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## Views and Opinions.

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### Spiritualism and Progress.

I am bringing this series of notes on Spiritualism to a close by a few random, but I hope pertinent, considerations of the Spiritualistic theory in the light of what has already been said. The triviality of the alleged communications received from the next world has been often commented on, and justly so. Apart from the value of the proof they would give, if genuine, of the existence of another world, I do not know of a single communication that has ever been given that has been worth the trouble of receiving. There is much talk in Spiritualistic circles of progress and development, but if we are to go by the talk of the supposed spirits it is altogether non-existent. If one will take up any of the published volumes of spirit communications from famous people whose works we have, the striking thing about them is their extreme inanity. In a work before me,<sup>1</sup> there are contained fifty-six communications from men and women such as George Eliot, John Stuart Mill, G. H. Lewes, Dickens, De Quincey, Gambetta, Darwin, etc., and one is aghast at the deterioration that has set in since they left this world. They all write in the same tone, they all make use of much the same expressions, and not one of them seems able to dictate a sentence that is above the capacity of a Sunday-school teacher. The dead level of mediocrity is appalling. When they died they not only stopped growing, they must also have stopped thinking. The great scientist here makes no discoveries there, beyond meaningless chatter about unknown forces. The historian throws no light on any of the subjects he debated so hotly while on earth, and which he might so easily settle by consulting the principal parties concerned. In the whole history of Spiritualism it is left for the people on earth to make the discoveries, and for the spirits to indulge in columns of useless verbiage about the greatness of the human mind—and disprove it in themselves.

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### A Plea for Common Sense.

The Spiritualistic explanation of this curious fact that the communications are conditioned by the

<sup>1</sup> *The Next World: Fifty-six Communications from Eminent Historians, Authors, etc., through Mrs. Susan G. Horn, 1890.*

mentality of the medium only adds to the absurdity. It says little for the mentality of the average medium if the messages received represent the limits of their brain power. Moreover, if the spirits can move the hands of a medium so as to transmit a message of which he is unconscious, or cause him to write in an unknown tongue, or to write about matters unknown to him, why cannot mediums write about matters of scientific or historic interest that are unknown to them? After all, it is the formation of a series of letters that is important here, not the sense of the message conveyed. It is a matter of complete indifference whether the message that is tapped out on a typewriter is sense or nonsense. The keys will register equally well. And why does not that hold good with regard to the medium who stands to the spirits exactly as my typewriter stands to me? The results are quite inconsistent with the theory of Spiritualism; they are quite consistent with the theory I have been describing. It is again in accordance with the facts of morbid psychology, but difficult to reconcile with the Spiritualistic theory, why mediums should usually have a constant control or a very limited number. If they are expressions of the medium's sub-consciousness this is what we should expect, otherwise it would seem that with so many billions of departed spirits there should be endless variety in the visitors who return. In this connection we may note the suggestibility of the medium. In the case of "Dr. Phinuit," suggestion after suggestion was taken up and repeated in subsequent sittings. In my own experience I have noticed how receptive are both the mediums and the cases of dissociation that I have come across. This is also pointed out by Dr. Maxwell who, in his *Metapsychical Phenomena*, remarks that he has seen a medium who professes that an actual spirit was controlling her, and at another time resolves the spirit into an impersonal force. This will explain why those who are experimenting with mediums so often get what they are expecting. Mr. Podmore properly remarks that "automatic utterances, and especially the trance utterances, show all the characteristics of automatic utterances generally, incoherence, vagueness, ambiguity, evasiveness." Once more we fall into line with those abnormal states on which the whole thing seems to hang.

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### Seeing the Non-Existent.

Another thing overlooked by the Spiritualist is that an explanation which is to be accepted by anyone with a due regard to scientific procedure, must cover all the facts and not merely a selected few. Now, assuming that the Spiritualistic explanation covers all those cases where the medium is right, what are we to do with those cases where the medium is demonstrably wrong? When, to take one instance out of many, the medium describes correctly the appearance of the spirit of someone who is dead, that is to be taken as proof that the dead live again. But when the medium describes as dead someone who is still living, what then? Clearly the explanation that the thing seen is a genuinely objective existence will not fit both cases.

And if not both, why either? Why may it not be that we are dealing in both cases with suggestion or guessing, or a combination of mistakes? The irrelevancy, even the absurdity, of the assurance by either the medium or the medium's friends that she is speaking of things that are beyond her knowledge will be realized when it is remembered that it is precisely because these things are beyond the medium's memory that they take the form they do. It has been shown over and over again that an experience once gained is seldom lost beyond the possibility of revivability. We are all of us continually running up against the sense of having experienced a thing previously without being able to locate time or place. In the majority of cases these experiences are not of a very striking kind, but, here again, the normal shades very gradually into the abnormal, and in the qualities displayed by the medium we have only an extension of those possessed by the ordinary human being. And there is always the co-operation of pure delusion and illusion.

#### Fraud and Fact.

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The question of deliberate fraud is not at this point of great moment. Indeed, to lead the discussion that way helps rather than hinders the Spiritualist, since it draws a red herring across the track by turning attention in the wrong direction. It is not at all difficult for the Spiritualist who knows his case to prove that the theory of fraud will not cover all the cases, and he is thus able to leave his hearers or readers with the confused feeling that there is, after all, something in it. And so there is, but not what the Spiritualist believes is there. One may put it that the critic has been right in suspecting trickery, but it was not of necessity the trickery of the normal personality. As Jung says, "The more consciousness becomes dissociated, the greater becomes the plasticity of the dream situation, the less becomes the amount of conscious lying" (*Analytic Psychology*, p. 71), and if what has been said is correct it is perfectly idle to accuse the normal personality of deliberate deception on account of things done during a period of dissociation. We have to continually bear in mind the trickiness of the secondary consciousness, its capacity for acting up to a part that has been suggested to it, and the abnormal sensitiveness to certain sounds or sights that exists. We do, indeed, need to be constantly on our guard against trickery, but we also need to be awake to the class of trickery against which we are to guard ourselves.

#### An Old Story.

\* \* \*

As already said, I have purposely left the case of the deliberate swindler on one side. My aim has been to show that after eliminating him, or her, and taking what remains as genuine phenomena, there is not the least evidence here for the belief in a future state of existence. The facts upon which the majority of Spiritualists depend to prove their belief in a future life I think I may claim to have shown can be explained in terms of abnormal psychology. Unfortunately, says Flammarion, "a large number of Spiritualists prefer not to go to the bottom of things, or analyze anything, but to be the dupes of their own impressions. They resemble certain worthy women who tell their heads while believing that they have before them Saint Agnes or Saint Filomena." Spiritualists are for the most part the victims of their own "will to believe," and decline to learn the lesson that experience offers them. When hypnotism began we had it explained in terms of some occult hypnotic fluid, or some magnetic influence, or some mysterious power was supposed to "flow" from the one person to another. More careful examination of the facts showed that it was simple suggestion, and the "occult" disappeared

save from the repertory of quacks. Or, if I may use my previous illustration, we are in the position with regard to Spiritualism that our ancestors were with regard to demoniacal possession. Or, again, there were the visions of mediæval saints and mystics. These were real to them, and upon their experience the faith of others was built. Or, in the case of witchcraft, we had from the accused people themselves circumstantial accounts of their experience with devils just as we have to-day the experiences of "mediums" with the denizens of the next world. The differences between all these cases is one of time and environment. In other respects they are identical. And the end to these things came when science took these psychological facts in hand and gave them a rational and a natural explanation. That is where we are, so far as a large number of people are concerned, with Spiritualism to-day. There is the same substratum of fact distorted by misunderstanding into proof of an impossible life beyond the grave. There is the same fight against an explanation of it in terms of known forces, the same attempt to interpret the unusual, or the ill-understood, in terms of a disguised supernaturalism. As with other forms of religious belief Spiritualism is in this respect true to itself and to type. It can trace an ancestry that carries it right back to the stage of primitive savagery, where we see the same species of misunderstanding at work. That it is so, and that Spiritualism can claim so many supporters to-day offers but one more proof, if any were needed, that our boasted advance has only scratched the surface of things, and that careful scientific thinking, especially where religion is concerned, still remains one of the rarest of mental endowments. CHAPMAN COHEN.

### Sin and Its Forgiveness.

FOR August 11 the "Correspondence of the Rev. Professor David Smith, D.D.," in the *British Weekly*, discusses the exegesis of John xx. 23. A local preacher of the Primitive Methodist Church is at a loss to understand the meaning of the strange words: "Whose soever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain they are retained." Assuming, for argument's sake, the historicity of the text, the natural inference is that the risen Jesus conferred on those whom he addressed the power to forgive the sins of others, or to refuse them forgiveness. A similar passage is found in Matt. xvi. 19, addressed to Peter alone after his great confession. Professor Smith admits that this is the "proof text of the Romanist doctrine of Priestly Absolution—that our Lord delegated to his apostles an authority to grant or withhold forgiveness which has been transmitted to their successors in virtue of episcopal ordination." To show how full and unqualified this authority is conceived to be, the Professor supplies the following account of the three affirmations on the subject in the Canons of the Council of Trent:—

(1) The priests' absolution is not merely a pronouncement that a penitent has been forgiven; it is "a judicial act," and the word of absolution is *per se* efficacious, even though spoken "not seriously but in joke." (2) Its efficacy does not depend on the character of the priest; even "priests who are in mortal sin have power to bind and loose." The reason is that it is the rite of ordination that confers the authority of absolution. And it follows (3) that only a priest possesses that authority; "priests alone can give absolution, and the words of Christ concerning binding and loosing, remitting and retaining sin, were not spoken to all the faithful."

Such is the teaching of the Catholic Church on priestly absolution. Dr. Smith declares that it is based on a false interpretation of Matt. xvi. 19 and John xx. 23-

That is to say, of the two exegeses that of the Protestants is entirely right, whilst that of the Catholics is wholly wrong. Of course, all Protestants are not agreed. Dean Alford, for example, in his Commentary on John's Gospel affirms that in verse 21, where occurs the phrase, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you," Jesus "confirms and grounds their apostleship on the present glorification of himself, whose apostleship (Heb. iii. 1) on earth was now ended, but was to be continued by this sending forth of them." In Dr. Alford's opinion the whole passage, verses 19-23, applies, not to the disciples in general, but to the apostles present on the occasion. Dr. Smith throws discredit on that opinion by referring to Luke xxiv. 33-43. To us, however, it is utterly immaterial for whom the term "disciples" stands in the passage under review, the important point being that whether they were the apostles or the disciples in general Jesus is represented as bestowing upon them the right to grant or withhold forgiveness; but it is fair to point out that the passage in Luke proves nothing, and may not even describe the same incident, for it contains no reference whatever either to the sending forth of the apostles or to the authority of absolution. Touching absolution Dr. Smith admits that the strange words were repeated three times, first to Peter, then to the twelve, and last of all to "the disciples" on the evening of the Resurrection Day, as reported in John xx. 23.

Coming now to the real significance of absolution we find that Professor Smith allows his Protestant attitude to blind his judgment. He says:—

What did our Lord mean in thus conferring on all his believing people authority to pronounce absolution? Remember their vocation, their mission and function in the world. They are his "witnesses," and their office is to testify of his grace out of their own blessed experience. Only one who has obtained mercy can pronounce absolution, and he does it unconsciously by his mere presence in the world.

Thus are the Master's words rendered practically meaningless. We firmly maintain that the Catholic doctrine of priestly absolution is much more in accord with the teaching of the New Testament than the Protestant. Priests are Christ's representatives on earth by his own appointment. What they bind and loose here is bound and loosed in heaven. However groundless and ridiculous such a dogma may be, it is indisputable that the New Testament contains it. God does nothing whatsoever except through his priests. They are his vicegerents, his official instruments.

Curious as it may appear, there would have been no Christian Church to-day had it not been for its supreme emphasis throughout the ages upon sin, sinners, and redemption through faith in the Crucified One. The Church has always lived on sin and the belief in its infallible cure in Christ. But now at last the sense of sin and sinfulness is gradually being irretrievably lost as the result of the growth and dissemination of secular knowledge and intelligence. The sense of sin is in no respect natural; it is an artificial sense, a theological product merely, or, in other words, a sense engendered as the natural outcome of the infusion into the child's mind of certain religious beliefs. It is considered to be the bounden duty of all who have a child's upbringing at heart to cultivate within it a due sense of sin and the need of a Saviour. We are told that, like Dr. Clifford, Dr. Jowett "loves Emerson, and knows his works from end to end"; but the other Sunday morning this renowned preacher informed "one of his largest congregations," that Emerson shut his eyes to sin. "He did not want a Mary Magdalene or a Caliban in his world." Can it be true that Dr. Jowett wants either in his world? Would it make him miserable if there were no prostitutes on our streets and no deformed savages here and there is society? We cannot believe it of him, and yet

he deplores the fact that the greatest American writer did not make sin a more prominent factor in his philosophy. He said:—

You can travel from end to end of Emerson's works, and you find nothing resembling what the Bible calls sin. I am reminded of the sailor who cried out, as he listened to a sermon which made no allowance for sin, "Eh, man, your rope's not long enough!"

God, Christ, sin and salvation are theological figments, with no corresponding objective realities anywhere. Recently a well-known Theosophist was induced to attend church, who writing about it said:—

I was unpleasantly struck by the "miserable sinners," and all the "Lord, have mercy upon us" business. Fancy children addressing a loving father in that fashion! The human heart is *not* deceitful above all things, and deplorably wicked, and I think it degrading to both God and man to be perpetually repeating such lies.

The Catholic faith is, on the whole, more Biblical and certainly much more courageously and consistently held than is the Protestant. If such a thing were possible as for the present writer to become once more a supernatural believer, he would, without a moment's hesitation, seek membership in the Catholic Church, but as such a conversion is utterly inconceivable, he glories in Secularism as being at once the most rational and morally elevating of all creeds. It is a creed in which there is no room for sin in its theological connotation, and no need of absolution by God or priest. A Christian may naturally ask, "Do you, then, regard yourselves as already perfect and incapable of any improvement?" By no means; we do not believe even in the perfectibility of human nature, as Shelley and his father-in-law so ardently did. All of us have our failings; moods of tiger and of ape still cling to us, and most of us are governed by no high aims and ideals. The world is suffering from an intellectual, moral, and social indifference of the most debasing character. The sense of responsibility is in many circles of life at a woefully low ebb. Can nothing be done to rouse the masses from this horrible state of mental torpor in which they now dwell? Some of us are doing all we can to bring about some degree of reform, to quicken and ennoble the social conscience, to cultivate the love and practice of exalted Idealism all round, and in every way within our reach to hasten the advent of the day when all mankind shall enjoy the unalloyed happiness of living as brothers and sisters in our Mother Nature's spacious house. We realize that what we need is not forgiveness, not to have our social offences remitted, or blotted out as a cloud. That cannot be done. The harm we may have done can only be neutralized by the good we are resolved to do henceforth. This is the only line along which social reconstruction of a wholesome sort is practicable. What we need is brotherly love enforcing, or rather, inspiring brotherly conduct.

J. T. LLOYD.

The idea of hell, as inculcated in the books given to me when I was a child, never really frightened me at all. I conceived the possibility of a hell in which were eternal flames to destroy every one who had not been good. But a hell whose flames were eternally impotent to destroy these people, a hell where evil was to go on writhing yet thriving for ever and ever, seemed to me, even at that age, too patently absurd to be appalling.

—Max Beerbohm, "Yet Again."

It is easy to show, if you have the exact words of Jesus, that he was mistaken in some points of the greatest magnitude; in the character of God; the existence of the devil; the eternal damnation of men; in the interpretation of the Old Testament; in the doctrine of demons and in the end of the world within a few years.—Theodore Parker.

## The Voices of the Stars.

Glendower:

At my nativity  
The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes,  
Of burning cressets; and at my birth,  
The frame and huge foundations of the earth  
Shaked like a coward.

Hotspur:

Why, so it would have done  
At the same season, if your mother's cat had  
But kittened, though yourself had ne'er been born.  
—Shakespeare, "Henry IV."

THOMAS MOORE, the poet, was nearly choked with indignation by being asked by a young lady at dinner how he got his forecasts for his Almanac. Yet the fact remains that "Old Moore," the prophet, counts far more readers to-day than the author of *Lalla Rookh*, a poem much admired on publication, and for which the poet received ten thousand pounds.

It used to be said that prophecy found a man mad, or left him so, but an exception must be made in the case of "Old Moore," the most genial of prophets, whose Almanac is known to everybody. Not long since, there rose up, in an idle week, the old newspaper dispute over the names of the twenty greatest men now alive and famous. Reputations tossed and rose and fell. There were odd folk who were not quite certain of Mr. Lloyd George. Over the merits of Mr. Horatio Bottomley and the Bishop of London there were unkind comparisons; but none of the numerous correspondents ever questioned the right of "Old Moore" to be considered a great and a good man.

His is a fame that flourishes wherever the English language is spoken, and his enormous reputation is in itself a singular comment on our civilization. He has shown to hundreds of thousands the vision of the future, and he has observed carefully the secret of anonymity. As for his readers, the prophet serves them well. His manly utterances set them right at the moment when a new bacillus causes them "to get the wind up." His words, too, have a soothing effect when folk are jumpy over a coming eclipse, or when the press-gang screams that the country is going to the bow-wows.

*Old Moore's Almanac* for the coming year suggests that "the voices of the stars" are very clamorous. The prophet's principal hieroglyphic for 1922 is a fearsome and a wonderful sight. To the uninitiated onlooker the chief features seem weird. At the top is a large figure of Buddha, somewhat resembling Lord Curzon, and next to it is a picture of the British lion, sadly in need of re-upholstering, apparently making a meal of a tiger. The foreground shows a number of flying pigs, whilst near at hand a chubby boy is carrying a battleship. Other designs complete an artistic combination which is full of ominous significance; but, lest any reader should get cold feet in consequence, the prophet concludes his awe-inspiring comments with the heart-rousing words, "God Save the King."

The dozen smaller cartoons, thoughtfully provided for the twelve months of the year, supply considerable food for reflection, and amplify the large picture. From the accompanying letterpress we learn that "a great religious revival will be established in our wonderful Canadian colony." There will also be trouble in Jamaica caused by naughty natives "led astray by so-called foreign missionaries." In the merry month of May "a well-known person" will shuffle off this mortal coil, despite the efforts of the medical profession, and there will be "a boom in the brewing trade" in September.

Of more interest to our readers is the forecast that a very large number of books will be published dealing with "the world beyond the grave." Lest this calamity should induce pessimism, we hasten to point

out that there will be "less grouching from our heavily taxed and hard-working section of the community," and that we may expect "an old-fashioned Christmas."

"Old Moore" should know something about "the stars" and "planetary influence," for he has been in active communion with them for over two hundred years. At least one of the editions of his Almanac claims to be in its 225th year, whilst another is said to have a circulation of over a million copies annually. It is true that the name of "Francis Moore, physician," is not in the current *Medical Directory*, but, probably, on account of his great age, he is on the retired list. He must have seen many ups and downs during his lengthy and interesting career, having started in business as a prophet prior to the reign of good Queen Anne.

There are so many people out walking in the streets who are celebrities, or notorieties, that it is a pleasant novelty to find a prophet whose features are veiled. On this Bagdad of ours no Haroun al Raschid can venture abroad undistinguished. "Old Moore's" fame, however, is still safe without his portrait being reproduced on the cinemas and in the picture papers. Let all other prophets give us as cautious and comforting anticipations, and there will be an end of the slump in prophecy.

MIMNERMUS.

## The Characteristics of Life.

II.

(Concluded from page 556.)

Now let us see how this is paralleled in living substance. One point of difference must be noted forthwith, otherwise the points of agreement or identity will be missed. The medium is water, and not air; is liquid, and not gaseous. This fact will make identical actions and processes to appear different things. Notwithstanding this difference of medium, both are alike a burning process. This is as literally true of living substance as it is of a flame or a fire.

Though the vehicle of life is water, yet if the watery medium contains oxidisable matter (nutrient substance) and oxygen in solution, oxidation or burning will proceed just the same, the only difference being in the rate of combustion. Similarly, in both cases alike a stream of nutrient substance (matter with available energy) must pass through the space where the fall of potential occurs—the body; for, as we all know, "eating" is virtually the sole object of animal life, and is likewise the primary concern of all human thought and activity. In respect to this particular, a fire is the more apposite simile, for both body and fire are fed intermittently. Again, continuity is effected in both cases in exactly the same way, by "kindling" the new by the "old," the unchanged by the actually changing. And, lastly, animal *body* gives the living process its relative fixity, discreteness, and individuality, much in the same way as the grate does to a fire, or the wick to a flame—all of which have to be renewed alike when worn out.

In respect to the redistribution of energy, there is a point of incompleteness: the vital process is double, whereas a flame or a fire is a single one, as it involves only a release or dissipation of energy. A living substance, as we observed earlier, is primarily a storing process, of which it mainly consists in the *vegetal* world. But in the forms of sentient life both processes are equally represented, and on an immensely magnified scale, concomitant with which consciousness emerged into being.

This double fact is pithily expressed in the term "metabolism," which connotes at the same time the two opposite processes of continuous chemical changes, *viz.*, the *constructive* one, by which nutritive material

is built up into complex and unstable living matter (anabolism), and the *destructive*, or counter process, by which protoplasm is broken down into simpler and more stable substances (katabolism).

These conditions are fulfilled in Nature in two ways, which in point of simplicity are as widely apart as the celestial poles. The phenomenon of life is manifested by two orders of livings—the simple and the compound. With respect to the former, the conditions are realized almost spontaneously; in the latter case, only by a method of the most elaborate and ingenious kind. So we must consider each case separately.

A member of the first or simple class consists of a speck or particle of living substance (protoplasm), to which the term "cell" is applied. Because they exist more or less in isolation, like a cottage in the country, they are called uni-cellular, or one-celled things, and as they are also looked upon as the first or primitive forms of life, they are, therefore, called protozoa, or first creatures. This class comprises all the legions of microscopic life which tenant our ponds, pools, and ditches, as well as the myriads of microbial forms which infest the air. To provide these living specks—these tiny "flames" of life—with the necessary conditions of keeping themselves alight was no difficult task. Their watery home would naturally be impregnated with organic (*i.e.*, oxidisable) matter, and would also be saturated with oxygen, even when stagnant, and there would be no difficulty to get rid of the products of combustion. Microbial forms are parasitic, and depend upon their host for a supply of nutritive matter, which is one of the intrinsic, inalienable, and perennial sources of evil in Nature.

In the case of organisms of the compound or animal type we are in a different realm, or rather, on a different plane of existence, and so extremely dissimilar in character are the analogues that, though exact equivalents in function, they cannot be recognized save by the well-informed and disciplined mind. What obvious identity is there between a muddy pool and the ruddy stream that flows in our veins?

In the compound organism the individual cells have combined for mutual aid, and have forgone or forfeited most of their individuality by so doing. The object or end for which they sought aid was the realization of the conditions essential to actuate the life-burning process and to maintain it. To have some conception of the magnitude and nature of the task to be realized in order to attain this end, let the reader suppose or imagine that the microscopic denizens of the pond conceived a common desire to move about and to change their position at will, instead of being always tethered to the same spot. What would they have to do? In the first place, since water is "the vehicle of life"—the medium in which alone the process can take place—they would have to devise means to carry the pond with them! That would be the very first essential. Then they would have to keep it well stocked with nutrient matter, *i.e.*, matter containing available energy, and afterwards to provide it with free oxygen; next, to assure it an outlet for impurities—the products of combustion; and finally, would have to acquire a locomotive system for enabling them, as a community, to effect the movements desired.

Such, in brief outline, was the character of the task which had to be fulfilled, and is exactly the transcendent "miracle" which Nature, after infinite trials and failures, extending through an experimental period of millions of years, finally achieved. No one who takes the trouble to reflect over the thousand and one expedients and devices to which she resorted to attain this end can be blind to the fact that the redistribution of chemical energy is absolutely indispensable to the vital process. That is Nature's solution of the problem. The pond is hermetically sealed in a

system of a million and one tubes, and though the community—the body—consists of countless myriads of cells which are all, more or less, attached and coherent, yet each is steeped in its watery medium. So the "city" can move about and carry its pond with it without spilling a drop of its life-supporting fluid.

So fundamental, so cardinal, is this blood-system to the life-process that the rest of the body is nothing but a group of organs and tissues, all engaged in the preparation, purification, or distribution of this first essential, the *sine qua non* of life—the muscles, in securing and preparing the nutrient matter, and subsequently, when ready, in pumping it through the "city"; the alimentary tract, in making it soluble, and so available for "burning"; the respiratory system, in saturating it with oxygen and removing impurities from it; and the brain and its attendant nerves, in regulating and co-ordinating the other systems in order to ensure the provision of a continuous supply of a nutrient, oxygenated, uncontaminated fluid.

In the achievement of this transcendent result Nature reduplicated life and awoke higher up in the psychic scale. She made an advance vitally and mentally. She evolved a higher type of life and of consciousness. In the compound organism, *i.e.*, in any member of the animal kingdom, Nature has evolved a form of life immensely fuller and more comprehensive than that possessed by the individual cells of which the body consists. This is the corporate life of the body as a whole, distinct from and superimposed upon the life of the individual cells. So that the animal possesses at one and the same time two different orders of life—that of the individual cells and that of the aggregate (the body) in its corporate capacity. At the same time the vague glimmer of the *cell*-consciousness of the animalcule and microbe awoke, in the animal world, to a somnambulistic *sense*-consciousness. The Amoeba, though conscious, cannot see, nor hear, nor smell, nor taste, nor feel in the sense that we do. This result Nature achieved by evolving tissues and organs specialized for single functions, on the principle of the division of labour; one to effect chemical change, another to execute mechanical movement, and a third to provide the neural system. The last was intended to awaken consciousness, indeed, several types of consciousness, that of sight, of hearing, of smell, etc., which the central organ co-ordinates in the interest of the corporate life. In man this organ is further developed, and Nature becomes fully awake in human *self*-consciousness. As his other structural modifications were correspondingly slight, man ultimately evolved into a lop-sided creature—an embodiment of incongruity. Though the analogy between the living process and that of a flame or fire is such as to be considered identical, yet the former possesses two essential characteristics, which are wholly unique, for the living cell, and especially the living body, possess an impulse which urges it to seek a supply of "fuel" to keep its fire alight, and also another impulse to provide a new "wick" or "burner" to perpetuate the "flame" when its own self is worn out. There is not the faintest glimmer of a promise of either of these impulses in the physical process, and to that extent life remains by the very meaning of knowledge "unknown" and a mystery. KERIDON.

Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation, all of which may be guides to an outward moral virtue though religion were not; but superstition dismounts all these.—Lord Bacon.

Wise men ne'er sit and wail their loss  
But cheerly seek how to redress their harm.  
—Shakespeare.

## "Modern Materialism—A Candid Examination."

MR. WALTER MANN'S name is well-known to our readers, and his book bearing the above title, just published by the Pioneer Press for the Secular Society, Limited, will enhance his reputation as a popular exponent of the theories held by modern scientists. The volume is divided into twelve chapters. The first two briefly expound the tendencies of the scientific thought of to-day, emphasizing what Darwinian evolution has contributed to it. The next five trace the influence upon modern thought of Kant, Comte, Spencer, Huxley, Tyndall, Clifford and Buechner. The remaining chapters, with the exception of the eleventh, "The French Revolution and the Great War," deal with such problems as "the atoms and the ether," and "the origin of life," concluding with a brief survey of "the advance of materialism."

The materialistic view of the world of phenomena is an interpretation of Nature based upon observation and experiment. To explain such phenomena in terms of matter and energy by noting those that are similar in their properties and examining the relations between the groups into which they are classified, constitutes science. The whole progress of human knowledge concerning the material Universe consists in the substitution of natural for supernatural explanations of it and its observed processes.

Materialism has won all along the line. No one with an adequate knowledge of Biology, Psychology, and Anthropology, doubts that Mind, Consciousness and Life, have evolved naturally from elemental matter (p. 161).

Recent theories concerning the origin of life, the structure of the atom, and radio-activity, are briefly dealt with by Mr. Mann, and the difficulties presented are squarely faced, though there will be, of course, difference of opinion concerning some of his conclusions.

The writer does not confine his examination to the strictly scientific aspect of his subject. In the chapter on "The French Revolution and the Great War" he completely refutes the charge that Materialism was responsible for those two tragic events in human history. This is a well written and readable chapter, and I confidently recommend its perusal to all those who trace the cause of the late war to Nietzsche and his anti-Christian writings. One of the big questions of the day is how to prevent war-makers and privileged classes from abusing the power which science confers on the race. Hitherto, in their culture-destroying work they have had the support of an organized superstition whose principals and agents alike are professionally interested in impeding the spread of the scientific spirit among the masses.

*Modern Materialism* is not much concerned with the Absolute and the Ultimate Reality of metaphysical speculation. It is a book for "the man in the street" who takes an intelligent interest in the problems exercising the world of science to-day. It is largely a compilation, but one which has been well thought out and presents a coherent system. The references to the sources of the writer's information are both complete and up-to-date, and in compressing so much material into 176 pages he has scored a distinct success. The book should appeal to the general reader who has been assured so often by the professional Christian apologist that "Materialism is bankrupt." A. D. McLAREN.

God is a guess. An undesigned designer, an uncaused cause, is as incomprehensible to the human mind as a circle without a diameter.—Robert G. Ingersoll.

## One, Two, Three, Four.

ISLAM, the religion of the sandy Arabia, where nature appears monotonous, has one God—Allah.

Persia, where green valleys alternate with dreary deserts, has two Gods—a serene and fair Ormuzd, and a dark and malignant Ahriman.

Catholicism, growing up in a Western Europe where Humanism began to develop, and a new political spirit breathed, had (and has) three Persons in one Trinitarian God, namely: the Original One, the Human Son, and the Expressive Spirit, or Holy Ghost. To this group logic must needs add, under various names, Satan, Dragon, Devil, Mephistopheles, Beelzebub, Senescent Nicholas (I am afraid to write the popular nickname in this select periodical), a fourth, and somewhat unfortunate Person, who has, at moments, seemed to hold more power than all the official Three put together, but who is never offered a place at the table.

The Jews, for reasons which I believe are ascertainable, but which I cannot here discuss, have all along declined to divide the Deity into aspects, or Persons, and have shown the utmost dislike of the Catholic tendency to identify God and Man in Christ Jesus.

Such are the fourfold views of the Cosmic Government still extant in the Western world and its Persian and Mohammedan neighbours. A glance at human geography or history will also reveal vast systems of many Gods (Polytheism), such as the ancient Egyptian or the present-day Hindu. In the course of the unfolding of the human mind, the conception of nature at large as governed by a multitude of gods, often contrariant, appeared irrational, and the doctrine of Unity was accepted by the more advanced thinkers. Or an endeavour was made, by means of Dualism—as in Persian Zoroastrianism—to reduce the supreme forces to two. Careful readers of the New Testament will discover these two—God the Almighty and Satan the Prince of this World—in the period of the Christian story which preceded the Cross. After Jesus died on the Cross, and rose again, an infinite change took place (according, for instance, to the poem called *John's Gospel*):—

Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands [pierced], and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing.

And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

With those words, and a few lines of comment, the poem of *John* closes.<sup>1</sup> The prose-poet has carried his hero from Bethabara beyond Jordan (i. 28-30), where he figured as "a man," to the climax of resurrection and Godhood. It was natural enough for Catholic Europe to fix this idea in the doctrine that Jesus was co-equal God with the Almighty Father, and to attach a Third Person, or Expression, or Spirit (Ghost) emanating from both. So resolute, indeed, was this effort to humanize God that, in the Middle Ages, a woman joined the Divine group in the person of the Sinless Mary, Mother of God and Queen of Heaven. As a matter of fact, this humanizing process continued until it led the foremost Western minds out of theology altogether, and they came to reverence the human genius, and relinquish reverence for the Supernatural One. The modern Unitarians—excellent people, with whom I have many cordial relations—try to retain the One God, and, at the same time, to evolve a just respect for humanity.

Other critics will, of course, speak for themselves. My personal judgment is that all these methods of accounting for creation and providence were natural. Even the disputes about the One, the Two, the Three,

<sup>1</sup> That is, at xx. 31; chapter xxi. being a later addition.

or the dubious Fourth, and the involutions and explanations of the Athanasian and other creeds, were attempts, not at all foolish or useless, to frame a definite and rational explanation of the Cosmos.

But, just as a student familiar with the history of science places a certain value on astrology (stargazing) and alchemy, and yet rejects both in favour of to-day's astronomy and chemistry, so the student of psychology places a certain value on the ancient theology, and yet rejects it in favour of to-day's Humanism. That is how it happens that I, for one, completely pass beyond the creeds of Islam, Jewry, and Rome, while appreciating all the moral values of their long and varied search for cosmic truth and the secret of man's destiny ("Whence and Whither?"). This respect for the Past, however, implies a decisive censure of the Backward Souls who, in the twentieth century, seek to direct our political and social life by the One, Two, Three, or Four. Humanity must now launch out from the old port, Palos, and, more daring than her son Columbus, seek whatever Indies or Americas may exist across the unmapped Future; and the Gods of old are now but pictures and entries in the log-books of her former voyages. The log-books are the world's literature—the "Words" (*Logoi*) of all the nations.

These brief reflections have been aroused by the reading of a little book by the late Captain Perring,<sup>2</sup> *Hard Knots for the Clergy* (Constable, 5s.), in which he vigorously condemns the doctrine of the Three, and enthusiastically votes for the two, Father and Son, and even this Son is less than the Almighty. The Captain rakes over heaps of New Testament passages, and passionately insists that the Holy Ghost is simply a characteristic of God, not a separate entity, and he affirms:—

The Christian looks for life, eternal life, to the one only God, through the one Mediator; for beings of flesh need a fleshy mediator, the man Christ Jesus. Henceforth we must speak not of the Holy Triad, but of the Holy Dyad.

Well, well, perhaps we must, and perhaps we need not, and probably we shall not. In any case, the clergy of 1921 are not likely to eat corn out of Captain Perring's hand, and humbly accept his "Holy Dyad" (two).

As I have intimated, I can excuse the furious debates of our Third, Fourth, and Fifth Century forefathers on the problem of the Trinity, but the case of the Trinitarian or anti-Trinitarian controversialist of to-day is very different. He and the alchemist who manufactured the elixir of life are equally out of date. In this throbbing To-day of Darwinism, Republics all but universal, Socialism, wide-spread Education, League of Nations, and tremendous re-examination of social issues, we must gently, but firmly, decline to place the One-Two-Three-Four problem on the overcrowded agenda.

F. J. GOULD.

### Acid Drops.

The Census returns are now published and the comments on them bear witness to the small amount of intelligence that goes to the make-up of the average newspaper writer. To read their comments one would conclude that it is an undiluted blessing when the population increases, and an undiluted evil when it is stationary. It never seems to dawn upon these wiseacres that it is quality and not quantity that should be aimed at; it is the type of men and women that develop on which we should pride ourselves, and whether we have added a few millions more or not to the population is a matter of small concern. Ruskin put the matter well when he said that it was a matter of small concern whether a man had two or four children, but it was a matter of very great concern whether the children he had deserved to be hanged or not.

The real loss from the war was not in the *number* of people killed but in the quality. The vast majority would be young men, and so far as the war made an appeal to human idealism, they would be men who were possessed of a keen appreciation of duty and a strong sense of right. In the normal course of events these would have represented part of the environment of a new generation, and the war thus meant the destruction of a great educational force. War always serves the cause of reaction, and in no direction more effectively than by killing off the young and restive, and those who might otherwise exert an educational influence on the future. But that is a view of the matter one can hardly expect the average newspaper writer to concern himself with.

Mrs. Amelia Spurgeon, an aunt of the famous preacher, the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, has celebrated her 102nd birthday, and the journalists are making paragraphs concerning the matter. At that tender age the Bible Patriarchs were bowling hoops, and playing leap-frog.

Over 20,000 Roman Catholic pilgrims gathered at the Lourdes Shrine for the first big ceremonial since the war. The original grotto is supposed to mark the spot where the Virgin Mary appeared to a French peasant girl about fifty years ago, and the present excursions are a striking comment on religious psychology.

Providence cares as little for places of worship as for other buildings. Over a ton of lead has been stolen from the roof of Nazcing Church, near Waltham Abbey.

The Archbishop of York has been complaining of the size of his diocese. Some poor curates might easily complain of the size of His Grace's salary, which is £10,000 yearly.

A Band of Hope superintendent, Henry Newman, of Hobury Street, Chelsea, was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for assaulting a girl member of the Band of Hope. The boasted restraints of religion are not manifest in this case.

The farce of a Jewish State in Palestine is being steadily played out, and as we foretold, the religious elements concerned, Jewish, Christian and Mohammedan, are regularly making for trouble. Christians and Mohammedans appear, for the time being, on more friendly terms, in order to protest against the Jew, although we may expect new combinations later. The late Berlin correspondent of the *Christian World*, commenting on the quarrel, says "We had thought that all that the Holy Land meant for Moslem and Hebrew alike would have modified racial antagonism, and made mutual understandings easy." Which is pure nonsense. The religious associations of the "Holy Land" have never yet made for anything but hatred and bloodshed, and are never likely to. Look at the Crusades! The Holy Land meant then more than it means now, and how much did it help the members of the three creeds to live peaceably together? And the *Christian World* should remember that the Mohammedans, in modern times, have had to keep soldiers in the Church of Nativity in Jerusalem to keep the Christians of different sects from fighting. The best way would be for Jew, Christian, and Moslem to forget the religious associations of the place. Then there might be some reasonable prospect of peace.

A boy was fined a small sum at Willesden Court for stealing apples. For a similar offence by "Adam" and "Eve" the Bible tells us that the whole of the human race is punished. That is the little difference between "human" and "divine" justice.

The *Daily Express* (London) recently had an article on "Fiction in the Pulpit," suggesting that the clergy should take a course of novel-reading. Few books, however, contain so much fiction as the Bible. From the "rib story" of "Adam" to the "Nightmare" of "Saint John," the whole work is full of riotous imagination.

A Rome newspaper has been collecting the opinions of its lady readers as to which was the luckiest woman of all time. The majority of votes were given to Eve and Mary Magdalene. To Eve because she had no competitors and Adam couldn't run away, and Mary because, after enjoying all the sins of the world, she was forgiven and became a saint. There is quite an elaborate lesson in the psychology of Christianity in the last reason.

Once more there is a flutter in the theological dovecotes as to whether Christians ought or ought not to believe in the Virgin Birth and the divinity of Jesus. And when one boils it down to something like sheer actuality what it comes to is the question of how much the "dignified clergy" can afford to surrender without having, from sheer shamefacedness, to give up their appointments. Many of the clergy are undoubtedly sufficiently mediævally-minded to believe these stories, but with many others it is impossible to believe that they are not well aware that these doctrines are pure myth. One can easily think of a man like the Bishop of London believing them to be true, but can they as easily picture other Christian preachers, men of scholarship and ability, accepting them as true? They know they are not, and their problem is how to get the people to drop them without their leaving the Church altogether.

The *Challenge* (August 19), referring to the Modern Churchmen's Conference, says that "pressmen can hardly be blamed for emphasizing such phrases as may be expected to make their readers jump and write letters of protest." These highly enterprising pressmen are to be congratulated on the ability with which they gauge the public taste in matters of religion. The reader who "jumps" on hearing that a bishop or dean of the Anglican Church no longer believes that the world was made in six days only exists in England to-day as one of the theatrical "properties" of the journalistic world.

The same issue of the *Challenge* contains an article by Mr. L. S. Hunter who says that the majority of the laity at the conference were elderly men, whose views of life had become fixed some time during the last century. Not long ago the *Christian World* made a similar complaint of the majority attending a Free Church conference. If, with so much influence in our schools, and with a large measure of support from the privileged and official class, the Churches are losing their hold on the rising generation, where would they be in open and fair competition with their opponents?

Roman Catholics are smart press propagandists. The *Daily Chronicle*, referring to the rebuilding of Louvain University Library, destroyed in the late war, declares bluntly that the original library was "the most famous in the world," and that it comprised "320,000 volumes and manuscripts." Yet the plain facts remain that old works on theology are merely waste paper, and Roman Catholic priests are mostly ignorant.

Jack Johnson, the well-known fighting man has made his appearance in the pulpit. Preaching in the New York Baptist Tabernacle, he urged his hearers to help close the breach between the black and the white races by leading a Christian life. The sentiment may be all right, but a little knowledge of the subject would have shown the speaker that it was under Christian influences that the line between black and white was sharply drawn, and that it is to Christian influence also that the Blacks in America owe the sufferings they have undergone. Africa, as a whole, has nothing to thank Christianity for save a development of the slave trade, the importation of drink, and the acquisition of a number of European vices with a weakening of the native virtues.

In proof of this we may cite the following from a sermon by the Archdeacon of Rovuma, Zanzibar, and reported in the *Church Times* for August 26:—

What has been the influence of Europe in Africa?  
What has been the result of the impact of Western

civilization upon African life? The answer is full of tragedy. Exploitation, slavery, disaster—nearly the whole of Europe has been steeped in it. From the time when Las Casas peopled the West Indies from the population of Africa, and England in the sixteenth century became initiated into the abominable traffic, this oppression went on, degrading, decimating, devastating the people of Africa, while out of their ruin and wreckage the white man amassed his fabulous fortunes. "Abolition" came in 1833, but was that the end of slavery? Far from it. Fifteen years after, a thousand slaves a day were being imported into Cuba and Brazil, and less than fifty years ago nearly twenty thousand slaves from Nyasa passed through the Custom House at Zanzibar.

And lest all this should seem vague and undefined, let me instance one crucial point. Forced labour in East Africa. Since the partition of Africa by the European Powers large numbers of white colonists have settled in the country. These men are in Africa for what purpose? To protect, help, develop, uplift the native? Some there are to be found whose intentions are wholly right and good. But it is quite clear that the making of quick profits is the only object of many. One thing is necessary for them; they must have labour. But the labour is hard to obtain. Slavery and the crimes inseparable from slave-trading, the breakdown of the tribal and communal system of security in land tenure, punitive expeditions, the introduction from without of sexual diseases—all these have sapped and undermined the population. But the white man must have labour, and therefore labour must be got by force. Settlers of experience and long standing are found calmly and coolly suggesting that the natives should be expropriated, deprived of their land—and remember that to the African land means home and food and life and everything—in order that they may be forced to work—where and for whom? On the white man's plantation for the white man's profit!

No one who knows Africa will say that this picture is overdrawn. All that the Archdeacon might have added is that these outrages on the native races have been perpetrated under the cloak of concern for the religious welfare of the black man's soul.

Bishop Gore, unlike Dean Inge, believes in hell, and that the true terror of death consists in the possibility and danger of getting there on our departure from this world. "God himself, who made us free, cannot alter our character; God himself must treat us as we are." Dr. Gore knows that death is not the end. As a matter of stern fact, he does not know, nor has he a moral right to assure ignorant and credulous hearers that he does. All appearances support the notion that death *does* end all for individuals of all species. Dean Inge is right when he declares that the belief in "heaven and hell" has lost its hold upon the majority, even of professing Christians.

The *Church Times* is a sworn enemy of Liberal Christianity, which so many affect just now, and we are prepared to endorse all that our able contemporary says on the subject. Liberal Christianity denies all the so-called fundamental doctrines, and affirms that "no belief can claim the serious attention of thoughtful men and women to-day merely because it is Scriptural, Primitive, or Catholic." It treats Jesus as a purely human personality, and, as held by many, it does not believe in Immortality. In other words, Liberal Christianity is not Christianity at all, but a mongrel system, a cross between Supernaturalism and Naturalism, indicative of and partly caused by the general trend towards Secularism.

Professor Conklin, who occupies the chair of Biology in Princeton University, has published a book entitled *The Direction of Human Evolution*. It naturally falls into three divisions, and the third part deals with Evolution and Religion. Now Princeton University used to be an intensely Christian institution, with such devout believers as James M'Cosh and Woodrow Wilson as its Principals, but the *Church Times* tells us that Professor Conklin is a Pantheist. This is a welcome sign of the times. Our Universities are clearly advancing, for in most, if not all, of them some chairs are held by avowed Freethinkers, who deliver lectures and publish articles and books deeply tinged with Freethought, which proves that Freethought is at last becoming a winning cause.



**To Correspondents.**

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

E. PINDER.—Thanks. The articles on Spiritualism appear to have aroused considerable attention. Something on those lines was evidently needed.

V. J. HANDS.—Received, and shall appear as soon as space can be found.

HOWELL S. ENGLAND.—We like the ideas contained in your "Committal Service." It may prove useful. There are already several Secular Funeral services in use. The other is not quite applicable to our purpose, and evidently has a personal application which would be lost to the reader. Will send paper.

BERNARD MOORE AND "SEEKER AFTER TRUTH."—We have been obliged to compress your letters a little owing to the demands on our space.

A. ALDWINKLE.—You are jumping to a ridiculous conclusion. It has always been the rule of this office never to give addresses without the express permission of those concerned. The letter was forwarded on Wednesday, August 24.

R. W. ALLEN (Alta U.S.A.).—We note your high appreciation of Mr. Cohen's *Theism or Atheism and Religion and Sex*. All of the Pioneer Press publications can be had from Mr. T. Wright, 12 N. Broadway, Yonkers, New York. Mr. Cohen is writing you on the other matter.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**Sugar Plums.**

Mr. Cohen's articles on Spiritualism have been creating considerable interest in many quarters, and some readers have written us suggesting their continuation and republication. They have, however, gone far enough for the present, and will have served their purpose if they have pointed a way of investigation that serves to explain what occurs without the very unconvincing line usually adopted by those who write on it. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle writes that "The *Freethinker*, most materialistic of journals, has now admitted that the Spiritualistic phenomena are not the result of fraud," and commends this attitude to others. But this is not quite a fair representation since it suggests an acceptance or partial acceptance of the Spiritualistic explanation. Our readers are aware that the point of view of the articles was that there is very considerable fraud connected with Spiritual-

istic phenomena, but that when this is eliminated there remains a residuum which calls for explanation, a residuum which is usually overlooked by writers against Spiritualism who deal with the matter without being properly acquainted with it. The whole point of the articles was the utter uselessness of the Spiritualistic theory, and their complete inability to prove a future life.

*Truth*, in its issue for August 24, in calling attention to the articles, rightly sums up the point of view in the sentence, "The *Freethinker* is elaborating a purely materialistic explanation based on modern psychological research, and very interesting it is." That is a correct summary of the aim of the articles, and we are pleased they have been found so acceptable. Toward the end of the year Mr. Cohen hopes to publish a book dealing with the whole question of a future life, and these articles will then, in an expanded form, contribute a section of the work. Meanwhile, those who would care to send the six copies of the paper containing the articles to friends who are interested in Spiritualism may obtain them on sending to the *Freethinker* office. They should prove a very acceptable present to anyone who is really interested in the subject.

Mr. Cohen will commence his lecturing this year on the last Sunday in this month. He will lecture in Newcastle-on-Tyne on Sunday, September 25, and at South Shields on the following Sunday. Between the two dates he will visit some of the towns on Tyneside. It looks as though he will have a very busy lecturing season, and he hopes to visit some new places in the hope of setting on foot a regular propaganda where it does not at present exist.

The West Ham Branch has arranged for an excursion to-day (September 4) to Hainault Forest. The train will leave Forest Gate Station at 9.30, passengers changing at Ilford. The fare is one shilling, and tea will be arranged for at a moderate charge. The party will be under the guidance of Mr. H. Spence, B.Sc., and all Freethinkers and their friends are cordially invited.

The Manchester Branch of the N. S. S. is also arranging for an excursion to-day (September 4) to Grant's Tower and Holcombe Broad. The train will leave Victoria Station at 12.50 for Bury. Tea will be provided.

Will Freethinkers who are interested in organizing the movement in the neighbourhood of Stockport note that a special meeting is to be held at 191 Higher Hillgate to-day (September 4) at 10.30. We hope there will be a good muster of friends. There must be hundreds of Freethinkers in the neighbourhood, and they should get to work as soon as possible.

Mr. George Whitehead, who is now busily engaged in the N. S. S. lecture field, published this week through the Pioneer Press two pamphlets which we venture to commend to the attention of our readers. The titles of the pamphlets are *Man and His Gods*, and *The Coming of the Superman, Essays in Social Idealism*. Mr. Whitehead writes forcibly and clearly, and his criticism of the prevailing Christian superstition is very well done within the compass of the pamphlets. We welcome them as two very useful propagandist efforts, and shall be pleased to see them securing the circulation they deserve. The price of the pamphlets is twopence each. Postage one penny extra. The titles of other pamphlets by Mr. Whitehead will be found on our advertisement pages.

Mr. Whitehead having finished his second lecturing tour in South Wales has now returned to the north of England, and will be for some weeks lecturing in Leeds, Stockport and elsewhere. He will continue his campaign, which is being financed by the N. S. S., so long as conditions permit of open-air lecturing. Next season we should like to see half-a-dozen men at work in various parts of the country. There is room and need for them.

The *Manchester City News* (August 6) contains a lengthy and well-written review of the edition of Volney's *Ruins* published by the Pioneer Press. Our contemporary speaks in eulogistic terms of the revised translation of this "classic work," and of Mr. Underwood's Introduction recounting the career of the author:—

Mr. George Underwood, a foremost French scholar, has done great service by his revision of Volney's classic work; and the Pioneer Press has re-issued it opportunely. The present generation may not know much of the French philosopher who passed away just over a century ago, but he was one of the great thinkers the world will not lose, and his remarkable study of the religions of many races will always have a fascination for scholars. Profound as the work is, the style is romantic and fascinating. We seem at times to be reading an Oriental tale, but the deep purpose is always in evidence. As for the questions and answers at the end, where Volney compels reason to triumph over mere opinion, it is as masterly as Socrates himself could have wished.

## Blake and Hardy; Or the Eternal in Literature.

Without contraries is no progression. Attraction and repulsion, reason and energy, love and hate, are necessary to human existence. —Blake.

THE fame of Euripides abides in spite of Swinburne describing him as a "botcher." Blake, in his day, ran a great risk of being classified as mad, and Hardy, who is happily with us, has received much ignorant criticism from his religious foes. If we remember anything so insignificant, it was that knight of the pewter pot, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, who thought to silence Hardy with the word "Atheist"—qualified by some adjective which is a peculiar form of attack, peculiar to people who know they are on the Lord's side.

A catholic writer of good, bad, or indifferent merit has his public ready made. Blake, difficult to classify, set out with no such advantages; Hardy has this in common with Blake that he challenges the comfortable thinkers, and he has had to make his public. A spacious public awaits any writer who can come down to the level of a leading article in the *Daily Mail*, or descend still further to the swamps of Ella Wheeler Wilcox. It shall be hard for a writer in prose or verse when sales and popularity are the measures of value, when our popular heroes discourse to bargain hunters in the rooms of business establishments, and when the Muse is sold with cheese and umbrellas. This, no doubt, is the modern form of patronage of art.

We have before us the poems of Hardy.<sup>1</sup> We have read everyone, and some we have read twice, and we trust to taste again their attic salt. In reading them we are impressed by the central theme which is a challenge to the God who has done service for many generations for the English. Cronus and Rhea, Zeus and Hera, as far as their personal aspect is concerned, are deities who have had their day. In a thunderstorm, or in white clouds across the sky, we may be reminded of these beautiful myths, fashioned by the intellect of a race that is a permanent page in the book of history. It is time that the Christian God was also removed from the world and the energy and devotion used for some better purpose. In other words, it is time that government by fear receded from the human stage. Hardy has written the vindictive God's funeral. He has transvalued Christian values, and the aristocracy of literature is justified. Safer and more comfortable for him to have taken "bread and cheese advice" and written about the road to Rome, Charlemagne, and Beer, and the Pope; that way lies popularity and the privilege of rubbing shoulders with statesmen. In-

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy*, Vol. I. (Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 7s. 6d. net).

deed, he has given the English that which they are least inclined to take—or assimilate, the tragic form in art in tones of grey and silver, without the easiest form of entertainment practised by many writers—the joke—to enable readers to get over the stiles from one chapter to the next.

As in Heine's poems so in Hardy's there is the salt tang. He is not content with externals, and he can demonstrate the metaphysics of causation in rhythm and rhyme. Blake could point no slight moral in a rustic's game of Blind-Man's Buff, and from the lesser to the greater, in the prophetic books, he speaks through symbols of universal interest and significance. In narrative verse, sonnets, and epigrams, we have the small shadows in Hardy that are cast before the coming of "The Dynasts." Take the sonnet entitled "Hap"; in the last four lines given the same thought is expressed differently by Blake. When Freethinkers have finished cudgelling the stupidities of the Christian fable, breathing space may be found to examine the credentials of Imagination which will yield more fruitful results than the bickerings of a creed founded on assumption, and grounded on assumption that the English will eat their mental subsistence in the dark. This, pitched in a minor key:—

—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,  
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan.....  
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown  
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

Turn we to Blake, whose utterances have the strong affirmation of the major key:—

Man was made for joy and woe;  
And, when this we rightly know,  
Safely through the world we go.

May this difference and similarity be explained by temperament? Was the writer of Ecclesiastes of a bilious temperament, and had the writer of the Wisdom of Solomon the capacity to digest a brick? First causes may illuminate—in his whimsical manner does not Sterne associate the winding of the clock with his natural infirmities? May we not find, in our search for first causes that the gloom of Christianity may be partly caused through ignorance of the joy of a cooked slice of bacon on a frosty morning. Locusts and honey—plain living doubtless, but the perspective of one or two decapitated heads will make us look in vain for high thinking. And forty years of manna! and many months of standard bread in our own progressive age prove, ironically, that man cannot live by bread alone, and these factors may creep and intrude in the musical notes of our life.

In a poem of eight lines, glittering, gem-like, and with the reading of it leaving illumination in the mind, Blake compressed a subtle truth, the comprehension of which enables us to lighten our burden of living—and also to render thanks to the genius that gives us in poetry clear insight and vivid visions of reality. The poem is entitled "Opportunity," and we shall place by its side Hardy's "Postponement." There is contrast in tone, there is similarity in thought; there is Blake's strong affirmation, the Nietzschean Yea to life—whilst in Hardy's version, there is the inhibition of action and consequent regret. The difference between the two is an act of faith—the former attitude is fresh and innocent, the latter is one of indecision or an undertone—yet as necessary in the symphony of life as chord and discord. Blake is the man who was always a child; Hardy was never a child; in the three metamorphoses of the spirit under the names of the Camel, the Lion, and the Child, Blake entered naturally to the third. Wisdom and intuition were his by right of birth—the evidence is before our eyes in his works, and it is superfluous to raise the question of genius. Hardy, with a natural affinity for the Greek virtues arrives at the same view point as Blake, but by a different way. As "all mind finally becomes visible" we may now view

the journey of Blake and Hardy to their objectives. Through the swiftness of intuition, or by living on the borderland of ecstatic visions, Blake brings us to the door of that spiritual world in which a key may be found. Hardy, by slower methods, brings us to the same place. Neither can tell us what is beyond, but in bringing amenable mankind to this spot, both their lives are justified, genius has its rightful place, and the eternal in literature becomes a reality in the same degree as the sun, moon, and stars are a reality to those who still look on these heavenly bodies with wonder.

WILLIAM REPTON.

## Pages From Fontenelle.

FERNANDO CORTEZ AND MONTEZUMA.

What constitutes the difference between a barbarous and a civilized people?

*Cortez.*—Come, now! you must admit the truth. You other Americans were really grossly stupid when you took the Spaniards for men who had dropped down from a fiery sphere, and you were equally stupid when you imagined their ships to be gigantic birds floating upon the sea.

*Montezuma.*—You are right. But, tell me! Were your Spaniards as civilized as the Athenians?

*Cortez.*—I am surprised at your question. Why, the Athenians were the teachers of civilization to the rest of the world.

*Montezuma.*—Is that so? Then what do you make of the method adopted by the tyrant Pisistratus in order to re-occupy the citadel from which he had been driven? Did he not get hold of a woman and have her dressed to look like Minerva (for it is said that Minerva was the goddess who protected the Athenians)? Did he not mount a chariot with this goddess of his own making? Did she not drive through the city with him, holding his hand and calling out: "Here is Pisistratus! Him I bring to you, him I command you to accept"? Did not these witty people submit to the tyrant in order to please Minerva, who had herself explained what she wanted them to do?

*Cortez.*—Who has been teaching you all these things about the Athenians?

*Montezuma.*—Ever since I came here I made a point of studying history, and I have had many a talk with different ghosts. But, anyhow, you will agree that the Athenians were even more easily duped than we were. We had never seen ships or cannons, but they had seen women; and when Pisistratus made up his mind to bring them to heel, he certainly showed that he set less value upon them than you yourselves did when you reduced us to subjection with your guns.

*Cortez.*—No people are proof against a tripping up at some time or other. They are caught when they are off their guard, and the wiser among them are carried away by the crowd. How am I to consider you? There were circumstances which we cannot now understand, and, possibly, we should not have taken them into account if we had witnessed them.

*Montezuma.*—But would you say that the Greeks were off their guard when, throughout their whole history, they believed that knowledge of future events came out of a hole in the ground in the form of exhalations? By what kind of trickery did they let themselves be persuaded that when the moon was eclipsed its light could be restored by making a horrible din, and why was there only a handful of men who dared to whisper that it was darkened by the earth's shadow? I say nothing about the Romans and the gods with whom they sat down to a meal on feast-days,<sup>1</sup> or of the sacred birds whose pecking decided all

<sup>1</sup>The reference is to the religious function known as the *lectisternium*.

things in the capital of the world. Indeed, you cannot reproach me with the absurdities of our American people when you provide me greater absurdities from your own countries, and when you even invite me to point out the absurdities of your Greeks and Romans.

*Cortez.*—Yet with all their absurdities the Greeks and Romans invented the arts and sciences, while you haven't the faintest notion of them.

*Montezuma.*—We were fortunate in not knowing anything of the sciences. I am afraid we should not have had enough intelligence to save us from becoming learned men. It is not always possible to follow the example of the Greeks, who took good care to preserve themselves from the sciences of their neighbours. As for the arts, America found means to surpass the ancients, and that in a way more wonderful than even your European methods. It is easy to write histories when you know how to write, but we had not the art of writing, and yet wrote histories. You can build bridges when you know how to build in the water, but the difficult thing is to build them when you do not know how. You must remember that the Spaniards found many puzzling things in our country; immense blocks of stone raised to such a height as to be inconceivable to them without the help of machinery. What do you say to that? It seems to me that so far you have not proved the advantages of Europe over America.

*Cortez.*—They are proved conclusively by what distinguishes a civilized from a barbarous people. With us civilization is paramount, force and violence have no place, power is moderated by justice, all wars are based on legitimate causes, which will prove to you how scrupulous we are. We made war against your country only when we had satisfied ourselves by close reasoning that it belonged to us, and decided as to the justice of our claim.

*Montezuma.*—Without a doubt you treated us barbarians with more courtesy than we deserved. I believe that you are civilized and just among yourselves in the same way as you are scrupulous in your commerce with us. But if you deprived Europe of her formalities you would turn her into something not unlike America. Courtesy measures all your steps, dictates all your words, embarrasses all your discourse, hinders all your actions; but it does not affect your sentiments; and that justice which we ought to find in your designs is found only in your pretexts.

*Cortez.*—I cannot say anything positive of the heart. We see men only from the outside. An heir who loses a parent and gains a fortune puts on a black coat. Is he deeply grieved? Apparently not. Yet if he does not put it on he offends against reason.

*Montezuma.*—I know what you mean. It is not reason that rules over you; but at least it protests that things ought to go along in a certain way; for example, heirs ought to mourn their parents; these protestations are received and even made into laws. A black coat is worn. Your formalities only serve to indicate a right which reason possesses and which you do not let it exercise. You do not act virtuously but are contented to tell yourselves that you ought to act virtuously.

*Cortez.*—Isn't that a good deal? Reason has so little power with you that it can put into your actions nothing that warns you that it ought to be there.

*Montezuma.*—But the remembrance of reason is apparently of as little use to you as the remembrance of their origins was to certain Greeks who came up in conversation a day or two ago. They had made their home in Tuscany, a country of barbarians according to their account, and gradually they had adopted the alien customs so thoroughly that they forgot their own. However, they were not pleased with themselves for becoming barbarians, and every year, on a certain day, they met together. They read their ancient laws in the Greek tongue, although they no longer obeyed and

scarcely understood them. After that they took up once more the way of life of their new home. Greek laws were for them precisely what reason is for you. They were aware that these laws existed; they even referred to them, but merely as a matter of duty, and without getting any good out of them. Still, they felt the loss in a way; but you do not miss the reason which you have cast away. You admit its existence, and then you proceed to discredit it.

*Cortez.*—Nevertheless, when you do admit its existence you are better able to follow it.

*Montezuma.*—Is it not just on that point that we yield to you? Ah! my dear Cortez, if we had had only your ships to enable us to discover your countries, and if we could only have satisfied ourselves that they belonged to us! We should then have had as good a right to confiscate your lands as you had to confiscate ours.

*Englished by GEORGE UNDERWOOD.*

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## Happiness

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IN spite of the multiplicity of illusions mankind has set before itself, the major portion of humanity is devoted to one illusion only; most men feel that their lives should be devoted to obtaining happiness. They have no clear conception wherein precisely happiness lies, but they feel quite convinced that during the short term of consciousness they should, at least, be happy.

They do their utmost to achieve this end. Around the pole of happiness they weave various garlands. Not the least important of these is the æsthetic garland. Men fancy that by devoting themselves to the virtues of beauty they will achieve somewhat in their lives which will, at any rate, give them a measure of happiness. It is, however, regrettable that they find the happiness rather than content, arising out of æstheticism is momentary, evanescent, and that the flowers wither at the moment they blossom.

The great majority of men are uninterested in æstheticism, but they hope to find their satisfaction in what they call their work, and they labour at apparently meaningless tasks for the purpose of obtaining more wealth than their neighbours. Strangely enough, they find ultimately that even this absorbing pursuit is unsatisfactory, and its only virtue is that it provides them with an occupation, and they are therefore obliged to continue with the occupation after its object is achieved.

These are merely the two main characteristics of the search for happiness. Man has evolved a variety of experience which more or less contents him temporarily. He is so absorbed with the superficialities of life, since he is wrapped with so thick a layer of superficiality having no real application to life, that he cannot arrive at any real idea of its ultimate significance. Most of the passions arise out of a superficial observation. Envy, for instance, is largely a matter of misapprehension.

When the mummy wrappings in which it pleases us to protect life from itself are removed, it will be found that the only function of life which is any justification is its procreation. Procreation in this sense also includes the protection of the individual while living in order that he may procreate. All other ideas or ideals, all other illusions, all other means whereby man endeavours to obtain happiness are fallacious; the function of life is really the continuance of life, and that can only be secured by a new birth, for death must supervene in the case of the individual.

The superficialities with which man is so largely occupied in the search for happiness are merely concomitants or assistants in the procreation of life. Æstheticism, for instance, may be regarded as something which will

assist life to be more efficiently continued. The world's work, in which the great business man or captain of industry indulges, is devoted merely to the creation and distribution of means of life. Ultimately, all the activities of man will be found to be subservient to this end however much we may wish to forget it.

For a great number of people, perhaps, happiness lies in the realization of these truths; such realization would bring a content that would otherwise be impossible. Instead of the factitious striving for particular individual benefits and pleasures, although these also perform their function in their assistance of the continuance of life, this would be abandoned in favour of the more satisfactory conclusion, and in the result the race would be happier in their realization of fundamental fact. The individuals who can realize the ultimate necessity, and who can appreciate the fact that the best efforts they can make in any direction of human activity are subservient to this end, will be all the happier, although it does not seem possible that absolute happiness can be achieved by any human being.

Man is so constituted that happiness is bound to evade him. Humanity is so arranged that whatever its objective experience may be it will build upon that objective experience a subjective ideal which invariably it cannot achieve within the limits of the span of life of the individual. It does not matter what function of life is concerned with the ideal—it may be simply an eugenic principle, or it may be a belief that the true appreciation of beauty would prove to be the solution of human difficulties.

It may be that the highest form of sex love is the truest form of happiness, but it does not matter what form this activity takes; always man creates an ideal which is a phantasy of the real with which he is surrounded, and this precludes him from absolute happiness. At the same time, the realization of the function of life and the fact that all human effort is directed towards the fulfilment of that function will enable him to achieve a measure of happiness that could not otherwise be obtainable. G. E. FUSSELL.

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## Report of Welsh Lecturing Tour.

August 9 to August 25.

FROM August 9 to August 25 I have addressed eighteen meetings in South Wales. Nine meetings held at Swansea were successful from every point of view. Large crowds, intense interest, many questions, platform opposition, good order, satisfactory collections and gratifying literature sales. A most favourable impression has been left and numerous individuals who were previously supporters of religion have intimated a serious modification of their views. Especial thanks are due to Messrs. Tucker, Richards, Roberts and Dupree for the help they rendered at the meetings. Other Swansea Secularists may please note that I am desirous of spilling some gratitude upon them also if they will on a future visit kindly hustle around and earn it!

Five meetings were next held in Pontypridd, where on the last occasion some little friskiness was in evidence. The place has been seething with excitement as a result of my previous visit and a lively reception was promised when I returned. Instead of which large meetings, almost entirely free from interruption, were held, and again a series of successes are to be reported, marred only by the rain which interfered somewhat with the last. The helpers at Pontypridd were even less in number than at Swansea, and yet again the literature receipts were very satisfactory.

Two meetings were next held in Ferndale, the scene of much liveliness during my last visit. Again scarcely an interruption, attention most flattering and an appetite for reading matter which will result, I hope, in an augmented membership for the society.

One other meeting at Mardy filled a large hall, and a local clergyman in opposition on the platform helped to

increase the number of our converts. A debate with another member of the clergy is to be the outcome.

The next evening we had a set debate in Ferndale with a lecturer of Cardiff University upon the subject, "Is Christianity the Enemy of Labour?" The immense hall was packed and many were turned away. I opened for forty minutes and got a reply remarkable for its irrelevancy. Authorities by the score were read out almost haphazard testifying not to the support religion had given to Labour, nor as a reply to my own points, but to the belief in Christ, etc., expressed by various personages. My opponent's second and concluding speech of twenty minutes was even more incoherent, reminding one irresistably of a man floundering about at random in the deep sea without having any clear idea of the vicinity of the land. Although a professional lecturer and an M.D., my opponent set out his case badly, the points being weak and stated in the most confused fashion. And I must confess to being more bored than I have been at any previous debate. Some day in Wales I shall meet an opponent who can state his case intelligently. Out of the dozens who have so far attempted not one has succeeded. I, personally, am anxious to meet the best that can be said for Christianity.

Anyway, good results will accrue from the debate, and a splendid advertisement has been given for future meetings. By the time this appears in print I shall have finished the present tour in Wales and shall be in Yorkshire.

GEORGE WHITEHEAD.

### Correspondence.

#### "CONSTRUCTIVE SECULARISM."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I congratulate your contributor, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, on his article "Constructive Secularism," and think that he has the support of all Freethinkers when he states, "Our view is that Secularists cannot be quite honest, and certainly cannot be zealous and convincing advocates of their philosophy without being convinced Atheists"; but with his statement that "If there is a God who made and owns the world we certainly owe him duties" I must profoundly disagree. I take it he means that if it were conclusively proved that there was a God who was able to understand and appreciate praise, then it would be our duty to give thanks to him for allowing us to live upon his earth. I fail to see the logic of this idea, as I, for one, never asked either God or anyone else to allow me to exist, nor did God ask my permission before making me a tenant, and I contend that no more duty would be due from us to God than is due from a set of marionettes to the man who pulls the strings.

G. AMBLER.

#### A LOST OPPORTUNITY.

SIR,—As one who has but very recently become acquainted with the *Freethinker*, and who has also read with an entirely open mind the lucid and vigorous arguments of *Theism or Atheism*, I welcomed the idea of throwing open the paper to Dr. Lyttelton's criticism of the book, and looked forward to an equally clear and forcible rejoinder from the champion of Theism.

Dr. Lyttelton had a magnificent opportunity of confuting the Atheist protagonist, and of convincing at the same time of their errors many wanderers from the paths of orthodoxy. Alas! Once again "the hungry sheep look up and are not fed." We hoped for the bread of sound and weighty reasoning, and are given instead a stone, in the shape of a misty and discursive discussion as to whether the author of the book in particular and Freethinkers in general are lacking in the "mental affections of Wonder and Humour!"

Well, we are keenly disappointed. Not only because we cannot help feeling that Dr. Lyttelton has failed to take advantage of the opportunity accorded him, but also on account of the nature of the criticism itself, as the following brief notes will show.

First and most important. Nowhere is there any discussion of the truth or falsehood of the contents of the book, but merely a diffuse expression of dread as to the possible consequences of its teaching—if, however, the latter is true, it must be accepted, and the consequences can very well be left to take care of themselves.

But Dr. Lyttelton's fear that Freethought will leave us nothing to learn or wonder at seems quite ungrounded. It is not the Freethinker who "allows nothing inexplicable to be left." The book under criticism repeatedly states that very much in the Universe is, and probably always will be, beyond the grasp of the human intellect.

Aristotle's well-known saying is therefore no stumbling-block, but is it necessary to remind Dr. Lyttelton that the philosopher's teaching must be accepted or rejected on its own merits and does not require the endorsement of Lord Haldane for its recognition?

Then, in his apparent acknowledgment that the arguments for Theism are illogical, Dr. Lyttelton seems to an impartial outsider to have given away his case. And we entirely refuse to be frightened by the contemplation of the *Freethinker's* future rôle. The destruction of superstition is, after all, but a small part of the work of Freethought—merely the preliminary to the constructive labour in which even now its adherents are beginning to engage.

Again, the memory of Rabelais, Voltaire, Heine and many another brilliant Freethinker will put to flight the apprehension that Humour will vanish when Christianity disappears. But Freethinkers reserve their weapons for their enemies. What, however, are we to make of Dr. Lyttelton's specimen of Christian humour? Here is a Cambridge undergraduate, at the age of full citizenship, who has been confirmed and is a communicant of the English Church. Yet, arrived at riper years and holding office in that same Church, he tells us as a huge joke that he was perfectly willing to deny the existence of the God whom, according to his belief, he had many a time received at the altar. To quote his own words, he made "a gallant attempt to become an Atheist," and for no weightier reason than that he might be "freed from the Sunday restrictions which galled him not a little." What are we to think of the religious "convictions" that such a story discloses? The Christian may need this kind of humour to "save him from going mad," but the Freethinker can dispense with it. And Christians can rest assured that the earnest and disinterested search for truth leads to neither groans nor disappointment, nor yet to those terrors of a troubled mind which engulfed poor Cowper and so many of his fellow religionists.

In conclusion, is it too much to ask Dr. Lyttelton to read carefully once more the book he is criticizing, and to state clearly where and why he thinks its positions untenable? The author puts his case in plain and unmistakable language. But surely it is not worthy of Dr. Lyttelton or of his office to neglect such a chance of putting the Theistic position, as he sees it, fairly and squarely before us, so that we may know (as we do in the case of his opponent) what he really believes and why he believes it. He will thereby earn the gratitude of many a one who, like myself, is a

SEEKER AFTER TRUTH.

#### CROSS PURPOSES.

SIR,—In his criticism of *Theism or Atheism* Dr. the Hon. E. Lyttelton prefaces his remarks by stating his intention of "showing where the arguments in the book seem to me to fail of their purpose." Instead, however, the reverend gentleman leaves the arguments severely alone and proceeds to misunderstand, and mis-state the author's "purpose" thus: "The writer is labouring to construct a Universe from which the mental affections would have to be banished: Wonder and Humour."

Now, that sentence contains a very flagrant "terminological inexactitude." There is not a syllable in the book which could lead any candid critic to suppose that the author "is labouring to construct a Universe." The Universe (there can be but ONE) is already constructed, and Freethinkers as well as Christians have to make the best of it. No one but a madman would dream of attempting to construct another.

Dr. Lyttelton will probably consider the objection a mere quibble. I contend that it is not so. In the preface to *Theism or Atheism* the writer's "purpose" is distinctly stated: ".....to make clear the nature of this alliance (between Theism and Philosophy) and to expose the real character of what we are asked to worship..... to press home the point that the logical issue is between Theism and Atheism.....that there is no logical halting place between the two."

Surely, we have here a perfectly clear and definite issue. Why does Dr. Lyttelton not deal with this? Why switch off to Wonder and Humour? Because *per se* and *a priori* of necessity, and in the nature of the case the professional theologian acts according to the well-known formula of his Church: "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end." The clergy know that they have no case when it comes to a question of facts. Accordingly, they never attempt to deal with facts. Clerical camouflage, wholesale assumption, and unlimited dogmatism are now, and always have been the materials of their profession.

Dr. Lyttelton is not one whit behind his clerical conferees in his adroitness in raising clouds to obscure the light. Talk about Theism, and he asks what would you have to wonder at if there be no God? Mention Atheism, and he enquires: What would you have to laugh at if religion were dead?

It is the old, old story. Freethinkers have no imagination, no wonder, no humour, no love of the good, the true, and the beautiful; no taste for Art, no love of Music, no appreciation of Poetry. We are a gloomy, sad, melancholy, despondent, unhappy set of beings "Without God, and without hope in the World."

To parody Dr. Lyttelton.....When Atheism has (thus) been satisfactorily disposed of, labelled, pigeon-holed, as an exploded superstition; when all Freethinkers have been scared into the outer darkness of forgotten delusions, trooping off like the nether ghosts into Erebus, what will he do next?

What *will* the reverend gentleman do next? "What will become of the Freethinker if there are no more gods to laugh at and hammer and expose?"

Dr. Lyttelton need not worry about the fate of the Freethinker. There will always be work to be done, constructive work, and the Freethinker will be in a far better position to do it when the Pantheon is entirely denuded of all its gods.

BERNARD MOORE.

#### "WHAT IS AN AFTER-LIFE?"

SIR,—Dr. Lyttelton is not only an exceedingly urbane controversialist but a dialectician of rare skill. As an adroit metaphysical swordsman he parries my question by asking another with the implication that a direct answer would not be intelligible to me, as apparently I am not able to "conceive of" an after-life.

But the manœuvre has only shifted my question from the term "training" to the term "life"; I need, therefore, only recast it as demanded by the change.

The word "life" is an abstract term summing up the characteristics of vital phenomena, the most fundamental of which is its indissoluble association with a specialised physical substance known as protoplasm, within which continuous metabolic changes take place. These involve the alternate absorption and release of physical energy which is the *prime essential of the phenomenon* in all its multitudinous forms. This fact, together with that of reproduction, constitutes the two pivots around which every characteristic in the meaning of the term life (and its adjunct, mind) rotates.

Now, these two pivots obviously vanish at death; may I, therefore, ask Dr. Lyttelton what characteristic is then possessed by his "conception" of an "after-life" which justifies him in calling it *life*? In other words, what meaning can the "conception" possess in an environment (the spirit world) in which it *cannot* have a shred of its normal meaning, and so prevent it from being a verbal vacuity—a mere sound or symbol?

I do not ask what warrant has the Doctor for believing in the reality of his "conception," but simply for his logical justification for calling it "life" at all.

The phenomenon of life in Nature does certainly exhibit different "orders" or "stages"—vegetal, animal, human—and legions of sub-varieties, but every variant in the phenomenon is invariably and indissolubly united with a corresponding variant in the degree and type of organization of its physical basis.

Had the phenomenon varied while its physical basis remained constant there would be a reason presumptive for regarding the essence of life as something non-phenomenal or ultra-material, but as the Doctor well knows the concomitance of variation between the two is quite absolute.

KERIDON.

## 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.

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#### INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "The Duty of Free-thinking."

#### OUTDOOR.

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

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

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, Mr. F. Shaller, A Lecture.

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