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## Views and Opinions.

### Opinion and the Law.

The echoes of the last prosecution for Blasphemy are still with us, and are bearing results in directions not quite such as some people may have expected. The trial has not merely led to the formation of a Society having for its object the abolition of the Blasphemy laws themselves—that much was in my mind when I advised the N. S. S., not that any urging was needed, to take up the defence of the case—but it has called the attention of many to the fact that such laws are still in operation, and has roused the disgust of a large number of men and women, many of whom are still associated with some form of Christianity. Further, it has fixed the attention of many upon questions that go even deeper than the existence of the Blasphemy laws, or the imprisonment of men for religious offences. One of these is the degree to which opinions that are held by some to be erroneous, or even mischievous, may be interfered with by the law. The question is not always raised in this form, but it is there, and is often disguised under a pretended concern for the "decencies of controversy," or concern for other people's feelings. But the truth concerning the matter is not so easily disguised. And the game is given away by the fact that it is only in connection with unpopular opinions, or what are considered to be undesirable opinions, that concern for the decencies of controversy, or for the feelings of other people, is made the pretext for legal action. To that aspect of the matter I will return presently. For the moment, all I want to fix attention on is the point that every attempt to interfere with the free circulation of opinion, even when coarsely or offensively expressed, gives rise to a consideration of the much deeper question as to how far society is warranted in entering upon a policy of suppression.

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### The Latest Blasphemy Case.

This is the question that is raised, almost incidentally, in the course of an article in the last issue of the *Cambridge Law Journal* by Professor Courtney Kenny. Professor Kenny calls his article "The Evolution of the Law of Blasphemy," and with that I have not for the moment any concern, except to say that he is concerned with the purely legal aspect only, and not with other considerations that have determined the course of legal history in this respect. On one or two points,

however, in connection therewith, I may make a little correction and an observation. He says, in connection with the Gott trial, that on a petition being presented to the Home Secretary, Mr. Shortt, the latter explained that it was not under any statute, but under common law that Gott was convicted, and "The common law does not interfere with the free expression of *bona fide* opinion." On that, I may remark, no petition was presented for Mr. Gott's release. That question was considered, but it was felt that with the present Home Secretary in office such a move would be useless. Next, Mr. Shortt's statement was made in order to justify his running away from a deliberate promise to support a repeal of the Blasphemy laws—statute and common—and was one of the most contemptible and barefaced repudiations of an undertaking that any public man could make. The Home Secretary tried to justify his conduct by saying that he was prepared to support the abolition of the statute law of blasphemy, but not the common law. Which only meant that he was prepared to repeal a law that was inoperative, but was not prepared to do anything to alter one under which trials for blasphemy had always been taken. It was the act of a lawyer politician who had brought to the trickiness of the one the craftiness of the other.

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### Blasphemy and the Civil Courts.

One other point. Professor Kenny points out that the taking over by the civil courts of the offence of blasphemy was a sheer act of usurpation. The courts had no authority to act in such matters; this had hitherto been a purely ecclesiastical offence. But it happened, and as one result we were furnished with the creation of the legal doctrine that Christianity was part of the law of England, and it was held, therefore, that to attack Christianity was illegal. Professor Kenny thinks that Hale founded this decision upon a misreading of an old law book. This may be correct, but, with all deference, I venture another and very likely origin of the phrase. In Hale's time, the only Christianity which had any pretence to legal existence was the Christianity of the Established Church. And, as the creation of Parliament, with its clergy as so many State officials, Christianity was then actually part of the law of England. Personally, this strikes us as a very obvious explanation of an expression that has puzzled lawyers since the seventeenth century, and I am surprised that none of them have hit on it. For the rest, Professor Kenny thinks that the common law of blasphemy has now—owing to the Bowman case in the House of Lords and the Gott trial—reached a satisfactory position, or one that is nearly satisfactory. That is, emphatically, not the case. All that these cases have settled is that "blasphemy" cannot be constituted by mere opinion, but must be an *opinion about religion* expressed in such a way as Christians consider offensive. I emphasise this because mere offensiveness will not constitute blasphemy, it must be offensiveness in connection with a special opinion. Avowed or unavowed the opinion must be there. It is that which is the seed of the offence. Without that there is no offence whatever.

### The Common Law.

To say that this is a satisfactory conclusion is to caricature the facts. It may be satisfactory to a lawyer to feel quite sure that the common law, at least avowedly, makes the offence to consist in the manner and not in the matter of the publication or speech. But the common law is a fluid thing, a fact which lawyers—although they should be the last to forget this—too often overlook, and most judges seem to ignore altogether. And as Professor Kenny was in the court on the second trial of Mr. Gott, he may remember that Mr. Justice Avory, in his bitterly malignant address, stated that the law of blasphemy might become more lax or more stringent. It entirely depended upon the circumstances of the time. With that I quite agree. So long as there is a feeling abroad in favour of liberty too strong for the legislature and the judicature to ignore the more liberal interpretation is safe. But given a state of panic, or a very strong reaction, and the less liberal interpretation would have it turn. And those who have not yet forgotten how nearly every principle of constitutional liberty was trodden underfoot during the war, how men were arrested without a definite charge, imprisoned without trial, and detained or deported on a mere administrative order, and that all this was done without any effective public protest, will always have in mind the possibility of a reversion to the narrower reading of the common law of libel. There are great possibilities in this direction, and the moral of the situation is that no position will be satisfactory short of the abolition of both the common and statute law of blasphemy, and so leave all alleged offences against public order and decency to the ordinary law. That does at least place all citizens, of whatever opinion they may be, upon exactly the same level, and so removes all ground for this particular complaint.

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### Opinion and Civil Order.

The present law of blasphemy is, in the words of one of the law lords in the Bowman case, that no attack upon Christianity is criminal unless it contains "such an element of vilification, ridicule, or irreverence, as would be likely to exasperate the feelings of others and so lead to a breach of the peace." Another of the law lords added to this the words "then and there." But Mr. Justice Avory, in discussing this, decided that "then and there" did not mean immediately, but that a man might buy a pamphlet, have his feelings hurt, and then come back, perhaps the day after, and punch the seller of the pamphlet on the nose. It is the punch on the nose that does it. If the man merely feels hurt it will not do. And seeking out the seller and assaulting him, instead of being evidence of a calculated assault—as it would be in any other connection—is said by Professor Kenny to be a settlement of the law "congenial with the tolerant spirit of modern times." Now there is nothing new in this reading of the law of criminal libel. I am not a lawyer, and my reading of constitutional and other law has naturally been of casual and desultory nature. But I think I am right in saying that the law of criminal libel always assumed that the language constituting the libel was of such a kind as would probably lead to a breach of the peace. And there is one other point in this connection which Professor Kenny names, but does not discuss. This is the question of intention. With criminal libels in general it is assumed that the offender knew the contents of the publication and published it with a desire, or at least a readiness, to offend. The offence must be premeditated. In blasphemy this appears to be quite unnecessary. A pamphlet may be issued quite innocently, so far as the author and publisher are concerned, the coarse language may not be intentional, but merely

the way in which the writer or speaker usually expresses himself. It will not avail. It is the man who reads it who is important. Why this distinction in the case of blasphemy? Does it not look as though, as I have already said, the attack upon opinion, avowed or unavowed, is still there. The modern law of blasphemy is substantially an attack upon opinion in the way that current opinion will tolerate.

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### Why Protect Religion?

In India there is no law of blasphemy, as such. The anomaly of punishing a man for blaspheming the Christian religion in a country where only a fraction of the population believed in it was too great for even Christians. But Lord Macaulay's code embodied an enactment which made it punishable with a year's imprisonment for anyone who by speech or gesture deliberately wounded the religious feelings of another person. We fancy that if this law were applied a great many missionaries in that country would be "doing time." This law appears to be Professor Kenny's ideal for England. He points out that Christianity is protected against "wanton insult," and he suggests that not only the feelings of a Christian but also the feelings of every other religious person should be protected by "Parliamentary legislation." In other words, Professor Kenny finds a bad law and suggests as a remedy that instead of this law applying to one section of the community only it should be made to apply to several sections, still leaving the feelings of those outside all religions as they were. But you do not by extending badness do away with it. The main question of why should the religious feelings of people have special deference paid them or why should there be a special legislation in favour of religious persons remains unanswered. The Indian law is, in principle, no better than the English one, however much may be said on its behalf from the point of view of special circumstances. Professor Kenny's remedy for the present state of things is exactly that which so many Nonconformists propose in their attack on the Established Church. They are agreeable to the State patronage of religion so long as they get their share of the plunder. It was that kind of selling a principle for what the sale would fetch which led the Nonconformists to sell the country when they agreed to religious instruction in the schools. And Professor Kenny should realize that what Freethinkers, at least, are fighting for is not a sectarian advantage, or a share in some general sectarian advantage, but the establishment of the simple principle that in matters of religion the State should stand entirely upon one side. And that any offences that are punishable should be so in terms of a disturbance of the social order, and not in terms of offences against the religious opinions or the religious feelings of anyone. CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be Continued.)

What is meant by Conscience? If it means the perception of right or wrong, it is an intellectual faculty, which varies in individuals and societies, some having greater discrimination than others. If it means the recognition of distinct, settled categories of right and wrong, it depends on social and religious training. In a high state of civilization these categories approximate to the laws of social welfare and disease; in a low state of civilization they are fantastic and fearfully distorted by superstition. There is hardly a single vice that has not been practised as a virtue under a religious sanction. Finally, if conscience means the feeling of obligation, the sense of "I ought," it is a product of social evolution. It is necessarily generated among gregarious beings, and in the course of time Natural Selection weeds out the individuals in whom it is lacking or deficient. Social types of feeling survive, and the anti-social perish. And this is the whole "mystery" of conscience.—G. W. Foote.

## The Soul-Theory Discredited.

To a superficial observer nothing is more perplexing than the difference between a living and a dead man, and to such an observer the natural inference is that precisely the same distinction exists between a living and a dead dog, death in either case signifying the cessation of reaction to environment. Our human friend when dead makes no response to our advances. There is no breath in his nostrils, no gleam in his eye, no smile of glad recognition on his lips, and the senses of hearing and touch are no more; but our canine friend when dead presents exactly the same characteristics. When we draw near he neither wags his tail nor barks with delight, neither welcomes nor resents our presence. Both man and dog no longer react to the environment, and in both the process of disorganization and disintegration is already in operation. Does death ever involve more than that? To all appearance death is simply the coming to an end of individual existence, or the return from the organic to the inorganic state. It is only with the advent of the speculative philosopher that the soul-theory first looms into view. In fact, the belief in the soul owes its origin not to any speculative contemplation of death as such, but to a speculative inference which primitive man ignorantly drew from his dream experiences. Dreams always occurred during sleep, and the crude theory was that a mysterious something, which afterwards came to be spoken of as the double, ghost, spirit, or soul, went out of the sleeper, took part in most wonderful performances, and returned again. Primitive man was consistent enough to declare that every living thing had its double or soul. Furthermore, primitive man formed the belief, likewise based upon his dream experiences, that the double or soul, which inhabited the body, lived on somewhere after it ultimately took leave of that body. Consequently, in his childish fancy man consisted of two parts, body and soul, the latter living and the former dead. Once Marcus Aurelius solemnly asked himself, "What art thou?" and answered, "A little soul carrying a corpse."

At first, the soul was conceived of as a vapour-like duplicate of the body, and in some Oriental philosophies it may be still so regarded. But Plato's conjecture was that the soul was an entity or being of a nature fundamentally different from that of the body. It was a being that existed before and would continue to exist after its union with the body, which union it was forced into as punishment for some sin committed by it in its pre-existent state. Aristotle rejected Plato's theory, and taught that the soul was simply "the sum of the vital functions." That is to say, to the logical mind of this brilliant Greek thinker the soul signified everything that distinguishes living beings from inanimate things. During the Christian era, down to the seventeenth century, there was practical unanimity of opinion that the soul was an immaterial entity which could function either through or apart from, and even after the death of, the body. What an immaterial substance was no one could tell. Aquinas taught that the functions of the soul depend upon bodily organs, but maintained that the dependence is not necessary. "The soul is created by God when the body of which it is the entelechy is prepared for it."

In the seventeenth century philosophy, which throughout the Middle Ages had been the handmaid of theology, reached the climax of its theological servitude in the teaching of Descartes, of whom Dr. McDougall says:—

He boldly asserted that the bodies of men and animals differ in no wise from other material things, but are merely very complicated machines whose

workings are to be explained by the mechanical principles which enable us to understand the processes of other machines. To man alone of all living beings he assigned a soul, and this soul exercised only the higher mental functions of thought and volition (*Psychology*, p. 13).

Such, in brief, has been the evolution of the soul-theory. In the course of that evolution it underwent many changes and assumed several different forms. In its final form, as described by the so-called father of modern philosophy, it rests on no positive evidence whatsoever. Descartes expressed a great scientific fact when he affirmed that the bodies of men and animals alike are nothing but "very complicated machines"; but men of science, confirming this theory, were naturally led to ask, "Why, if animals are merely complex machines, should man be regarded as anything but one of still greater complexity? What, they asked, is the soul?" This proved to be an extremely difficult question, which neither the theologians nor the philosophers could satisfactorily answer. Even Lock could do nothing better than "fall back upon revealed religion as the only sure ground for the belief in the soul," while Bishop Berkeley could only attack Materialism by repudiating the belief in the reality of Matter. Dr. McDougall says:—

But one of the most influential writers of that time, the great Scotch Sceptic, David Hume, brilliantly argued that the existence of the soul was merely a tradition which had been uncritically accepted, and that no demonstration of its existence ever had been, or could be, made (*Ibid.*, p. 14).

Now, it is a remarkable and highly significant fact that in present-day psychology there is neither room nor need for the soul as a distinct and independent entity. Even so great an authority as Professor Gilbert Murray is radically mistaken when he says that Plato "was unconsciously founding a new science, that 'science of the soul,' which we call psychology." According to the latest accredited psychologists, "it is no longer possible to define psychology as the science of the soul," for the history of thought on the soul "shows that the notion of the soul is a speculative hypothesis, one much too vague and uncertain to be made the essential notion in the definition of a large province of natural science." Such is Dr. McDougall's view in his *Psychology*, published in the Home University Library in 1912. Dr. Boris Sidis, the distinguished disciple of the late William James, expresses the same conviction in his *Foundations of Normal and Abnormal Psychology*, which appeared in 1914. It is quite true that both Lotze and Ladd, in their works on Psychology, accepted and advocated the soul-theory, declaring it to be entirely rational, "and, in fact, the only tenable hypothesis"; but it must be borne in mind that Lotze died forty-one years ago, while his great work, *Psychology*, appeared in 1852, and that Professor Ladd is pre-eminently a theologian, whose four or five interesting books on psychology made their appearance in 1891 and 1894. After paying a well-deserved tribute to the valuable contributions of those two great men, Dr. Sidis is obliged to come to the following conclusion:—

From a purely scientific standpoint we must reject this soul-hypothesis. The first requirement of a scientific hypothesis is that its hypothetic cause should be of such a nature as to be verifiable by experiment and observation. Now in the case of the soul, this condition is not fulfilled. The soul is something that lies outside the range of experience, and could never be brought within the limits of empiricism, the basis of science. The spiritualist, in fact, has not even a positive notion of his "soul"; he either frames it in wholly negative terms, that it is not changeable, that it is not material; or, if pressed

hard, he falls back on the phenomena of consciousness, the very phenomena the soul is called for to explain.....As a hypothesis the soul is useless and scientifically unjustifiable (p. 56).

Now, in the *Christian World Pulpit* of May 11, there is a notable sermon by Canon Barnes, Sc.D., entitled, "Soul and Body." Canon Barnes won fame by repudiating the historicity of the Garden of Eden story, and ever since he has devoted most of his public utterances to an attempt to justify the step he then took. Mrs. Carlyle, after a visit by Bishop Colenso, remarked that it was rather peculiar for a man in gaiters to be attacking the Bible. The same remark applies to any man in holy orders who ventures to discard any of the fundamental doctrines which he has vowed by an oath to defend. Canon Barnes rejects at once the doctrine of the Fall and Original Sin so clearly taught in the Ninth of the Twenty-Nine Articles. He also denies the resurrection of the flesh, which is as clearly promulgated in Article Four, wherein we are assured that "Christ did truly rise again from death, and took again his body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into Heaven, and there sitteth, until he returns to judge all men at the last day." He unhesitatingly denies what that Article as unhesitatingly affirms. We by no means uphold the Article, but neither can we uphold a man who throws it overboard after taking an oath to be loyal to it. The two Articles just alluded to are as contrary to the discoveries of modern science as they can possibly be. The Canon disowns them both in the name of science. After doing that, however, he proceeds, on wholly unscientific lines, to try to justify his belief in the soul, which, we contend, no man of science, no self-confessed evolutionist, can legitimately and consistently do.

J. T. LLOYD.

(To be Concluded.)

## A Tragic Comedian.

I would have all men come out of Christendom into the universe.  
—John Davidson.

The Church has failed infamously.—Bernard Shaw.

THE whirligig of time brings strange revenges. Much that the Philistine disclaimed years ago the middle-class man admires to-day. Nowhere, however, has the reversal of positions been so rapid or so absolute as in literature. The Socialist writers ran a great risk, for they were odious, unpopular, and were supposed to exhibit the worst features of petty political propaganda. William Morris is now a classic; Edward Carpenter addresses a large and ever-increasing audience; and Bernard Shaw is one of the foremost figures in the literary arena. And Shaw possesses an effrontery like Casanova, a readiness and an irreverence equal to that of Panurge, and a brain as brilliant as Machiavelli. "It is roses, roses all the way!"

Shaw is on the high road to become a classic. His biography has been written by a university professor, who hails from the land of "tall statements and tall buildings." Other critics also throw bouquets at Shaw from across the Atlantic. To these sober-minded critics Shaw appears as a serious rival to Shakespeare and as a superior of Sheridan. A French critic, not to be outdone by mere Americans, declares Shaw to be "the English Molière," which is a very graceful compliment. This wide consensus of opinion is remarkable, for the purely parochial success of an ordinary writer sinks into insignificance beside a reputation of this kind.

Shaw is a great humourist, but the underlying seriousness of his work cannot be ignored. For Shaw,

despite his chameleon-like changes, always maintains stoutly the rottenness of the prevailing ideals. He criticises these ideals in his novels, his dramas, his musical, sociological, and theatrical reviews. He sets up these ideals, strips them, and puts them to the test, and the ordeal is the cleansing fire of truth and the scalding water of satire. So thorough is the process that few impostures may walk and live. He is so much more than a merely brilliant author. Underlying all his wit and irony you find a sanity, a balanced good sense, which mere smartness lacks. Occasionally, as an Irishman, he justifies his reputation as a "Celtic Mephistopheles," and grins under his cock's feathers, as in his attacks on Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, and his variable attitude on religion. The total impression, however, left by his work is of a man grappling earnestly and seriously with great social and religious problems, not of a clown grinning through a horse-collar. That impression is very welcome, for, as Heine says finely, "unless wit is based on seriousness it is only a sneeze of the reason."

Shaw has not the temperament which suffers fools gladly, and when he is annoyed he is merciless. He sees all round a subject. Be he writing to Benjamin Tucker, the single-minded apostle of Individualism, he will tell him blandly that true Individualism can only be reached through Socialism. When addressing Socialists he will warn them seriously of the dangers of bureaucracy to personal liberty. He will gibe at religious people for their barbarism, and scoff at Free-thinkers for their devotion to science. When he belonged to the Shelley Society he told the members bluntly that he expected all the members were Atheists, Republicans, and Vegetarians, and nearly broke up the Society on the spot. Sometimes the victims get angry, but the ready Irish wit comes to the rescue, and the critic is forgiven for his audacity.

After all, Shaw's plays contain his most valuable work. His novels belong to his early manhood; but his plays are the work of his maturity. He has been at great pains to explain that in his dramatic work his technique is old and his philosophy is new. Frankly, neither is originally Shavian. The one is seen clearly in Ibsen, and the other plainly conveyed from Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. But Shaw's wit and humour is valuable. He has re-introduced high comedy on the English stage. So far as England is concerned, the comic spirit, as George Meredith so admirably calls it, has had few chances between Shaw and the Restoration dramatists. And, remember, the main secret of Congreve and Wycherley's interplay of character is not mere depravity. It is the equality with which men and women pitch their battles of wit.

Shaw has "related himself to paper," as few authors have done. The impress of his personality is on all his work, and even his newspaper articles retain their freshness triumphantly. They are the work of a brilliant, clever, and witty man. With a haughty nonchalance he has expressed himself with great freedom. He asked once, "Who is Hall Caine?" and people have not done laughing yet. His phrases hit. "Sardoodledom" is not a compliment to the author of *La Tosca*. "Bardolatry" is applied to the worshippers of Shakespeare. His famous retort, "Sir Edward Grey is himself a Junker," was merciless. And so was his advice to the Free Churchmen that if they were wise, they would place busts of Voltaire in their chapels. Shaw is too much in earnest to be impartial. "I have never claimed for myself the divine attribute of justice," he says smilingly. His life's work is a siege laid to the social and religious abuses of his time by an author who had to cut his way into them at the point of his sword, and throw some of the defenders into the moat. He has done more for Progress than any other writer of his generation.

MIMNERMUS.

## Buddhism, God, and the Soul.

### II.

(Concluded from page 331.)

THE more we subject the aggregates of being to investigation the less reason we find for assuming the existence of a soul in the animistic sense. The soul-theory in relation to man is much the same as the phlogiston theory was in relation to fire. In fact, nowhere in nature have we any grounds for assuming a noumenon behind the phenomenon. Such an assumption is merely the outcome of ignorance proceeding along lines of pure imagination and conjecture.

The outstanding characteristic of all phenomena is that they are subject to constant change, to transition. There can be no static *being*, there is only a *becoming*. The physical body, as we know, is in a constant state of flux, of inflow and outflow, so that at the end of ten years, or less, no single particle of the body which then existed remains, although the outer appearance may appear to be the same. Much more rapid are the changes of the other aggregates, especially of mentality (*sankhara*), which in another aspect becomes the tendencies of the mind or character. This aggregate, if any, might best be called the "soul." But we know that it is not only *not* eternal, indestructible, and unchangeable, but it is so volatile that its life may be said to last only so long as a single thought lasts. Moreover, it is not an entity in itself. It is not a monad (the imaginary *Atma-buddhi* of Theosophy), and it is incapable of existence apart from its association with the other aggregates. It is simply a form of energy which cannot manifest apart from matter.

We now come to the (for Western readers) more difficult question, the Buddhist theory of re-birth. Here it is advanced merely as a theory. The Buddha himself laid it down that no one is obliged to accept even his teachings unless they accord with reason and experience; but it is recommended that it is not well to dismiss any proposition off-hand without reflection simply because it does not seem at first sight to answer to that test. The Buddha did not deal in dogmas, therefore a suspension of judgment is always justifiable. The phenomenon of the "ego" or "I," this "myself," which seems to be separate and distinct from all other "selves," and which runs apparently along a separate line of transition, of arising, developing, declining, and passing away, must have an adequate cause. "I" may be physically the product of my parents and of an innumerable host of ancestors. But "I" am certainly not one of them, nor am I the sum total of all of them. I develop proclivities, characteristics, tendencies, all my own, which differ in many striking ways from those of my progenitors, though they may, through heredity, be to some extent conditioned by them. But physical heredity does not account for everything.

Whether the self-conscious "I" existed before this particular life, and whether it will arise again somewhere else, may be debatable questions. But that it has arisen in this life cannot be disputed, nor that there must be some adequate cause for the phenomenon. This personality is not an entity in itself, but is built up of innumerable entities, none of which are entities *in themselves*. For example, the physical body is built up of innumerable cells, all of which are in a constant state of change. The same observation applies to the mind, to states of consciousness. We get not one personality, but many personalities, the constitution of which is always changing like the shifting glass in a kaleidoscope; or, to vary the illustration, there is a succession of "I's" following one another rapidly like the pictures in a cinematograph film. Or, to put it in more precise Buddhist

phraseology: "In the *absolute sense* there are only numberless processes, countless waves in the ever changing sea of forms, feelings, perceptions and states of consciousness, and none amongst all these constantly changing phenomena constitute any permanent entity, called I or self (*atta*), nor does there exist any ego-entity apart from them."

The Buddhist philosophy teaches that at "death" there is no break in the sequence of rising and falling (as of waves), but that life and death, death and life alternate. So that the "fall" of the ego-phenomenon is followed by its rise. The direction of the "flow" of these waves is determined by the sum of the tendencies (of the character) which are expressed by what is technically called *tanha*, which may be translated desires, cravings, or "will-to-live." There must be a cause why I was born ("arising" is a better word than "birth" to express the Buddhist idea) just exactly when I was, in such and such circumstances and environment, and not in others, possessed of such and such physical and mental abilities and disabilities. There is no such thing as fate, chance, luck, or fortuity admitted in the Buddhist philosophy. In Buddhism it is taught that nothing in the nature of a soul-entity passes over from death to birth. What happens is simply a transmission of energy, and this energy constantly tends to find re-expression according to its nature, and to stimulate into activity a new phenomenal being (*namarupa*) of the same kind. The "nature" of a being is called its *kamma* (Sanskrit, *karma*). *Kamma* literally means action, doing. As a technical term in the Buddhist philosophy it is the law of cause and effect, of action and reaction, of compensation, of consequences. Now, the "nature" of a being is contained nowhere else but in itself. We are, each one of us, at this present moment, the exact sum total of all our past *doings*, of our own thoughts, words and deeds; we are, in short, our own *kamma*. The working out of natural processes is often obscure and sometimes impossible to trace; but that they do work out logically and of necessity cannot be denied, even though we do not know the laws which govern them. That a self-conscious "I" should arise at all is a problem in itself which we cannot hope to account for. But it is quite certain that this present "I" is the result of its past "doings," and that the "I" of the future will faithfully react to the doings of the present.

Buddhism explains the vast diversity between the multitudes of individual human beings by carrying over the *kamma* to a previous life or being-phenomenon, and regards it as simply a continuation of the "stream" of the tendencies (*sankhara*), or psychic energy, linked with the *kamma*, which, at death, quickens into activity a new phenomenal being akin to the one which disappeared at death. There is nothing supernatural about it, "gods" have nothing to do with it. It is simply the interplay of natural forces.

If this can be accepted as a working hypothesis, it will go far towards solving many problems which physical heredity and ordinary psychology fail to answer. Then most of the obvious injustices which we see all around us, and from which we ourselves often suffer, assume a different aspect. Of course, the lapse of memory may be urged against it. But it is not taught that it is the *same being* which persists, but another (of the same kind) which arises under the stimulus of past energy. Yet, even in this life, we often experience sufferings and tribulations as the result of causes in this life which we have wholly forgotten.

It is upon this teaching of *kamma* and re-birth (or re-arising) that the ethics of Buddhism is based. This has no relation whatever to any "divine law," nor is "sin" regarded as an offence against any god. The only "devil" is ignorance, and the only "saviour"

is knowledge, from the Buddhist point of view. The evils, pains, and tribulations from which men suffer are their own doing, are simply the natural and inevitable sequence of cause and effect, and so also are happiness and well-being. Buddhism recognizes no obligations, nor any duties, towards a god, neither does it inculcate the fear of any divine wrath or supernatural visitation. Mankind have obligations and duties towards each other, and as they fulfil or neglect these, as they act towards each other, so do they make the world more or less of a hell or more or less of a heaven. Buddhism seeks to drive out the devil of ignorance by the angel of enlightenment, and ignorance is at its blackest and worst when associated with gods and their associated superstitions. Buddhism seeks so to enlighten men and women that they shall be able to walk upright on their own feet, as self-reliant, self-respecting beings, without weak reliance on the bruised reeds of creeds, dogmas and priestly impositions. To do righteously, equitably and honourably by one's fellow-men is of knowledge; to do the reverse is of ignorance. The one leads to happiness, the other to suffering, not only for others but for oneself also. Thus taught the Buddha.

E. UPASAKA.

### The Age of Unreason.

THERE are a few people who assert that the age of witchcraft and miracle mongering is over. They say that we enlightened beings of this twentieth century are now, owing to the abnormal strides made by science during the last one hundred years or so, entirely freed from the guiles of crystal gazing and palmistry. In fact, they will, in their endeavours to convince us of this, point out that it is now almost impossible to find any responsible or sane person who honestly believes in the existence of mermaids or goblins, or who accepts with anything but a shrug of the shoulders many of the acknowledged "truths" of a generation ago. Yet, in spite of this, and in spite of the fact that such men as Darwin and Haeckel have lived quite recently on this planet, statistics would lead one to believe that out of the 1,650,000,000 (approximate) human inhabitants of this globe men call earth, something like 1,340,000,000 of them believe in some sort of deity and accept, more or less, the traditional folk lore, legends, superstitions and religious humbug of whatever particular country or state fate happens to have placed them in, as something far more tangible than fiction. It is an appalling fact when one comes to think of it, though of course it is one with reference to which it may be correctly argued that statistics are very misleading and that the number given as representing even the Christian element of this vast concord of "mind slaves" is considerably reduced when the thousands of Atheists and Rationalists (avowed or otherwise) who never take super- or non-naturalism into any of their calculations, are considered.

Nevertheless it is fairly obvious to anyone who makes but a casual enquiry into the lives of the majority of so-called "civilized" people, that under the assumed rationalism of their every day lives there is a marked susceptibility to the occult and mysterious. Wart charmers, fortune tellers, astrologers and the like may appear to be, and probably are, losing a bit of ground, but that is no reason for concluding that superstition is on the decline. The deluge of "Good Luck" postcards (similar to the old "prayer chain" craze) which is just now so prevalent all over the country is sufficient evidence to show that many people still believe in the power these paltry things have of influencing their lives, and that good fortune will forsake them unless they laboriously copy out nine cards similar to the one they receive and distri-

bute them amongst their friends. New moons seen through glass, broken mirrors and horseshoes are still credited with almost superhuman powers, and people continue even now to wear charms to ensure good luck, throw salt over their shoulders for the same reason, cringe and send up prayers and petitions to some imaginary person or persons in the sky and, in short, do a thousand and one absolutely ridiculous things simply because they are slaves of an imagination which has an inordinate craving for unrealities, though what possible excuse there can be for anyone placing the slightest confidence or reliance in the supernatural is difficult to conjecture, because that which is supernatural or unnatural does not and cannot exist. However strange or remarkable a particular phenomenon may be, the very fact of its existence is proof positive that it is a natural phenomenon and therefore capable of a materialistic explanation.

So-called miracle workers in the past have always incited widespread interest and attention and have, consequently, always been given greater prominence in the written records of their doings than men whose works have been of some real advantage to mankind, although this, perhaps, is not so surprising when one considers the conditions and intellectual environment in which they lived; but when the same "magic" is dished up again under the pseudonyms of Spiritualism, Auto-Suggestion, and so forth, the infantile interest that is given to it is a fairly sure indication that the age of reason is, unfortunately for the world at large, a long way yet from becoming anything more than an ideal to look forward to.

It has been said that we are now passing through an "Age of Faith." Perhaps this is so, but in any case it is an age of faith in something which is not worth having faith in, and until the absurd tendency on the part of so many people to place faith in every new fangled psychological theory advanced by present day "mystics" is entirely erased from their minds, pure reason can never begin to make much headway.

Christianity, as an ethical code, is a played out fallacy, and any religion, whatever else it may be, is, owing to the bigoted and sectarian feelings it promotes, the greatest barrier to the advance of real knowledge that civilization has ever had to contend with, and as a means of realizing the ideal of universal brotherhood, a complete failure. It has been weighed, times without number, and found vastly wanting in practically every essential to the real benefit of society, and the sooner many people begin to appreciate this the better it will be for everyone.

It is admitted that every man or woman has a perfectly equal right to his or her opinions and beliefs, whatever they may be, and, providing all are willing to give an impartial consideration to the other side when it is reasonably asked, there is little or no doubt that eventually the true conception of life and its meaning will be universally accepted; but in the meantime, considering the diversity of ethical opinion and antagonistic bigotry now dominating the major portion of humanity, and in order to facilitate this inevitable conception of things, it must be emphasized beyond a possible shadow of doubt that no man or woman has any right whatever to *force* his or her opinions on to a child before that child is capable of judging for itself whether those opinions are worthy of acceptance; for however much one may be convinced of the infallibility of such opinions, to do so is a moral crime of the first magnitude.

John Ruskin truly said that: "There is more to be taught (to a child) of absolute incontrovertible knowledge, open to its capacity, than any child can learn; there is no need to teach it anything doubtful. Better that it should be ignorant of a thousand truths than have consecrated in its heart a single lie," and if people would only recognize this and be human enough

to give a child a fair start there is little fear but that that child would afterwards steer its course correctly enough through life.

Christianity or Atheism? Mysticism or logic? are questions to be asked of a child only when it has arrived at real years of discretion, or is a child no longer. Then, when this is done, and not until then, real knowledge will begin to make itself manifest. The age of unreason and prejudice will decline (let us at least hope) absolutely with the present generation and with the next, metaphysicians will receive no quarter. Priests and self-inspired conjurers and divines will discover that natural selection has slowly but surely been sifting out the unfit and unwanted, and that the survivors have no more need of their witchery. They will see, in the hands of the Materialists, the world being shaped into a far more beautiful and sociable place than it has ever been whilst in their clutches, and realizing the utter futility of their worn out doctrines and creeds will, it is to be hoped, without a pang of regret to anyone, tearfully :—

Fold their tents like the Arabs  
And as silently steal away.

FRANK W. ROBINSON.

### Acid Drops.

In the article on the Blasphemy laws by Professor Kenny, with which we deal elsewhere, there is a word about Charles Bradlaugh which deserves attention. Professor Kenny says that when he was in Parliament Mr. Bradlaugh approached him to introduce a Bill for the abolition of the Blasphemy laws. He prepared a "Religious Prosecutions Abolition Bill" which prepared to do away with both the common and statute law of blasphemy. But he enacted Macaulay's prohibition against offending the religious feelings of anyone. That, he says, was a fatal difficulty. "The general body of Secularists at large refused to accept anything but an unqualified and absolute license in controversy. Mr. Bradlaugh accordingly, although personally approving of the Indian clause, said that he must oppose the Bill if it were carried to a second reading. It accordingly dropped."

We are not, of course, able to speak authoritatively on this matter, but we confess to reading the above with some surprise, and with some little doubt as to its accuracy. Probably Professor Kenny's memory has played him false. We should not think that Bradlaugh would have approved of what was, not an abolition of all law against blasphemy, but only the removal of the present one and the introduction of another that would cover all religions. That does not seem to be quite in the Bradlaugh vein, nor does the picture of Bradlaugh being driven to a course he did not approve by the Secular party quite fit the scene. Perhaps his daughter, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, may know something of the matter. In any case, we dissent most strongly from the statement that the Secular party wanted "absolute license in controversy." "Absolute license" carries with it a very unpleasant connotation that is quite unjustified by the facts. All that Secularists have asked for is that any law which dictates the controversy shall be the same for religion as for other subjects. And that is quite a different proposition. We object to the feelings of people on religion being protected by special legislation, which at the same time places other sections of the community at a distinct disadvantage.

The question of what is blasphemy is always a difficult one to answer off-hand. But it certainly depends largely upon who utters it. Take the following from *The Note-books of Samuel Butler* :—

God is only a less jumping kind of jumping cat; and those who worship God are still worshippers of the jump-

ing cat all the time. There is no getting away from the jumping cat—if I climb up into heaven, it is there, if I go down to hell, it is there also, if I take the wings of the morning and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there, and so on; it is about my path and about my bed and spith out all my ways. It is the eternal underlying verity or the eternal underlying lie, as people may choose to call it.

Quite a nasty way of saying that God is anything or nothing, just as man likes to personify his hopes or fears.

We do not know much about the *Weekly Telegraph*, but it appears to be one of those journals published in order to persuade people who know no better that they are reading well-informed matter instead of the casual jottings of ill-informed writers, whose sole concern seems to be to cover a certain quantity of space. On a page of this journal which reaches us we find the following :—

Here is Blatchford, after his violent attack, not only on superstition, but on religion itself, recanting some of his formerly declared convictions. Most of the Atheists and Determinists do recant.

We are not very much concerned with the recantation of Blatchford—or anyone else, for that matter. The opinions of anyone with brains do not depend upon whether a certain man or woman continues to hold them, but on personal conviction resulting from a study and understanding of the facts. Anything held in any other way does not deserve to be called an opinion at all. It is a mere prejudice, or an echo. We dare say this is hard enough for a Christian to appreciate, since his own religious belief is not at all a matter of intellectual conviction, but for the most part an unthinking echo of what he has been unintelligently taught.

The value of this paragraphist's information or mental power may be gauged by the "Most of the Atheists and Determinists do recant." Quite clearly he knows nothing at all about the subject, or he would not write thus. And it is equally clear that having heard from certain preachers that Atheists and Determinists recant and die shrieking on Jesus to save them, he repeats the statement, which will have the dual result of pleasing the Christians among his readers and impressing the uninformed ones with the extent of his reading or knowledge. But we should be rather curious to be supplied with a list of these recanting Atheists and Determinists.

The Rev. B. G. Bourchier, a broad-minded Hampstead parson, has advocated Sunday games. He has had scores of letters of protest from his parishioners, and, in his parish magazine, he says with regard to the letter writers : "If creatures of this mentality are the lawful products of Christianity, then small wonder that decent people will have none of it." For once, we are in agreement with an opinion expressed in a parish magazine.

Sunday football, cricket, tennis, and golf have been approved by the Wrotham Church Council. If this sort of thing goes on, the religion of the Man of Sorrows will be too jolly for words.

The Roman Catholic *Universe* welcomes our remark in a recent issue that the Protestant Churches are being eaten away by the Catholic Church on the one side and Prethought on the other. One can trust a Christian to take pleasure in hearing of disaster to those of the opposite sect. The Protestant Press Bureau informs us that in five years there have been 50,000 conversions to Catholicism in this country. We take the correctness of the figures for granted, and are quite undisturbed. These conversions are all from other Christian Churches, and it is a matter of comparative indifference to us whether a man believes in the absurdities on one side of the street or the other. And as we have a natural leaning towards thoroughness, we prefer even religious folly to be as consistent as possible.

But the *Universe* has small cause for congratulation.

The ultimate enemy that Roman Catholicism has to fight is not this or that Church—these are mere skirmishes, which do not vitally affect the strength of the forces of superstition. The real enemy of the Catholic Church, the final enemy of every form of Christianity and of every form of supernatural religion, is life—the whole tendency of civilization. And against that any Church in the world is, in the end, powerless. The Roman Church has over and over again found itself strong enough to suppress a man or an organization. It managed to crush out Protestantism in Spain, and it was able to secure the continuance of the reign of the Church by destroying nearly all that was best in the life of the country. But in the end, the forces that were represented by the men who were crushed proved themselves too strong for the conqueror, and there is not a civilized country in the world to-day in which the Christian Church is not losing its hold on life. The crucifixion of man in the name of a crucified Christ is growing visibly weaker.

A medical friend of ours once told us of a visit he paid to a lunatic asylum. As is often the case, he found many of the inmates quite rational in their conversation on some things, and he engaged in talk with one of them concerning some of the other patients. The man described the habits of several, and then pointed to one who was standing alone. "That one," he explained, "is quite mad. He actually claims to be Jesus Christ. And that is quite impossible for I am Jesus Christ myself." We think of that man pitying the delusion of the other one every time we come across a Catholic and a Protestant ridiculing the stupid beliefs of each other.

A preacher at the Victoria Institute—which appears to be a refuge for men who have mentally died in their infancy—the other day said that all students of biblical prophecy would agree that there would be another war. That being the case, it would seem that in the opinion of people of this stamp God worked it all out from the commencement. He must have arranged for the last war, and he has arranged for another war. That is a form of religious aspiration that will mightily please our militarists as well as the prophecy-mongers.

There is, of course, a serious side to this kind of thing. It will be a question for the philosophic historian of the future to settle how much the war prophets in England, Germany, and France had to do with bringing about the last war. For some years pretendedly wise people in each country had been warning their fellow citizens that they must get ready for war with the "other fellow," and in all probability made the war inevitable by the distrust and concealed hatred that such propaganda encourages. And then when war does come these prophets, instead of concluding that they probably had a hand in bringing the war about, pride themselves on being able to foresee the future. War is made possible by a moulding of public opinion, and exactly the people who were warning us about the last war are now warning us against the next; and so it will continue until the people have enough common-sense to tell these war-prophets to go to the devil. What is needed is a substitution of the peace-mind for the war-mind. But that will never suit our militarists. And now to them we have to add the biblical prophecy-mongers. It is a mad world.

Readers of the *Daily Express* are informed by the Bishop of Norwich that "Morality will not long survive without belief or worship. Even those who try to dispense with them pay their homage to them by following the ethical lines which the Church has staked out." The first part of this statement is just nonsense, and the latter portion involves a very common fallacy. So far as the Freethinker agrees with the ethical teachings of the Churches he does so, not because they represent the outcome of the teachings of the Churches, but because they express the pressure of the social forces on the Churches. It is not the Freethinker who follows the Churches so much as it is the Churches that are driven, sooner or later,

to bring their teachings into harmony with the Freethinker. This is seen more clearly in other directions than it is seen in morals. The advanced Christian to-day is teaching what has been hammered into him by several generations of heretical advocacy. A Church that stood solidly on principle would fight to the last ditch, and then meet an honourable death rather than surrender. The policy of the opportunist Christian Church is to fight an idea so long as it can and then adopt a more or less distorted version of it and proclaim it as its own.

Whatever strength there may be in the Bishop's statement is due almost entirely to those timid heretics who are afraid to say outright that the character of Jesus is one that offers no attraction to the healthy modern mind. With this class there is too much talk of the Christ ideal, too much fear of saying what most of them think because they fear the weight of public disapproval. It is for that reason that we are always impressing upon Freethinkers that what the world needs to-day is not so much dissent from Christianity as it is dissent which has the courage to say boldly what it believes. Nothing would so easily or so quickly prick the bubble of present-day Christianity as would the determination of all unbelievers to say outright and without qualification exactly what they feel in these matters. It is the fear of social disapproval that as much as anything else prevents our movement occupying the position in the country that it ought to have.

In Borneo the Prince of Wales witnessed an exhibition of shooting by some of the "wild" natives. The weapons were blowpipes and poison darts. A scratch with one of these darts causes death in ten minutes. These people are savages. When they become properly Christianized they will use poison gas that will blind or poison hundreds in a few moments. How the Christian nations must smile at the puny attempts of these savages to compete with them in the gentle art of collective killing.

In announcing the disposal of the remains of the late ex-Emperor Karl, the *Rand Daily Mail* headed the column, "Heart to be sent to Austria. Body going to Hungary." Perhaps it was thought to be too dangerous to risk stating the probable destination of his "soul."

Speaking at Northampton, the Bishop of Peterborough said he hoped that there would be no undue and outrageous display of luxury during the London season. Why this anxiety for the morals of Mayfair? We hear that all the clergy are starving.

The cinema is being pressed into the service of religion, and the great hall of the Church House, Westminster, the business headquarters of the Church of England, is to become a cinema-theatre for a short season. We wonder if we shall be treated to a film showing the animals going into the Ark.

During a service in the village church of Senvensac, France, the building was struck by lightning. One person was killed, a second was seriously burnt, and a number of people injured in the panic. What a comment on the opening sentence of the Lord's Prayer.

"Simple believers have been troubled" by the growth of knowledge, declares the Bishop of Norwich. This is interesting! Are there any "believers" who are otherwise than "simple"?

The clergy like their flocks to think that bishops are selected by the Holy Ghost. They are, really, appointed by the Prime Minister, and Mr. Lloyd George is a Baptist. "There's the rub!" Hence, there is a movement in Church circles to set up a committee to deal with the appointment of bishops. For the lawn-sleeved ecclesiastics share 180,000 yearly, without counting suffragans and overseas prelates.



To Correspondents.

R. W. B.—Much obliged. See "Acid Drops."

J. BURRELL.—We note the reply that Commandant Mary Allen, Parliamentary candidate, has expressed willingness to vote for the abolition of the Blasphemy laws. All this questioning will be a great help when the critical moment of struggle arrives.

H. B. MISTON.—It is very rarely that we see the *Japan Chronicle*, and we are glad to learn that the action of the N. S. S. attracted so much attention so far away. It is this persistent struggle against bad laws which gets rid of an injustice. Even in the moment of apparent defeat one is getting nearer the final victory. Shall be glad to have anything on Christianity in China you can send. The cooked reports of missionary societies and biased government officials are not worth the reading. Other point noted.

H. S. ENGLAND.—Glad to have your congratulations. But why cannot something be done to circulate the *Freethinker* more effectively throughout the United States? We have many American readers, but have always felt that they do not represent a tenth of those that might easily be got. What we want on this side is someone who will take the matter up. Perhaps this may lead to the required result. Will use the poems.

T. REYNOLDS.—Certainly you can order the publications of the Pioneer Press through any bookseller in the kingdom. They should be supplied you at the published price.

H. R. WRIGHT.—We have written and will let you know if any reply is received. The Bill for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws will be reintroduced next session, if possible.

A. LEE.—Shall be pleased to see you at the Nottingham Conference. We are looking forward to meeting many old friends there.

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

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

*All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press" and crossed "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."*

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Sugar Plums.

Delegates and members intending to be present at the Annual Conference are reminded that the local arrangements are falling upon a few willing, but otherwise busy, friends of the movement, there being no Branch at present at Nottingham. Therefore, all who require accommodation should write the General Secretary, not later than Monday 29th, stating definitely what they require.

The "George" Hotel will be the rendezvous. The tariff here for bed and breakfast is 10s. 6d. Special luncheon (hot) 5s. (cold) 3s. 6d. Private apartments may also be found. The President, Secretary and members of the Executive will welcome the delegates at 7.30 at the Hotel on Saturday evening.

A Whit-Monday excursion can be arranged for a few shillings, including tea, if a sufficient number advise Miss Vance by Wednesday 31st. Nottingham, both from the picturesque and historical point of view, is full of interest, but arrangements cannot be made on the spot.

As the local friends are strangers to most of the members, the necessity of wearing the Pansy Badge cannot be too strongly urged. It is understood that the wearing of the badge is an invitation to fellow Freethinkers to introduce themselves. Badges can be obtained from the office. Broach or stud post free 1s. They should

be worn in sufficient numbers to arouse the curiosity of the residents.

The platform at the Public Meeting in the Corn Exchange at 6.30 is a particularly strong one this year, there being eight speakers, with the President, Mr. Cohen, in the chair.

We learn from the Swansea Branch that they have closed their indoor session, despite their hard work and help from the Executive, with a heavy financial loss. This is not surprising, seeing the terrible conditions consequent on lack of employment obtaining in that district. Nothing daunted, however, a few members are willing to avail themselves of the services of Mr. Whitehead for outdoor work if a fair proportion of members and sympathizers will make definite promises of either financial or moral support. It may not be possible to obtain both from the same quarter, but a campaign can be arranged if helpers will communicate with headquarters, or direct with Mr. B. Dupree, 12 Short Street, Swansea. Wake up, Swansea friends!

Mr. George Whitehead will be the lecturer for the West Ham Branch to-day (May 28). The Branch holds its meetings in the Romford Road, a few minutes walk from Stratford Broadway, outside the Technical Institute. The lecture will commence at 7, and we hope that local Freethinkers will make a point of being present.

The Executive is doing what it can during the summer months to bring the Gospel of Freethought into places where it would not otherwise be heard. It has engaged Mr. George Whitehead to visit certain districts and deliver open-air lectures on the lines of his campaign of last summer. He will commence at Nottingham on the evening of May 29, and will continue lecturing every evening during the week. Full particulars will be found in our "Lecture Guide." We trust that all local friends will do what they can to make the visit a complete success.

The Newcastle Branch of the N. S. S. will meet this afternoon (May 28) at 3 p.m. in the Trades Council's Room, 12A Clayton Street, to consider arrangements for its share in the propaganda during Race Week. As it is expected that Mr. Fothergill and representatives of other districts will be present, Mr. Whitehead will probably be provided with a full programme of the arrangements made. Friends from outlying parts who can offer any suggestions for utilizing Mr. Whitehead's services will be welcome. The Secretary, Mr. Arthur Bartram, has undertaken the co-ordination of the lectures. His address is 107 Morley Street, Newcastle.

Last Sunday several members turned up to take the first ramble of the Manchester Branch. The party travelled to Hazel Grove and walked through Bramhall Park. The "stocks," of course, reminded these Freethinkers of by-gone days and stimulated some discussion on old methods of punishment. The librarian dropped a few leaflets in likely places on the route, and some copies of *Life, Mind, and Knowledge* were sold. Tea was partaken of at Heald Green. Altogether, the ramble was one of the most enjoyable ever taken by the Branch, and the leader is to be congratulated on his choice of route.

On June 24, from 3 to 6 p.m., Mrs. B. A. Bayfield will hold an American Tea, in aid of the funds of the Manchester Branch. Will all friends who have articles to dispose of please forward them to Mrs. Bayfield, 61 Claude Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, stating the price at which they are to be sold.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti had large audiences in Brockwell Park last Sunday. In the afternoon he spoke on "Christianity before Christ," and in the evening on "Christianity and the Science of Anthropology." At the conclusion of each address there were many questions forthcoming from inquirers, and Mr. Rosetti's answers

made an evident impression. The speaker this afternoon and evening (May 28) will be Mr. Shaller.

This evening (May 28) at 6.30, Mr. A. C. Rosetti will hold a Discussion Class at his home, 39, The Crescent, Flixton, Manchester. Those intending to be present are asked to travel by the 5 p.m. train, not the 1.20 p.m. train, as previously announced. They are also requested to drop a card to Mrs. Rosetti to that effect.

At a social meeting held in St. Enoch Tea Rooms on Friday, May 12, the Glasgow Branch of the N. S. S. bade farewell to Miss H. Black, who had long been engaged in secretarial work for the Branch, and is leaving for Australia. Mr. E. Hale presided over a representative gathering, although the committee would have been pleased to see more of the older members. After refreshments Mr. W. H. Macewan, in the name of the Society, presented Miss Black with a handsome dressing-case as a small token of appreciation of her services. Miss Black having responded, music and dancing were indulged in, and a most enjoyable evening was brought to a close with the singing of "Auld Lang Syne."

### The Troubles of Authorship.

I HEAR that many people find all sorts of errors in this wonderful old Bible which we have so graciously adopted, considering its Jewish relatives not at all suited for the guardianship. Such people may be right or wrong; I do not care to argue the point. For my own part, I have nothing worth mention to say against the book; it serves me pretty well when I happen to want its assistance. At the same time, I have no strong objection to another being put in its place; but in the meanwhile shall continue to use this now and then, as it is convenient to have a Holy Bible of some sort. In fact, for deep moral and spiritual lessons any one Scripture is about as good as any other; and I am persuaded that were we to found our National Church on *Hamlet* or *Epipsychidion*, on *Tom Jones* or *A Tale of a Tub*, on *Euclid's Elements* or *Johnson's Dictionary*, or on the whole half dozen bound together, we should with any one or with all flourish in religion even as we flourish now; the evidences as sure, mysteries as sublime, doctrines as rational and consistent, theories of morals as lofty in harmony with practice as pure, sects as few and friendly, good texts for good sermons as abundant, pastors as faithful, and flocks as pious. For it is well known to the initiated that when we draw lessons from a book (except bare nominal acquaintance with matters of fact), we only draw out what ourselves have put in, we find nothing but what we have brought with us; the book is a mirror which reflects more or less clearly our own features and surroundings, a Spanish country inn where merely that is served up to us dressed which we carry with us crude, a bank which will not suffer us to overdraw our little account though it may hold much larger sums on account of others. Thus the small Dobbs turned loose in Shakespeare cannot gather a single thought beyond what is veritably Dobbish, as a cup cannot hold more than a cupful whether dipped in can or ocean. And thus no two men read a book alike, every reader reading in it himself.

Therefore, when long ago I became convinced of the evils and miseries of authorship, convinced that of all trades the profession of literature is in all regards (of mind, body, and estate) one of the very worst, I was sure that reference to the Bible would confirm my conviction. For that which life had taught me I was certain to read in the infallible book; and read it I did, as this article will briefly show. But, first, let me explain that I divide those who follow authorship or the profession of literature into but three classes, authors, editors, and critics; and do not include the

manufacturers of pens, ink, and paper, printers, bookbinders, publishers, booksellers, librarians, and so forth. For these, though their trades have some connection with literature, are not called upon to furnish the thought which wears out so rapidly the brain, the style which gives infinite trouble and is bad at the best after all; they deal in material things with a definite market value; they are related to the poor writer somewhat as farmer, corn merchant, miller and baker to the wretched peasant who ploughs and reaps, whose whole capital is his labour.

Let me now turn to the Holy Bible for impartial study (that is to say, honest reading of my own opinions) of its prototypes of author, editor, and critic.

The first and greatest author was God Almighty himself, the author of Creation. What had he done before he turned author? Nothing at all, so far as we know from the book, save subsist in self-sufficing perfection. Why, then, did he turn author? We can learn no reason except that he wanted to set forth his power and glory, and make all his works praise him for ever. Thus his authorship sprang from some defect and want in his perfect nature; if he wrought for honour and glory, he no longer sufficed unto himself. He created the heaven and the earth in six days, and doing so much in so short a time seems to have "scamped" a great deal of the work. When he looked on all that he had made he found it very good; every author fancies his work very good when just completed, and while he still glows with the heat of composition. But we very soon read that it repented him, and grieved him at his heart, that he had done the last day-and-a-half's work, the finishing quarter with the liveliest touches, the very head and crown of the whole. He found this portion so bad that he washed almost all of it out, a doleful liquidation in bankruptcy for an author. The washed-out part he did again, but not a bit better than before. In fact, the ultimate section, to which all the remainder of the work was subsidiary, turned out so bad that he sacrificed the life of his only son in a vain attempt to improve it; a sacrifice which shows that even the most benevolent of beings, possessed by the mania of authorship, will stick at nothing in trying to promote the success of his works. After this, despite his fondness for his own productions, he felt constrained to announce that he would soon put them in the fire and burn the whole lot, save some very select fragments, which he had resolved to incorporate in a new work. This announcement has not yet been fulfilled: an author is so reluctant to withdraw and destroy what has once seen the light. And perhaps he feels that the new work, which he promised should be faultless, would most likely turn out, in the long run, no better than the edition still current, which he found at first so very good that he blessed it, and which he has been cursing for its badness ever since. And truly it is a wretched failure. Not wanting money (the want of which excuses much vile authorship), he worked for honour and glory; and the only personage who has reaped much honour and glory from the productions is not himself, the author, but his great hostile critic, the Devil.

Should any one verily believe that he believes that this work is an honour to its divine author, I propose a very simple test. Ask any decently good and intelligent man, who knows something of the world and its history, whether, if he had the power, he would take the responsibility of producing such a work, all its goodness redounding to his honour, all its badness to his shame; and I venture to affirm that no such man would take such responsibility. That work must be very unworthy of God, which man himself would not do if he could. Seeing, therefore, that God Almighty, who is perfect in all other respects, has failed so utterly in authorship, it is certain that man,

who is imperfect in all respects, can never succeed in it. And thus are we admonished by the Holy Bible not to become authors.

And equally are we admonished by the Holy Bible not to become editors. For the first editor was Moses, who edited the lithograph of the Ten Commandments. Now, we are expressly told that this great prophet and first editor, Moses, was naturally the meekest of men. It is true that he had slain an Egyptian, but the deed was patriotic and praiseworthy. It is true that he had brought ten terrible plagues upon Egypt, and got Pharaoh and his hosts all drowned in the Red Sea; but these also were purely patriotic proceedings, inspired by God himself. We have, therefore, no cause to doubt that he was truly the meekest of men. But mark the sad and ferocious change in his moral nature so soon as he turns editor, even though editor of a divine work, a small treatise which had occupied God and himself nearly seven times as long as the whole work of Creation had occupied God alone, perhaps through extreme care in the composition, perhaps through want of practice in lithography. Coming down from the mountain crest, which had been study and printing-office, with the lithographic stones in his hands, Moses heard sounds of jubilation, and discovered that the people were singing and dancing, feasting and playing, and worshipping the golden calf which his brother had made for them out of their own ornaments, perhaps borrowed from the Egyptians. Instead of being heartily glad that his fellow-countrymen were all enjoying themselves in their own way, he saw in their enjoyment nothing but an obstacle to the success of the work he was editing; having the golden calf, they didn't want his tables of stone. The meekest of men, carried away by the editorial fury, flung down and broke the tables, the unique originals of the work, the work and writing of God, destroyed the calf which did not belong to him, and got his own tribe to massacre some thousands of the unfortunate Jews. Since editorship thus transformed the meekest of men into a wholesale murderer, can we wonder that common editors are so fierce and stony-hearted? And thus we are warned by the Holy Bible not to become editors.

And equally are we admonished by the Holy Bible not to become critics, except in very peculiar circumstances. The first great critic was probably Satan, but we know very little of this personage from the Bible. It is true that we English have a sort of supplementary book of Genesis, called *Paradise Lost*, which, although it has never been officially canonized, has more to do with our notions of the earliest occurrences than has Genesis itself; while its younger brother, called *Paradise Regained*, has scarcely influenced at all our notions of Gospel events. But as I have hinted before, I am contented enough with our Bible, borrowed from the Jews as they borrowed from the Egyptians, and shall therefore not seek the aid of *Paradise Lost*, though it tells us much about Satan, whom Genesis mentions not at all. If the first critic was Lucifer Son of the Morning, it is clear that criticism played the devil with him; God hurled him whither every outraged author would gladly consign his hostile critics. The prototype of the critic in Genesis is the serpent, being a beast more subtle than any beast of the field. And in reward for its criticism it was cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field.

The most detailed and instructive story concerning criticism, however, is to be found in the ancient book of Job. Job was healthy and wealthy, happy and pious, a perfect and upright man, the greatest of all the men of the East. In this blessed state he never took to criticism. But one day Satan criticised him in the presence of God, who was boasting of him as a

remarkably fine work. So God allowed Satan to do as he pleased with all belonging to Job, and Satan took from him his oxen and sheep and camels and asses, his sons and daughters, but left him his wife. And yet Job did not give way to criticism. But again Satan criticised him to boasting God, and God allowed Satan to cut him up at pleasure, saving only his life. And Satan smote him with sore boils, from the sole of the foot unto his crown. Then his wife said, Curse God and die, or in other words, Become a slashing critic. This advice he would not follow, telling her that she spoke as one of the foolish women. But when the kind criticism of his friends had thoroughly brought home to him his abject and hopeless condition, he took to criticising in earnest. Himself the production of God with which he was best acquainted, he cursed the day he was brought forth, and prayed to be cancelled at once. Admitting that God was an author of great power, and that many of his works were marvellous beyond human understanding, Job yet managed to insist that the plot of the whole world drama was full of confusion, and a mistake from beginning to end. It was Job who cried, Behold my desire is that the Almighty would answer me, and that mine adversary had written a book; yearning for the savage joy of cutting it up. God answered this long critique out of the whirlwind, by which is probably meant that he was in a furious passion; and boasted in fine style of certain grandiose parts of his works, taunting Job with fierce questions whether he could have produced them, whether he could improve them, whether he could even comprehend them. But God did not answer Job's complaint that the whole plot of the piece was obscure and confused, and quite devoid of poetical justice. However, the thundering replication overawed poor Job, who withdrew all offensive remarks, and repented in dust and ashes. So God cured Job and made him twice as rich as before, and gave him another, but not a double family of sons and daughters, and left him with his single wife. And we do not hear that Job ever uttered another criticism after his restoration to health and wealth and happiness. And thus are we admonished by the Holy Bible never to become critics save when beggared and diseased. This conclusion, by-the-by, is partially confirmed by the late excellent Dean Swift, who says: "For as to be a true beggar, it will cost the richest candidate every groat he is worth; so, before one can commence a true critic, it will cost a man all the good qualities of his mind; which perhaps, for a less purchase, would be thought but an indifferent bargain."

I have thus, as I modestly trust, proved by clear instances from our Holy Bible, that no man should become an author, since the Author of Creation himself has failed miserably; that no man should become an editor, since the meekest of men, and greatest of prophets, was transformed into a wholesale murderer through editing a very short treatise of God's; and, finally, that no man who is well and happy should become a critic, since Job only took to criticism when ruined and diseased, and renounced it immediately he recovered health and wealth. And as these conclusions are exactly those at which I had arrived independently of the Scriptures, I am of course persuaded that they are sound.

But should any one ask, Why then do you write, who write against writing? I would answer with that saying of some philosopher, to me unknown: Suicide would be much more common, were it not that by the time one has learnt the vanity of life he has acquired the bad habit of living. So by the time one has learnt the vanity, and worse than vanity, of authorship, he has fallen into the bad habit of writing. But though himself a careless victim of the plague, he may warn others to keep far from its infection.

JAMES THOMSON ("B.V.").

### Grave and Gay.

Great issues and great questions should be either handled with courage or not at all. Handled with hesitancy or with weakness they lose the best part of their significance and most of their utility.

Every meeting of philosophers is a congress of interrogations.

Life itself, says Nietzsche, is the will to power, the instinct of self-preservation is only its expression. This is too metaphysical. Self-preservation, the tendency to persist, is a perfectly natural and universal fact. It is the first law of motion in its most universal form. The will to power or the will to live are only poetical ways of expressing this fact in the sphere of biology. In man it is a conscious expression of the underlying instinct.

Evil is a matter of direction. So for the matter of that is good. Qualities in themselves are neutral as nature is neutral.

Those Christians who are fond of finding types and symbols in the Bible should reflect that the first triumphant progress recorded of Jesus Christ is his entry into Jerusalem on the back of an Ass. The Ass is a very patient and unreflective animal. The Church should raise a monument to the Ass. As a type it owes it much.

As a moulder of *opinion* the Press has ceased to count. As a creator of *prejudice* it is more powerful than ever. The appeal the Press makes to-day is to the mass, its chief anxiety is to get the largest circulation, and to get this it must subordinate reason to passion and prejudice. The mere claim of a paper that it has a circulation of over a million copies of each issue is decisive. There are not in this country a million or a tenth of a million of readers of good matter. To have a small circulation is not proof that a paper is a good one. But to have a very large one is proof that it isn't.

Public opinion is a bully, and like all bullies it is as often as not a coward: It threatens only so long as the object of its threats is weak. When that object gains strength it fawns on it and strives to make it part of itself. It has no lies and no truth, it simply accepts and denounces. It never hurts a liar and it never injures a hypocrite. It can only vent its spleen on the comparatively honest few who are bold enough to bid it go to the devil.

Some people are such incurable humbugs that even when they say something sensible it does not do to take them too seriously. It may be just another expression of their character, and done with the intention of deluding the public into the belief that they are clever.

Persecution is the homage paid by a threatened lie to a conquering truth.

Life is an episode in the history of death, and in the end death conquers.

The evidence in favour of the existence of a personal devil is every bit as strong as the evidence for the existence of a personal God. People who believe in the devil have never seen him—neither does either God or devil reward the believer with a view of his sacred or satanic person. Millions of people have confessed to feeling his influence. Great works have been attributed to him. He has built bridges and destroyed them; he has been an extensive owner of land, has raised people from the dead, and prevented their dying. And for one person whom God has enlightened the devil has deluded a score. He is certainly the most powerful and the most interesting of the Christian Quarternary.

PETER SIMPLE.

### Writers and Readers.

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT.

(Born, December 12, 1821—Died, May 8, 1880.)

The centenary of the birth of the greatest of modern French novelists, which our friends on the other side of the Channel have recently made the occasion of justifiable self-congratulation, is my excuse, if excuse be needed, for drawing attention to him here. As with Tourgeniev, Balzac and our own Meredith, Flaubert's Freethought, his non-religious attitude to life, is implied in his work. It is so intimately wrought into the texture of the novels that the average reader may be pardoned for not noticing it. Like that of the majority of men of letters, Flaubert's life was uneventful. He was born at Rouen, the son of a country doctor, and spent the greater part of his life in easy circumstances on the family estate known as Croisset. Although acclaimed as the first of realists in fiction, he was at heart incurably romantic, while remaining by habit and practice of life a sort of intellectual bourgeois. New and startling ideas annoyed and bored him. He remarked of Comte's *Essai de philosophie positive* that it was stupid and wearisome, a mine of comicalities, a California of grotesques. He preferred the accepted masters, Shakespeare, Rabelais, Montaigne, Voltaire, Lesage, while directly he learnt most from such masters as Hugo, Gautier and Baudelaire. But he went beyond if he did not in every way improve on their teaching. He tried to see and to represent life as it really is, and succeeded in reproducing with amazing veracity the form and spirit of human nature as he knew or imagined it. He did this by rigorously curbing his natural tendency to romantic exaggeration, and was lucky enough to create characters that approach more closely to human nature than any I know.

His first novel is generally accepted as a flawless specimen of novelist's art. *Madame Bovary* (1857) is quite a simple story of the gradual and inevitable moral disintegration of a pretty country woman of the lower middle class, a disintegration brought about by romantic lyrical aspirations and vague spiritual exaltations foolishly, and in the end fatally, applied to the common affairs of everyday life. Emma Bovary dies the victim of her illusions. Although alike by temperament and theory, Flaubert had the hatred of an impersonal artist for mere effusive sentiment. It is impossible for anyone not to draw a moral conclusion from his story, and equally impossible not to feel profound pity for the passionately tragic heroine. The book is so fundamentally moral that its author was prosecuted for immorality under the most virtuous regime of Napoleon the Little. When the case was proceeding Taine described to a grand lady of his acquaintance, who was deeply interested in the morals of other people, a powerful tract he had just come across. He narrated the desolating story of Emma Bovary. The good lady was profoundly impressed until she was told that it was the novel the government was trying to suppress.

*Madame Bovary* has the advantage of a solid and simple structure. It moves with something of the inevitability of a Sophoclean tragedy, and it has also the tragic irony characteristic of the Greek poet. *Sentimental Education* (1869) is much less attractive for the general reader, who cannot be expected to have a special interest in Flaubert's attitude to life and art. Most people are disappointed if something does not happen in a story. They do not want it to be too faithful a copy of ordinary life, which is grey and desolate enough to hit the taste of your lachrymose pessimist. Frédéric Moreau has fathered any number of flabby and weak personalities in fiction, the sort of people who have not enough courage to resist, or to yield to temptation. The novel has the easy-going ambience of life as most of us know it, and is raised to a higher plane of creative imagination by the unforgettable study of Madame Arnoux, who is portrayed for us with exquisite delicacy and impeccable distinction. *Sentimental Education* is a good test of a reader's appreciation of Flaubert's qualities as a realist. If he really gets the savour of it

(it has something of the tonic acidity of olives), he will prefer it to many other things, for, in spite of a certain dragging out of the theme, the genuine Flaubert is there.

But Flaubert was not content to apply his realistic method to modern life only. He attempted to deal in the same way with more recalcitrant subjects, with the customs, manners and mental states of remote ages. It is curious to note that Flaubert is best known to the average intelligent man by the Carthaginian romance *Salammbô* (1862), and that amazing fantasy *The Temptation of Saint Antony* (1874), where the religious and metaphysical systems evoked by the febrile imagination of the saint form a procession before the reader's eyes, and refute each other by the mere fact of their confrontation. *Salammbô* was based on a prolonged and intelligent study of antiquity, and although the specialist may point to inaccuracies of statement and fact, the impression it has on most of us is that of full and vigorous life. It is romantic in spite of a strict enough application of the method of realistic fiction, but it is not romantic in the sense that Kingsley's *Hyppatia* or Bulwer's *Last Days of Pompeii* is romantic. It is too hard and brilliant for my liking, and is, perhaps, at bottom, not any more veracious than stories constructed according to a rigidly personal method. *The Temptation of St. Antony* was analysed and appraised some while ago in these columns by Mr. William Repton, with his customary enthusiasm and intelligence, and I have no doubt a number of my readers have looked into it on his recommendation. From that book and from the *Correspondence* we get to know Flaubert as a Freethinker, an uncompromising enemy of superstitious beliefs, one of the great masters of disillusion in the direct line of Montaigne, Fontenelle and Voltaire.

I am not far wrong, perhaps, in assuming that there are not many English critics who are aware that Flaubert's novels have been made the starting point of a new philosophical theory. About 1889 M. Jules de Gaultier published a brilliant study of Flaubert's psychology in the novels. He made the assumption that in every man there are two main aspects, one physiological, the other psychological. We are born with a nature predetermined by heredity which has given us certain aptitudes and deprived us of others. We are then reshaped by education, by the ideas we have acquired, which ideas have often no relation, while sometimes they may be in sharp contrast, to what are called our natural aptitudes. Hence the possibility of a conflict between the two natures, the acquired psychological and the hereditary physiological one. This, we are told, explains the power we all possess to *conceive ourselves as other than we are*. It is put forward as a sufficient explanation of all the comedy and tragedy of life. M. de Gaultier found that every one of Flaubert's characters was marked by this psychological blemish, and showed that they were all so created under the tyranny of a particular mode of vision. This study of pathological cases, for in Flaubert's novels almost all characters are deficient in will-power, led him to extend his theory to normal human nature, with the result that he published a revision of the earlier study under the title *Le Bovarysme*. This ability to conceive ourselves other than we are he found to be not only a source of weakness in the individual, the unhealthy forcing of development in a way absolutely opposed to a man's real personality, but also a source of strength, of achievement when there is a certain equilibrium between the will to live and the will to know, between life and intellect. He envisaged it as one of the causes of the idea of evolution, and one of the factors of evolution itself. He found in it the universal process by which not only men, but also communities and civilizations reshape themselves in accordance with conceptions which are vital, and when they no longer help them to live, replace them by others. M. de Gaultier applies his philosophic method of criticism to literature as well as to the intellectual cosmos as a whole. I know nothing more illuminating than his penetrating study of Ibsen in *La Fiction Universelle*, or the chapter on Tolstoi in the same book. The whole of M. de Gaultier's profound metaphysical studies are a tribute to the seminal properties of Flaubert's vision of life. GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

## Correspondence.

### CONDUCT AND A FUTURE LIFE. TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The remarks in your issue of May 14 invite a reply, which I rely on your courtesy to publish, brief and imperfect as it is. I pass by the comment on "the old clothes of Christian theology," merely stating that I have always claimed, and still claim, to be a free thinker, and that I came to realize the truth of the metapsychic facts on rational grounds and by direct experiment. Some of these facts are inexplicable by subconscious or morbid mentation. The treatment of the facts is temperamental. One type of mind concentrates on the illusions of the subconscious mind and refuses to look at experiments in which fraud or illusion are made physically impossible; the other type dwells on these latter while admitting the former, and concludes that they are sufficient to establish the facts.

To the former class belong Professor Haeckel, Professor Metchnikoff and Mr. Clodd. They start from the fact that "Consciousness is a function of the brain," and do not see that they may be falling into the fallacy which Sir W. Hamilton qualifies in his *Logic* as "quantification of the predicate." Their basic fact is indisputable, but it does not imply that all consciousness is a function of the brain. The metapsychic facts show that there are effects of consciousness apart from nerves or protoplasm.

The latter class includes such men as Henry Sidgwick, A. J. Balfour, William James, F. W. H. Myers, Sir Oliver Lodge, the astronomer C. Flammarion, Charles Richet, James Hyslop, William Crookes, A. R. Wallace, and a large number of Continental men of science who declare, after many years of study and investigation, that there is a psychological problem to be faced, and that our categories of thought must be enlarged to take in the new evidence.

As to the influence of Haeckel on German thought I made no allegation against the German people, but alluded only to the effect of the doctrine on the directing classes; who quite logically divided mankind into militarist super-men and cannon-fodder. For the inference of the effect of the annihilation theory on primitive minds I am content to refer to the trial of Smith who drowned three successive wives in their baths not long ago. He said in court, "When they are dead they are done with." His logic seems to have run: There can be no injury to the non-existent. These women are non-existent. Therefore they are not injured.

As to the metapsychic facts, "proof" is used in two senses (1) that which establishes the fact, and (2) that which convinces. For the latter an open mind is necessary. The vast majority of those who examine the facts with open minds come to the conclusion that they prove survival. A. R. Wallace, who distinctly states that he had no theological bias of any kind, takes this view in his *World of Life*, showing that a man may be a convinced evolutionist and a spiritualist at the same time. I am not ashamed to be in the same position. But I own that I am astonished that Freethinkers should revile other free thinkers who come to spiritualist conclusions as being in ecclesiastical shackles! STANLEY DE BRATH.

[Mr. De Brath's letter is concerned with some of the "Acid Drops" which appeared in our issue of May 14. We must leave our readers to estimate the general nature of the statements there made and also Mr. De Brath's reply. But we imagine that our remark that he was still wearing the "old clothes of Christian theology" is justified by his returning to what we must regard as the stupid belief concerning the connection between a lack of belief in immortality and desirable conduct. The "directing classes" in Germany were, as a matter of fact, all very pious and quite convinced of the existence of a future life. Mr. De Brath is speaking without his book.—Editor.]

### THE MARTIN CENTENARY.

SIR,—Will you allow me to draw the attention of your readers to the Martin centenary which humanitarians of every shade are just now celebrating. Dick Martin was M.P. for Galway—I would like to know his attitude to the religious problems of his time.

That he was a humane man is shown by his sympathies with men and animals. He was responsible for the

measure that abolished capital punishment for forgery, and it was his foresight that promoted our present Court of Criminal Appeal.

After several defeats he succeeded in passing a Bill to prevent cruelty and injury to any animal, and to make it a punishable offence. I suppose in time we shall be able to make vivisection of animals equally illegal.

T. A. WILLIAMS,  
*Humane Advocate.*

## National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON  
MAY 18, 1922

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Corrigan, Lloyd, Moss, Neate, Quinton and Rosetti, Miss Pankhurst, Miss Kough and the Secretary.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed. New members were received from the Glasgow and South London Branches.

The report of the Propagandist Committee, recommending amongst other matters that Mr. George Whitehead commence a week's mission at Plymouth on June 11, proceeding to Tyneside and thence to Huddersfield, and that the Manchester Branch, who had made an application for assistance and enclosed their Balance Sheet, receive a grant of £15, was adopted.

The South London delegate reported that his Branch proposed arranging for a public dinner to the veteran, Mr. F. Wood, on his retirement from the Treasurership of the Branch, and asked for the support of members.

It was reported that the Conference arrangements were practically complete and that Messrs. Willis and Williams (Birmingham Branch) had been added to the list of speakers, and the proceedings terminated with a vote of thanks to Miss Kough for her assistance to the Executive during the year.

E. M. VANCE,  
*General Secretary.*

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## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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### LONDON. INDOOR.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE (19 Buckingham Street, Charing Cross): 3.30, Mr. Golding, "Nietzsche and Ethics."

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (241 Marylebone Road, W., near Edgware Road). A Musical Evening will be given by Mr. Rudham, commencing at 8 p.m. sharp. All welcome! Discussion Circle of above meets every Thursday at "The Lauri Arms," Crawford Place, W. Strangers welcome.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "On the Writing of Books."

### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.15, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Regent's Park): 6.30, Mr. A. D. McLaren, "Religion and Science."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15 and 6, Mr. Shaller Lectures.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Corner Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. G. Whitehead, A Lecture.

### COUNTRY. OUTDOOR.

NOTTINGHAM.—Week's Freethought Mission. Mr. George Whitehead, every evening at 7 o'clock. Monday, May 29, Nottingham Market Place; Tuesday, May 30, Nottingham Market Place; Wednesday, May 31, Bulwell Market Place; Thursday, June 1, Nottingham Market Place; Friday, June 2, Bulwell Market Place.

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