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Views and Opinions.

Parliament and The Blasphemy Bill.

THERE was no time last week except to just report the fate of the Bill for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. The result was not surprising. It was not to be expected that the House of Commons had achieved a sufficient degree of mental development to place religious opinions on the same level as other opinions. One might as reasonably expect an uncivilized African to treat his own particular wooden Joss as just a mere piece of carved wood. It was wonderful for the Bill to have passed its Second Reading. It would have been miraculous for it to have passed a third. It was a question only of whether the Government—although the Bill was supported by so many of its own followers—would kill the Bill in the Committee stage or on a third reading. It decided on the Committee stage as being a little less public. Mr. Thurtle deserves the thanks of all who have a genuine love for freedom of thought for his introducing the Bill in face of the bigotry it was certain to arouse. So do the others who spoke and voted in its favour. But the Government had to consider its Chapel supporters, and above all the Roman Catholic vote. So the orders went out for the destruction of the Bill.

I was present during the whole of the discussion, and it was a revelation to one who had never wasted his time listening to the House of Commons. There was a Committee of forty, and with the Catholic Solicitor-General, who personified legal obscurantism, backed up with Roman Catholic belief, Sir Charles Oman, who stood for sheer mental incapacity for anything but a single idea, and representatives of the Stone Age such as Lord Rustace Percy, one felt that the Christian Church was quite safe. A progressive idea that could pass that bunch would be too faint to be of much use to anyone.

* * *

A Cowardly Game.

I warned readers weeks ago that the Home Secre-

tary, Mr. Clynes, would only agree to the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws so long as they remained unaltered. The result justified what was said. A man of courage would have said outright that he would not agree to the abolition of the law of blasphemy, but Mr. Clynes is not exactly a brave man—except in a crowd. In his second reading speech he said, in almost as many words, that he would do as “the denominations” wished. So having received his marching orders, the Government sent down a wrecking amendment, which it declared was “essential,” and left it to its Roman Catholic Solicitor-General to carry it out. Here it is:—

Any person who, by words, writing, or otherwise, publishes any matter of so scurrilous a character as to be calculated, by outraging the religious convictions of any other person, to provoke a breach of the peace shall be guilty of an offence under this Act, and shall be liable on conviction on indictment to a fine not exceeding one hundred pounds or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year, or to both such fine and imprisonment.

This was as contemptible a manoeuvre on the part of the Government as could be conceived. It lacked the courage to say that it dare not support the Bill, so it adopted the plan of suggesting an amendment which it knew quite well would not be accepted, and so forced its withdrawal. It recreated the old Common Law of Blasphemy, with the exception of giving it a wider scope. It made the position infinitely worse than it is at present. What the Bill asked for was, as Mr. Thurtle put it, “that attacks on religion shall not be singled out for prosecution as against attacks on any other form of belief which is strongly held.” Dr. Forgan, Labour Member for Renfrew W., properly singled out one cause of the death of the Bill as “the abstention of members of the Government.” As the Government supplied the wrecking amendment it could hardly vote for the Bill as it stood.

Mr. Thurtle properly and promptly, once the fact that the Government had decided to either kill the Bill, or re-enact the Law of Blasphemy, moved that the Bill be dropped, and this, of course, was agreed to. Once more he tried to get the Committee to see that no licence was asked for on behalf of attacks on religion, only that there should be the same freedom as existed with other opinions. Mr. Snell made a quietly impassioned speech, which Mr. Ormsby-Gore received with a grin on his exceeding foolish face, and had to be called to order by the Speaker. Mr. Snell aptly reminded members that if the Law of Blasphemy had to-day a more liberal interpretation it was because so many had suffered to achieve it. Mr. Ede also appealed for more toleration than had been displayed, but without any perceptible effect. The bigots had their religion to defend and their intolerance to gratify. One felt that the House of Commons will never repeal the Blasphemy Laws until outside

forces compel it to do so. It will register an advance, it will never achieve one.

* * *

Christian Sadism.

Once again we were treated to a picture of the flood of indecent pictures that were ready to be launched if the Bill passed. Sir Charles Oman, the representative of Cambridge University dwelt upon this—it seems about the only point he ever does dwell on in this connexion, and his obsession is an interesting fact to a psychologist. He explained that “The feeling that we are standing up against a rush of indecent stuff has made us feel strongly against this Bill.” And Mr. Kedward grew almost tearful in his protestation that while “such things,” “might easily be cast aside by the pure mind, we have to think of the effect it might have upon thousands of children.” Poor children! Poor people! What a pity they have not “pure minds” and so naturally protected against such things. And yet if either of these gentlemen will undertake to read aloud certain portions of their sacred book in public, I will undertake to get the police to stop him. I have done this before, and will do so again. Or if they will send these selected passages through the post, the Postmaster-General will prosecute them. A further illustration of the fossilized mentality of Sir Charles Oman was seen in the fact that he had actually an amendment making it a criminal offence to use “sacred subjects” as a means of caricaturing political personages or others of public importance. It seems someone had actually drawn the leader of the opposition in the likeness of the Devil. But whether he thought that was a libel on the Devil or the leader of the Opposition I do not know. At any rate I agree with Bertrand Russell that this mania for manufacturing opportunities for punishment is a fine illustration of the development of Sadism under Christian influence.

Now the complete answer to all this foolish talk about indecency and breaches of the peace is, first, that no such indecency exists, and, next, there have never been any actual breaches of the peace in connexion with any blasphemy prosecution that has ever taken place. If there were there is the ordinary law to deal with them. Why is not action taken under the ordinary law? It cannot be because Christians do not wish to do so; it is only because these offences only exist with Freethought propaganda because there is a special law to make them such. And this same law made it an offence at one time to deny the divinity of Jesus, or the reality of witchcraft, or the existence of hell, or the infallibility of the Bible: and the same people who now picture themselves as so many Galahads standing between the British public and floods of indecency are precisely the same people who resisted the extension of the Franchise to Jews and Catholics, or making it possible for men who did not believe in the Oath to go into a court of law and make a simple affirmation. It is the same story right through. The picture of men with the mentality of Sir Charles Oman demanding the continuance of a law for fear of England sinking to the low moral level of the Continent of Europe would be quite amusing, did it not betoken a frame of mind that seriously handicaps the building up of friendly relations between this and other countries.

* * *

A Straight Issue.

Commenting on the result the *Church Times* says:—

We have no enthusiasm for the Blasphemy Law as at present administered. It is a class law, giving free liberty to the cultured sceptic and punishing the ignorant unbeliever.

That is quite straightforward. The Blasphemy Law is a law against opinion; that truth cannot be too often emphasized, nor must it be forgotten that it is a Labour Government which now subscribes to the twin doctrine that religion must be maintained to keep the “lower classes” in order, and which refuses to the uneducated man the liberty it grants to the educated one. When Justice Salter summed up in the trial of J. W. Gott, at Birmingham, he impressed upon the jury that in considering whether the language used was likely to outrage the feelings of believers, it was not the refined or educated believer it must have in mind, but the ordinary man in the street. This made the least educated member of the community the judge of what might be permissible in the matter of controversy. I am quite sure that if Mr. Justice Salter had been a member of that Standing Committee he would not have looked outside the room for illustrative examples. The *Church Times* makes no secret that it is the opinions it would like to control. One of the dictators to the present Government, the Roman Catholic Church makes no secret either of what it desires. Mr. Kedward spoke quite frankly of the need for guarding children from “poisonous opinions.” The attitude of other members was quite clear. It was the opinions they hated. These men would, if they could, suppress any opinion to which they are opposed.

* * *

How We Stand.

And now how do we stand? Well to begin with the Blasphemy Law, whether existent or non-existent will make not the slightest difference to our propaganda. It has never done so in the past, and will not do so in the future. Our policy, which has been the policy of the N.S.S. ever since it has been in existence, has been to conduct a propaganda in strict accordance with the circumstances in which the battle is fought. If ridicule is advisable, ridicule is used; if invective, then invective; if serious scientific argument, that is used. With every subject other than religion this is the policy adopted, and we see no reason whatever to alter the plan when religion is on the carpet. We see no reason whatever to humour bigots by acting as though their bigotry deserves respect. It deserves only contempt, and it may rely upon getting it in full measure. If we treated the ridiculous, savage, superstitions of the Christian Church with respect we should deserve the contempt of all really civilized men and women. We respect the right of everyone to hold and express whatever opinions he pleases, and that is all that should be expected. If Christians cannot hear their opinions attacked with any form of controversial argument, we must do what we can to educate them above that stage of primitive mentality.

Next, we really have gained enormously by the discussion of the Blasphemy Law. Deliberate as the misrepresentations have been on the part of such specialists in scurrility in misrepresentation as Mr. Lovat-Fraser, or through the want of legal knowledge of such men as Mr. Clynes, or such curious survivals as Lord Eustace Percy and Sir Charles Oman, the discussion has brought many of the better type of Christians over to our side. Publicly and privately these have expressed their disgust that at this time of day men should demand the protection of the police for their religious opinions. The newspapers, ever ready to feel such tendencies, have with few exceptions, taken the line that the sooner the Blasphemy Laws disappear the better. On no other occasion has there been so general an opinion expressed. The pressure of the better type of public opinion is making itself felt.

The lesson for Freethinkers is obvious. Our work is to go on sapping the foundations of religion by every legitimate means; and I use that term without the slightest regard to the existence of the Blasphemy Laws. We shall continue to treat Christianity with as much ridicule as we can, with all the irreverence that an historic lie deserves, with all the contempt that so contemptible a creed merits, and I hope that every Freethinker in the country will pursue the same policy. The Church, said Ingersoll, only gave up burning Freethinkers when they became too numerous to be burned; the bulk of Christians will only treat Freethinkers with justice when they show themselves strong enough to demand it. The mealy-mouthed policy of guarding one's speech, or disguising one's opinions for fear of offending Christians has never paid and never will pay. Carlyle might have saved himself more than nine year's imprisonment had he adopted that policy; Bradlaugh, the years of fighting that brought about his premature death, had he subscribed to it; but the world would in that case not have been where it is to-day. It is a case of "Crush the Infamous!" The adventure of the Bill for the repeal of the Blasphemy laws should give Freethinkers every encouragement to press forward with renewed vigour. They will be unworthy of their forbears and of the tradition bequeathed to them if they do not rise to the occasion.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Black Army and Brotherhood

"The National Church is a national concern."

Dean Inge.

"The Christian Bible is like a nose of wax, it can be twisted into any shape."—Martin Luther.

"More life, and fuller, that we want."—Tennyson.

THERE are fashions in pulpit talk as in women's dress. Priests are now telling their credulous congregations that the brotherhood of man is one of the primary concerns of Christian doctrine. The Union Jack is now hidden behind the vestry door. All the patriotic platitudes regarding an alleged "god of battles" are forgotten, and men and women are bidden to turn their eyes to a camouflaged "prince of peace." The founder of the Christian Religion, priests now say, proclaimed "blessed are the peacemakers." The clergy themselves have, however, never earned for themselves this benediction, although the Roman Pontiff sought to impose what was called "the truce of God" several times during the Great War. For little could be gained by postponing a fight to the death between embattled millions for a few hours on Christmas Day or Good Friday. Such minor palliatives are of small moment compared with the grim fact that the clergy never set themselves in opposition to war and militarism itself.

Turn to the history of our own country, and refer to the record of the Church of England during the past few generations. Britain has waged over a hundred wars, great and small. We have spilled our own and other people's blood in every corner of the earth from Ashanti to New Zealand. In every instance, this Anglican Church has been the maid-of-all-work of the Government, blessed the regimental flags, christened the battleships, and sung Te Deums for victory. *The Book of Common Prayer*, issued with the sanction of Parliament, assumes that justice is on our side, and reminds Christians that "there is none other that fighteth for us but only Thou, O God."

In the Great War whole nations, professedly Christian, were engaged for years in wholesale murder. Europe was a slaughter-house in which perished the flower of the manhood of the Christian world. It was a complete indictment of the religion of Christ, which had proved itself powerless for good but powerful for evil. The millions who professed and called themselves Christian were entirely unaffected by the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. When passion or self-interest was aroused, every commandment and every precept was forgotten. Nor was this all of the sorry story, for a few persons were actually treated as criminals for attempting to take their religion seriously, as with the Quakers and Conscientious Objectors in England, and a few Communists in Europe and America.

Indeed, Christianity seems to breed hypocrisy. So far as the different Christian churches were concerned, the profession of Christian ethics was a delusion and a mockery. Whether they were Anglican bishops, Romish cardinals, Nonconformist clergymen, or patriarchs of the Greek Church, the grim fact remains. As for the brotherhood of man, no one remembering the awful treatment of Jews and Freethinkers throughout Europe, or of the black race in America, can but see that Christian doctrines have one aspect in theory and another in practice.

The English clergy are now very anxious to persuade everybody that they had a very important share in the improvement of the condition of the people. They wish to forget the votes of the bishops in the House of Lords, and they also wish to forget the Great War, and their own shameful share in it. To this end they have included in a Church of England hymnal a few lines of doggerel intended to enlist the sympathies of sturdy Trade-Unionists. Listen to the dulcet tones of the clerical syren:—

"Sons of Labour, think of Jesus
As you rest your homes within,
Think of that sweet babe of Mary
In the stable of the inn.
Think, now, in the sacred story
Jesus took a humble grade,
And the lord of life and glory
Worked with Joseph at his trade."

Where are the snows of yesteryear? "Where are the hymns of hate, the songs of hell and the blood of the lamb?" Where are the fervent appeals to regard the Union Jack as among the most sacred symbols of the national religion? Without elaborating the matter unduly, this change of front is disingenuous and by no means clever. For in the same programme there are still prayers for individual members of the Royal Family, and Omnipotence is dubbed "King of Kings" until such times as priests alter the title to "president of presidents."

Is it possible that the growth of the Democratic Movement has frightened the seventeen thousand priests of the State Church who may visualize the horrors of disestablishment and disendowment on the political horizon. Perhaps the clergy are actually preparing for the dreadful day when the Red Flag will fly at Westminster, and the Bench of Bishops get marching orders. If so, someone ought to remind the Black Army of priests that it is quite within the bounds of possibility that the continued existence of a medieval church may be found incompatible with materialistic efficiency. With every generation the social conscience becomes quickened and more sensitive. Men and women cannot accept to-day ideas which were accepted quietly by their innocent and ill-instructed forefathers. Christianity is an organized hypocrisy, and the clergy are but self-seeking leaders of the blind. The world-war produced horrors and evil enough, but there is a bright lining

to the blackest of clouds if this most awful outbreak has shown once and for all that Christianity is but one of many superstitions, and that the so-called "Old old story" is of the things that perish.

The collapse of the Christian churches is too complete to be glossed over by the glamour of false sentiments and assumed heroics. Let the people disband the Black Army, and work out their own salvation without the assistance of petticoated priests and the fables of an outworn faith. Modern man has surely outgrown the two thousand years' old dogmas of Orientalism, and civilized man is better and nobler than all the gods of decadent and debased superstitions. Priestcraft, in all its forms, is an affront to the spirit of Democracy. For no one can be a loyal Churchman without renouncing his mental and moral freedom, and placing his civil loyalty and duty at the mercy of a priest, a truly intolerable position for a man to whom Liberty and Fraternity are more than empty names.

MIMNERMUS.

A Racial Calamity:—Losing the Sense of the Absurd.

(Concluded from page 134.)

II.

IN my previous article I confined myself to the old dispensation of pre-scientific ignorance and superstition. In this one I wish to consider the effect, if any, which post-scientific illumination has had upon our sense of the absurd. We enumerated the various methods resorted to by the priesthood to produce the narcoma or state of torpor in which our sense of the fantastic is rendered impotent. We did so in the case of the child and in that of the adult. We saw that in respect to the latter its uniform policy was to erect a barrier to intercept the light of science. In the case of Catholicism, after persecution was put an end to by the State, the barrier devised was the notorious Index and the Confessional which in conjunction served as a more or less effective barrage around the Catholics of the world.

The confessional is the church's mental thumb-screw to wrench confessions from its victims ever since it was compelled to abandon the physical instrument. In point of brutality the confessional is certainly less villainous; but it is probably more efficient as a control over every individual. At least a more perfect device to make the Index a reality could hardly be conceived, priest-craft, as practised by Catholicism, is nigh perfect in its efficiency to perpetuate the superstitious follies of barbarism.

But Catholicism is not the only "army corps" that hoists the Christian flag. There are several others though their adherents may be fewer. The Southern States of America exult in a cult of Christians who possess a will of their own. They call themselves Fundamentalists. Only in one respect do they resemble the Catholics: the light of science and of truth is carefully kept out of their schools. Catholicism is a priest-run religion. The Index and Confessional deprive its devotees of all independence of opinion and judgment. They are led by the priest like a flock of sheep to the slaughter. The Fundamentalists are not priest-ridden at all; their attitude and policy are their own. They keep the light out by making that miscellany called the Bible, a *fetish*, and so accept that mixture of legends, folklore, the display of magic (miracles) and the ravings of poets and prophets as historical facts and positive truths.

The Catholic is not allowed to have a will of his

own; the Fundamentalist, on the other hand, has his own credal will; but under the petrifying influence of his fetish it has attained such a stonelike solidity, that he is just as incapable of enlightenment as a Catholic.

America, the home of religious cranks, has another army corps which displays the name Christian on its unfurled banner. I refer to that already world-wide cult called "Christian Science or Church of Christ Scientist." This cult has interlarded the grotesque imbecilities of the Christian creed and ritual with extravaganzas expressed in the most rhapsodic fustian ever penned by a human being. So that the sense of the absurd is more benumbed in Mrs. Eddy's followers than in the devotees of Catholicism and Fundamentalism—a fact that accounts for the phenomenal credulity of those who profess it, which, in turn, accounts for the astounding rapidity of its growth. It is said that already there are about ten million Christian Scientists in the United States alone.

But increase in credulity is not confined to the three religious cults just considered! This trait is exhibited in a modern movement not formally allied to religion at all, to an extent that eclipses all religious credulity. The reader will know I refer to Spiritualism.

One would have expected, after an output of two centuries of scientific research and discoveries in all civilized countries, that the sense of the absurd would have become so sensitive that notorious superstitions would be found only in out-of-the-way corners where the light of modern culture had not penetrated. Is it not, therefore, a most astonishing fact to find that the very reverse has happened? Indeed, I do not think that credulity was ever more rampant, and certainly it was never more phenomenal and unaccountable in the history of the race, than at present. Never has readiness to believe been more indiscriminate and fatuous. People see nothing absurd in the claims and pretensions of cranks and charlatans, however transparent and contemptible be their intrigues, with the result that they never fail to get followers even from the cultured class. The press is not a little responsible for this state of affairs. It publishes the doings of a spook in a haunted house in as serious an attitude as if it were describing a railway disaster and even in more detail. The more fantastic is the tale, the more space is given to it.

One stands aghast at the appalling spectacle exhibited by cultured people professing belief in Spiritualism—a movement or cult based on *darkness and noise* as means of putting our two higher sense-organs (the eye and ear) temporarily out of action! Where it is a means of bringing grist to the mill, it is accountable enough; but when it is championed by sincerity of belief, it must be ascribed to a form of monomania.

In point of utter dementia, the claims made on behalf of spiritualists puts one in mind of those made by the notorious Joanna Southcott—a servant-girl who claimed to possess supernatural gifts and to be in touch with the unseen world, and was therefore able to forecast the future. Though she put forward such fatuous ideas as that she was the woman referred to in Revelations xii.; and that she would be delivered of Shiloh on October 19, 1814, yet 100,000 followers saw nothing fantastic in this exhibition of arrant dementia. The claims of mediums or made on behalf of mediums are not one jot less grotesque. The only difference between Joanna and the medium is that in the case of the latter, trickery is much more in evidence. Nothing ever uttered by Joanna excelled in sheer imbecility than a profession of belief in fairies and in spooks of haunted houses.

Before I conclude these remarks, I wish to draw attention to the correlation between proselyting zeal and creeds. It is a remarkable fact that truth and sanity do not inspire one with a missionary spirit ever eager to disseminate them over the earth. Science has no colporteurs; it has only teachers. It is "airy nothings," the essence of all superstition, which have only a verbal existence or reality that rely upon missionary societies for their propagation. Even religious sects resort to propaganda inversely proportional to their sanity. Of the Nonconformist bodies, the Unitarians and the Congregationalists are about the sanest amongst them both in creed and ritual; but they do no propaganda work. Belief in dogmas that are intrinsically absurd seems to imbue the believer with a proselyting spirit, and the more farcical it is, the more intense is his zeal to do it.

That fact was well exemplified in the history of Christianity during its infancy, when the new born cult was struggling to become a religion: the saner section of the early Christians had not the implacable zeal of those to whom nothing was too grotesque to be included in the creed. With this section reason was not allowed a hearing. Its incandescent fervour made it dominant, and Christianity developed into that complex of credal follies known as Catholicism instead of into a comparatively rational cult.

Again, the credal hotchpotch of farcical inanities which Catholicism ultimately became correlates in like manner with the zeal and activities known as Jesuitism. So perfervid is this zeal, that it stops short at no intrigue, on the casuistic plea that the end justifies the means. And as its operating "wires" are all carefully laid "underground," great events transpire quite unexpectedly.

Apart its recent renewed propaganda campaign, the same clandestine tactics are resorted to, with the result that meeting-houses spring up with astonishing frequency, and in districts that one would never think of. And what is more, they meet now with no opposition or hindrance. Nonconformity used to be so disgusted with the mummery of its hollow ritual as openly to ridicule it. What has happened? Is Nonconformity moribund! If so, it makes the Catholic new push a danger so great that our descendants in the not-long distant future, will anathematize our forbears for having extended political toleration to the Catholics, who in *practice* are Jesuits. Tolerance to Jesuitism has no parallel among the other sects and denominations. It is sheer madness to urge one to display chivalrous toleration to a highway-man who, while pointing his revolver at you, gives you the benign option: "Your money or your life." The only difference between the two is, that the revolver of Catholicism is levelled at our descendants rather than at us. The recent dénouement in Italy is indicative of what is happening the world over. Jesuitism is an octopus of colossal dimensions with arms innumerable and of lengths immeasurable, lithe, and powerful, whose movements are true to character, invisible in the gloom of the "ocean" floor ever ready to entwine their victims, serpent-like, till they are permanently secured by their unseverable suckers.

The monster's main objective is the *capture of the Press*. And it is evident that their machinations are not without success, for Catholic activities are frequently lionized with photos and letterpress in those journals whose editors or proprietors have already been captured.

KERIDON.

To Dogmatism the Spirit of Inquiry is the Spirit of Evil; and to pictures of the latter it has appended a tail, to represent the note of interrogation.

Dod Grile (Ambrose Bierce).

Atheism and Persecution.

From "The Parson and the Atheist," a discussion between Rev. the Hon. Edward Lyttelton and Chapman Cohen.

SPEAKING in the House of Commons (at the beginning of the Revolution in Russia), Mr. Lloyd George advised those who were talking about Russia to turn their minds away from newspapers and read the French Revolution. The history of the two movements are instructively analogous. In both instances an age-long and intolerable tyranny, backed up in both cases by the Church, was ended by the only possible method—a revolution. In both instances other countries, alarmed at its possible influence, depicted the revolutionists as a band of blood-stained scoundrels, sought to suppress the revolution by force, under the plea of restoring order, while the press of that day shrieked over the Atheism of the French, attributing the exaggerated and manufactured horrors of the revolution to the disestablishment of religion. Quite as remarkable was the insensibility to the age-long suffering of the people, and the extreme sensitiveness to the sufferings of those who were put to death during the revolution. So Christians could see the Russian people robbed, tortured, and ill-treated, could see Jews murdered wholesale, and Jewesses compelled to register themselves as prostitutes before being allowed to study at their own universities, could see, in the rising headed by Father Gapon, scores of unarmed men and women shot down by the Czar's troops and yet remain unmoved. For these things were done by the order of the anointed Czar and with the sanction of the Church. It is when the people rise in their turn, and lives are lost, that there is an outburst of horror and indignation. In Paine's immortal phrase, they pity the plumage and forget the dying bird. The injustice to the many by the few may be easily forgiven; the revenge taken by the many on the few calls for denunciation and is unforgivable. A year of retaliation for centuries of wrong. A people brutalized by a religion-soaked autocracy behaving as their masters have taught them to behave. I am not defending brutality and wrong, whether committed by Atheist or Christian, by peer or peasant, but I do marvel at the state of mind that can calmly bear the injustice of an Established Church and a tyrannous Government and become convulsed with horror when the people commit excesses in the attempt to end an intolerable wrong. By all means read the French Revolution.

Now, I think I may safely leave my previous articles as an answer to the major portion of Dr. Lyttelton's last contribution; but he puts a direct question to me, and I do not care to avoid that. He takes certain statements contributed, for the most part, by anonymous correspondents, and, building upon them, as upon a rock, asks me what I make of them. For, he says, Trotsky is an Atheist, and he believes (I do not know how Dr. Lyttelton can know this) he is acting in accordance with the principles of Atheism. And he concludes that we see there Atheism leading not to an improvement of the world, but the reverse. I must say in passing that there is no evidence that all the stories our papers print about Russia are true, and some are clearly not true, while other are flatly contradicted by reputable witnesses who put their names to their communications.

It is not true, for instance, that Trotsky has "organized compulsory lessons on the non-existence of a Divine Being." The *Christian World* is my authority (and I have others) for saying that, for the first time in its history, Russia possesses religious freedom, and there is a great deal of Evangelical work going on in the villages. Any religion may be professed, but there are no religious tests, and, as in France, the State is completely secularized. That, I presume, is a grave offence in the eyes of English Christians; and only a few years ago these same daily dreadfuls were making our flesh creep with tales of the moral degradation that had overtaken France, because she had done what Russia has now done—secularized the State. And perhaps Dr. Lyttelton will inform me, assuming the statement is true, is there anything worse in the compulsory teaching of the non-existence of God than in the compulsory teaching of his existence? Both to me are equally stupid; but is one more wrong than the other?

The Freethought case is so strong it can afford to be more than fair—it can well be generous. So let me give Dr. Lyttelton all for which he asks. Let me assume that all his statements are actually verified facts, and that the brutality of the Lenin-Trotsky regime has in twelve months so outdone the slaughtering and torturing, and outraging, and killing, and robbing of the whole of Czarism that we are justifiably outraged. What have I to say? Well, my first comment is that of Mirabeau's. If you treat a people like brutes you must expect them to behave like brutes. How a people behave is a consequence of their antecedents, an exhibition of their education. The Church has had more influence over the mind of the Russian people for centuries than any other power. It alone made the autocracy possible for so long. And if the outcome of this influence—not for a year, but for many centuries—is that at the first opportunity the people behave, as Dr. Lyttelton believes they have, does it not occur to him that it is the Atheist who should call on the Christian for an explanation of their conduct and not *vice versa*? Christianity had the training of these people—not Atheism. And the Atheist might reply: What on earth can you expect from a people with so Christian an heredity? . . .

But I am really puzzled to see why Dr. Lyttelton should connect Atheism with brutality or murder, or why, because an Atheist is brutal, it should be at once held to be a logical result of his Atheism. Theoretically, Atheism is a rejection of Theism. In practice the Atheist believes that the world will be the better for its rejection of Theism. There is plenty of proof to be offered for this belief, but it is not now germane to the issue. But how can you logically connect Atheism with crime? Granted that an Atheist can and does commit crime, is there any reason in the nature of things why he should not? If vice and virtue are, as I believe, qualities of human nature, is there any ground for assuming that Theists should have a monopoly of vice? And if the criminality of one Atheist is to be placed to the credit of his Atheism, to what are we to attribute the criminality of thousands of Theists? Atheism, said Bacon, "leaves a man to sense; to philosophy; to natural piety, to reputation"; in other words, it leaves a man face to face with the world, to make the best or the worst of it, as his sense and character will determine. Atheism does not prevent a man making blunders or perpetuating follies—I do not know anything that does. But it does prevent his blinding himself and drugging his conscience with theological formulæ, which, as the world's history shows, have helped men to commit the vilest of

crimes. My difference with the Trotsky of the British press—I do not know how far it corresponds with the Trotsky of real life—is that brutality and crime remain brutality and crime whether perpetrated in the name of God or in the name of the State. I will only add that, while brutality in man is sporadic in its outburst and carries the germs of its own destruction, brutality in the name of God has endured from the dawn of history, and carries the seed of its own perpetuation.

It seems to a Christian, says Dr. Lyttelton, as if Trotsky "was preaching Atheism as a help to license." Is there really need for one to go beyond religion for all the excuse that one needs? Is it not like exchanging an oak cudgel for a reed? When Spain, in the space of three centuries (1471-1781), killed or imprisoned over 330,000 men and women for religious offences alone, there was no question of Atheism. And when it proceeded to wreck the welfare of the country by driving out the whole Jewish and Moorish population, its justification was God, not Atheism. It was not in the frenzy of a revolution that men and women and children were subjected to obscene and unspeakable tortures in the dungeons of the Inquisition, or burned alive in public, with thousands of Christians looking on and gloating over their agonies. The excuse was God and Christ. What need for adopting Atheism was there when France put thousands to death on the night of St. Bartholomew? Look at the records of religious cruelty and spoliation in every country, at the pious rascals that have figured in the financial world, at the pious criminals who fill our prisons, and then say whether it is at all necessary to adopt Atheism as an excuse for ill-doing. And if warranty for slaughter during a time of war is required, it is not in a textbook of Atheism that one need search, but in the "Holy Bible," where one can find:—

And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it (the city) into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword. But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle therein, even all the spoil thereof, thou shalt take unto thyself, and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies which the Lord thy God hath given thee . . . Of the cities of these people . . . thou shalt save nothing alive that breatheth.

Really, Dr. Lyttelton strangely undervalues the accommodating capacity of Christianity, historical and doctrinal, if he thinks that anyone needs stray beyond its confines in order to find an excuse for rascality. The late sainted Monk Rasputin certainly laboured under no sense of the limitations of religion.

And if sexual license is needed, Christianity shows itself, historically, as accommodating here as elsewhere. I must be very brief, although I can assure Dr. Lyttelton that I am only giving samples from bulk. The story begins with St. Paul, whose claim that he had power to lead about "a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles," caused some scandal, and has provided a basis for Christian Free Love down to our own day. It continues through a number of the early Christian teachers, who, as Rev. S. Baring Gould says, "defiantly urged on the converts to the gospel to commit adultery, fornication, and all uncleanness"—to prove their freedom of the natural moral law. It goes on through the sexual scandals of the Love Feasts; the second-century Adamites, who held their religious services in a state of nudity; the Manicheans, accused of religious prostitution; the Carpocratians, who taught the holding of women in common; the Brethren of the Free Spirit, and similar medieval sects, all of whom indulged in some form or other of sexual extravagance. It is found in modern

America, in the Christian sects of Free Love, and more significant still, it is found active in pre-revolutionary Russia. There were the Klysti, whose ceremonies were performed round a naked woman; the Jumpers, who practised debauchery to prove that all things were permitted to the saints; the Eunuchs, who practised castration, etc. And these sects, remarks their historian, Mr. Heard, "justify their abominations by the Biblical legends of Lot's daughters, Solomon's harem, and the like." There is no need to continue the tale. One could fill a volume. I content myself with asking Dr. Lyttelton, what does he make of it all? And looking at the history we have, and the people we know, does he still think anyone is compelled to fly to Atheism as an excuse for crime?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Acid Drops.

The Secretary of the National Council of the Y.M.C.A. has his own way of defending the youth of the nation from the charge of Atheism. He says:—

It requires a highly subtle and highly intellectual type of mind, which is fortunately extremely rare, to be either a sincere Atheist or a consistent moral pervert. I don't mean to suggest, of course, that they have anything else in common.

The qualification contained in the last sentence was necessary, although we are quite ready to prove that instances of moral perversion are far commoner in connexion with Christianity than with any other form of religious or non-religious belief. Apart from this it is interesting to note the implication that the Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. thinks the bulk of young men are protected against Atheism because that requires "a highly subtle and highly intellectual type of mind." To use Lowell freely:—

A kindly providence has fashioned them hollow
In order they might Christianity swallow.

Sunday was set aside as a special day for prayer and intercession on behalf of the Naval Conference. No one is a penny the worse—or better. It only means that the Churches have seized one more opportunity for public advertisement. Great is the inspiration of the Lord!

Some person proposes to walk across the English Channel on "water-boots." He should get in touch with Jesus. For Jesus was, or is, the only known expert at walking on water, and would no doubt impart a few useful hints to one who approached him in a true spirit of reverent enquiry.

The Sunday school "situation" in London has been the subject of an investigation by a Committee representing the various Metropolitan Sunday Schools. We learn that the managements of the schools are intending to co-operate for the purpose of "meeting the challenge of the very serious position revealed by the report" of the Committee. If anyone has any new wheezes for kidnapping immature intelligences, will they please forward them to the Committee?

The Rev. C. F. Andrews has been to America and has brought back the following impression:—

The student life in the greater colleges of North America is obviously going through a period of reaction against the purely religious motive as the dominant principle of human affairs in some such manner as we find in Russia, religion being declared to be the "opium of the people." At the same time my experience equally shows that in many universities, and especially among the smaller colleges, this revolt against religion is by no means widespread.

Reading between the lines, one may hazard a guess that the alleged coming revival of religion will receive no support from the more alert and enquiring minds among American students. Meanwhile, no doubt our American Freethought friends are doing their best to make the "revolt" more widespread.

Mr. James Kelly, British Secretary of the World's Sunday School Association, has been asked whether the Secular type of Sunday school hinders the work of his Association. His reply is:—

I have visited most of the few Socialist and Communist Sunday schools in Glasgow and in London, and in the main I have seen nothing at all objectionable in their teaching. True, most of them simply give moral teaching. But it is good moral teaching. There are exceptions, but they are not many. Only once or twice in this country have I heard class hatred preached, or any anti-Christian attitude at all. There are some very strongly anti-Christian Sunday schools in Germany, for instance. But I don't consider it a real peril at all.

Assuming that Mr. Kelly's diagnosis is correct, the job of those who conduct Secular Sunday schools is to see that these are made a real "peril." One way of doing this is to impart something more than moral teaching; to inculcate habits of thinking that will make it impossible for religious ideas or the religious mode of thought to gain a footing.

The Wesleyan Church at Daventry has been, we are told, struggling for years with the problem of how to "gain a hold on the crowd"—a truly apt phrase! Seating accommodation is for 500, but evening congregations of seventy to eighty have been the average for years. But now the Rev. M. L. Foyle has had a divine brain-wave, and has discovered a solution to the empty chapel problem. Every month he holds a musical service. There is no sermon, but neatly sandwiched in between musical items interspersed with community singing, is a ten-minute address consisting of a minimum of theology. Results from these tactics are admirable from the rev. gent.'s point of view, but the whole game is despicable. First of all the local parsons do their utmost to prevent in Daventry, as in other towns, all kind of rational recreation and amusement on Sunday. The mass of the people are reduced to boredom. And then altruistic gentlemen like Mr. Foyle organize one hour's amusement in the shape of a musical service. And we daresay Mr. Foyle and his supporters boast of how they are keeping people out of mischief. For such manoeuvres, and the creed that inspires them, one can have nothing but contempt.

Speaking at Caxton Hall recently, Mr. C. E. M. Joad said he had asked three of his classes at University College the two questions: "Do you believe in God?" and "Do you feel any need to believe in God?" The answer to the first question was a unanimous negative, and to the second question a practically unanimous negative. According to a religious journal, Mr. Joad, because of these answers, has come to the conclusion that the most striking characteristic of the modern generation is a wistful agnosticism. We can only say that the answers reveal nothing of wistfulness and very little agnosticism. Possibly the wistful agnosticism exist only in the mind of Mr. Joad.

Mission halls in Manchester have for several years been exhibiting films at their Saturday night concerts. The magistrates of the city have, however, now decided that, in the interests of public safety, they could not renew the Kinema licences of the mission halls. The Rev. Herbert Cooper, however, undertook that before a new season commenced, every possible precaution would be taken to protect the public. The magistrates thereupon granted a licence for one month. Apropos of this decision, the *Methodist Times* says: "It is not unlikely that the Manchester example will be followed by other licensing authorities. Whatever such a decision may

mean in the way of alteration of premises or of programmes, its consequences must be accepted without any resentment. The Church must lead in every effort and influence that shields the life and health of the community." The sloppy cant of this almost defies comment. The Church never gave a thought to protecting the life and health of the public at its pious Kinema shows, until the secular authorities compelled it to do so. It is the secular authorities who are leading the way of compelling the Church to come to heel. In Russia this would be called an Atheistic outrage.

The *Morning Post*, which caters for the most hopelessly ignorant of the "educated" classes publishes a letter in its issue for March 4, from a Mr. H. Lyon, who says, with regard to the Government prohibition of official and compulsory prayers on behalf of Russia, that the order may be circumvented by praying for all who are persecuted. Very thoughtfully he adds, "the Almighty will understand." Now that is really paying God Almighty a compliment, and may atone for the implied censure on his carelessness for not doing what he should have done long ago. And the picture of the Chaplain giving a quiet wink to God when he is offering up a just and general prayer, is indicative of the pap that does duty for brains in the skulls of the *Morning Post* regular readers.

The education of the people of Britain being such as it is, Mr. Howard Carter, the excavator of Tutankhamen's tomb, has thought it necessary to express his opinion regarding the "curse" of the Pharaoh's. He says:—

All sane people should dismiss such inventions with contempt so far as the living are concerned. Curses of this nature have no place in the Egyptian ritual.

One need not expect this statement to have any effect on the public at large. Acquaintance with the Bible, in church and school, has accustomed the British people to the superstitious notion of "curses" and the evil said to be wrought by such. And Christian education is not easily uprooted. There are still some educationists who cannot understand why the Bible ought to be kept out of the schools. Yet, to all intelligent people, the fact is obvious that education in the wider sense of the term cannot be imparted while the Bible is there.

The World's Evangelical Alliance recently held a meeting at Queen's Hall, London. The Rt. Hon. Sir Donald Maclean, P.C., K.B.E., LL.D., M.P., said:—

Science, literary criticism, historical criticism, archaeological research were launched not with any wicked motive but with a sincere desire to turn the light of facts on the authenticity of the Bible; and as the years went by, was it not true to say that the finer the criticism, the more accurate the research, the more firmly based the Bible stood, rooted not in the hearts alone but in the intelligence of mankind?

Yes, quite true—as true as Christian truth usually is. Apparently, God in his infinite wisdom ordained that it should take all kinds of Christian "truth" to make a Christian world.

Dean Inge wrote last week in a London evening newspaper:—

I have just finished writing a book on *Christian Ethics and Modern Problems*, in preparing for which I have had to study the various aspects of "the revolt of youth" against the standards and conventions of traditional morality. I have become more and more convinced that this is the storm-centre of the near future, and that it is on this field that the Churches must struggle for their existence. . . . We need to exercise this spirit of schism. . . . We need an open mind for all that the present century has taught us in natural science, sociology, and other subjects. For this is a revolutionary age, in which all that can be shaken has been or will be shaken.

Put in another way, the winds of Freethought criticism have so battered the good ship "Christianity," that

much venerable cargo must be dumped overboard. And when the good ship reaches port, if it does reach it, fresh cargo will be needed, or the ship will never sail again. With all due deference to the Dean, we suggest that if the Christian opens his mind there is a very real danger of a lot of irrational and unwholesome mush falling out. Should this happen, there is a terrible risk of what is left getting badly shaken or even ejected altogether. Finally, the Church of Christ wasn't built up on open minds but open mouths. Departure from this basic Christian principle would wreck the Church completely.

The woman contributor to a Methodist journal says: "It seems to me that the Vatican at Rome, and the Archbishop's palace at Lambeth, are incongruous with the life of Him who knows not where to lay his head." Elementary Freethought criticism is, you see, gradually reaching dull Christian wits. And it is trotted out as if it were highly original thought.

The same contributor wonders whether the Church is taking sufficient real interest in the lives of the workers. Could not the Church, we are asked, do more to secure better and cheaper homes for the people. And why is she dumb concerning low wages, and high rents and dear food. Why does not the Church stand behind the people, or better still, lead them in a campaign for "righteousness and justice?" Well, there seems nothing much to stop the Church from taking up the role of red-hot social reformer. All the Church needs to do first of all is to stop preaching the blessing of poverty, contentment with things as they are, contempt of things material, and heavenly compensation for injustice and suffering. This first step taken, the rest is plain sailing. The Church's past record in regard to social reform could be glibly explained away.

The *Methodist Times* says that this age is a reign of youth. In politics or economics, literature or sex, religion or art, the young man can be seen victorious, dominant, self-competent, impatient. Our contemporary adds:—

Emphatically, neither our Divine Master nor we ourselves are afraid of youth, but of unguided, anchorless, conscienceless youth we are afraid. We are not afraid of athleticism, or of adventure or enterprise or of self-reliance and the eager, enquiring mind. But of an all-monopolising athleticism and a godless dash and spirit of irreverent enquiry and unrestrained, not to say insolent, assurance we certainly are afraid.

Our friend is likely to continue afraid. Intelligent youth has discovered that there is no scope for the best kind of adventure, or the widest spirit of enquiry, in the sheep-pen of Christ called the Christian Church. That youth should be insolently sure regarding this, is evidence that youth has acquired a truer sense of values. Only people in sheep-pens will deplore it.

Dr. Jesse H. Holmes, Professor of Philosophy in the Quaker College at Swathmore, Pennsylvania, declares that the sole foundation of modern Christianity is a collection of myths of the Middle Ages. Stories such as the Fall, Jonah and the Whale, and the Miracles he classes as "Medieval superstition." The Jonah and the Whale story is, he says, a satire. It has no claim to historic truth. Scholars have long recognized it as an allegory of the Jewish people, who were swallowed up in the Babylonian captivity. The dare-devilry of Dr. Holmes should excite the admiration of the world. Few Christian thinkers are able to rise to the height of repeating what Freethinkers said fifty or more years ago. By the way, it does seem odd that so much of "progressive revelation" is suggested by Freethought criticism. Perhaps if the Blasphemy Laws were repealed the rate of "progression" might be faster. The experiment would be worth a trial.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

TESTIMONIAL TO MR. CHAPMAN COHEN.—Received since close of Fund: E. J. Barratt (N.Z.), 10s.; P. O'Dea (N.Z.), 10s.; J. Snowden (N.Z.), 10s.

C. S. FRASER.—Shall be glad to see copy of reply if any is received. It is curious that in all these tales about all religion being suppressed, no one mentions that there actually exists a Christian Church in Russia with the full permission of the Soviet Government. The Established Church of Russia is The Patriarchal Orthodox Church, of which the Metropolitan Sergius is the head. But this Church does not enjoy State funds, and it has to pay its way by the purely voluntary efforts of its supporters.

A GLASGOW READER sends us the following suggestion.—“Why not publish in book form the articles that appeared (on the War) during the years 1914-1918. A careful selection would make a lasting impression on the attitude of those who refused to be carried away by expediency.” We have often thought of reprinting portions of some of the articles which now read like fulfilled prophecies, but we are afraid the suggestion as offered is impracticable.

S. G. BATH.—Thanks for copy of letter. It is excellent. We are also obliged for the high opinion you express of this journal.

L. HUGHES.—We do not think that an occasional letter of the kind is inadvisable. They are interesting studies in psychology, if nothing else.

E. W. FLINT (New Zealand).—Thanks for new subscriber. Paper is being sent.

H. R. WAKEFIELD.—We agree. The whole idea of appointing a day of Intercession, and publicly informing God Almighty that on that date he is to receive a deputation on the subject of his lack of attention to the affairs of his worshippers, is absurd. What you say about Christian treatment of heretics is correct, but we question whether one Christian out of a thousand will reflect that if all the stories of Russia were true, they would only offer a practical illustration of what was the Christian policy for centuries.

B. KING.—A Translation into English of Michelet's *The Sorceress*, was published some years ago by Carrington, of Paris. We do not know of any other English version.

J.R.—What is the good of comparing Russia with England? The two countries are entirely different in their history, and a people must react in terms of their history as a whole. You write in the same vein as the man spoke who visited France and was surprised to find that even little children could speak French.

T. MOSLEY.—Of course, it is possible to make religion mean anything one pleases, if one leaves out of consideration the nature of the origin and its historic implications. The desire to have some sort of a religion is a concession of the timid mind to established “respectability.”

C BENTLEY.—Next week.

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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.

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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 (March 9) Mr. Cohen will visit Manchester, and will lecture in the Chorlton Town Hall at 3.0 and 6.30. If Mr. Cohen has his usual meetings in Manchester the hall should be well filled. Next Sunday Mr. Cohen has business in London, and on the 23rd he will speak in the Town Hall, Birmingham.

Someone ought really to supply Mr. Clynes with “an office boy in a lawyer's firm,” who could instruct him on elementary points of law. He blundered badly in his speech on the Second Reading of the Blasphemy Bill, and now he has put his foot in it again. On February 22, the *Times* published three cartoons as typical of the pictorial propaganda now being carried on in Russia. They reflected credit on those responsible for them. In each case the figure of Jesus figured, and it was the typical Jesus of the Greek Church, reproduced without distortion in any direction. But in each case Jesus was represented as leading the people into the clutches of the capitalist, and so far as the teachings of Jesus may be said to have been used by the Church and the powers that be to keep the people in subjection, the pictures were saying only what we have always said in this journal, and shall keep on saying. But as drawings they were excellent, and quite chaste in design. Unless one took up the ridiculous position that the figure of Jesus must not be used in any connexion other than a religious one, no objection could be taken to them.

But in view of the attitude of Mr. Clynes and others with regard to the Blasphemy Bill, Mr. Clynes was asked by a Labour Member whether he contemplated instituting proceedings against the *Times* for blasphemy. To this Mr. Clynes made the perfectly ridiculous reply that:—

Proceedings should not be taken when clearly no offence is intended to anyone's religious convictions.

Apart from other aspects of the reply, the answer exhibits gross ignorance of the scope and nature of the law of Blasphemy. Intention has nothing whatever to do with the Common Law of Blasphemy in this country. It might aggravate the offence, but it has nothing to do with the offence itself. Perhaps he might have merely repeated what he was told to say, but that explains the statement, without justifying it. One begins to wonder what are the qualification for the post of Home Secretary? Is it that of having been useful to a party, and therefore a job of some kind must be found?

Having read Mr. Clynes' reply we are inclined to give credence to a story that reached us with regard to the government amendment that brought about the death of the Bill. We were told that members of the Committee were informed that some such amendment was essential (it appears in another part of this issue) because outside of London it was impossible to bring an action for language likely to create a breach of the peace unless there was an actual riot. Bearing in mind the probability that Mr. Clynes' legal advisers were trading upon his evident ignorance of the law, it is likely that the same trick may have been tried on the Standing Committee. Of course it is not the state of the law. In any part of the country anyone using language calculated to cause a breach of the peace may be brought before a magistrate and punished.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti visits Plymouth and will lecture twice to-day (Sunday) in the Co-operative Hall, Courtenay Street. In the afternoon, at 3, the subject will be “Where are the Gods?” and at 7 o'clock, “An Evening with the Golden Bough.”

Under the heading of “Pot and Kettle,” the *Observer* for March 2, has the following:—

The Blasphemy Bill has been withdrawn by its pro-

moters on the ground that an amendment insisted on by Ministers would bear more harshly on freedom of opinion than even the rusty weapons of the present law. The collapse of this attempt at legislation undermines the whole case for protest against the Soviet's treatment of religion. If "we whose souls are lighted," as the hymn says, "with wisdom from on high," cannot see our way to inscribe religious liberty on the statute-book, what title have we to demand such tolerance from the befogged Bolshevik?

Mr. LeMaine visits Leicester to-day (March 9) for the first time, and will speak in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, at 6.30. We hope to hear of a good meeting. Mr. LeMaine's subject is "Why I am an Atheist." Freethinkers should do what they can to bring along a Christian friend.

We are asked to announce that in the case of the debate on the "Abolition of Religious Teaching in Schools," between Mr. D. Capper (Secretary of the Teacher's Labour League) and the Rev. F. Osborne (London Diocesan Chief Inspector) at the Essex Hall on Friday, March 21, the price of admission is sixpence. Tickets may be obtained from the Pioneer Press. Mr. Cohen has promised to take the chair, there will be questions permitted. The chair will be taken at 7.30.

We note an excellent letter in the *Boothle Times*, from the Secretary of the Liverpool Branch of the N.S.S., on the subject of Secular Education. We are glad to see that he made good use of the declaration of the Prime Minister in favour of Secular Education. This speech is being reprinted as a leaflet, and will soon be in circulation.

We were pleased to see in the *Darwen News*, a good letter by "Perpetual Vigilance," driving home the lesson of Christian persecutions apropos of the talk of Atheistic persecutions in Russia. We think it a phase of the matter which might be kept well in evidence in connexion with the present agitation.

Religious Obscurity.

IN our account of Mr. Leonard Woolf's criticism of Mr. Joad's book *The Present and Future of Religion*, we remarked that when the apologists for religion were not attacking Materialism, they spent their time in attacking one another. An illustration of this occurred in the very next number of *The Nation*, in which periodical the criticism of Mr. Joad appeared. For, instead of the reply to Mr. Woolf, which we expected to see, there was a drastic criticism of Prof. Whitehead's new book, *Process and Reality*, by Mr. Joad, under the title, "Dr. Whitehead's Metaphysics." (*The Nation*, February 22.)

Prof. Whitehead, we may remind our readers, is a Professor of Philosophy and Mathematics, he has written works on the Non-Euclidean Geometry, and Relativity, upon the latter subject he has contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. He is looked upon by the more educated religious public, as a kind of modern St. George, armed with modern science for the dialectic slaughter of the dragons of Materialism and Atheism. One would have thought, considering the present parlous state of religion, that Mr. Joad would have welcomed this religious champion, with open arms, as a stalwart ally. Not at all, quite the contrary. Mr. Joad observes:—

When I first read a book by Professor Whitehead I understood very little of it, a circumstance which produces a feeling of diffidence in regard to my own intellectual powers, and a heightened respect for those of the author. I re-read, and, although I understood more than I did before, much still re-

mains obscure. Other philosophers appear for the most part to understand Professor Whitehead no better than I do, and though mindful of his great contemporary reputation, I am reminded also of the fact that it has been largely acquired in a country where men's admiration for an author increases in proportion as their comprehension diminishes, and I begin to wonder whether it is entirely my fault that I understood so little.

This obscurity is not confined to the work under review, for we felt precisely the same after reading an earlier work of Prof. Whitehead's, attracted thereto by the frequent citation of his name in advanced religious literature; and consoled myself with the reflection that if we could not pierce the profundity, or rather, obscurity of his thought, there was not much fear of another Pentecost, or religious revival, from the teaching of this new prophet; and we suspect that it is the prestige of his scientific reputation, rather than his arguments, that cause his name to be so much quoted in religious literature. Continuing his criticism, Mr. Joad observes:—

He is excessively and, to my mind, unnecessarily obscure. In part this obscurity is due to his invention of a special vocabulary; novel words occur of which the connotation is not always precise, nor is it always clear that more familiar words would not have served as well. In considering a difficult work it is necessary to distinguish between the expression of obscurity and obscurity of expression. The former is pardonable—there is no reason that I know of why the nature of the universe should necessarily be such as to be readily intelligible to a twentieth century mind—but the latter, which is the result of bad craftsmanship, is not. It is the first business of a writer, especially a writer on philosophy, to make himself plain, and Professor Whitehead simply does not do this: sentences like "The defining characteristic of a living person is some definite type of hybrid prehensions transmitted from occasion to occasion of its existence" are all too common.

Obscurity is the unpardonable sin in literature. Compare one of Thomas Huxley's essays with a sample from Prof. Whitehead. Huxley's is as clear as crystal, anyone who can read can understand it, but the other is like muddy ditchwater. So Prof. Lloyd Morgan, another defender, or advocate, for religion has a peculiarly heavy, dull, and lifeless style of composition.

It is said that when Hegel was on his death-bed, he lamented that only one man had understood his philosophy, shortly afterwards adding fretfully that even he did not understand it. Heine, who studied under Hegel, declared that he did not wish to be understood, and we are sometimes led to suspect the same of more modern authors; it gives them a fictitious air of profundity that their more clearly expressed ideas does not entitle them to.

That Prof. Whitehead can write clearly when it suits his purpose, the following quotation will show:—

On the whole, during many generations, there has been a gradual decay of religious influence in European civilization. Each revival touches a lower peak than its predecessor, and each period of slackness a lower depth. The average curve marks a steady fall in religious tone. In some countries the interest in religion is higher than in others. But in those countries where the interest is relatively high, it still falls as the generations pass. Religion is tending to degenerate into a decent formula wherewith to embellish a comfortable life. (A. N. Whitehead: *Science and the Modern World*. p. 269.)

There is no ambiguity, or obscurity, about that pronouncement; because the facts are there and he can see them clearly, and render them clearly. But

unfortunately, the religious would say, this is not at all the testimony required. Neither is the comparison drawn as to the reception of new truth by religion, and by science, in the following passage:—

Something, which has been proclaimed to be vital, [to religion] has finally, after struggle, distress, and anathema, been modified and otherwise interpreted. The next generation of religious apologists then congratulate the religious world on the deeper insight which has been gained. The result of continued repetition of this undignified retreat, during many generations, has at last almost entirely destroyed the intellectual authority of religious thinkers. Consider this contrast when Darwin or Einstein proclaim theories which modify our ideas, it is a triumph for science. We do not go about saying that there is another defeat for science, because its old ideas have been abandoned. We know that another step of scientific insight has been gained. (p. 270.)

Clear facts and ideas can be clearly and intelligently expressed, but religious ideas are vague, obscure, and mainly imaginary, and therefore difficult to express. We repeat what we have said before; that if anyone anxious to preserve his early faith was to study the latest advanced apologies for religion, he would, at the end be more perplexed and bewildered, and certainly more sceptical about the whole affair, than before he started. W. MANN.

Chain-Stone Religion.

I.

"GLITTERING pretentiousness, slickly manufactured "artiness," superficial ingenuity, and an inhuman rigidity"—these, according to a statement made by Mr. Thomas Craven in the August issue of the *New York Forum*, are the "current American requirements."

In the same issue of the same *Forum*, we are told, quasi-editorially, that "the ancients had such clear ideas about God that they seemed, at times, to be able to count the very whiskers on His face"; but that "this distinct image has been blurred by time," until now many moderns "think of God as an impersonal Force—the Eternal Question Mark behind natural law." Or, in other words, as the profit-hungry, inscrutable Big Noise behind the religious Chain-Store?

Upon yet another page of the same identical issue of the *Forum*, under the heading: "Does the Modern World Need Religion?" we are authoritatively informed by Mr. Max Eastman—"freethinker, poet, critic, former editor of *The Masses*"—whatever they are—that "the Russian Communists are religious"; and religious, too, in the worst Jesuitical sense, since they hold that "We are merely the expression of a force which is inevitably going to produce a Communist Society in the future. Everything we do, therefore, is a step towards that historically necessary goal. So it doesn't matter how many Communist ideas we violate now"—my italics—since "this is a part of the historical process"!

It reminds me, very much, of a certain famous declaration by Robert Green Ingersoll. To wit: "A tyrant father will have liars for his children . . . A lie is born of tyranny upon the one hand, and weakness upon the other, and when you rush at a poor little boy with a club in your hand, of course he lies . . . I thank thee, Mother Nature, that thou hast put ingenuity enough in the brain of a child, when attacked by a brutal parent, to throw up a little breastwork in the shape of a lie."

Similarly, a tyrannical God—and especially one who, at times, comes so close that "the ancients" could "count the very whiskers upon His face"—produces a human race of servile artists, prostituted editors, bought college-professors, "kept" Priests, Popes, and Bishops, as well as many meaner varieties of more-or-less base stipendiary liar. But it is the spectacle of an enraged and phenomenally God-like Western civilization, rushing at a poor, timid little, shrinking infant of a Russia—a whole 140,000,000 of him!—driving him now into the throwing-up of an Ingersoleum "little breast-work in the shape of a lie," and calling *that* his religion, which tickles me. Mr. Max Eastman—"glitteringly pretentious, slickly machined" enough, etc., in all conscience—may know his Russia and his Russians much better than I do; but he asserts that he is "only describing a tendency in the minds of the most orthodox"—i.e., of Russian Communists; whereas it seems to me that a nation, 140,000,000 strong, which is engaged in public business of running a world-sized Chain-Store Religion, and which manifestly expects the whole world to swallow it, has no business whatever in skulking behind a "little breast-work" of lies.

It is this latter-day Jesuitical element in Communism which excites disgust. I have been chained to Russians and to Chinamen, as well as to Russian Jews; I have discharged all the inescapable functions of nature in their close, chain-bound company: but I never felt their physical presence, in those days, one twentieth part so irksome, as I find the mental company of this slick, glitteringly pretentious, inhumanly rigid, Jesuitically ingenious Russian Communism now.

This is not, for one instant, to say that I bow down before the enraged and phenomenally God-like Western civilization, with all of its warts and wens as well as its whiskers countable, and call it blessed. Most assuredly no. Mr. Max Eastman's thesis is, I believe, that religion is, essentially, a "hindrance to progress." Then my contra-thesis is that Communism to-day, emitted from the Religious Chain-store of the Russian Soviet, is simply such another hindrance, and a most damnable one, since it plasters the same old Jesuitical mortar of expediency—i.e., the proposition that the end justifies the means—over countless millions of ignorant, brick-like minds.

It is well to be clear upon these things. Far too many of us, in all lands, calling ourselves writers, editors and artists, instead of men, are walking through a modern Milan dressed-up like Thomas Craven's Leonardo da Vinci: "Wearing a rose-coloured tunic and a black velvet *béret*." I suspect, for a start, that Dr. Henry Goddard Leach, Editor of the *American Forum*, together with his amusing satellite of a Mr. Max Eastman, is precisely a slick little, machine-made Leonardo of that sort. For if Leonardo da Vinci himself, late in the magnificent fifteenth century, was "the first consciously superior artist: the first to desert the craftsmen, and to affect the graces of the aristocrat"—then I certainly think that the *Forum* itself has been the first among sham-Medicean American magazines to desert the honest craftsman of cultural America—the men, I mean, who in works like *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, set up a standard as clear and as unmistakable as anything ever done for Russia by Turgenev, with his totally-different and yet essentially identical Piga-sova and Bazarovs.

It is the contention, I take it, of Mr. Thomas Craven, that the original Leonardo da Vinci was himself "bought and sold by kings and despots, as if he were himself a work of art." With him, accordingly, begins appropriately in Italy the new

art-form of the Higher Prostitution. And it seems to me that the monthly magazines of America are, with the proud exception of the just-dead *Dial*, merely so many more competitive Religious Chain-Stores, out Russianizing Russia in their anxiety to peddle slickness, superficial ingenuity, and glittering pretentiousness—at \$2 for nine special issues—at the ends of the earth. My mail, week by week, is choked with all sorts of “inhumanly rigid” appeals from the circulation-managers of the United States, informing me that I will be intellectually ruined, now and for ever more, if I do not instantly subscribe \$5.00 for a year’s issue of the *Octopus Magazine*.

I am getting tired of it. I was aware, perfectly well, long before Mr. Thomas Craven told me in the August *Forum*, that “the honourable marriage of the arts and crafts was dissolved” in that remote fifteenth century; but I do not perceive any reason whatever why the innumerable bastard magazines of America—the sexual product, to wit, of that long-dissolved Italian marriage—should be supported by me. Instead of throwing up, like the poor, miserable, brow-beaten Russian a little breastwork of lies, pleading my poverty, etc., I prefer to tell these damned importunate Americans that I am too rich—rich in my own intellectual resources, as well as in my own proven capacity to earn a writer’s fee of \$500.00 *per hour*—to have any dire need of these literary gew-gaws, paddled by Magazinedom through its Religious Chain-Store.

“Henceforward,” according to Mr. Thomas Craven, “the history of art is a record of the ever-widening divergence between the two classes of workmen, and the accompanying maladjustment of the fine arts. The painter, putting on the superior airs of Leonardo da Vinci, became an insufferable æsthetic and cultivated the dealer, the *salon* and the garret, while the craftsman remained in the shop, inglorious and anonymous, and plied his trade like an honest son of toil.” It looks like it. The stuff that they send to me—those pretentiously glittering, machine-slick monthly and weekly Religious Chain-Stores of America, imploring me to subscribe to the Super-Bounders’ Book Club, and receive the blurb of the month for five cents less than the ordinary bookseller will charge me, strongly suggests that there has been a continent-slip, let alone a mere “divergence,” somewhere, and I would rather slip with the whole mountain, clean into the waters of the Pacific, and be swallowed up, than “come through” with any coin for such prostituted guff.

The death of *The Dial* was the last star-heavy straw that burst my camel-patient back. I have not been in America, it is true, since 1913; but, upon the direct evidence of Mr. Thomas Craven himself, I notice that those who, in that year, raised hysterical voices against cubist pictures, now eagerly swallow and digest a cubist religion, while a quadrilateral God is being sold to them, daily, by the million tons, through the *Saturday Evening Post* and similar magazines. A cubist furniture of Heaven, with a Four-Square God Almighty sitting like a recitilinear Egyptian Pharaoh in the center of it—sells big to-day from Maine to California upon the slick and glitteringly-pretentious, sales-promoting hokum of an Aimee McPherson: and what is more to the point, is actually selling here in Australia to-day, to the deluded, home-mortgaging coal-miners of New South Wales.

The divorced America that once gave us Whittier and Emerson, Thoreau and Nathaniel Hawthorne; the

America, even, that produced an Ingersoll, and which gave so much of vertical manhood to former world-figures like Thomas Paine and William Cobbett—what has it now become for me, I ask, but a sort of literary-cum-religious Tottenham Court Road? This “new” movement, “arty” religion, gets my goat. I can stand the honest, perpendicular Communist—the man who says that God is a damned Reptile, worshipped by those who feel within themselves a kindred lizard-urge—and I can also stand the antipodean Goliath K. Bimpelweiser—the stark Pachaugian person who has gone through the “Mystic Naturalization Ceremony,” received his Knights Kamelia degree, and literally wallowed upon his horizontal belly for hours before the great Lodge-Rounder Heflin and the rest of the Imperial Wizards of the Ku Klux Klan. But what I cannot stand any more, and never will agree to stand, is this Religious Chain-Storage system of America, which expects me, at the end of a mail-route by land and sea about 9,000 miles long, to become a sort of a magazine-Shriner applauding America with my money as the cubist super-God of the universe; when all the time I know, perfectly well, that the United States is “engaged essentially” in “the reduction of the human elements of life to the tyranny of mechanical processes, and that it has geared-down God Almighty himself—or the religious race-concept embodied in such term—to be and perform as a sort of international gramophone-disc, rasping the whole world from Sydney to Shanghai with the cacophonous sound of its infernal worn-out needles.

The “arty” Americans, I mean to say, look cheap beside the humble if ignorant Bimpelweiser of Pachaug. His mind, too, is being stuffed and cluttered up with grotesque cubist furniture—the sort of uncouth anti-Roman Catholic junk that is sold from Washington by Mr. James S. Vance, managing editor of the Ku Klux Klan organ, the alleged *Fellowship Forum*; but if Bimpelweiserism is respectable as a religion at all, then it is so because there is at least *one* honest man at one end of the transaction, and that is Mr. Bimpleweiser at Pachaug, himself. But this other “highbrow” *Forum*—this pseudo-cultural guide to whatever there is of a reflective America; it *knows* that its readers know that even Russian Communism, skulking, in a belated infantile terror behind its “little breastwork of lies,” is preferable to a God who is sold daily, upon the instalment-plan, as a sort of “modernist decoration.”

A God, glitteringly pretentious, slick, mechanically machined and “arty”; a Chain-Store Magazine Religion superficially ingenious and inhumanly rigid—is that the only sort of “divine service” that America can render to the world at the present hour? Such a God, we need no Dr. Henry Goddard Leach or Dr. Clarence True Wilson to tell us, may be “extraordinarily adaptable” to current semi-Afroid-American needs, but he does not fit in with ours. Among the ignorant strata of Australians, of course, this “new art” of applied God-design has caught on, and is rapidly spreading through the country. “He”—the big, right-angled, pot-bellied He of Palestine—is popular with the subterranean savages of the Maitaland coal-fields of Australia, as I have said. From Hell to Hollywood is but a step. And if as the *New York Forum* says, that during the last year, two of the largest department stores in New York have exhibited European models—*i.e.*, of cubist art and furniture—“principally French on a grand scale” . . . then it is equally true that America, *vis-a-vis* Australia, New Zealand, China,

Japan, and the lesser countries bordering upon the Pacific, figures as a kind of Cubist Religious Chain-Store, or trans-Atlantic suburb of France, selling the empty packing-cases of a Square Doxology to a world whose firm conviction is, and will remain, that the earth is round.

JOHN MCCRASHAN.

(To be continued.)

Science and Superstition.

I AM puzzled.

What is Sir Oliver Lodge?

Recently, a ticket was sent to me for a Sunday afternoon "Peel" meeting, at Finsbury Town Hall. Sir Oliver Lodge was going to speak. Our neighbourhood had been profusely posted with the announcement, and Sir Oliver was described as the "Greatest Living Scientist."

I was rather interested, because it struck me as curious that any sort of scientist could have leanings towards Spiritualism. And so I decided to go.

The hall was packed, and hundreds were turned away. On the platform, beside the venerable figure of the speaker, were ranged the Mayor and Corporation and our local M.P.

Proceedings began with a hymn—all about praising the Lord. This was followed by a fairly long prayer, composed of the usual platitudes. Next, a fat man rose and read out some Psalms. Sir Oliver sat placidly through it all. "How insufferably bored with all this the great man must be," I thought.

Judge of my astonishment when, after a short address by the M.P., and a few announcements, Sir Oliver began his speech by quoting feelingly from the Psalms! I was prepared for something freakish—a scientific discourse, peppered with a dash of the occult—but such wallowings in orthodoxy from a scientific mind left me gasping.

He made affecting reference to our Saviour being born in a manger 1930 years ago, "because there was no room in the inn," and emphasized the significance of this date being so universally used. He talked of God Almighty—Creator of Heaven and Earth. Several times we were told—"The Deity thinks so and so." I am unable to remember what. I was too astounded at the idea of a mere creature presuming to interpret the thoughts of his creator.

The world, I learnt, was as good a place as possible, under the circumstances. The Deity could have made us all perfect, but that would have been coercion. We should have been nothing but machines. That wasn't God's intention. He gave us free will to enable us to be responsible beings.

Why talk of the Almighty stopping the war? If men liked to go mad and destroy each other, they must. After all, they had free-will.

The first man was he who knew the difference between right and wrong. It was that which distinguished us from the lower animals. God had given this power to us in order that we may work out our own destiny (under Divine guidance—the Deity is always willing to guide us) until in time we should so perfect humanity, as to be fit companions to God.

Sir Oliver is eighty-three, and he had come eighty miles to tell us that!

Of course, we had a reference to the wonders of the stars ("the stars He made also") and to civilization being only in its cradle (I can well believe that). But as we passed out, I was sorely perplexed. I had a great desire to meet the bright individual responsible for describing this genial but fossilized survival as the greatest living scientist. I gazed round wonderingly at the crowd. Each face seemed to wear a smug, highly-satisfied expression—evidently elated at what our M.P. called the "inspiring address."

And I felt like a "grain of wheat in a sackful of chaff."

WINIFRED KNIGHT.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

PERSECUTION IN RUSSIA.

SIR,—I am indebted for the courtesy which prompted the sending to me of a copy of your interesting paper of March 2, with reference to my *Sunday Express* article upon the Moscow persecution of religionists.

The thought behind this little animadversion is so "free" that it has, I think, flown wide of the kernel of my "crusade" article. That kernel was the doing to death of thousands of worshippers in Russia for no other reason than that they worshipped their gods in their own way. I would have urged the same crusade, particularly by the "boycott," against any Christian State which killed Freethinkers for their beliefs—often, let me say, quite as dogmatic as those of many of the theologians . . . and as unfounded.

SHAW DESMOND.

[I do not agree that the writer of the article missed the kernel of Mr. Shaw Desmond's letter. That letter expressed the hope—almost the belief—that the Pope would raise his "soft" white hand and lead a crusade against Russia. The suggestion was as ridiculous as anything I have read for some time, and could only appeal to those, the texture of whose heads matched that of the papal hand. I was also surprised that Mr. Shaw Desmond should take these persecutions at their face value. A responsible paper such as the *Manchester Guardian*, which does not convert itself into a vehicle for the publication of sensational articles or misleading "stunts" has protested more than once against the manifestly absurd stories that are in circulation.

I do not question Mr. Shaw Desmond's desire to see justice done or his hatred of persecution. I have given public evidence of my own hatred of anything of the kind, but I am justifiably suspicious when the head of the most brutally intolerant Church in the world is held up as the champion of religious toleration. I should also like to see these Christians a little more vocal when Christians are persecuting other people. I am particularly pleased to find that Mr. Shaw Desmond is keenly against the boycott on Free-thought in this country, and I shall watch eagerly in the papers for an article from his pen. I suggest that he begins with the *Sunday Express*, the paper in which his own article on the religions crusade appeared. I am sure that its editor, James Douglas, with his passion for everything that is noble, and profitable, will welcome it. Meanwhile I beg to ask Mr. Shaw Desmond the following questions:—

- (1) Is the alleged persecution of Christians in Russia due to the direct order of the Government? Does it involve the closing of all Churches and the forbidding of all religious worship? Or is there merely a closing of a certain number of churches for reasons which are given as non-religious?
- (2) Is it true that all over Russia there are thousands of Churches where worship is being carried on without any interference from the Government?
- (3) Can he throw any light on the circumstance that the stories of thousands of people being butchered for the mere offence of worshipping God, is not told by any of the civilians who have visited Russia, either from this country or from others, but comes from a section of the clergy who say that information has reached them, but are delightfully vague about places and dates?
- (4) Assuming that the Russian Government is carrying out an educational policy, having at its avowed end the eradication of religious belief and the production of Atheists, in what respect does this policy differ from that of other Governments carrying out an educational policy with the object of destroying religious unbelief and producing a generation of Christians?
- (5) Does Mr. Desmond find nothing significant in the fact that this agitation began only when a Labour Government was in power, and that the avowed reason for the anger of our Archbishops and the Pope with his soft hand was that the alleged persecution was directed against all religions? Presumably, had it been the usual case of Christians butchering each other, or persecuting non-Christians, the proceedings would have been quite in order.—EDITOR.]

Society News.

MRS. SEATON TIEDEMAN lectured to a large number of friends on the "Church and Divorce." The explanation was that civil marriages have existed as far back as "Hamurabi," the King of Babylon; who lived some centuries before Christ. And not until the Council of Trent, in 1563, did the Church make Marriage a Sacrament. The lecturer had the sympathy of all those present in the demand for removing the Church influence as far as Marriage Laws are concerned.

There was some discussion, and many questions were answered, and after Mr. Savory had complimented the speaker on her strenuous fight for those unhappily married the meeting closed.—B.A.L.E.M.

Relativity.

O TIGER, when you kneel to pray
Devoutly at your midday prayer
You thank, I hope, the God above
Who, in his wisdom, put you there.

When you've feasted off a man
And licked your chops, O tiger spare
A word of thanks to God above
Who, in his wisdom, put him there.

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LONDON.

INDOOR.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree, Euston Road, N.W.1): Thursday, March 13, Social and Dance at 101 Tottenham Court Road, 7.30 to 11.30. Admission 1s.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree, Euston Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Debate—"Was Adam the First Man?" Affir: Mr. H. Everett; Neg.: Mr. T. F. Palmer.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Public Hall, Clapham Road, close to Clapham North Station): 7.30, Mr. R. B. Kerr—"The Future of Marriage."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, entrance Theobald's Road): 7.30, Mr. E. Saphin—"The Past, Present and Future."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Mr. Harry Snell, M.P.—"The World's Cross Currents of Hope and Fear."

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): 11.15, Mr. R. Dimsdale Stocker—"Bertrand Russell's Attack on the Virtue of Jealousy." At 6.15, Miss Marjorie Gullan—"Recital of Ethical Poetry."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, C. Delisle Burnis, M.A., D.Lit.—"Man in the Modern City."

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE (Emerson Club, 1 Little George Street, Westminster): 3.30, Lecture in French by M. Deshumbert—"L'Histoire du Feu." All are invited.

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.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Courtenay Street): Mr. R. H. Rosetti will lecture at 3.0, on "Where are the Gods?" and at 7.0, on "An Evening with the Golden Bough."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Francis Metcalfe (Nelson)—"The Bible in the Light of Modern Geology."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints, Manchester): Mr. Chapman Cohen (London) will lecture at 3.0, on "The New Materialism." In the evening, at 6.30, on "Can we do Without Christianity?" Admission Free. Questions and Discussion cordially invited.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.30, Mr. S. Munro (Liverpool), Hon. Local Secretary, R.P.A.—"Freethought from a Viewpoint of Organization."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. H. LeMaine—"Why I am an Atheist."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Schools): 7.0, Mr. G. Whitehead—"The Development of the Penny Dreadful."

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

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

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All who join the Society participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest.

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