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Views and Opinions.

Stupidity in the Press.

It is said that Mr. Balfour, now disguised under the title of Lord Balfour, never reads the papers. But as he has someone who reads them for him, selecting all it is thought necessary for him to see, he loses nothing and gains much. All of us are not so fortunately situated and so have to do our own drudgery, although if one is placed for a time where access to newspapers is impossible it is surprising how little one misses. Happily, for those blessed with a sense of humour, there is some compensation even in having to wade through a number of newspapers. The *Times* leading articles, for instance, when dealing with non-political subjects, are extremely amusing in their ponderous stupidity. When one turns to them from other papers it is like witnessing a really funny turn at a music hall after sitting through half-a-dozen dull performers. Sometimes one of the leading articles is concerned with religion, and it is then plainly written to order with a view to please at once the old ladies—of both sexes—with whom the *Times* is an institution, and at the same time satisfy those latitudinarian conservatives who like to feel themselves to be daring revolutionists. What with this type of leading article and Lord Northcliffe's comic opera expedition into Germany, travelling *incognito* by merely changing his name, and solemnly recording the number of expectant German mothers as part of a deep-laid plot to upset the Versailles Treaty, one often wonders whether the appointed editor of the *Times* does not sometimes change places with the editor of *Comic Cuts* or some similar paper that is issued under the auspices of our leading yellow journalist. The only unfortunate thing is that a large number of people still take the *Times* seriously. They heard in their youth that the *Times* was an important paper; they accept the tradition without reflection, and are quite unaware that *the Times* ceased to exist years ago.

* * *

The Law and the Public.

A good illustration of the *Times'* handling of an important social and scientific issue may be seen in one of its leading articles on the True case. The issue in this case was quite simple, and in its first form did credit to the common sense of the general public. Ronald True, an obvious degenerate, but who was certainly not insane in any genuine sense of the word, had led a wholly disgraceful life, and finished up by murdering a girl under peculiarly revolting circumstances. He was sentenced to death, and the Home Secretary, acting, it was said, under private pressure, found means of reprieving him. Now there was no particular public grievance to begin with, in the mere fact of True being reprieved, so long as he was not permitted to remain at large no one would have complained. What made the case noticeable was that only a few days before the same Home Secretary had declined to interfere in the case of a boy of 18, who was duly hanged. In the one case there was a poor boy without money or influence, in the other there was a vile creature with money and influential friends behind him. So gross a case of partiality could not well pass unnoticed, and a public agitation sprang up. So far, as I have said, the matter did the public's sense of justice credit. But under the influence of Lord Northcliffe's papers—the morning edition of the *Evening News* (the *Times*), and the evening edition of the *Times* (the *Evening News*)—this exhibition of healthy resentment at the partiality of public administration is turned into a brutalizing scream for someone to be hanged merely because someone has been killed, and thus the healthy demand for the impartial administration of the law tends to become lost in a cry that does no credit to anyone, and the only purpose of which can be to advance the attractiveness of a form of journalism that has for some years tended to lower the whole tone of the British Press. And that is a matter which concerns all who desire to see the tone of public life on as high a level as is possible.

* * *

Legal Stupidity.

So much for the bald facts of the case as it stands. What I have called the pompous absurdity of the *Times* is seen in a leading article in the issues for June 13 and 14, and one in the evening edition for the latter date. Under cover of the True case there is an attack upon the teachings of Psycho-analysis, or what the writer thinks is such, and upon the doctrine of determinism—again upon what the writer thinks is such. And shelter is taken behind a stupidity of Mr. Justice Avory, who, if he wishes to build up a reputation for intelligence in non-legal matters, would do well to keep his mouth closed out of working hours. Justice Avory protested against the infliction of penalties being left to the discretion of Harley Street specialists (who would be much better judges of fitting penalties than the average judge), and said that "the only security for the public was every crime should be followed by its appropriate penalty." Presumably what Mr. Justice Avory has in his mind is "stated penalty," and the confusion of the two indicates that his lordship might greatly benefit by a course of lectures dealing with the psychology of crime and the history of the criminal law. For the infliction of stated penalties has very little to do with the diminution of crime and the protection of the public. There never was a law that people would not risk evading, and which many do not evade. The whole history of the criminal law proves that severity of punishment, and even certainty of punishment, does little or noth-

ing to diminish crime. Naturally a certain type of judge, particularly one of the Justice Avory type, who with the whole history of religious persecution before him is convinced that punishments will prevent heretics voicing their heresy, ladles out penalties like a draper measuring off yards of calico, and in the end comes to regard that as the only method of dealing with crime. Inflicting penalties is his business, he believes in his trade, although one might expect that the mere sight of people coming before him time after time for sentence might convince him that there is something wrong with the method employed. We are not surprised at the *Times* approving Justice Avory. We do not doubt that Justice Avory reads the *Times*. The two are well matched in this instance.

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Free Will and Determinism.

For the rest the True case is taken by these two leading lights of yellow journalism to solemnly warn us against a scientific psychology and the dangers of adopting a theory of determinism. The *Times* says that "the moment the idea that a man is fully responsible for his actions is successfully assailed the whole administration of justice fails." And the *Evening News* writes with impressive ignorance that years ago "there was a pitched battle between the preachers of Determinism and those who stood fast by Free Will," and the Determinists were "severely defeated." And the argument of the Determinist was "that a murderer could not have helped committing his murder, and that it was wrong to punish him for doing what he could not help." It is quite news to me that in some pitched battle of years ago the Determinists were severely defeated, since I had got into my head that in every branch of science determinism was an accepted and unquestioned principle, and that without it science, as such, was an impossibility. After all, the most that Determinism says is that every event is due to definite, knowable, and localisable causes, and I have yet to hear of any scientific man who questions that. And as science is wholly a search for the conditions under which things occur, if that is not accepted as a working principle, then no science is possible, ordered thinking is a delusion, and all that is left for us is the leader writers of the morning and evening edition of the *Evening News*. Of course, we are not able to assign to every phenomenon the conditions of its occurrence, but that is quite a different matter. We hope to be able to one day, and in the meantime nature only becomes understandable, and civilized man lifted above the level of the ignorant wonder of the savage so far as this aspiration is realized.

* * *

What Is Responsibility?

Apart from the question of miracles the fight between the Determinist and the believer in Free-Will, centred on the question of whether this principle generally admitted in science, should be applied to human nature or not. And in this case both theory and fact were on the side of the Determinist. The theory because any judgment on human conduct implies Determinism. When it is said that True was a degenerate character, and the jury with the evidence before them decided that he was guilty of the murder, what they really did was to assume that given such a man and such a set of environing circumstances, it was fairly certain that the murder was committed. The character and the circumstances were the determining factors in the crime. Had the jury not been guided—in practice—by deterministic principles, there was no reason why they should have come to any decision on the matter. And it being granted that a certain character, combined with a certain set of circumstances, results in a particular crime, the question of punishment and responsibility arises. The Determinist here raises no objection to punishment—although he prefers another term—what he insists upon is that the punishment must bear due relation to the character of the convicted man, and that the fact of his responsibility shall be made clear. And here it is quite clear that the *Times'* writer has not the slightest notion as to what is the nature of responsibility. Clearly there are some things for which man would be held neither legally nor morally responsible. An insane person is responsible neither in morals nor at law. A child who emptied a bottle of poison into a cup of tea would not be responsible for the death of the one who drank it. And there are some people who are so overmastered by one special propensity, that responsibility is also denied. The questions of the origin of actions and of responsibility for actions are quite distinct. The first is a matter of pure science, the other enters into the province of sociology. And in both morals and law the question of responsibility centres upon the fact of whether the person before us is normally constituted, is able to appreciate the consequences of what he is doing, and is amenable to certain restraining or modifying motives. If he is normally constituted and can appreciate what he is doing, then the fact of his responsibility is established. And in spite of the learned ignorance of Mr. Justice Avory, the interests of society would be looked after much better if, after the judge and jury had found the man guilty on a question of fact, it were left to a panel of experts to say what kind of punishment would best meet the particular offence under notice. Until something like that is done I venture to say we shall do very little to seriously diminish crime or to reform the criminal. The absurdity of highly paid judges without any necessary qualifications, other than a knowledge of law, sitting and imposing sentences with the aid of a yard stick, is one of the most ridiculous features of our legal administration. It is only slightly less disheartening than is the sight of papers enjoying huge circulations playing to the lower passions of men instead of appealing to what is better in their nature, and trading upon the general ignorance of science to throw discredit upon scientific labours. For such papers live by—and on—their readers. And it is the reader of the newspaper, not the student of books or of life, who plays so large a part in fashioning the modern State.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Percy Bysshe Shelley.

I.

THE MAN.

ON the eighth of July will be observed the centen of one of the greatest lyrical poets the world has c seen. Born on August 4, 1792, at Field Place, n Horsham, Sussex, Shelley lost his life at sea off t Gulf of Spezia, Italy, on July 8, 1822, within less th a month of the completion of the thirtieth year of age. What actually took place is not known, a never will be. Both he and his friend Williams, b passionately fond of boating, were returning from visit to Leghorn on their little schooner the "D Juan," but they never reached Spezia. That there suddenly arose a violent squall, and that the schooner sank, are facts; but whether she capsized in the storm or was run down by some other vessel, a felucca or fishing-smack, can only be surmised, though the weight of evidence, such as it is, seems to lean towards the latter alternative. It was a tragedy which the poet's loyal friend, Trelawny, and others, could never forget, and which posterity will never cease to deplore.

It was Trelawny who, after a laborious search, discovered the bodies of the two friends washed ashore, and had them duly burned according to the ancient Greek custom. Then the ashes of the poet were collected and piously taken to Rome, where they were buried in the new Protestant cemetery. Close by had been buried, a little more than a year before, another great English poet, John Keats, who died at Rome, when he had but just entered upon the twenty-sixth year of his age, of whom Shelley had written, in the preface to *Adonais*, an elegy on his friend's lamented decease, that he "considered the fragment of *Hyperion* as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years." In the same preface, describing the cemetery as "an open space among the ruins, covered in winter by violets and daisies," he says: "It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place," little dreaming that his own ashes should so soon find their home in the same lovely spot.

From earliest childhood Shelley was a boy of strong, independent character. Though shy, sensitive, and inclined to mopishness, he was yet wonderfully open to impressions and of a peculiarly independent, even rebellious disposition. Certain customs of the day he positively hated and was not slow to condemn and revolt against. Before entering University College, Oxford, he passed through three schools. The first was at Warnham, to which he was sent at the age of six. The second was Sion House Academy, Brentford, under the principalship of Dr. Greenlaw, to whom were entrusted mostly the sons of local tradesmen. He entered this institution in his tenth year. Two years later he was sent to Eton public school, whose headmaster, nearly to the end of his stay, was Dr. Goodall. Dr. Goodall may have been a mild disciplinarian for that period, but it by no means follows that flagellation was not practised at the school. It would have been almost a miracle had a boy of Shelley's ardent temperament escaped corporal punishment. Submission to authority was generally looked upon as an essential attribute of a successful school life; but Shelley was a natural rebel against all artificially constituted authority. Readers of *Tom Brown's School Days* are aware what a prominent place fagging used to hold in English public schools, and fagging means compelling the younger boys to be under the dominion of the older ones. That is to say, the junior pupils must be the drudges or "fags" of the senior pupils, running their errands, cleaning their studies, stopping balls at cricket. Against such a system Shelley's whole nature was at war, with the result that the Etonians called him "Mad Shelley." It is quite possible that at heart they admired him for his proud independence and courage. He had the strength of character to mutiny against all forms of tyranny, whether exercised by senior boys or by anybody else with whom he had to do.

Equally distasteful to young Shelley was the cruel tyranny of supernatural beliefs as then held and enforced at public schools. Authoritative creeds were as objectionable to him as authoritative discipline. At what stage in his career he first repudiated the belief in God is not known; but it is a fact that in his middle teens at Eton he was dubbed an Atheist. It is argued by some orthodox writers that an Eton boy might be called an Atheist, not because he disbelieved in God, but merely because he was mutinous; but, as pointed out by the late W. M. Rossetti, inasmuch as Shelley was an avowed Atheist long before he came of age, the natural inference is that the Etonians knew what they were about when they so characterized him. He was only eighteen when he entered University College, Oxford, and met Thomas Jefferson Hogg, a young man from Durham. It was a fateful meeting for both, for there was at once struck up between them the closest possible friendship. They were extremely dissimilar in many respects, and yet they were irresistibly drawn together by an invisible but unbreakable chain of mutual attraction, and each proved complementary to the other. On one point they were absolutely at one, namely, in their hostility to the Christian religion. They were both convinced Atheists and zealous anti-Christians. For all his convictions Shelley was afire with enthusiasm, and ere long he managed to kindle a feeble flame of enthusiasm in the semi-cynical mind of his friend, with the result that, after a few months as exceedingly popular undergraduates they succeeded in producing the famous pamphlet entitled *The Necessity of Atheism*, which was anonymously published and privately circulated, and which, on their declining to avow or disavow the authorship, resulted in their expulsion. Nominally, however, they were expelled not for holding and promulgating Atheistical views, but for "contumaciously refusing to answer questions." At the time of his expulsion, on the 25th of March, 1811, Shelley was in the nineteenth year of his age.

He came up to London, and was soon assiduously engaged in a proselytizing mission. He wanted to convert everybody he came in contact with to his own way of thinking. One of his first converts was Harriet Westbrook, a Methodist, aged between fifteen and sixteen, who very naturally fell in love with the brilliant and fascinating young man, a love he was never fully able to requite, but with whom he afterwards eloped, travelling post haste to Edinburgh, where, on the 25th of August, 1811, they were married according to the law of Scotland. It was not an ideal union, but Harriet was buoyed up by her deep love for her husband, and he was uniformly kind and considerate. Into the poet's domestic experiences, however, it is not our purpose to peer, all we are concerned with just now being his attitude toward the world in which he lived. For some years after his expulsion from Oxford he was a wanderer, now in Ireland, fighting for Catholic emancipation and the repeal of the union with England, now in North Wales, not far from Snowdon, full of active sympathy with the down-trodden poor, sharing with them his modest income, now in London, taking an absorbing interest in all the democratic movements of the time, which the French Revolution had done so much to stimulate to a highly enthusiastic pitch, and now in the Lake District; but wherever he happened to be he made himself known as an anti-Christian but passionate lover of the people. His *Address to the Irish People, Proposals for an Association of Philanthropists to Accomplish the Regeneration of Ireland, Declaration of Rights, A Letter to Lord Ellenborough*, all published in 1812, show conclusively how ardently he desired and worked for the welfare of the masses.

Naturally such a romantic lover of the people came into close touch with that most popular sage of the opening years of the nineteenth century, William Godwin, whose *Political Justice* (1793), and *Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794), were the much loved text books of all social reformers of that period. Curious beyond comment was the concatenation of events for which the French evolution was almost directly responsible. In 1789 the Society for Commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain held its annual meeting, the chief features of which since 1688 were a dinner and a sermon; and on this occasion the sermon was preached by Dr. Richard Price, of Old Jewry, a radical Nonconformist divine. It was a most remarkable discourse, many of its points owing their pertinence to the recent fall of the Bastille. Of course the Golden Age was about to dawn and put an end to all social miseries. The published sermon circulated widely, and gave rise to a good deal of excitement. At first even Wordsworth fell under the spell

of the intoxicating new hope, and put the scene of the Millenium,

> Not in Utopia, subterraneous fields,
> Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where,
> But in the very world which is the world
> Of all of us, the place where in the end
> We find our happiness, or not at all.

But this did not suit the politicians at all who were only enraged by it, and who found a fitting spokesman in the one man of genius among them, Edmund Burke, whose reverence for established faiths and institutions knew scarcely any bounds. Burke immortalized Dr. Price's sermon by his angry reply to it entitled *Reflections on the French Revolution* (1790). His hostility to the Revolution was a towering frenzy. Three years later Godwin's philosophical reply to Burke made its appearance, emphasizing and developing Paine's arguments so brilliantly and unanswerably presented in his celebrated *Rights of Man* (1791). While the Government prosecuted Paine for a seditious libel, Godwin's *Political Justice* made him for a time the idol of the masses. And yet long before the author's end, his book was utterly dead; but its principles and aims were destined to live on in the works of the poet Shelley, a far greater genius than either Burke, Paine, or Godwin. As Mr. Brailsford justly says:—

> To Shelley *Political Justice* was the veritable "milk of paradise." We must drink of it ourselves if we would share his banquet. Godwin, in short, explains Shelley, and it is equally true that Shelley is the indispensable commentary to Godwin (*Shelley, Godwin, and their Circle*, p. 214).

But Shelley was more, immeasurably more, than that.

J. T. Lloyd.

A Doubting Dean.

> This mystery of sending spiritual gifts is nothing but a trade. —*Jonathan Swift.*
>
> Is not religion a cloak? —*Swift.*
>
> Swift is Rabelais in his good sense. —*Voltaire.*
>
> Not a fantastical fool of them all shall flout me out of my calling. —*Shakespeare.*

The Christian Church has contained in its fold many great men. Some of them were sincere believers. Others were Christians from force of circumstances, or held to the doctrines for material gain. To which class did Jonathan Swift belong? Was this great genius a sincere Christian, or was he a professing believer? Would he have remained a Christian had actual deaneries and possible bishoprics had no existence? Should we have found him among the Scottish Covenanters on the field of battle, or in the arena with the lions at Rome, had his birth placed him in different circumstances?

His biographers, Scott, Johnson, and Thackeray, all describe Swift as religious, and popular opinion agrees with them. We hesitate to enter the lists against such eminent writers, but a candid opinion compels us to say that Swift was a Christian in name only; that he remained in the Church for the emoluments she offered. In fact, Swift was a most irreligious man. Compared to him, Paine and Voltaire were saints, for these great Freethinkers had at heart a love for humanity, which was absent in Swift. The author of *Gulliver's Travels* and the *Tale of a Tub* was intellectually incapable of being a Christian, and emotionally incapable of loving his fellow-men. The *Tale of a Tub* is one of the most tremendous indictments of Christianity, from the purely intellectual side, that have ever been printed. *Gulliver's Travels* expresses such scorn of the human race that its writer was constitutionally incapable of sympathizing with a religion claiming to be a gospel of love.

Voltaire, a most excellent judge, regarded the *Tale of a Tub* as casting ridicule on the Christian religion. The man who wrote that book was quite aware of the logical inference of his proposition. The bishops who advised Queen Anne not to appoint Swift to a bishopric were not without sagacity. Queen Anne and Voltaire had little in common, but they both agreed in regarding Swift's literary work as anti-Christian.

Swift was irreligious, and a life long dissembler. He could be coarser than Rabelais, and profaner than Voltaire. Men have suffered death for treating sacred subjects less offensively than Swift treats the Holy Communion. Consider the facts of his life. He was brought up in the household of the epicurean Sir William Temple, and educated in the library of an avowed Freethinker. Swift was the boon companion of Pope, and a friend of the sceptical Bolingbroke. It is significant, nay, almost conclusive, as to the insincerity of Swift's religion, that he advised John Gay, the wildest of the men about town, to turn parson and look out for a seat on the Bench among the lordly successors of the poor apostles.

The paper Swift left behind him, *Thoughts on Religion*, is merely a set of excuses for not expressing disbelief. He says of his sermons, quite truthfully, that he preached pamphlets. They have no special Christian characteristic, and might have been preached from the steps of a Mohammedan mosque as well as from a Christian pulpit. There is no cant, for Swift was too great and proud for that sorry device. Tried even by the low standards of the eighteenth century, his sermons are very secular. The following caustic passage from Swift's sermon on the fate of Eutychus, who fell out of a window whilst listening to Paul preaching, will illustrate our meaning:—

> The accident which happened to this young man in the text hath not been sufficient to discourage his successors; but because the preachers now in the world, however they may exceed St. Paul in the art of setting men to sleep, do extremely fall short of him in the working of miracles; therefore men are become so cautious as to choose more safe and convenient stations and postures for taking their repose without hazard of their persons, and, upon the whole matter, choose rather to entrust their destruction to a miracle than their safety.

The surest indication of Swift's real irreligion is given in the satirical verses on the Day of Judgment, which were not published till after his death. They were sent by Lord Chesterfield in a letter to Voltaire, but everybody knows the biting lines:—

> Ye who in divers sects were shammed,
> And came to see each other damned
> (For so folks told you; but they knew
> No more of Jove's designs than you);
> The world's mad business now is o'er,
> And Jove resents such pranks no more.
> I to such blockheads set my wit!
> I damn such fools! Go, go, you're bit.

It may be pointed out that in controversy Swift took the orthodox side. Outwardly he was loyal to his employers. For the Deists of his time, such as Asgill, Collins, and Toland, he expressed contempt. He refers to "that quality of their voluminous writings which the poverty of the English language compels me to call their style." In his sinister argument upon the abolition of the Christian religion, he drenches his opponents with vitriol. It is, however, purely dialectic fencing. Swift was defending the Church, of which he was a paid servant; just as a counsel will argue for his client.

When face to face with death, Swift let the mask drop from his face, and we see the real man. When he wrote his own epitaph, he disdained religion. A pillar of the Church, he refused to permit any religious

allusions. A dignified worldliness, an appeal to the memory of his fellows, but not a syllable of pious platitude :—

> Here lies the body of Jonathan Swift, Doctor of Divinity, Dean of his Cathedral Church, where fierce rage can tear the heart no more. Go, traveller, and imitate, if you can, an earnest, manly champion of freedom.

The original is in Latin, and the dates were the only additions. His allusion to his fight for freedom is genuine, for he strove for the liberty of Ireland.

Rabelais and Renan, both great sceptics, left the Church, and chose the open road. Swift stayed in the fold, and failed in his ambition. He had to put up with a petty deanery, when his ambition was at least a bishopric. The rage, of which he wrote as lacerating his heart, was intensified by disappointment. After prostituting a great and splendid genius, he died, to quote his own painful words, " like a poisoned rat in a hole." MIMNERMUS.

"A Clergyman in Hell!"

> Wherever God erects a house of prayer,
> The Devil always builds a chapel there;
> And 'twill be found upon examination
> The latter always has the larger congregation.
> —*Defoe, " The True-born Englishman."*

" A CLERGYMAN in Hell! " A strange title, but we did not invent it. It is the rev. gentleman's own description of his experiences during five years as Rector of Rusper, as recorded in *Five Years' Hell in a Country Parish,* by the Rev. Edward Fitzgerald Synnott.

Rusper is a country village in Sussex, midway between Horsham and Three Bridges, and it may be remembered that some three years ago the Rector of Rusper, the Rev. E. F. Synnott, was summoned before a consistory court to answer certain charges of misconduct brought against him by some of his parishioners. The charges were not substantiated, the president of the court remarking that Rusper appeared to be a hotbed of scandal.

In this book, *Five Years' Hell in a Country Parish,* the Rector, in his turn, takes the offensive against his parishioners, or rather those who scandalized him, and they appear to have been the great majority, and incidentally to enlighten the world as to the trials and troubles with which the path of a country parson is beset.

When Mr. Synnott was invited to accept the living of Rusper in 1914, after leading a strenuous life in London, Devonport, and Canada, he was pleased to receive the offer of what promised to be the quiet, placid life of a rural village. His friends and acquaintances congratulated him upon his good fortune. One of them drew a rosy picture of a sheltered rectory, over which the golden honeysuckle climbed. The flock, a few good-hearted rustics, who would greet their rector with a doff of the hat or an old-fashioned curtsey. His sermons, instead of being written under the flickering gaslight of a London slum, would be prepared while blissfully sauntering through green fields, or wandering down fragrant, shady lanes. In fact it was to be " roses, roses all the way." In the event, the parish yielded a great deal more thorns and stinging nettles than roses, and the unhappy rector tells us that many a time, during those five years of agony, he wished he had pursued the more strenuous life to which he had been accustomed.

Mr. Synnott traces all the troubles that befell him to the scandal loving proclivities of the inhabitants of Rusper. He says : " Rusper has become a byword! It is a synonym for slander, back-biting, and gossip, and as such it will probably appear in the standard English dictionaries of the future."

To the question : " Is Rusper any worse in regard to calumny and calumniators than any other village? " the Rector replies emphatically " Yes," and again " Yes." To anyone who doubts it, I suggest that he call at Rusper and test these charges of mine for himself. I will guarantee that the first person that he meets at either Horsham or Three Bridges Station—Rusper lies between the two—he will tell him of the scandal-loving nature of Rusper. And when he enters the village he will find as much evidence as he requires.

There are no Helens of Troy at Rusper, observes Mr. Synnott, there are women there, he adds :

> who, denied beauty of face or form, make themselves still more repellant by their thoughts, their words and deeds. Long hours spent in idle and venomous gossip seems to leave a mark on their plain and vacant faces. I can tell a gossiper and a scandal-monger by a glance, even as a doctor can frequently recognise the disease from which a person is suffering by looking into the eyes or at the tongue. Love of scandal is written plainly on the faces of these women everywhere. If any modern artist is in need of a model to express the voice of the calumniator in any great work that he is undertaking, he could not do better than come down to Rusper and stroll down our village street. He would soon procure such a perfect model of a female slanderer that the fame of his picture would be assured.

The women of Rusper reminded him of the statues of Buddha, the most striking feature of which is the length of the tongue, which is coiled round his neck; but this is nothing, he says, to the tongues of the women of Rusper, for " they stretch from door to door and even from parish to parish." The women form cliques, and some of these cliques, we are told, have a specially appointed liaison officer who goes between and communicates the scandal of one clique to another clique.

Mr. Synnott had not been many days in Rusper before he decided to make his first call on each of his parishioners; this took about a week as there were about six hundred inhabitants. Of that tour he has many vivid recollections. He says : "It was a week of gossip, of scandal and back-biting. The unpleasant taste of that first week is still in my palate. Recollections of that tour fill me with doubts about the future of humanity. At the first house I called I found that I had stepped deep into the unsavoury gossip of the village. As I progressed from house to house, the tide of gossip and scandal rose higher and higher, until, at the end of the week, it seemed to me that this picturesque old village was the last resort of all that was unsavoury and worst in humanity."

The Rector had not been in the first house two minutes before he was warned against calling next door. " This neighbour, I was assured, was up to her eyes in debt. She was a designing woman. Her daughters, when they were not doing church work in Rusper, were away in London, where they spent their days and nights in gambling hells."

Mr. Synnott records that he called on the well-to-do at the mansion; on the publican and the sinner; the church-goer and the infidel. Unfortunately he does not record the result of his visit to the infidel. Evidently he heard no scandal there, or we should have heard of it, neither did he convert him from the error of his way, or we should have heard something of that, too. He entered the village " pub " and talked to the lads in the bar, and when the pussyfoot section learned this horrible fact, says Mr. Synnott, " they expressed themselves as though I were an emissary from the lower region."

At the end of his tour the Rector went for a quiet walk, and reflected that if these people say such things

of their neighbours, who are not much in the limelight, what are they likely to say of their Rector, in the full glare, a magnificent target for all the gossipers in Rusper. He was soon to find out.

Mr. Synnott, like a modern Achilles defying the lightning, resolved to "fight the gossip-mongers tooth and nail." So when they came with their scandal, he "asked them plainly, what about the mote in their own eye?" Others he lectured upon the necessity of minding their own business. The consequence was that upon making his second call, he was received very coolly. Some of the occupants of the big houses sent back a servant to say that they were out. Mr. Synott says: "I heard them giving these instructions while I was waiting in the hall or drawing-room." The battle had been set in array.

On the morning following his arrival at Rusper, the gardener appeared and announced that twenty-one of the chickens he had brought with him had been stolen during the night. "My first night in the village!" says the Rector. "Ye gods! One would have thought I should have been given a chance to turn round and buy a padlock." Later an objection was made to his fowls crowing too loudly at dawn. "There were plenty of noisy poultry in other parts of the town, yet my poultry," observes the unhappy rector, "because they were owned by a clergyman, I suppose, were expected to be of a higher order. Some people seem to think a clergyman's cockerels should produce the soothing notes of a cathedral organ!"

He soon had occasion to remember the warning he received from a college professor during his college days. He says: "His words burned in my brain. His father, he told me, was a country rector in Sussex, and he had said that work in a Sussex village would make an Atheist of any clergyman in seven years."

(*To be Concluded.*) W. MANN.

A. D.

She was a Catholic, too, sincere, austere,
As far as her own gentle heart allowed.
—*Don Juan, xv., 46.*

As, rising from the lap of night,
Aurora brings the welcome light,
And all the common ways grow bright
As on she walks in silence,

So in our lesser, human sphere,
Spirits in shadow gather cheer,
When like the radiant morn draws near
One named of her—Aurora.

Harbinger, she, of light and joy;
Yet, with all promise, gentle, coy;
Has never dream of some kind boy
Yet troubled her, I wonder?

When winds of March are rough and bleak,
And, boldly amorous, bite her cheek,
For roses then you need not seek,
Roses that tell 'tis morning.

Let priest and parson talk of "sins,"
—Where God's world ends, and earth begins,
Or pape or heretic, he wins
A prize who wins Aurora.

The Pope himself, did he behold
Her cheeks of rose, her hair of gold,
And eyes of heaven, might quit the fold
Of saints, methinks, to woo her.

But ah! the Pope must keep his vow;
His heaven's to come (I ask not how);
But dearer heaven is his, and now,
The one that loves Aurora.

H. BARBER.

And now abide faith, hope, and love; these three; and the greatest of these is love. —*St. Paul.*

Acid Drops.

English bishops are not appointed by the Holy Ghost, but by the Government. Now, the present Prime Minister is a hard-shell Baptist, and the matter is causing some heart-burning among ecclesiastically-minded Churchmen. The question of reform is to be raised at a meeting which the Bishop of Manchester will address on the subject. If Lord Morley, who used to write "god" without the capital G, had become Premier—at one time his prospects were not unhopeful—an Agnostic, not always regarded as "reverent," would have had the paramount voice in appointing these Right Reverends. Doubtless they would have accepted, gratefully, and the British public would have exclaimed, "Hear, hear!" That public knows all about English Christianity.

At a Streatham Church breakfasts are provided for early morning communicants. This may almost be described as catering for the body and the soul.

The congregation of Walton Baptist Chapel has raised £40 by selling old clothes. If this sort of thing is carried to its logical conclusion, we may yet see the three brass balls among the sacred emblems of our most holy religion.

An American revivalist, popularly known as the "Texas Tornado," has been voicing his objection to smoking by ladies. "The woman who smokes will smoke hereafter," he declares. If smoking becomes fashionable, women devotees will be calling the Devil "Old Nicotine."

We are not paid for advertising the same, but we gladly give publicity to the fact that the Christian Evidence Society is appealing for funds. We do so the more gladly because in the appeal, which is signed by a number of the "dignified clergy," is is stated that the number of unbelievers would not be nearly so great were it not for those societies which exist for the special purpose of making them. That is a tribute to the value of our own work, so those of our readers who do not feel inclined to respond to the Christian Evidence Society's appeal for funds need not be baulked in their generosity. There are other avenues of indulging themselves.

The Vicar of St. Saviour's, Luton, says that he is "distressed and humiliated by the wholesale collapse of our congregation" during the summer. It appears that people prefer going for rides, or any other thing instead of going to church. May we give the Vicar a hint. If he were to hire, say, three motor-cars, fill them with members of his congregation, and go in for long journeys, he might occupy the centre one and preach to his followers while travelling. That would be one way of preventing his congregation becoming too rapidly humanized.

At present most of this motor-car travelling during the summer months is done by preachers, who manage to get a rattling good holiday at the expense of their churches. But there is no reason why the congregations themselves should not have a turn.

The Bishop of London has been explaining why he is an optimist, and he attributes it to the Christian religion. He made no mention that he has an income of £10,000 a year, and that he is unmarried.

Three women were baptized in the river at Mildenhall by the minister of the local Baptist Church. Let us hope that they had lovely weather.

The *Western Morning News*, Plymouth (June 8), contains a leading article which urges vehemently that "something should be done to protect the nation" from

the Socialist Sunday Schools. In these schools "teaching of the most blasphemous kind.....is openly inculcated." We have previously referred to these schools, and on one occasion quoted at length from the syllabuses of instruction used in two of them. The whole campaign now being organized against them shows how Atheism and "blasphemy" are dreaded in certain quarters, and it is only with this aspect of the agitation that we are concerned. The churches, or some of them, are quite prepared to declare for some form of Christian Socialism, always emphasizing, of course, that what matters supremely is the spirit that is brought to bear on social problems. This must accord with the Christian ideal, and the present demand for the suppression of the Socialist Sunday Schools is further proof, if any were needed, of what that ideal stands for in regard to Freethought and fair play to opponents.

Public Opinion (June 9) reproduces from a Scottish contemporary some stirring verses on the deity that show the sort of religious life into which Auld Scotia is rapidly drifting. The poet asks why the "Great Engineer" should "delight to treat poor mortals here with cold derision," and why, if he watches the sparrows fall, he sends the driving snow to freeze hundreds of them to death by slow degrees. The concluding lines gracefully acknowledge that the deity is "beyond man's ken"—a fact which many others, besides the author, are beginning to discover. It is a good thing perhaps for some of our English and Scottish newspapers that they are not published in New Zealand.

The following from the *Encyclopædia Britannica* will be of interest to many of our readers :—

> There is a remarkable absence of religious influence in Luchu. Places of worship are few, and the only function discharged by Buddhist priests seems to be to officiate at funerals. The people are distinguished by gentleness, courtesy and docility, as well as by marked avoidance of crime. With the exception of petty thefts, their Japanese administrators find nothing to punish, and for nearly three centuries no such thing as a lethal weapon has been known in Luchu.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, in a spiritualist lecture in America, said : "People who are silly and stupid here will be silly and stupid there." Presumably, these are the spiritually-minded folk who send messages from the "Other Side."

Bodies of paupers in the Lexden and Winstree Union, Essex, are to be placed at the disposal of the doctors for dissection. This country professes to worship a pauper-god.

"Christianity is not a failure," says the Bishop of London, because 260 churches have been built in the Metropolis during half a century. He might have added that the churches are jerry-buildings, and that they are almost all half empty.

A new publication, *Popular Wireless*, has the following :—"An odd thing happened in America the other day in connection with a sermon being delivered as part of a radio programme. By what is known as 'jamming' the ether, some man, evidently a rabid Atheist, cut in and literally blew the sermon into the air." If that is true we can only say that the subscribers to the radio service benefited by the exchange.

"Suffer the little children to come unto me." The following appeared in *Le Journal* (Paris) on June 5, 1922 :—

> Brussels, June 3.—The Hainaut Court of Assizes has just rendered its verdict touching the affair of the Little Brothers of the Orphanage of the Holy Family accused of offences against morals committed upon the children entrusted to their care. One hundred and two questions were put to the jury. The following convictions were pronounced : Clement Langue, in religion Brother Odilon, was condemned to five years' reclusion; Ernest Delfosse, in religion Brother Hildebert, to twelve years' hard labour; Georges Bled, in religion Brother Menard, to five years' reclusion; Alphonse Vanderhart, in religion Brother Puirille, to five years' reclusion; Désiré Verhelle, in religion Brother Ulrich, to seven years' reclusion. Only one of the accused, Jean-Baptiste Verhiggelen, in religion Brother Alto, was acquitted.

The Establishment is still complaining of the dearth of curates. In 1886 eight hundred deacons were ordained; in 1921 barely three hundred. "If the shortage continues it will prove catastrophic," says the Rev. C. S. Woodward, of Cranley Gardens. "Slender stipends clearly constitute the chief deterrent." Had Freethinkers assigned this as the cause of the shortage, in some quarters there would have been protests against their anti-Christian malice. There are, however, other causes, and the dignitaries of the Anglican Church know perfectly well what they are. The decline of belief in the cardinal doctrines of Christianity is never mentioned in this connection. If materialism is so hopelessly "bankrupt" and "discredited" as the Christian clerics assure us it is, what becomes of all the "spiritual" energy that the churches fail to make their own?

Writing in the parish magazine, the Vicar of All Saints' Church, Twickenham, says : "The too popular idea is that a church is where we go to be entertained." The writer is a master of irony. The little adverb "too" clearly indicates that. In the scores of parish magazines issued in England, gems innumerable could be found, if one only cared to dig them out.

At a recent demonstration in Hyde Park, organized for the purpose of proclaiming the social principles of Christianity, the speakers included the Anglican Bishop of Kensington, the Rev. Father McNabb, and the Revs. Dr. W. E. Orchard and J. E. Rattenbury. The last two belong to what are sometimes called the "Free" Churches, though we are not quite sure wherein their freedom now consists. The redemption, the resurrection, and inspired books produce little impression on the toiling masses of the twentieth century. As long as those "spiritual" principles were considered secure, and could be enforced along sound orthodox lines, the social principles of Christianity were not a "material" asset to the churches. To-day Demas loves this present world, and he is no solitary wayfarer in a strange land. All the religious sects see this clearly enough. There *is* much in common between them. There always was.

A poster announces the 268th anniversary of the "Sons of the Clergy." They appear to be quite big boys by now.

The late Rt. Rev. James Macarthur, of Shanklin, Isle of Wight, and formerly Bishop of Bombay, left £36,226; the late Rev. D. Thomas, of Bognor, left £19,133. The founder of their religion was a pauper.

In an account of the life of Charles Peace, the burglar, Judge Parry says that one of the favourite relaxations of this famous criminal was that of playing hymns on violins which were stolen from the houses he visited. It ought to be commemorated by a stained-glass window in St. Paul's Cathedral.

Asked what her husband earned, in a Bow County Court, a woman replied :—"I am a Christian woman, and would not wish my husband to lie to me, so I have never asked." Such humility is a very fragrant virtue.

For a clever and comprehensive definition of nothing we must allow Mr. Maurice Baring to speak for himself in his book entitled the *Puppet Show of Memory*. Christian humility is often a cloak for masking an egotist, and it is a trait that should be taken as a danger signal by

those who are prepared to go beneath surfaces. Writing of his experience—presumably Christian—he says :—

> I do not mean anything sentimental. I am speaking of the experience that comes from having been suddenly constrained to turn round and look at life from a different point of view. So when I heard the intellectuals reason in the manner I have described, I felt for the moment an old person listening to young people. I felt young people must always have talked like that.

So must one feel as one sees a youngster of five teaching his grandmother (Rochefoucauld) to suck eggs. Rochefoucauld put all this balderdash in the one line, "The head is always the dupe of the heart." And consciously or otherwise, Christians would impose their feelings on the world as a standard of value.

On several occasions during the past two years we have tried to draw serious attention to the unmistakable reaction against Freethought and individual liberty, not only in England, but in nearly every part of the world. Energetic attempts are now being made to enforce "Lord's Day observance" in Victoria, Australia, and the Melbourne *Age* (April 1) has a leading article on the subject. One man, a carrier, was prosecuted for carting theatrical scenery from the railway station to the theatre on Sunday. The charge was laid under 29 Car. II. c. 7, and a "substantial fine" was imposed. Yet the clergy in Australia are constantly complaining that the working-class population is largely indifferent to religion. So it is; but unfortunately for human freedom, a well-organized minority never has much difficulty in dealing with a disorganized mass of indifference.

The Christchurch, N.Z., *Press* (March 25) gives an account of some curious exhibits on view at the Early Settlers' Museum in Dunedin. Among them is a Bible, printed in 1670, which belonged to Donald Cargill, who suffered martyrdom in the Edinburgh Grassmarket on July 27, 1681. One of his biographers describes Cargill as "most pious and religious." An occasional reminder of the attitude of the hierarchy of England and Scotland to Dissent is useful in its way, though probably nowadays only Freethinkers appreciate it. While we are on the subject, we may note that on the night of August 24-25, this year, it will be just three and a half centuries since the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew. "The Pope ordered a medal to be struck in commemoration of the event, and sent Cardinal Orsini to convey in person his felicitations to the Queen Mother." We have been notified that we have only to wait another half century for the conversion of England to the "one true faith." In this short period of respite we hope the Catholic Evidence Guild and the League of Ransom will make the most of the Church's past achievements.

The civilized world, including the Copper Eskimos, will hear with pleasure the reverberation of Northcliffe's clicking heels in Germany. Also, his lordship's shrewd observation of that which no women can conceal. The Germans, it appears, are propagating, by numbers as it were. Therefore, it is for one object only. On this crazy logic, it would follow that if the German nation had decided on general castration it would simply have been a dodge to escape payment of indemnities. His lordship is tossing with a penny that has two tails. Admiration of this gallant lord and his gallant deeds will be moderated by the fact that this brave knight of the pen had a fine chance to get into Germany during the years 1914-1918, but like a few other patriots he declined the opportunity. Johnson's definition of patriotism improves with age.

Journalism, with knobs on, as in the case of his lordship, is identical with religion. Both of these professions will write, speak, preach, bawl, caterwaul, and advertise on any subject that has no real and vital interest to mankind.

In the same issue of the *Times* chronicling the mighty and world-shaking deeds of the Fleet St. Galahad, straight from the nosebag (we had almost written gasbag), there is an interesting report. Dr. Deykmitz, of the Munich University Children's Hospital has discovered a preventive against measles. We put our money on Dr. Deykmitz, and ask the Germans to forgive us our bursting Æsop's frog as we forgive them their Prussians.

If it is permissible to pat a lord on the back, having lost our guide book on strawberry leaves, we would venture to suggest that his services to mankind were greater when he was writing articles in *Answers* on the making of rabbit-hutches.

That man is a reasonable animal is only true when he is taken individually. It does not work out in the bulk. If not absolutely so, the majority are always relatively fools. And it must be so if one may judge from a recent article in *Pearson's Weekly*. The writer draws attention to what he calls the "definite and reliable evidence" of Dr. Schofield proving that the biblical miracles are true. Dr. Schofield, we learn, proves the truth of the drying up of the Red Sea, because a strong wind does sometimes force the waters away and make a passage possible. Even so, we should like to know more of this remarkable wind which was able to pile the waters up into a wall while the Israelites marched between. Another equally remarkable proof is concerned with the falling of the walls of Jericho. Dr. Schofield visited the site of the village, and found the remains of some walls of sun-dried loam. So he says that when the Israelites blew their trumpets loudly the people all rushed to the wall, and the pressure of their feet pushed the walls into the ditch. What walls! And why could not the Israelites have pushed the walls over from their side? Dr. Schofield proves the truth of the story of the swine running down into the sea by actually bringing back a photograph of the steep place down which they ran. That settles it.

Now Dr. Schofield is undoubtedly a crank, and there is an end of him. But what is the editor of *Pearson's Weekly*? Does he believe in this fantastical rubbish? Or is he trusting to the fact that the majority are fools and that it pays better to sell copies of a paper to half-a-dozen fools than to one sensible man? After all, the pence of a wise man count for no more in the open market than do those of a fool. But when we have a public who can read such unadulterated rubbish as the above, what kind of reason can we have that they will act sensibly at the ballot box or in the affairs of everyday life? Such people are a threat to the health of the community, far more dangerous than True or Jacoby.

How to Help.

There are thousands of men and women who have left the Churches and who do not know of the existence of this journal. Most of them would become subscribers if only its existence were brought to their notice.

We are unable to reach them through the ordinary channels of commercial advertising, and so must rely upon the willingness of our friends to help. This may be given in many ways :

By taking an extra copy and sending it to a likely acquaintance.

By getting your newsagent to take an extra copy and displaying it.

By lending your own copy to a friend after you have read it.

By leaving a copy in a train, tram or 'bus.

It is monstrous that after forty years of existence, and in spite of the labour of love given it by those responsible for its existence, the *Freethinker* should not yet be in a sound financial position. It can be done if all will help. And the paper and the Cause is worthy of all that each can do for it.

THERE IS A NEW READER WAITING

To Correspondents.

E. BUTLER.—Thanks for cutting. It illustrates the fact that whether a statement is blasphemous or not depends not only upon where it it said, but also upon who says it. The whole thing is ridiculous.

W. BRANDIE.—We are sending you on a parcel of specimen copies of the *Freethinker* for distribution. Would gladly have labels advertising the paper printed if we thought readers would avail themselves of them. Perhaps some others will let us have their opinion. We should also like to see a Branch of the N.S.S. at Aberdeen, and are pleased to know that you are starting a publicity campaign. Let us know if we can assist in any way.

J FOX.—Sorry to hear of Mr. Warren's death. But your letter, although dated the fourteenth, did not reach us till Saturday—too late to communicate with the Nottingham friends.

J. MCMURRAY.—The *General Information for Freethinkers* has been sent. You have the right to withdraw your child from religious instruction, but you will have to send him at the usual school time. He will be kept apart from the other children during the religious lesson and prayers.

MRS. TAYLOR.—Pleased to learn that you so much enjoyed the Conference. We hope to see you at future gatherings, if it is at all possible. You will let us know if we can do anything to aid the work in Huddersfield.

C. NORMAN.—Does anybody really believe "official" assurances? Political leaders all profess to do so, but we do not imagine for a moment that this is really the case. It is part of the game to pretend to do so.

H. ELLIOT.—Glad to have your appreciation of our notes on the *Sunday Express* interview. We hardly think, however, that it would be worth while reprinting it as a special leaflet. Thanks all the same for your offer to contribute towards the expense of same.

H. MARSHALL.—No copy of the book has been sent us for review, and we shall have to find other work than editing the *Freethinker* if we are to purchase only a small percentage of the new and expensive books we might read and write about.

A. RUSSELL.—Article received and is only awaiting an opportunity of publication. We hope to get it in in the course of a week or two.

W. H. HEPWORTH (Johannesburg).—Subscription received. Glad to know that you value the *Freethinker* so highly.

A NUMBER of letters, owing to the want of space, are held over until next week.

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.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, and not to the Editor.

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

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—

The United Kingdom.—One year, 17s. 6d.; half year, 8s. 9d.; three months, 4s. 6d.

Foreign and Colonial.—One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

Will those of our friends who are seriously interesting themselves in the *Freethinker* push for new subscribers? Please bear in mind that we will gladly forward a number of specimen copies of the paper for them to distribute among their friends if they will let us know what quantity they require. The new readers are coming along, although not so rapidly as we would like, or as they might. It is not an impossible task for all interested to present us with a new reader within the next week or two.

Mr. Whitehead has concluded his visit to Plymouth, and is now giving Newcastle a turn. We are glad to know that the friends at Plymouth have thrown themselves heartily into the week's work, and that the Branch intends the campaign to be pushed vigorously in the future. There is plenty of scope for work at Plymouth, and the visit of Mr. Whitehead, with the energy displayed by the local friends, should produce good in the future.

This evening (June 25) at 7 o'clock Mr. McLaren will speak at West Ham. What is called "West Ham Educational Week" begins on this date, and most of the churches and chapels in the district will make special reference to it. As the local branch of the N.S.S. is represented on the Committee which has arranged the programme of lectures, Mr. McLaren has chosen for his subject, "The Workers' Interest in Science." We look forward to a large and successful meeting on this occasion.

Mr. R. H. Hurst, who presided over the Shelley centenary celebration at Horsham in 1892, declared that the youthful Shelley had "written and said things" which did not represent his maturer views. A statement of this kind applies probably to every one of the world's great writers. In regard to Shelley, however, it is sometimes urged in a way which conveys the impression that his early attitude to Christianity was not part of his real self, it was something altogether extraneous. Hardly any estimate of the poet shows less insight into his mind and personality. The Rev. Stopford A. Brooke, in his inaugural address to the Shelley Society in 1886, says finely that we never see in Shelley "a man made up in any way for presentation to the world," and that in his prose productions he reasons as connectedly as Mill. Shelley was a student, not a *poseur*. He was acquainted with Paine's writings, at least with some of them. "We pity the plumage, but forget the dying bird." These words, taken with slight alteration from *The Rights of Man*, appear on the title-page of *An Address to the People on the Death of Princess Charlotte*, and it was the imprisonment of D. I. Eaton for publishing part of the *Age of Reason* that occasioned the *Letter to Lord Ellenborough*.

We are sorry to say that in our report of the Conference proceedings one of the visitors, Mrs. Alice Lee, was given as Mrs. Ben Lee. We make the correction because there was a Mr. Ben Lee present, we believe, and it is therefore desirable to avoid confusion.

We are asked to announce that by the kindness of Mrs. Bayfield, the Manchester Branch will be holding an "American Tea," on Saturday, June 24, at 61, Claude Road, Chorlton, from 3 till 6 o'clock. The tea is in aid of the branch funds, and contributions will be acceptable. Manchester friends may also note that the Discussion Class holds its next meeting on Sunday, June 25, at Mr. Rosetti's, 39, The Crescent, Flixton. If friends will leave the central station by the 5 o'clock train they will reach the house at about the appointed time.

Freethinking "Ramblers" will note that the Glasgow friends have arranged for an excursion for to-day (June 25), when they will visit Catkin Loch, meeting at the Burnside car terminus at 12 o'clock. Visitors will bring their own refreshments. Nearer home the West Ham Branch has arranged for a Ramble on July 2 round Upminster, leaving Plaistow Station at 9.58, and Upton Park, East Ham, and Barking, a few minutes later. The excursion is open to all Freethinkers and their friends. Tea will be provided.

We are informed that the St. Pancras Free Library has accepted and placed on its shelves a copy of the *Life of Charles Bradlaugh*, by his daughter and J. M. Robertson. We hope that the book will be well read, and will arouse a sympathetic interest in a movement that could command the devotion of so great a man.

Freethought and Religious Equality.

Read at the N.S.S. Annual Conference, Nottingham, June 4.

I.

By A. D. McLaren.

In the primitive human group the rules governing religious observances extended to every detail of life, and long after an advance towards civilization had been made, there remained a close connection between the civil and the religious functions of the community. Even in highly cultured Athens the statesmen thought that there should be limits to the right to criticize the current religious beliefs.

Among the historical religious systems of Europe, however, it was reserved for Christianity to carry to its logical conclusion the conception of absolute uniformity, and to stamp out most ruthlessly any departure from it. No other system that has prevailed in Europe put the same clamps upon free inquiry, or sought so persistently to stereotype all religious ideas in its own mould. It was the only religious authority that emanated from God, it was the " one name given under heaven " for the salvation of the race. This spirit of exclusiveness was its outstanding characteristic; the intellectual and moral effects of which are strikingly exemplified in the history of the Roman Catholic Church. She was the bride of Christ; her sanctions were excommunication in this world and the threat of dire penalties in the next. But there was also a worldly side to her spiritual status, involving the discharge of worldly duties. Her canons long had the force of law, compelling acceptance of her dogmas and obedience to her prescribed practices. Universal dominion was her goal, to be reached, it is true, by the spiritual ascendancy of the one true faith; but the civil power was always an acceptable ally for the realization of this aim.

Some English writers represent Protestantism as the expression of a spirit of revolt against these claims. This view is erroneous. Protestantism was not born of antagonism to religious authority as such. Politically, the growth of nationality in Europe tended to bring the doctrine of sovereignty into conflict with Rome's spiritual supremacy; but it was still regarded as the duty of every nation to establish and endow some form of Christianity in the State. In England, special Ecclesiastical Courts long punished special offences. From the purely religious standpoint neither freedom nor equality was an essential ingredient of any form of Protestant theology, which bore most of the characteristic features of Roman exclusiveness. The attitude of the hierarchy of England and Scotland to the Dissenter, and of both alike to the heretic, shows that the will to persecute was limited solely by the power to do so. But Protestantism made the " inspired " revelation the foundation of the faith and granted the right of private judgment in interpreting it. The practical result was a variety of sects, whose mere existence made it difficult for any one of them to carry on an effectual campaign of persecution against the others, and as these sects became numerically strong, the maintenance of one supreme establishment was impossible. In England we trace the history of the ecclesiastical struggle in the Acts of Uniformity, the Test and Corporation Acts, on the one hand, and on the other in the resistance to these measures and in the series of efforts to repeal them. In actual practice to-day all forms of religion are to some degree supported by the State, though the Church, " as by law established," retains certain special privileges.

Not one of these sects has been, or is now, fighting for Freethought or individual liberty as a principle of its faith. Their attitude to science and criticism is, of course, their own concern; but when this attitude is practically applied in the persecution of popular Freethinkers under blasphemy laws, in enforcing Lord's Day observance, or in introducing religious instruction into State-aided schools, it becomes the concern of every dissentient citizen. Whatever religious equality they enjoy, such dissentients have won step by step against Rome, against the Establishment, and against the Protestant sects, which demanded equal rights for themselves, but also equal right to persecute where heresy was in question.

Some English people boast a good deal of the equality of all classes before the law. It is well to remind them that the Test Act and the Corporation Act were not repealed till 1828. Only as recently as 1846 was the legal obligation to attend the parish church on Sunday formally removed by 9 and 10 Vic. c. 59. Dissenters were not admitted to degrees at the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and Durham till 1854 and 1855, nor to public and endowed schools till 1868 and 1869. Only in 1871, by 34 and 35 Vic. c. 26, were non-Anglicans entitled to share in all the rights and privileges of Oxford and Cambridge. Before the passing of the Oaths Act in 1888, non-Christians refusing to take the oath were rejected as jurymen, M.P.'s, and witnesses in Court, and were often gratuitously insulted by judges and magistrates. Finally, not till 1917 did the decision in the Bowman case completely establish liberty of bequest for Freethought purposes.

Religious inequality still survives to a noticeable degree in England. It may be considered under two heads: (1) the special disabilities imposed upon anti-Christians, and (2) the special privileges enjoyed by Christians. Of the former the Blasphemy Law stands first in importance. This subject has been so prominently before Freethinkers of late that it would be traversing a well-worn track to treat it in detail here. It will usffice to note that the State still punishes for the " crime " of blasphemy, not on the ground that it is an offence against God, but as likely to create a breach of the peace where the decencies of controversy are violated. In practice the law is put in operation only against those whom the authorities regard as belonging to the poorer and less cultured class of Freethinkers. In the recent New Zealand case, however, political animus was clearly a motive in the prosecution. Another special disability is the state of the law concerning Sunday observance. A number of tradesmen have recently been prosecuted in the North of England for Sunday trading, and in many of the public parks innocent games are prohibited on the first day of the week. In Victoria, Australia, too, there have been prosecutions this year under 29 Car. II. c. 7. One may mention as another disability the power exercised by the Court of Chancery in regard to its wards. Mr. Betrand Russell stated last March that, though his father left express instructions for the appointment of Freethinkers as guardians to his children, the Court ignored the testamentary injunction and appointed Christians.

One can do no more than mention the bare details of the privileges still attached to religious organizations. Two of these privileges are enjoyed by all Christian bodies—religious instruction in State-aided schools, and the exemption of Churches and Chapels from the payment of rates. The Establishment, besides, has its endowments and tithes, compulsorily levied, and its lords spiritual in the upper chamber of the legislature. Its clergy are exempt, wholly or partially, from payment of poor rates. The King, who is officially the " defender of the faith," by his coronation oath undertakes to uphold in England and Scotland " the Protestant religion established by law."

Moreover, the recital of prayer at the opening of Parliament is further recognition of religion by the State.

As an indication of how far we are from the realization of our ideal—the complete secularization of the State—one notes that, though marriage before a registrar is now quite usual, the solemnization of marriages is still largely a clerical function. It is significant, too, that when the Bill for extending facilities for divorce was before Parliament recently, most of the objections raised against the measure were based upon religious grounds.

The only remedy for the existing conditions of inequality is the general spread of such ideas concerning religious authority as will lead to complete neutrality towards religion on the part of the State. More particularly, one may urge that the Christian Church is essentially an organized system, and to-day more than ever such authority as it retains, at any rate in Protestant communities, is derived from this organization rather than from its doctrines. We must meet organization by organization and resist every infringement of our equal rights. Let us make it quite clear to Christians that we do not regard equal citizenship for the Secularist as a concession which it is in their gift to grant or to withhold arbitrarily. In the second place, let us never apologize for being Freethinkers. A reverential attitude either to specific doctrines intellectually discredited, or to the institutions in which they are embodied, naturally encourages the civil power to protect them—by coercive measures if necessary. Lastly, we must seek to impress upon the indifferent the need of free inquiry on religious subjects as the essence of any culture worth maintaining. Mill long ago insisted that it is precisely those least inclined to fit themselves into the petty ruts of collective mediocrity who probably have something of value to contribute to the world's thought. Enforced uniformity is a prolific parent of religious hypocrisy, which reacts upon the whole mental and moral life of the community. Outward compliance where there is no inward conviction becomes the normal attitude of all except the most vigorous minds. If all Freethinkers in England to-day openly expressed their convictions, probably no man or body of men in the nation would have any rights or privileges based upon religious subscription.

II.

By R. H. Rosetti.

If one takes the heading "Freethought and Religious Equality" to mean the discussion and advocacy of religion and of Freethought under equal conditions, that is, either restriction for all, or freedom for all and favour for none, there can be little doubt as to the attitude of Freethinkers and organised Freethought. Judging from the character of Christianity—the dominant form of religion in England—and from the history of its practice, one may be equally certain as to the direction which the heartfelt desire of the respective Christian sects would take. Just as the fullest and freest expression and discussion of religion is the inspiring stimulus of healthy Freethought activity, so an all-to apparent desire for exclusive freedom and favour for self is characteristically the attitude of all Christian sects, which implies a general approval of the suppression of Freethought.

Obviously with that spirit animating Christendom, religious equality is impossible—even among themselves—consequently the destruction of that spirit becomes an essential objective in the campaign for religious equality. It would be unwise indeed to imagine that this Christian standpoint is the result of a natural indifference to justice, or of ignorance of the inequalities and persecution weighing upon Freethought, and that we have but to awaken a sense of justice in the Christian and to acquaint him with the legal and social restrictions inflicted upon Freethinkers in order to win his support for their removal. The attitude of Christianity towards Freethought has a far more deep rooted origin, which does not come within the category of ignorance or indifference. Whilst C 3 intelligence may aptly describe the mentality of the great majority of Christian rank and file, and a large portion of the clergy, we must understand Christianity as a purely human institution of gigantic proportion and vast organization run under a business polity, a policy carefully designed, weighed and controlled by an inner circle of cunning, diplomatic minds, animated by the one desire to strengthen the grip of their institution upon society. The legal and social restrictions and disfavours put in motion against Freethought and Freethinkers, whilst perhaps not free from bigotry and spite, reveal more truly a well-grounded and sustained fear of free inquiry in matters of religion. A fear of the deadly effect of Freethought upon religion, a fear born of suspicion, nourished and developed by experience, and revealing the Church without a single natural or healthy weapon of defence, characterizes the Christian's antagonism to the fullest investigation and criticism of his faith. Therefore Freethought must dismiss the idea of any voluntary movement towards religious equality coming from the churches until they give indication of suicidal tendencies.

To expect the churches to concede religious equality is to expect them to abandon their carefully devised essential scheme of protection, to cut off a vital source of artificial respiration, and to volunteer immense disadvantages for themselves coupled with increased advantages for the deadly enemy, Freethought, against which they cannot now hold their own. For religious equality must embrace Disestablishment of the Church, cessation of State favours, payment of rates, abolition of tithes, abolition of religious tests in public services, repeal of blasphemy laws, secular education—every item inflicting a blow upon organized religion.

For Christianity, gloomy and perilous indeed would be the prospect of standing on its merit in fair and open contest with its Freethought antagonists. Therefore, if a wholesome and voluntary effort towards religious equality is not to be expected from the churches, Freethinkers must firmly grasp that position, and look to Freethought alone for the necessary driving power to win religious equality. Nor must we fall into the error of treating Christians as normal creatures where spiritual matters are concerned. However desirable a person the Christian may be on other topics, the Church has seen to his special preparation for spiritual affairs, with the result that where religion is concerned the normal mind ceases to operate. The most grotesque abuse of intelligence becomes a virtue, and meanness and falsehood, frequently translated into cowardly and contemptible actions are sanctified in the service of the Lord.

With few exceptions Christians readily take upon themselves an assumed, and apparently agreeable, duty of pouring libel, social contempt and injustice upon Freethinkers wherever possible. Religion will concede to Freethought just what Freethought is strong enough to take, and nothing more. And Freethought can grow strong only in proportion as it weakens religion. Our success in the struggle for religious equality will be measured by our success in loosening the grip of religion upon its victims. All Freethought successes in fact have been secured by working along these lines, and not until Freethought has made the way safe for Christians will the latter venture on it.

Thus as religion weakens the outlook for religious equality becomes brighter. Undeceived by Christian cant and hypocrisy, the various stages to this equality

will be secured only when religion is no longer strong enough to prevent it. And when the final stage has been reached and the "cease fire" sounded, although the religious remnants will do most of the shouting, it will not reverse the records of history, showing that religious equality was a triumph for Freethought against the forces of religion, in a sternly contested conflict, and won cleanly by the usual methods of conquest.

Book Chat.

Christian Theophagy.

Theophagy, as the reader is no doubt aware, is the scientific term for the primitive custom of eating the god, for what we are told a sincere but rather coarse Calvinist of the sixteenth century once referred to, in connection with "the most estimable of sacraments," the holy Eucharist, as a "cyclopean god-gobbling." This subject has been discussed by Mr. Lloyd from the standpoints of anthropology and the origins and history of Christianity, in his lucid and learned pamphlet. Most of my readers, I imagine, will be content to accept Mr. Lloyd for their guide in this *terra incognita* of comparative religion. But it is just possible that there are some blessed with leisure and a leaning to scholarship, and they may wish to consult and check the authorities upon which my friend has based his excellent little study. They cannot therefore do better than turn their studious attention to Dr. Preserved Smith's *Short History of Christian Theophagy* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 10s. net), a brilliant excursion in the field of comparative religion written by a scholar who, as we are told, is not a propagandist and who has no cause to serve save that of knowledge for its own sake.

The first two sections of the book, "Preparatio Evangelica" and "Paul and his Symmystæ," were originally printed in the *Monist* for 1918, and I remember noting at the time their importance as a buttress to the Freethought position. Other sections deal with transubstantiation, consubstantiation, Luther Zwingli, Calvin, and other reformers; there are also nine pages of bibliography.

The sacrifice of the mass, the eaten body of the saviour, is shown not to be peculiar to Christianity, but to go back to a time when man was just emerging from an animal form. It is a striking instance of the conservatism of religion. But, as Dr. Smith says, not all the examples of god-eating are to be found among "the beastly devices of the heathen":—

> In Europe the Catholic Church has resorted to similar means for enabling the pious to enjoy the ineffable privilege of eating the persons of the Infant God and his Mother. For this purpose images of the Madonna are printed on some soluble, harmless substance (ordinary wafer-paper, I suppose) and sold in sheets like postage stamps. The worshipper buys as many of these sacred images as he has occasion for, and, affixing one or more to his food, swallows the bolus.....In his youth Count Hoensbroech and his devout mother used to consume portions of God and of his Mother with their meals.

The practice was officially sanctioned by a decree of the Inquisition in July, 1903.

It is precisely the Roman Catholic Church that has preserved the pre-Christian mystery-religions in all their crude supernaturalism. It was only among the lower orders of pagan society that the tradition of the eaten god was preserved. "Not many wise, not many noble," says Dr. Smith, "were called to salvation by the blood of Bacchus or of Attis." The expressed opinion of a Roman philosopher as to the Real Presence is very much what the expressed opinion of a modern scientist is now: "When we call corn Ceres and wine Bacchus," says Cicero, "we use a common figure of speech; but do you imagine that anybody is so insane as to believe that the thing he feeds on is God?"

And yet there are Christians to-day holding advanced liberal views and fully aware that it was Paul who imported the Eucharist from the mystery religions, who accept the sacraments, if not as assertions of historical truth, yet as judgments of spiritual value. This is the attitude of Professor Kirsopp Lake. But any experience in life may have a spiritual value; there is no reason why it should be limited to one form. "More and more," says Dr. Smith, "men are finding the needs of their inner life supplied and their value-judgments given, in poetry, in art and in science, and less and less in the repetition of outworn survivals from a primeval state."

Dean Inge and the Victorians.

In a number of years the Victorians have had a rough time of it at the hands of our young barbarians of criticism. It was inevitable because the ideals, the style and the mannerisms of an age are always more or less ridiculous in the eyes of its successor, and the Victorians had an exaggerated notion of their importance. The poets disguised themselves as prophets and seers, and seeking to give mankind a moral uplift, they let down their art pretty badly. The novelists destroyed their creative balance by directly attacking social evils, apparently unaware that art cannot exist in an atmosphere of moral indignation. Philosophy was unashamedly dogmatic and amusingly self-complacent. It is obvious enough that the Victorian age had its weak spots, yet its admirers have no difficulty in making out its claim to greatness; even if we do not agree with Dean Inge (*The Victorian Age*, Cambridge University Press, 2s. 6d. net) that it will "appear to the historian of the future as one of the twin peaks in which English civilization culminated." The other "twin peak," the Elizabethan age was a wonderful flowering-time. But it was not merely the culmination of a form of spiritual activity; it was the promise and pledge of another and different civilization. We can now see the connection between the age of Shakespeare and Bacon and that of Milton and Hobbes; and for posterity there will doubtless be a similar close relation between the Victorian age and ours which is not so intellectually barren as our pessimists would have us believe.

However that may be, I am grateful to Dean Inge for his vigorous defence of the Victorians. His lecture should knock a little sense into the heads of people like Mr. Robert Nicholls, who recently amused a cynical interviewer by talking about the ridiculous doctrines of Herbert Spencer's view of evolution in which the struggle to survive is considered the only factor in evolution. It is only your self-satisfied literary man coddled by one of the many mutual admiration groups, who could bring himself to talk about the flummery of Spencer, and describe him as a pedant. Spencer knew quite as well as we do that one of the factors in *conscious* evolution was, what has been called, the struggle *against* the struggle for existence. This, however, is one more example of the fatuity of an otherwise intelligent man who is moved to express an opinion on matters beyond his mental reach.

I notice that Dean Inge is pleased to disparage the literature of our day. His censure is largely discounted when we remember that for Macaulay there was nothing worth reading in 1850. And some thirty years later, as my friend Robert Ross pointed out, a third rate writer, W. E. H. Lecky, made a speech at a dinner of the Authors' Society, in which he said that he was sorry to say that there were no great writers alive, and no stylists to compare with those who had passed away. Yet Pater, Meredith and Lang were among the guests. Tennyson was president of the society, and Ruskin was still alive. There always are and always will be some people who find it safer and more congenial to disparage a writer of their own time, and to talk vaguely about the spiritual poverty of the age. Frankly, I have no use for critical wet blankets. With the Victorian artists and thinkers I have no quarrel, but I do not set them above or below contemporary writers. I prefer Mr. Arnold Bennett to Thackeray, Mr. Wells to Dickens, Mr. Galsworthy to Meredith, Mr. James Joyce to Stevenson, Mr. Bernard Shaw to W. S. Gilbert, not so much because they are

finer artists, but because they interpret for me modern ideas and ideals. This also is my reason for preferring Dean Inge to Arnold as a critic of life and religion.

The decadence of modern literature is a phrase we often hear from people who pleased to dwell only in the past. And in the same breath we are told that our art is shamelessly original. How are we then to square decay with and excess of energy? The truth is that there is no decay of civilization. Gibbon's title to his history was a brilliant misnomer. Certainly there are literary periods when life is at low water, but these are imitative periods and even then it is possible that only one or two forms of mental activity are in a fallow state. In the eighteenth century poetry was at a standstill; but the novel, prose comedy and history were putting forth healthy and vigorous branches. Now the objection is not that we are imitative, but that we have no wholesome respect for tradition, that we are too ready to experiment, too ready to recast the world in moulds we have made for ourselves, in fact, that we are too much alive. And yet our belated Victorians assure us that art and letters are travelling the road to dusty death.

Mr. Bertrand Russell and Freethought.

I believe that there are people who imagine that the Freethought battle is won. If they will take the trouble to read Mr. Bertrand Russell's *Freethought and Official Propaganda* (Allen and Unwin, 2s. net), this illusion of the will to believe should be dissipated and replaced by the will to find out. Mr. Russell discovers enemies to Freethought in education, in economic pressure, and in official propaganda. He is a vigorous champion of Freethought and his suggestions for eliminating the will to believe, if carried out, would bring us a little nearer that intellectual aristocracy to which I trust we are moving.

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

Correspondence.

CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—After having read Mr. H. Cutner's letter in your issue for June 11, I re-read my "dismal screed" in the previous number, and I really fail to see what there was in it to work up Mr. Cutner to such a pitch of irascibility and sarcasm. I have noticed among some of your contributors a tendency to interpret the weakening of the interest of people in Christianity as a triumph for Freethought, and have pointed out that the jubilant note is a little premature, because, unfortunately, religion is not giving way to a loftier and more scientific *Lebansanschauung* but to imbecilities which are baser in their nature, and the churches are becoming empty not because "the earth has already become full of knowledge," but on account of the overcrowding of the boxing rinks and other degrading attractions.

Mr. Cutner seems to be quite at home in Freethought, and smelling in me the novice, he is kind enough to treat me to a course of Freethought philosophy. Now, I am quite willing to learn from anybody, but I am afraid that his conception of the ideals of Freethought is too crude for me to be able to digest.

Happiness, Mr. Cutner explains for my benefit, is his ideal in life, "like that of most Freethinkers." Now, this is quite correct, although this is certainly not the only one we should aspire to. It will perhaps interest Mr. Cutner, whom my Anarchism seems particularly to tickle, to learn that this is precisely the ideal of Anarchism. But what is happiness? Mr. Cutner is not short of answer. Happiness is something that varies, like taxes. Mr. Cutner enjoys a good glass of beer and the antics of Charlie Chaplin and Harry Tate, whereas his neighbour is fond of a good boxing match, and so on. Although not having the pleasure of knowing Mr. Cutner personally I have too good an opinion of his mentality to imagine that he was thinking before penning his letter. If he did, he would have realized that this is the individualism of the prehistoric man, and if logically carried out would carry to anything but happiness. What if my neighbour's idea of happiness is killing himself or others? And why have the N.S.S. and disturb the peace of the Christian, who is quite happy with his faith, and has no desire of giving it up?

Happiness is a state of mind produced and conditioned by the knowledge that my thoughts and actions are beautiful and good and contributing to create the same type of mind in my neighbour, and helping to accelerate the progress of humanity. It is wrong to think that because life is short and there is no hereafter we must take as much as we can. Life is a game of take and give, and if there is happiness in the take-side of life, there is a nobler and more intensive happiness in its give-side. It is always more pleasant to give than to take. We are not beggars, who only take but do not give. By its constitution and history the human race belongs to the animal family that creates, like bees, etc., and if there is no Creator we are the creators of this planet. I believe in the mission of the human race, although some people discard the idea, thinking that teleology presupposes theology. But this is not necessarily so. Everything that develops in accordance with the laws which are inherent in it is carrying out its mission. Now the mission of the human race is, despite numerous slips and lapses, a steady process of *spiritualization*. As science has taught us, we have started at the very bottom of animal life and we are unceasingly climbing towards the dizzy heights of godliness, or, as we would say, of humanity. Important as the individuum may be, it is in relation to humanity and its constant process of evolution, human progress, as the part to the whole, as the rain-drop to the ocean. If we may take from the inherited store as much as we like, we must not only see that the store should not become exhausted, but, short as our life may be, that it accumulates and enlarges for the benefit of those who will follow us. As there is more happiness in giving than in taking we must give to the utmost of our abilities. My happiness does not mean my personal happiness, even if not acquired at the expense of my neighbour, but that which is produced and conditioned by and inseparably connected with the happiness and advancement of my neighbour and the whole human race. I really believe in a trinity, in the trinity of I, Thou and We.

I am afraid my letter has become too long, but I should like to briefly touch upon one more point.

Mr. Cutner especially objects to my disparagement of sport. I do not know whether this is the zeal of the bulldog breed, whose national deity has been desecrated or of the assimilated foreigner, who is as a rule *plus royaliste que le roi*, but it really does not matter. In the present state of affairs, where man is obliged to work very hard in order to eke out a living, I recognise the benefit of sport for brain-workers or those who are doing sedentary work, although I think that it would be far nobler and more useful if instead of indulging in sport people would work an allotment or, say, make bathchairs and cradles for the poor. (What an old fogey I must be!) But when gymnastics turn into athletics and human beings are degraded into fighting cocks, when the whole thing becomes a matter of betting and gambling, revealing thereby the basest animal features which the best of us are trying to eradicate but which still are dormant in man, or when this is encouraged by government and capital for the purpose of stultifying the masses and takes away their attention from their misdoings, I—I am here speaking for myself—would most certainly be for stopping it even in an Anarchist state of society, where the word *verboten* should really be unknown. After all, liberty is not licentiousness.

This is also the reason why I said that I should rather see the churches packed with brainless throngs, etc. From two evils we naturally choose the lesser, and the infantile drivel of humanity's first acquaintance with mental activity is certainly superior to the glories of our Simian age. The transition from Christianity to the present mode of life is far from being gratifying.

J. M. SALKIND.

[We have been obliged to abridge this letter owing to its great length. Will correspondents please bear in mind that a letter ought not to run to the length of an essay?—Editor.]

Mr. George Whitehead's Lecturing Tour in Plymouth.

June 11 to June 16, 1922.

Mr. George Whitehead commenced his Plymouth campaign by holding a large meeting on the Quay on Sunday morning. In spite of the attractions provided by numerous other meetings our audience remained attentive and appreciative to the end and we disposed of a large amount of literature and forms of membership. In the evening we were on the Market Square, taking possession of and retaining a huge audience most of which had already listened to a Communist speaker.

Monday found the crowd awaiting our arrival, while a religious enthusiast talked to the cobblestones anent our wickedness. Some platform opposition was offered and disposed of, a good collection taken and another large literature sale registered.

Tuesday found us at Devonport on a badly advertised pitch utilizing the services of a ginger-beer box on a raw windy evening. The crowd, however, gathered round and remained interested to the end.

Thursday's meeting on the same spot attracted a numerous gathering, listening with the attention characteristic of this week's work. Scores of questions and platform opposition helped us to ram home our message in spite of the presence of a good number of bluejacket supporters requiring some tact to handle.

On Wednesday we again found a big crowd eagerly awaiting our arrival, and speaking upon the "Religious Aspect of the Irish Question," we fed it upon the pure milk of the word, while a rival Catholic orator made angry noises to about three of the faithful in a fruitless attempt to get a hearing. An unconscious Christian humorist occupied the platform and was laughed out of court for his pains by the crowd which testified to its appreciation of Secularist propaganda by a very decent collection and an eager demand for our literature.

The concluding meeting on the Square, Plymouth, was remarkable for its enthusiasm and literature sales, which surpassed the very high totals of the other evenings.

Altogether the seven meetings were among the most successful we have conducted. The result will be the resuscitation of the Plymouth Branch, which has the chance of growing to be one of the largest in the movement.

I have to thank Mr. and Mrs. McCluskey for their most kindly hospitality, and Messrs. Churchill and Hick for their loyal support and assistance.

George Whitehead.

Obituary.

It is with deep regret that I have to inform you of the decease of one of your valuable paper's oldest subscribers in the person of J. O. Warren, of this town. He it was who introduced myself and several others to the "Free," as your paper is called amongst ourselves. A very ardent admirer of the late G. W. Foote and yourself, his greatest disappointment was his inability to get over to Nottingham last March 5th and the recent conference and annual meeting. He was a very respected citizen, having held the post of conductor of the Ilkeston Glee Choir for over twenty years. A member of the R.A.O.B., of which he had been honoured with the fourth degree, also had held the head office of this district in the order.

J. Fox.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on post-card.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

Ethics Based on the Laws of Nature (19 Buckingham Street, Charing Cross) : 3.30, Mr. Siddle, "The Prospects of Naturalistic Morals." All invited.

South Place Ethical Society (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.2) : 11, S. R. Ratcliffe, "The Intellectual Reaction in America."

OUTDOOR.

Bethnal Green Branch N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand) : 6.15, Mr. Burke, A Lecture.

North London Branch N. S. S. (Regent's Park) : 6.30, Mr. Rosetti, A Lecture.

South London Branch N. S. S. (Brockwell Park) : 3.15 and 6, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, "The Story of the Ages."

West Ham Branch N. S. S. (Corner Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.) : 7, Mr. A. D. McLaren, "The Workers' Interest in Science."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

South Shields Branch, N.S.S.—Saturday, June 24, Picnic, Jesmond Dene; Sunday, June 25 (Marsden Miners' Hall, Imeary Street) : 6.30 Mr. G. Whitehead, "Religion and the Social Problem."

THE "FREETHINKER."

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