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*Letters to the Editor, etc.*

Views and Opinions.

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**Offering Religion a Truce.**

IN bringing to a close these notes on Professor Julian Huxley, it will save time and repetition if I say that I am using both his Conway Memorial lecture and his broadcast address. Substantially these are not two lectures but one, the difference is that the lecture was given in two places, and published in separate forms.

So far we have seen that Professor Huxley brings to bear on the history of the Freethinking criticism of religion an astounding non-acquaintance with the subject. The result is that he gets things out of their true perspective. Then, in his anxiety to establish some sort of a truce with religion, he proceeds to emulate his famous grandfather by giving the hard-pressed religionists a definition of religion which has all the characteristics of the "Agnosticism" of his ancestor. When analysed his definition of religion turns out to be nothing but a parade of words which by their pomposity may impress the unthinking, or weigh with those who must have some sort of religion so long as religion has an established currency in respectable circles. It is quite true that Professor Huxley might have kept his mouth closed and confined himself to his biological researches. But there are possible objections to that policy. Ordinary scientific work does not usually bring men into public notice. That kind of labour means to live comparatively unknown and to die unsung. Another objection is that unless a man is of a very coarse type he cannot go on allowing the world—perhaps one ought to say his world—to think that he holds beliefs of which he is really ashamed. The impulse to rebel is as much a social product as the impulse to conserve,

and all of us are very much at the mercy of our impulses. So in order to preserve one's self-respect, if one has not the strength to be a whole-souled rebel, one sets to work to rationalize one's impulses. Shame forbids one fighting on the side of the old, fear of social opinion prevents one standing four-square with the new. Some kind of apology is required to explain a man in this condition to both himself and others. And when one has analysed the situation on these lines there really does not appear to be much more that need be said—except that no competent psychologist will question the truth of what has been said.

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**The Real Problem.**

The scientific problem before a man in Professor Huxley's position is this. Given a complete disbelief in the supernatural, given also the outstanding fact of the existence in all history of religious beliefs and ritual, how are we to explain their existence and persistence? Starting along these lines he would find himself driven to explain the existence of religion in terms of a misunderstanding of natural phenomena, including in that expression man's existence as a member of a group, his subjective experiences, and the existence of institutions fashioned under the influence of supernaturalism. And he would see in what the religious world calls the development of religion, the elaboration of mere ritual on the one hand, and the continuous whittling down of supernaturalism on the other in the face of the advance of natural knowledge.

What we get in place of this genuinely scientific line of enquiry is a number of expressions about "the workings of the religious function," "Religious feeling," "the religious spirit is a permanent element in human nature," "specific religious emotion," etc., which, except for the scientific air with which these things are said are only worthy of a sucking curate or a wayside evangelist. I do not wonder that Canon Streeter pronounces his episcopal blessing upon Professor Huxley for saying that he looks to religion to assimilate and humanize the scientific knowledge we possess. I do not know exactly what is Professor Huxley's understanding of the scope of science, but statements of that kind seem to show that it is anything but adequate. At any rate no priest could ask for more than to have the world of science handed over to him to serve out in the name of religion to those who would not be denied. I have no time now to enter into this last aspect of the subject, I would simply remind Professor Huxley that the facts of the moral and intellectual and social life are as much within the province of science as the facts of the chemical, psychical and biological worlds. And their ordering in the interests of the well-being of human society is as much the task of science as the discovery of the facts which are the raw material with which

science works. What a blessing it would be if we could only turn our scientific men into scientific thinkers!

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### The Beginning of Religion.

In dealing with the manner in which the alleged religious feeling—more properly religious belief—has been built up Professor Huxley outlines the various factors that have operated. There are (1) cosmic influences such as the heavenly bodies, the sea, the fertility of the earth, etc.; (2) the influence of living things, animals and humans; (3) the biological crises of human existence, birth, puberty, marriage, death; (4) the sense of dependence on powers greater than man himself. These factors are real enough, as anyone who consults an up-to-date work on anthropology will discover. What is curious is the use Professor Huxley makes of these facts. For one would imagine that his first task as a scientist would have been to disentangle the essential from the non-essential, the casual from the causal, and proceed to show how essential social facts and feelings became clothed in a religious dress. Instead of that the form is treated as the "upthrust" of a sceptic religious emotion which comes, apparently from nowhere, and is dependent on nothing but itself. God help Professor Huxley if he ever meets in combat one of the more astute Roman Catholic defenders of religion. In that case the Roman Catholic will not have to put forward anything on his own account. All he need do is to translate Professor Huxley's statements into Roman Catholic theology.

Really, as a believer in evolution, Professor Huxley ought to have remembered that feelings, and functions do not come from the air. Every feeling, every emotion has a history behind it, and its explanation lies in its history. The man who overlooks that, the man whose thinking is not permeated with that has no real right to call himself an evolutionist. He *knows* evolution, as a gramophone may be said to know one of Caruso's songs, but evolution is not part and parcel of his thinking. But if evolution be true, and if Professor Huxley really desired to be in line with the essential idea of evolution, then his enquiry should have taken the form of asking in what way certain emotions, or feelings, or ideas, now expressed in the form of religion have come to be so expressed? If he were faced with the task of explaining the idea, or the feeling of loyalty he would not connect it in its origin with loyalty to a King, or to a Flag, or to a Nation, but would trace it back to the basic animal feeling of gregariousness, and the development of that to the operation of the principle of natural and social selection. Human feeling may express itself in all sorts of fantastic manners, but the true scientist manages to detect, or tries to detect, the essential thing under the form in which it finds expression.

\* \* \*

### Facts and Fiction.

If Professor Huxley had followed this fairly obvious line of *scientific* enquiry, his Conway lecture would never have seen the light in the form it did: and his broadcast lecture would never have been delivered, for a condition of broadcasting is that no one must make a straightforward attack on religion. He would, by pursuing a different policy, have realized that the essential difference is one of interpretation of the same set of facts. And that resolves itself, as his grandfather pointed out, into the difference between mechanism and vitalism. The heavenly bodies, the phenomena of fertility, of vegetative and animal life, of birth, puberty, marriage and death, social practices and institutions, with man's feelings and mental

states are here with us as they were with early man when he first stood distinct from the rest of the animal world. The difference that exists is purely a difference of interpretation; and if one discards the primitive interpretation what other logical alternative is there save the naturalistic one?

The process of development then becomes not that of freeing a fictitious religious quality in human nature which has been struggling to find expression through the different religious cults, but freeing the social, physical and psychological facts from their religious interpretations. The need for food, for example, is the most permanent of human needs, and there is no other single thing around which so many religious customs and beliefs have been formed as around the fact of fertility. For long enough man went on performing his magico-religious ceremonies to secure the ever-necessary food. He did what was essential to get it, or he would have died out. But he also did what was wholly unnecessary, the religious ceremonies—prayers, sacrifices, etc., the remnants of which we have still with us in the form of the blessing of fishing nets, harvest thanksgivings, spring festivals, etc. The work of science was to concentrate attention on the essential facts and throw the religious performances on one side. It was not with primitive man a case of religion being of real use, but simply that the ground should be suitable, the seed healthy, the climate favourable and the labour effective. So with the other things mentioned by Professor Huxley. Birth, puberty, death, all develop a religious interpretation because man is at an early stage faced with phenomena he does not understand. The religious interpretation is given because there is no other interpretation possible at that stage. Religion is at that stage as Professor Huxley says, but without the ridiculous meaning he gives it, "a natural product of human nature," just as murder and kindness, lying and truthfulness, science and silliness, are products of human nature. And what is called the development of religion is the gradual withdrawing of religion from one department after another in the face of better knowledge and a verifiable interpretation of the facts. Religion is the one thing that grows smaller and weaker as it "develops."

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### Save Us From Our Friends.

We come finally to Professor Huxley's attempt to provide a religion without a personal God, which reminds me of his grandfather's contemptuous reference to the worship of Humanity that he would as soon worship a wilderness of monkeys. I repeat, I do not wonder that Canon Streeter accepts joyously the idea of Professor Huxley, that it is the duty of science to find out what the facts are, and then hand them over to religion for it to use them in regulating life. But that is no more the task of religion than it is to tell us the shape of the earth or the constitution of the solar system—although it has done both. The co-ordination of the separate sciences is as much the work of science as is the development of a single science. Art and literature, music and painting, man's inchoate feeling that he belongs to a larger whole, and so is actually aware that there is some power greater than his own individuality, all these things are as much material for scientific investigation as is the constitution of the atom, or the nature of life. I do not wonder that Professor Huxley is permitted to lead off with a series of broadcast talks on Religion and Science, and that astute religious leaders are welcoming the suggestion from a man who, in the name of science, tells them that there is a region of life—and the higher region of life—with which science cannot

deal, and which is to be handed over to religion to remain unto it a possession for ever and ever. If religion cannot control everything, the next best thing is for it to control something, and if the something it controls is to be secured to it for ever, well, here is an arrangement with which religious leaders may well remain content. It can certainly be satisfied with a treaty which says, "It is the work of science to do all the digging and dredging, to arrange and classify, and tell us what certain things are. But when this is done the work of science is done. It is then that religion steps forward and takes control of the higher aspects of human life. So will the war between religion and science be ended. Science is thus placed in its proper position as the handmaid of religion; Religion is given the place it once had, and is still struggling to recover, that of standing as the supreme director of human destiny." Freethought has always been able to look after its enemies. These it has time after time beaten to their knees. It is far more difficult to guard against its proclaimed friends. It is from them that one of the principal dangers to Freethought comes to-day.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### The Gentle Shakespeare.

"To bear all naked truths,  
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,  
That is the top of sovereignty."—Keats.

"Others abide our question—thou art free."  
Matthew Arnold on Shakespeare.

Was Shakespeare a Tory or a Democrat? Numberless critics have attempted an answer to this interesting question, but in nearly every case, according to their own political leanings. Bernard Shaw, in the strange company of the *Daily Mail*, shares the opinion that Shakespeare was a hidebound reactionary in politics, and many Socialists echo the same view with the faithfulness of gramophones.

Other men, other views. Professor Dowden had doubts whether he should label Shakespeare "Liberal" or "Conservative," and the poet, Swinburne, found that the author of "Hamlet" was a Democrat. On the other hand, John Morley, considered Shakespeare was a Feudalist, and to William Archer he was an aristocrat. Frank Harris finds that he was "a gentleman," whilst the Conservative press always hail the greatest of all writers as a "sound Tory." Amid this babel of voices the plays and poems of Shakespeare provide the only sure key to the Master's political sympathies, and the evidence contained in them should make clear what Shakespeare really thought and felt.

Shakespeare, as revealed in his own works, was above party feeling, and did not find ill alone in the meanest of his fellow creatures. Shakespeare lived, it is well to recall, at a time when a monarch might claim divine right without being laughed at. He wrote in days when Democracy in its modern sense was as unknown as the aeroplane or the submarine. Shakespeare's detachment from the theological turmoil which drenched Europe in blood ought to supply a guarantee that he could suspend his judgment in matters political, no less than in matters religious. Shakespeare has many messages for his countrymen, but few more valuable or more opportune than that party is a natural bane. That message is implicit, and to discerning readers, explicit in his works, beyond cavil and dispute. There is no need of tearing text from context in the plays, and fathering the views of his own puppets on Shakespeare himself. As well might we make Shakespeare a murderer because he

was the author of "Macbeth," or a lunatic because he wrote "King Lear."

Mr. John M. Robertson, to whose untiring industry in Shakespearian scholarship we owe so much, has pointed out that the Master often states both sides of a question by various utterances placed in the mouths of his characters. This is a distinguishing mark of his mind, for it is few men who can do this, and still fewer poets. It was this extraordinary power of holding the scales firmly that caused Ruskin to say that Shakespeare was not only unknowable, but inconceivable. The angry utterances put in the mouth of a man-hater like Timon of Athens, or the bitter outbursts of Coriolanus, do not prove that Shakespeare was hostile to the people. Nor do they make Shakespeare inferior to Milton as a poet, because Milton was a fiery Republican, whilst Shakespeare introduces kings, queens, and princes, among his puppets.

The truth is that Shakespeare stood for no class. He is the poet of all, rich and poor alike. He cannot legitimately be made to support the people against the aristocrat, the sovereign against the citizen. All may learn from him; the monarch the necessity of good government, the people that the Kingly state is not always to be envied. Statesmen may learn that popular verdicts are unstable, and the agitator that order and contentment are essential to a country's prosperity. Shakespeare did think about political matters. He had opinions, but in him the artist was always stronger than the politician.

Shakespeare was quite democratic in his treatment of women in his plays. Indeed, he was far in front of his contemporaries in this respect, for he depicts women as being in every way the equals of men. The brilliant and witty Beatrice is more than a match for the smart Benedict, and Emilia holds her own with the brainy Iago. In the play of "Macbeth," it is the woman who has the master-mind, and her husband is as clay in her hands. What comradeship, too, there is between Cæsar and his wife, and Brutus and Portia. What tribute there is in the welcome given by Coriolanus to his wife, quite in "the high Roman manner." Shakespeare chose the beautiful lips of Portia to condemn the folly and wickedness of torture, which was then common in the jurisprudence of Christendom. Where else is there a similar protest in contemporary literature? As Ingersoll well says: "Shakespeare has done more for women than all the other dramatists of the world."

Consider, too, Shakespeare's broad-minded view of men. As in the case of Shylock, the Master rose superior to religious prejudices, so, in the case of Othello, he ignored prejudices concerning race. He had, too, a democratic dislike of men who "having before gored the gentle bosom of peace with pillage and robbery, make wars their bulwark."

Indeed, too little attention has been made to Shakespeare's intense humanism. He was no bigot; his sympathies were too broad. Nor was he ascetic; he delights too much in the joy of life, and devotes his genius to the public amusement. Only a humanitarian, as well as a true poet, could have pictured the storm in those suggestive lines in "King Lear":—

"Mine enemy's dog,  
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night  
Against my fire."

Such a passage is one which shows at once the humanity of the man. In "Titus Andronicus" he has some lines on the killing of a fly:—

"But how, if that fly had a father and a mother,  
How would he hang his slender, gilded wings,  
And buzz lamenting doings in the air?  
Poor harmless fly!

That with his pretty buzzing melody  
Came here to make us merry, and thou hast killed him."

How tender are his lines on the wounded stag in "As You Like It":—

"Come, shall we go and kill us venison,  
And yet it irks me, the poor dappled fools—  
Being native burghers of this desert city—  
Should, in their own confines, with forked heads  
Have their round haunches gored."

What searching criticism is in the passage:—

"How quickly Nature falls into revolt  
When gold becomes her object."

These words, if written to-day, would be regarded as democratic. Three centuries ago, when a man risked his life by talking critically of politics or religion, Shakespeare held the balance steady. The quality of justice was as little strained in him as the quality of mercy. The profound and intimate knowledge of mankind which went to the making of his matchless genius was not unmingled with pity.

Writing purely for the public amusement, his work contained passages of joy and emancipation to the hearts of men. His contemporaries esteemed him as cordial, gentle, kindly, and modest. His was not the kind of greatness which says "I am Sir Oracle, and when I open my mouth let no dog bark," but the rarer kind which had regard for all. He might have used of himself the suggestive words he puts in the mouth of the clown in "Twelfth Night":—

I am one of those gentle ones that will use the devil himself with courtesy.

This is more than a mere academic matter. The name of William Shakespeare is the greatest in the world of literature. It is of moment that his finest work should prove that, in an age of cruelty, he ranged himself with the humanitarians, who are, more even than the poets themselves, "the unacknowledged legislators of mankind."

MIMNERMUS.

## Masterpieces of Freethought.

### IX.—THE TRIAL OF THEISM.

By GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.

It is extraordinary that during the long life of Holyoake, he should have produced so little of real permanent value. Born in 1817, he died in 1906, outliving almost all his contemporaries (Mrs. Annie Besant, born in 1847, is still, however, with us); yet, though he seemed ever engaged in controversy, in writing articles, letters and books, it would be extremely difficult for a modern young Freethinker to buy any one of his works.

Holyoake occupies a very high niche in nineteenth century Freethought, though it must be confessed he seemed to shirk any big issue. It was not because he had no decided beliefs of his own. He had, and he expressed them forcibly. Moreover, he could write and write well, for he was a master of fine phrasing. But though he was an Atheist in every sense of the word, he seemed frightened at its connotations, and insisted that it was not the term which could really describe him. Following Humboldt, he tried to introduce the word "Cosmist," and failing in this, he eventually took refuge in that particularly nebulous term "Agnostic." Foote made pretty play with arguments in one of his well known and most incisively written pamphlets, but the fact remains Holyoake would have nothing to do with the word "Atheism" in later life.

George Combe and Robert Owen made Holyoake a Freethinker, and he was soon an ardent follower of the latter's Socialism. In 1842, when courageous

Charles Southwell was imprisoned for an article called "The Jew Book," in the *Oracle of Reason*, Holyoake took his place as editor, but was arrested himself for saying at a public meeting, in answer to a question, that the Deity should be put on half-pay, and he was given six months imprisonment.

Readers who are interested, and who would like to know how a Freethinker was treated in those days, should procure the little work he wrote entitled *The Last Trial by Jury for Atheism*. Holyoake bore some of the savagery of "gentle" Christianity on his back in his early days, like many others of the brave old pioneers to whom we owe so much. It takes courage and determination to bear ostracism and vilification and imprisonment, but Holyoake was young, and took up his share of the burden with enthusiasm and grit.

Over ten years later he met a rising young dissenting parson, called Brewin Grant, in public debate twice. Both these debates were taken down verbatim and published, and the first, known as the Cowper Street Debate, had a huge circulation for such a work. They make interesting reading, for Brewin Grant really could debate; that is, he could speak fast and fluently, had a certain kind of biting humour and knew how so to quote from his opponent's writings—a bit from here, a bit from there—that his hearers, if Christians, always wanted to thank heaven for sending them such a champion, and if Freethinkers, could hardly believe that the quotations were genuine. Grant was also a "dab hand" at personalities and extremely cheeky. Holyoake did not have an easy task, especially as Grant "boasted he should talk three times as fast as I should, and so have three times more pages in the report."

Looking through the Cowper Street Debate and the Glasgow one, I must confess that Brewin Grant, in spite of his "epithets," to which Holyoake so strongly objected, and his coarseness and invective, is none the less amusing. I feel that Holyoake took him too seriously, and indeed, his own mission. He should have poked more fun at Christian absurdities and not kept so much of a weather eye on what posterity ought to think about his championship of Freethought. Nor should he have been so afraid of the word Atheism; no matter what the average Christian thought about the term. Grant said in the Cowper Street Debate, "now he (Holyoake) comes forward and says it is not *Atheism* he advocates, but *Non-theism*. *Atheism*, you must understand, is from the Greek 'no,' and *Non-theism* from the Latin 'no'; that is all the difference, and I have no doubt this very nice distinction will be 'Greek' to some." Holyoake really asked for this—and it must be confessed, he kept on asking, even with Freethinkers, and almost always got the same kind of reply.

Again, Holyoake seemed always to object to quotations from his own or his contributor's writings being brought up in evidence against him, and Grant took an impish delight in quoting all the more. "In *The Bible and the People* (Grant's journal), of which here is a parcel," said Holyoake, in the same debate, "and of which only twenty-four issues have been made to the public, there are, I believe, more offences against Christian charity and literary etiquette than Mr. Grant can find in 350 issues of the *Reasoner*. I have marked many of the passages, but I will not read them. I will not stoop to such a worn-out expedient. It might give me the triumph of the hour; but what would the serious part of the audience think? What would the newspapers think, when they came to review this debate, if they found that we have only exhibited the spectacle of disparaging each other, while we profess to be standing here contending for the truth?"

In some measure, Holyoake was right, of course, but he was far too serious for such an opponent. The Rev. Brewin Grant wrote his autobiography after or just before he left Dissent for the Church of England and his smug self-satisfaction at his own triumphant progress through the ranks of all sorts and conditions of opponents, makes it very very amusing these days. Like Grant himself, it is quite forgotten except by those who love to wander through the bye-ways of Freethought discussion, a waste of time, it is true, but oh, how intriguing sometimes! For my own part, I feel in spite of his faults, Brewin Grant was far and away the best opponent Christians could put up in a public debate against Freethinkers last century. He knew all the tricks of the platform, and the only way to deal with his type was to bear in mind the famous reply of the nigger who, after being cursed for half an hour by a brother nigger, said, "Yus, all them things you say I am, you is!" As a matter of fact Grant only wanted to score debating points, and did not care a fig for posterity. And if he had, posterity would have no use for him now.

Most of his arguments, like the Christianity he stood for, are dead. We are now being introduced to a new kind of religion, the religion of the scientist, based either on "Vitalism"—whatever that means, or a "mathematical deity" for whom or by whom the Universe is a thought—whatever that means. And the only place for Christians nowadays, is somewhere in the backwoods of America, where Fundamentalism reigns supreme. But the problem of Theism was, in his day and Holyoake's, as it is to-day, the great problem. And Holyoake, while in prison conceived the idea of putting it in the witness box, like one of the great defences of Christianity against Deism in the eighteenth century called *The Trial of the Witnesses*. What defence in favour of Theism can its advocates put up? Here was an interesting subject, an engrossing one, and Holyoake it must be confessed, never did anything better either in style or logic. Step by step he examines the witnesses for the defence, and shows what a sorry mess they made of their case.

H. CUTNER.

(To be concluded.)

## The Vicar's Curse.

THE REV. E. A. MERRYWEATHER, Vicar of Pelton, has caused quite a sensation in the English Church by pronouncing an "excommunication" upon three Parishioners for the evidence they gave before a "Consistory Court," at Durham, anent the ritualistic practices of the Vicar, who also described them as "low-minded persons." They are now considering what legal steps they can take "to get the stigma placed upon them" removed; for they are also excluded from attendance at the Church at which the Vicar presides, for three years. Oh horrible! Think of it! What a penalty for speaking the truth!

The Bishop of Durham, however, has intervened at the last moment, and called on the wrathful vicar to remove the ban and allow his parishioners to return to their Parish Church. This "excommunication" and ban on three poor parishioners, puts me in mind of the famous little poem by R. H. Barham, called "The Jackdaw of Rheims, which was a popular recitation when I was a boy. The Jackdaw had stolen the Lord Cardinal's ring and hidden it.

Then come the following lines:—  
There's a cry and a shout and a terrible rout  
And nobody seems to know what they're about,  
But the monks have their pockets all turned inside out;

The Friars are kneeling and hunting and feeling,  
The carpet, the floor, and the walls and the ceiling.  
The Cardinal drew off each plum colour'd shoe,  
He peeps and he feels in the toes and the heels;  
They turn up the dishes—they turn up the plates,  
They take out the poker and poke out the grates;  
They turn up the rugs, they examine the mugs,  
But no, no such thing, they can't find the ring!  
And the Abbot declared that, when nobody twig'd it;  
Some rascal or other had popp'd in and prigg'd it.  
"The Cardinal rose with a dignified look  
He called for his candle, his bell and his book  
In Holy Anger and pious grief, he solemnly cursed that  
rascally thief,  
He cursed him at board, he cursed him in bed  
From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head,  
He cursed him in sleeping that every night;  
He should dream of the devil and wake in a fright;  
He cursed him in eating, he cursed him in drinking,  
He cursed him in coughing, in sneezing, in winking,  
He cursed him in sitting, in standing, in lying;  
He cursed him in walking, in riding, in flying,  
He cursed him in living, he cursed him in dying!  
Never was heard such a terrible curse!  
But what give rise to no little surprise  
Nobody seemed one penny the worse!

The result of the Bishop's intervention has been that the poor unfortunate vicar has had to recant and declare through a substitute that "the excommunication" which he had pronounced on the three parishioners "is null and void," and they may now return to church as formerly and to wind up the Vicar tenders his resignation.

And so the incident comes to this tame end. Obviously the Vicar thought he was quite within his rights in sentencing these simple-minded parishioners to an "excommunication" for telling the truth about his Ritualistic practises; and it only shows to what awful tyranny these priests are prepared to go if they were only allowed to exert their power as "in the good old days," when the English Church was a real power in the Land.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

## With the Spirits

THE inaccuracy of statements made by Spiritualists is well known by those who have taken the trouble to test them in detail. Sometimes these statements involve gross misrepresentation that amounts to almost deliberate lying, sometimes there are little exaggerations, or omissions, or additions that entirely alter the character of what really happened. I have several times exposed the unreliability—to use a mild word—of some of the statements made by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and the same may be said to hold good of many other leading writers, as well as ordinary narrators. Personally I should be inclined to place the mis-statements of Sir Arthur as belonging to the last of the two classes mentioned.

The latest example that has come to hand—I do not lay myself out to collect them, or could fill columns with my catches—is furnished by Sir Frank Benson, the well-known actor and avowed Spiritualist. In the Spiritualist journal *Beyond*, for August, Sir Frank has an article made up of a number of his "experiences." Here is one of them, which I republish in its entirety:—

A certain English battalion in the early and crucial days of the war was ordered to advance against a strong German position.

The C.O. noticed that the men seemed jubilant. One of them ventured to remark, I didn't know, Sir, that the reserves had come up. The Colonel was puzzled, for no reserves had come up nor were any expected; there were none near.

The battalion went into action, and after a hard fight the Germans surrendered.

The German Colonel as he handed over his sword, asked, "Where are the others?"

What others?

Why we saw hundreds besides those I see now.

The English Colonel replied: "All our men who were engaged in the action are standing before you."

"I can't understand it?" said the German, "We saw hundreds fighting for you by the side of this handful. If it hadn't been for them I should never have surrendered."

Some years ago after I had told this story before the London Philosophical Society, a tall soldierly man came up to me and said, "I am glad you told the story. I can vouch for the truth of every word." I was the English Colonel to whom the Germans surrendered.

A reader of this journal, Mr. W. J. Jessup, wrote the editor asking for the date of the incident and the name of the Colonel. The editor did not know, but referred his letter to Sir Frank Benson. Sir Frank replied as follows, under date of November 4:—

I have not by me at the moment, if I ever knew, the name of the Colonel who confirmed the story I told on the hearsay evidence of a soldier whom I met some years ago. I have had personal experiences still more remarkable, which I expect nobody to believe who has not come across similar phenomena. I am not in the least ashamed to find myself in the company of such distinguished men as Lodge, Crooks, Barret, Doyle, Stead, etc., who believe in the reality of psychic phenomena.

Sir Frank appears to be annoyed, and Spiritualists should be made of sterner stuff, or take care that their "experiences" are read only by the faithful and credulous believing. The point at issue is not whether Sir Frank is in the glorious company of Lodge, Doyle, etc.—he might have found a much more distinguished and much more numerous company in the Catholic Church—he is simply asked for verification of a single incident. Now if Sir Frank had told the readers of *Beyond* that his fantastic story—which is obviously a re-hash of the famous "Angels of Mons" legend—rested upon the hearsay evidence of an unknown and unnamed soldier, whom he casually met, one would imagine that even the editor of a Spiritualist paper would have drawn the line at publishing it.

One would also think that on receiving confirmation of so startling a tale from the "Colonel to whom the Germans surrendered," Sir Frank would at least have enquired the Colonel's name. But not a bit of it. The Colonel is as casual as the soldier. It is really wonderful! Legions of angels are handed round by unknown warriors and anonymous Colonels with the carelessness of confetti on a gala night, and Sir Frank Benson never has the curiosity to ask their names or addresses. And when brought to book he says, in effect, "Oh, I could tell you much more wonderful stories than that one." Why so could I, so could any man. But we should not expect them to be taken for anything save as so many attempts to win a prize in the popular game of "Taking the Biscuit."

We feel inclined to set aside a column of this paper, if Sir Frank Benson is so inclined, in which he and I could swap stories of our marvellous experiences. And I have enough conceit in my own abilities to wager that he would find me hard to beat. The only condition would be that he must not ask for any stronger evidence than casual stories by an unknown person. And in that sport I should not be at all ashamed to find myself in the glorious company that runs from Lucian to Munchausen, to say nothing of some really gifted moderns.

C. COHEN.

## A Englishman Among the Meecans.

A SWARTHY desert dweller clad in a long white robe standing in the foreground of a picture, and small figures of pilgrims en route to Mecca make the striking wrapper of one of the most remarkable books I have ever read.

The book is a good fat one, and at 15s. is a wealth of information about religious fanatics. The title is *The Holy Cities of Arabia*, the author Eldon Rutter, and the publishers Messrs. Putnams.

Eldon Rutter, in May, 1925, was in Cairo intent upon making a journey into Arabia to visit Mecca, and to perform the rites of the Muhammadan pilgrimage there, and having accomplished that, to visit El Medina where lies the tomb of Muhammad.

He set off on the journey quite alone, and his account of the rites and duties of the pilgrimage are almost unbelievable. Special dress had to be worn, special methods of speech adopted, and special prayers said in every conceivable circumstance.

Space forbids a mention of everything contained in the 600 pages.

But here, for instance, is an account of the beliefs of the Wahhabis, the Puritans of the desert, and by substituting English sects and expressions it would be quite easy to describe the follies and absurdities of religious sects at home.

"The act of asking the spirit of Muhammad and of other prophets and saints to intercede with God in their favour is extremely prevalent among the Egyptians and Syrians, and the Wahhabis say that this practice is equivalent to associating Muhammad or another with God on an equality. By them it is also asserted that the erection of domes over tombs is a sign that the relatives and friends of the buried person consider that he is as important as God, and must therefore have a mosque built over him, so that his followers may pray to him there. To live in a magnificent house, to dress well, or in fact to possess anything which is not found in the desert, is a sign in the eyes of the ignorant Wahhabis that the owner of such appendages worships not God but Mammon."

Religious logic seems to be the same the world over.

On arrival at Mecca the author was dressed in two towels and a pair of sandals, the orthodox pilgrim's garb, and although he had rested little during the previous fortnight, and was half-starved and unwashed, all in accordance with ritual, he was obliged to go at once to prayer and to perform the circumambulation of arrival.

This circumambulation ceremony is incumbent upon all pilgrims, and consists of walking seven times round the Bayt Allah saying prayers at special corners and kissing stones now and then.

A most intricate series of evolutions has to be performed, one of the most amusing of which is, that at about six paces before two certain pillars the pilgrim has to break into a run and then begin walking again on coming abreast of the pillars, all the while repeating prayers. The reason for this is partly that the pagan Arabs once set up two idols here, and partly that Hagar ran about the valley of Mecca in search of water!

Probably the most interesting chapter tells how the author penetrated the Kaaba, the great holy of holies in the Muhammadan world.

True to religious practice the world over, the author secured admission to the Kaaba before others by tipping the door keepers, and had hardly entered when a voice in his ear murmured "This is the Prophet's praying niche—money here," and the author again handed over a coin.

So it went on, at every praying niche or holy part of the Kaaba the guide whispered for money, and so the author went on praying.

The famous black stone was seen, but the author was not impressed by it. The cracks made by Arabs ages ago, when they smashed the holy stone, are plainly visible, and the kisses of countless pilgrims have worn the stone down until it is deeply hollow.

Such is a brief note of a fascinating book, one which lifts the veil on a religion stronger than Christianity, and which reveals it in all its ignorance and superstition. When Christianity has been vanquished and banished, mankind will have a greater task before it, that of ridding the world of the religion of the East, and the reading of such books as Eldon Rutter's will arm us for the fight.

NECHELLS.

### Acid Drops.

The *Christian World* is rather pleased with the broadcast addresses on religion. It says the talks on religion by our most distinguished men of science are "characterized by a refreshing modesty." The humbug of it all! Humbug so patent that not even the editor of a religious paper can possibly be deceived into believing it to be anything else but humbug. The *Christian World* knows quite well that the wireless talkers on religion are very carefully selected, and only those who decline pressing the case against religion, who will not state the real force of the scientific case against religion are allowed. Others will not be allowed to speak. Men who, like Professor Malinowski, confesses his Agnosticism with a sob of agony at having to give up his religion, or Professor Julian Huxley with his verbal moonshine in the shape of a new religion, may broadcast, but the other side must not be heard. The B.B.C. dare not permit a genuinely honest and really devastating criticism of religion. If it did we fancy the *Christian World* would be the first to shriek its protests.

The game in its stark dishonesty is characteristically Christian. While it was possible the pretence was kept up that nearly all scientific men were Christians. Now that this game can no longer be played, the next step is to select scientific men who do not care to proclaim the full extent of their disbelief, and who may be relied upon to put forward that which they label with the narcotizing name of "Religion." This done their concession can be brought before an unthinking public as proof of the value of religion, and having got the aforementioned public confused as regards Christianity and religion, the statement of belief in religion can be used to strengthen belief in Christianity. We say that method is characteristically Christian in its stark dishonesty. And we should like to have the private opinions of the men who find themselves dragged in to support, in this way, one of the world's worst superstitions.

In the *Daily Express* for November 14, Sir John Reith, the Director-General of the B.B.C. admits there is "a small, but fairly continuous stream of opposition" to the refusal of the B.B.C. to provide an alternative secular programme on Sunday. We know the opposition is persistent, and we strongly question the "small," and as this concerns religion, we must decline to take the word of Sir John Reith about it. Particularly after the Rev. Shepherd writing that the B.B.C. had received only twenty letters of protest against the religious services, and on pressure, admitted that he ought to have said 200, and as we know that quite that number must have been sent from one city alone. If Sir John likes, we could provide him with thousands of such letters.

The B.B.C., says Sir John, takes the stand that this is a Christian country, and are convinced that public opinion is with them in their refusal to secularize Sunday. Well, Sir John has been challenged to submit a poll of any district to ask licence holders the simple question whether they are in favour of an alternative service on Sunday. There is no question of preventing people listening to the religious service, but giving those who do not want it the chance of listening to something else. Sir John dare not accept the challenge, because he knows that it is a bigoted minority, with himself as its leader, that is exerting its authority. When he talks of public opinion, he means only the opinion of the narrower section of church and chapel goers.

One other point. If he will consult Paris Radio, or any other continental station that is, from a business point of view, concerned with getting into touch with the largest number of English listeners, he will find that these stations say their best day, judging from the letters received, is Sunday. And anyone who enquires among his friends with wireless sets able to reach the Continent, will find that for a large proportion the English wireless stations are on that day practically dead. We again challenge Sir John Reith to submit to any genuine test as to whether he has public opinion behind him or not in this refusal to give an alternative service on Sunday. It is a case of the insolence of bigotry in office.

We feel sorry for Professor B. Malinowski. Having read his contribution to the Science and Religion Series in the *Listener*, we shall always think of him as an atrophied angel, withered in the cruel atmosphere of science. With a deep and fervent desire to be religious, science leaves him with a tragic agnosticism. In melancholy tones the professor says, "Is science responsible for my agnosticism and for others who think like me? I believe it is, and therefore I do not love science, though I have to remain its loyal servant." Boo-hoo.

Here is another pathetic outburst. "All my scientific evidence tends to show that there are no reasons and no room for conflict between science and religion, but, in my personal experience I have found that science is dangerous, even, perhaps when it does not destroy faith completely. Because, through it all and above all, though I am unable to worship any Divinity, I have almost come to worship, certainly to revere religion." We hope Professor Malinowski is just posing and playing for safety, otherwise it appears a sad development in a famous man.

Because traffic will only be allowed to go one way in Fleet Street, it is thought to be of sufficient importance for half a column of space in the *News-Chronicle*. From this announcement we learn that more newspapers, books and periodicals emerge from Fleet Street, than from any other street. The number is about 25,000,000 a week. This doubtless explains the litter in the parks and open spaces, and if one believes in Providence, there is hope that a good idea may emerge from such a vast tonnage. And then there will be a blue moon.

Dr. Barnes, in trying to be on both sides of the fence is not very complimentary to what he must call the divine scheme of things. He stated that there were something like 300,000 mental deficient in England and Wales. As Freethinkers, we could mildly suggest that omnipotency could just as easily cause mentally sound children to be born as the other kind, but in common fairness to God we do not lay such things at his door.

With so many people yapping, "Where are the Dead?" it is refreshing to read the letter of a correspondent to the *News-Chronicle*. The writer, refers to the inscription on the grave in Highgate Cemetery of Professor Edward Clifford: "I was not, and was conceived: I loved and did a little work: I am not and grieve not." Perhaps this is too downright for the colossal egotism of those who require a scapegoat to put them right for the next world.

The popular newspapers, sensing the great difficulty of its supporters of the intelligentsia in reading a leading article the length of a column, have come to their aid with leaderettes. There are very brief—almost as brief as limericks. In one of these examples of compressed air, the *Daily Express* attacks an Oxford vicar for providing his choir boys with entertaining books to keep them quiet during his sermon. Says the leaderette:—

To call in books and authors to calm the fidgets of choirboys made restless and desperate by pulpit dullness is virtually to throw up the clerical sponge. The vicar made a mistake; he should have given his lads newspaper cross-word puzzles or newspaper insurance forms to fill in. Our sympathies go out to the

choir boys, but for genuine uplift give us the newspapers; with their pictures they even remove the necessity of reading.

A correspondent of the *Daily Express* chronicles the fact that he once heard a clergyman ask God to preserve us against unholy desahz. We do not see anything wrong in this as we feel sure that God has heard of the Oxford accent, and he has to understand all the languages of the world. "Desahz" is a mere flea bite.

The late Canon Dr. W. A. Spooner left a trifle of £17,419. He also left a few quips and whimsicalities of speech that proved his profession had not deprived him of the one thing lacking in so many of his colleagues, a partiality for wit.

The disinterested might think that the Salvation Army only existed to rescue the perishing, and provide them with firewood for chopping. General Higgins, like a company chairman making an annual speech is reported as follows:—

The Army began with the General, its founder, as its autocrat; but the Army is to-day a very different thing. Then it had fifty officers; to-day it has over 25,000. Then its properties were worth £4,000 or £5,000; to-day they are worth 2½ millions in this country alone.

Verily thou persuadest me to don a red and yellow jersey, might be the comment of an inhabitant of Mars.

Mr. G. D. H. Cole, that eminent and voluminous writer on economics, has, with the aid of his wife, written a novel entitled *Corpse in Canonicals*. There is no apparent reason for the novel unless Mr. Cole has found labour economics moribund and left them so.

In a notice of *Italy after the Renaissance*, by Lacy Collison-Morley, a reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* writes:—

The curious medley of repression and display, of extravagance and torpor, of formal piety and cynical hypocrisy, which was the natural outcome of an all-pervading civil and ecclesiastical tyranny, is amply illustrated in Mr. Collison-Morley's amusing pages. "If you speak," it was said at Rome, "you are sent to the galleys; if you write, you are hung; if you are silent, you go to prison."

Given a little more banging of the Catholic drum, the capture of the press, and a whittling away of the freedom of expression, it is unlikely that a few individuals would be pleased to see a revival of those delightful days. Two public men, Messrs. Belloc and Chesterton, want to get back—as the negro song has it—but the obstinacy of stiff-necked people like Professor G. G. Coulton, Bertrand Russell, and our Aristophanes, Bernard Shaw prefers the devil we don't know, to the devils that are known in ecclesiastical history.

Cinemas in Dover, England, will be opened in future on Sunday. The Mayor gave his casting vote in favour, and therefore the lads and lasses of the place where soles come from, will be able to see a little fiction on a white sheet instead of listening to it from pulpits. Almost a white monkey for a black cat, but there is no reason why churches and chapels should have the sole rights of Sunday leisure.

The Bishop of Kingston has some distressing news. There is according to his Lordship, a shortage of clergy. As far as we can gather, this does not make any difference to the supply of cakes and ale.

From an American biography of Dr. Campbell Morgan, we learn that when he was a young man and troubled with religious doubts, he shut up all his other books and devoted himself for months to the study of the Bible alone. The world knows the result—a petrified intelligence, embalmed in the Blood of the Lamb!

A writer in a contemporary has been exhorting his readers to think. Not one in a thousand, he says, ever

tries to think. Most people are content to use other people's thoughts—it is easier. We are afraid the clergy will fail to appreciate this writer's efforts. For they rely on mental inertia to keep their sheep within the ecclesiastical fold.

Dr. Hensley Henson declares that in this age the Church is faced with an anti-Christian movement greater than any the world has seen since the seventh century. So it would appear that the influence of the despised Freethinker is not so negligible after all.

A Nonconformist parson says that what is needed in the Church to-day is fewer meetings and more opportunities for thought. He doesn't mean, of course, opportunities for real thinking, but opportunities for the flock to be inoculated with more religious dope, and especially with the best modernist serum which is supposed to ward off "this modern scepticism."

The Secretary of the National Sunday School Union thinks that youth is "revolting" because it does not want to be hide-bound by outworn theories, and desires freedom of action. We congratulate youth on its common-sense. Only unintelligent persons would want to be bound mentally by religious theories invented 2,000 or more years ago. And only very stupid persons would accept the word of the priest or parson that he is specially appointed to guide other people.

A medical writer declares that a summer shower beating down on the skin is as stimulating as sun-bathing; and that rain should be allowed access to the surface of the body as much and as often as possible. This will horrify our Puritan friends. For their God has revealed unto them that the handiwork he fashioned in his own image is too vile to be exposed to air, sun, or rain.

In a pious contemporary a writer says that: "Tennyson wrote about 'The Parliament of man, the federation of the world,' but it seemed so far off that he felt easy in making new ballads in honour of soldiers." Presumably the case was much the same with the parsons during the last war. Peace among all men, and the Brotherhood of Man, seemed so remote that the parsons felt quite easy in urging other men to fight.

From a weekly paper we learn that:—

God is looking on, and we are his partners. What are we doing with the world?

For our part, we are just letting God look on and do nothing—as he always has done. But we are also trying to make the "world" a little more rational than it was when the All-wise Looker-on finished creating it.

Commander Stenhouse says that the Antarctic is a germless continent. This fact should be useful for Christian evidence. The germ-free portions of God's earth are un-inhabitable, and the germ-full parts are where God has ordained that mankind shall live. With a little verbal juggling, the Christian Evidencer should have no trouble in showing how these facts prove the existence of a merciful and loving Heavenly Father.

For a hundred years, says Professor G. M. Trevelyan, the destruction of beauty has been our national sin. Well, there was once an Evangelical Revival—a revival of Puritanism which caused atrophy of the æsthetic faculty among a large portion of the nation. It should be remembered that, as the pious assure us, such revivals are very far-reaching; and the sins of the Puritans are visited upon the children.

That expert on the mechanics of God-finding, the *Christian World*, tells us that when the soul finds God there is a kind of "click" in the mind, which tells it that it has "come home." Fancy that, now! In our innocence we should have assumed that the "click" indicated that the mind had a screw loose somewhere.



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## Sugar Plums.

There have been many requests to know when Mr. Cohen will be lecturing in London. The only Sunday this season is to-day (November 23) when he will be speaking in the Town Hall, Stratford. His other Sundays are booked throughout the season, and have been for some time. His subject to-day will be "How Man Found Himself," and this should prove interesting to those interested in social questions. It may also transpire that another matter may be dealt with on this occasion that affects Mr. Cohen personally, and also the honour of the Society. But of that we cannot be certain at the moment of writing. All we need add now is that the lecture will commence at 7.0, and that Stratford Town Hall can be reached comfortably by train, bus, or tram from all parts of London.

Mr. Cohen had two splendid meetings at Manchester on Sunday last. Both afternoon and evening every foot of standing room was occupied, and numbers had to be refused admission. The evening meeting provided the somewhat rare spectacle of four speakers in opposition, although these might, for the most part, have been of a better quality. Mr. Cohen was in excellent form, and the audience appeared thoroughly to enjoy itself. Mr.

Monks occupied the chair at both meetings. There was, we understand, a record sale of literature.

The Debate at Bolton between Canon Elliot provided another very much overcrowded meeting. Every inch of the Co-operative Hall was packed, and the platform was so loaded that people simply oozed over the edge. The *Manchester Evening Dispatch*, in a descriptive notice of the debate says:—

So intense was the interest taken in the debate that long before the meeting was timed to commence the hall was crowded. Policemen had to keep back the crowds who could not gain admission, and the speeches were relayed through a microphone.

There will probably be a report of the debate in the *Bolton Evening News*. A large number of visitors came from Manchester, Liverpool and elsewhere.

Canon Elliot is a good speaker, but was quite obviously unacquainted with the case for Secularism, and that made the discussion of necessity one-sided, for a number of sermonettes makes a very poor substitute for a reasoned argument. He had also a very bad habit of taking notice of any little interjection that came from the audience and dwelling upon it as though it were a part of the case before the meeting. In the old days the opponents of Freethought—at least acquainted themselves with Freethought. Then when it was found that debating did not pay the religious side, the pose was adopted that Freethought was dead, and debates became rare. Now some of them appear to have awakened to the fact that Freethought is very much alive, and must be met. But to do this they need a closer study of it than a casual listening to a casual open-air meeting. But a consequence of this policy is, as happened with Canon Elliot, that the real case for Freethought is never even touched. Perhaps another explanation may be that those who have the knowledge and ability to make out a case for religion in a public discussion, have also intelligence enough to realize that they have no case to put before an audience in a public discussion. That is the case with men of the calibre of Dean Inge. They can discuss religion with anyone so long as the one they are discussing with is not permitted to reply. But the debate at Bolton must have done good inasmuch as many heard the case put for Secularism for the first time.

Mr. Cohen has had a very busy week-end, and some things have to be held over till next week. Correspondents must, therefore, exercise their patience this week.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti visits Leicester to-day (Sunday, November 23) and lectures in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, at 6.30 p.m., on "What is the Use of Science?" Those Leicester friends who have not yet heard Mr. Rosetti should make it a point of being present. They will not regret it.

On Sunday next (November 30) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Queen's Hall, Morley Street, Bradford, at 7.0. His subject will be "The Passing of the Gods." There will be reserved seats at 1s. 6d.

We think we ought to apologise this week for the length of our "Views and Opinions," but we wanted to finish with the criticism of Professor Huxley, as there are many other things waiting for treatment. And seeing the use that is being made of these attempts to patch up some kind of a peace with religion, it was worth while spending some space over this particular effort. It is possible that Mr. Cohen may rewrite his criticism of Professor Huxley for issue as a separate pamphlet. But he has a great deal of work on hand, much more than appears on the surface, and if the thing is to be done it must be done very soon. So we shall see.

There is an active Branch of the N.S.S. at Paisley, and it is doing good work. Also there are a number of local Freethinkers who are not helping. The Branch Secretary, Mr. R. T. White, 23 Kilnside Road, Paisley, will be pleased to receive applications for membership forms, details of lectures, offers of help, etc.

A slip of the pen when writing on Mr. Cohen's forthcoming book, *Opinions, a Book of Random Reflections and Wayside Sayings*, made us say that the work would be published about the middle of January. It should have read about the middle of December. As the book is very suitable for a Christmas or New Year's gift to anyone of liberal opinions in either religion, ethics, or sociology, the middle of January would be rather late.

We cordially commend to our readers a pamphlet on *Justice and the Law*, by Professor Laski. This the Horace Seal Memorial lecture, and it is full of meat. The pamphlet is published at threepence by the Ethical Union of 1 Little George Street, Westminster.

The following from the pen of Mr. F. A. Davies, a name well known to many of the older readers of the *Freethinker*, which appears in *The Newspaper World*, explains itself:—

I think the statement of your correspondent, "W.H.A.," referring to Chas. Bradlaugh and *The National Reformer* is somewhat misleading. It is true another Bradlaugh has not appeared—that was scarcely to be expected—but the advocacy of his teaching has never ceased. *The National Reformer* disappeared, notwithstanding that it numbered on its staff writers like John M. Robertson, Colonel Lynch, and Mr. Ernest Newman, in the same way that others journals built up round the personality of one man have disappeared, but the *Freethinker*, founded in the early 80's by G. W. Foote, is still alive, fifteen years after the death of its brilliant founder, and has a larger circulation than was ever enjoyed by *The National Reformer*.

We are not surprised to find that two questions were asked in the House of Commons concerning the publication of *Green Pastures* in serial form in the *Evening Standard*. The questioners were the Conservative members for Chislehurst and Newcastle—Mr. Smithers and Sir Grattan Doyle—who wished to know if the Home Secretary intended to institute a prosecution for Blasphemy. (Readers will remember the character of the play from the review of the books which appeared in these columns on its first appearance.) Mr. Clynes replied that he deprecated prosecution for blasphemy where there was no apparent intention to give offence to anyone's religious feelings.

We do wish that some responsible lawyer would advise Mr. Clynes as to what the law of blasphemy is. He appears to be quite ignorant of its nature. He makes two statements concerning it, and both are wrong. We beg to inform him (1) the law of blasphemy does not make it an offence to outrage the religious feelings of anyone, but only of—at most—Christians. (2) An intention to outrage feelings is no part of the offence. The question submitted to juries is whether the language used will outrage the feelings of religious feelings of Christians. On this point we are not arguing with Mr. Clynes, we are merely instructing him. Any solicitor in the kingdom will verify what we say if he wishes to make enquiries. G. W. Foote did twelve months' imprisonment for saying things about God similar in kind to what is said in *Green Pastures*. It is a pity that Mr. Clynes had not the courage to defy his religious masters and refuse to wreck Mr. Thurtle's Bill for the abolition of the blasphemy laws. He might then have made a reputation for himself, instead of making himself ridiculous.

## The Problem of Evil.

THE obvious existence of evil in the world has proved a very great stumbling-block to all monotheistic religions and to the Christian religion in particular.

Christian dogma states that the universe was made by God. This statement, though wholly unsupported by evidence which can be proved, is not patently illogical. But, if it is true, it follows that the world and all its phenomena must also have been the creation of God. Thus evil must have been made by God as well as everything else.

So far we are still within the bounds of logic. But when Christian dogma also states that God is utterly perfect, and that there is no evil in him, we are presented with two statements about the same thing which flatly contradict one another. For to suppose a perfect Creator who is capable of creating imperfection is just as contradictory and illogical as to suppose that a circle can be square or that motion can be motionless.

To escape this dilemma a variety of attitudes have been adopted.

The most logical one is, of course, to regard the Creator as imperfect. This, in effect, was the attitude of the ancient Jews. They found it quite possible to worship a God who exhibited most, if not all, of the failings of ordinary men. But the more civilized members of the Christian Churches to-day will not admit that the deity they worship is in any way inferior to the best that can be imagined.

One would think that this perfecting of the Creator's character would have made the existence of evil in his creation a more blatant contradiction than ever. So it did. But logicity has never been regarded as a virtue and the religious mind has always been tolerant of contradiction in its beliefs. Consequently almost any verbal ruse is enough to smother illogicalities in belief which would not be tolerated for a moment in the practical business of life.

The most favoured ruse of modern theologians is that of simply evading the issue. They dare not say outright: "Yes, it is a contradiction, and therefore absurd, to suppose the Creator to be perfect when his creation is obviously not so." So they avoid the unpleasant words "contradiction" and "absurd," by saying: "It is a Mystery," or in simpler language: "We can't offer any reasonable explanation and we don't intend to." And in order to check any awkward questions on the subject they persuade their congregations (even though they do not wholly persuade themselves) to worship what is nothing more than ignorance in comely guise. What would Christian apologists have done without this beautiful word "Mystery"!

In spite of this simple method of hoodwinking the public, there have been some whose doubts as to its logicity have persisted. For most of these the "Free Will" ruse has sufficed. God created man, they are told, and presented him with the inestimable boon of a "free" will. Having acquired this gift of doubtful value, our first ancestors were then informed by their Creator that they were absolutely at liberty to choose their own line of action. "But," added the Creator, "if you choose to do evil, you cannot blame me." Whereupon those ancestors of ours, who were presumably God's perfect creatures, showed their perfection by choosing to do evil. And God remained conveniently blameless!

Most people are so eaten up with the importance of their fancied "freedom" of will, that they are unable to consider any reasonable criticism of the foregoing verbal contortion. Yet were they to think for

a moment, it would appear obvious to them that a will which chooses evil (no matter how "freely") can scarcely be regarded as perfect. Apart from this, one is still left puzzling as to where, in God's perfect creation, there could have been evil for such "free" wills to choose!

Another attitude towards the problem, which has found favour with a considerable number of people, originated in the United States and has spread in lesser degree to other parts of Christendom. This may be defined in the following argument: "God created the world. God is perfect. Therefore the world must be perfect."

Thus far the attitude manifests a most consistent logicity. And when someone in surprise is driven to ask: "But what of evil?" the reply given is still relatively logical. "Since the world must be perfect, there can be no evil in it. What people call evil is entirely due to imagination. It simply does not exist in reality."

To the ordinary person this reply is apt to elicit either hoots of laughter or else a gasp of incredulity, coupled with unexpressed doubts of the speaker's sanity. But it is nevertheless true that, in so far as it goes, this "Christian Science" attitude is far more logical than either of the other two which are generally accepted. For it is useless to argue that if evil did not exist there would be no word for it. There are hundreds of things which do not exist and which yet possess names.

Yet the argument is as much a verbal ruse as any other. And the catch lies in the word "imagination." For if "evil" is non-existent and is no more than the result of imagination, then two things follow. Either the imagination which is capable of conceiving evil is imperfect, and God's effort at creation still contains a flaw; or else "good" can equally be described as the result of imagination and be regarded as non-existent. In a creation that was absolutely perfect it is clear that no imperfection could be perceived in reality nor conceived in imagination.

So, no matter how the theologians may twist their words, they will never be able to extricate themselves from the logical absurdities implied by their monotheistic propositions. The only possible conclusions which can be arrived at from these propositions and which can claim to be logical are the two following: (1) God did not create the universe, or (2) God is not perfect.

To the Atheist every attempt to explain what is called the "problem of evil" is futile, for he realizes that there is, in fact, no problem at all to explain. In the first place he is aware that "good" and "evil" are merely relative terms, like "hot" and "cold," which are used as symbols of reference in speech to denote our reactions to phenomena of different kinds. In this sense nothing is good or bad, perfect or imperfect, but what we agree to call so; and what is called good in one place or at one time may be (and often is) called bad in another. In the second place, as we noted at the beginning, the proposition that anything was "created" by a "creator" is wholly unsupported by any evidence whatever and is, at best, an unwarranted and useless assumption.

C. S. FRASER.

You believe that easily which you hope for earnestly.  
Terence.

For I am nothing if not critical.—Shakespeare.

In heaven an angel is nobody in particular.  
G. Bernard Shaw.

## Noyes and Augustine.

A WEAKNESS noticeable in several modern writers of both prose and verse in their craving for identification with some movement, cult, religion or political party. It is perhaps one way of getting more continuously into the limelight and thus may serve as a means of advertisement. But the craving cannot be thought of as anything other than deplorable. I have no doubt that it is responsible for the fact that we have no great masters in poetry to-day.

On the occasion of the fifteenth centenary of the death of Saint Augustine a memorial volume of Essays on that eccentric individual has been printed. It receives prominent notice in the *Bookman*, a monthly publication (of which that doughty Presbyterian and cute journalist, Sir Robertson Nicall was the founder and for long editor.)

The first notice in the *Bookman*—a very short one—is written by Mr. Alfred Noyes, the alleged poet. In the course of it, Mr. Noyes writes, "Mr. Dawson's subtle and profound essay should form an admirable antidote to the shallow irony of those chapters from Gibbon, which have recently been detached from their context, and published separately at the price of one shilling for the benefit of 'thinkers' on railway journeys, and in the hope of speeding the parting guest—the Christ that has so long inhabited the deeper regions of the soul of man."

There are two great historians who really get the goat of the religionists—the one is Gibbon and the other is Buckle. We may stress the point that Mr. Noyes praises the Essay by Mr. Dawson for its subtlety and profundity. One may therefore assume that it is over the head of the wayfaring man and the fool. But the spectacle of Mr. Noyes using his penny squirt at Gibbon is about the limit! He does not attempt to substantiate or elaborate reasons for his sneers. And what is his authority for condemning abridged or condensed editions of the works of great writers? Mr. G. K. Chesterton has given us a most admirable abridgement of Boswell's "Johnson"—and there are dozens of other instances of the same kind of thing. These abridged books are a boon and a blessing to many people who could never find the time to read the originals. In most cases the best of what the great men penned has been preserved. Mr. Noyes will look in vain for sympathetic consideration from persons of intelligence when he reveals that the chief weapons of his armoury against Freethought are flouts, jibes, jeers, sarcasm and contempt.

And who is this mighty Dawson, who is to lay Gibbon low? Shallow irony? God bless us! Is not irony a legitimate and often useful and admirable literary method? Don't we find it in some of the best writing in the Bible? Shallow? Well, that is a matter of opinion. But Mr. Noyes' virulence may have the effect of increasing the number of readers and students of Gibbon in the original, so that after all out of evil good may come! Mr. Noyes indeed may be confusing shallowness with clarity. Religionists cannot do with depth alone. They must also depend on subtlety and cloudiness—and to judge by Mr. Noyes puerile railing—mud as well.

Mr. Noyes, prefatorily, has struck the *Bookman's* keynote. But in justice to the succeeding reviewers it should be said that to a large extent the historical and biographical elements are not sacrificed to the polemical. They contain much interesting reading on that account.

Let the authors and poets, if they would achieve greatness, stick to their last. In the pursuit of

beauty and truth and love of purity, the gall of bitterness blinds the eyes of the mind. Shakespeare and Keats never descended to the squalid dog-fights which seem to have such an attraction for so many of our present-day pressmen.

IGNOTUS.

### The Mad Parson.

#### THE INEVITABLE.

ONE hears profound truths everywhere, that is if one's ears are attuned to the Beautiful. I was passing by the fountain the other night, and the air was clear and cool. The moon shone on the sea, and on the low wall people sat and talked, as is the custom, of many things. They spoke of horses, of girls, of beer: of Health as a departmental commodity, of other forms of Insurance notably what in the argot all too prevalent nowadays, is commonly designated the Dole. There was puerility about the issues, a futility about their discussion which nauseated me somewhat. Sadly I thought of the walrus of Victorian mythology, as my gaze wandered seawards to a speed-boat, which churned up the water as it ploughed through the deep. And it was then, standing for a few moments involuntarily writing with my umbrella on the gravel, that I heard words which gladdened my heart to know that still in the petrol-laden atmosphere of the jazz-mad world the Holy Spirit was not altogether forgotten. Ah, my dear friends, no need to ask of the stranger as to the whereabouts of a pump. Heaven knows these cylindrical garish enamelled monuments to a tyred world that raise their hydra heads reeking and shrieking of Shell, smell and Hell have little modesty. Alas, these stations are all too easy for life's pilgrims (and death's pillions) in the pursuit of pleasure, which all too often leads to perdition.

Here I pondered on the melancholy fact that I simply dare not take my Baby Boston out till I have settled this quarter's tax. The ferrule of my umbrella outlined the letter G, clearly the symbol for God, and I meditated for ten seconds on the Omnipotence of the Holy Spirit, eternal as opposed to the infernal, a healer of the soul, not a destroyer of the body. Ah, divine essence, bah, petrol incense!

The words I had heard, and which had acted as balm to my soul proceeded from a small group near to the spot where I stood. The subject had been the seeming inequality between rich and poor, and opinions somewhat sceptical of the justice of God had been mooted when a dear old lady intervened. She did not argue, she did not plead, she exhorted not, nor cajoled; she merely stated a fact, but a fact that confounds all confusion the fact of God's incontrovertible truth! She simply said, "We've all got to go," then as an addendum, "when our time comes."

Ah, yes, my friends, that is where Almighty God gives man the K.O., if I may dare to use a sporting colloquialism. We've all got to go! No howling Atheist can deny that, we are in God's hands. And no matter our station in life, no matter our plans, our ambitions, our suppressed importance, we must all go, when our time comes, as decreed by our all loving Father. There is no prevarication possible, no remonstrating; no protestations of unreadiness will avail. God says: Your time has come and you've got to go. And when He says a thing, He means it. And we know not the day nor the hour. We are at His mercy, we are his creatures. We may not stand on the order of our going, we may not stand on the order of our going, we must just go.

Ah dear friends, but where must we go to you ask, and that is exactly what you must determine for yourselves. For God has given us Free Will in his Infinite mercy and wisdom, so that we may choose where we will spend Eternity. What would you think of a railway company that compelled you to go to London, when your inclination was for Brighton? Well, surely God Almighty is greater than the L.N.W.? But the analogy is faulty, for one pays for a railway journey with

money, while one's life is the payment exacted by God at His booking office. See to it then, dear friends, that you believe on the Lord Jesus, for on that simple act of Faith depends your eternal destiny. And never lose sight of the fact that Death comes as a thief in the night, and that we must always be prepared. At all times, at all places, on all occasions let us have in our hearts these simple, beautiful, and all sufficing words:—

I do believe I will believe that Jesus died for me, and on the Cross He shed His blood, from sin to set me free.

Then suddenly, if our car does an unexpected skid, that awful thought that we have not registered with the *Weekly Wail* need not press unduly on the last flicker of our consciousness; for we shall know that we are safe in Jesus' arms, that the time had come for us to go, and that at the heavenly Booking Office Peter would smile upon us as he punched our ticket.

J. EFFEL.

### The Value of Opinion.

How long Christianity will endure is no longer a question of Education, Knowledge and Time. It will depend on how long the supply of fools, natural and acting, can be maintained. There is sufficient knowledge and facilities for education in this country to kill Christianity stone dead, and flatten it out. The God of Christianity was wise when he entrusted his Cause to fools. By this cute move he added many centuries to the life of that religion. It is no refutation to present a list of gifted men and women who profess belief in Jesus. Talent is no guarantee against lapses into the foolish, and could one compile a list of the patrons of foolish schemes and enterprises, the sciences and arts would be found well represented. I have been reading some of the letters in the *News-Chronicle*, prompted by Sir Hall Caine's attack on Sir A. Keith. If anyone doubts the mental poverty associated with spiritual beliefs, let him read the letters sent in by the champions. The *News-Chronicle* may boycott Freethought in its pages, but it serves us by revealing the dud mental ammunition of the soldiers of the Lord.

Incidentally, when a man of science says something in support of Christianity, he at once becomes a great authority in science, and a bulwark of religion. But one who states any form of disbelief immediately becomes of no consequence in science, knows nothing about religion, is speaking outside his province, and so on. Satisfaction from such stupidity could only be obtained by fools.

The truth or value of Christianity is not a matter for the microscope, test tube, telescope or laboratory. The value of a professor of botany to the educational life of society depends upon his self-acquired knowledge of botany. His religion began as an accident of birth. He was born into it. The same applies to professors in other departments of science. They are valued in their respective departments because of their knowledge of science, not because of their opinions on religion.

There seems to be a common idea that when a man becomes eminent in the world of science he ceases to be troubled by any form of human weakness. Really professors of science remain human beings, with all the general make up of humans. Gather together the famous men of science in the world, and you will find traits, characteristics, and habits as among ordinary folk. Men of science eat, drink, smoke, sleep, and suffer from indigestion. A professorship in science doesn't cure a nervous superstitious temperament. A life-long study of the stars does not give an intuition into the fraudulent nature of Christianity or the crimson history of the church. In fact a collection of the opinions of scientists on religion is so astoundingly funny and chaotic, that had the average Christian any sense of the ridiculous, he would keep perfectly quiet over the opinions of scientists on religion. The value of a man's opinion on religion doesn't depend upon his laurels in the world of science, but upon his knowledge and understanding of the natural history of religion.

R. H. ROSETTI.

## The Journey and the Journey's End.

A LONG title for a short article—the End being the purpose, aim, pursuit, of which anon. Most of my man-life has been lived beside the railway line, indeed upon it, having to do with engines and trains, mechanical evolutions that have left the mental (in the mass) so far behind, and, as the superb Shakespeare has it:—

And almost thence my nature is subdued  
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand.

But, no, some soul of me escapes, some line of least resistance found or forced upon me, as instance, last Sunday in the train from sea to city (some thirty miles) when in spite of years and the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world I was intensely happy, a sweet felicity, if but occasional, one feels will recur even to the final edge of life.

The second hamlet passed, the pleasant river's bend is seen, steep bank and copse and cot bestrewn with Autumn leafage, too swiftly passed for wistful reverie. But there are hills to come, moorland slopes of brown bracken, pallid heath and green, woodland, lake, streamlet, field and meadow, and under a temperate fitful sun a vast and composite valley landscape stretching away to a grander mountainous beyond!

And now we are in the City, turned from nature to art, to pictures, to Praxitelian shapes filling the hushed air with everlasting awe. Anon it is the Lecture Hall and the London speaker, a master of the platform and of philosophy; yet even he matures, and gives us the substance of some six lectures in one. The evolution of man contains the evolution of God, finally the inessential will be discarded and man will reign alone, having at last found himself and mastered himself. Some six hundred people listened eager to a pinfall. Great art and skill were disguised in simplicity and charm and no doubt, most, like ourselves, came away ennobled, refreshed and happy.

COHA.

## THE BIRTH OF TRADITIONALISM.

*Homo* was the first living creature to form a picture of his universe that transcended individual experience. The elders supplemented their stories of what had happened to them and what they had been told by their predecessors with imaginations about the beasts and rocks and the sun and moon; myth and legend were added to tradition.

It is not so very difficult to imagine, once the process of symbolization was begun, once the point of crystallization was reached and language became possible, a very rapid development of the traditional element in human life. Man began to "explain" things, and particularly the tabus and customs, by telling stories about them. Man added tradition to heredity. He is the first and only traditional animal. There again he is separated from all the species. And now he ceases again to be traditional. He is supplementing tradition by science and analysis. Tradition has been a phase in his development which has lasted only a few score thousand years.

Primitive human thinking was like the thinking of children and uneducated people to-day. Something was imagined and either liked and sought, or disliked and avoided. Things were grouped in the mind to see how they looked and felt together. Countervailing ideas were evoked to alleviate, distort, or suppress disagreeable realizations. Thinking was more like reverie, and had little use for words until it had to be bold. It has only been very slowly that an acuter observation, an exacter definition, a more logical process has come to the aid of these primitive methods, and now begin to supercede them.

The great period of Hellenic thought between the sixth and the fourth centuries B.C. makes the transition from what Jung, in his *Psychology of the Unconscious* calls Undirected Thinking to Directed Thinking. Plato has recorded and immortalized for us the birth-cries of logical thought. Aristotle was the Father of Natural History

and Philosophy. From that period onward, the earlier mythological method of expression, dream-like in its quality, gave way slowly but surely to philosophical analysis and open-eyed scientific classification. We are still in the closing centuries of that phrase of transition. Only now does it become possible to present the ordinary human being with a picture of the universe that is generally valid and divested of fabulous interpretations. The bulk of mankind is still thinking mythodically. Only now is it possible to replace dogma by rational direction.—"*The Science of Life*," by H. G. Wells, J. Huxley, and G. R. Wells.

## Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

### GENERAL IDEAS AND BIOLOGY.

SIR,—May I add a few words in reference to your just remarks on Professor Julian Huxley's assertion that man is the only animal that has general ideas. There is nothing in the whole region of biological study that could entitle Professor Huxley to make such a statement. I have followed the experiments and observations of various research workers, principally American and French; the results they have obtained properly interpreted would lead to the opposite conclusion to that of Professor Huxley. But, on the other hand, the full interpretation of the facts observed could not be reached by study within the biological realm alone; what is required is an examination aided by application of the principles of psychology. Incidentally, I say, the value of biology in regard to throwing light on psychological problems has been greatly exaggerated; its faculties in this respect are absurdly inadequate; and I cannot find that Professor Huxley has ever ascertained the real psychological data which would enable him to give a good opinion, if not to pontificate, on these matters.

I speak here, I confess with a certain impetus, even perhaps personal animus; for I spent twenty of the most valuable years of my life in ascertaining what precisely is the mechanism of thought, or, as it has been expressed, in determining the Fundamental Processes of the Mind. The results will be found in my book *Principles of Psychology*, and one of these results is to make evident that the minds of animals do, in fact must, work on general ideas.

In these studies I borrowed from biology or physiology, the fewest possible data; essentially only, that the development of the brain is "economical."

I once called Professor Huxley's attention to these modes of reasoning, the grasp of which would save him from many errors; these like meaningless or misleading sayings, I find almost day by day in the writings of distinguished men, Wells, Bernard Shaw, Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Arthur Keith, Sir J. Jeans, whose great deficiencies in psychology never deter them in speaking with authority, but without illumination, on matters of great delicacy and intricacies in that field.

ARTHUR LYNCH.

### MALTA AND THE VATICAN.

SIR,—Some weeks ago you allowed Mr. Boyd Freeman to indulge at my expense in the irrelevant and (as it was also inaccurate) doubly odious charge that my motive in initiating and continuing this controversy was obedience to my "masters" in the Roman Catholic Church.

I know the readers of the *Freethinker* are quite accustomed to the notion that those who defend a religious institution from what they regard as an unwarrantable attack are either knaves or fools or a mixture of both. Even so, I do not think it quite fair that my reply to Mr. Boyd Freeman's impudent attack should not be given at least equal prominence.

ROBERT H. CORRICK.

## CHURCH PARADES.

SIR,—I am an Atheist who for some time has been an interested reader of the *Freethinker*, and I feel justified in expressing my dissent from the letter "Religion in the Services," which appeared in the issue of November 2.

Of course the average service man has no desire to do Church Parades—he has to do a lot of cleaning for them. That fact bears no relation to the average man's desire to attend church, however. A brief survey of the numerical strength of congregations at voluntary evening services in Garrison Churches will forcibly indicate the discrepancy.

I can correct him on one point: in no station in the British Empire has a Padre any power to disperse any Sports Funds.

What any Padre's "idea" in life may be is a subject on which W.H.F. has no authority to write. What any Padre does in life is another question. If W.H.F. would like enlightenment on this point, I will furnish it privately, with pleasure.

A man has to state his "religious convictions" on enlistment. If he is an Atheist he is not shown as "C. of E.": Atheists as such cannot enlist in the British Service.

Boys are not compelled to pray at night. Religious instruction is a feature of their daily routine—their spare time is not encroached upon.

It must be remembered always that a church parade is primarily and essentially a "parade" in the Army. A soldier receives "Extra Drills," and "Confinement to Barracks," and so on for talking or laughing on any parade whatsoever.

In conclusion I would like to state that I have discussed with many Army Padres, and I find that the majority are no more in favour of compulsory attendance at church than is W. H. Field. I was an Atheist before I joined the Army, and during my service I have not been compelled to attend any religious service, although to facilitate my enlistment I was recorded as "C. of E." As I get posted to a "new" station, so I repair post haste to the resident Padre. To him I state my views—and I have to justify them to him. So far I have not failed to justify my views, and no Padre has failed to recognize the justification or to assist me in obtaining permission to "dismiss" from the parade at the church door.

Cpl. A. STUART.

[We think our correspondent is in error on one point. If a man will insist on being entered as an Atheist, when joining the Army, this will be done.—Ed.]

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

## LONDON.

## OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrols Road, North End Road, opposite Walham Green Church): Every Saturday at 7.30.—Various speakers.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine; 3.30, Messrs. A. D. McLaren and B. A. Le Maine; Every Wednesday at 7.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and C. Tuson; every Friday at 7.30, Messrs. A. D. McLaren and B. A. Le Maine. Current *Freethinkers* can be obtained opposite the Park Gates, on the corner of Edgware Road, during and after the meetings.

## INDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Circle House, Great Alic Street, Aldgate, E.1): 8.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine—"Is the Belief in God Rational?"

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (London Co-operative Society's Hall, 249 Dawes Road, Fulham): 7.30, Mr. Charles Tuson—"Can a Thoughtful Man be a Christian?" Reply to Rev. B. F. Simpson, of St. Peters, Cranley Gardens. No. 11 bus passes the door.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): 11.15, Mr. H. Snell, M.P.—"If Christ Returned to Jerusalem,"

HIGHGATE DEBATING SOCIETY (The Winchester Hotel, Archway Road, Highgate, N.): 7.45, Wednesday, November 26, Mr. R. A. McLeod.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, C. E. M. Joad, B.A.—"Russia: A Society in the Making."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Public Hall, Clapham Road): 7.15, Mr. R. Arch—"The Universe Around Us."

TOWN HALL, STRATFORD, E.—Mr. Chapman Cohen, President National Secular Society and Editor of the *Freethinker*, will lecture on Sunday, November 23, at 7.0 p.m.—Subject "How Man Found Himself."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, facing Cattle Market): 7.30, Mr. F. Victor Fisher—"The Modernist Aspect of Christianity."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.) : 7.30, Mrs. M. L. Seaton-Tiedman—"Dean Inge's Married Pariahs."

## COUNTRY.

## INDOOR.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Cafe, Godwin Street): 7.30, Mr. G. Clarke—"Wheat." Special Branch Meeting will be held the same evening. Agenda—Mr. Chapman Cohen's Meeting at Queen's Hall on 30th inst.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (Club Rooms, Front Street): 7.0, Mr. Jas. Welsh. Chairman Mr. G. B. Swinburne.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Jack Clayton—"Christianity and the Fear of Death." All welcome.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.—City (Albion Street) Hall, 11.30, Mr. Whitehead, London—"Does Man Survive Death"; 6.30, "An Atheist's Morality." On Wednesday, November 26, at 8.0, in City Hall (North Saloon), Candleriggs, Mr. Whitehead will lecture on "Candid Views on Birth Control." Tickets 6d. each.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, 41 Islington, Liverpool—entrance Christian Street): Sunday, November 23, at 7, Mrs. F. Pomeroy, B.A.—"Shelley's Philosophy." Current *Freethinkers* will be on sale.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"What is the Use of Science?"

NELSON—I.L.P. Institute, Vernon Street.—Mr. Jack Clayton will lecture at 11.0 on Sunday—"Russia and Religion."

PAISLEY BRANCH N.S.S. ("I.L.P." Rooms Cumberland Court): Monday, November 24 at 7.30, Mr. George Whitehead—"Secularism Explained."

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Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

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