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Views and Opinions.

Labour and Religion.

UNDER the title of "Labour Speaks for Itself On Religion," Mr. Jerome Davis, an American journalist, has brought together thirty-one essays from different parts of the world illustrating his title. Whether they exhibit fully the attitude of labour towards religion is a matter of opinion, although the points of view are wide enough, if curiously so. For example, if one takes the four Russian writers, then we must conclude that labour is definitely hostile to religion. One of the most carefully reasoned chapters in the book is that by the Russian Minister for Education on the need for education being atheistic from the outset. On the other hand, of the thirteen writers who have been selected to represent Canada and the United States, only two give a pronouncement against religion—Mr. Hardman, the President of the Clothing Workers, and Mr. Thompson, National Organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World, who has nothing but supreme scorn for the religious idea as a whole. The well known Socialist writer, Emile Vandervelde, says that in France "the Socialist Party is composed wholly of men who are indifferent to religion or hostile to it," while an equally prominent Socialist writer, Karl Kautsky, says that while labour may be left to make up its own mind about religious subjects, the less it has to do with the churches and church questions the better. These men know quite well that the Socialist movement grew up without religion, and feel that its presence is bound to be a source of weakness.

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Religious Exploitation.

Taking the symposium as a whole it is significant that the tendency to pronounce Labour as being profoundly religious is most noticeable where the purely political opportunities are greatest, and where there are some hopes of capturing the religious vote. One

may certainly attribute to these circumstances the fact that the three selected representatives of Labour in this country, Mr. Arthur Henderson, Mr. Lansbury, and Mr. Fenner Brockway, all find the movement profoundly Christian. It cannot be that there are no non-Christians in the Labour movement, or if Mr. Jerome Davis is ignorant of such, we should be happy to give him the names of several. Messrs. Lansbury, Brockway, and Henderson may be political representatives of a section of the labour world, but they were certainly not selected on account of their religious opinions, or because they represented the Labour world on matters of religion. The truth is that in this matter religious Socialists are inconsiderately vocal in their advocacy of religious ideas, while non-religious Socialists, for the sake of some assumed advantage, are curiously, even criminally silent when religion is brought on the carpet at Labour gatherings. If all Socialists who do not believe in religion were to repudiate their identification with nonsensical statements about the ideal of that plastic and putty-like figure, Jesus, there might soon be an alteration in the tone of the leaders. The policy of treating these spurts of evangelistic extravagance as mental aberrations on the same level as the irresponsible utterances of wayward children may be carried a little too far.

* * *

Ill-Mannered Piety.

There is a curious illustration of this impertinent intrusion of personal religious opinions where they have no right in the following anecdote by M. Emile Vandervelde :—

Two or three years after the war, the Bureau of the Socialist International met in London. Our comrades of the Labour Party gave a lunch in our honour. Henderson, the future Minister of the Interior in the Cabinet of Macdonald, presided. My neighbour was the Secretary of the French Socialist Party, Dubreuilh . . . As the meal was about to commence, Henderson rose from his seat for a moment and spoke a few words. "What is he saying?" asked Dubreuilh. "He was saying Grace." "No!" cried my French comrade, "it is impossible." And for a little I was afraid that he meant to leave the room.

If Mr. Henderson cared to say grace when he was by himself, or when in public said it to himself, no one would have the slightest right to object. But I wonder what would have happened if at some similar gathering at which Mr. Henderson was present someone had got up and voluntarily made a confession of Atheism which implicated the whole. French manners were in that case superior to British religion.

The way in which this religious prejudice distorts the commonest facts of industrial history is seen in the assertion that the Labour movement was an outcome of the evangelical movement of John Wesley.

It is quite true that many of the early agitators belonged to the Methodist Church, but on the other hand some of the most ardent Labourites were men like Carlile, Cobbet, and Hetherington, whose religion was of a minus quantity. I may refer Mr. Henderson to the works of Barbara and J. L. Hammond, books that he must be well acquainted with, and he will find that the leaders of the Wesleyan Church were as much in opposition to the labourers for entering into a political agitation for an increase of their wages from seven shillings a week as were the leaders of the established church. Quite naturally, some of the leaders of the dispossessed came from the Nonconformists. Where else were they to come from save from the ranks of the heretics generally? Wesleyanism was preached among the people, for much the same reason that the New Testament tells us Jesus carried his teaching to the Gentiles—because others would not listen. A man reflects little credit on his qualifications for statesmanship when he so easily mistakes a purely casual connexion from a causal one. No one preached the doctrine of "those whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" more fervently than did John Wesley. And it was during the great evangelical revival that some of the worst evils of the factory system developed.

* * *

Religion and Labour in Mexico.

The most interesting chapter in the book is that dealing with religion and labour in Mexico. It is written by Roberto Haberman, a man who has had an adventurous and a distinguished career. It gives a brief outline of the history of the Church in Mexico that leaves little to imagination. From the beginning of the sixteenth century, when South America was invaded by a horde of greedy and unscrupulous adventurers and priests the evil influence of religion was felt. The priests brought the Inquisition with them, and sixty-three victims were executed within three years of its arrival. The Church ruled the country through its priests, and through its priests it secured freedom from taxes with monopolies in land and even food that finally enabled it to hold the land and the people in pawn. It collected, for example, enormous quantities of seed as tithe, and the Inquisition saw to it that no one planted seeds that were not blessed by the church. The church had immunity from the civil authority, and maintained its own police force to ensure the collection of tithes. It had also a monopoly of education and wielded a rigorous censorship over all publications.

Time after time everyone who attempted to help the downtrodden, under-fed and over-worked peasants found himself in conflict with the church. In 1854 a revolution removed some of the possessions of the church and considerably weakened its power. Church property was taken over by the State, and the schools were secularized. The Pope called upon all Catholics to disobey the constitution, and since then the church has shown itself ready to aid any foreign enterprise that promised it some of its old privileges as a reward. The church in Mexico has always been a power foreign to the nation, caring but for its own power and obsessed with its own greed.

* * *

An Unintended Moral.

In a way the chapter on Mexico points the moral of the book. There are plenty of cant expressions such as "People have never left the Church, the churches have left the people." "Work is worship, to labour is to pray, because that is to exercise the highest, the divine faculties implanted in us as sons of God." "Labour thinks of the church as a

dutiful child thinks of its mother." "We have a real reverence for the teaching and life of Christ," etc. But the plain fact the book discloses is that in no part of the world do the people look upon the church as anything other than an enemy to their best interests. It is idle to say that this is because the church has departed from its true mission, or has been untrue to its ideal. Even if that were true it would be a stupid statement to make, and one that only the muddle-headedness of the average man makes possible of acceptance. "The Church" is not a mysterious something that exists apart from men and women; it is made up of men and women; and to say that Christianity has not had a beneficial influence on the Church is a roundabout way of saying that it has not had a good influence on the lives of those who believed in it. The excuse finds the grounds of its existence in the inability of some men to think apart from orthodox forms, and the fear others have of giving offence to established beliefs and institutions.

Naturally an institution that wished to control men and women had to keep in touch with average human nature, and to accommodate itself to those conditions that make human society possible. The Church did get as far as possible away from a sane sociology in its doctrine of other-worldism and the teaching of the sacredness of celibacy. But social development went on in spite of the church, and compelled the church to recognize its existence. The proof of this is that there is not a fundamental reform, either in pure sociology or in the world of ideas that originated within the Christian church; and with the development of positive science and the spread of education the recognition became general that the problem of social betterment lies completely outside the religious question, and that the great task is to remove the control that religion has exerted over sociological processes. That gives us the fundamental fact disclosed by this book that all over the world, even in the handful of Chinese Christians who rather arrogantly take it upon themselves to speak in the name of "Chinese labour," organized Christianity is seen to be an enemy that must be fought and conquered. The arguments for the identity of Labour and Christian ideals are mere sentimental excuses, or political catchwords framed for the capture of the shallow-witted.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Sidetracking Science.

"There is no darkness but ignorance."—*Shakespeare.*

"How can I hate anything, unless I myself am filled with hatred."—*Goethe.*

"The soul was invented in order to explain the body."—*Clemenceau.*

SCIENCE and religion have ever been enemies. Scientific teaching and investigation, or, indeed, any form of intellectual liberty has always been incompatible with assent to the dogmas of religion. The entire organization of Priestcraft has invariably been brought to bear against science, on the ground that it is a most powerful solvent of religious faith. This resistance of the various churches of Christ to the prevalent opinions of scientists has no indisputable claim to our respect. When we remember that the system of Copernicus, the discoveries of Galileo, the law of gravitation of Newton, and the Darwinian theory were all in turn opposed by priests, we are inclined to attribute that resistance, not to the weakness of the arguments of scientists, but to the priestly dislike of knowledge.

Chemistry was opposed as an impious prying into the secrets of "God," and the early chemists were re-

garded as agents of "the devil," and treated accordingly. Physiology was opposed on similar grounds. Geology and biology were also opposed tooth and nail by priests who resented all inquiry and preferred explaining natural phenomena by mythological invention. Even the introduction of the use of chloroform in cases of child-birth was opposed in the nineteenth century by priests on the ground that it alleviated the primal curse imposed on woman by an alleged god of love.

Priests have communicated their dislikes of science to their followers, and sometimes the laymen better the instruction of their pastors and masters. Such an instance occurred recently in the columns of the *Evening News* (London) when a leading article, in all the glory of leaded type, was devoted to "The Case Against Science." There is always something exhilarating in the infatuation of an heroic ignoramus, and Freethinkers will appreciate an indictment of Science which, like a famous actor's impersonation of "Hamlet," was said to be "funny without being vulgar."

This journalistic ally of the small but fierce tribe of Christian Evidence exponents is as ruthless as a bull in a china shop. Not only does he describe science as being materialistic, but its crowning infamy is that it "moulds and directs the souls of men." And then he asks the bewildered reader to consider the awful fate which has overtaken Russia, where priests have to work six days a week in ordinary employment, and aristocrats are no more highly esteemed than plain citizens. So unlike our own country, where some of our Socialists are more servile than flunkies, and folks whose naturalization papers are not yet dry carry the largest Union Jacks.

Why drag in Russia? The journalist wanted a turnip-head to scare opponents, but in selecting Russia for that purpose he displayed his own lack of knowledge. For the Russian Revolution was not caused by that country's scientists, but by the twin machinations of Kingcraft and Priestcraft. Between these two thieves the unfortunate Russian people were crucified. Living by faith is an easy profession, as priests well know. Living on faith is a far more precarious business. Elijah is said to have subsisted on food brought him by inspired ravens. The starving people of Russia during and after the war asked their "god" to give them their daily bread, and the answer was that they died, not by hundreds, but by thousands. If there were no other indictment of Christianity, the awful sufferings of Christian nations during and after the last war would condemn it everlastingly.

Science is a big word, and when you've uttered it "you've said a mouthful," as they say in the Great Republic of the West. Journalistic verbiage, at so many pence per line, is no substitute for ordered knowledge and sober opinion. The questioning mind of the scholar is as important to the human race as the creative mind of the artist. Socrates is as great a name as that of Shakespeare. Plato is as important as Phidias. Besides, science has its creative not less than its investigatory aspects. That it has been prostituted by the making of high explosive shells and bombing aeroplanes for the destruction of life is the fault of militarism and so-called statesmen. Science has its beneficent side as the making of motors, agricultural machinery, and food-stuffs, amply testify.

The *Evening News* journalist is not so bland nor so childlike as he appears to be. He follows a well-beaten track of theology in belittling science and in magnifying "the world of the spirit," which is a mystery. And the journalist himself is in a mist. In writing of mysteries he is simply using a subterfuge to cover the rapid retreat of a defender of the faith.

"The world of the spirit," forsooth! And the

Fleet Street journalist has not illuminated it with his camouflage of controversy. Wishing to keep religion in mystery, or obscurity, he objects to explanations. He, who pokes fun at scientists, cannot tolerate that men should talk of religion too inquiringly. Even if the scientists are right, the subject is taboo. The older theologians were definite; their degenerate descendants are indefinite. Of all the hundred-and-one varieties of Christianity, only two stick to first principles. They are the Roman Catholic Church and the Salvation Army, both of whose followers are mainly recruited from the most illiterate sections of the community.

Freethinkers will welcome the newest theologians from Fleet Street. The clergy are almost as shy of debates as burglars of the Flying Squad. But the pressmen turned theologians should play the game a little more fairly. A theologian ought not necessarily, emulate Samuel Pecksniff or imitate Monsieur Tartuffe. Nor should he assume the pontifical airs of a Suburban Sunday-School teacher. In the wicked old days of absolute monarchy it was a law enjoined on all good citizens that "the King can do no wrong." This adage the "gentlemen" from Fleet Street apply to themselves. They magnanimously denounce all those who dare to utter a word that might not profit the little boys and girls of that tin-tabernacle that they themselves adorn when arrayed in their best "glad rags." Fleet Street theology, however diluted and under-proof it may be, has not the stuff in it which moves mountains and converts hard-boiled sceptics. When the Sultan of Zanzibar sent a second-hand tramp steamer to sink the British Fleet, a hearty laugh rang through the civilized world. The "gentleman from Fleet Street" acting the part of Saint George attacking the dragon of "Science" is equally exhilarating. For his shining tin armour and the bright sword come from the theatrical costumier's, and have only been hired for a couple of hours. Such sham heroics, instead of inaugurating a new crusade, only serve to cause laughter in the ranks of the Army of Human Liberation.

MIMNERMUS.

Spiritism in Aboriginal Africa.

THE adoration and appeasement of departed spirits played an outstanding part in the cults of Egypt, Rome, and Greece. Indeed, throughout savage, barbarous and cultured communities, in every stage of development, evidences of ancestor worship are apparent. In China, Japan, and modern India, the deification of the dead forms a conspicuous feature in their faiths. Ghosts, baneful and benign, constantly appear, and Sir James Frazer's admission that all man-like gods may ultimately be traced to the deified spirits of departed men derives powerful support from the supernatural cults of savage Africa.

Mr. W. C. Willoughby, in his valuable volume, *The Soul of the Bantu*, proves that religion pervades the lives of the people. Every family and tribal relationship; all feasts, festivals and observances, both in peace and war; in fact, all things that relate to tribal life are regulated by religious requirements. To the largely secularized European races, the despotic sway exercised by supernaturalism among savages is partly responsible for the pitying contempt with which they are sometimes regarded. Willoughby opines that religion has so saturated the thoughts of the Bantu peoples, that it is inseparable from their very being. "Materialistic influences from Europe," he writes, "are playing upon Africa from a thousand points and may break up Bantu life; but the Bantu are hardly likely to be secularized, for they will

never be content without a religion that is able to touch every phase of life and to interpret the divine in terms of humanity."

Be this as it may, the native cult is a combination of animism and ancestor worship. In animistic belief, everything that casts a shadow is endowed with a soul, and this theory seems universal among peoples of the lower culture in the Dark Continent. In Bantu society ancestor worship is so intimately interwoven with ethics, legal arrangements, political institutions, and funerary rites, that the social structure would seemingly collapse in utter ruin were this veneration and propitiation of the ghosts to disappear.

Commenting on the circumstance that medical men trained on modern scientific principles, with special knowledge of tropical medicine, are those now usually selected for service in equatorial climes, Willoughby, who speaks as a missionary, whose outlook has been enlarged by evolutionary studies, puts some very pertinent questions regarding the fitness of the average missionary for his vocation. "Is there any inherent reason," he inquires, "why the man who has the cure of souls should be less scientific in temper and method than his brother of the scalpel and the phial? Without an analogous discipline, it is no more easy for a fully qualified spiritual practitioner to deal with the tropical diseases of the soul, or to detect the causes of that low spiritual vitality that he will discover among his converts. And a missionary's mistakes are much more serious than those of a doctor. The old saw has it that 'A doctor's mistakes are buried'; most of them are, though some outlive the doctor; but a missionary's mistakes are all sent forth to propagate their species among a people who are just entering into a real world of life and thought."

In the Bantu world no one dreams of doubting that man survives death. Every act concerning the dead demonstrates an unfaltering native faith in survival. Indeed, scepticism appears as unknown as it was in ancient Egypt.

Opposed as is the notion of an after-existence to all our everyday experiences, this belief, in company with all others, is of purely natural origin. Students of Sir Edward Tylor's *Primitive Culture*; Herbert Spencer's monumental *Principles of Sociology*; Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God*, and kindred works, have been rendered familiar with the multitudinous array of evidence collected from all parts of the earth which plainly pronounces in favour of the doctrine that the cult of the ghost has played the predominant part in the origin and evolution of theology.

Surveying the problem from a Christian Modernist standpoint, Willoughby concedes that the contention that "soul and spirit have been woven out of the vaporous 'dream figures' of normal sleep and abnormal hallucination, is, perhaps, as good as any other."

The misconceptions of natural phenomena attributed by anthropologists to primitive man are to-day displayed in abundant measure in the religions of savage Africa. Cyril Claridge, in his *Wild Bush Tribes of Central Africa* (Seeley, Service, 1921), when speaking of the Lower Congo, refers to the native belief that the spirit can abandon the body and "operate independently of it, and return to it at will. It is the explanation of a dream. The soul slips out of the body and talks, sees, hears, travels, and capers entirely on its own account. When out of the body, which it leaves snug under the blanket, it knows neither time nor space. It hunts in distant jungles, interviews dead acquaintances, enjoys the most delightful excursions, performs sensational feats, and

gets back to its old clay tenement before the cocks begin to crow in the morning. What better evidence of the existence of a soul does a Negro want than that? . . . He has even dreamt of his own funeral when his soul has played him the trick of pretending to lead him to the burial ground. Whilst *nitu* (body) sleeps; *mwandu* (soul) enjoys itself.

Bantu ideas concerning the nature of the soul are vague and conflicting, but always there appears a close connexion between the shade or spirit and the shadow, breath, and pulsation of the heart. The fertility of the fields, the utilities and dangers of edible or noxious plants, and the baneful or beneficent attributes of animals, are matters of life or death to the savage community. The truth of the native traditions the Bantu never questions, and he thinks it a wicked waste of time to inquire too curiously concerning the nature and destiny of the spirit. Savages generally are reticent when interrogated on matters of faith, and the absence of writing, as a rule, increases the difficulty of ascertaining their real attitude towards the unseen.

Nevertheless, important inferences may be drawn from native customs. In family worship, recently departed male ancestors are particularly remembered, but earlier ancestors are also invited to share in the sacrificial feast.

Infanticide is common with the Bantu, and it has been suggested that children are regarded as soulless. Willoughby thinks this an unwarranted assumption. In antiquity, infanticide was employed as a means of reducing the pressure of population. Yet the faithful held "that these little waifs of humanity were doomed to eke out the span of human life in wandering on the earth in unquiet and pain." Virgil in his description of the descent of Æneas into Hades notes the wailing of infants sent before their time to the dwelling of the dead. In one of Plutarch's sacred myths the pitiful appeals of children whose lives were ended at birth ascend from the deep abyss where they languish, through their inability to rise to the abodes of the blest. In Bantu belief the soul appears to enter the womb *before* the birth of the child.

The soul is regarded as a miniature replica of the body. If a limb be lost in life, at death the spirit enters the realm of the dead in a maimed state. The ghost retains the same face and figure as the living man, but on a minor scale. These diminutive spirits dwell in tiny huts erected for their accommodation in every Central African village.

Gibbon tells us that in ancient Rome the various religions were, to the multitude, equally true; to the philosopher, equally false; and to the magistrate, equally useful. Modern statesmen who utilize the superstitions of the vulgar to protect vested interests are not restricted to Europe and America. All Bantu chiefs appear to have carried on the same old game. The famous Chaka, when establishing his autocracy in Zululand, deemed it prudent to strengthen his sovereignty by securing the approval of earlier rulers who resided in the home of the dead. There was a prophet, who, according to common report, had once been eaten by a lion, and then specially commissioned in the spirit realm to return to earth with an important message to the people. In impressive tones the prophet described the land of the dead, where the warriors of old, and those who led laborious lives, now spent their ghostly days. Both men and cattle were small, but all seem to have approved of Chaka's conduct. "One smiles at the trick," comments Willoughby, "but is grateful for the authentic Bantu picture of the underworld—a picture that could substantiate the prophet's crafty claims only by chiming in with the notions of the people."

Do all Bantu cattle survive death? Certainly, cattle are slaughtered for the purpose of accompanying their master to the spirit land. Sometimes a cattle-shed is erected above the grave in which choice oxen are housed, and these are devoted to the dead. The finest specimens of the herd are selected to serve for the funeral feast. When great men die a hundred head of cattle are sometimes sacrificed, and their hides provide the bed on which the corpse is laid.

Various observers allege that there is no serious belief in the survival of animal spirits after death. Yet, conclusive evidence is available that the ghosts of defunct animals are feared and propitiated in Uganda and other African lands. The spectres of lions and other predatory beasts are very genuinely feared, while in the ghostly realm "the herd-boy still herds the beautiful beasts." Moreover, the chase is continued from this world to the next, where it forms a favourite pastime. Furthermore, the elaborate ritual of the hunt remains utterly meaningless unless we assume that the souls of the slain beasts retain their potency for good or ill after their career on earth is at an end. The imposing array of evidence garnered from all the habitable globe powerfully supports the saying of Grant Allen that spiritualism formed the first phase of religion, and as contemporary necromancy suggests, seems destined to prove the last.

T. F. PALMER.

The National Secular Society's Annual Dinner.

The thirty-third Annual Dinner, which took place at the Midland Hotel on January 18 last, stands out in many ways as unique in the history of the Society. The attendance was almost a record in point of numbers, and the occasion marked the presentation to the President of the sum subscribed by his friends from all parts of the world as a token of their loyalty and of their appreciation of the work he has done for the "Best of all Causes."

The gathering was happy and marked by sufficient informality to put everyone at their ease. Members and friends were delighted at meeting each other again, and the older generation seemed particularly pleased to note the many young people who gathered together ready to take up their share of the work which still had to be done in the fight against superstition, intolerance and for freedom of thought and speech. Many provincial members took the opportunity to meet their London friends again while the womenfolk in the person of jolly wives and pretty daughters gave a touch of colour and animation to the scene symbolizing the happy spirit of everybody.

Among those present were Mr. G. Alward, Mr. T. H. Elstob, Mr. Sydney Gimson, Colonel Arthur Lynch, Mrs. Seton Tiedeman, Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook, Mr. J. W. Easterbrook, Lieut.-Commander Easterbrook, Miss Kough, Dr. C. Marsh Beadnell, Mr. and Mrs. Saphin, Mr. & Mrs. Silvester, Mr. and Mrs. Clifton, Mr. and Mrs. Ready, Mr. McKelvie, Mr. & Mrs. Cutner, Mrs. Walters, Mr. LeMaine, Mr. A. D. Maclaren, Mr. and Mrs. Hornibrook, Mr. J. Lazarnick, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, Mr. and Mrs. C. Quinton, Mr. A. B. Moss, Mr. F. G. McCluskey, Mr. and Mrs. Kerr, Mr. and Mrs. Gorniot, Mr. and Mrs. Finch, Mr. Howell-Smith, Mr. A. G. Lye, Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Rosetti, Mr. and Mrs. Rudd, and Mr. and Mrs. G. Royle.

One missed, as is inevitable of course, many familiar faces, members who had passed away or who were too ill to attend. On the other hand quite a number of veterans of the movement were in evidence, and it is hoped they will be on many similar occasions still. The half-hour or so during which the reception was held by the President was really all too short. One meets so many friends, one has such a lot to say, so many questions to ask, that punctuality does not seem a virtue. But the

programme was an exceptionally long one, and though the function lasted nearly five hours the time seemed to fly at breakneck pace. The Chairman's speech was delivered in Mr. Cohen's best vein—punctuated here and there by that witty phrase or epigram of which his admirers know he is a master, and he kept it "short and sweet." Of the many happy people there, it is doubtful whether there were two happier than Mr. Easterbrook and Mr. Sydney Gimson. Mr. Easterbrook had accomplished what he had set his heart upon—a tribute from Freethinkers to the Editor of the *Freethinker* and President of the Society for his forty years' unselfish devotion to the movement. Mr. Gimson had known Mr. Cohen from the beginning of his career and had been his steadfast friend throughout. They made two splendid speeches, and in the reply, to which Mr. Cohen showed more emotion than was usually his wont, the audience rose to the occasion by singing "For he's a jolly good fellow"—which certainly relieved their feelings somewhat, and Mrs. Rosetti in a graceful little speech presented Mrs. Cohen with a beautiful basket of flowers.

The youngest member of the N.S.S., Mr. Arthur B. Moss, proposed the toast of the "National Secular Society" in his ever vigorous and trenchant tones, and Mr. H. R. Clifton (another youngster) seconded, while Dr. Arthur Lynch spoke on "Freethought at Home and Abroad," with Mr. R. B. Kerr in response.

Mr. Chapman Cohen, in delivering the Chairman's address dealt briefly with the work of the National Secular Society, its present position and prospects, and the part it had played for many years in the development of advanced thought in this country. He made a strong plea for those interested to be more than usually active in connexion with the removal of religion in State supported schools, and for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. The greatest leader Freethought in this country had ever had, Charles Bradlaugh, had taken for his motto "Thorough," and when the National Secular Society ceased to live up to that motto it might as well cease to exist.

The item of the evening was, of course, the presentation, and no one had worked harder for its success than Mr. Easterbrook. He said: "My task is fairly easy to-night as the honorary secretary to the Testimonial Fund. My duty is to tell you in a few words the history and development of the movement during the last few months. We decided to recognize Mr. Cohen's great work for our cause in a tangible and formal manner, but when it was proposed in 1928 at the Annual Conference, the President barred further discussion. We learnt our lesson then, and so in Manchester last year we gagged Mr. Cohen, for the first time, and put him out of the chair so that he could not interfere with what we intended to do. He has been, and is always, far more anxious for the cause than for his own profit, and always uses the blue pencil in snuffing out any fine references to himself—though he doesn't mind how he is attacked in his own paper. We thought there wasn't much financial life in the party, but the *Freethinker* Endowment Fund was a revelation. But please remember Mr. Cohen gets no pecuniary benefit out of it whatever—it all goes to the paper. You have all seen the appeal in the *Freethinker*, but I must add a word to that. The testimonial to Mr. Cohen is a very small medium of our great recognition to him for what he has done. It was not subscribed as payment for past services to our cause. Neither was it subscribed for his allegiance in the future, that must be thoroughly understood. Mr. Cohen gave himself to our movement forty years ago. He cannot take back the gift he gave nor the heart he gave. He must remain to be free to think or do as he has always thought best. That is how we stand. But to come to brass tacks—the L.S.D. of the testimonial. With interest the amount is £1,645 8s. 0½d. I am not satisfied and I wish it were more, but I am pleased to say its purchasing power is greater than it would have been 18 months ago. Another item of interest is that the Fund has had no charges of either postage or printing. All you gave goes straight to its proper destination. We desire to thank all who gave and deeply regret that many subscribers are not here to-night—as, for example, Mr. Monks, of Manchester, representing the younger generation, was unable to come. I will now call upon one who has had a long and honoured

career in the movement to make the presentation—Mr. Sydney Gimson of Leicester.”

Mr. Gimson said: “Words cannot express how proud I am to make the presentation. Mr. Easterbrook instructed me to prepare a gem of oratory, but any pearls I could make would be of the Woolworth variety. No, this is a bad simile for my words will be genuine and will express my real feelings for Mr. Cohen. Very young boys, in choosing their careers, will want to be engine drivers or sailors. Girls would like to be mothers of big families—at least that used to be the case—or Prime Ministers or film stars. Mr. Cohen choose as his career the freeing of men’s minds from superstition, and he did not choose it for its money making possibilities. He has had a long career, and though I have known him for over forty years, I have never met anyone who has shown such single mindedness and devotion to the cause—or thought less of money. Mr. Cohen was, I am proud to say, born in Leicester, and, looking through my Society’s records, the first time I can trace that he spoke for us was in December 31, 1893. And, curious to relate, at almost the same period three other famous Free-thinkers lectured for our Society, and they are happily still with us—Mr. J. M. Robertson, Mr. F. J. Gould, and Mr. Arthur B. Moss. Outside the movement Mr. Cohen’s abilities would have brought him a fortune. Within, it is difficult to make ends meet, but we all know him as the worthy successor to Charles Bradlaugh and George William Foote. Mr. Cohen is a fine scholar and he keeps well ahead of his time. He can put the most difficult problems into the simplest language, and his work has been taken into account by the leaders of religion. We—his friends—know him as a jolly comrade, a steadfast friend and a fine leader. Friends from all over the world have subscribed to this testimonial—and it comes as a veritable cargo of devotion. (Turning to Mr. Cohen): We ask you to accept this tribute of our affection, and if it will give you one quarter of the pleasure it has given us in subscribing to, we shall be content.

In replying, Mr. Chapman Cohen said: “It is not often that I find it difficult to put into words what I wish to say, but you must excuse me if on the present occasion my words are halting and brief. I feel that the last two speakers have had a far easier task than I have. It chimes in with the almost invariable good humour and the quite invariable good nature of my friend Mr. Easterbrook to say the very kindly things he has said. I ought to remind you that Mr. Easterbrook comes from Devon, a county remarkable for the number of men it has turned out noted for their capacity for piratical raids on other people’s pockets, although in this case I have to thank him for his efficiency and for the immense labour he has undertaken. And my old friend and fellow townsmen, Mr. Sydney Gimson, who bears a honoured name wherever English Freethought is known, and whose father was chiefly responsible for the handsome Secular Hall that Leicester possesses, Mr. Gimson has been for so long engaged in the public life of his town and is so used to presenting public nuisances as monuments of virtue that he naturally handles such a task with ease, grace, and dignity.

But my task is a harder one. These two speakers have but to think of all possible gracious things and to say them. I have to listen to them, and then try and look as though I deserved them. And that is a much harder task. So I hope you will look at what has been said about my past as people look at the crime-bespattered record of a convert at an evangelistic meeting—as a record of what may have been, but as no promise of what is to be. Please do not expect me to live up to the character that has been so generously sketched. I beg you to take what has been said as the kindly thoughts of generous friends who rate perhaps too highly what I have been able to do in the Freethought field.

But there is one thing I wish to say and that I do not want to be taken as a mere formality. I have just been presented with a very solid mark of esteem from Free-thinkers in this country, indeed, all over the world. I have been able to read—in the *Freethinker*—passages from some of the letters received by Mr. Easterbrook, and I have noted with the deepest appreciation the warm expressions of esteem that have been so generously given. One does not work for appreciation, but one

would be less than human not to welcome it when it is so generously and so spontaneously given. After all it is something to know that one has been able to make for some the rough road smooth, and to have thrown light where otherwise darkness would have prevailed. I wish, however, to protest against the use of the word sacrifice. I have been able to do the work I wished to do in the way I wished to do it. It would have been indeed a sacrifice if I had been driven to spend my life as the Reverend Chapman Cohen. It doesn’t even sound well.

Reference has been made to my length of service. That may, of course, be a gentle hint that voluntarily or involuntarily the time for my withdrawal comes steadily nearer. I suppose forty years is a rather long time, and to those who think it too long I will promise that I will not repeat the offence—to the same extent.

I cannot say with Othello, even when paraphrasing him, that since these arms of mine had seven year’s pith they have used their dearest efforts in the Freethought field, but if I may carry the paraphrase further I can say that since this brain of mine had reached the age of three times seven it has spent its best efforts in the Best of Causes. I could give that Cause no more than my poor best. I never had any inclination to give it less. In my youth I felt that I could fight under no nobler banner, and now that I have left that youth a long way behind me I am of the same opinion. It is a great Cause, and it has been served by a succession of brave men and women. In the autumn of one’s life it is something to feel that one is standing on the same spiritual platform as these. It is still more to feel that one has earned the right to stand in such illustrious company. If I have earned that right, and if I am further dowered with the esteem of good men and women in all parts of the world, I feel that I am well repaid for anything I have done.”

Mr. Arthur B. Moss, in proposing the “National Secular Society,” said: “As one of the oldest members I am proud to say a few words. We are making steady progress, our numbers are growing, and we are recruiting them from the intelligent classes. They are turning to us because there are only two logical positions. One must be either a whole-hogger, a Roman Catholic, or one must think and decide for oneself. Freethought is increasing, and the one great enemy we shall have to fight is Roman Catholicism for the Church of England is nearly done for. But we must not forget that we should still have to carry on the fight if the churches close up as most people would become “nothingarians.” Let us make our cause the grandest of all.”

Mr. H. R. Clifton in supporting the toast said: “I joined the N.S.S. in 1894, and have every reason to be proud of the event. It is an inspiration to belong to the N.S.S. I have heard Mr. Foote, Mr. Bradlaugh, Mr. Watts, Mrs. Besant, and I look back with pleasure on them all, and on the splendid articles in our paper every week. Young members should give them their whole attention. The N.S.S. represents the essence of truth and the ultimate fight will be between faith and reason.”

For the toast to “Freethought at Home and Abroad,” Dr. Arthur Lynch’s witty speech was listened to with great attention. A world-wide traveller he was able to draw upon his experience in various countries as illustrating the prospects of Freethought. Of Russia he advised his hearers to be cautious as to how far they accepted as accurate the stories of religious persecution that were published in certain papers. Italy, in spite of the alliance between the Pope and Mussolini, was due for a Renaissance of Freethinking, and it would come. In France and Germany the advance of Freethought was marked but the most hopeless case at present was Ireland, the Southern part of which had become an appendage of the Pope.

Mr. Kerr, in responding, did not think so poorly of Ireland as did Dr. Lynch, and instanced the failure of the Censorship measure, which although passed over eighteen months ago was unworkable because it was so completely opposed to the spirit of the younger and better-educated classes. But there did appear to be signs of serious reaction in England.

The speeches were not delivered without a break, for Mr. Royle had prepared a fine musical programme, which was thoroughly appreciated. Miss Marian Ord and Mr.

Fred Gregory rendered some excellent songs, and Clown Argo proved himself a most accomplished bird, lion, cat and other animals as well as a piece of wood being sawn and a bluebottle. How he did it was beyond most of us. Mr. Naunton Wayne's "efforts to amuse" proved extremely funny, Mr. Walter Newman "deputized" so well that he had the audience roaring with laughter the whole time, while the Misses Elsie and Doris Waters repeated last year's great success, including that beautifully rendered song "Jogging along."

And the thanks of all present must be given to the hard working organizers who did the work to make the evening so successful. They remain in the background, it is true, but without them such a great evening would not have been possible.

Finally, like all good things, the evening came to an end, and we each went our several ways, treasuring the memory of a wonderful time.

H. CUTNER.

"Mockery" of God and Others.

"God is not mocked." Even the fundamentalist cannot believe this without qualification. Many instances are given in the Holy Bible, which suggest that God was occasionally mocked, even in the ages of faith. Nowadays the mocking of God occurs constantly. The churches do their "bit" . . . but in some cases the boot may be on the other foot. Does God mock His Churches?

The *Freethinker* recorded that in November, 1928 a very determined co-operation between God and the Chicago Churches to put a stop to crime and corruption in that wicked city. To all appearance God came along quite obediently in response to the call of his professed (and professional) worshippers. It is quite certain the Churches believed that God had come out of the Holy City to rescue the Unholy City from its evil government. The "gigantic victory" of the Churches was hailed on all sides as a victory for God and Good Government. The Prayer Meetings which led up to the electoral landslide were succeeded by Thanksgiving Services in all the churches to celebrate the glorious victory.

God's good government in Chicago has had a year in which to "make good." Many changes have taken place. New police heads, mostly of the pious sort, have taken the place of the old "corrupt" ones; new education officers, new legal lights, new brooms everywhere. But so far from "sweeping clean," there is not a single intelligent observer who does not agree that Chicago is worse instead of better. Gangsters are not only more numerous but more murderous. Crimes have increased in ferocity as well as numerically.

It is not easy to say exactly how much "graft" goes on, but statistics show that although there are more murders there are fewer arrests for murder, and of the arrests there is a smaller proportion of convictions, and of the convictions there are more criminals who escape punishment. It is generally supposed that the brigands, assassins, and hold-up men bribe their way to immunity; pay blackmail; or (and) threaten to murder the officials, police, judges and witnesses who hinder them. Whether this is the truth or not I have no means of judging. It may be, of course, that the whole of these protectors of the citizens are only robbing the taxpayers. The only point made in this connexion is that the whole city is convinced by the facts that the present administration is not an improvement on, but is actually less worthy of support than the much maligned municipal "gang" which God and His Churches defeated a year ago.

Was God mocked? Was the religious appeal simply part of the tactics of a discredited corporation to come into office again by a ruse? To most of us it seems so. It looks as if some of the religionists of Chicago are part of the wilful corruption by which the worst elements in public life succeed in retaining power all the time. But those who deserve a very large share of the discredit are the "honest" Christians, the stupid, ignorant, incompetent parsons who are incapable of judgment yet deliver oracular guarantees that their favourite candidates deserve public confidence. It is the bumptious, bamboozling the babes for the benefit of the brigands.

Of course it must not be supposed that the police have done nothing at all while a hundred and twenty business premises have been bombed by dynamite, while two assassinations a day have disgraced Chicago, and while there have actually been physical assaults by judges upon other judges in the courts. Several prostitutes have been harried in the usual manner of police lacking more important duties. Also there have been more "slot-machines" suppressed than in the whole previous history of Chicago. (These slot-machines are said to be a terrible temptation to the gambling spirit of our young men, who may lose a few cents and no doubt seldom win any at these "games"). Movy pictures have been slightly censored—anyhow the picture theatres advertise that they are not allowed to show films to any but adults.

On the financial side the position is most precarious. In one of the wealthiest cities in the world, the public school teachers have several months' salary due to them. Christmas has found several thousand employees of the city penniless through a silly mistake by which a large proportion of the 1928 taxes cannot be collected until 1930! In a panic the Chicago Finance Committee tried to borrow £20,000,000, but as the Chicago debt already stands at over £50,000,000 the bankers (who are sometimes Jews) declined to aid a corporation elected by what the *Chicago Times* calls "the uplifters, the good church people."

Of course these church bosses were "mocking" the citizens. God does not suffer anyway whether mocked or not. And the citizens of Chicago will suffer from a corrupt and incompetent council so long as they allow themselves to be mocked by ministers of the gospel.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Acid Drops.

Members of the Historical Association recently passed a resolution that history cannot be made real to children unless aids other than the text book are enlisted. Surely these shouldn't be necessary. The text book writers should put more imagination in their products. See how real is Biblical history written by men with all the exuberance of Oriental fancy!

"It is a sorry circumstance," says Dr. Graham Little, M.P., "that education should be the play-thing of politicians, who are more eager for votes than for education." The question of votes will also be very prominent when the politicians have to settle the matter of religion in the State schools. After all, votes are vastly more important than principles or education!

According to the Rev. Dr. T. H. Ritson:—

If the world is to be saved, we have got to practise saintly living. . . . Let us in 1930 seek to manifest the gentlier virtues.

The virtues he mentions are lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, and forbearing one another in love. As the pious are being implored to seek to manifest them, we infer that they haven't been doing so in the past. Our observation confirms the inference. And we suggest that less intolerance towards Freethought and more forbearance in love towards Freethinkers would enable Christians to make a flying start in the direction of "saintly living."

Christianity, declares a writer, is not a code of beliefs, it is a method of living. This is not quite accurate. Christianity is a way of doing and not-doing, and of interfering with the actions of others, in accordance with a code of superstitious fancies. It is one of those stupid ways which the *Freethinker* is helping mankind to grow out of.

Sir Ernest Benn says that a world has been created in which hardly any man dare move in any matter on his own responsibility. Are things really so bad as that? Surely the ideal Kingdom of Heaven on earth beloved by Christian priests has not arrived yet.

One of the saddest things, says Miss Ethel Mannin, is that there is never time to do the things which would give us most satisfaction. Perhaps a revival of Puritan notions would be a cure for this state of affairs—people would cease desiring to do wholesome things that give pleasure.

We should have imagined it to be unnecessary in these enlightened times, but the *Listener* has been telling its readers to cultivate a broad mind when they travel on the Continent, and not be scandalized by the manner and customs of the inhabitants. For instance, all the people of Hungary and Czechoslovakia live in bathing suits in or on the rivers and lakes during the summer, and Vienna's largest indoor swimming bath permits mixed bathing. And the *Listener* asks its touring readers to "think no evil." That the advice should be necessary. . . . What a revelation it is as to the kind of intelligence produced by the British brand of Christian education!

A report issued by the Social Welfare Department of the Wesleyan Church tells all good men and true that: "Assistance has been given to ministers, Sunday school officials, and others, in influencing members of public bodies to give their support to the maintenance of Sunday as a day of worship, reflection, and rest." In other words, much back-stair influence, and also coercion and veiled threats have been employed to make timid local councillors vote against their conscience and for the benefit of the parsons. What a contemptible species this Christian religion breeds!

A generation is springing up, declares a religious weekly, regardless of religion, with no sense of loss because of its absence nor desire for its consolation and inspiration. The present age, we are told, is not agnostic; it does not even enquire. In other words, we presume, the present generation has progressed so far mentally as to treat religion with indifferent contempt. In this we can see no cause for lamentation. Only to the squint-brained religionist is mental progress a matter for regret. We may add that the incidence of the modern attitude towards religion is no mere accident. It is due in large part to the efforts of Freethinkers. There is, however, still much more to be done. Evil religious habits of thinking have to be uprooted from the minds of our partially emancipated moderns in order that more rational modes of thought may get a footing.

Paris isn't really wicked! The Rev. Basil Bourchier is anxious that ignorant English Christians should know that. In fact, he says:—

A regular mythology of evil absurdities has arisen as to the character of various Continental towns. I feel that and shall do our neighbours some service by exposing a few, even if I rob the professional moral-monger of some of his most spectacular artillery. . . . Believe me, the "sink of iniquity" talk is so much nonsense.

It is very kind of the reverend gentleman to echo what the *Freethinker* said many years ago. If he is still in the mood for enlightening ignorant English Christians, he can glean many more suggestions from past volumes of this journal.

Writing about "Prohibition" in America, the editor of the *Daily Mirror* says that the law is being enormously evaded or cynically broken, and the "drys" are demanding stricter enforcement of it. The editor adds:—

For it is always the view of the Puritans, in any community, that if a moral regulation fails, the police are to blame or the persecution is not severe enough; never that the morals enforced may be *too* pure, or even muddled and wrong.

The wisdom of the Puritan comes, he believes, straight from God. Quite naturally he never dreams of doubting whether it is muddled or wrong. Probably, the Puritans itch to interfere and prohibit may be psychologically explained as an outlet for his own stupid repressions.

Under a heading, "The Intolerance of Fear," the *Methodist Recorder* comments on the American Christian Scientists' boycott of Mrs. Eddy: *The Study of a Virginal Mind*. A book by Edwin F. Dakin. Our contemporary says:—

The New York *Christian Advocate* points out what opprobrious epithets would be hurled at the Methodist Church, . . . if its Vigilance Committees were to threaten with boycott those booksellers who exhibit books which proclaim teaching opposed to orthodox Christian morality. But here is a book above any suspicion of uncleanness, which does not even attack the "Church of Christ Scientist." A boycott has been put in operation against all who sell this book, simply because it states, and substantiates with sound testimony, facts which are unpalatable to the credulous members of this widely advertised organisation. . . . But a religion which is marked by fear of the light, and which aims at self-preservation by the method of the boycott, has as little right to the name of Science as it has to the title Christian.

For the sake of pure religion, as well as for the freedom of the Press and the liberty of truth, we hope Messrs. Scribners will win the day.

In a similar vein of moral indignation the pot, we remember, reproached the kettle for being black! Coercion and dirty boycotting tactics, as a means of "self-preservation," are in common use here by all the orthodox Christian churches, either separately or in collusion, in their attempts to suppress Freethought and also liberty of thought and action. To take one instance. Pressure is often brought to bear on local councillors when votes against Sunday games and kinemas are required. These tactics are quite Christian—traditionally Christian, too.

More and more the antique fiction of Holy Writ is being neglected. And the soul of the people will perish unless it recovers its former liking for holy fiction! This is the burden of the song of most reverend gentlemen who have been prophetically surveying the religious prospects for 1930.

The Rev. Prof. E. S. Waterhouse speaking:—

Theology for the Jew meant the Talmud, for the Greek it meant mythology. Christianity started without a theology—a defect Paul of Tarsus laboured hard to remedy. Theology then came to mean the dogmas of Church Councils; and the Middle Ages spent most of its theological efforts in settling accounts with Augustine and adding a relish of Aristotle. After the Reformation theology meant extracting from the Bible as a whole, taken from Genesis or Revelation, the Bible doctrine of such things as sin, grace, atonement, holiness, and so forth. A generation ago theology seemed inclined to veer round to philosophy of religion. Now a new tendency is showing itself. Theology is becoming psychological, and it may be that theology in years to come will increasingly mean a philosophical and psychological interpretation of Christianity, based on its historic records and upon the perennial facts of Christian experience.

P.S.—The two directions in which theology is never likely to "veer" are—towards common-sense and away from superstition. Theology dare not depart from the central truths of Christ Jesus.

Mr C. A. Spiepmann, at a recent conference, appealed for a close alliance between education authorities and the B.B.C. in the cause of adult education. The Librarian of Newcastle, he stated, had in twelve weeks distributed 1,500 books that had been recommended in broadcast talks and lectures. Needless to say, the books demanded would not include anything concerning religion on the adversely critical side. Owing to the B.B.C. policy of excluding Freethought lecturers, listeners are prevented from "hearing the other side" so that they can form their own judgment in matters of religion. Religion is the only topic that must be kept wrapped up in cotton wool. Every other subject can stand the light of day, but not religion.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

We are asked by Mr. Easterbrook to publish the following statement concerning the Chapman Cohen Testimonial.—Previously acknowledged, £1,634 3s. 3d.; O. C. James (Australia) per J. Neate, 10s.; W. W. Kensett, £1; Dr. Arthur Lynch, £1 1s.; Mrs. A. Lee, 5s.; R. S. Skaw, 10s.; Balance of Stamps on a Postal Order, ½d.; Interest on Bank Deposit of Fund, £7 18s. 9d.; Total, £1,645 8s. 0½d. At this point the account had to be closed to obtain Bankers' Draft for presentation made to Mr. Chapman Cohen on January 18, 1930. The following Donations have since been received:—E. Mancipated (S.-on-Trent), 5s.; Bonzo, per F.E.M., 10s.; H.J. (Carmarthenshire), £2; Mr. and Mrs. G. L. Alward, £5; Total in hand to January 20, 1930, £7 15s.

S. R. READY.—Pleased to know that you found the Dinner the "best function" you have ever attended. Shall hope to see you and your wife present next year.

P. V. MORRIS.—Crowded out of this issue. Will appear next week.

J. CLAYTON.—Another year, perhaps, we shall have the pleasure of greeting you.

J. BARTRAM.—Sorry to learn of the death of John Laidler. Unfortunately the obituary reaches us just as we are closing the paper. Shall appear next week.

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

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

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

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.

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 made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

Sugar Plums.

To-day (January 26) Mr. Cohen will visit the Chester-le-Street district. In the afternoon, at 2.30, he will speak in the Miner's Welfare Hall, at West Pelton, and in the evening in the South Pelaw Miner's Hall at 7. The handbill forwarded does not say, but we fancy the last-named hall is in Chester-le-Street. There will be music by Mr. J. Chapman and Miss Chapman for thirty minutes before each lecture, and tea will be provided for those friends who come from a distance. Mr. Cohen is looking forward to meeting many of his North Country friends again.

On Sunday next (February 2) Mr. Cohen will lecture at the Labour Church Stockport on "the Savage in our Midst." On the Monday evening he will cross to Bradford to lecture for the new Bradford Branch on "Things Christians Ought to Know." The lecture will be given in the King's Hall, Morley Street. The lecture will commence at 7.30. The local friends are expecting a large audience, and we hope they will not be disappointed.

There was no mistaking the success of the Annual Dinner at the Midland Grand Hotel on Saturday last. The gathering was one of the largest in the history of the

Society, and certainly the most representative. Visitors were present from Scarborough, Grimsby, North Wales, Liverpool, Manchester, Plymouth, Bournemouth, Coventry, Leicester, Luton, Ashford, Oxford, Saltash, Wolverhampton, and elsewhere. The large room was quite filled and the dinner itself was as good as it usually is. The musical part of the evening was in the very capable hands of Mr. G. Royle, and the Society is the more indebted to him for his cheerful help on account of his having only just come from the hands of a doctor, who only consented to Mr. Royle coming on the condition of his travelling to and fro in a closed car. Every one was thoroughly happy, and everyone showed it.

The unusual event of the evening was the presentation to Mr. Cohen of the cheque representing a testimonial of the esteem in which he is held by Freethinkers in all parts of the world. A report of the speeches of Mr. Easterbrook, who has acted as Secretary for the Committee, and of Mr. Sydney Gimson appears in another column. All we need say here is that both speeches were in excellent taste and well delivered. Mr. Cohen received a very warm welcome when he rose to reply. The few words he was able to say but ill-expressed his feelings at the expressions of esteem shown both by those, absent and present, who subscribed to the testimonial. On that point he can safely leave his friends, wherever situated, to take his thanks and appreciation for granted.

The surprise item of the occasion came in the shape of a very handsome basket of flowers to Mrs. Cohen. This was presented by Mrs. Rosetti, in a speech that was as pretty in form as the gift that was handed over. The already beautifully decorated tables were made the more beautiful by this adornment. It was the poetical touch of the evening, and a pronounced success.

We ought to add that the arrangements ran with exceptional ease, and the Secretary, Mr. Rosetti, deserves congratulations on the success of his first Annual Dinner. We hope he will have many such.

Mr. George Whitehead visits Liverpool this Sunday, and will lecture in the Picton Hall on "Religion and Birth Control." The lecture is timed for 7.30 p.m. Admission is free, with reserved seats at sixpence, and one shilling each. The fine Picton Hall requires some filling, but it will be easy if Liverpool and District Freethinkers bring themselves and orthodox friends.

In another part of this issue we publish a letter from Mr. C. J. Tennant, a press agent of the Christian Scientists in this country, in reply to our article in the *Freethinker* for January 12. Mr. Tennant's reply is not very convincing. He says:—

Christian Scientists have every right to protest against a biography which is neither authentic, reliable, nor true to the life and character and founder of their religion. They have no intention of permitting falsehood and misrepresentation to be broadcast without making protest and offering corrections.

We have no desire to challenge this policy, the proof of which is that we publish a quite evasive letter which is intended to rank as "a correction." But a deliberate policy of threat and boycott which may involve the ruin of booksellers who display books which Christian Scientists do not desire to see circulated, is scarcely what the ordinary person understands by a "correction." Perhaps Mr. Tennant will be good enough to address himself to the real point at issue which is that members of this cult are not to deal with any bookseller or publisher who publishes any which is considered obnoxious. Other comments are mere side issues.

Whether we are right in calling Mrs. Eddy an ignorant woman can be easily tested by anyone who cares to wade through the incredibly silly early editions of her book. We have not Paine's biography of Mark Twain's at hand, but we are willing to wager that Mr. Tennant distorts the writer's meaning. I can quite believe that

Mark Twain would endorse the principle that to keep a cheerful mind concerning health is a good thing, and so saves many from the imaginary ailments from which so many suffer. But that is not the principle that Mrs. Eddy claims to have discovered. Does Mr. Tennant wish his readers to understand that Mark Twain endorsed the teaching that all disease was a product of "mental mind," to be cured by the belief that no medical treatment, no hygienic treatment, no dietic treatment was necessary? That is the question to which we should like a much more straightforward answer than Mr. Tennant gives in his letter.

We are not surprised at receiving a number of letters of protest against the terribly brutal language of the South London Coroner to the mother on whose son he was holding an inquest. The only fitting thing would be to remove such a man from public office. To tell a mother whose son, riddled with disease as he was by being out of employment, that she was responsible for his suicide, and that her conduct in that respect was "perfectly shocking" is an outrage on decency. Mr. Douglas Cowburn should restrict himself to revival meetings. He seems to be quite unfitted for anything of a more responsible character.

Curiously, about the same time, a young man also out of work, and also in ill-health drowned himself. The inquest was held at Wavenden, and in a notice published in the *Leighton Buzzard Observer*, of January 14, we see that he was a member of St. Mary's Choir, and a regular attendant at St. Mary's Church. Our deepest sympathy is with Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard on the death of their son. All the same we wonder what the uncouth South London Coroner makes of it?

Time's Revenges.

It is enlightening for the modest student of history to notice how human values change. The "great man" of the day before yesterday shrinks into the outmoded professionalist who was "lucky"; the despised, unpopular outcast gets the statue centuries after his death. "So runs the world away." The forgotten scrap of holograph in the fist of "the Master" is catalogued by the autograph-dealer at a price that would have kept the writer alive for another six months. The irony is at once agonizing and delicious. Fate, with the heavy hand and the cruel smile, is a stern but witty deity, capable of amazing and unexpected generosity, usually when it is too late.

George Gissing's tragedy was that he was never able, even in the days of his fame, to make enough money to be "easy." The other day one of his "firsts" went for three hundred and twenty-five pounds, and the dealers laughed. Imagine, if you can, what that little sum would have meant to poor, worried Gissing. Where is he now. Anywhere? No one knows. But if he gets "news" now, we wonder what he thinks of the world and its ways, seen in perspective? If Gissing retain any part of his consciousness, we cannot help wondering how he regards the transaction. Morley Roberts, his faithful friend and biographer, tells how sometimes he had not a penny wherewith partly to satisfy his hunger. And one copy of one of his books, when Gissing is beyond the need of food, "goes" for very much more than he got for writing it. Could there be bitterer irony? Who can deny the goodness of the gods to mortals?

No matter! We will cease speculating upon the insoluble, and turn to the past. Recently, rambling in an old furniture shop, we lighted upon a set of *Chamber's Papers for the People*; Volume 12, No. 8, of that forgotten work, of which we now possess a

set, consists of an account of the famous Duke of Wellington, "The Iron Duke," as he was called by the success-adoring Victorians.

The last paragraph thrilled us, as showing how the world rewards the successful soldier. Here it is, in full:—

The Duke of Wellington's titles and offices are perhaps the most exalted and numerous ever conferred upon a single individual. We subjoin the list: Duke and Viscount Wellington; Baron Douro; Knight of the Garter, and Grand Cross of the Bath; Prince of Waterloo in the Netherlands; Duke of Ciudad Rodrigo, and Grandee of Spain; Duke of Vittoria; Marquis of Torres-Vedras; Count Vimiera in Portugal; Knight of the foreign orders of the Guelph of Hanover, St. Andrew of Russia, the Black Eagle of Prussia, the Golden Fleece of Spain, the Elephant of Denmark, St. Ferdinand of Merit, and St. Januarius of the Two Sicilies, Maximilian-Joseph of Bavaria, Maria-Theresa of Austria, the Sword of Sweden, of William of the Netherlands; Field-Marshal in the Armies of Austria, Russia, Prussia, Portugal, the Netherlands; Captain-General of Spain; Commander-in-Chief; Colonel of Grenadier Guards; Colonel-in-Chief of Rifle Brigade; Constable of the Tower and Dover Castle; Warden of the Cinque Ports; Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire and the Tower Hamlets; Chancellor of the University of Oxford; Master of Trinity House; Vice-President of the Scottish Naval and Military Academy; Governor of King's College; and D.C.I.

This precious string of pompous jargon, published in the Year of Grace, 1851, is a list of the honours bestowed by a grateful world upon a successful soldier, who was, incidentally, one of the most unloveable characters of whom we have any record. This "Iron Duke" and Tin God was also rewarded by a grateful country with seven hundred thousand pounds, two-thousand-a-year besides, "and perquisites." Enough of this dreary account of human sycophancy and snobbery; but it is amusing, perhaps, to recall the fact that when His Grace had the misfortune to differ from the citizens of London and Westminster about the expediency of a Reform Bill, the fickle mob, whose country he was supposed to have "saved" at the Battle of Waterloo, showed their dissent from, and their gratitude to, their saviour by smashing the windows of Apsley House, Piccadilly, His Grace's town residence. "So runs the world away."

All the great ceremonial religions—Buddhism, Catholicism, Judaism—and all the great imaginative writers, Homer, Aristophanes, Goethe, Dante, Rabelais, Shakespeare, Swift, Whitman, know the humanly-valuable worth of the litany as a psychological enlightener. These human catalogues!

As a counterblast to the list-history of the Duke of Wellington, here is an almost-contemporary list-history of Charles Southwell, the forgotten hero whom we are trying to restore to his rightful place in English social history.

In *The Lancashire Beacon* for November 10, 1849—thus almost contemporarily with the list of Wellington's "honours"—Southwell, after claiming to be "the best abused man in all England," gives a catalogue of the kind things said about him by his orthodox and pious opponents. We transcribe this list in full; in the hope that it will amuse our readers as much as it has amused us:—

"Gentleman mountebank; Napoleon-minded anti-Christian demagogue; destroying monster atheist; midnight reveller; man Southwell; of never-to-be-beaten spirit; king of himself alone; man with a melancholy soul; Voltaire the second; friend of Christ; hypocrite; fellow; hero of mischief; pest of society; infidel."—*Christian Beacon*, No. 1.

"Wandering vagabond; strolling player; restless, unhappy man; poor wanderer; little cop; infidel Charles Southwell."—*Christian Beacon*, No. 2.

"Hop-o'-my-thumb; blethering skate; hotch potch genius; little argus-eyed Tom Thumb; Bombastes Furioso; dear Voltaire; base and villainous designer; infamous editor; blasphemous, vituperative, demoralizing, abandoned; cod-seller; shark; jackan-apes; liar; will-o'-the-wisp; mountebank stage doctor; broker; general dealing conglomerist; editor of this dark lanthorn; showman; cantino hypocrite; dancing shop keeper; braggadacio; calumniator; whited sepulchre; tinkling symbol."—*Christian Beacon*, No. 3.

Avowed blasphemer; denier of Almighty God; scoffer of His revealed word; traducer of religion; vilifier of the clergy; malignant fellow; shrimp of wretchedness; libel on mankind; brazen-faced; Satan's representative; public disturber of the peace; maligner; libeller; monster shape; low leader of an atheistical mob; idle mountebank; pestiferous monster; BEAST."—*London Era*, quoted in the *Christian Beacon*, No. 3.

"Chartist from London; impudent cockney; extractor of thunder from cucumber frames."—*Manchester Courier*, No. 1478.

Southwell's crime was that he wished to liberate men's minds from the tryanny of the superstitions of his day. The world rewarded him by bestowing the praises that he had such glee in recording. The volatile reader might now do worse than turn to "Laud" Tennyson's famous *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, published in 1852. In his middle age the most "eminent" and popular of the Victorian poets was already a militarist, a toady, and a violent jingo. He falls over himself in beslaving the dead soldier; he writes as though the world ought to end because a successful and extremely-well-paid warrior has died. This will suffice; we will not quote from the lick-spittle laureate. Instead, we will quote a few lines from Holyoake upon Southwell's death:—

"Still pursuing a profitless journalism, struggling against difficulties too great for his strength or his means, he dies as he has lived. It is so sorrowful that he should die so far away, where no old friend could soothe by affectionate attention his last hours, and pay the last tribute of honour at his grave."

"So runs the world away." Meantime, in our brief hour it is well to remember how values alter. The condemned criminal, howled-at on the way to execution by the "God"-sodden mob of yesterday, is to-day canonized and has monographs written about his views by "respectable" dons. The fashionable theological prince of his day, author of twenty volumes in elephant-folio, deferred-to by popes, princes and plutocrats, is to-day a shadow of a name, his mouldy pages lying neglected upon the top shelves of public libraries, his doctrines superseded, his works forgotten.

What are ultimate values? Are there any ultimate values at all? The only voice that could reply satisfactorily would be a voice from the Unknown. And the Unknown is dumb. Such is the tragedy of human life and work.

Nevertheless, there are signs—and manifold signs at that!—that an age is approaching wherein the forgotten and neglected pioneers of the race will come into their own; and in that age, not far distant, we think, the gaudy reputations of politicians and generals will be known for the tinsel and stucco that they are; and the true gold of those who worked and wrought and suffered for the love of man will be recognized and valued at its true worth.

"Glory to Man in the highest, for Man is the master of things."

This single line of the greatest of the Victorian poets is final and decisive. When the magnificent obsequies of the Iron Duke are forgotten, and his vast reputation is an historical curiosity, our descendants

will be gathering around the monument erected to the revived memory of Charles Southwell.

There is no moral; but there is, maybe, material herein for the student of humanity to consider. "So runs the world away."

VICTOR B. NEUBURG.

God or Science? (Or Both, or Neither.)

According to the Gospel of the Sunday Press.

THERE are two great mysteries in life. The one is the mystery of God. The other is the mystery of Science. Are they antagonistic? Or do they work together in that great Harmony of polyphonic Unison which some have likened to the sound of the Great Amen?

That is the question which all of us, from the highest to the lowest, from the steeplejack to the diver, have at one time or another, in one place or another, asked ourselves. Some have whispered it in the holy precincts of their particular God's own house. Others have mumbled it on their knees in the privacy of their pyjamas. Yet others have bellowed it to the winds of Heaven, and have been subsequently detained during His Majesty's pleasure.

Yet, when we come to think about it seriously, how childish we all are (except myself) to ask this question. Why, indeed, do we ask it? Why do we ask any questions? Why are we always prying into the Realms of the Unknown? Why are we—(you know, I could go on asking questions like this for hours and hours. It's great fun!) Well, anyhow, why do we do it? God knows!

God knows! There we have it! The obvious, the final answer to the question. (It was stupid of me not to think of it before.) God knows! Ah, how readily does that answer come. How often, when in the depths of despair or at the heights of inspiration, do we fall back upon those soul-consoling words. Is it not the very answer which scientists and saints (beg pardon—saints and scientists) have sought from the world's beginning? Do not these two unsurpassably profound and powerful words supply that long-lost key to the great Mystery of the Universe? They do not. But let that pass.

What then? Where are we to seek the fundamental protoplasm of this cosmic enigma? Long words will not help us to discover the solution. That is why I never use them. It is in the simple and sweet things of this life, it is in the ordinary and commonplace that God has commanded us to look. And having commanded, dare we disobey? (What? You do dare! Well, well! What do you think of that!)

And this brings me to my third point. If Science were of the slightest use to Humanity, would we be where we are? Most emphatically not. Where then would we be? Ah, where! It is in the noble endeavour to check the disruptive influences of this human heart-cry that canons and curates have clung clam-like to their dog-collars and bishops have bravely buttoned on their gaiters.

What has been the result? Have we, or have we not, been drawn nearer to the Spirit of Ultimate Good? Or have we just drifted, as it were, into the nearest pub (so to speak) for half a pint of bitter?

You must excuse me for asking such a lot of questions, but the fact of the matter is that I have somewhat lost the drift of my argument. Not that it matters in the least, really. Because you can see for yourselves that if I were to write anything logical or sensible, no one would read a word of what I am paid so highly to write.

C. S. FRASER.

Friend Wimpole.

EVER since Wimpole drifted into my life, we have been excellent friends. He likes to pay us a visit as often as possible, and, really, we get on well together. For the most part we agree, and, when the sins of our legislators are in review, we can wax quite eloquent. Generally we find ourselves "agin' the Government."

Though my friend is such an excellent man, that is not to say he is without fault. Who is? And he would be the first to admit it as a general proposition. If we came to particulars, I can hardly imagine him agreeing. He is one of those who deploras their shortcomings on a Sunday. Take him at his word on the Monday and you find a mule of a very different colour.

But he is a man possessed of a wide extent of general knowledge. Been a faithful servant of a large company for a period of fifty years, he has gathered together a fair share of this world's goods. Yet I could almost swear he has never filled his fountain-pen at the public expense. Morally and socially no one can throw a brick-bat at him. A most respectable gentleman. If he has a fault, it is his total abstinence from the wine that cheers. Then it is that I think he is somewhat intolerant with the weaker brethren.

Wimpole both smokes and snuffs. These particular vices he defends on hygienic grounds. Indeed, to him, they are virtues. If it hadn't been for his "mull," he would not be alive to-day. From this one may gather what his opinion on Scotland's great poet is. He thinks that Robbie bears a great responsibility for encouraging drinking habits; also for a tendency to laxity in the relations of the sexes. I find him not at all responsive when I declaim in my best rhetorical style:—

"Inspiring, bold John Barleycorn.
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!
Wi' tippeny we fear nae evil.
Wi' usquebae we'll face the deevil."

No, I cannot get Wimpole into a rhapsody on that.

Some of his friends accuse him of a kind of meanness, implying that he is close-fisted in money matters. That, I should very much doubt. Having lived for a considerable period of his life very near the Border, he may have absorbed, almost unconsciously, some of the thrifty habits of the Scottish people. But that is perfectly legitimate. There is a wide difference between meanness and reasonable acquisitiveness. His is the reasonable kind. I will say that much. He would never dream of attaching a piece of string to the sixpence in the Christmas pudding, if thereby, he could become the possessor.

Yet Homer nods occasionally, and, now and again you find a fly in the jam-pot. Wimpole, in my opinion, has certain grave limitations. He wouldn't admit it, of course. For one thing, he sometimes fails to see my jokes. Well, yes! They may be thin.

The other night we were looking through a volume on Natural History. It was on a Sunday night, and, although Wimpole is a supporter of the Establishment and a Churchwarden, he is broad-minded enough to sanction the study of Natural History, even on a Sunday. Have I not said Wimpole is a tolerant man?

On one of the outlandish animals there represented, there was one which had a large ruff round its neck. A kind of Elizabethan decoration which made it look comical. It seemed so out of place. So totally unnecessary. I suggested that it might be "ectoplasm."

Now here was where Wimpole failed. He failed to see any joke, as, indeed may be the case with many others. But, to us, it was a capital joke, for, as a fact, Wimpole is a bit keen on "ectoplasm."

Honest, level-headed, keen, rational man of business as he is, he will cheerfully swallow any tale in support of "spiritualism." Get him to talk about the Mines Bill before Parliament, and you find him a keen critic, open to all the pros and cons of legislative enactment. Take him on table rapping, direct-voices, clairvoyance and such, and you find him a credulous dupe, anxious to believe anything to bolster up his faith.

Yet he pretends to be tolerant. But there are two subjects on which I cannot move him. I am not

anxious to proselytize. He may "gang his ain gait" and believe in all the hobgoblins out of hell if he wants. Yet it is a wee bit vexing to note his determined opposition to Evolution. And still he professes to have an open mind.

Really he would like all the links filled up showing the connexion of man with the anthropoid ape. He would like them to be lying side by side. Like Doubting Thomas, he would like to put his fingers into the eyeless sockets of the skulls of our poor pre-human ancestors. And then he wouldn't believe.

But he is ready to believe any rubbish connected with "survival." Sir Oliver Lodge is his Allah, and Conan Doyle his prophet, rubber-gloves, direct voices, materializations, jumping furniture. He has a stomach for them all. Nothing can be too silly, or superstitious, or impossible for his mental digestion. He thrives on it. It has become part of his nature. He is fond of quoting Richet "Impossible, but true." Yet we are the best of friends.

ALAN TYNDAL.

An Advertising Religion.

Why cannot church-goers worship their gods without disturbing the rest of other mortals? This (Sunday) morning I was awakened by the bells of a Roman Catholic Cathedral calling its disciples to the worship and glorification of God in early mass. Now it is undoubtedly necessary for some people to go to early mass, but it is equally important for some less pious to lie in bed and recover the energies wasted through the week. It is with the object of reconciling the two aims that I am writing.

I would suggest that the churches use some quieter form of advertising the commencement of their early morning session; they could in this matter, as in many others, follow the example of the leading picture palaces. People go to the pictures without the assistance of a bell, not only do they go, but they wait in long queues and pay exorbitant sums for admittance. Women also go bargain hunting without anyone ringing a bell to attract their attention. There are so many other ways that the churches could let their patrons know that they are open for business, for instance, they could send out boys with dodgers, or make out attractive programmes and post them to their clients, still better, go in for an extensive drive of newspaper publicity. (Should this meet the eye of any church leader, for doing so it could not fail to impress him with its soundness, I will be only too pleased to discuss advertising terms with him). The ways at their disposal are so obvious that even the most superficial glance could not but see them. Now what would the authorities say if some enterprising draper or store-manager rang bells in the early hours of Monday morning, to let the populace know that this was the morning of his huge bargain-sale. I leave it to the imagination, not only his customers would be awakened, but those who would soundly curse his shop and swear deep oaths never to darken the portals of his store. It would be a very short time before he shut his doors. Some will perhaps reply that one is a business and the other a religion, and as such are not to be compared, personally, I fail to see the distinction, both appear to me to be only run that they may sell the public something at a profit, and so pay their staffs and declare dividends at the end of the year. With one we get something for the money, the other is a bit of a wildcat and does not publish a balance-sheet.

Bells, bells, nothing but bells. Big noisy bells and little tinkling bells, with every degree of bell between these two poles. Churches with one bell that monotonously dong, dong, dongs. Cathedrals with innumerable bells running up and down the scale. Here is this minority of church-goers disturbing the rest of the majority. All will admit that church-goers are in the minority, this being so, cannot we of the majority do something to stop this infernal bell-ringing. Then there is the Army, that curse of Sunday-morning-in-bedists. Why in the name of all that is quiet and peaceful is such an unmusical and degraded form of religion permitted to cumber the earth. A lot of hand-

clapping, bad-singing, ranting, raging, shouting lunatics, who parade with that abomination of music, a brass band. Waking the sleeping workers, and not content with that, they have the unparalleled effrontery to expect to be paid for doing it. The usual procedure is to pick a nice quiet street in a prosperous suburb (I presume that the money-making qualities of the streets are considered, and that the Captains remember that the collection was worth more in one street than another and choose accordingly) then the misguided persons who play in the band station themselves at one end of the street, the singers cluster around, and the performance starts. While the arrangements for the torture have been going on, four of the more brazen have gone to the other end of the street. These are the collectors, the moment the band starts they start. Ringing, banging and hammering at each and every door, dragging the poor occupant from the warmth of his bed (which never seems so warm as on a Sunday morning) to meet an unctuous request for a donation towards the upkeep of his tormentors. The usual good-natured householder has not the strength to refuse them, let alone upbraid them for their impudence. The band plays until the whole street has been canvassed, then packs up and moves on to the next stand, this may still be sufficiently near for the sounds to reach the previous victims, so the agony may continue indefinitely.

Then the morning elimination test begins, every church, big or small, high or low, Catholic or Protestant, advertises between ten-thirty and eleven a.m. The idea appears to be that the one which makes the most row will get the most clients. Loud and louder toll the bells, one for a moment will have the ascendancy, another will rouse itself for a fresh effort and surpass its rivals. The shrill bell, the deep bell, the tinkling bells, nothing but bells, oh! for an hour with the inventor of bells, I derive no little satisfaction from the devising of different modes of death suitable for such an offence against mankind. At eleven it ceases, and with what a sigh of relief do we turn over and snuggle in bed, but it is not to be, our rest is ruined, people are beginning to stir, cars are honking, and all the noises of a large city have awakened.

If some people find church absolutely necessary to their happiness why not conduct it without upsetting the tempers of those who can get along very well without it. Sunday is a day of rest, and I for one, will believe anything if I am only permitted to rest. Look at the money that the churches would save in bells and ringers, and they might be able to raise subscriptions from those that would be willing to pay for the assurance that no bells would be rung on a Sunday morning. This form of blackmail should be worth considering.

A. BLANCHE.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

"NEUTRAL STUFF."

SIR,—Mr. G. H. Taylor is doing commendable service to your readers by quarrying "nuggets of gold" from the "rocky" publications of great writers on the relation of mind and matter. Ever since I read in the year 1891—alas, nearly forty years ago!—Prof. Lloyd Morgan's famous book *Animal Life and Intelligence*, I have called myself a Monist! And in reading the works of Bertrand Russell, I have often been impressed with the similitude of our views in respect to ultimate things. Now and again, however, he uses expressions to which I can attach no meaning.

To use terms and statements that would imply the possibility for mind either as sensation or intellect to give rise to inertia, weight, and solidity is to me too preposterous for serious discussion. Those who can believe in the possibility of such magic possess a mentality as far removed from mine as the poles are asunder. We have no logical common denominator for the comparison of ideas.

To get inertia, gravity, and solidity out of sensation

and thought is to me equally as impossible as to get sensation and thought out of physical forces and chemical affinities—indeed, if not more so. Hence the monistic hypothesis—viz., that ultimate substance is both material and mental in essence, gave me some satisfaction, though I confess the ideas behind the words were of a nebulous order.

Hence I welcome the idea of a "neutral stuff"—"something more primitive than either mind or matter"—as a very helpful hypothesis.

What makes me lose patience with those quidnuncs is that they ignore so palpable a fact as that gravity, inertia, and solidity are *objective realities*. It is true that they are subjective ones as well, for in the exercise of our muscles we are aware of these attributes as sensations in our sense of effort. But it is in the *mutual behaviour* of material objects that these three properties of matter are revealed as objective realities. It is the paramount lesson taught by astronomy and geology, and the truth is every instant in essential evidence in the industrial world.

The eye, touch, and hearing are mere recording instruments. Self-consciousness imposed upon these higher senses a new function; and from the standpoint of the animal world—an artificial function—viz., to act as the hand-maids of the intellect and not merely to serve as scouts of the stomach.

It passes my comprehension why so fundamental and far reaching a fact should be so systematically ignored by writers on philosophy. It cannot be a case of overlooking, for it is too palpable a fact.

Is the evasion due to a credal dogma inherited from the Dark Ages that if one dearly aspires to be thought a philosopher, he has willy-nilly to don the mental blinkers of the metaphysician?

In that way only can he hope to acquire that nebulosity of style and evanescence of meaning so essential to the make up of a "great philosopher," an acquisition which the awe-struck lay public adore as indicative of great profundity of thought, though it is, as Anatole France points out, directly in the inverse proportion to it.

KERDON.

AUTHORITY AND OPINION.

SIR,—The essential point about children is that they have no "free opinion." A child of three believes whatever it is told by the person who has power over it. It is a very impressionable recipient, as the priests are aware. "Give us a child of three, and we will terrify it into perpetual submission," the Catholic priesthood has always said.

Somebody must have power over children, and Parliament must decide who shall exercise that power. A hundred years ago a father could do whatever he liked with his child, short of naked murder. To-day he has been shorn of three quarters of his power. He is still, however, an absolute despot in religion, and Freethinkers support that despotism, under the name of liberty!

"In using force against opinion we do not change opinions," you say. On the contrary, opinions have nearly always been changed by force. Why is England a Protestant country? Because Henry VIII could not get a divorce from the Pope, and therefore severed England from the Papacy. Why is one half of Germany Protestant, and the other half Catholic? Because four hundred years ago half the German princes adopted Protestantism, and the other half remained Catholic. Why are Turkey, Egypt and Morocco rabidly Mohammedan, although fourteen hundred years ago they were rabidly Christians? Because the Mohammedans conquered them, and ordered them to become Moslems. Why are there more Freethinkers in France than in any other country? Because during the Revolution the Freethinkers were in power, and struck the Church such blows that it has never recovered.

I do not believe that all parents will refrain from teaching their children about hell on the authority of a court order, nor do I believe that any law in the world will ever be universally obeyed. But I believe that if Parliament were to forbid the teaching of hell-fire, it

would have an immense effect on the great majority of parents.

R. B. KERR.

[We do not agree with Mr. Kerr's interpretation of history. France did not forbid the teaching of religion; it disestablished religion, which is not quite the same thing. And even Napoleon had to come to terms with the church in the end. Other causes than the State prohibition of religion are responsible for the Freethinking of France. Turkey was overrun by conquerors of another religion, and another church established in place of the old one. But even then Christianity was never forbidden as a belief, only as the State religion. The elevation of one form of religion over another is always possible—at least for a time if the force applied be strong enough. But in England Roman Catholicism was driven underground rather than destroyed in this country, and has been recovering lost ground since. Mr. Kerr's examples appear to prove the impossibility of crushing completely an opinion by decree. And the partial suppression by force of Roman Catholicism in favour of Protestantism meant the development of features in our national life which I, for one consider, dearly bought.—C.C.]

PROTEST OR BOYCOTT?

SIR,—In an article appearing in your issue of January 12, the statement is made that Mary Baker Eddy was "always a very ignorant woman." Such a statement could only be made by one who was not aware of the facts. The Rev. Enoch Corser, who was one of her tutors, predicted for her a great future, and spoke of her as "an intellectual and spiritual genius." Mrs. Eddy was made an associate life member of the Victoria Institute, and, at the instance of M. Briand, who was French Prime Minister at the time, an officer of the French Academy in recognition of her literary work.

Christian Scientists have every right to protest against a biography which is neither authentic, reliable nor true as to the life and character of the founder of their religion. They have no intention of permitting falsehood and misrepresentation to be broadcast without making protests and offering corrections. This cannot be construed by any stretch of the imagination as a policy of "terrorism," as is implied.

It is interesting to note that Mark Twain, who was at first an opponent of Christian Science, is stated by his biographer, Paine, to have spoken of it latterly as "humanity's boon"; and of Mrs. Eddy, he said, "She has organized and made available a healing principle that for two thousand years has never been employed, except as the merest guesswork. She is the benefactor of the age."

CHARLES W. J. TENNANT.
Committee on Publication.

[Our comments on this letter will be found in the "Sugar Plum" Column.]

Society News.

THERE was a good attendance on Sunday at the Conway Hall to hear our esteemed lecturer Mr. F. J. Gould.

The subject "My Fifty Years of Humanism," was well received, and followed most attentively in all its detail.

The lecturer produced his original membership Diploma of the N.S.S., signed by the late Mr. Charles Bradlaugh. His contentions were that even Freethinkers and Rationalists have a religion, that is if the term be properly defined, as the Religion of Humanism devoid of any Theology.

There were many questions and a good deal of discussion, and the meeting closed with a unanimous vote of thanks to Mr. Gould in the hope to have him with us again in the near future.—B.A.L.e.M.

Miscellaneous Advertisements.

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Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.5, by the FIRST POST ON TUESDAY, or they will not be inserted.

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INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, John A. Hobson, M.A.—"Unemployment."

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station) : 11.15, Mr. F. J. Gould—"The Religious Question in State-Supported Schools."

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