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Views and Opinions.

Religion in Ireland.

A correspondent sends me a copy of the *Irish Independent* for October 20, for which I am duly obliged. One cannot see all the papers that are published, and those readers who send things which they think may be of interest are doing us a real service. But for seeing this issue of the *Irish Independent* I should have missed the speech which Mr. T. M. Healy—we assume that it is the T. M. Healy—delivered before a meeting of the Catholic Truth Society in the Dublin Mansion House on October 19. We are a little late in referring to this speech, but it will be none the worse for that. Mr. Healy was the principal lay speaker, the chairman being Cardinal Logue, who informed the members and friends of the society that "if it pleased God to give peace to Ireland" they must make fresh efforts to make up for lost time. In that case, if the Catholic Truth Society does make headway, we feel inclined to predict that the last state of Ireland will be worse than the first. For it does not require a philosopher to perceive that Ireland's one great need is to see, not that the Catholic Church makes headway there, but that its power for evil is curtailed, and its influence on the civil life community annihilated. The religious question is not the only question in Ireland, but it is the most important one. It is the one that aggravates every other question; it intensifies bitterness between the two main sections of the population, and with that out of the way there is no reason why the people of Ireland should not settle down together with no greater amount of discord than exists among the people of Scotland or England. Ireland has lost many of its people by emigration, but if one could only induce all the priests and parsons who are now there to emigrate, and if the people could only forget their religion for six months or so, there would hardly be more of an Irish question at the end of that time than there is now, a Scottish or a Welsh question. We have no doubt but that many of our politicians see this, but they are politicians, and, therefore, do not say what they see, but only what it is profitable for them to express.

* * *

Life and the Supernatural.

Mr. Healy took for the text of his address a statement made in a review to the effect that a modern child

had not long left the nursery before he questioned the stories of the supernatural. This was construed by him to mean that the child was "so filled with intelligence and learning that he had no occasion for religious education or religious belief." The first part of the deduction means nothing of the kind. The child rapidly finds—if its education has been along the right lines and its home environment a healthy one—that the larger and better part of its environment gives the lie to all stories of the supernatural. He does not find the men and women around him looking for or relying upon any of the trumpety miracles which disgrace the record of the Roman Catholic Church. He fails to find in its scientific text-books the least encouragement for the belief that the affairs of the world are under the control of any "divine intelligence," and in actual contact with his fellows he finds that a profession of religion is not taken as a standard of worth or utility. When the Roman Church grew to power it was amid a people whose scientific ignorance was about as complete as it could be, and there was nothing in the general environment to refute the tales which the Church imposed upon an ignorant and a credulous people. But to-day the conditions are reversed. Instead of the environment making for religious belief it works against it. It is not this man or that book which divests the child of belief in the supernatural. The influence is radiated from the whole of modern knowledge. And the only way to escape it altogether is for one to shut oneself up in either a convent or a nunnery. To exist in a kind of living death is the only way in which one can altogether hope to escape the influence of a healthy life.

* * *

A Survival.

Mr. Healy is so far a representative of the Church that neither forgets anything that is stupid nor learns anything that is useful, that he is still an unbeliever in the animal origin of man. Presumably he does believe that the earth goes round the sun, since his Church admitted the fact as long ago as 1823, but with regard to the animal beginnings of man, he is still under the delusion that it is a mere theory that one may either reject or accept as one pleases. We do not argue it here any more than we should argue that twice two equal four. We only note Mr. Healy's reason for not believing in the teachings of modern science. He says that such teaching "leads straight to paganism," and the advantages of this are that "they can rob their neighbour, covet his wife, divorce their own. They could keep a harem." And this evidently tickled his audience so much that he repeats it:—

The only thing he could see that this Freethought gave was the right to loose thinking and loose living. They might box the compass of unbelief in any way they pleased, they might decorate it with the pretences of human liberty, but in the result it came down to nothing else than the license to defraud one's neighbour or one's neighbour's wife. The better that these so-called scientists should have that fact put down their throats occasionally.

And this, be it noted, on behalf of a Church that for hundreds of years turned Europe into a cross between

an artificial hell and a lunatic asylum, which wiped out two civilizations, which was a greater cause of licence in the sexual relations than any other institution that ever existed, which has written its behests in blood and fire over the whole of Europe, and which has a greater and a more damning record of lying, forgery, duplicity and general dishonesty to its credit than any other institution that was ever born of human folly or fattened on human credulity and fraud. Most of us had, I think, hoped that this sort of gutter-mongering advocacy had almost disappeared, but it still appears to thrive in Catholic Ireland, and it still has the endorsement of Roman Catholic dignitaries. Is there not something in the Bible about the dog returning to its vomit in spite of all that one may do to prevent it?

* * *

The Strength of Superstition.

Perhaps, after all, we Freethinkers are apt to overestimate the advance made, and in noting the number of Christians who have outgrown the worst aspects of their creed forget that these are only a portion, and a probably small portion, of the whole. There are nearly 50,000 clergymen in Britain, and how many of them stand as genuinely liberal thinkers? There is but a small proportion after all. The majority are almost as obscurantist as ever. If they are not more vocal than they are it is because the times are not favourable to speech. And as are the clergy so are the mass of believers. Followings such as the movement headed by the late Pastor Russell has are almost alone enough to remind us that much as has already been done, it is only the surface of superstition that has been scratched. Above all, we are inclined to overlook the fact that in this country the largest single Church in Christendom, and by far the best organized and the most powerful, is the Roman Catholic. It is sleepless in its watchfulness to advance its interests, and damnably unscrupulous as to the methods it adopts to achieve its purposes. In a way the Roman Church has no politics. That is, it will play any game, and back up any party that promises to support its claims. It is above party in the sense that a political trickster is above principles. It makes use of a bad man with the same ease that it does a good one. It knows of only one rule and one law, and that is the welfare of the Roman Church. I do not agree with those who talk of an increase of superstition because of certain recent occurrences. There has been no increase of superstition, it was there all the time; certain things bring it more prominently forward at one time than another, but the superstition was there, and when, as at the Conference of the Roman Catholic Truth Society, it gets a chance to make itself manifest it does so. And that is a circumstance we should all note and take to heart. It is a reminder that our work has only commenced. We have been clearing the decks for action, and it may well be that they were right who have so often reminded us that the last and the decisive fight will be between Atheism and the Roman Church. And in that fight nothing less than civilization itself will be at stake.

* * *

What Ireland Needs.

To return to the point from which I set out. An Irish friend constantly assures me that no Englishman can really understand the Irish question, because no Englishman can have a full appreciation of the depths of superstition in which the Roman Catholics of Ireland are sunk. That may be true, but I do not think it follows of necessity that self-government in Ireland means a confirmation of the rule of the priest. If that were so, it might become advisable to pause ere anything were done to confirm in its existence so sinister and so dangerous a power. I have hopes that even

among the professed Roman Catholics of Ireland, once the political question is out of the way there are enough men and women to put the priest in his place. At present we are keeping the political and the religious question fused, and the priest profits from the fusion. The Church in Ireland, like the Church everywhere, grows fat upon the misery of the people. Like all branches of the Christian Church it prides itself upon the way in which it comforts people in misfortune, and sees to it that there are plenty of opportunities for its ministrations. What Ireland needs above all is to get the priest out of the way, and in spite of all that obscurantists like Mr. Healy may say or do, Ireland cannot avoid in the matter of religion following the same lines that all other civilized countries are taking. For, after all, it is civilization that is the real and the only unconquerable enemy of the Church. By trickery, by force, by fraud, the Roman Church may crush a man or a group of men that oppose it. But behind the man or the group are the forces of which they are the expression, and in time they defeat the Church. Irish advocates tell us that what Ireland needs is freedom. That may be, but what Ireland needs more than all is the freedom that will come from shaking off the control of a Church that stands as by far the greatest curse that has ever fallen upon man.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Sundries.

THE *Manchester Guardian* is just now devoting considerable space to the discussion of various religious and theological matters. A frequent contributor is Canon Peter Green, who imagines himself competent to sit in judgment and to condemn the very greatest and most renowned thinkers if they have the misfortune to disagree with him. His main subject is that of the Deity of Jesus Christ as differentiated from his Divinity. Because we discern no difference between the two we recognize no distinction. If God and man are of the same substance it necessarily follows that the only conceivable difference between them must be one of degrees. On this point orthodoxy and modernism are sharply divided. It is our conviction that both parties are utterly incompetent to arrive at any intelligible conclusion upon so transcendental a theme. It may be easy enough for Canon Green to assert that no one ever claimed to be a philosopher on so meagre a supply of capital as Professor Huxley did; and we are tempted to retort that no one ever undertook to express an opinion as to the nature of God on fewer available data than Canon Green does. What does he really know about God and his substance, and on what ground does he venture to affirm that the Divine Substance is different from man's? Is not ignorance the foundation on which his whole theological structure has been erected?

Recently he delivered a lecture on the causes of modern unbelief, in which he declared that the first cause is "the totally wrong view of the world rubbed into the minds of the people in the nineteenth century." That view, of course, was the one embodied in scientific Materialism which he had the audacity to pronounce false. On what evidence did he so condemn and repudiate it? On none at all. What he did say, as reported in the *Manchester Guardian*, October 25, was absurd and puerile beyond words. The following are the words attributed to him:—

When they came to take the mechanical view, out went the moral character of man. They did not get love, freedom, religion, or anything of the sort.

It is difficult to conceive how any man of moderate intelligence could give expression to such unqualified

nonsense. Anyone who knows the world at all cannot but be aware that the Canon's statement is wholly false. It is quite true that Materialism excludes supernaturalism in all its forms, but it is also equally true that Secularism, which is the philosophy of life based on Materialism, embraces the most exalted views of life and character, and its chief difference from Christianity lies in the fact that, as the late Mr. Foote used to say, "it regards the public welfare as the criterion of right and wrong" rather than the will of an imaginary Supreme Being. Canon Green must know that a large proportion of the men of science are unbelievers in the supernatural, whether they call themselves Materialists or not; but surely he is not prepared to characterize them as living without love and freedom, or anything of that sort. Another deep cause of unbelief, according to this divine, "is ignorance and lack of real teaching in doctrine." On the assumption that this is true we seriously ask, Whose fault is it? There are nearly fifty thousand ordained priests and ministers in this country, and if religious ignorance prevails, one naturally wonders what these men and women of God are doing to justify their holy profession. The truth is, however, that positive unbelief is the direct outcome of the spread of secular knowledge. It is knowledge, not ignorance, that accounts for the unbelief that prevails among educated people. Canon Green's third cause of unbelief is a most extraordinary one, namely, social discontent. That we are face to face with considerable social and industrial unrest is beyond dispute, but to pronounce it the cause of supernatural unbelief betrays a serious misunderstanding of the situation. Social unrest is an effect rather than a cause. At the root of it is a strong sense of injustice and an insistent demand for economic fairplay. The situation is extremely, even bewilderingly, anomalous. The only remedy suggested by the Canon is more doctrinal preaching, and then he flew off on a tangent to sing the praises of dogmatic sermons, exclaiming without evidence that the people do not dislike such discourses. It is perfectly true that thousands are convinced that the existing social conditions would have been impossible had the Church been the Divine institution it has always claimed to be; but this is a radically different thing from asserting that the social discontent is the cause of unbelief.

In the year 1868 the Jesuit fathers, who lived in Burlington Street, Manchester, began a mission enterprise on the south side of the city and called it the Mission of the Holy Name. Their ministrations were conducted in a church so exceedingly mean in appearance that it came to be spoken of as "The Shed." To-day, "The Shed" has given place to a beautiful building in Oxford Street known as the Church of the Holy Name. The other week-end the jubilee of this church was celebrated when Father Bernard Vaughan took a prominent part in the ceremonies. The celebrations closed with a mass meeting held in the Free Trade Hall on Monday evening, October 24, when Cardinal Bourne presided, and in his address claimed that Catholicism was never so much needed in England, and its message so heartily welcomed as at the present time. The country is confronted by problems which only the Catholic Church alone, with its Divine and infallible message, is competent to tackle and solve. Is it not a curious fact that the self same problems still remain unsolved in countries where Catholicism has been in power for many centuries, such as Italy and Spain? The truth is that in no country or age has the Catholic Church succeeded in establishing sane and wholesome social conditions, and certainly there is no likelihood of its proving an efficient social reformer in Great Britain.

Dr. Keating, the Archdeacon of Liverpool, contended that "human society the whole world over was like a volcano in full eruption, and was threatened by the burning lava of Bolshevism—the negation of all civilization." Assuming the truth of that statement, is it at all creditable to the Catholic Church, which has been in the world for nineteen centuries? Why has the Body of Christ been such a gigantic failure? The Archdeacon proceeded thus:—

Two veterans in public life had lately been celebrating their birthdays. Mr. Frederick Harrison, the apostle of Positivism, had been keeping his ninetieth birthday, and Dr. Clifford, an old friend of theirs, had been keeping his eighty-fifth birthday. It was a happy thought on the part of someone to invite these gentlemen to say what lesson their long experience had taught them for the guidance of the present day. Mr. Harrison in reply said: "My life has witnessed great material and moral progress; it ends with material and moral chaos." Now these words were the death-knell of the cause for which Mr. Harrison had spoken and written throughout the whole of his life. For Mr. Harrison belonged to what he might call the dominant school of thought in this country during the Victorian era. He belonged to that school of Secularism which avowedly was out to destroy the old Christian civilization, and substitute for it a new type of civilization. The Secularists had had the ball at their feet; they had had the ears of the public, and the assistance of great scientists and literary men.

Dr. Keating is seriously astray as to the facts. Mr. Harrison, excellent man though he is, never belonged to the dominant school of thought in this country. Positivism was never a popular philosophy, and its adherents form to this day the smallest of all the Secularist sects. The Archdeacon is equally mistaken in thinking that the Secularists ever had the ball at their feet, nor have they ever had the ear of the public. More than that, they have never been in favour with great scientists and literary men. As a matter of fact, they have always been objects of cruel persecution, and there was a time when Dr. Keating's Church put not a few of them to a horrible death.

Now, it is undeniable that Mr. Harrison's life "ends with material and moral chaos." Again, we ask, on whom falls the blame? Certainly not on an infinitesimally small school of Secularists who have never had the ghost of a chance to set a disjointed world right. The Church pretends to be a supernatural institution, charged with supernatural powers, and founded for the sole purpose of ridding the world of all the evils and wrongs which darken and embitter life. Has this unique organization ever redeemed its superhuman pledges, or ever justified its existence by its accomplishments? It may be true, as the Archdeacon alleges, that the Catholic Church has "always minded its own business, which was to preach Christ and his Divinity, and his great work of redemption," but the fact that stares us in the face is that its preaching has been of no avail, and that Christ's redemption is still a dead letter. How does the Archdeacon account for this notorious impotence of the great work and Church of Christ? How does it accord with its alleged supernatural character and powers? To us its failure, which cannot be ignored, is a conclusive evidence that it is a fraudulent institution, claiming to be and do what it clearly is not and does not. Secularism has never had an opportunity to justify itself in the eyes of the public. Its apostles have never had the field to themselves, nor had the least justice shown them. They are eagerly waiting for their innings. So far, the advocacy of Secularism is looked upon as a crime which Christian magistrates are not slow to punish with fines and imprisonment. And yet what they inculcate is highest morality, altruistic service, which is the finest embodiment of the essential brotherhood of the race.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Sleep of Death.

We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep. —*Shakespeare.*
Death and his brother Sleep. —*Shelley.*

SHAKESPEARE, the supreme genius of literature, has told us that "our little life is rounded with a sleep." The materialistic similitude of death to sleep is a thought which has possessed a peculiar fascination for great writers, ancient and modern, but more particularly to Shakespeare, whom it always prompts to utterances of universal sublimity. With this lofty thought is mingled a touch of simple pathos that strikes home to every heart, as, for example, in the saying, "Tired we sleep, and life's poor play is o'er."

Sleep! All that the human fancy can conceive of refreshing and delightful things are compressed in that gentle word. Poets in all ages and in all countries have sung its praises, but of all tributes uttered on this subject, the most striking, probably, is that which Cervantes puts in the mouth of stout Sancho Panza:—

Sleep! It covers a man all over, thoughts and all like a cloak. It is meat for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, heat for the cold, and cold for the hot.

Priests, on the other hand, have ever sought advantage from the fact that man is mortal. They have taught their followers that death is the most dreadful evil. All the terrors that theology could gather from savage nations were added to increase the horrors, and they invariably tried to paralyse reason with the clutch of fear.

The advent of the Christian religion deepened this terror. Never has death been the cause of such craven timidity as in the Christian world. To visionaries like Catharine of Siena, or Emanuel Swedenborg, it may have been different, but to the uncultured masses death has been, and is, the King of Terrors, from whose approach they cower in an agony which Epicurus and Socrates would have scorned with lifted eyebrows. Notice how the grand old Pagans look death in the face without flinching. Epicurus says proudly:—

Why should we fear death? For where death is, there are we not; and where we are, there death is not.

No less emphatic is Marcus Aurelius, who bids us regard death as a friend:—

What is it to die? If we view it by itself, and stripped of those imaginary terrors in which our fears have dressed it, we shall find it to be nothing more than the mere work of Nature; but it is childish folly to be afraid of what is natural. Nay, it is not only the work of Nature, but is conducive to the good of the universe, which subsists by change.

These great Pagans invested death with dignity, but Christians fear death as children fear the dark. In Bacon's famous essay on death it is remarkable that all the instances he gives of its being borne with equanimity are taken from Pagans. For Christianity added fresh terrors to death in the thought of being cut off in sin. Even to-day the Church of England, the Government form of faith, has a prayer against sudden death, which the old-world Pagans regarded as best.

The clergy have found it profitable to invest death with horrors. "Prepare for death, flee from the wrath to come" have been their cries. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," shout the evangelists, with throats of leather and lungs of brass.

By such appeals to fear and imagination it has made a terror of what should be accepted with serenity. The clergy knew their business. Old Doctor Samuel Johnson was not a fool, but he was tormented by the

fear of death. The gentle William Cowper was driven mad by the horrors of religion. Spurgeon, the most popular preacher of the last century, preached and wrote that the majority of the human race was destined to everlasting torture in full view of their deity. To-day the Roman Catholic Church, the most powerful Church in Christendom, has not abated a spark of its fiery damnation, and the Salvation Army actually works the same threat into its trade-mark—"Blood and Fire"—and the tambourines of its devotees are full of money.

Yet to the Freethinker, dissolution has no terrors beyond the sundering of friendship, or of love. This has been finely expressed by William Cory, the singer of *Ionica*:—

They told me, Heraclitus, they told me you were dead;
They brought me bitter news to hear, and bitter tears to shed;
I wept as I remembered how often you and I
Had tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.

It was long, long ago pointed out by Lucretius, the stateliest of the Roman poets, that death is dreamless rest. Mark his beautiful words:—

Thou not again shalt see thy dear home's door,
Nor thy sweet wife and children come to throw
Their arms round thee, and ask for kisses more,
And through thy heart make quiet comfort go.
Out of thy hands hath slipped the precious store
Thou hoardest for thine own, men say, and lo!
All thou desired is gone. But never say
All the desire as well hath passed away.

Freethought everywhere destroys the terrors of death. Shelley, in the lovely opening lines of *Queen Mab*, hails death and sleep as brethren. Walt Whitman, "the tan-faced poet of the West," chants many a hymn of welcome to death. Our own Swinburne sings beautifully:—

Content thee, howsoe'er whose days are done:
There lies not any troublous thing before
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore.

"That unsubduable old Roman," Walter Savage Landor, in extreme age, wrote:—

Death stands above me whispering low,
I know not what into my ear:
Of his strange language all I know
Is, there is not a word of fear.

George Meredith asks with a fine touch of stoicism:—

Into the breast that gives the rose
Shall I with shuddering fall.

Death to Sully Prudhomme was the liberator as well as the great consoler. He wishes to "Drift on through slumber to a dream, and through a dream to death."

Truly, the poets have left the priests and their superstitions far behind. Beyond the fabled hells, the tiresome purgatories, and the tawdry paradises, the resplendent words of the great singers sound over the world. For thousands of years priests have chanted the old, sad, disheartening refrain of death as an enemy, but the Freethinker listens to far other and better strains. Paying no heed to "the lie at the lips of the priest," he dies without fear—

Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

MIMNERMUS.

So soon as we thus recognize that Hebrew myths would, of necessity, be more essentially astronomical than those of other nations, we perceive that the Hebrew race was not unlike other early races in having no mythology, as Max Müller thought, but possessed a mythology less simple and readily interpreted than that of other nations.—*Richard Anthony Proctor.*

The Evolution of the Sense of Humour.

(Concluded from page 693.)

II.

UTILITY.

WE now come to the question of utility. It may well be asked, What has all this got to do with usefulness? What possible advantage in the social struggle can a sense of humour confer on the societies possessing it? The answer is that, both in origin and development, the social advantage conferred is an indirect one, but is none the less real on that account. We have seen that among animals the sense of humour probably originated in and is associated with the play-instinct, and it is easily seen that this instinct may have been of the greatest advantage. The play of young animals always bears a relation to their future work and mimics the actions of the adult. It is essentially a preparation and a training for the activities of later life, and a rehearsal of the parts they will have to play in the coming drama of the struggle for existence. These activities, exerted in the guise of play and serving as an outlet for the growing energies of youth, generate a sense of fun and frolic which seems to be the basis of the sense of humour. And as, in its origin, this sense is associated with a function of obvious utility to the species, so in its development among human beings it is associated with a feeling no less obviously useful—the feeling of susceptibility to ridicule. It is evident that as the sense of humour becomes stronger and more definite the sense of aversion from ridicule must likewise gain in strength. The keener becomes the sense of the ridiculous the keener must become the sensitiveness at being made the subject of ridicule, for the two feelings are reciprocal, and the association between them is of the same nature as other associations of reciprocity which are quite familiar. For instance, the more generously disposed a person is the greater is his feeling of pleasure and gratitude at any act of generosity done towards himself, and a person with a keen sense of justice or a strict code of honour experiences a more poignant sense of resentment on being wronged or dishonoured than does one in whom these moral feelings are not so high.

As to the strength of this susceptibility to ridicule and its utility among savage communities there can be no question. At the stage when custom was the only guiding force, any breach of custom, even of a trivial kind, would probably bring down on its perpetrator the united ridicule of the tribe, and a feeling of susceptibility to ridicule would be a very strong factor in keeping individuals or family groups strictly to the path of common usage. We have been informed by travellers that among the head-hunting tribes of Malaya and the scalp-hunting Indians of the West—both now, happily, extinct or nearly so—the young man who failed to show his prowess in these pursuits was looked upon with derision. In warlike communities cowardice was treated with such scorn that the fear of ridicule would overcome the fear of death, and the coward would rather meet the dreaded spear-thrust of the foe than run away to meet the jeers of his fellows. Indeed, no lengthy exposition is needed to show that the fear of ridicule must have been one of the strongest supports of custom, and as every well-established custom must have possessed some element of utility at the period of its development this feeling of aversion from ridicule must have exerted a more or less preservative influence.

The remarkable strength of this feeling among the most highly civilized modern societies is additional evidence of its deep-seated origin and its significance

in the process of social evolution. All children exhibit it to some extent, and "sensitive" children very strongly. Children at play, and in their school life, are keenly sensitive to the ridicule of their companions, and in their relations with parents or teachers a small dose of ridicule judiciously administered often proves more effective than the voice of admonition or the appeal to moral principles, especially with children who themselves possess a sense of humour. I have seen a child laughing and weeping at one and the same time on having some delinquency shown up in a humorous light—the laughter resulting from the child's innate sense of the absurd, and the tears resulting from chagrin at being made to "look ridiculous."

And it is not during childhood only that we experience this all-powerful feeling. It has been remarked, and, I think, quite truly, that many a respectable and highly moral individual would feel less pain of mind at having done a positive wrong than he would at having done or said something in a crowded drawing-room which has laid him open to social ridicule. Even after a long interval the recollection of some trifling breach of merely conventional "good manners," and of the covert smiles with which it was received, is capable of reviving a very disagreeable feeling of shamefacedness. Nor is it only among our social peers that we are slaves to the fear of ridicule. No man, however intellectual he may be, and however much he may persuade himself that he cares nothing for the opinion of the ignorant and vulgar, has ever risen to such a height of philosophic detachment as to meet the jeers of a street urchin or the sarcasms of a humorous caddy with absolute equanimity.

While thus we find that the sense of ridicule is as strong in civilized communities as it probably was with primitive man, or possibly even stronger, we find, too, that it plays a useful part in civilization, though in a different way. Increased refinement of manners, increased sympathy and consideration for the sensibilities of others forbid the use of ridicule as directed against individuals. We refrain from "hurting people's feelings" by the exercise of our wit at their expense, and even in public controversy the use of disparaging personalities is rigidly, and very properly, debarred—this very prohibition furnishing, by the way, a further indication of the great strength of the sentiment we are discussing. But there remains a wider and more useful field for the exercise of ridicule where ridicule is called for—a field in which it may actually subserve a moral purpose in the interests of high and true ideals. This field lies in the sphere of social opinion. We no longer direct our ridicule against persons, either individually or collectively, but we claim the right to use it against every opinion, belief, dogma, or creed which cannot justify itself on rational and moral grounds.

It may here be asked why it is less justifiable to hurt people's feelings by ridiculing them personally than to do so by ridiculing their beliefs. The first and more obvious reply to this is that the one is a matter of private and the other is a matter of public concern. The truth or falsity, the moral justification or otherwise, of opinions and beliefs are intimately related to the welfare and progress of the society in which they are held, and are therefore matters in which the community is profoundly interested. In the second place the pain of mind or injury to the feelings resulting from personal ridicule is, as we have seen, an innate human feeling shared by all, and should therefore be respected, while the injury to the feelings of the believer caused by ridicule directed solely against his belief is entirely dependent on the nature of the belief, and is in itself an indication that the belief is unworthy of respect. Hence it is that Blasphemy Laws were

found necessary for counteracting the destructive effects of ridicule, for ridicule is the acid test of truth and moral validity, *since no belief based on rational and moral grounds can ever be effectively ridiculed.* The Rationalist has beliefs which he holds as firmly and regards as highly as the Christian does his creed, but he fears no ridicule of these beliefs. For what he believes in and reverences are such sacred things as Justice, Benevolence, Honour, and Truth, and anyone who would dare to ridicule them would only be pronouncing his own condemnation. No Blasphemy Laws are needed to protect such beliefs as these from scorn or contempt.

W. K. Clifford has somewhere said that no one has a right to believe without reasonable evidence. It might as justly be said that no one has a right to regard as sacred anything that is susceptible of ridicule, or at any rate he has no right to complain when such ridicule is bestowed on it.

A. E. MADDOCK.

"Should the Church Advertise?"

THE article which appeared in the *Evening News* a few days ago with the above title will, I hope, make those Freethinkers who read it heartily smile. It is written by an anonymous advertising expert who, at least, ought to have been proud of his connection with the Church and therefore should have published his name. It is always interesting to know the names of business men who subscribe to the doctrines of the Church.

I happen to be an advertising man myself, and I think I know something about "how it is done." I want to say then, right away, that the vast majority of copy-writers, before they can truthfully write good copy, not only must know all about the "goods" from A to Z, but must also feel in their own hearts that the "goods" are genuine. I do not say that all advertisements are truthful—a man has to earn his living in this sinful world—but I do say that the good copy-writer turns out better work if he is writing sincerely. It must therefore be pretty obvious that if the Churches are going to advertise in the daily Press, much as Glaxo or Pelman or any other extensively advertised commodity, the writers will have to know all about their subject and be ready to treat it exhaustively. Well, I have met a good many advertising men myself, and I need hardly say that precious few know very much about the history of the Church or the doctrines of Christianity. The biggest proof is the article in question, which is written by A. E. (advertising expert) very much as if he were writing about a particular brand of margarine, and the reasons why you should buy it. Insert margarine for Church and very little alteration will transform the article into an excellent advertisement for a butter substitute. As an example, A. E. gives a two inch single column display with the heading "Come to Church To-morrow," and asks, "Would it persuade YOU?" Here it is:—

Come to the Church nearest to you—to-morrow. If you have not been to Church for years—come once more. You will be surprised at how much better you will feel at having done so. If you were going to die to-night you would call in someone to minister to you. The Church can help you in your daily life also. Come once more and see. Make up your mind *Now* to come to-morrow—you will not regret it. Think it over. It's worth it.

Now I ask, seriously, have we not all read that before, but with margarine or boots as the "goods"? Is it not pitiful?

Throughout his whole article A. E. does not mention Jesus, and God, except three times. There is not the slightest suggestion, of course, that people do not go to

Church, either because while believing in religion they do not believe in the Church, or because *they have found the Church out.* A. E. seems to think that if the papers were filled with big advertisements appealing boldly to the people to go to church there would be as big queues outside the churches waiting for the doors to open as there are outside the cinemas sometimes to see the inimitable Charlie, or Mary, or Duggie. No question whatever could possibly pass through the minds of the people as to whether there was the slightest truth in the message delivered from the pulpits or that the Christian religion was, after all, simply a re-hash of pagan and other myths. In fact, our advertising expert seems to think that if only the advertisements were properly written, as per the sample quoted above, people would easily be got to believe that "the hour or two which they spent in church once a week was for their well-being here as well as hereafter." Such questions as the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection or miracles or the authorship of the Gospels need not even be thought about. And why worry about any particular Church? "No sect would be mentioned." The various little differences which have made the Calvinists so love Roman Catholics or the Methodists love the Mormons would, of course, be passed over in reverent silence, though how A. E. is going to guarantee that fulminations against heresies of all sorts would be suppressed I do not know.

There is one aspect of the matter, however, which our advertising expert, in spite of his knowledge, seems to have entirely overlooked, and that is that there never has been any firm which has mastered the principles of publicity with the thoroughness and acumen of the Church. Talk about expert advertising! From the moment that Christianity got the thin edge of the wedge into power it captured the best copy-writers, the best poster artists, the best architects and builders, and carried on a campaign which, till recently, very nearly managed to convince the so-called civilized nations that it was really the "goods." Rival firms were ruthlessly destroyed by every foul means known for nearly fifteen hundred years, and even now one can see how the two great branches of the original undertaking love one another, in Belfast, for instance. But what the marvellous paintings of the old masters, or the wonderful churches dotted all over Europe, or the millions of books written, to advance the Faith, in all languages, or the hundreds of millions of Bibles distributed everywhere, or the tens of thousands of sermons preached regularly from the pulpits in every country, or the vast missionary enterprises and revival stunts have all failed to do, that is, to convince modern educated people that Christianity is true and make them go to church, A. E. hopes to do with paltry imitations of trade advertisements in our daily papers. Can anything be funnier? And who, think you, is going to pay for it all? The Church? Oh dear no! It is going to be cadged—in these happy times of unemployment and unrest and heavy taxation—from "the rich men and the business men." We can see our multi-millionaires shell-out thousands of pounds to pay for advertisements in the *Daily Mail* and other papers with large circulations for the express purpose of inducing the "proletariat" to go to church. What optimism!

Let me conclude with a personal experience. The question "Should the Churches advertise?" was discussed recently at the Publicity Club of London, a club for advertising men. Three clerical gentlemen and a Protestant layman were the speakers, and what three of them said was quite innocuous. The remaining one, the Rev. J. Stephenson, thought the occasion was too good to miss, so he gave us a rattling good sermon full of the usual exhortations, and after saying how he preferred preaching to hard-headed business, especially keen publicity experts, threw out a challenge to the

club. In stentorian tones he gave us to understand that he was a member of the original firm and had the "goods" without which no man could be saved. There were two or three hundred men and women in the room, and it was very funny to "hear" the dead silence that ensued for a moment when I, on behalf of the club, accepted the challenge and offered to prove that neither Mr. Stephenson nor his Church had the "goods." When I proceeded to enlarge on the topic the Chairman jumped up, told me to sit down, and said he wasn't there to see the guests of the evening insulted with my private views, and the reverend gentleman himself, then very angry, told me his challenge was not for those *outside* the Church, but for those *within*, and amid cheers for the Chair and angry and contemptuous looks for me, I sat down. And out of all that crowd of modern young men and women, mostly well educated, I did not get one supporter.

Many Rationalists think the fight is over for Free-thought. It can never be over until men and women not only agree that Christianity is untrue, but are not ashamed to proclaim it from the house-tops. And we must never cease to fight till that time comes.

H. CUTNER.

Acid Drops.

We are very pleased to see that the Home Secretary has acted so promptly in releasing the man who was sentenced by Mr. Mead at Marlborough Street to six weeks' imprisonment for the very old joke of selling a blank pamphlet for a penny. The sentence showed a sad deficiency of both humour and justice, and we do not think that justice in London would suffer if Mr. Mead took it into his head to resign. We have several times commented in this journal on Mr. Mead's rulings, and our readers will perhaps recall the fact that he is the magistrate who is responsible for the backing up of the police in Hyde Park in their attempts to suppress Free-thought meetings. There were a series of stupid and petty prosecutions which would soon have broken down with a magistrate who was able to take a common-sense view of the charges, but before Mr. Mead everyone knew the result before the case commenced. If Mr. Mead will only take the retirement he has certainly merited there will be a possibility of people reading the proceedings in his court with greater respect for the course of justice.

A quaint advertisement in a religious periodical gives the information: "A brother-in-the-Lord sells chumps." According to the Bible, the Lord himself did some sawing wood.

Mr. T. M. Healy, K.C., at the annual conference of the Catholic Truth Society in Ireland, said that the view "that man sprang from a monkey led straight to Paganism, and it is because the Roman Catholic Church says so boldly, that she is hated." "This monkey folly," he continued, "was started because it struck deliberately at the existence of the human soul." It is worth noting, though easily explicable, that the Church which owes so much to Paganism—saint worship, the Virgin Birth, and Mariolatry—denounces it most vehemently. Similarly, our High Anglicans ape all the superstitious practices of Roman Catholicism, while stoutly protesting that the maintenance of a "national" Church is the strongest "bulwark against Rome."

Mr. Healy's deliverance on the "monkey folly" may pass. Perhaps it should even be welcomed. But when he proceeds to dilate upon "the many advantages of Paganism," and its comfortable morality, he is not speaking from a large knowledge of either Pagan or Roman Catholic morals. "You could rob your neighbour's till, covet his wife, divorce your own; you could keep a harem," if you were a Pagan. You may also do a considerable number of things if you are a good Catholic,

and, of course, if you have the power to do them. What they are is written very realistically on the page of history. The issue of the *Catholic Times* (October 22), reporting Mr. Healy's speech, refers to ex-king Ludwig, of Bavaria, as a devoted Catholic, who was largely responsible for the appointment of Hertling as Prime Minister of Bavaria. This is true. Ludwig, like Belgian Leopold, of Congo fame and blessed memory, was a good Catholic. Hertling, who was afterwards Chancellor, declared when Germany seemed to have Europe at her feet: "We have gained all we set out for, and there is now no further object to be gained by continuing the struggle." Erzberger, who was recently shot, was another "good Catholic," who at the time spoke in very similar terms. None of these highly moral Christians denounced "frightfulness." They were not Pagans.

"Give to him that asketh" is alleged to be the command of the founder of Christianity. How little it affects modern Christians is shown by the fact that a woman was sentenced to a month's imprisonment for begging outside Westminster Cathedral, London.

The *War Cry* has an account of the conversion of an alleged Atheist in a recent issue. The only clue to the man's identity is that he "had been listening to a professing Atheist in the park." Neither the name of the man, nor the name of the park is mentioned. Such Free-thinkers are easily converted to the glory of God and the Salvation Army's banking account.

We are assured by a writer in the *Catholic Times* that in France Roman Catholic Women's Trade Unions were formed, because active trade unionists were "anti-clerical" and often "blatantly immoral." Similar reasons for maintaining their own unions were given by adherents of the faith in Germany. This moral sensitiveness of the average Catholic is a greater asset to his Church than to society. Just before the outbreak of the Great War, the Monistenbund gave detailed figures of serious crimes in Germany, and of the religious denominations to which the criminals belonged. In proportion to their population the Roman Catholics headed the list. And Germany is not the only country where they hold that unenviable position.

The *Daily Express* (October 22) gives an illustration, evidently reproduced from a photograph, of Pastor Jeffreys conducting a "faith cure" at Horbury Church, Notting Hill Gate. The patient (a woman) is represented kneeling at a chair, while three men are placing their hands upon her head and back. We presume that she consented to be photographed in this position. "And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." A photograph in a widely circulated daily journal is a substantial reward nowadays in England.

The Bishop of Exeter is in a very depressed mood. He says there is "a great wave of unbelief sweeping over our country" which is cause for depression in the case of a bishop. And he wants everyone to be on their guard "against this great unbelieving movement. It is developing in our big towns, and has *even* reached Plymouth." We *italicise* the "even," and we wonder why surprise should be expressed at the wave of unbelief reaching Plymouth! Does the Bishop think that Plymouth is so far removed from the influence of civilization as to be unaffected by any wave of enlightenment that is sweeping over the world? If so, that is not very complimentary to Plymouth. Personally, we do not believe that Plymouth is so far behind the times. When we were last there, although it is true a Christian opponent, who was a striking survival of the Dark Ages, turned up at the meetings, we still did not notice any marked difference for the worse between the audiences we met there and those we meet in other parts of the country. And if there is any warranty in the Bishop's being surprised that *even* the people of Plymouth should be getting sensible with

regard to religious belief, that seems good reason for Free-thinkers getting to work and enlightening the natives as quickly as possible.

The Bishop of Exeter is also desirous that all teachers should be so far as is possible Christians. In the Church schools they can, of course, secure this, and if Christians can only be induced to heed the Bishop's advice, those in whose hands the appointment of teachers rests will see to it that none but Christians are appointed. And that is another reason why all who are genuinely interested in education should see to it that religious instruction is kept out of all State schools. So long as it is there it will be made an instrument of veiled persecution, and encouragement will be given to the timid and mentally cowardly type of teacher rather than to the strong and independent. And the result must always be a turning out of a type of character inferior to what might otherwise be turned out. Teachers, in many cases, dare not say what they believe, and the result of this state of affairs is that the best type of character is kept out of education, the timid and time-serving enlist for the work, and it does not need very profound thought to see that this means a very real injury to the children. And it is they we should be chiefly concerned with, and not primarily the parents—still less the priest, whose only object is to breed customers for his own peculiar class of wares.

"Do not let us disarm," writes the Bishop of Exeter in his *Diocesan Gazette* in an article on future wars in Europe. Evidently, the right-reverend Father-in-God is not averse from spreading the Gospel of the Prince of Peace at the point of the bayonet.

Dr. Hastings Rashdall, Dean of Carlisle, in a speech last week, said that Christianity was the only religion that had so far held its own against the dissolving power of modern science and modern civilization. The future of the world lay either in Christianity or Materialism, tempered probably by considerable survivals of quite unethical superstition. "There was no religion in the East except Christianity that could offer any serious obstacle to the growth of an aggressive military spirit, constituting a formidable peril to the world." The statement that Christianity has held its own "against the dissolving power of modern science," made at the very moment when many members of the Protestant bodies are urging change and expansion in accordance with the growth of knowledge, and many others are equally loud in protesting against such change, is merely one more proof of the grip which stereotyped ideas have upon the professional mind. The reference to the East and the power of Christianity to keep it free from militarism, however, deserves to be characterized in stronger language. There are a few still living who remember our opium war on China, and the subsequent seizure of Hongkong. Nor among the Christian nations of Europe is our record exceptional. The ex-Kaiser was constantly proclaiming the yellow peril, and invoking the Christian nations of Europe to "protect their holiest possessions." And now after 1914-18 the Dean of Carlisle recommends Christianity as a prophylactic against militarism in the East. Christians, we presume, weigh mere worldly things according to the dictates of a special conscience.

We live in an age of advertisement. The refined poses of Lady Diana, the moralizing of Hall Caine or Marie Corelli, the letters to the press of Sir Oliver Lodge, the admonitions of the dismal Dean, and the flagellations administered by Father Vaughan and Dr. F. B. Meyer, all indicate the trend of the currents of the age. This dread of popular neglect applies pre-eminently to religion to-day, because it has so many competitors to meet. The late Profit Dowie, the Chicago "faith-healer," once created a sensation by declaring on the public platform that he was the illegitimate child of a Scottish duke. Men like him and the Rev. Billy Sunday are well aware that they will never lack a following so long as the Press organs combine to second their antics.

Viator writes:—

Pastor Jeffreys' Pentecostal Assembly reminds me of a faith-healing mission under the same name that was started in Sydney and Melbourne about a quarter of a century ago. Its specialty was casting out devils. Some extraordinary cures were reported. At that time a severe drought prevailed over parts of New South Wales. I remember going from Hungerford, near the Queensland border, for a distance of nearly 100 miles, and the surrounding country was like a piece of brown paper. Turn from that picture to Europe to-day. We hear of a religious revival in Germany. At home we have endless conferences, proposals for the revision of the Prayer Book, and Providence is curing gout and rheumatism at Notting Hill Gate. In the meantime, millions are dying of starvation in Russia and South-eastern Europe. The supernatural, we are assured, needs to be re-discovered. It does—very much so.

Those who are awaiting the second coming of Christ will be interested in learning that he has arrived at Braintree, Essex. He has quite a liking for appearing in out of the way places. According to the *Essex Chronicle* of October 28 "a hard-headed business man" saw a vision of Christ in Braintree Parish Church. He reported the matter to the Vicar of Braintree, and that gentleman is quite satisfied that it was a genuine vision. That is remarkable corroborative evidence from a quite unbiased quarter. The Vicar of Holy Trinity, Ripon, also, is satisfied of the genuineness of the vision, because while he has been conducting missions for years he has "never had such an experience before." In ordinary matters what has happened is a guide as to what will happen. In religion the rule is that what has never happened before is good reason for believing it will happen. So the hard-headed business man, whoever he is, and the two vicars are quite satisfied that Jesus appeared in Braintree Parish, although what the deuce he was doing there no one seems to know or care. And these three witnesses are still at large. And we are a civilized people! And some wonder if the world has gone quite mad!

Harvard University now requires all undergraduates who specialize in languages and literature to show some knowledge of the Bible and the works of Shakespeare. The *Harvard Graduates' Magazine* comments that "Nobody who does not know the language of the English Bible or Shakespeare can rightfully claim to know the Saxon tongue." The sentence might have been better phrased, but its meaning is clear, and—with regard to the Bible it is quite wrong. The English Bible is not written in the "Saxon tongue," or in any other tongue that was ever a medium of communication between men. Bible English was never spoken in this country in the whole of its history. It is a tongue that slowly grew up in connection with the Bible and the Bible alone. A study of the conditions under which the Bible grew up proves this. The Bible does contain many words of Saxon origin, but for a knowledge of the Saxon tongue as it was spoken and written one has to go to other sources.

This claim of the English Bible to be a "well of English undefiled" is one of the many superstitions that have grown up during recent times, and has been promulgated, on the one side for interested purposes, and on the other because many who had ceased to believe in the Bible were anxious to cover their disbelief by the pretence that they had a profound respect for the Bible as literature even though they had ceased to believe in it as the Churches held it. The truth is that the Bible does not owe its position to its merits as literature, nor would the clergy bother about it if that were the only ground on which it was recognized. But it is important to them to get the Bible placed in a position of privilege by some means or other, and if it cannot get to that position by the old road, then some other will do. It is a form of the old advice, "Get money—honestly, if you can, but get it." And they who back up this claim of the Bible are, whether they know it or not, simply helping to perpetuate a superstition and giving illicit support to the "Black Army."

O. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

November 6, Swansea; November 13, Leicester; November 20, Liverpool; November 27, Ton Pentre; December 4, Friars Hall, London; December 11, Birmingham; December 18, Golder's Green.

To Correspondents.

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

H. MARSHALL.—We are not surprised that the ladies who were begging for the Church accepted a shilling from you with the written inscription in this book, "From an Infidel to help Almighty God." So long as they get money there are few churches that care how they get it. We do not know if there are enough Freethinkers in Dewsbury to form a Branch, but Dewsbury must be a very queer place if there are not a fairly good number. Perhaps those who would like to see a Branch of the society formed will write us.

ARTHOS ZENO.—Received. The magazines are always useful and interesting.

AUTOLYCUS.—Certainly, if the man is a good man, and other conditions are suitable. Mr. Cohen is quite willing to undertake a debate when he is asked to do so.

G. O. W.—Received, with thanks.

G. BARTON.—What a Theist has in mind when he speaks of Special Creation is the creation of an animal or plant with a deliberate design on the part of the maker that it shall serve a certain purpose or discharge a special function.

Mrs. E. CRAWFORD.—Sorry your letter is crowded out, but we quite agree with you in your criticism of Dr. Haddon's statement that people have been kept from doing wrong through fear of hell, and that there has been an increase of immorality owing to the decline of the belief. There has been no increase of immorality that we are aware of, and it is certain that the belief in hell is the worst kind of moralizing agency one could select. It degrades and brutalizes, and no man is ever made better in that way.

H. S. ENGLAND (Detroit).—Pleased to have your appreciation of our work. We must all do what we can towards realizing our ideals, and if they are never realized we can always enjoy making the attempt. We reviewed Professor Leuba's book on its first appearance several years ago.

F. A. WILMER.—Sorry we have had to curtail your letter, but our space is very limited.

W. JAMESON.—We are afraid that sending some clergymen any number of copies of the *Freethinker* would have small effect. The way to influence the clergy is to let in the light among their congregations. That is the only method that has ever had effect, and we send out as much free literature as we can afford.

J. WILSON.—Thanks for the trouble you have taken in the matter. We do not issue weekly contents bills, but we have a general poster advertising the *Freethinker* and some of these have been already sent to your newsagent. We are sending a further supply.

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

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

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. 6d.; three months, 4s. 6d.

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen visits Swansea to-day (November 6). He will lecture in the Elysium, High Street, at 7 p.m. on "Freethought, Free Speech, Blasphemy, and the Law." Local friends will please note the time and place.

Mr. Lloyd lectures to-day (November 6) in the City Hall Saloon, Glasgow, at 11.30 and 6.30. Glasgow friends will please note that the time of the morning lecture has been advanced by half-an-hour. We hope to hear that the City Hall was crowded on both occasions—preferably with Christians.

We are afraid that some of our correspondents have not yet awakened to the fact that owing to the abolition of the Sunday postal collection in the provinces letters posted on Sunday do not reach this office until Tuesday, and if there is any delay, too late for the current week's issue. We have been receiving numbers of lecture notices lately on Wednesday, which is just about the time the paper is on the printing machine. Some, again, send to the N. S. S. Secretary, others to the *Freethinker* office. Now there is no reason why lecture notices should not reach us by the Saturday before the week in which the lecture is to take place, and in order to standardise the matter we suggest that they should send their lecture notices to the Secretary of the N. S. S. so as to reach her by the Saturday. They could then be arranged and handed into this office in a batch. Matters that are of a more journalistic character should be addressed, as usual, to the Editor of the *Freethinker*.

It would also help the organization of the N. S. S. work if Branch Secretaries would send to the Society's headquarters a regular fortnightly or monthly report of work done or work in contemplation. This would not only enable a record to be kept at headquarters, but it would enable a compilation to be made for insertion in the *Freethinker*. The *Freethinker* opens its columns quite gratuitously to this work, and is only too pleased to be of service to the movement. But the effectiveness of the help must be always dependent upon the degree to which friends in all parts of the country co-operate.

Might we also, while we are on this topic, again impress upon all our friends the need for introducing this paper to new readers wherever it is possible. Everyone connected with printing and publishing is at present passing through a very trying time. The other day, Lord Burnham, who speaks with inside knowledge, said that there was not a paper in London that was not running at a loss, and if that is true of the great newspapers, it is evident that times must be hard for anyone running a paper such as the *Freethinker*. With the very bad state of trade the expenditure of people on books and papers is naturally limited, but expenses go on just the same. And we have still in front of us the desire to make the *Freethinker* pay its way. We believe we can do that with the co-operation of our friends. Another thousand or so per week on our circulation would accomplish the feat, and we are sure that can be done if only our friends make up their minds that it shall be done. It ought to be done with ease between now and Christmas. We urge each one interested to try.

There was a fair attendance at South Place last Sunday afternoon to hear Mr. A. D. McLaren's address, "A Freethinker looks at the World," and the large number of questions at the conclusion showed the keen interest with which his remarks were followed. This was the last of the series of N. S. S. lectures at South Place this year, but arrangements have been made for a further series of evening lectures at Friar's Hall in December.

There was a fine attendance at Mr. Cohen's lecture in Birmingham on Sunday evening last, and the Secretary

informs us that both the collection taken up on behalf of the Branch funds and the sale of literature were unusually good. We are delighted to hear this. The Birmingham "saints" deserve every encouragement that can be given them in their work.

The Birmingham Branch is to-day (November 6) honouring itself and its late President, Mr. R. G. Fathers, with whose name is coupled that of his wife, by offering them a presentation in recognition of their many years' work and association with Birmingham Freethought. The function will take place at the Market Hotel, Station Street, at 6 o'clock. Refreshments will be provided, and there will be both vocal and instrumental music during the evening. It is a well deserved honour that is being bestowed, and we wish all concerned the happiest of evenings.

The Belief in Luck.

Christian Evidence lecturers frequently endeavour to persuade their hearers that the universality and persistence of a belief are proofs of its intrinsic truth. That this sort of argument is fallacious requires but little demonstration.

There is one belief, and only one, which has been truly universal, and which has persisted from prehistoric times to the present day. That is the belief in luck, magic, talismans, charms and amulets. Originating amongst primitive, savage, and ignorant peoples, this belief has been transmitted from one generation to another without intermission, and without serious loss. Modifications have taken place with advancing civilization, but the basic ideas still persist, and are a source of wonderment to those who have passed beyond the intellectual stage of the barbarian.

All magical reasoning is based upon the inherent belief of primitive man that causal connection in thought is equivalent to causal connection in fact. The savage is unable to distinguish subjective and objective relations.

The use of amulets, charms, spells, and sympathetic magic doubtless originated in the impression that the unseen powers which primitive man conceived to be behind phenomena were inimical to the seen, and could be counteracted by charms, and magic spells.

From the sarcophagi and tombs of ancient Egypt, from the ruined cities of Assyria and Babylonia, from the ancient graves of North America and even of Europe, we learn how important was the part played by amulets, charms and talismans in the early history of the world.

Amulets of stone, porcelain, lapis lazuli, jade and metal were buried in tombs with, or on the bodies of, the dead. In Egypt the variety of charms employed was bewildering. In addition to those placed on the body, the coffins or mummy-cases were inscribed with texts and painted with the figures of gods and goddesses above and below. With all these protective symbols around and about him the deceased believed that of a certainty he would pass through the gates to the judgment hall of Osiris unharmed. Amongst the amulets usually buried with the mummy were the scarab beetle, the emblem of the new life and resurrection, the girdle of Isis, the eye of Horus, the heart, the sceptre, the collar, the pillow, the hawk, the vulture, the plumes, the phallus, and the solar disc. On rare occasions all these have been found in one tomb or on a single body.

The Chinese believe that the air is full of cruel and vindictive spirits, many of whom are supposed to be the wandering ghosts of departed relatives. At the gates of their cities and the doors of the houses are placed terrifying images of the gods, whose duty it is to warn trespassers off the premises. In China, jade is a favourite stone for the carving of amulets, which

are worn on the breast, in the cartilage of the nose or the lower lip, or in the lobe of the ear. Cups made of jade are supposed to give health to him who drinks from them, and, naturally, are capable of counteracting poison.

In India charms of various kinds are worn to protect the wearer from disease, from deadly snakes, to secure the fruitfulness of childless women, and jealous wives wear them to retain their husband's love.

The earlier priests among the Israelites laid claim to magic powers, and the legendary Moses is reputed to have been a magician. The Hebrews understood that to take the god's name in vain was to employ it for sorcery and magical purposes. The stones that Joshua was said to have set up at Gilgal were a sacred and magic circle, precisely such a circle as the Druids made with stones in this country, as at Stonehenge and elsewhere.

Many sacred stones are now known to have been shaped idols; all of them were anciently thought to be the abode of deity. The stone had usually a pit at the foot of it, in which the blood of a slaughtered beast offered in sacrifice sank and stagnated, whilst a feast was made of the roasted flesh. It was customary to decorate the stone with garlands, to smear it with blood and fat, and, occasionally, to cast into the pit silver and gold ornaments. There is frequent reference to sacred stones in the Bible. Jacob is fabled to have discovered a holy stone at Bethel, and a later tradition declares that Jacob's Pillow was brought to Scotland and deposited at Scone until Edward I took it to Westminster, where it has now become part of the coronation chair used by the British monarch. Moses raised twelve stones at the foot of Mount Horeb, Elijah set up a circle at Mount Carmel.

Amongst the Mohammedans magic, sorcery, divination, and astrology are rife. Every Moslem believes in the efficacy of amulets, charms, exorcisms, magic mirrors, cabbalistic figures and the like.

With the Gnostics abraxas stones were extensively used as talismans. The Turks, Arabs, and tribes of Central Asia consider it absolutely necessary to wear some preservative charm.

In the charms worn by Christians, precisely similar benefits to those expected by Pagans were looked for. The following piffle accompanied a sacred charm sent by Pope Urban V to his emperor: "Thunder it chases, sin it effaces, from fire it saves, and flood when it raves. Sudden death shuns it, devils revere it, enemies fear it."

If popes believed in charms we need feel no surprise that the people cherished similar superstitions. The sign of the cross was a weapon of miraculous power. The writings of the fathers are crowded with the wonders it performed. The consecrated Host was, and still is, used as a charm. It has been employed as a love charm, to render bees fruitful, to drive away a plague of caterpillars, to still a tempest, and as a cure for blindness. The cross or crucifix is worn as a talisman, it is supposed to be especially effective in driving away evil spirits.

In the Spanish, Portugese, and Italian armies and navies every Catholic wears some kind of sacred protector. The rosary, blessed medals, scapulars, the Agnus Dei, St. Joseph's girdle, and other sacred charms have been found on the bodies of the dead. On the tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey may be seen a chaplet of beads or rosary.

A Spanish bull-fighter, should he be a Catholic, wears some sacred medal, amulet, or charm, and credits his escapes to its influence. The *Times* correspondent at Naples affirms that "the brigands who are taken red-handed in this province are invariably found to have rosaries and relics around their necks." The gay women of Continental cities are also wearers of all sorts of medals, rosaries, and scapulars.

Every Catholic depository in Ireland, England, United States, Africa, Australia, New Zealand and the Continent does a steady and lucrative trade in these "Objects of Devotion."

When the Prince Imperial fell in Zululand he was wearing a medal of the Virgin. This the Zulus were afraid to touch. They recognized it as a charm such as they themselves wore, and for that reason allowed it to remain on the dead body of the Prince, lest it should transfer the bad luck of its late wearer to the man who might afterwards possess it.

The United States possess a famous stone which it is said has been marvellously efficacious in the treatment of persons bitten by a mad dog; many vouch for its curative properties. The *Pall Mall Gazette* in January, 1874 said: "Eleven hundred applications of the stone have been made to mad dog and snake wounds without a single failure."

The fact is that superstition is almost as rampant to-day as it was in the dim and pre-historic past. Look into the jeweller's shops and note the assemblage of lucky rings set with lucky stones, the gold and silver mascots, crosses, charms, svastikas, etc. Look at every private motor car and note the various mascots displayed on the bonnet. Every regiment, every battleship, every aeroplane is supplied with some sort of lucky charm, animate or inanimate.

The Churches and Cathedrals are all built on plans which embody primitive ideas derived from ancient paganism, and if the origin of the Church's rites, ceremonies, symbols, and teaching be sought it will be found in the paganism, which to outward appearance it had supplanted.

BERNARD MOORE.

Gentle Hostilities.

THE lady missionary called on the lady of the house, the one enthusiastic for religion, the other as religiously against it, both propagandists of a sort, and, after the manner of English ladies, quite profusely civil to one another. After the caller had gone it occurred to the called on she would pen a sort of reply to some "literature" that had been left, a reply duly posted to the lady missionary, but the rest was silence.

The following is in substance what was written, and may explain the shocked silence of the good well-meaning visitor:—

Regarding the pamphlet, *The Inspiration of the Bible*, by H. L. Hastings, I do not think it necessary at the moment to refute the statements concerning Voltaire, Paine, and Ingersoll. It is the fate of great men to be slandered by such creatures as it is your misfortune to admire. That the Bible sells in millions does not prove it inspired—or read either. The quality not the quantity of the book or the convert is the criterion here. It is always the few in books and men who really count, the masses, as a rule, are but "the vain crowd wandering blindly led by lies." For instance, in these islands alone, some fifty thousand clergy can make a fairly good living out of the ignorance and superstition of the people. I agree with the writer that Christianity is not likely to die out, but that it will change, has changed, is changing so much that the ultimate residuum will be quite unrecognizable as "the faith once delivered to the Saints." Apart from such inevitable metamorphosis of ancient faith it is a well-known fact that multitudes of quite intelligent and estimable people will cling to the forms of a religion long after their minds have outgrown actual belief in its truth, and which fact largely accounts for the survival of a faith so foolish and absurd as Christianity.

As to the assertion that "the Bible makes things

safe," that may only mean that it is safest to agree with the majority, and one must agree with the dictum, but with the proviso that the *safest* is not always the *best*. To say there are no Bibles in the rogue's museum is loose and foolish talk. As a fact, the Bible all through history has been used to cloak or defend all sorts of crimes, slavery, for instance, persecution, etc. I am not prepared to say all criminals are religious, but it is a notorious fact that most of the murderers executed have made a most edifyingly pious exit on the scaffold. Even if religion were a deterrent against crime, and even if the wrongdoer had been, or was, sincerely religious, it must be remembered a murder, for instance, is an abnormal act, by a person in an abnormal condition, or with a congenitally weak or depraved mind, and is a subject for the pathologist, psychologist, sociologist, or criminologist, not one for the moralist or the religionist, except in so far as religion and morality—or immorality—may have been accessory conditions.

To say a writer is inspired is to say he possesses powers, or gifts, above the natural; in a word, supernatural. As to what is meant by the supernatural the following passage from *The Religion of the Open Mind*, by Adam Gowans White, may shed some illumination:—

All our ideas of the supernatural are rooted in the natural. There is not a sentiment, a hope, a belief, a dogma, or a custom associated with religion which cannot be explained by ordinary scientific means. In this sense there was no "revelation" whatever about Christianity or any other form of supernatural religion—nothing imparted from unknown sources, nothing whispered by mysterious voices, nothing produced save what man himself conceived in his terror or his ecstasy, his ignorance or his striving after knowledge. It is always man's own shadow that has been cast upon the darkness of the unknown. Primitive man in his ignorance dreamed or imagined powers or spirits haunted forests, glades, rocks, and mountains. There were earth gods, tree gods, animal gods, stone gods, water gods, as well as ancestral gods. They were symbols of the unknown powers with which he was surrounded and before which he stood helpless and trembling. From the ancestral god there rose by natural growth the tribal god. Jehovah the God of Israel is the most familiar example of a tribal god. A jealous, revengeful god, he demanded that the Israelites should worship no other gods. By slow degrees this conception of a god who was ready to lead the tribe in battle, and whose wrath could be appeased by burnt offerings and blood sacrifices gave place to the idea of a single supreme God, creator of heaven and earth, the father of all humanity. Later the God-idea became refined; it became etheralized from a man writ large to a spirit infinite in knowledge and in power.

Matthew Arnold described God as the power not ourselves that makes for righteousness. Jehovah of the ancient Jews was thus become the vague diffused and omnipresent Providence of the latter day Christian, a rationalized and sublimated idea of God that still left moral and religious sanction to the judgment of the supreme supernatural being, keeping alive with a present awe and fear the moral and religious conscience, but which was really derived from, as the writer quoted points out, the traditional and customary conscience of the race, rooted in the past, born of ignorance and fear, refined at last by ages of experience, knowledge, reflection, and taste. Even now vengeance is the prerogative of the Lord. But for a long time the sinner's fear of Hell was the strongest weapon of the Church. The present day Christian, however, is ashamed of the doctrine of Hell-fire, and is indignant when it is mentioned as an integral part of the Christian's creed. God is now but the personification, or unification, of a general providence. Nature and the laws of nature are but the expression of his

will, and the uniformity of nature the expression of a God without variability or shadow of turning. At this point God is identified with the energy immanent in nature. This is the logical summit of Theism, and is practically the same position as that of so-called Atheism. The difference is one of interpretation. The evolution of religion has been an advance from the supernatural to the natural. The savage where knowledge of the Seen was minute lived in the constant presence of the Unseen; we, whose knowledge of the Seen is comparatively great, are no longer haunted by the Unseen. Pious tract distributors, many of them, are already ashamed of Hell; they may in due course be ashamed of the stupidities of silly tracts.

E. W. per A. M.

Correspondence.

FREETHOUGHT FELLOWSHIPS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Following in the footsteps of your recent and welcome visit to Saltcoats, and while these are still clearly outlined in the mind's eye of those who heard your lecture; also having in mind the oft repeated request in the *Freethinker* for the formation of a central Fellowship, I have just thought of what seems to me an excellent easily workable idea, namely: that scattered here and there in every community—like good raisins in a coarse war-time loaf—are so many detached, but convinced, even enthusiastic Freethinkers, a formal "Society" of whom may for the moment be outside practical, or at least practicable politics. In such a scattered community, also, is almost always to be found one more enthusiastic than the rest, who would be more than willing to take on the simple *irresponsible* duties of local secretary to the quite *irresponsible* members of the Fellowship. There would be no fees, no particular meeting time or place, no one in authority—individual principle and predilection would remain the guiding, inspiring and cohesive forces, and without which forces the most formal and concrete society would not stand.

The use of such a fellowship seems to me obvious and incalculable. For instance, the arrangement, etc., for the recent Saltcoats' lecture (which was comparatively a great success) was at the first a one man affair, though loyal local helpers came along at the last—even people not connected with our movement. Such is, however, a big risk for one man, if he is without means, and is not quite fair to, say, a man of Mr. Cohen's standing in the intellectual world, when he so bravely visits those out of the way places—places so much in need of him, and of all the others the local spirits can afford to bring.

In view of such another event the local secretary would post card, or otherwise acquaint, the members of the Fellowship, and lay them under *strictly voluntary* contribution. A meeting could be called, and the resources pooled, and a plan of campaign arranged. Failing the support of the members the local enthusiast would still be as free to proceed with his venture as the others were to fight shy of it.

I should like at least to hear from local readers of the *Freethinker* what are their views on the matter thus crudely outlined. Membership certificates could be printed, which still would not involve the signatories even in "limited liability."

A. MILLAR.

THE MYTH OF JESUS.

SIR,—Mr. Robert Arch asks why a statement, that some standing round should not see death until the arrival of the kingdom of God, could have been attributed to a person who never existed? Well, I suppose that Mr. Arch will admit that some of the sayings and doings attributed to Jesus are mythical, and I cannot see that this particular one is any more impossible of fabrication than the others. The New Testament writings are not verbatim contemporary reports. The four Gospels themselves, as we have them, were not written until the middle of the second century, and even Christian scholars now

admit that they have been interpolated. Celsus in the second century called attention to the fact that the Christians were constantly altering their Gospels. I should imagine that the passage in question was inserted by a believer in the coming "Kingdom of God," who wished to have the authority of the Gospels for the doctrine.

Mr. Arch is not satisfied with my theory about the brethren of the Lord; very well then we will agree to differ. I would advise Mr. Arch—if he has not already done so—to read Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Pagan Christs, The Historical Jesus, The Jesus Problem, and Christianity and Mythology*. Also *The Christ Myth*, by Professor Arthur Drews.

"Unorthodox"—I cannot see why he should conceal his name, for he has nothing to fear from the orthodox. In fact, I suggest that he should change his pen-name to Ultramontane—now gives the name of the book containing the photo of Golgotha, it is—don't smile—*The Empty Tomb*, by the Rev. C. C. Dobson. "Unorthodox" has also gone to the trouble of writing to the Rev. C. C. Dobson asking, for my benefit, if the photograph is faked. After much striving I cannot for the life of me see what benefit it will be to me, as I never suggested that the photograph was faked. What I said was that the same evidence, *viz.*, a photograph, could be produced for all the other sites claimed.

The traditional site shown to visitors to-day was discarded by General Gordon and Colonel Conder, who investigated the matter on the spot, and who suggested another site. All the sites, in fact, are mere guess-work. The Rev. C. C. Dobson will doubtless be much edified by the knowledge that *The Empty Tomb*, written solely for religious edification, should be used in the good work of smiting the infidel, even by an unorthodox champion; doubtless the Rev. C. C. Dobson will bestow his blessing upon "Unorthodox," and what infidel would be so unkind as to begrudge him that?

"Unorthodox," who seems to be in a most uncharitable frame of mind, still contends that the whole course of events, from the trial before Pilate—at daybreak at six in the morning! onward—took place between six and nine. Our readers can see the impossibility of this fantastic claim for themselves without my going over the ground again.

W. MANN.

WANTED, MEETING PLACES.

SIR,—Is it not remarkable that every religious sect appears able without apparent difficulty to obtain meeting places whilst many earnest and high-minded people are absolutely unable to obtain halls or rooms for meetings of a secular character in many parts of the country, especially for Sunday evening meetings? How is it that the supporters of the respective religious creeds who can afford it readily take their share in the financial obligations involved, whilst we rarely hear of broad-minded philanthropists outside the established religions coming forward to aid any Freethought propaganda? Without necessarily identifying myself with either the Freethought or religious bodies I cannot help thinking that it would be well worth while any person of means rendering some assistance to those who are compelled to remain inarticulate for lack of meeting places or the means of publishing.

I know of Labour and other organizations that have been vainly searching for a meeting place for over a year. A decent sized shop could be converted at little cost into two meeting rooms and would be a great boon sought after by scores of organizations. An apparently derelict hall connected with a church that I applied for and was willing to pay a fair rent for during the winter months for lectures on the land question was refused me by the vicar because he said I would be taking the young people out of his church. Can any of your readers suggest any means of overcoming this difficulty?

F. A. WILMER.

Courageous casting off all bondage to authority and superstition would carry through the religious revolution begun four centuries ago, wipe out the last vestige of religious privilege, and settle the claims of spiritual liberty against ecclesiasticism.—A. J. Todd, "Theories of Social Progress."

Mr. F. J. Gould in South Shields.

"THE CHILDREN'S HOUR."

THERE are few things more interesting, and shall we say, even more inspiring, than to look back and trace the steps of some who have gone before. But the recorded work of Freethinkers is of exceeding slim dimensions. And it is of no small value to remember that the *Freethinker* is the chief source to which posterity will look for a record of the work of our noble cause. We in South Shields can, perhaps, rest easy in this respect. Most of the champions of Secularism have visited our township from time to time, and it is pleasing to think that it is largely to their teaching and influence that we should look for an explanation of the tolerance and hospitality which is extended to unpopular views. But our present purpose is to record and deal with, briefly, a visit paid to us recently by Mr. F. J. Gould. It is true that we had no part in the arrangements for Mr. Gould's visit. He was brought by the local branch of the National Union of Women Teachers, to assist in propagating "The League of Nations," but the noteworthy thing is, and it certainly calls for some explanation, that this is the first time that Mr. Gould has been in this important Freethought area.

The subject matter of Mr. Gould was not avowedly Secularism or anti-religious, but it was undoubtedly Secularistic. The method pursued was novel and heartening. A number of children present were supposed to be "the league," representing various countries. The prevailing idea was that there should not be any bar, neither colour, race, nor religion. One little lady was concerned as to whether some of the others were Christians, but the general consensus of opinion was that this was not of immediate importance, Humanism being sufficient as a bond of union. The adults present were quite agreed that this should be "the children's hour." In a very short time these little folk will have the affairs of life in their own hands, and as a preparation for their equipment in carrying out the duties of citizenship, real education must be considered as being unique. Of course, much discussion might be evoked as to what constitutes "real education," but proved truth is all that counts. In any case, the atmosphere where education is to operate must be perfectly free. Our shoddy education really causes the free heart and conscience to be dried up by the lying tongue and pen. We can safely assume that "that hour" will be treasured by those little members of that transient league, even though it was only of an hour's duration. And in after life their minds will go back to that kindly gentleman who, for an hour, trusted them. He did not want to know whether they had learnt their creeds well, or any other thing of a dogmatic nature. He treated them as "grown-ups," as it were. He wanted to know their honest thoughts about the greatest problem in the world—the amelioration of mankind.

The local Education Committee is perturbed at the backwardness of a large number of school-children, and in their deliberations they talk airily about lower and higher walks of life. In their wisdom they presume that a slow or backward child is doomed to "the lower walk." This alone puts them out of court. But, of course, they are quite unconscious of this; they seek for the explanation in the child or the curriculum, and, as usual, refer the matter to the proper committee. If only education could come into its own we would soon cease to be pestered by these little men from the little Bethels. In the meantime we would show our appreciation of work performed by an attempt to record the same. When the citadel of ignorance falls it will be by the application of every means of attack, and who shall estimate the share of destruction that will be put to the credit of "The Children's Hour," as informed by Mr. Gould, if universally applied?

J. FOTHERGILL.

The desire to be for ever as we are; the reluctance to a violent and unexperienced change, which is common to all the animated and inanimate combinations of the universe, is, indeed, the secret persuasion which has given birth to the opinions of a future state.—*Shelley*.

The Milngavie Debate.

"THE people of Milngavie know my position, they want to know Mr. Cohen's position." This was the astonishing statement made by the Rev. Mr. Hislop some weeks ago. Astonishing because made by a minister, and yet it seemed to speak scorn of his opponent, and that is always fatal.

Well, the people of Milngavie have heard both positions stated on the same platform, on the same subject and on the same night. It is matter for regret that two to three hundred had to be refused admission for want of room. Standing (like a good many more) listening, one assumed that Mr. Hislop made out the best case he could for Christianity, and yet the best was of such a nature that it could not possibly have drawn out the best of which Mr. Cohen is capable. The best is that Christianity abolished slavery in America and Africa. Mr. Cohen's query: "Who took slavery there?" was unanswered, and his story of Captain Hawkins' slave ships, the "Holy Ghost" and the "Jesus" was new to the bulk of the audience. And Christianity raised the status of the home, prevented the exposure of infants, passed Factory Acts, promoted education, fostered art, and was, in fact, the one bright spot in the Dark Ages and the great democratic power of to-day.

When Mr. Hislop sat down the volume of applause seemed to say, "That's that." But there was another side to the story, and Mr. Cohen proceeded to tell it. So far from being a great democratic power Christianity had opposed Factory Acts, the trade unions and the temperance movement until it no longer dared, and then it had nobbled them. It had upheld slavery and had created and still tolerated a state of society that required societies to prevent cruelty to children and to animals. Mr. Hislop admitted that before Christianity there were great ideals, but Christianity alone had the driving force to carry them out. When is the force going to function? What holds it in restraint? No answer was forthcoming. None is possible. One wondered how the thoughts of the people were running when the debate finished. What is the worth of religion if its strongest arguments can be so easily rebutted? Most of the audience were young people, and to many of them Christianity must have appeared in a new shape, and that a less ideal one than the former. Home-going I wondered if Mr. Hislop still believes that "the people of Milngavie know my position, they want to know Mr. Cohen's position." AUTOLYCUS.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON
OCTOBER 27.

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

Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

The Monthly Financial Statement was presented and adopted.

New members were received for Leeds, Newcastle, North London, Stockport and the Parent Society.

In further reference to the action of the Birmingham Recorder towards the freethinking jurymen, the President reported the result of his interview with the Society's solicitor, and that a letter had been written to the Home Secretary pointing out that under the Oaths Act of 1888 the juror should have been exempt, and, further, that there appeared to be no statutory authorization for some of the words used. It was also agreed that further action should be considered.

Correspondence and reports of propaganda work were received from Glasgow, Stockport, Leeds, Swansea and Fulham, and instructions given.

The proposed innovation for the Annual Conference was discussed and it was resolved: "That in the opinion of this Executive, it is desirable that the Afternoon Session of the Conference be devoted to short papers on some social topic, to be followed by discussion."

The meeting then closed.

E. M. VANCE,
General Secretary.

Obituary.

It is with the very deepest regret that we have to record the loss sustained by Mr. and Mrs. Macconnell, of Bake-well, in the death of their infant son, after a brief illness. The child was a first and only one, and all will understand and sympathize with the mother and father in their sorrow. A simple but touchingly effective service was conducted by Mr. Macconnell at the grave side, the two parents being the only known Freethinkers in a small community. Perhaps the service itself will have the effect of impressing upon others the fact of how great is the community of feeling that exists in the great crises of life, in spite of the artificial differences and distinctions created by theology. We offer our sincere sympathy to the bereaved parents, and hope that the future will hold compensation for them for the sorrow they are now experiencing.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc

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

LONDON. INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Mr. L. Joseph, "What is Intelligence?"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Mr. H. V. Storey, "The English Language and its Rivals."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. 9., three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Mr. C. Ratcliffe, "Is Christianity True?"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, Norman Angell, "Absolute Nationalism and the Social Future."

COUNTRY. INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (The Market Hotel, Station Street): 6, Presentation to Mr. R. G. Fathers (late President of the Branch) and Mrs. Fathers. Vocal and Instrumental music.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (City Hall Saloon, Candleriggs): Mr. J. T. Lloyd, 11.30, "Desperate Christian Reaction"; 6.30, "Maligned Secularism."

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (19 Lowerhead Row, Youngman's): 7, Mr. Wm. Moffatt, F.Z.S., "Instinct and Intelligence."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Dan Griffiths, "Human Nature."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme Public Hall, near Brick Villa Hotel): Mr. W. H. Thresh, 3, "The Colours of Flowers"; 6.30, "The Record of the Rocks and how to Read it."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (3 Thompson Street, Tyne Dock): 6.30, Mr. J. Fothergill, "Freethought & Nationality."

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (The Elysium, High Street, Swansea): 7, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Freethought, Free Speech, Blasphemy, and the Law."

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Registered Office: 62 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

Secretary: MISS E. M. VANCE.

THIS Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

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The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up.

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The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are eligible for re-election.

Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re* Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

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