodies on the other, and as the clothes were magnificent, there was much competition in bidding for them, but no one would name a price for the men. I take it that, what happened to the Persians would happen to a good number of others if it were possible to separate their personal merit from the gifts which fortune bestowed on them.

Charles.—But what do you understand by personal merit?

Erasmus.—Need you ask that? Everything that is in us, our mind, for example, and our knowledge.

Charles.—But can a man reasonably boast of these things?

Erasmus.—Why not? It is evident that they are not the gifts of chance like high birth and riches.

Charles.—You surprise me very much. Don't you find that knowledge descends to the learned just in the same way as riches do to most of us who possess them? Does it not come by the way of succession? You learned men inherit from the ancients as we do from our fathers. If we have been left all we have, you have been left all you know, and for this reason many men of learning regard the traditions they have received from the ancients with precisely the same respect as other men regard their ancestors' estates and castles, and would object to have anything changed.

Erasmus.—The great are born heirs of their fathers' greatness, but men of learning are not born heirs of ancient knowledge. Learning is not an estate received in succession, but a new acquisition made by personal effort, or, if it is a succession, it is so come by as to be worthy of honour.

Charles.—Very well then! Let us balance the difficulty of acquiring mental possessions against the difficulty of preserving those of fortune, and I wager you the two things are about equal, for, if difficulty is what you value, there is as much in worldly affairs as in the study of philosophy.

Erasmus.—But suppose we postpone our dispute about the acquisition of knowledge and confine ourselves to the mind, which you must admit does not depend upon chance.

Charles.—Are you quite sure of that? The mind depends upon a certain happy disposition of the brain. You allow that it is so; then is it less of a chance for a man to be born with a good brain than to be born the son of a king? You were a man of remarkable intellect I admit, but put it to any philosopher why you were not a stupid blockhead; it depended upon a next to nothing, on a mere arrangement of nervous tissues so fine that the most delicate operation of anatomy is unequal to discovering it. And yet there are clever men, with this knowledge, who have the temerity to declare that they alone are independent of chance, and who think themselves at liberty to look down upon the rest of us.

Erasmus.—Then you hold that it is quite as meritorious to have great worldly possessions as to have a great intellect.

Charles.—To have a great intellect is merely a luckier chance, but, in the last analysis, it is all chance.

Erasmus.—You mean that everything that happens is contingent.

Charles.—Certainly, if you understand by the word "contingent" or "chance" a sequence or order, which you do not understand. Now! a moment ago you talked of sweeping away my claims to merit. I leave you to decide whether I have not plucked men cleaner than you have. You merely robbed them of certain advantages of birth, but I take away even those of the mind. If, before they grew vain of a thing, men would make certain that it really belonged to them, vanity would be unknown in the world.

Englised by GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

Freethought on Tyneside.

SOME considerable time has elapsed since we were compelled to postpone the visit of our President. Our work is great, and the workers are few. We have set ourselves the very hardest task of all time. Our object cannot be described as very tangible. Much of the great work of the world has been accomplished by very estimable perseverance. But there has mostly been a clear objective with a fair prospect of success. The pyramids of Egypt and other massive structural work might be mentioned in support of that idea. But all these things pale into nothingness when compared with the work of the would-

be emancipator of the human mind. We might try to picture to ourselves for the moment the nature of the thoughts that would have occurred to Socrates and some of the other old-world reasoners could they have foreseen the long travail to be gone through between then and now, owing to the victory of superstition. It may be a somewhat dolorous thought, but it is probably inevitable, when one considers the general attitude towards liberty, that another long night should envelope the race. But that is no cause for relaxation; it should spur us on to more persistent effort. In the recent industrial troubles on Tyneside the few pioneers have "burnt much of their wood." But we are determined to make another effort to have Mr. Cohen amongst us, and have arranged for him to be in Newcastle on September 25 and South Shields on October 2. During the week he will visit Greenside and New Herrington and possibly other places. May we hope that all friends of the Movement will rally and make the campaign a success?

J. FOTHERGILL.

Secretary

Correspondence.

WHAT IS AN AFTER-LIFE?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Keridon asks me to answer the question, What do I mean by training character for an after-life? But does he think it possible that any answer whatever could be intelligible to one who apparently can't conceive of any life higher than the animal life we lead? There is this difference of opinion between my critics and myself that many of them, perhaps all, assume that what they can't conceive has no existence. Others, more legitimately in my judgment, say that it may exist but has no claim upon their attention. I would ask Keridon, and others who think with him, whether it is not sanguine to expect that that assumption should be shared by people who *can* conceive the existence in question. Let me put the matter thus: We all agree there are levels or orders of life: vegetable, animal, human; sharply distinguished from each other, each one, we feel pretty sure, being wholly unable to conceive more than a tiny portion of the order next above it. Now, if I assume that human life is not the highest, but that there are indications of an order higher than ours, why am I to be called the victim of an exploded superstition merely because a fellow creature says he can't conceive of this higher life? I am not in the least surprised at his inability; for many years I shared it, but I don't remember ever making it the basis of a denial.

Suppose a cabbage were to converse with a carrot and they agreed that the thing called a donkey could not be alive, but must be a hallucination, and their only reason was that no carrots or cabbages ever walked on four legs, should we not say they were talking rather foolishly? Or to come nearer home, there is such a thing as a science of geometry, and there are very many children who cannot conceive of such a science. Add to them a goodly number of adults. Supposing they totalled up to eighty per cent. of the population, would Keridon say that was sufficient ground for saying that geometry was stuff and nonsense? If not, would ninety per cent. be enough, or any number? If not, why not? I don't know if Keridon understands Differential Calculus; I have tried to, wholly without success, but it never occurs to me to doubt that there is such a thing. At the same time, if a harsh-voiced professor were to jaw at me about the calculus, its beauties, its purpose, its sublimity, etc., I should walk out of the room. Keridon would probably do something stronger if I were to descant on the nature of the higher life or its meaning. All the time there is a fundamental law involved, *viz.*, that to learn anything of this higher life you must desire it.

E. LYTELTON.

WHAT SCIENCE HAS DONE FOR HUMANITY.

SIR,—The writings of "Mimnermus" are to me usually the most interesting in the *Freethinker*, but in this week's issue he clearly has made an imperfect study of his subject. The medical priest is little less dangerous than his religious brother. In Britain, at least, they usually hang together. Of the names he mentions for their services to humanity Lord Lister alone deserves the highest commendation because he had the honesty to admit that his

much vaunted antiseptic treatment of disease was a mistake. The fact is, with the medical priest, like their clerical brothers, they can blow their own trumpet in corrupt newspapers, and opposition is as carefully excluded as opposition to Freethought. Some of the alleged wonderful scientific discoveries have been, next to religious faith, the most awful curses to humanity; for instance, vaccination, not so much from the direct deaths it has caused, as by diverting people's minds from good housing and sanitation. As to deaths from diphtheria, they have actually increased since the serum was used. The apparent decrease is arrived at by a disingenuous juggle.

A. J. MARRIOTT.

SIR,—The indiscriminate praise of science, or what passes by the name, by "Mimnermus" in this week's article is rather disturbing. We are expected to marvel at the wonders of modern science as expressed in the germ theory of disease and the alleged benefits derived from serum therapy. In the first place the benefits of this treatment have been so challenged and disputed that the germ theory is now breaking down at all points. In the second place, and this is far the more important, we should be particularly concerned to know something of the means employed in obtaining these benefits, whether real or alleged, when we set out to praise them. Suffering humanity is a very real thing, but when it is attempted to find relief for ourselves by inflicting suffering upon another creature it is time to call things by their proper names and not to sing songs of praise over what is called science, but what is really downright cruelty, selfishness and meanness. If the animals could speak that have been subjected to countless experiments and unspeakable torments in the vivisection laboratories of Europe that we might be the gainers, it is doubtful whether they would agree about the debt civilization owes the "great Frenchman" and others, and it might be that they would not consider that it necessarily followed that, simply to part with certain superstitions about God and the devil, etc., was sufficient to raise one from barbarian to civilized man; for, after all, it is conduct that counts, whether a man professes Christianity or Atheism, and I very much regret to find that on the question of the proper treatment of animals certain Atheists are no better than most Christians.

V. WILSON.

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.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.15, Mr. E. Burke, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Regent's Park): 6, Mr. A. D. McLaren, "The Warfare of Science."

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

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—Ramble to Harefield. Conducted by Mr. F. Herbert Mansford. Train from Marylebone, 10.20. Take return ticket to Ruislip, fare 2s. 6d. (Conductor will meet train at Ruislip.)

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

STOCKPORT BRANCH N. S. S. (191 Higher Hillgate, Stockport): 10.30, Mr. D. Mapp, "Carnivorous Plants."

FERNDALE, RHONDDA VALLEY (Workmen's Hall): Thursday, August 25, at 7.30, Public Debate between Mr. George Whitehead and Mr. Evan John Jones, M.A., "Is Christianity an Enemy to Labour?"

FOR SALE.—Twenty-eight Volumes of the Fine Art Scott Library, Scott's Novels and Poetry complete, including Lockhart's *Life of Scott* and Book Case for same; as new, only read once, £4. A real bargain, five bound volumes (half leather) of *Harmsworth New Self Educator* and numbers for the remaining two volumes, in good condition, £2 10s. Also evening dress suit and white corded silk waistcoat extra, hardly been worn, to fit moderately built man, 5ft. 6ins., chest 34ins, approval willingly, £7 or £12 the lot. Would consider exchange for good violin, value for value, approval necessary.—C. CHAMBERS, 11 Gray Street, Clown, near Chesterfield.

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