

MORE ABOUT THE BLASPHEMY LAWS.

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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>More About the Blasphemy Laws.—The Editor</i> - - -	97
<i>The Canon Owns Up.—Mimnermus</i> - - -	99
<i>The Progress of Atheism.—W. Mann</i> - - -	100
<i>A Surviving Stone Age Stock.—T. F. Palmer</i> - - -	101
<i>American Freethought.—H. Cutner</i> - - -	106
<i>In Praise of Atheism.—Max Coorlegh</i> - - -	107
<i>A Freethinking Pagan of Nigeria.—J. M. Stuart-Young</i>	108
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

More About The Blasphemy Laws.

We have nothing of which to complain concerning the attention aroused in the press and among the public by the introduction in the House of Commons of a Bill to repeal the Blasphemy Laws. No other private member's Bill has created so much interest, and those who are fond of speaking of Freethinking criticism as having had its day, should bethink themselves, whenever they again feel inclined to make that remark. The truth is that the comment that the day for attacking religious beliefs has gone by owes its existence mainly to the fear that many have of their power. It is an example of what psychologists call "rationalizing." Quite a number feel that with the opinions they hold they ought to join in the attack on religion: but it is still very powerful, and a man who is playing for public position or for public honours is apt to think twice before he arouses religious enmity, which is the most unrelenting and the most unscrupulous of all enmities. If he had enough moral courage to openly admit his fear of religious prejudice he would confess as much. Lacking that moral courage, he must justify himself to himself. Hence the cry that the day for attacking religion has gone by—uttered by the very person who is afraid to let the religious world know that he does not share its beliefs. The truth is that no one can take any steps in serious social reform unless he runs up against religious prejudice in some form or other. Religion still remains the home of the most stupid form of conservatism, the bulwark of the worst forms of vested interest.

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Fogging the Issue.

So far the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws has advanced farther than it has ever yet done; and it would be ungracious not to acknowledge here the support

given by members of different religious bodies, who properly resent the implication that their religion is not safe unless a policeman stands on guard against weapons of controversy that Christians themselves wield with the utmost freedom against their opponents whenever circumstances are favourable to their use. But it is uncertain how much farther the Bill will be advanced unless all Freethinkers make up their minds to put in some genuine work in educating their representatives and the general public as to what is the exact meaning of the Blasphemy Laws, and the reasons for their repeal. Confusion and misunderstanding gives plenty of room for both conscious and unconscious misrepresentation. These are the reasons why I am again dealing with the subject. If Freethinkers are not active and alert, we must expect to pay the price of our negligence.

First of all there will certainly be attempts in Committee so to modify the Bill as to rob it of all real value. The line upon which this attempt will be made was foreshadowed by the Home Secretary, Mr. Clynes, and has been taken up by a number of papers, a line which probably owes its existence to Mr. Clynes' confusion as to what the Blasphemy Laws do, and also as to what is being asked for. Mr. Clynes takes up the curious position that "the denominations" will not be content unless there are safeguards against attacks on religion, and, of course, if the Home Secretary is determined to act under orders from "the denominations," the nature of his contribution to the securing of equal freedom of opinion for all is indicated. He believes that non-Christians are entitled to just that measure of freedom which Christians agree they should have, just that and no more. If that is so I can assure him that those who believe in the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, Christians and non-Christians, will not support any modified Bill that may be brought forward, and will continue in the future as they have done in the past. So far, as Freethinkers are concerned, I may say quite plainly that whether the Bill becomes law or not, it will not be permitted to interfere with our propaganda. That will go on, just as it has always gone on. It is Christianity that is on trial, not Freethought. It remains to be seen how many will place the interests of the denomination before concern for a plain principle of social freedom.

* * *

The Peace of Religion.

The claim made by the supporters of the Bill is clear and, I think, impregnable. It is that all opinions, whether religious or not, shall enjoy precisely the same privileges, and have precisely the same protection at law in their expression. The *Methodist Recorder* in giving a half-hearted welcome to a Bill that it clearly wishes had never been introduced at all, says, "Although a member of the Society of

Friends seconded the motion, the Bill is not introduced in the interests of Christianity or of religion, but is probably a move in the campaign for the disestablishment of religion that is now being conducted in certain quarters." Granted, but what then? The professed claim of Nonconformists is that the State shall not interfere in matters of religion, which is only a back-handed affirmation of the secularization of the State; and if the Nonconformists really have any principle at all behind them why should any of them object to a development which is carrying the principle of the secularization of the State a step further, and placing religious opinion on the same level as all other opinions? The only possible objections here is either that religion cannot stand against open discussion, which can be admitted only under protest, or that religion cannot be treated as other subjects are treated because to do so will lead inevitably to a breach of the peace. Sir James Reynolds, who opposed the Bill, said that in order to stop religious disturbances in Liverpool he, while a member of the City Council, carried a resolution that it should not be lawful for any member of the community to use expressions in public against the religion of any other member of the community. I do not know whether Sir James Reynolds was romancing or not, but I do know that such expressions have never been unlawful in Liverpool, and criticisms of religion have gone on there as elsewhere. Perhaps he means that he would like to have made such criticisms unlawful.

Sir James says that the reason for this startling proposal was that it was necessary "to prevent breaches of the peace and to curtail social hatreds and personal dislikes." What a tribute to the humanizing and socializing influence of religion! There is no need to stop criticisms of opinion in art, in science, in literature, or even in politics. All these subjects may be discussed without causing breaches of the peace or without seriously and generally disturbing social relationships. Religion is the one subject on which men cannot openly differ without their sinking to the level of wild beasts! Did any Atheist ever draw a more serious indictment of religion than this? The allegation may be true of Sir James—he is a Roman Catholic—but I venture to raise a mild protest on behalf of quite a number of religionists of my acquaintance who can differ on religion and still behave themselves with decency. What a great deal of trouble it gives the Atheist to prove to Christians that it is possible for them to be decent members of society without their religion!

* * *

Preparing for Battle.

Very strenuous endeavours are being made by religious organizations to prevent the Bill now before Parliament becoming law. They may succeed in their efforts. I am not one to underrate the power of religion in this country. A force that can impose silence upon so many public men, and compel all sorts of politicians to hide their beliefs about religion, is not to be ignored. The other week, Viscount Castlerosse, in the *Sunday Express*, said that T. P. O'Connor had told him that he had been an Atheist from the time he was eighteen. But he always posed as a Roman Catholic in public, and no one appears to think it any the worse of publicists acting in this way. While I write there lies (in more than one sense) before me a frantic appeal sent out by the "National Constitutional Defence Movement" for funds. The appeal runs:—

LEGALISING BLASPHEMY IN GREAT BRITAIN!

BILL PASSES SECOND READING

THIRD READING MUST BE DEFEATED

Action Now! No Time for Apathy

If this iniquitous Bill becomes law... foul-mouthed oratory will flood the country and the most offensive cartoons may be published broadcast on walls and in newspapers. The authorities will be powerless to deal with the situation.

It is the thin end of the wedge, sign the protest form below—*now*.

The circular is sent out by a Mr. Stafford Northcote, who signs himself "Director of Intelligence." Judging by the product, the amount of intelligence he has to direct can scarcely be described as of a burdensome character. If the Bill passes, he says, "the situation will become intolerable to all Christian people." Of course this is only a repetition of the blackguardism of Mr. Lovat-Fraser in the House of Commons, and of those who pictured mobs of Free-thought speakers waiting the passing of the Bill to let loose floods of indecent speech, which they are rehearsing in quietness meanwhile, and storing up stacks of "indecent" pictures in secret warehouses ready for distribution. I am not going to argue with such childish stupidity, to use a very gentlemanly expression, people who can use such appeals are pretty far gone, mentally, even when they are quite honest about it. I cite the above merely to show the kind of opposition that will have to be met. It will certainly be strong, and unless history belies itself, it will not be over-scrupulous. Only one thing we ought to make sure of. If the Bill becomes law we shall have gained our point. If it does not become law, the intensive propaganda in which we ought to indulge should make victory for the religious bigots a very dear one. We can make certain of the last, if we cannot command the first.

* * *

What To Do.

What can we do? Well, in the first place every Freethinker in the country should keep an eye on his parliamentary representative. Even when a member of Parliament is inclined in the right direction it lends firmness to his attitude when he knows that he has a body of opinion behind him in his constituency; and when he is not so inclined the knowledge that Freethinkers have votes—and use them—is not without its influence. It has been suggested to me that last week's article should be reprinted and scattered over the country. I have not made up my mind on that head yet, but a very large edition was printed, and there is yet a stock in hand, and supplies of these will be sent out, post free, at the rate of twelve for 2s. 6d. The stock of these should be exhausted very soon. For those who wish for a more elaborate essay on the Blasphemy Laws there is my pamphlet on *Blasphemy*. That can soon be reprinted, if required. I do not often recommend my own writings, but the occasion is not one to allow false modesty to stand in the way. Then there is the press. There will be floods of letters in defence of the existing Blasphemy Laws, and the specimen cited above, from Mr. Stafford Northcote, shows the kind of opposition that will have to be met. Make it quite plain to all that Freethinkers are asking for no sectarian favour or privilege. We have no objection to the law against language inciting to a breach of the peace. Sir Charles Oman, in his opposition to the Bill, seemed to be quite unaware that this law applies to publications, pictorial or otherwise. We raise no objection to the law against indecent or insulting language so long as it does not discriminate between classes, all we are asking is that there shall be no special laws made for the defence of religious opinion. If the ordinary law and the good sense and good taste of the

public can be trusted to look after speeches and publications in other matters, it should be enough for religion. Our demand is for the equality of all opinions before the law. We have never asked for more; we shall never be satisfied with less.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Canon Owns Up.

"The system which begins by making mental indolence a virtue and intellectual narrowness a part of sanctity, ends by putting a premium on something too like hypocrisy."—*John Morley*.

"Liberty's chief foe is theology."—*Bradlaugh*.

THERE are over forty thousand Christian priests in this country. Seventeen thousand of them belong to the English State Church, and the remainder are divided among the Roman Catholic Church and the numerous other Nonconformist bodies. No part of the country is without a State Church official, and wherever there is a parson there are also ministers of the various fancy religions. These are the present-day figures. Before the war the total number of priests in this country was at least fifty thousand. In spite, however, of this monstrous Black Army of priests this age inclines to turn from the many churches of Christendom. Not because the fire and fervour has gone from the priests, but because the alleged good news of the Christian evangel is not felt to be good news to the present generation.

Only last week Mr. J. A. R. Cairns, the London magistrate, asked, in the pages of the *Daily Chronicle*, what message of hope the Christian Churches had for the helpless and hopeless. He was not referring only to poor people. These unfortunates have turned from the crumbs offered by Mother Church to the loaves proffered by the public Relieving Officers. Mr. Cairns instanced the case of a hopeless criminal with scores of convictions. It was a case similar to that of the once notorious Jane Cakebread who had over two hundred convictions for drunkenness recorded against her. Maybe, poor Jane was the victim of some form of insanity, but she was utterly beyond the reach of sermons, tracts, prayers, hymns, or even threats of eternal damnation. She loathed prison, but, undoubtedly, she was better off "in durance vile" than basking in the "sunshine of God" in her native Bermondsey. For that populous district of London has more temples of Bacchus than Christian places of worship, and Jane was at heart a naughty Bacchanalian, who lost no chance of twisting the vine leaves in her hair.

There was a challenging note in Mr. Cairns' question, and the reply was not long in forthcoming. Two days later Canon W. H. Elliott, of St. Paul's Cathedral, rode into the lists as the champion of Christianity. Why he should have been selected from the forty thousand priests of this country is a delicate question. Maybe, he lives closer to Fleet Street than the others, and was more readily accessible. Anyway, the Canon is easily the most apologetic of champions. Perhaps it was his first appearance before a magistrate and he felt nervous.

Remember that Mr. Cairns' question concerned a hopeless and confirmed criminal. What could the Churches do with this man? Now, note Canon Elliott's reply. It is querulous and somewhat disingenuous. The Canon explains that his own Church is "pathetically weak in man-power." This is no answer at all, unless it means that seventeen thousand priests is an insufficient number to convert one hard-boiled criminal. This may be true, for poor Jane Cakebread's career of crime was ended by "that

fell sergeant Death," and not by the exertions of the fifty thousand Christian priests then ministering in this country. Even in America the same phenomenon is observable. Chicago gunmen attend Church, are married in church, and have funerals such as are only granted to "God's anointed." Yet this does not prevent the gunmen from gaining their livelihood by "bumping off" their fellow-citizens at the price of one hundred dollars and upwards. One wonders if there is any association between the tolerance of Mother Church and the generosity of the gunmen towards the Church where work is plentiful and the mortuaries are full.

Canon Elliott makes open confession of the things that do not matter, as, for example, when he admits, plaintively, "I hate statistics." He would do well to ponder Goethe's words: "How can I hate anything, unless I myself am filled with hatred." This, indeed, is a pretty condition for a man professing and calling himself a Christian to find himself in. Whether his "hatred" in this instance is merely a misapplied figure of speech there are no means of determining. The Canon knows enough of statistics when it will help his cause. How otherwise does he know that the State Church is "pathetically weak in man-power."

Exactitude is not Canon Elliott's strong point. He evades the question of the habitual criminal, and rides off in a cloud of verbiage. Here are his words:—

"I really do not know what this country—during the last hundred years, for example—would have been without the inspiring and steadying power, directly and indirectly, of Christian influence."

"I really do not know," says the Canon, and it is the keynote of so much that he writes about. He knows little of "Christian influence." Let the Canon ponder the following. As an ecclesiastic of a powerful Christian Church he should know that one of the alleged divine commandments says: "Thou shalt not kill." Another divine injunction tells the Christian to love his enemies. Yet this Church of England, of which he is such a distinguished ornament, has been one of the greatest advocates of militarism. Even to-day it still encourages the belief that a soldier or a sailor, if a general or an admiral, is entitled, if successful, to burial in Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's Cathedral. Everywhere emblems of war are hung to decorate churches. Priests christen battleships and bless regimental standards.

Turn to the history of our own country, and refer to the record of this Church of England during the past few generations. Britain has waged over a hundred wars, great and small. We have fought against half the countries in Europe. In every corner of the earth we have shed our own and other men's blood. In all instances this Anglican Church has been the obedient, humble handmaiden of the Government in power; blessed the regimental flags and sung Te Deums for victory. *The Book of Common Prayer*, issued with the alleged joint sanction of the Bishops and also of Parliament, assumes always that truth and justice are on our side, and reminds credulous worshippers that "there is none other that fighteth for us but only Thou O God."

This same Church of England has a bench of representatives in the House of Lords, and the votes of these lawn-sleeved ecclesiastics are sufficient to rouse the hostility of all Democrats, and to show how far removed from Democratic ideals is this Church of Christ. Bishops voted against admitting Nonconformists to the Universities, and against removing the civil disabilities of Roman Catholics, Jews and Free-thinkers. They opposed the introduction of free education, and voted against admitting women as mem-

bers of London Borough Councils. None voted for the abolition of flogging women in public, beating women in prison, and the use of the lash in the Army and Navy. Scores of measures for the bettering of the conditions of working classes have been opposed by these bishops, and their record carries its own worst condemnation.

Canon Elliott, it appears, is most extensively mistaken. He and his thousands of priestly colleagues have shown us quite clearly that England will never be civilized, in the true sense of that word, while it has a Christian majority. Nor will matters be improved whilst Canon Elliott and other priests bid us kneel in silent adoration before the highly-coloured lithograph of a "Saviour" who never lived, but in whose name they extract tithes and other monies from their credulous fellow-citizens.

MIMNERMUS.

The Progress of Atheism.

(Concluded from page 91.)

MR. LEONARD WOOLF goes on to observe, that Mr. Joad, having told us that belief is rapidly on the decline, and that the young do not believe in God and do not want to; suddenly doubles in his tracks and declares that religion has a great future before it.

"It is all rather puzzling." Says Mr. Woolf:—

The conjuring trick by which religion is killed dead by the end of page 145, but after a tap or two with Mr. Joad's magic wand is alive and kicking again on page 208, is accomplished with considerable dexterity, but fellow conjurors—who in their time have also managed to do a trick or two with words and arguments—will probably be able to make a guess as to how the rabbit is finally discovered under the hat of the gentleman sitting in the front row of the stalls. They may notice, for instance, that it is not exactly the same rabbit as was originally put under the conjuror's hat and made to disappear. For instance, in the last part of his book Mr. Joad says that the "endeavour to promote what is thought to be the good of the community"; or "the political impulse," as he calls it elsewhere, is "essentially religious."

Of course, as Mr. Woolf points out, Mr. Joad has the right to attach a religious label to anything he prefers, but the thing he so labels "is so entirely different from the religion which consists in belief in a personal Deity, that one does not see any connexion between them other than Mr. Joad's habit of calling them both religion." Mr. Woolf concludes:—

But surely the audience is interested in the future of the rabbit that went into the conjuror's hat originally; it is not interested in the guinea-pig which Mr. Joad produces on page 170, even though it may admit that he has every right to call it, if he chooses to do so, a rabbit. It is true that he finds another field for the future of religion in mysticism, but that is a field in which it would be absurd to think of pursuing guinea-pigs or rabbits.

So much for Mr. Joad's conjuring trick. How a clever man like Mr. Joad can delude himself, or hope to delude others by this *Ersatz* religion; or why he should waste his time on the effort, is one of those irritating mysteries that "no fellah can understand."

In that brilliant fragment of irony and satire *Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, in which Heine mocks at the prevalent religious ideas of his time; he says, of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, this was the sword that slew Deism in Germany. With this Kant stormed heaven and put the garrison to the sword, the Trinity lies dead upon the ramparts, the immortality

of the soul is in its last agony, you can hear its groans and death-rattle. Old Lampe, his servant, who trudges behind him with a big umbrella under his arm, like an image of providence, every day along the "Philosophers walk"; is standing by, an afflicted spectator of the scene, tears and sweat drops of terror dropping from his countenance. Then Kant relents, and half good-naturedly, half-ironically, he says: "Old Lampe must have a God, otherwise the poor fellow can never be happy. Now man ought to be happy in this world; practical reason says so." So he wrote a codicil to his first testament, in which, as with a magician's wand, he revivifies the Deism which his first work had slain. Many modern theological works seem to be inspired by similar sentiments.

A study of modern religious apologies, strike one as being various ingenious ways of trying to find a niche in which to instal God who has been evicted as an unnecessary parasite from philosophy, and warned off the ordered course of science. Compare them with the religious literature of Victorian times. The Bridgewater Treatises were written some twenty years before the revolutionary works of Darwin and Spencer, when it was then possible to indulge in beliefs about God and the Soul, which the progress of science has since then made impossible. There is nothing apologetic about them, they are dogmatic and regarded, as Paley also regarded his works, as calculated to compel belief, and not a series of metaphysical conjuring tricks like the modern apologies. The modern apologist is not confident. He labours under the consciousness that modern thought is against him, that religion is losing ground day by day, and year by year.

We say deliberately, and we challenge contradiction, that if any doubting believer, anxious to preserve his early faith from the attacks it is now receiving on every hand, were to study the works of the few modern scientific apologists for religion, like Prof. Whitehead, McDougall, Alexander, and Lloyd Morgan, he would rise from their perusal—provided, of course, that he could understand them at all—more perplexed and bewildered, and certainly more profoundly sceptical about the whole business than he was before he started. For he would find all his ideas about God and the Soul had long been abandoned and were now regarded as the grossest superstitions.

Moreover, there is only one point of agreement among them, and that is that Materialism is the enemy. When they turn their attention to one another's philosophic ideas, we find them fighting all over the place among themselves. Take the case of Prof. McDougall, a survival from Victorian times—he was born in 1870—one of the few Professors of Psychology who still retain the old ideas about religion; he has just published a book entitled *Modern Materialism and Emergent Evolution*. (Methuen & Co., 7s. 6d.) It consists of 284 pages, 160 of which consists of a laboured attack on Materialism, and the remaining 124 pages consists of an appendix which would more than equal the previous 160 pages if it were not printed in smaller type, and is mainly devoted to attacking the views of other opponents of Materialism.

Voltaire, writing of Warburton's book, *The Divine Legation of Moses*, describes the author as "ranging through a hundred labyrinths, and fighting all he met with on the way." The same description would apply to Professor McDougall. He seems to be a voice crying in the wilderness "Nobody loves me."

It seems passing strange too, when you come to think of it, that while the pulpit and the press are never tired of declaring that Materialism is dead and

done with, that Professors of science should waste their time in writing voluminous works about it. Why should they trouble to kill the slain? But they are under no delusion in the matter, they know perfectly well that Materialism was never in a stronger position than it is to-day. The fact is that the pulpit and the press are either ignorant of the facts, or they are deliberately deceiving the public. Prof. McDougall himself, at the very commencement of his new book, confesses that the overwhelming majority of scientific men are Materialists. Dealing with the argument for design in Nature, he asks:—

Is there good reason to believe that causal processes are or can be in any instance governed by design? Among contemporary thinkers, the vast majority of men of science and, I think, a considerable majority of philosophers, assume that all causation is of one type only, namely the mechanistic type, that teleological causation does not occur, or, at least, that all instances of seemingly teleological causation are but specially complicated and obscure forms of mechanistic causation. The dominance of modern thinking by this assumption is the essence of what in this book is meant by Modern Materialism. (Prof. McDougall: *Modern Materialism and Emergent Evolution*. p. v.)

This does not look much like Materialism being dead. The vast majority of scientific men are Materialists, and we may take it as certain that the few that still hold out, are survivals who are governed by their religious training, or prejudices.

The report of Dr. Brown's speech in the *Daily News*, which I gave as January 16th, should have been January 20th.

W. MANN.

A Surviving Stone Age Stock.

THE native races of Australia are ranked among the most primitive of contemporary peoples. When discovered, they were less advanced than the artistically endowed Palæolithic races that roamed over Europe in the remote past. They remain destitute of the art of agriculture, and no animal save the dingo has been domesticated. This mammal is the native dog, an animal about as large as a sheep-dog, which is utilized in capturing the kangaroo. Apart from the rat, no other higher mammal is found in the indigenous Australian fauna. Sollas and others suppose that the natives were accompanied by the dingo when they invaded the Continent. Nehring, who has devoted much attention to the problem of the origin of domesticated creatures asserts that the skull of the dingo displays close affinities to that of the Indian dog. And the cranium of the dog recovered from Bronze Age deposits in Europe is stated to be practically identical with that of the Indian dog (*Canis pallipes*).

The Australians are in the hunting stage, and possess no permanent habitations. Wind-screens as primitive as those of the extinct Tasmanians serve as shelters. An expert fisherman, and industrious food gatherer is the native. Bark canoes and rude vessels fashioned from tree-trunks are in use in the north. In North-east Queensland the outrigger canoe is employed. Their stone artifacts range from the rudest coliths to well-shapen and polished implements, while the introduction of European manufactured articles has, in some instances, modified their handiwork. They do not possess the bow, but the club, the boomerang, digging and hurling sticks, the tray and other similar contrivances prove useful in their hunting and food collecting expeditions.

Usually, the natives appear in unadorned nudity, but on ceremonial and other special occasions skins

serve to cover their nakedness. Such coverings as these are decorative in character, and are mainly associated with magic and religion. They track their prey with consummate skill; are remarkably close observers of animal life, and display considerable knowledge of the properties of the floral domain. Their domestic and hunting utilities are employed to make music, which some suggest is highly unmusical. Conch shells are also in request for the sound they make.

The mutilation of the human penis is a custom very extensively spread throughout the earth. This practice is common to many African races. It is observed in Madagascar, and many isles in the Pacific; among various New World races, and survives in relatively cultured Moslem regions, and is universal with the Jews. The origin of circumcision dates back to the prehistoric past, and was probably regarded in the light of an offering to appease the gods. That its inception was due to hygienic considerations seems utterly absurd. At least as early as 3,000 B.C., it was practised in ancient Egypt. Prof. Sollas thinks that, "There seems no reason to doubt that Herodotus was right when he asserted that the custom had spread from Egypt to the Ethiopians, the Phœnicians and the Jews. But its origin lies probably far beyond the date of the Fourth Dynasty, and it may have been practiced by some of the hunters of the later Palæolithic age." (*Ancient Hunters*, 3rd edition, p. 289.)

Sollas also remarks on the contempt with which the circumcised regard the uncircumcised "dogs" in their vicinity. The Jews of old looked with disdain on the uncut Philistines, and on one occasion circumcised the corpses of their fallen foes. And in Henry IV, Part I, Scene 1, mutilation of a kindred nature seems implied by Shakespeare in the famous lines:—

"But yesternight; when, all athwart, there came
A post from Wales, laden with heavy news;
Whose worst was—that the noble Mortimer,
Leading the men of Herefordshire to fight
Against the irregular and wild Glendower,
Was by the rude hands of that Welshman taken,
And a thousand of his people butchered;
Upon whose dead corpse there was such misuse,
Such beastly, shameless transformation
By those Welshwomen done, as may not be
Without much shame, retold or spoken of."

In addition to circumcision, the horrible rite of subincision is widely prevalent in native Australia. While this custom is not universal, it prevails "in a broad band from the north to the south coast across the middle of the Continent," but is unknown in other parts of Australia. Indeed, its distribution suggests that it may have been introduced from New Guinea, whose natives carry on commercial intercourse with the Australian aborigines; and thus spread from north to south.

Circumcision, subincision, throwing the novice in the air, fire ceremonies, and the removal of teeth, are all associated with the rites of initiation. Here, as elsewhere, the initiatory rites, especially those for the male sex, are designed to establish the supremacy of the elders, to encourage self-reliance and bravery, and to accomplish a progressive revelation of the tribal secrets and traditions. The rite of subincision is the most painful and complicated of all forms of genital mutilation. In this strange operation, the penile urethra—the channel by which the urine is conducted from the bladder and evacuated—is cut open from the meatus to its junction with the bag which contains the testicles. This mutilation may cause serious physiological anomalies including sterility, but the suggestion that it is designed to prevent conception appears quite incredible.

The alleged existence of a belief in one god, sup-

reme over all lesser divinities among races so low in the scale of culture as the aborigines of Australia has given rise to considerable controversy. Andrew Lang championed the genuineness of the belief with misplaced ingenuity, and his claims were cleverly controverted by the late E. S. Hartland. Sollas concludes that the studied reserve of the natives towards the European investigator leaves too much to the white man's imagination. The famous ethnologist, the late Dr. A. H. Keane was contemptuously sceptical concerning these creative and overruling deities. He states that the creation stories of native Australia "have been gathered from tribes which have long been in association with the whites, and probably derived the substance and the moral tendency from the missionaries. The local colouring would gradually be supplied as the stories passed from tribe to tribe."

The widespread beliefs in a supreme god with a divine son may denote missionary influence. Several of these high gods bear a striking resemblance to ancestral chiefs who have died and now dwell in the sky. Prof. Sollas adopts a conservative attitude and thinks it dangerous to dogmatize as to the genesis of these gods. "It is tempting to suppose," he says "that a Mungunugaua (a supreme god of the sky) was a common ancestor from which they have all been derived, but this is by no means certain. Some may have arisen independently, perhaps by the deification of a great man or hero."

Although the souls of the dead dwell in the sky, the ghosts, as among ourselves, also haunt the earth. The shade not only outlives death, but exists prior to birth. When a woman becomes pregnant this is attributed to the entrance of a spirit into her womb. The natives, it appears, never associate sexual congress with conception. During dreams the shadow-soul wanders abroad, and those who possess exceptional spiritual discernment may watch its movements.

That fell serjeant death enters as the result of the machinations of black magicians. Many innocent savages are murdered in consequence of this direful superstition.

Mortuary customs vary to a surprising degree, and it is said that their endless diversity embraces almost all the sepulchral observances known to man. Sometimes the flesh of the corpse is devoured, while in rare instances the dying native is seated near the fire, and then the corpse and the camp are forsaken. In other cases, the body is cremated, and the ashes collected and preserved in a skin bag. Again, the dead are laid on a nest of boughs arranged amid the tree branches, and there they remain until the flesh has decayed. The bones are then buried, although some are retained for magical purposes. Occasionally, it is customary to put the body on a platform of boughs and then dessicate it in the fumes of a fire until it is mummified.

Earth burial, again, is very general, but the manner in which the corpse is disposed in the grave varies greatly. The ceremonial attire of the deceased is usually placed in the grave. Also, the weapons he possessed in life are interred, except in those instances in which the dead was a warrior of violent temper, when it is deemed advisable to send him to the spirit-land unarmed. As, a rule every consideration is shown towards the defunct. His long home is carpeted with ferns, food is laid near the corpse, and a drinking vessel is interred, and a fire is furnished to keep him warm.

In many respects the Australians are more advanced than the extinct Tasmanians. But their fate will in all probability be the same. The invading white is steadily thrusting them to the wall. Although humanely treated in recent generations, their

favourite hunting-grounds have largely passed into European possession. For all practical purposes they are relegated to lands that are useless as arable and pasture settlements. The aborigines have been greatly maligned by those who have entered into their heritage. But it seems that the more impartial scientific observer has found them a courageous and kindly people. Unwanted children were exposed, as this was the only method available for lessening the pressure of population in a harsh environment. But the offspring that were spared were treated with uniform kindness. Once wedded, matrimonial relationships proved as successful as our own. And it is claimed that in the schools where the children of European descent, and those of the native races learnt together, the latter displayed marked ability. Fortunately for science, Spencer, Gillen, and other sympathetic inquirers have made us acquainted with their manners and customs before inexorable fate has sealed their doom.

T. F. PALMER.

Acid Drops.

Mr. Aleister Crowley had arranged to lecture on Gilles de Rais and medieval magic, before the Poetry Society of Oxford; but at the last moment the Poetry Society has been compelled to cancel the lecture owing to threatened disciplinary action by the college authorities. They will not have a lecture on magic. We have not yet heard that anything is to be done to the clerical workers in magic who transform bread and wine into human flesh and blood.

Religious bigotry to-day is bound to be absurd, if for no other reason, than because it lacks courage. Bigotry with courage would suppress the opinion of the other fellow because it did not agree with his own. But the peculiar form of bigotry developed by Sir John Reith inevitably lacks the honesty that comes from courage. Sir Conan Doyle, for example, is not permitted to broadcast his fantastic conception of a future life because, says, the B.B.C. it is propaganda. Meanwhile all sorts of parsons are busy preaching their religion from B.B.C. stations, and we are asked to assume that that is not propaganda. We doubt whether anywhere but in this country so absurd a person as Sir John Reith would be permitted to hold the position he does hold. The B.B.C. really represents a new form of the State endowment of religion. But our brave champions of the so-called Free Churches are satisfied because they are permitted to share in the swag.

The feeling against the evangelistic mania of Sir John Reith is growing. From all over the country, thanks to the agitation we set on foot some years ago, objections are being urged against this product of Presbyterianism using the B.B.C. for showering religion on everybody for the larger part of Sunday, to say nothing of week-days. The latest to join the crusade is the *Sunday Sun*. There is only one comment we wish to make in welcoming the "sun" to the congregation of the same, and that is on its remark that "Sunday is a day of observance, but it need not be dull." So long as it is a day of Christian religious observance, it is certain to be dull.

The Rev. J. Thompson Downes says that the present need of the church is brains and efficiency rather than money. We agree, but all the same the Church will find it much easier to get money for the service of the Church than it is to get brains of any quality. Of course it will always be able to purchase some kind of a service, but its quality will be getting steadily worse.

We understand the Christian Evidence Society is also in need of more speakers. Qualifications are not stated,

but a disregard for truth, carelessness as to good manners, and ignorance of the nature of religion would, we should say, be absolutely necessary.

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York are the Presidents of the Christian Evidence Society, and it issues a tearful appeal for funds to fight the horrible blasphemy that is organized to drive from the minds of youth the belief in a heavenly father. It is fearful! "The lecturers, chairmen and speakers and followers of Atheist societies" are seen everywhere, and, worse and worse, "They are backed by the money and brains of men whose presence in our community is a deadly menace." The situation is terrible! Once upon a time "our Heavenly Father" took this kind of thing in hand himself and blasted the scoffer at his existence. But now, since God has been deprived of the control of the crops, and the weather, and disease, he is sulking like Achilles in his tent, and simply does nothing. So the two Archbishops sends out a frantic appeal that the only thing that will save our "heavenly father" from destruction is cash—prompt and plentiful.

The President of the National Sunday School Union, Mr. James Ogden, was recently the victim of a "smash and grab" raid. A man smashed his firm's shop window, where £100,000 of jewels were displayed, and grabbed a pearl necklace. The man was arrested later. Those who love the Lord are under the special protection of the Lord. The man wasn't to know that, and so he naturally got caught. He realizes now that Providence does more than look after sparrows.

The Rev. E. W. Price Evans says that Christ "is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, always and for all men. And He is a free gift." Fancy that—there's no need to save up any coupons! Nevertheless, though Christ is a free gift, we note that his priests do not omit to remind the Christian that he is expected to give a tenth of his income to Christ's Church. The "free gift" can become quite expensive if the Christian lives to old age.

Mr. Arthur Black, General Secretary of the Shaftesbury Society, supplies some interesting statistics, of which we give an extract:—

The Church of England and Wales showed in 1915 Easter Communicants 2,359,000, and in last returns 2,570,000. It is obvious that though church attendances have gravely declined, membership is over a period of years holding its own, and in view of the frightful injury inflicted on organized religion by the war, it is cause for congratulation.

The particular point we wish to emphasize is that with reference to the frightful injury inflicted on organized religion by the war. The religion of "Love" the talk about which makes most men sick, could find no effective means of protest during the war; it was not safe from many points of view. Now, when even military men are pacifists, war can safely be derided, ridiculed, and held in contempt. Let us shake hands, Christian apologists say in effect; a million men have been killed, but we have held our own. Such reasoning could only be taken seriously inside Colney Hatch.

Quaker Byways is the name of a book containing a collection of essays, and we take the following snippet to show the genuine Christian spirit at work:—

What silly lives ladies lead in Turkey. They cannot read, and if they could they have no Bible to read!

This is probably meant to be humorous, but it is also one of those metaphors of the mind that tell the reader all he wants to know—the unconscious arrogance that comes with being provided with the one and only genuine out of some thousand or so.

The hand and glove policy of the Pope and Mussolini

does not seem to be working so smoothly as one might be led to believe. In a corner of a newspaper, we find tucked away, the following note:—

The Vatican authorities have placed on the index of prohibited books two Fascist publications—*Render Unto Cæsar*, by the journalist, Mario Missiroli, and an anonymous work dealing with education.

We have no knowledge of the merits of the two books, but we feel sure that the Church of Rome can never be interested in any other education than that which fits an individual to be a Catholic. Is it a hundred years ago that Francisco Ferrar was shot for dabbling with education?

The residents of Addiscombe, Surrey, are the recipients of some good news; the three-ton bell of the parish church is to be rung at noon as a call to prayer.

Before the Churches cut in and claim any merit for the decline in drunkenness, we put it on record that the views of the Chief Constable of Oldham (Mr. Arthur Killeck Mayall) do not coincide with the fairy tales of the dear clergy:—

"The primary factors in the decline of drunkenness," he said, "are the cost of liquor, the reduced strength of intoxicants and the changed attitude towards a drunken person, who is now looked upon as a general nuisance."

When Praying in the Holy Place, is a collection of prayers for public use on various occasions. A reviewer says: "The language of the prayers is thoughtful, reverent, and thoroughly Scriptural." We daresay much the same could be said of the prayers which a Central African native uses to address his Joss. The kinship of truly religious minds is everywhere remarkable!

From the earliest years of the Christian Church, says a religious weekly, music has played an important part in its worship. Quite so. The power of rhythmic noise to excite emotion has always been appreciated by Christian priests. God in his goodness has also vouchsafed a like appreciation among medicine-men of other religions.

Mr. Augustine Birrell says that his experience of life does not support the proposition that as a man grows older he grows wiser. Our observation of elderly persons who form the mainstay of the churches would appear to confirm Mr. Birrell's statement. The "truths" they learnt at "their mother's knee" are still good enough for them.

Parsons whose habit is to complain about the wickedness of the age, the ungodliness of youth, etc., may receive spiritual uplift from the following advice says a writer, when you are fed up, have a good "grouse and get over it. But don't make a habit of it. Don't grouse—grin! Nevertheless, parsons had better not make a habit of grinning too widely in the Lord's house. The congregation may get suspicious that they are being regarded as "mugs."

Dr. Herbert Levinstein, President of the Society of Chemical Industry, contends that poison gas in war is more humane than explosive shells. That is a very comforting thought! But, as a Freethinker sees it, nations that were truly civilized would be ashamed to discuss what degree of cruelty or barbarism was permissible in war. For they would know that cruelty in the shape of organized hooliganism is not a civilized method of settling disputes between nations. We appreciate, of course, that this point of view is not likely to be acceptable to Christian nations. For many centuries they have known that God has always given a victory to the nation with right on its side. Would it not, then, be an affront to God to organize, for settling disputes, a method in which God's help would be unnecessary?

According to a religious writer, the Sunday School is the great feeding and sustaining agency of the Church, and contributes eighty per cent of the actual Church membership. We don't doubt it. Ideas and beliefs forced into the immature mind have a trick of staying there in adulthood. Still, it is not exactly a compliment to the adult's intelligence that he should remain satisfied with ideas and beliefs which suited his immature mind. On the other hand, the fact that so many people who were Sunday school trained should have dumped their religious beliefs, is a compliment to *their* intelligence.

The Churches are hard put to keep a hold on their youthful members, especially adolescents. Hence the various clubs, guilds, classes, concert parties, games, and rambling clubs, etc. Once upon a time the magic of Jesus was sufficient to hold them to the Churches. Now, all kinds of secular amusements have to be called in to prop up the magic influence. This sad truth hardly encourages one to believe in a coming revival of the religion of Jesus. But perhaps the new religion will consist of 90 per cent lazy religiosity. If that be so, there's hope yet for the Churches.

Can Science close the prisons? is the theme discussed by a *John Bull* writer. After mentioning the results obtained by medical psychologists, he says:—

The truth is that we are only just beginning to evolve sane and scientific methods of dealing with delinquency and crime. The idea in the past has been to repay cruelty with cruelty, violence with violence, injury with injury.

The doctors now say that, scientifically, this is sheer madness. In a great many cases, probably in the majority, there is a mental cause for social wrongdoing. The thing is to find it, and cure it.

This, of course, is the Christian method. Old-fashioned theologians called it "saving the soul."

There is no namby-pamby sentimentalism about this new treatment of the criminal. If the doctors found that their methods were encouraging crime instead of lessening it, they would confess their mistake, and retire from the field. But the exact opposite is true. Wherever qualified mental specialists have been given a chance to observe and treat criminals, their efforts have been followed by a marked diminution of crime.

It is the method of violence and cruelty that was the Christian method. For it was the only method in use during the greater part of the Christian era. With the Christian doctrine of "sin" and temptation by Satan, nothing better could be expected. When Christian ideas lost their hold, only then did more humane and intelligent methods become possible. We are inclined to fancy that the reference to "the Christian method" is an interpolation of a pious sub-editor. It reads like it, and doesn't fit in with the rest of the article.

Mr. J. C. Squire recently described the career and demise of the late "Mrs. Grundy":—

For generations Mrs. Grundy's position was unassailable. But in the years immediately before the war the old lady was perceptibly ailing. Most of her old friends had passed away. Mr. Pecksniff had long been gathered to his fathers, and Mr. Chadband and Mr. Stiggins were no more. Year by year her opinion was less frequently consulted; the stream of callers anxious to know what her views were before they spoke or acted, dwindled to a mere trickle. . . . In a way, it is a pity she is dead. She went too far, but she was better than nothing. She confused modesty and prudery, reticence and cowardice, morality and hypocrisy, prudence and fear.

Freethinkers did more than any to hasten her demise. In every way, it is a blessing she is dead. A wholesome society was impossible while Mrs. Grundy's typically Christian confusions were dominating people's minds. May she never suffer resurrection here! Let everlasting anchorage in the Christian Heaven be her reward.

Mr. Fitzwanger Wray, the translator of Barbusse's *Under Fire*, but better known to cyclists as *Kuklos*, was recently invited by the Stratford-on-Avon Brotherhood to give an address at a Sunday afternoon service, held in

the Hippodrome. The subject chosen by the speaker was "A Heretic's Faith." We don't anticipate that anything will be said very disturbing to Christian faith. Still, the Brotherhood are to be congratulated on wishing to hear a heretic state his faith. If they could screw up their courage a bit higher, they might invite a forthright Freethinker to address them.

We regret to hear that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is very unwell. The curious thing is that Spiritualists have issued something like an official prayer to "Father God," asking for him to be left here. Candidly we do not see why Spiritualists should do this. They will still be in touch with Sir Arthur after he "passes over," he will still be able to influence people here, and as he will be in touch with mighty spirits of one kind and another, he will know so much more there than he can here, and will be able to exert the more influence. Somehow, in spite of the talk about the "Summerland" when it comes to actual facts, Spiritualists and Atheists and Christians face the separation from those they love, and face death itself in much the same way. The chief difference is that the Atheist faces death with a sounder philosophy and greater courage than either of the other trio.

We often think that a collection of the sayings of highly placed clerics might be made and labelled *Studies in Incipient Idiocy*. The following from Bishop Well-ton, writing in the *Sunday Graphic*, should certainly be included if ever such a volume is published:—

If Jesus Christ was a divine being, then his incarnation was the greatest of all miracles, and it implies at least the possibility of other miracles in his life or at His death. It is idle to dispute about His miracles of feeding the hungry or of healing the sick, or even of raising the dead to life, or of His own resurrection if He came down from Heaven to earth, if He is one with His Heavenly Father, and if he will come again as the Judge of all the living and the dead.

In other words, if we believe in all the nonsensical things about Jesus, what is the use of doubting any of them? Well, we agree, but to what a state must the mind of a man be reduced when he can solemnly write such unadulterated rubbish! All that Bishop Well-ton is saying is that if anyone believes that Jesus was reincarnated god capable of doing all the things that are told of him, from getting born without a father to rising from the dead, why not believe all these things? We agree that anyone who swallows the first item ought to be able to manage the rest without any difficulty whatever.

Derby Education Committee intends to arrange lectures on "sex happiness" for pupils aged thirteen years and upwards in secondary schools. We hope, for the pupils' sake that the lectures will not be based on some of the books dealing with this subject written by the pious. Very few pious authors have rational and wholesome notions concerning sex. Their study of the Bible doesn't induce wholesome views in the matter.

Unfortunately, says a Cabinet minister, the sense of beauty is not so widespread as it ought to be. Well, the nation once suffered from an Evangelical Revival, didn't it? Mental distempers, like physical disorders, often have evil after effects.

Beauty, declares Lord Moynihan, is necessary for social health. If that is so, the philosopher might be pardoned for wondering to what extent Puritanism has been conducive to ill-health, seeing how sourly it has always regarded beauty.

There are, says Mr. Shaw Desmond, any number of dead men and women walking about not knowing they are dead. We presume there's no need to enquire whether the speaker had been to church recently! We, too, have noted that church-goers could easily suffer resurrection without their needing to wait to be buried.

National Secular Society

THE Funds of the National Secular Society are now legally controlled by Trust Deed, and those who wish to benefit the Society by gift or bequest may do so with complete confidence that any money so received will be properly administered and expended.

The following form of bequest is sufficient for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by will:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society, and I direct that a receipt signed by two of the trustees of the said Society shall be a good discharge to my executors for the said legacy.

Any information concerning the Trust Deed and its administration may be had on application.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

TESTIMONIAL TO MR. CHAPMAN COHEN.—Received since closing of list: F. Rose (Bloomfontein), £5 5s.

W. JAMESON.—Always pleased to have helpful criticism of the paper, and will bear yours in mind. But if we altered our policy, and changed the make-up of the *Freethinker* with every fresh piece of advice that came along, we should be at the end of our troubles—and of the paper. There is a certain providential arrangement in the fact that the capacity for giving advice is equalled by the capacity for taking no notice of it.

R. H. COOPER.—Thanks. Shall appear.

F. HILL.—See "Views and Opinions." Your member voted for the Bill, as promised.

B. HARRIS writes, "Thanks for article on the Blasphemy Bill. We should like to see every clergyman and every paper in the country receive a copy. It puts our case as it should be put." Thanks.

A. G. LYE.—Papers have been sent to the addresses given.

"WELL-WISHER."—Pleased to hear from a new reader, and to know how much you appreciate the paper. The sketch of Bradlaugh is an excellent one. When religious prejudice gets weaker he will receive a better appreciation from historians than he has got up to the present.

S. LAVING.—There is no doubt that Mrs. Eddy, the founder of Christian Science was not over scrupulous about the truth, but that is a very common characteristic of Christian leaders. She was certainly an hysterical subject, and narratives from such are never to be taken without the closest examination. They are always ready to express events, or describe their own feelings as they would wish them to be, rather than as they are. Mrs. Eddy's case seems to be largely pathological.

R. BROWN.—The concern for the maintenance of the Blasphemy Laws lest children be corrupted only adds an extra touch of hypocrisy to the intolerance that is the real cause of the opposition to their repeal.

H. DODD.—Your points are very well put. We shall be writing on the subject in a week or two.

T. P. PALMER.—Sorry we did not keep the letter to which you refer, and the precise nature of its contents has now slipped our memory.

J. T. BARTRAM.—You are right, it is not possible to shame the ordinary religious tract maker and distributor out of their lies. The vile lie about the death of Thomas Paine has been disproved times out of number, but it is still being issued by Christian organizations. The worst feature of it is that even those who are shamed to tell the lies themselves connive by their silence at others doing so. It is this kind of thing that makes it safe for a man such as Lovat-Fraser to ventilate his slanderous abuse even in the House of Commons.

H. BLACK.—Sorry you caught a cold coming to Stockport. But you *might* have caught it had you stayed at home. Anyway, pleased you are better. We have had the Blasphemy copy well circulated, but have still a good supply on hand. Pamphlet sent.

F. SHARP.—We do not at present contemplate reprinting the article on the Blasphemy debate. We thank you, and the many others who have written complimenting us on it.

"SCRUTATOR."—Next week. Crowded out of this issue.

J. McCARNEY.—Thanks for cutting, will deal with the matter next week.

A. B. MOSS.—Pleased to have your appreciation of the article on the Blasphemy Laws. We have had several appreciative letters from Members of Parliament. It remains to be seen how much good it will do. But we hope that Freethinkers all over the country will not forget their share.

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 Secular Society, Limited, 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 (February 16) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the City Hall, Glasgow, at 11.30 and 6.30. There is no question of there being good audiences, but we should like every Freethinker to bring along a Christian friend, even if the Freethinker has to stay outside to give the Christian his place. On Monday evening Mr. Cohen will speak in the Co-operative Hall, Causeyside Street, Paisley at 7.30.

Mr. Cohen's audiences on Sunday last was not up to the usual in point of numbers, although that might be accounted for by the bitterly cold weather, and some rival attractions in the town. But they were very gratifying audiences from the point of view of the interest displayed and also the number of young people of both sex present. Mr. Smith took the chair at both meetings, and although suffering from a bad cold fulfilled his duties admirably.

From the *New Leader*:—

Who I wonder, advised the Home Secretary on his law for the speech he made in the Blasphemy Bill. As law it was inaccurate from beginning to end. Mr. Thurtle and Mr. Sorrensen were both excellent; but, quite frankly, neither Mr. Lovat-Fraser nor Mr. Logan seemed to know anything of the history or nature of the problem with which the Bill deals.

Which is exactly what we said in last week's *Freethinker*. Only Mr. Lovat-Fraser's language was so "foul-mouthed," to use a term of his own, and so deliberate, it suggested that the speech was delivered with one eye on the religious constituency of Litchfield. As we said, the ignorance it assumed on the part of the members of the House was a direct insult to the assembly.

We deeply regret that, after all, the *New York Truth Seeker* has converted itself into a monthly. This is, we hope, only a temporary measure, but it means a distinct

loss to American Freethought. It is no easy task to keep a weekly Freethought journal—one that is a Freethought journal in existence.

We are asked to announce that the new Secretary of the Birmingham Branch of the N.S.S. is Mr. T. G. Millington, 4 Weston Road, Handsworth, Birmingham. Local Freethinkers will please note.

We printed a very large edition of last week's *Freethinker*, and we still have a supply on hand. We again bespeak the efforts of our friends to get them into circulation. That issue focusses attention on the Blasphemy Laws, and that for the moment is the question to be pressed. Twelve copies will be sent post free for 2s. 6d. Those who wish for a more elaborate statement of the Blasphemy Laws should send for Mr. Cohen's pamphlet on the Blasphemy Laws, price threepence.

As one method of fighting the terrorism which Christian Scientists in America are exerting over booksellers so that the truth about Mrs. Eddy may not be read, the Freethought Press Association of New York is circulating the life of Mrs. Eddy, by Dakin, at three dollars, two dollars less than the published price.

American Freethought.

AMERICAN Freethought has always appealed to me. In fact, it is to an American I owe my introduction to the Best of all Causes. He was the first man I ever worked for, an excellent lithographic artist who taught me many secrets of the trade, and who indeed rudely awakened me from the sleepy apathy from which so many people seem to suffer. When he found I still had no doubts about the old, old story, he would read out from American journals, reports of lectures by somebody he called Ingersoll. The way he used to say Ingersoll always reminded me later of the way Mr. Foote used to say Shakespeare. For there was no question but that my old American boss simply adored the Colonel.

I must confess that I rather looked forward to hearing more from Ingersoll. Who this lecturer was, I could never find out, but he "had a way wid him," and many a half hour I would laze away eagerly drinking in the humour, the wit, the sparkle, the sturdy common sense, the magnificent humanitarianism of Robert G. Ingersoll. He did not altogether convert me, because I was really too young to be converted, but he profoundly influenced me, and later when a copy of Foote's edition of the *Age of Reason* came my way I was ready for an almost complete change.

When my American friend left England, I tried hard to buy the lectures of Ingersoll, but the boycott was too great. No shop in my native town would get me any of the pamphlets, though I was lucky enough one day to come across a bijou edition of *What We Must Do to be Saved*. But I have preserved my love and admiration for Ingersoll ever since, and it makes me smile when I read any deprecatory notices of him. For example, the other day Professor H. J. Laski reviewed Mr. J. M. Robertson's magnificent *History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century* and this is the kind of "criticism" we get:—

Mr. Robertson praises R. G. Ingersoll; to me his writings are those of an eloquent rhetorician who had nothing new of his own to contribute, and was inferior to a score of people performing a similar function.

Prof. Laski is a newcomer into the ranks of Freethought, and perhaps on that score we might excuse him a little. He is obviously unacquainted with the history of Freethought, and it is impossible for him to understand its development by attending to the anti-Christian utterances of "respectable" heretics. These are products rather than causes. But the fact that a critic of Mr. Robertson's reputation—and Mr. Robertson has been an active Freethinker for over fifty years, so he knows something about his subject—has praised Ingersoll, might have made him pause. But Prof. Laski evidently feels that with the almost universal praise of Ingersoll, he should have been Gibbon, Voltaire, Diderot, Marx and even perhaps Prof. Laski himself, all rolled into one, and is disappointed because he is only R. G. Ingersoll. To say that a man "has nothing new of his own to contribute" is easily said. A friend of mine once wrote a doctoral thesis showing the debt Voltaire owed to English Deists. One could say with truth that Voltaire had "nothing new of his own to contribute," but then look at the way he did it! Put on one side men like Bradlaugh, Holyoake and Foote and what man other than Ingersoll has had so great an influence in popularizing Freethought?

Ingersoll was a mighty force in Presbyterian America. He attacked hell and smashed it in the minds of almost every educated American of his time. He carried high the banner of Freethought, and he contributed to the cause his own inimitable and original lectures and addresses. Of course he got his facts from elsewhere, but look at the way he gave them out! I claim that certain of his lectures will live as long as Freethought, and that may be longer than even the memory of Prof. Laski. But if this should meet the critic's eye, I should take it as a favour to learn who the "score" of superior people to Ingersoll could be. May we have a complete list of names?

All this by way of a preamble. It was forced upon me as I turned over the pages of Mr. George E. Macdonald's engrossing reminiscences.*

Mr. Macdonald is the third editor of our famous contemporary *The Truth Seeker*, which is, I think, the oldest Freethought journal in the world. What Mr. Macdonald does not know about the sayings and doings of Freethought across the Atlantic, is not worth knowing. He seems to have met all the leading lights of his day, and he writes about them and their experiences and his own in that kindly, whimsical way which attracted me, at all events, many years ago, and which time seems to mellow but never weary. The early chapters of his book show his country upbringing, and lovers of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn will enjoy them almost equally as well. At the age of twenty or so, he joined up with the *Truth Seeker* office and found his life vocation. His brother Eugene was already installed there, and the famous D. M. Bennett was the editor.

Bennett wants an article to himself. Before he became an editor he had tried his hand at many things, and being an editor did not altogether change him. He was, of course, violently anti-Christian, but he became a Spiritualist, and would have turned Theosophist had he lived. He certainly worked hard for his paper, and he held written debates, wrote thousands of articles, and a large number of enormous books. If he had nothing else, he had the gift of words and knew how to get his facts. And Bennett had courage. He defied the unspeakable Comstock, and got thirteen months for mailing the pamphlet

* *Fifty Years of Freethought*. Vol I., by G. George E. Macdonald. New York. The *Truth Seeker* Co., 1929. \$3.50.

called *Cupid's Yoke*—I think it is on birth control, and could anything have shocked the pious America of his day more than such an indecent work?

Bennett nearly completed two volumes of *The Gods and Religions of Ancient and Modern Times*, by the time he came out of prison. E. M. Macdonald acted as editor while Bennett was away, and G. E. Macdonald was promoted to be foreman of the printing works.

It need hardly be said that D. M. Bennett had many loyal friends—foremost among them being Ingersoll, James Parton (who wrote a standard life of Voltaire), T. B. Wakeman, Courtland Palmer, and many others.

Before his last days Bennett went for a voyage round the world and had some remarkable experiences, to which I may refer at some other time. He died in December, 1882. "He owed," says Mr. Macdonald, "the popularity he achieved to his simple and honest nature, his capable head and his courageous heart." He was, indeed, in many ways, a remarkable man.

Mr. Macdonald records quite a large number of other remarkable men, whose names I should dearly like to place here as well, but space forbids, and the reader can find them in the book.

This extract is rather interesting:—

A perplexing phenomenon is the occasional reversion of an apparently convinced Rationalist to some form of mysticism. O. B. Frothingham, for years a Rationalist lecturer, whose discourses made up the bulk of a Truth Seeker book entitled *The Radical Pulpit*, turned in his last days to a form of Theism. B. F. Underwood, whose lectures in the '70's made a lifelong Materialist of me, thought he was taking a step forward when he embraced spiritualism. Louis F. Port died a confirmed Swedenborgian. They say G. H. Waller, founder of the town of Liberal, Missouri, after being forced by a medium, who later was exposed as a fraud relapsed into an orthodox fundamentalist. George Chainey, who as a Materialist, called Theosophy "mental rubbish," and said he hoped Bennett would write no more about it, went to a Spiritualist camp meeting, found there the "mother of his soul," proceeded from Spiritualism to Theosophy, and has been a sort of mystic ever since. I have known men, once supposed Freethinkers, to lean towards Christian Science, even Bahaism. And I have ceased to wonder thereat, not because I have seen so many of them, they are no longer novelties—not even an individualist turning Authoritarian.

I think we are luckier here in England. Very rarely have I known or heard of a converted Freethinker. Of course there have been some—Professor Romanes is a leading example, but the rule here seems to be once a Freethinker always a Freethinker.

Mr. Macdonald got precious experience in the art of preparing the paper for the press as assistant editor, and though he kept in the background he was responsible for many fine things—including some excellent verse. There may be glamour in the office of a journal but there is very little romance. Most of it is sheer hard work, especially if economy is the ruling factor. Printers' errors creep in, in a most objectionable and perverse way, and it's generally the paragraph which has not been read three times which contains most errors. A printer's reader is indeed a god in the office, for he certainly prevents the jubilation of the outside reader from getting a chance to "put it across" by discovering some trifling fault in spelling. All this hard work made Mr. Macdonald into the ideal editor he is, because he has been through the mill from the lowest to the highest position. But he knows what work is entailed in running a paper of advanced views, which necessarily can never hope for a big circulation, and therefore can get but a very

small revenue from advertisements. Still it is done, and over and over again, Mr. Macdonald records the generosity and loyalty of many of his subscribers and how they worked or gave to keep the *Truth Seeker* going. We on this paper can show an equally fine record of loyalty from our friends. The reader must go to Mr. Macdonald's book for particulars of Ingersoll and S. P. Putman, who wrote *Four Hundred Years of Freethought*, an enormous book packed with fine things. Then there was W. S. Bell, whose *Handbook to Freethought* I often consult, and John E. Remsburg, a genius at gathering facts and making books out of them. I have Remsburg's *The Christ and the Bible* always handy, and they have been of immense use to me. They contain veritable mines of information easy to get at and of damning importance.

There are also generous references to the late Charles Watts, who, whether he was lecturing or debating, proved a splendid propagandist in Canada, and to Charles Bradlaugh, whose death is recorded towards the end of the volume. Both Ingersoll and Bradlaugh were born in 1833. The American practised law, and Bradlaugh's knowledge of law was superior to most of the Q.C.'s of his time, as they found out in many a stormy tussle. Both were great orators, both attracted the love and devotion of thousands of people, and probably made more real converts than any other men of their time. I can find no record that they ever met, but they certainly prove the truth of the old adage "there were giants in those days."

Mr. Macdonald records the death of T. W. Doane, the author of *Bible Myths*, in 1885, at the early age of thirty-four. This was a heavy loss to Freethought, as Doane's book stands almost in a class by itself. I shall deal with it fully one day, but I wish Mr. Macdonald had expanded his reference and told us something about the author. Still we are grateful that he has not forgotten anyone of note—not even of Dr. Edward Aveling, about whom will be found an amusing description.

I could go on quoting names of past and present heroes of Freethought in America, but the reader should really consult the book. Mr. Macdonald's pages have vividly described the early days of American Freethought together with many other "Liberal" movements. His story is an absorbing one, and his task was well worth doing. Volume one stops at 1891—we shall look forward with the greatest interest to the second volume, so much nearer our own day. The completed history will prove of supreme worth to the future historian.

H. CUTNER.

In Praise of Atheism.

I was delighted to see C. S. Fraser's article "Call Me Atheist," in a recent *Freethinker*.

There are naturally more Rationalists, Freethinkers, Agnostics than Atheists. One may be rational in behaviour, free in thinking, doubt all things, yet not be an Atheist. Few are fortunate enough to be born in atheistic or scientific families, and so receive right instruction from youth. Potential families of Darwins, Huxleys, Russells and Bradlaughs have been persecuted and destroyed out of existence.

Atheism is usually the result of prolonged research and study, by its nature it must be slow and laborious, it cannot be the impulse of a moment, a sudden conversion; it is based on reasoned thought, not on stipulated feeling. For most, many weary years are spent in a religious atmosphere attempting to reconcile the defects and discrepancies that reason finds in belief and practice and natural phenomena, but happy those who at last break free. Atheists are a product of full know-

ledge, they must as yet be few; the time required to qualify in some branch of scientific research, or to develop the mental ability to reason rightly, needs time. Any fool can be a Christian. Any primer scholar with a smattering of words can set up as a teacher of religion and will be treated with respect by hordes of mental defectives. Religion is to-day the biggest fraud in the world, it battens on the most gullible and incapable of the classes. All religious beliefs to-day are the result of flaccid thinking and religious communities are composed of the most mediocre and ignorant men. An Atheist must be a great thinker, he must follow every enquiry honestly to whatever conclusion it leads. He must continually sacrifice pelf and place, suffer all manner of abuse and misrepresentation, remain tolerant to his oppressors, and exhibit a magnanimous attitude to all forms of religious bigotry and persecution. The Atheist uses caution and care in all his definitions and facts, he is never reckless. The Religionist is free from care relying on inspiration, faith and his bible. Yet the religionist attacks the Atheist and without any science disputes his facts, at the same time claiming special protection and reverence for his own fables and follies.

The Atheist is always questioned and censured by his fellow men, a thousand eyes watch his conduct for slips and flaws, he is responsible to humanity and does not excuse himself, his godlessness must be impeachable. The Christian admits a natural propensity to sin and mischief, he serves not his fellows but his God, to whom alone he is accountable, his godliness is patiently borne without question by his fellows.

An Atheist is on a high moral and intellectual plane far removed from the generality of men. His moral courage, self-discipline and reliance, perspicacity and fearless inquiries provokes implacable enmity from those who are by religion deprived of those qualities. Atheists knowing this present time is all, take advantage of every moment, filling it with beauty and imperishable good. Christians who anticipate an eternity have no need to conserve their time here below, they are content to see through a glass, darkly. The Atheist's most valuable possession is his mind, a storehouse of wealth and happiness, assets which no offended authority can distraint. His great aim is freeing mankind from the serfdom of God.

Christians are such because they have not the mental calibre to analyse simple facts, or else profess to believe what they do not believe because of social advancement and private gain. The first convicts them of colossal ignorance, the second of despicable hypocrisy.

Religion has a most harmful influence on everything it contacts with. Religion exploits all physical and mental deformities, all suffering, the basest of emotions, the tenderest of passions, the new-born and the bereaved, the sick and the poor, nothing is free from its baleful influence. It gives all human disharmonies a wrong direction.

The antics of a modern priest would discredit a cave man. The mischief religion has done in the suppression of Freethought is incalculable. It is to-day the greatest obstacle to the advancement and freedom of humanity.

But there is hope. Atheism is growing. By accepting the title "Atheist," I plant my feet upon the most substantial rock that has ever appeared in the shifting phases of human development. I also pay homage (however inadequately) to those noble and fireless Atheists who have suffered so much to free mankind from cruelty, wrong and pernicious superstition. They made the mind free, gave men hope on earth and made life worth possessing, by popularizing evolution they gave a rational meaning to life, and took men's thoughts out of the tomb and hell and heaven. Honour to all liberty loving, persecuted, god-defying, courageous, hell-and-heaven neglecting Sons-of-Men, scornful to be called the Sons-of-God.

MAX COORLEGG.

A God that killed God to appease God was an expressive phrase of La Puritan a phrase of itself sufficient to destroy the Christian religion, a phrase that will still retain its absurdity should one hundred volumes be written to prove it rational.—*Diderot*.

A Freethinking Pagan of Nigeria.

(Part of SNUFF AND BUTTER, a Study of the Problem of Miscegenation, in the form of a Romance of West Africa—still in manuscript.)

DACRE and Anguish were exchanging reminiscences of old-time voyages together. Dick looked on and listened. The scene was Bain's bungalow; and the two traders had been passing to examine a new canoe that Anguish wished to buy, when Dick hailed them from the gateway. He invited them to come upstairs and have a drink.

"Didn't you travel with me on the *Salaga* during the last year of the war?" asked Dacre.

"I did—that awful ship with the cockroaches and the bugs! There was such congestion on board, you remember, that we were three and four passengers to every cabin. But there were a dozen cockroaches and a score of bugs for every single one of us. We had no flour on board, and ate weevily biscuits and trade pork. Awful!"

A musing silence. Then from Anguish—

"You were on the *Abosso* when she was torpedoed, weren't you, Dacre?"

"Yes—and got ashore at Liverpool in list slippers, a kimona and a khaki helmet!"

Dick laughed. "Terrible days, those!" he commented. "Yet even now, one endures a lot. My cabin-mate outward bound last year was a missionary fellow. He was booked for Sierra Leone, and cranky about food: especially enthusing on the digestive values of Olive Oil. Olive Oil! Under his bunk he used to keep a three-gallon tin of the stuff; and he would arm himself each morning with a full quart bottle of it for the day's consumption!"

"Ugh!" grunted Anguish, while Dacre grinned.

"At mealtimes he would fill a pint tumbler, and drink it off just as you and I might a ginger ale . . . The state of his bedding . . . well, I leave you to guess. When he left the ship at Freetown, the steward came to me with a face as long as a coffin. Helping our missionary down the companion-way, the said steward had put his hand behind his back to receive the customary dole. He showed it to me—a florin!"

Dacre qualified the laughter of Anguish by remarking—

"But even a two-bob piece is better than a nickel! Many is the penny-piece-with-a-hole-in-it, à la the West African Currency Board, that I have seen dropped into the Seaman's Orphanage Box on Board E.D.'s steamers—aye! and in the first cabin, *s'il vous plait!*"

"And do you remember, on that *Salaga* trip," asked Anguish, "the old Government Johnny who used to walk up and down the deck massaging his tummy with a rubber roller? He suffered, he said, from rheumatoid arthritis, and was wont to souse himself every night in cold salt water for an hour, before he came to the cabin, shivering like a blanc-mange in a tornado."

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed Dacre. "Soaking in salt water will only drop out of fashion as a cure for rheumatism, when medical practitioners learn that everything in nature works from within outwards, and cease to imagine that human bodies are hams—to be pickled!"

After Anguish had gone, Dick invited Dacre to remain over "gadget-hour." He was growingly attached to the man's indubitable brains. The fact of Celia's unafraid countenance of hospitality to the social derelict had lent Dick sufficient courage to "Go Thou and Do Likewise." If Bellairs or Wilton or Harrop happened to drop in later, well, they could remain or not as they chose. Meanwhile, here was very present enjoyment. Dick determined gratefully to accept it.

"If Anguish could only write!" murmured Dacre ruminatively, "What a book we should have, to be sure! He has a far more adventurous life than I; and the way in which he sticks to the bottle gives him that kink which ensures something very like either genius or madness. Most geniuses have been drunkards, you know! It is the kink, congenital or acquired, in a man's nature which leads the ichor to become articulate: to fling out his arms against the ever-encroaching darkness of oblivion, in a splendidly defiant gesture of creation." He laughed—"Either that—or suicide! Now, John's deaf-

ness, of course, is a bar to social success. Yet one can understand why so much younger and more attractive a being like his wife married him. However sound the qualities which his contemporaries recognize in a man, those qualities are never half so sterling-gold as a woman's affectionate probing would have them appear. Celia Anguish must have been quite fond of him once, Dick. Don't you think so? He certainly loves her—in his animal way. The astonishingness of even the most commonplace human relationships! To think that beneath the stolid exterior of Anguish lurks both Romance and Tragedy! Heavens! If only I could write a book myself—*moi qui vous parle!* God! You know the sort of simple thing, Dick, I ought to do—the kind of thing every man who is *blasé* and cynical desires to write: the James Matthew Barrie sort of baby's pobs! All about a young man and a young woman who fall in love with each other, marry, and have difficulties, then at long, long last get over them, and live happily ever, ever afterwards. My God! What tripe! But how the public love it!"

"You could do it, surely, if you tried!" challenged Bain. "Why not make the attempt?"

"No more, Dick, could I write a book of that kind, than I could achieve *Hamlet!*" The voice was mournful. For he knew, this thinker, that he was telling the bare unvarnished truth! One half the world was shut away from him; the female half, the better half—shut away by reason of the peculiar twist in his nature. In art, as well as in life, there were simplicities that were irrevocably hidden from him. He was condemned forever to stand outside the Gates of Paradise. In his lyrics, he could sing as melliflously as Weatherly or Lockton or Omenham; simply because, æsthetically, poetically, he worshipped before an abstraction. (Golden hair and eyes of blue; dearest heart, be ever true . . . Tripe again! This time garnished with onions!) But when it came to the involved relationship of grown man and capable woman; healthy, virile male and sensitively absorbent female; he lacked the touchstone: the talent which has its roots in emotional attraction and repulsion. How could he, how *dare* he write a love story about a normal man and woman, a healthy male and female, if all the feelings, the sympathies, the intuitions that belong to womankind were, for him, forbidden ground? Where was the female of the species whom he had kissed and kissed again, until her lips grew hot, and her whole body melted with desire to become his sensual prey? . . . Nobody called. The man and boy went on talking, Dick always an appreciative listener. Let us make the rest of this evening's entertainment a monologue by Hilbert Daere; Daere, the derelict, upon that strange, old palm-oil ruffian who was himself.

"Dick, my son, if celibacy means living wholly to oneself, it is the only real sin against Nature: the sin against the Spirit. If I had a son of twentyone, who neither loved, nor desired to be loved, I'd smother him out of sheer paternal affection. Were there a God, or did this enigmatic universe of which we are so insignificant a part need a Creator (we can't conceive that possible, you and I!) then we might be sure, honourably convinced, that He would think very much on the plane of the Christ who said: 'Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone!'

"The Humanities, Dick, the Humanities! The attitudes, the illimitable spaces—the dimensions where there is no question of comfort, or ease, or success! Let us discover those peaks for ourselves, and make our homes there. For this is an age when we neglect them more and more, probably more than at any time since the Middle Ages. When men's minds turn so much and so often toward the practical, the advantageous, the material, it is pitiful that you Freethinkers do not safeguard your heritage of Kindness and Goodwill, the tolerance and *Laissez Vivre* bequeathed to the world by the Ancients of Greece and Rome. You have read the *Satyricon* of Petronius Arbiter, have you not? How delightfully natural the style, and how amazingly generous the spirit! Or Cicero's *Letters* to his friends; or those delightful *Essays* of Philo's; or the *Geography*, so quaintly precocious, of Strabo; or the *Characters* of Theophrastus?

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

PHILOSOPHY TO-DAY.

SIR,—Referring to Mr. G. H. Taylor's interesting article on "Neutral Monism and the New Materialism," I was, I confess, brought up standing by his statement that "Philosophy of to-day is *ultimately* of three types: Materialism, Materialism plus Theology, Vitalism.

I have spent my whole intellectual life, literally from childhood, either in direct meditation upon problems of philosophy, or in studies which, with an association never out of my mind, impinged on philosophical considerations.

May I therefore be permitted to state my position, for from the first I have tried to avoid limiting my speculations to the frameworks formed by others and expressed within the terms of certain "isms." Beginning—for the sake of a rapid indication—with the desire to obtain guidance in ethical conceptions, I found it necessary to acquire certain definite forms of knowledge in order to correct and to extend my knowledge of the world. My conception of the problem was this: Given an intelligence in the form of a man, and casting this being into the Universe—on our earth, in this instance—how is it possible for him, in virtue of the experiences borne upon him, to gain some canons of judgment in regard to conduct? Briefly again, this led naturally to studies in the whole range of Mental Science, Physics, and Biology, including by extension, Sociology.

For all these subjects I discerned at length certain correlations, and close attention to this, along with the interest of natural predilection, brought me to the point where I found it necessary to concentrate on psychology. Here again, it became apparent to me at length, that the only way in which psychology could be made a scientific subject, capable of great development was to pose the central problem and proceed to its solution. That central problem is: to ascertain the ultimate elements of our thinking, or, as I have called them, the Fundamental Processes of the Mind, by the various combinations of which all forms of thought, from the simplest to the most complex, may be built. This was the cardinal problem which Aristotle, and later Kant, attempted to solve, but neither of them found what was essential, that is to say, a principle of classification which would enable one to say decisively that the series of the Fundamental Processes was complete without being redundant, or as we say in mathematics, sufficient and necessary.

The research for that principle took me twenty years of effort. When I found it I proceed to formulate the principles, to exhibit the system of Fundamental Processes also as one instrument of analysis, and then to attack various old age-long problems, to proceed to various developments, and finally to place the coping stone of the Ethics on that foundation.

In all this both Materialism and Vitalism are discussed in due course—particularly in a later book: *Science, leading and Misleading*. But with your permission, Sir, I would propose to devote a special article to the correlation of what we may call, "Mind and Body," and so resume my contributions, which were by a sort of *force majeure* of this material world, interrupted.

ARTHUR LYNCH.

CORNWALL AND ITS PREHISTORIC MONUMENTS.

SIR,—The controversy between Messrs. Palmer and Thornewell on the above subject says a good deal, but leaves very much more to be said on the matter.

Some time ago a reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* adversely criticized a writer who had stated that tin is found in Brittany. The author in reply pointed out that tin is found in North-West France, a fact which is well known to all who are engaged or take an interest in metal mining. The reviewer in reply said he had consulted geography books and did not find tin mentioned as a mineral product of France. The Cornish prefix for mine is "wheal," as for instance "wheal kitty," the Breton prefix is "Huel." This of course brings us to the bronze age.

There are four places in Europe where tin is found: The Holy Mountains in Saxony, Cornwall and Devon, Brittany, and the North-West corner of Spain. The historians tell us with dogmatic assurance that the bronze-weapon men came from the East and conquered the atmosphere-weapon men of the West. From where did the bronze-weapon men obtain their tin? Was it obtained from Burma, Nigeria, Bolivia or Tasmania? I have a theory on the subject, but it will not be palatable to the anti-deluvians of this paper.

Tin in Cornwall is often associated with copper in the sedimentary rocks which cover the granite. In the granite tin only is found.

The Scilly Islands are generally considered to be the "cassiterides," but for many years I have looked in vain for evidence that tin is found there, although, *prima facie*, this metal should be present as the islands form a continuation of the granitic outcrop which extends from the Dartmoor to the Lands End. Last week, however, the following information was given in the *Western Morning News*: "1568, August 21. Indenture between Martin Dare, John Eliot and Roger Carew for the joint working of mines,* etc., in the Scilly Islands." The ancient Cornish name of St. Michael's Mount is "The grey rock in the woods." Further, Mounts Bay contains a submerged forest, and there is a tradition that when the land was sinking an ancestor of the present Lord Falmouth escaped on horseback to *terra firma*. This gives rise to the question as to whether there existed between the Lands End in Scilly Islands, a group of islands which are now beneath the sea, and which were the real "cassiterides" of the ancients.

With respect to megalithic monuments they are most abundant in Cornwall and Brittany, where tin is found. We may consequently enquire again if bronze was first made and used in the East. Again, the megaliths of Stonehenge appear to have no geological affinity to rocks in the neighbourhood, and one naturally wants to know whence they came.

With respect to Elliot-Smith and Perry's theories they are mostly of an ephemeral nature; one of their theories is I think correct, but they have arrived at their conclusion by a most illogical method.

WILLIAM CLARK.

* Tin is not specifically mentioned.

Society News.

THERE was a good gathering at the Conway Hall on Sunday, to hear Mr. A. D. Howell-Smith on "The Human Soul," who gave a most interesting account, in all detail of the gradual development of the human personality, a more appropriate term for the theological soul.

The lecturer contended that there can be no survival of human personality after death.

There were many friends of other progressive societies present, who were pleased with the lecture.

Following the usual procedure of questions and discussion, the meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the lecturer.—B.A.L.E.M.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"Men and Machines."

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): 11.15, Miss Cicely M. Craven—"The Duty of Society to the Lawbreaker."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree, Euston Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Debate—"Is the Co-op Movement Unsatisfactory?" *Affir.*: Mr. F. A. Ridley; *Neg.*: Mr. Reg. Gosling.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (361 Brixton Road, near Gresham Road, S.W.): 7.30, Mr. H. Preece—"The Origins of Symbolism."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7.0, W. Stephen Sanders, M.P.—"The Future of British Political Parties."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, entrance Theobald's Road): 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine—"Christ and Krishna."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree, Euston Road, N.W.1): Thursday, February 27, at 101 Tottenham Court Road, Social and Dance, 7.30 to 11.30. Admission 1s.

OUTDOOR.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Messrs. Charles Tuson and James Hart; 3.15, Messrs. E. Betts and C. E. Wood. Freethought meetings every Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. C. Tuson and J. Hart; every Friday, at 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. The *Freethinker* may be obtained during our meetings outside the Park Gates, Bayswater Road.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW.—City Saloon Hall at 11.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, on "What is Materialism"; 6.30, "The Savage in Our Midst."

PAISLEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Causeyside Street, Paisley): Monday, February 17, at 7.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, President of the N.S.S. and Editor of the *Freethinker* will lecture on "Can We Do Without Christianity?"

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. S. Saklatvala—"India, and What it Means—Socialism and Peace."

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.30, Mr. S. Cohen (Manchester)—"A Freethinker Looks at Life." On Sunday, February 23, Mr. Chapman Cohen will lecture in the Picton Hall, on "The Savage in our Midst." There will be reserved seats at 6d. and 1s. Will all friends and sympathizers please do all they can to make this meeting as widely known as possible.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Still's Restaurant, Bristol Street): Sunday, February 16, at 7.0, Committee Meeting—General Business.

Miscellaneous Advertisements.

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