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Views and Opinions.

A Sabbatarian Defeat.

The Sabbatarians have received a nasty jar. By an overwhelming vote the London County Council has decided to permit games to be played in the Parks on Sundays. The churches and chapels did their best to defeat the proposal; mothers' meetings and the like were organized to bombard members protesting against people being permitted to enjoy themselves on Sunday. But there must have been a very strong manifestation of feeling on the other side for members to vote as they did. Anyway, the vote is an accomplished fact, and the people of London should be heartily ashamed of themselves if they ever permit the vote to be reversed. After all the parks do belong to the people, they are not the property of the advocates of a long-faced day of rest, and while a people may be excused never having had freedom, there is not often much excuse for them if having once had it they allow it to be filched from them again. It was, of course, to be expected that the vote should be accompanied by at least a flicker of nonsense, and this was supplied by the proviso that the games should not be permitted to interfere with the convenience of the general public. That seems a quite unnecessary recommendation. The games are on appointed places, and the space set aside is but a very small portion of the whole of any park. There is no reason why the general public should be inconvenienced on any day, but on the other hand there seems no reason for a special precaution on Sunday. Assuming that a man is inconvenienced by getting a crack on the side of the head on Sunday, it is difficult to realize why he should be less inconvenienced by it on a Tuesday or Wednesday. We do not say that motor-cars must be driven more carefully on Sunday than on any other day, but simply that they must be driven carefully on every day. One assumes that the proviso is a last sop to the theological Cerberus; that Sunday is Sunday, England is England, and that it is almost impossible to do even the right thing without mixing it up with a lot of pious cant. The pretence that Sunday is more “sacred” than any other day must be kept alive. We take it that the only reason why there is no altar to Humbug in Churches is that the Church itself is taken to be sufficient monument.

A Question of “Taboo.”

The striking thing about this opposition to utilizing the Sunday as it should be utilized is the insincerity of the opposition. In the first place it is to be noted that it is mainly offered in opposition to the amusements of the masses of the people. There is no suggestion that the amusements of the wealthier classes should be curtailed by law or by regulation. But one of the main uses of religion in a civilized society is to keep the people “in order,” and it is felt—and properly felt—that if they once throw off religion anything may happen. The Bishop of London once warned a fashionable assembly which did not seem too ready to come up with their subscriptions that but for the Church the East End might take it into its head to visit Park Lane, and there was more in what was said than that usually foolish person saw. In the next place the existence of Sabbatarianism is one more example of the perpetuation of the savage in our midst. Sacred days are just as sensible as sacred stones or holy coats. Sabbatarianism is just an illustration of the persistence of “taboo,” although in the case of the Christian and his Sunday we have the mixing up of two distinct days. Long ago the ancient Chaldeans had devoted a day to Saturn—our Saturday, or Saturn's Day. On the day devoted to that god all work was forbidden, the day was sacred to him, and anything undertaken would prove unfortunate or disastrous. The day devoted to the Sun—Sun's Day—was a day of rejoicing. So the distinction continued till the Christian Church came to power. Then we had two days in conflict. The Sabbath of the Chaldeans, coming directly to the Christian world through the Jews, and the Sunday with its games and rejoicings common in the Pagan world. The Church in its desire to wean the people from their pagan customs gradually transferred the gloom of the day of Saturn to the day of the Sun, and with the rise of Puritanism it gained complete ascendancy. The ghost of the ancient Chaldean triumphed. To work on Sunday became a sin, to enjoy oneself, distasteful. We can see one effect of this in the hearty way in which Christian preachers and pamphleteers manufactured lies by the dozen detailing the accidents and deaths that occurred to the wicked boys and girls who played on Sunday instead of praying. When a case was to be made out Christian preachers have never allowed the truth to stand in the way of its effectiveness. But that is really at the root of the whole question of Sunday. It is a taboo day, and the speakers on the L.C.C. who protested against Sunday games were really the mouthpiece of these ancient Chaldean ghosts, working on behalf of an established superstition that has its origin in the beliefs of still more primitive people.

* * *

An Impertinent Cleric.

There are indications that the Sabbatarians are beginning to realize that their game is nearly up, and it is quite probable that the example of London will be followed by other places in the country. So one is not surprised to find the old game being played by the

clergy. They would prefer to shut all places on Sunday, but if they are to be opened they are willing to support that—when they cannot prevent it—but they ask that playing shall not be permitted during church hours. In a letter to the *Times* of July 15, Dean Welldon pleads for what he calls a "concordat." He says "Christians cannot fail to admit that there are thousands of people who will be habitual worshippers in churches and chapels," and these "deserve the consideration of local authorities." That is very gracious on the part of the Dean, and to some extent marks an advance. It is something to have weakened the offensive arrogance of Christians sufficiently to get them to admit that there are others on earth besides themselves, and that these others deserve consideration. So what the Dean suggests is this: He would restrict the time allowed for games to four hours *between church times*. There would then "be no serious interference with the primary obligation of worship, and the players and the games would enjoy a sufficient opportunity of relaxation without giving pain or offence to a number of their fellow citizens." Confound the man's impudence! In what way can young men and women playing games in a public park, and on spaces set aside for that purpose, interfere with others who wish to attend church? There is no danger of a cricket ball coming through the window, nor will the parson be called on to stop his sermon in order to act as referee in a football match. The players will not force worshippers to stay away from church or close the churches while they are playing. All they ask is to be let alone, and that is the one thing the churchgoer will not do. He goes to church himself, but he is not happy while others are enjoying themselves. No doubt there are some people who derive enjoyment from collective misery, but it would surely be better for the church-going Christian to try his hand at being decently human on Sunday, and see how it agreed with him. It might seem strange at first, but in time the habit would grow, and he would discover that genuine enjoyment loses nothing of its health-giving properties because one has it on the "Lord's Day."

* * *

Secularise the State.

The interference of the clergy in this matter is, after all, only one aspect of a much larger question. This is the interference of the priest in political and social affairs. That is always dangerous, and it is sometimes disastrous. For the parson is not in politics for the primary purpose of bettering the community, but for safeguarding the interests of his creed. He may debate the question on another ground, but he settles it on that one. And it is one of the evil features of religion that the more earnest a man is about his religion the more apt he is to make it a public nuisance. The truth of this is seen in the fact that in every country in the world where the clergy have gained a large influence in politics, sooner or later the secular power has been compelled in sheer self-defence to take steps for self-protection. An extreme case of this is seen and recognized by most in the case of the Jesuits, but every sect plays the part of the Jesuits to the extent of its opportunities, even if not with their skill. Now it is no cure for this to say that clergymen shall not interfere in political matters. That is to impose a disability on men because they are religious, and to a freethinker disabilities on that head are to be resisted just as much as though they are imposed in consequence of anti-religious opinions. The real cure is to see to it that the State stands completely aloof from all religious questions, and treats these as matters which are wholly and exclusively within the province of the individual. The London County Council has no business to concern itself with the question of whether games on Sunday will cause pain

to the churchgoers any more than it has to prohibit me eating a beefsteak because my doing so causes pain to a vegetarian. The State has no right to trouble itself with teaching religion in its schools, or to endow churches and chapels by remitting rates, which all the rest of the taxpayers have between them to make good. All these affairs should be left outside the purview of public bodies save to discharge the duties which fall to them as ordinary citizens. And if the labour leaders and labour representatives in this country were clear-headed enough to see in which direction their permanent interest lay, and had a genuine regard for principle and a real love of liberty, they would make it an irreducible part of their programme.

* * *

A Day of Demoralisation.

I have space only for touching on one more point in connection with this question of the right use of Sunday. Last week in another part of this paper I called attention to a leading article in the *Times* which pointed out the demoralizing consequence of making Sunday a day of dullness and shutting young people off from all healthy games and sports. As I have been stressing this fact for over thirty years, I was naturally pleased to find the *Times* a convert, even though a late one. But if Sunday to-day, comparatively civilized as it is, has that effect, what are we to say of the fact that over ten generations of young people have grown up under these same demoralizing conditions? They have been denied a healthy way of spending Sunday; museums, art galleries, libraries, playing fields have been closed to them, they have had nothing left but a day of enforced idleness, with countless opportunities of picking up bad habits, and as they grew older nothing but the public-house to offer them a little delusive life and brightness. I say deliberately that in the past three centuries of the history of this country there has been no other institution that has tended so powerfully to demoralize character as the Christian Sunday. And it has been in the interests of an army of priests who have quite realized that if their creed is placed in competition with healthy secular entertainments and instruction it will not stand. The fight of the clergy against a rational day of rest proves the truth of this. All the talk in other directions is so much insincerity. At bottom it is a fight between a senseless superstition and a rational appreciation of life and its possibilities. It is a question that involves one-seventh of the life of each of us. But we are fighting a class that would sacrifice six-sevenths of our life rather than run the risk of losing a seventh part of their position or incomes.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Foreign Missions.

THE Rev. W. B. Selbie, M.A., D.D., Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, is a profoundly evangelical divine of the orthodox type. He held pastorates at Highgate and Cambridge before accepting the position he now occupies in succession to the late Dr. Fairbairn. Like Dr. Horton, the Principal is a firm believer in and eloquent advocate of Foreign Missions. As is well known the idea of converting the whole world to Christ owes its origin to the conviction that Christianity is the only true religion, and that without it salvation is impossible. This exclusiveness of the new religion was boldly declared by Peter before the Sanhedrim at Jerusalem when he said of Jesus that "in none other is there salvation, for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts iv, 12). In all the Pauline Epistles this exclusiveness is taken for granted. According to Paul's teaching no man can be saved without confessing with his mouth Jesus as

Lord and believing in his heart that God raised him from the dead. This year it was Principal Selbie who preached the annual sermon of the London Missionary Society, and he chose for his text the following words: "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." The cry for help is universal, though very few people realize what kind of help they need, and what they need most they generally do not want. Dr. Selbie spiritualizes this and says:—

Paul understood that Macedonia did not want him. Europe did not want him. Those gay, busy cities there, to which afterwards he went.....did not want him. How they would have laughed if anyone had told them that here was an ugly little Jew dreaming in Troas and thinking he had got something which they needed. How they would have laughed! And how the world laughs to-day when we tell it that in the Christian Church—no, not in the Christian Church, in the Christ who is Head of the Church—there is the answer to their need! We have the Word, we have the very thing that they are dying for lack of.....Macedonia did not want Paul.....And the world to-day does not want Christ. It needs him, but it does not want him.

We say, on the contrary, that the world does not want Christ simply because it does not need him. It has never taken kindly to him, and it came to be known as Christian against its will. He was forced upon it by a haughty emperor. And even to-day Christendom covers comparatively very little more area than the Roman Empire did in the fourth century. Principal Selbie goes further still and admits that in this twentieth century Christ means very little even to the people who bear his name.

We are Christians, slaves of Christ, and yet how much time in our waking hours does Christ occupy? We are just as busy, just as distracted, just as full of the momentary interest as most of the men and women round about us. We have no eyes for realities; we have never seen the vision; we have never really heard the voice of God.

That being undoubtedly true, the question naturally arises, what is it that makes Christ of value to the world? What has he done or is doing even for his disciples who so easily forget him?

Principal Selbie has much to say of what Christ was and did for Paul, which, alas, he neither is nor does for modern Christians. Curiously enough, he cannot praise Paul without censuring his fellow Christians. Paul "was a legalist once," he says, "with a legalist view of God; and we are most of us legalists still." Yes—

We are most of us legalists still. God is a frightening object to many of us; we are still afraid of him; and the world outside, that Heathen world, with which we are concerned, is still more afraid of him.

Paul was a miracle-worker: "At one single stroke the Apostle lifted off that pall of fear which hung over the world in those early days." Of course, that was a supernatural act; but there are doubts about it, for that awful pall "is hanging still." After all, Paul's "single stroke" achieved practically nothing for mankind. The world is to-day what it was in his day, neither much better nor much worse. Individuals, like Dr. Selbie, may believe and feel that there is a God who is love, and if the belief and feeling are sufficiently strong and vehement they have an experience indescribably sweet and joyous, which experience the theologians speak of as the only absolutely conclusive evidence of the Divine existence. But such people are few and far between, and the impression they make upon the world is the slightest conceivable. In other words, the number of whole-hearted believers even in Christendom is tantalizingly

small. The Principal admits the truth of that statement; and yet he affirms "that man cannot but be religious, that he was made for God; and that when he forgets that, when he leaves his religion, he ceases to be truly a man." It follows of necessity that Christendom contains alarmingly few people of whom it can be said that they are truly men and women, although they were all made for God, and cannot but be religious. The Principal is anything but consistent in his various statements; but the inference one is bound to draw from his sermon is that professing Christians generally are not a credit to their Lord and Master Jesus Christ, and that only one here and there can be said to be worthy of the name. Then we ask, on what ground can foreign missions be justified? If Christ is such a failure at home, why send him to Heathen lands? If, after fifteen hundred years of Christian history, European Christians have no eyes for realities and have never really heard the voice of God, what good would result from the conversion of Indians, Chinese, and Japanese to Christianity? Paul teaches that in Christ there can be neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female; but in no Christian land under the sun has that beautiful ideal been realized, nor is it ever likely to be realized. And yet, face to face with the wicked divisions rampant in modern society, the guide of budding ministers at Mansfield College has the audacity to tell us how "that doctrine, following as it does naturally and inevitably from the doctrine of God in Christ, changed the face of society gradually." That is not true, and never has been true, as the preacher himself well knows. Whilst that doctrine is claimed to have changed the face of society gradually, the Christian Church is represented as only just working towards it. It was not true even for the Apostle Paul that there was neither male nor female, for he boldly taught that the latter should always be in a state of servile subjection to the former. Years ago eminent British Christians visited South African mission stations and flatly refused to partake of the Communion side by side with coloured converts. As Dr. Selbie is obliged to acknowledge, "There are people, plenty of Christian people, who tell you, 'Well, it is all very well, you know, but the difference between black and white is a difference you cannot get over.' You cannot, but cannot Christ?" Christ probably never had the chance to face such a problem; but his people have invariably fallen short of the ideal.

One argument against foreign missions is their *futility*. They have never been successful. No Heathen nation has ever been converted to Christianity as a result of the labours of missionaries. There have been numerous Christian missionaries in China for many years, but the Chinese are not a Christian nation. The same thing is true of the Japanese. These Oriental peoples have their own religions which they dearly cherish. There have been missionaries in India for many ages; but comparatively speaking Indian converts are not numerous, and almost every Indian tribe is opposed to Christian missions. We know, in fact, "that Christianity has taken but a poor grip on Hindoo India. Its votaries are nowhere really visible among the population. Its thoughts do not affect the life and perplex the orthodoxy of the creeds. No Indian Christian is a leader or even a quasi-leader among the Indian peoples; and a traveller living in India for two years might leave it without consciousness that any work of active proselytism was going on at all."

Another argument against foreign missions is their *injustice*. It is not fair to attack and seek to destroy any Heathen religion in order to make room for Christianity. Jack London, writing of one of the South Sea islands, represents one of the natives as complaining of what the introduction of Christianity had

ultimately done for his island and its aborigines. As he put it, the man of God arrived first, with the Bible in his hand, who told them how ignorant and depraved they were, and how corrupt and debasing was the religion which they professed. Then he preached Christ to them as the only real Saviour of the world. The man of God had not been there very long before the man of Alcohol made his appearance. Many of the natives died as the outcome of consuming his whiskey. For a time the man of God and the man of alcohol were enemies, but ultimately they became friends and their children intermarried. In the end the island became the property of the white man, for whom the natives were compelled to work or starve. That is substantially a true account of the ultimate effect of missionary work in more countries than one. The truth is that a Christian nation has no moral right to force Christianity upon other people, savage or civilized. Dr. Selbie believes that Christians "ought to unite together for one thing, to evangelize the world." It never occurs to him that Heathen nations do not need and have a right to object to Christian evangelization, and that some Heathen nations, such as the Chinese and Japanese, are morally equal, if not superior to the very highest Christian nation. He knows well enough that Christianity has not regenerated British society, that class divisions and interests disastrously clash, that capital and labour are at daggers drawn, and that real human brotherhood is still nothing but an empty dream; and yet fully aware of the utter failure of Christianity to produce just, sane, and wholesome conditions of life in Europe, he is most eager to do the very utmost to make it the religion of the whole world. Is he not conscious that it is already a wholly discredited and dying religion? Its day is over, it has been weighed in the balance of reason and found wanting.

J. T. LLOYD.

"Chatter About Harriet."

Most wretched men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong,
They learn in suffering what they teach in song.
—Shelley.

SHELLEY'S two marriages have formed the subject of endless debate, and, even now, after the lapse of a century, mud is still thrown at the poet's grave by journalists who have turned moralists for half-an-hour in order to castigate a genius.

Yet, when the story of Shelley's very early marriage to the pretty schoolmate of his sister is told, the note of pity should be heard as much as that of the censor. Shelley, be it remembered, had been expelled from Oxford University for Atheism, and his rigidly orthodox father had cut off a great part of his son's allowance. In these circumstances, his sisters, still at school, with whom he was very friendly, sent Shelley money, and their messenger was their schoolmate, Harriet Westbrook. The young poet was fully alive to the romantic nature of her errand, and was naturally predisposed in her favour. Idealist that he was, he immediately invested her with qualities of mind which she had not. He became more and more interested in her. Chivalry incarnate, his interest merged into a deeper feeling when her intimacy with the Atheist caused her schoolfellows to shrink from her. Then she wrote to him complaining of the tyranny of her home, and he went post-haste to help her. She flung herself in his arms, and the impetuous young poet married her before anyone could stop him. It was Romeo and Juliet all over again.

He was nineteen, and she a pretty girl of sixteen. Things went smoothly for a time, and two years after the Scotch marriage, they were re-married in London, Shelley having an idea that the first marriage was

irregular. Then the rift appeared, and widened. He began to realize that she was but repeating his phrases, and that her mind was imitative and not original. She was, girl-like, more interested in millinery than philosophy. As they drifted apart she became cold and indifferent, and Shelley supposed that he had the gravest reasons for jealousy before they separated. The sensitive poet became miserable, and things went from bad to worse.

All this time Shelley was a disciple of William Godwin, the philosopher. Now he was to make the philosopher's acquaintance, and also meet his daughter, Mary, the child of Mary Wollstonecraft, who, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, had done so much for the cause of Liberty. The memory of her mother filled a large place in her heart, and Shelley's own enthusiasm for that mother's work played an important part in drawing the two together.

One day they met by Mrs. Godwin's willow-shaded grave in Old St. Pancras Churchyard, and there Shelley poured out the story of his unfortunate marriage. Remember, the Godwins had no reverence for marriage as an institution, and Mary, drawn to Shelley by mind and heart, promised to be his comrade. She was angered by Harriet's lack of understanding, by her continuous threats of suicide, and her constant appeals to her husband to love her. It was a womanly contempt for her rival's weakness. No action of Shelley's was like that of an ordinary man, and he started on his second marriage without any arrangements as to money, or with any regard for consequences.

The first marriage began in brightness and finished with the blackest tragedy. Harriet went back with her young children to her relations. Shelley, it is true, treated her well in the matter of money, but she was very young and very weak. Her temperament was ill-balanced, and her life for the next two years must have been a nightmare. At the end of that time, in a fit of melancholy, she carried out the threat she had made so often, and committed suicide. Her drowning in the Serpentine was an awful shock to Shelley. He believed she had been unfaithful to him, and he knew she was indifferent, but she was the mother of his children. Her death rankled, and again and again, in his poems, he shows how the iron had entered his soul.

Shelley married Mary, and soon afterwards financial troubles were dispersed by a slight relenting on the part of the poet's father. It was as well, for it helped to smooth the later years of the poet's life. Shelley was, indeed, fortunate in his second wife. He was happy in finding a woman who was as unconventional as himself, for no other kind of woman could have understood or even tolerated him. She took an interest in his work, and her editions of his poems showed the extent of her care. Had she not married Shelley, she would have withered in the conventional surroundings of an ordinary home. In *Frankenstein* she shows something of her own remarkable talent, but her chief claim on our gratitude is that of Shelley's wife. If she had not loved Shelley, he would never have been such a happy man, nor so splendid a genius. What greater tribute can be paid to any wife? Mary Godwin was the worthy daughter of the noble woman, who, in the old days championed the cause of her sex against the world.

MIMNERMUS.

If to conquer heretics by fire were an art, the executioners would be the most learned doctors on the earth. There would be no more need of study, but the man who subdued his opponent by force would be entitled to burn him. Heresy was something spiritual that could not be cut out with steel, nor burned with fire, nor drowned with water.—Friedrich Heinrich Geffcken.

Lightning Conversion.

CHRISTIAN missionaries make very slow progress in converting the heathen world. They go into all the world, and try to preach the gospel to every creature, but they get extremely few to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Those they do rope in generally belong to the lowest strata of the population, and the well-known expression of "rice Christians" shows the common opinion as to the mercenary character of the converts who figure in missionary society statistics. No impression is made on the educated classes in any heathen nation in the world. The destitute and the outcast furnish the overwhelming majority of the "winnings for Christ." And the few who *are* won by the missionaries in this way are immensely outnumbered by what may be called the "losses for Christ" in Christian countries. Myriads of people become indifferentists every year. Thousands become Freethinkers. There are seven millions of "unbelievers" in France alone—which is more than all the heathen that ever were converted in Asia and Africa.

Now the men of God who are engaged in the soul-saving business abroad are in one important respect just like those engaged in the same business at home. They have all been ordained. They have received the Holy Ghost. And with "the Spirit" operating inside them they ought to gain converts as fast as a Yarmouth trawler hauls in herrings off the Dogger Bank in October.

Why is the process of conversion so slow nowadays? Has the saving virtue of the Holy Ghost been exhausted? Or have the soul-savers not really received the Holy Ghost, as they are said to have done in the prospectuses? Were their ordinations like unsuccessful vaccinations? Did the "imparting" operation fail to "take"? Some sort of answer should be given to these questions.

Nothing is more certain than that the Holy Ghost used to be a splendid missionary; at least, when he (or it) commenced operations in this world—an event which was celebrated last Sunday throughout Christendom.

The Jewish day of Pentecost comes fifty days after the Passover, and on the first day of Pentecost after the Passover on which Christ was crucified the twelve apostles (including Matthias, who had taken the place of Judas) were "all with one accord in one place." It is not very precise, but it will do. They were sitting together in some room of an unspecified house. Suddenly there was a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, and cloven tongues of fire sat upon each of the captains of the first Salvation Army. That the tongues were cloven is a most interesting feature of the occurrence. A cloven tongue is the symbol of lying, and this is an art in which Christian advocates have always been remarkably expert. But that is by the way. The narrative goes on to state that the apostles were "all filled with the Holy Ghost," and that they "began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." A moment before they were all Jews, who spoke nothing but Hebrew, or whatever bastard dialect was common at that time—the Yiddish of A.D. 33. Now they are speaking fresh lingo, and must be wondering what the deuce they are talking about. But the spectators and auditors who had flocked to the spot, attracted by the rumour of the windy noise and the cloven fiery tongues, are wondering still more, and for an excellent reason. They belonged to "every nation under heaven," and they heard the apostles talking in all their different languages. They were "amazed" and they "marvelled"—and no wonder. It was as if a Salvation Army company, in a London back street, suddenly gave up talking bad English and

spoke good French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese. This the clear meaning of the text in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. But the apostle Paul, or whoever wrote the epistles bearing his name, had an opinion of his own about those same "tongues," and sneered at them as a more or less inarticulate species of insanity. Nor will the readers of Carlyle's *Reminiscences* ever forget his graphic account of the "tongues" he heard at Edward Irving's house, and the foolish "lal-lal-lals" of the excited female disciples in the next room.

There is even a discrepancy in the story itself, for some who heard the apostles talking under the influence of the Holy Ghost said that they were "full of new wine," which they could hardly have said if they heard the many-tongued preachers holding forth distinctly and intelligibly. And it must be admitted that Peter's answer to the taunt was, to say the least of it, rather singular. He replied that he was not drunk—it was only nine o'clock in the morning; as though the accusation might have been fairly reasonable had it been nine o'clock in the evening.

That observation of Peter's was the introduction to a vigorous sermon, which is reported verbatim, and which made a powerful impression upon his audience. And the result was highly gratifying; no less than three thousand converts were made that very day.

Well, now, our point is this. If the Holy Ghost, speaking through one missionary's mouth, could convert three thousand unbelievers in a single day, how is it that Christian missionaries, who generally profess to have received the Holy Ghost, are not more successful? Thousands of them are at work, and they ought to make several millions of converts every week. In a few years all the heathen in the world should be brought within the Christian fold. Yet there are far more of them outside it now than there were a hundred years ago.

What is the matter? Are the missionaries only impostors? Have they never received the Holy Ghost? Or is the Holy Ghost himself (or itself) dead? Or is he (or it) in the last stages of decrepitude? Anyhow, the days of lightning conversion are over. Evan Roberts himself is in the doctor's hands, and the great Welsh Revival has dropped from fresh "fizz" to stale "swipes."

G. W. FOOTE.

The Brain and the Soul.

ALL good Christians are agreed that man is distinguished from the lower animals by reason of his alleged possession of an immortal soul. God made all the animals as well as man, but into the nostrils of man the Lord God "breathed the breath of life, and man became a living soul." (Genesis ii, 7.)

Modern spiritualists are not all agreed respecting the origin of man, but they are all satisfied that he possesses an immortal element within him and that he is destined to live on for ever and for ever after his body has ceased to function, decomposed and turned to dust. But though the Christian and the Spiritualist believe most ardently in the soul of man, they are unable to tell you what it is, when it comes into the body, where it is located, or what are its functions while it is connected with the body.

The soul they say is a spirit, but what a spirit is they are unable to say.

Some years ago a Christian with whom I was discussing, defined spirit as "an unknown substance." But if it is an "unknown substance" how are we to know that it is a substance at all? And, if a spirit is a substance, whether known or unknown, is it in the possession of every child born into the world, at the time of birth, or at what period of the development in

the foetus does it make its first appearance? Or are there innumerable souls waiting about somewhere in the universe, ready to take possession of the body of the child directly it is born into the world? These questions have puzzled believers for ages, and they do not appear to have reached a rational conclusion even to this day.

The more closely, however, they consider the problem the more Christians at all events, become convinced that whatever the soul may be in itself, it is without doubt closely associated with the mind of man, or in other words, the functional activity of the brain. This view is comparatively speaking modern even among scientists, many of whom used to hold that the soul was somewhere in the body, or as the philosopher Fischer held was "immanent throughout the whole nervous system."

The late Professor Bain put the case fairly when he said: "No fact in our constitution can be considered more certain than this, that the brain is the chief organ of the mind, and has mind for its principal function." (*Senses and Intellect*, p. 12.) By the word "mind" is meant the totality of mental phenomena. It is quite certain that without brain we can have no thought, no intelligence, no mind; and it is equally certain that a man's mind is dependent almost entirely upon the size, quality and constitution of the brain. With a large brain of good quality you have mental power and vigorous intelligence. Men's brains are on an average larger than women's, women's larger than those of children. The average brain weight of a male European is 49½ ounces; that of a female 44 ounces. But though, as a general rule, the larger the brain the greater the mental power, it sometimes happens that an average sized brain is capable of displaying more intelligence than an abnormally large one. The quality of the brain has much to do with this, for not only does it seem necessary that the brain should be large, but the convolutions should be complex and deep before any extraordinary power is shown. Men of great genius have been found to possess brains of exceptional size and quality, some of them weighing as much as 60 ounces. That there is a distinct relation between the size of the brain and thought-ability may be seen from the fact that the races lowest down the scale of civilization have been shown to possess the smallest brain. Thus we find that the European brain is larger than that of the Hindoo, the North American Indian and the Chinese. Further, the brain of the sane man is considerably larger than that of the idiot. For example, the brains of some idiots have not weighed more than 10 ounces, others have reached as much as 16 ounces, and a few as much as 22 ounces. Insanity, as distinguished from idiocy, is caused, there is very little reason to doubt, through disease of the brain, or from nervous derangement. Now, if intelligence depends upon the size and quality of the brain, the soul of man is injured in proportion as these qualities are deficient. In a healthy, active, well-developed brain you have an active, vigorous, and wonder producing instrument; but in a small, decrepit, diseased brain you have manifestations which indicate either the total loss of intelligence or a very partial possession of it.

In a previous article I dealt with the question of idiots and their alleged possession of souls; and I showed that if they lived again they must be idiots, or they would not be the same persons, and would not remember who they were in their previous existence.

Assuming that the mind of man is the soul, there is absolutely no evidence whatever to lead us to the conclusion that it is immortal, except in the sense that, as matter and force are alike imperishable, the elements of which the brain is composed exist through all eternity in some form or other, in the universe.

Taking the facts as they stand, we find that the brain

of the child is altogether inferior in vigour to that of the man, and with the growth of the body we have a corresponding growth of brain. Not only so, but it is also true that in the brain substance of the child there is more water and less cerebral fat than in that of the adult. It follows, therefore, that, if the soul be identified with the phenomena of mind, it is subject to change; and it grows with the growth of the material organization; that it becomes strong and active as the individual advances towards maturity, and suffers a gradual diminution of power in old age, so that the individual gradually lapses into second childhood, and as the melancholy Jaques expresses it, "In the seven ages of man" (in *As You Like It*) "the last scene of all, that ends this strange eventful history is second childishness and mere oblivion: sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything." And at the death of such an one might we not ask with the writer of Ecclesiastes, "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth (Ecclesiastes iii, 21). Ah! indeed!! Certainly not the Christian, or the Spiritualist either.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

ICHABOD.

(March 5, 1883.)

Write that above your doors, O fools and blind!
The days are past when matter governed mind.
Priests of a dotting god and slaves of slaves
Whose shackled hands dig one another's graves!
Twelve months in prison! Lo! the sentence falls
While hiss and scoffing fill the judgment halls.
Where are the hands which once for this foul creed
'Mid flame and torture made an Atheist bleed?
Dead—like the power your fathers used so well
To send souls heavenward through the flames of hell.
And you, poor palsied demons, you ere long
With them thrice damned shall swell Gehenna's
throng.

Your god is dead; your heaven a hope bewrayed;
Your hell a byword, and your creed a trade.
Your vengeance—what? A mere polluting touch—
A cripple striking with a broken crutch!

—George Chelwynd Griffith Jones.

FOR STRENGTH.

Break not, O heart,
Stern manhood bear the test!
Thou winnest not, but thou hast loved the best,
So part!
Be strong, my heart!

Be strong, my heart!
And strain thy level eyes
Beyond this pain, lest Weakness thee surprise.
Depart!
Break not, my heart!

—William James Linton.

THE POET AND THE PROPHET.

Poet I might have been,
Had I not dreamed that I
Was born to scourge the foul, the false,
With words of prophecy;
Prophet I might have been,
Had I not dreamed that I
Treasured within my deepest heart
The Poet's melody;
Thus was the Poet by the Prophet slain,
And thus the Prophet ever spoke in vain.

—William Maccall.

Acid Drops.

We are glad to see that the London County Council decided by a very large majority to permit games to be played in the parks under their control on Sunday. The chief opponent to the measure was Mrs. Lyall—a member of the syrup making family, we believe. She drew a pathetic picture of the poor mothers who would find their work increased through their children soiling their clothes with Sunday play, and thought that they should be kept at home reading quietly. Most children will be pleased that they have not to call Mrs. Lyall mother. The Rev. F. B. Meyer was also doleful as to what England might become if the sacredness of the Sunday was destroyed. But after all, there is room for improvement in the English people after having had Sunday as it is for so long. And it is just possible that the British public may not be such innate criminals, and that they may be trusted to play cricket or lawn tennis on Sunday without developing a desire to pick pockets or commit murder. We will hope for the best. Lord Haddo thought that people taking a walk in the parks would run the risk of being hit by a cricket ball. But that risk would seem to be as great on week-days as on Sunday. And, after all, if we were only sure that the balls would hit the right people, we do not know that it would be at all a bad thing to happen—that is, if the balls were heavy enough.

Now who the devil is Superintendent Edwards, of the Aberystwyth police? We ask the question because it is this pious and officious person who forbids the people of Aberystwyth to have bands on Sundays. On an application being made for music to be played in the Constitution Hill Gardens, the Mayor asked the Inspector's opinion. He replied that "the police had no objection to the concerts provided the music was sacred, but Churches and chapels were empty enough without having other competing attractions." Permission was refused. It should never have been asked for, and we suggest to the proprietors of the gardens that they have their bands and tell the Mayor and Inspector Edwards to go to the devil. Provided they do not charge for admission to the music the Mayor and the police are powerless. These pious Jacks in office are a public nuisance and offensive to the nostrils.

Australian and New Zealand files report numerous prosecutions either of Sunday traders or of the proprietors of Sunday cinemas. These dominions are supposed to be, and probably are, among the most advanced democracies in the world. The prosecutions, however, have benefited our cause. At one time Australian Socialists denounced those who spent energy in "kicking a dead horse." They are now showing a welcome tendency to recognize that there is still a great deal of vicious life in the "horse."

A few weeks ago the raw nerves of the public were sand papered by the Press, and the process was called "an air scare." On Friday, July 7—

Captain Guest, replying to Viscount Curzon, said his attention had been drawn to the statement issued by the Rolls-Royce firm that unless more orders could be given to them for the construction of aircraft engines they would have to close down that branch of their business.

The Rolls-Royce firm is in business on orthodox lines and has no relation to the following inferences that we draw.

- (1) The Press scare the public without giving facts and real reasons.
- (2) The production of convertible machines for war is made to appear necessary in order to find work.
- (3) War is inevitable after direct or indirect preparation for it.
- (4) To be prepared for war does not insure peace—look at Europe after Germany was ready to the last button.
- (5) War brings unintelligent scum to the top and precipitates us into barbarism—see daily murders.
- (6) Atavistic-minded priests invoke their God into blessing or cursing the results of a system that prevents human beings living without killing each other. We trust that the experts on ritual, vestments, and the Athanasian Creed will be fair to their God and not bring him again

into quarrels that can be demonstrated as precisely as a proposition in Euclid, and that are the results of a system of which they are the muddy-minded lick-spittles and supporters.

When a parent strikes a child it is easier than trying to correct it without force. When nations fight each other, it is easier than thinking. And a nation given over to prize-fighting, military training, and picture palaces is not capable of rooting out our cosmopolitan financiers and their pimps—the priests. The former unbridled mob are the realities at world conferences; statesmen are only their shadows, and priests are the trimmings and trappings.

Bishop Welldon says that to-day the Christian nations are exhibiting a reaction towards Christian morals. We also note that our Government is proceeding with the construction of two battleships which when completed will cost about eight millions each. That is one of the evidences of the reaction we presume.

Another remark of Bishop Welldon's is that if the New Testament were destroyed the Church would remain. "It was not the New Testament but the Church that was the standing witness of Christianity." There is much to be said for this view. Had it not been for the Church it is probable that the New Testament would never have existed. It was largely made to order. The Church was always an adept at manufacturing what evidence it required, from bogus miracles to forged documents.

The Bishop of Exeter, who pleads for fair-sized families, will be grieved to hear that a man at Epping, father of eighteen children, has been committed to prison for not sending his children to school. Eight of the children are under fourteen, and ten of them live in a four-roomed cottage in which there is nothing but bedding. One is left wondering as to what are the qualifications necessary to be a Bishop. One seems to be touching the dark ages in the refutation of the bilge from these dressed up representatives of the lowly Carpenter.

When the next war brings with it the usual talk of patriotism we must remember July 7, 1922—and the Bishop of Exeter whose recent advice to the nation to breed stamps him as a reasoner and thinker on a lower level than that of an Aborigine.

Mr. James Douglas writing in a Sunday paper informs his readers that he broods over the Bournemouth murder. This is very interesting, and if we were Christians we should think that he and his readers were hopeless and fallen, and fit for nothing better. But as we know that mankind has risen, we can distinguish the journalist from newspaper circulation, and affirm that it is the Press and not only the Priest that is nearer to savagery and lower in the scale of evolution than a man who maintains his family by hawking matches—or buys a Sunday newspaper.

Sunday newspapers, with murders well to the front, are not remote in their connection with professional religion. According to the Bible there was a murder in the house—or garden—of our first parents. "It is no longer our reason, but our taste that decides against Christianity," wrote Nietzsche, and a transvaluation of values would define Sunday newspapers and priests as a disease something similar to a blight on apple trees.

We are indebted to the *Glamorgan Advertiser* for calling attention to the following verse from St. Theodulph's hymn:—

O Lord, be Thou the rider,
And we the little Ass
That to God's Holy City
Together we may pass.

There seems to be a deal of suggestive truth about some of these old hymns.

The book entitled *When Labour Rules*, by the Right Hon. J. H. Thomas, M.P., published in 1920 at ten shillings, may now be obtained for half-a-crown. We trust that P.S.A. attendance will not be compulsory when labour rules, and when those sit in the seats of the mighty who now stand or wait on the mat.

The following advertisement appears in the Agony Column of the *South Wales Echo* for July 5:—

Two Christian sisters are praying daily that God might open the heart of a rich Christian philanthropist to advance amount to save their honour and avoid serious family catastrophe.

We wonder what these Christian sisters have been doing?

The Rev. F. H. Waring is disgusted at the scanty bathing costumes at the seaside. It is astonishing the number of pious persons who employ their spare time in looking for girls with short skirts and flimsy bathing dresses. It would serve these people right if ladies resolved to bathe draped from neck to heel in waterproof cloaks. It might spoil the holidays of these servants of the Lord, but it would be a just retribution.

We are indebted to one of our readers for the following:—It appears that Gipsy Smith has been invading Exeter. One of his converts was a local newsagent who had hitherto opened on Sundays. After conversion he gave notice that his shop would in future be closed on the Sabbath. The next Sunday an old lady in the establishment fell downstairs and broke her leg. The Lord keeps an eye on those who love him and keep his commandments.

Doctors will soon have their marching orders. A West Kilburn member of the Baptist Church has been cured of rheumatic fever, meningitis, and encephalitis, and she attributes it to "an intervention of the Saviour to restore her to life." The newspaper report is rather mixed—probably the case itself is—but the only conclusion we draw is that Harley Street will tremble, newspaper insurances be unnecessary, and the medical faculty will retire *en masse* to join the Baptist Church.

The Catholic *Universe* laments that Ingersoll's pamphlets are being sold in Plymouth at a very low price, while the replies to Ingersoll are so costly that they cannot be purchased freely. The poor *Universe* is evidently under the impression that Father Lambert did really demolish Ingersoll's attack on the Bible. Perhaps the best comment on that delusion is that most of what Ingersoll says concerning the Bible is not now seriously disputed by numbers of the best scholars in the Christian world. All they would like is for the attack to be conducted "reverently," which means that you must keep alive this superstition that the Bible is in some way superior to other books, and must not be handled in the same manner as other works.

"As a matter of fact they found in the Old Testament every crime in the calendar. There was no form of savagery and bestiality that they would not find in the Bible." That is not the opinion of an avowed Atheist, but is the deliberate expression of Bishop Talbot, of Pretoria, as reported in the *Cape Times* for June 21. Of course, the opinion is followed by the remark that the folk-lore, etc., in the Bible was God's way of educating man, but it is enough to note that it is this book, which contains every kind of bestiality that Christians are insisting must be made the basis of the education of children.

Another point worth noting is that the revelation of the nature of the contents of the Bible was not given to the world by Christians. In every case it was forced upon Christians by Freethinkers. But for Freethinkers the Christian world would still be where it was several generations ago. And not only have Freethinkers forced

a recognition of part of the truth upon Christians, but scores of them have gone to prison for vindicating the right of saying what a paid Bishop of the Church now announces as a great discovery. We wonder how much more Bishop Talbot would discover if it paid him to do so?

We pointed out a week or so ago that an attempt would be made to bury Shelley the Atheistic Republican under Shelley the poet. On the whole that is what has taken place, although some of the notices have had the daring to point out that was another Shelley to be noticed. It is the typical attitude of our Press to Atheistic men of letters. A cutting from the *Weekly Westminster Gazette*, sent us by a correspondent bears out what we said. In a review of a volume of *Modern French Writers* the reviewer has occasion to notice Anatole France, and finds fault with the author of the volume for paying tribute to his greatness. We are interested in learning that the thought of Anatole France is "cowardly and frivolous," and we are not left long in doubt as to why. "His world is entirely shackled by that narrow and intolerant rationalism which errs so grossly because it has no humility." So one of the greatest living French writers is negligible because he is not pious, and does not fill his works with the insincere cant of respectable piety. The criticism is typically British—even the use of the word "rationalism" in connection with Anatole France. For in France there is no rush after these half-hearted words as a means of evading the reproaches of Christians. To do French thinkers justice they are not afraid of their thought. In this country there is a large class of non-Christians who seem to spend no small part of their time in discovering how they can describe themselves so that Christians will regard them with a sort of pitying tolerance as misguided but otherwise "respectable" people. The strength of our enemies is largely derived from the weakness of our friends.

At Dijon, France, an old church was destroyed by fire, due to lightning. At Lowestoft a Sunday-school girl was drowned during a picnic. In parts of Australia heavy floods were recently reported. At Lincoln Herbert Dade was killed by lightning during a thunderstorm, and the jury returned a verdict of "Death from an act of God." God is still at large. At least the clergy say so.

£10,000 was the final bid at a London sale-room for the stone head of Amervemmes III, of the twelfth dynasty, considered to be the finest example of ancient Egyptian sculpture extant. The price seems high, but it must be remembered that this monarch lived before the creation of the world—if the Biblical chronology is correct.

"Much of the disposition of human life is based on the desire to escape from the thought of God." This gem appears in the *Pilgrim*, and is given to the world by Mr. Edward Shillito. When a Freethinker urges that man's supreme need is release from the supernatural and the burdens which it imposes, he is told that there is an innate craving for it.

A very curious position has arisen in Germany owing to the fall in the value of the mark. For some time numbers of monks and nuns have been leaving England and Ireland to settle in Germany, where their British incomes are of much greater value. They have also been acquiring estates and buildings at low prices. Over 60,000 have settled in the Rhine provinces since 1919, and they are busy buying up estates for "a mere song." So that among the other troubles of the German government it will have to face before long this question of a plague of nuns or monks, who will represent communities, possessed of a great deal of property, and acting all the time in the interests of the Roman Church. Christianity raised itself to power in the early centuries by fattening on the decay of the Roman Empire, and it is only in line with its past history for it to gain power in Germany from the distress of the country. It is wholly parasitic in its nature, and by instinct makes for the host that can supply it with the greater amount of nourishment.

To Correspondents.

Those subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that the renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

S. MARKLAND.—Quite a different matter.

J. F. HAMPSON.—Thanks. We hope that your efforts will bring good results, both as to members for the N.S.S. and new readers for the *Freethinker*. When circumstances permit, we may again try some judicious advertising in the provincial Press.

II. HAYWARD.—Nothing is easier than to meet Christians who have managed to disprove what Mr. Cohen had to say. We hear of them from all over the country. Mr. Cohen was not always present when the disproof was offered, but that is a very minor detail.

FRIENDS around Woolwich and Bristol who expressed a wish to have out-door propaganda in their districts are asked to communicate at once with the Secretary N.S.S. at the office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

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

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

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.

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

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.

We mentioned last week that we were always pleased to see our articles in other journals, and are glad to say that they appear elsewhere not infrequently. All the same, not for our own sake, but for that of the paper itself and of the cause it represents, we should appreciate an acknowledgment of the source of the articles. Last week we called attention to a lapse from the usual journalistic custom of the *New York Truthseeker*. The *Islamic Review* also reprints a large part of our "Views and Opinions" for May 7, with no other acknowledgment than "From a London Weekly."

The fight made by the N.S.S. on the occasion of the recent blasphemy trial had the effect of drawing widespread attention to the blasphemy laws and their operation, and echoes of the case are constantly turning up. There appeared in the *Daily News* the other day a brief, but pertinent letter from an old friend of ours, Mr. J. W. Wood, which would certainly never have been published had the N.S.S. allowed the case to pass without defence. And in the *Solicitors' Journal* there appears a two-column article on the Blasphemy Laws which gives

still greater publicity to the matter. The article does not support, directly, their repeal, but publicity is what we need, and it is never wise nor courageous to allow wicked and partial laws to operate in silence. It is often easier to do so, but that is never the way of a genuine Free-thinker who bears in mind the fighting traditions of the party.

The article in the *Solicitors' Journal* calls for a word or two of comment. In the first place the evasive distinction between the aim of the Common Law and the Statute on Blasphemy is not condemned as clearly as it should be. Mr. Shortt's statement that the Common Law does not attack opinion is sheer nonsense. It is only because a certain opinion is treated in an "irreverent" manner that the common law of blasphemy can be set in operation. The law makes it a criminal offence to attack Christian opinion in a way that the law tolerates with any other opinion. And if that is not a law protecting one opinion and punishing another, we should like someone to explain what it is. There is also a strange omission in the statement of statute law of blasphemy. The article makes the denial of the Trinity blasphemous. That is not the case. That portion of the Act was repealed for the benefit of Unitarians.

The South Shields Branch has arranged for a picnic at Marsden Rock and Grotto on Saturday, July 22. Trains will leave South Shields at 1.30 and 3.40. Mr. Whitehead is lecturing in the district and will be present, and it is hoped that a good number of friends and members will also attend. It may lead to more concerted work in the district.

Very many of our South Wales readers will be interested to learn that Mr. Dan Griffiths has collected into a small volume a number of his articles which have appeared in the *Daily Herald* and the *Socialist Review*, and turned them into a little book under the title *The Real Enemy and Other Socialist Essays*. The essays are in spirit rather wider than the title, and contain much that will interest others besides Socialists. Mr. Griffiths writes clearly, forcefully, and with conviction. They are the essays of a man who has thought out what he has to say, and then says it with courage and decision. And there is never over much of that kind of writing about on any subject. The book is published by the International Bookshops Limited, price 1s. 3d.

In our last issue we gave a report of the celebration of the Shelley centenary at Rome by the "Giordano Bruno" Society. We are pleased to note that so many of the leading Italian journals spoke of the poet in glowing terms. Except the *Revolt of Islam*, Shelley's greatest productions first saw the light in Italy, and several of them were directly inspired by his Italian surroundings. Some of the tributes of the French Press also showed an intimate knowledge of Shelley's poetry, and high appreciation of his genius. *Figaro* had a portrait, and articles by Paul Bourget, Henri Bordeaux and Henri de Régnier.

Those who wish to see the case for Indian self-government, and a restrained indictment of much of what has been going on in India during the past few years would do well to get *India in the Balance*. The book is published at the Mosque, Woking. Naturally it is written from the Indian point of view, but it is well that Englishmen should realize what that point of view is. The difficulty with most of them is to persuade them that there is any point of view other than their own.

Despite the very unfavourable weather last Sunday afternoon, Mr. A. D. McLaren's meeting in Regent's Park was one of the largest he has had during the present summer. The subject, "Creation or Evolution?" was attentively followed, and at the conclusion there was a good batch of questions. One of the questioners was a Roman Catholic, who appeared to follow the speaker's remarks throughout with keen interest.

Sunday.

THERE has been a good deal of discussion in the Press and elsewhere of late on that old subject, "Why don't people go to Church?"

It is obvious that if people go to church at all, it is on Sunday, which, besides being the day on which little or no business is done, "is the day which should be devoted to the worship of God," as we are politely informed by sundry religious folk.

One would therefore expect people to go to church on Sunday, but we are told the majority of them don't go at all. This must be very bad for the clergy, and they naturally see to it that we hear quite a lot on the matter. We are also informed that the fine weather, in conjunction with the "craze for pleasure" which is said to be sweeping the country, is responsible for this appalling state of affairs.

One clergyman, writing in his parish magazine recently complained that "If a fine day comes, or an attack of megrims or vapours, or a friend looks in, we don't even go to Mass. It is such a miserable, sloppy breakdown of self-control and self-discipline. It is a C₃ religion." Most other clergymen, however, do not care to make such damaging admissions about their religion, so perhaps it would be fairer if we examined their opinion.

A very important point to be considered, however, is whether the attendances at churches, chapels, etc., in the East End and other slum areas are as small as those in the upper-class districts such as Kensington, Hampstead, Harrow, and so on; for it will be seen that the wealthier boroughs have distinct advantages over the others in the way of sport and pleasure.

And I believe it to be a fact that the church attendances in the slums are no better than those in the better class districts; though, with the exception of a few football matches which are played on Sunday, the inhabitants of the East End find few opportunities for sport on that day.

How, then, is Sunday spent in the slums? In the morning, the majority of families rise late, as, of course, 70 per cent of the adults are hopelessly drunk on Saturday night. Well, while mother is busy clearing up the breakfast "things" preparing dinner, the elder children helping her, father leisurely shaves, puts on his best "choker"—or, in many cases, a soft collar and a violently coloured neck-tie—and "takes himself off" to one of the great Sunday markets: "Petticoat Lane," "Club Row," "Virginia Row," etc., meets his pals, discusses the latest sporting news, and argues with poultry dealers over the prices of certain fowls, pigeons, etc.

Ask one of these fathers—he may be a carman, warehouseman, labourer, or a factory worker—why church-going does not appeal to him.

"Church is all right fer kids an' old wimmin," he will tell you, "but fer men, no — fear!" And he will probably show his attitude towards the Church by spitting vigorously upon the pavement, despite the fact that "do not spit" warnings hang on every lamp-post.

To resume, the public-houses open while he is out, and he loses no time in entering one of them. When it closes at 3 p.m. he staggers home, toys with his food—or throws it at his wife should she dare to remonstrate with him—and then rolls off to bed.

The children, of course, have been sent to Sunday school, "to keep them out of mischief," and mother also lies down, arising when they return to get tea. At half-past six or so, father gets up, drinks two or three cups of tea, smokes a few cigarettes, and then adjourns with the "Missus" to the nearest "pub," or perhaps saunters off by himself to play cards or bagatelle. At a little after ten they return—slightly

boisterous—mother calls in the youngsters from the street, where they have been playing, gives one or more a "hiding," and sends them to bed.

Father finds fault with the pickles, and pronounces the cold meat "dry." Mother, looking up from the reports of divorce court cases she is reading, indignantly denies this, and they fall out again and a few more plates are broken. Father retires, and mother, after "tidying up," follows.

There is, however, another type to be found in the East End. This is the "couple" class—middle-aged people, childless—who regularly put on their stiffest and most uncomfortable clothes, and in the evening, wander off to the People's Palace (if they can afford the 8d. each for admittance) in the winter, and to church or for a walk in the summer. The old ladies, of course, never miss the evening service, they *do* enjoy those gossips with Mrs. Brown or Mrs. Jones after it is over!

In the lower class suburbia, father goes to church because his wife orders it—she goes to criticize the hat or dress her neighbour is wearing. Perhaps I have wearied you with these descriptions, but I think it will be seen that pleasure is not, except in a very few cases, responsible for non-attendance at church in the poorer districts.

Now let us take a family of the upper middle class. In the morning Mr. X cleans his car, Mrs. X helps the maid or maids, and the young people go out to golf. After dinner, Mrs. X sits on the verandah reading the latest novel, while "'hubby' looks to the garden." The "younger members" play tennis, stroll home for tea, and rush back to the courts. Mr. and Mrs. X then take a "run" in the car. So much for the better class suburbia.

As for the citizens of Mayfair, the General (or whatever he happens to be) gallantly escorts his wife to church for the morning service, lunches, reads the *Observer* throughout the afternoon, dines, and plays bridge or billiards with his guests till midnight.

Though these are, of course, only rough sketches of life on Sunday, I think they will be found accurate, and I am sure that they exist in every large town. It is therefore evident that church-going is not, on the whole, favoured by the inhabitants of big towns.

On the other hand, it will be found that quite a fair proportion, comparatively speaking, of the population of smaller towns go to church at least once a week, and this may also be said, perhaps, of the rural districts.

We have seen, therefore, that the regular church-goers are: (a) old women in the slums, (b) the "third-grade clerk" type in certain suburbs, and (c) the residents of Belgravia. This would seem, on first thought, to represent a good proportion of the total population, but the reader has only to consider the facts for a few moments to realize that, properly speaking, deeply "religious" people are the only real supporters of the Church. Class "a" attend because they have nothing else to do, "b" merely in order to criticize other people, and "c" merely for show.

As the "religious" class consists mainly of women, who, unable to believe that it is possible to live without the aid of superstition, christen it "God" and worship it, the Church has hardly any supporters who can be described as "intellectual."

It is true, of course, that there has been an almost phenomenal increase in all kinds of sport since, say, the beginning of the century. Is this increase, however, responsible for the drop in Church attendances? To a certain degree, perhaps, but one should go further and ask themselves, "Why has sport on Sunday become so popular?" There is but one answer: It is because the great majority of people are growing weary of the ridiculous dictation of the Church.

Sport, love of pleasure, call it what you will, is not responsible for the empty churches. For an example,

here is a cutting from the *Daily Chronicle* of June 18, 1922 :—

Wearing surplices and birettas, two clergymen mixed with the throngs of people at Teddington Lock on Sunday evening to hold a service.

One was the vicar of St. Alban's, the Rev. J. Williams, and he was accompanied by the Rev. Father Pitt. They took up a position close to the lock, within hail, perhaps of 5,000 people. But after waiting for ten minutes, only fifty persons were attracted to the open-air service. Both clergymen gave addresses. The Rev. J. Williams said they had not gone there to denounce people who used the river on Sundays; but he asked his congregation, before they went on pleasure to attend church. If they went in their flannels, they would be welcome.

Fifty out of 5,000! One out of every 100! Does not this incident show that the clergy are afraid of losing their job? They are certainly making sacrifices which their predecessors would have regarded with horror. The "come-in-your-flannels" idea dates back to the spring of 1921, when St. Paul's Church, East Molesey, decided to hold a special service each Sunday at 10 p.m., and invited tennis-players, golfers, and other pleasure-seekers to attend dressed in what garb they pleased. Only two persons, however, were present at the first service, twenty at the second, and after that—silence. This fact, too, speaks for itself.

At present millions of people (I am *not* speaking figuratively), though partly disbelieving the theory of religion, know not whether to accept or reject Freethought. There is every sign, however, that this doubt is vanishing, and we may look forward to the time when Secularism will definitely triumph with pride; for it will be the greatest step forward in the history of civilization. EUSTACE TAINE.

A Freethinker's Testimony.

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul.

—Shakespeare.

In looking over my past contributions to the columns of the *Freethinker* I was a little dismayed to find the pronoun "I" appearing with, what I felt to be, an altogether immodest frequency. It is, I fear, a common youthful failing to measure the world by personal standards; and during the trying years of adolescence and early manhood, one is often—through lack of sympathy—driven to over-introspection, and the *ego* thus assumes a greatly exaggerated importance.

Most of our readers are familiar (*painfully familiar*) with the "testimony" of the converted Christian; and as I feel that Christians have for too long had the monopoly of this form of entertainment, I shall make no apology for offering a testimony of my own; a testimony, not of one who has found God, but of one who has lost Him.

Poets of all times have glorified youth as the age of romance. I agree. It is a period which brings with it a strange and inexplicable charm; a period of change and acquisition. Life takes on a new aspect, and assumes a deeper and wider significance. It is an age of glowing ideals and burning enthusiasms; and it is, alas—truth compels me to say it—an age of disillusionment. Readers of the *Freethinker* are, I know, idealists, but they are also in the habit of facing facts, and they do not mistake realism for pessimism as do the "fatuous optimists"; and so I can paint the other side of the picture without fear of being misunderstood.

In these post-war days the lot of youth is not a happy one; and we who endured the fires of war so cheerfully, in the hope that out of its ashes would arise a New Jerusalem, are to-day eating the bitter bread of disappointment. Alas! those years of heroic

futility! You can see them any day in our great cities, these "wiser and sadder" men :—

Men who went out to battle, grim and glad;
Children, with eyes that hate you, broken and mad.

I am tempted to dwell at length on the shattered ideals and disillusionments of youth. The *burden* of youth! Strange words, eh, my masters? But I could tell strange, pathetic stories if I would. Stories of thwarted labour, thwarted aspiration, thwarted faculty, and thwarted sex that is the cursed heritage of war, and the burden of a heartless industrialism—"but this eternal blazon must not be." In his thought-provoking work *Religion and Sex*, Mr. Chapman Cohen points out how the vague and nebulous feelings associated with adolescence—emotions which signify "the entry of the individual into the larger life of the race"; feelings which, wisely directed, are so potent for good, so capable of receiving complete satisfaction in useful social service—are exploited in the interests of religion. It is here where my debt to Freethought comes in. But for the "saving grace," the clear, sane thinking, the wholesome philosophy of our glorious Freethought; with its stirring history, its clarion call to battle against the forces of superstition and its promise of an intellectual freedom and power which no religion can offer; but for this I might to-day be "wasting my substance" in the worship of a phantom and prostrating myself before the fantastic creation of my own imagination! Filled with the apparent grandeur of some ethereal ideal I might have gone on and on, until the hard stern facts of life shattered my poor thin vision into bits, and then—and then, I should have looked back on the wasted years; looked back with anguish on "the dead young poet whom the man survives!" Talk about the joy of communion with God, and "the peace that passeth understanding," it is as nothing compared with the knowledge that one's faith is grounded on reason, and its glory seems but tawdry beside *intelligent* social service. As for belief in God, half the difficulties of the decent religious man come about through trying to reconcile the goodness of his omnipotent ideal with the facts of life. One's difficulties *begin* with God; they *end* when you have the courage to set Him aside as a useless hypothesis. Think of the heart-burnings, the mental anguish the war caused to many a humane and religious man when he tried to square theory with fact! Think of the books that have been written, because, forsooth, people are so afraid of "verbal bugbears" and mental honesty is so scarce; because humility has become a virtue and men lack the courage to tell the creature of their own imagination to go to blazes!

When I tell my Christian friends as much, they tap their foreheads; or with a superior smile, suggest that I am passing through a youthful state of mind that I shall "grow out of." 'Twas ever thus :—

This, and but this, was the gospel always :
Fools from their folly 'tis hopeless to stay,
Mules will be mules by the law of their mulishness ;
Then be advised and leave fools to foolishness—
What from an ass can be got but a bray?

In Freethought we need not lose our ideals; we do not dream impossible dreams. We have the serene faith that comes from knowledge; we lean not upon some "Man of Sorrows" but rely on human effort and human strength, knowing that nothing can stop the ultimate realization of our ideals.

In looking around me I feel that in this world of sorrow and of joy there is so much that one would like to do to help one's brother man. So many worthy causes beckon for help and support. But the Freethought movement is fundamental, and its ideals once achieved, the rest will follow. To free one's fellow's minds from the shackles of superstition, to stimulate enquiry, discourage credulity, and promote mental

honesty is a great work, and for my part I am happy in its service. Aye, supremely happy my Christian friends! Perhaps, being young, it is natural that my enthusiasm should partake of the nature of hero-worship, and certainly I find the works of Mr. Cohen "a liberal education"; whilst he (although personally almost unknown to me) has given me kind encouragement. In Freethought, fraternity is an ideal easily attained, for as Holyoake said: "Freethought is of the nature of Intellectual Republicanism. All are equal who think, and the only distinction is in the capacity of thinking. In Freethought there is no leadership save the leadership of ideas." For my part I shall rest well content if it is written of me: "He was a faithful soldier in the army of human liberation."

VINCENT J. HANDS.

Correspondence.

CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your issue of June 4, Dr. Salkind expresses a view which, I think, should be taken to heart by all Freethinkers. Whilst the admission is made both inside and outside the Churches that Christianity is fast losing its hold on the masses I am inclined to the view held by your correspondent that the attraction of "sport" and the boxing is far greater, and that it is not altogether Freethought that is responsible for the masses seceding from the Church. They find that the Church is no longer attractive to them, its worn out ritual, and its antiquated sermons, plus its hypocrisy and hankering after wealth are quite apparent to them, and they prefer the more easily assimilated attractions outside. To openly label oneself an avowed Freethinker is no sinecure, and requires a moral courage that is only the intrinsic possession of a few. A recent contributor to your valuable journal describes as "indifferent" the mass of those people, who, while taking no interest in Church or religion, would indignantly repudiate the appellation of Freethinker. Dr. Salkind has expressed a view that is perfectly true and unquestionable. The man who substitutes for church-going an insatiable love of "sport" and exhibitions of brutality is utterly useless to the furtherance of our cause. The Freethought movement requires men and women who have sufficient courage to openly avow their opinions. It requires that they shall be familiar with science and ethics, with sociology and philosophy, that they possess a knowledge of the world and its history that shall better fit them to undertake the fight for freedom of thought. Their outlook on life must be humane and not brutal, intellectual and not dogmatic, and utterly free from obsession and obscured thinking.

Cape Town.

S. J. SCHNEIDER.

SOCIALISM AND RELIGION.

SIR,—Relative to the letter by V. M. Hardy in the *Freethinker* of 16th inst., I think Socialists who are avowed Freethinkers are far too timid, in many instances, in correcting attempts to elaborate Christian ideas, as though these were part of the working materials of the Labour and Socialist movements. Labour men are of all shapes and sizes, for which reason Christianity should be considered a foreign, non-essential intrusion, and openly treated as such, instead of being treated with good-natured indifference and silent sanction. Socialists should press for the recognition of the Secular standpoint as the fitting atmosphere for Socialist ideas and their implications.

Some hard, direct fighting is necessary. The "Religion is a private matter" crutch requires to be knocked away, if religion is to be really treated as a private matter. Individual courage and effective use of all opportunities are necessary. Christian ideas are much feebler and much less extensively accepted, than their largely unimpeded advertisement would lead us to believe.

ALFRED RUSSELL.

The Blasphemy Law.

EARLY this year the Home Secretary, replying to a petition for the remission of a sentence of nine months' hard labour, passed on one Gott, at the Central Criminal Court in December (*Rex v. Gott*, 16 Cr. App. R. 87), pointed out that blasphemy is both a Common Law and a statutory offence, and intimated that in the latter form the law appears to be obsolete and ought to be repealed. No legislation with the object of effecting this repeal has yet been introduced by the Government; but it may be assumed that in the future the Director of Public Prosecutions will act in accordance with the view thus officially expressed, and will not authorize the preferment of indictments charging any accused person with the statutory offence. Since, however, the right to initiate prosecutions is not confined to the Director, it is still possible that some private, and even some official, prosecutor may continue to utilize the obsolete statute, unless and until it is repealed. It is interesting, therefore, to note the difference between the Common Law offence, for which Gott was indicted and convicted, and the statutory offence, now declared obsolete.

As a matter of fact, in reply to the petition just mentioned, the Home Secretary had a written reply sent which states succinctly the difference in question, as he conceived it. "The Common Law does not interfere with the free expression of *bona fide* opinion. But it prohibits and renders punishable as a misdemeanour the use of coarse and scurrilous ridicule on subjects which are sacred to most people in this country. Mr. Shortt could not support any proposal for an alteration of the Common Law which would permit such outrages on the feelings of others as those of which Gott was found guilty.....but.....the Blasphemy Acts were intended to restrict the freedom of religious opinion or its expression; and Mr. Shortt is of opinion that those Acts may well be repealed. They are already obsolete." This is a clear and correct statement of the distinction as apprehended by many learned jurists of the Victorian age, with the exception of the eminent Sir James Fitzjames Stephen. But later research, deeper and more scholarly in character, has thrown doubt on its adequacy as an interpretation of the evolution of this branch of the law. Indeed, Dr. Courtney Kenny, who has recently retired from the Downing Professorship at Cambridge, has pointed out in the columns of the *Cambridge Law Journal* (Vol. I, p. 128), that there are many other considerations to which regard must be had before so simple a conclusion can be sustained. In fact, the contrary view of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen appears now to be established as historically correct. He expresses it in the following terms: "The public importance of the Christian Religion is so great that no one is to be allowed to deny its truth" (Stephen's *History of the Criminal Law*, II, 475).

Now, to begin with, we are faced with an initial question of great difficulty. It has never been clearly decided how far the Canon Law is part of the Common Law of England. If the Canon Law, the *Regulæ Juris Canonici*, are part of our Common Law, then clearly it is an offence to deny the truth of the Christian religion, no matter how decently and reverently it is denied. And, equally unquestionably, such Canon Law was enforced by the Spiritual Courts until the Reformation. But it is arguable that the Canon Law was so enforced, not because it was part of the Law of England, but because, everywhere in Christendom in the days of Papal supremacy, the Ecclesiastical Courts of the Bishop of Rome had equal jurisdiction with those of the secular surrogate. Such jurisdiction, obviously, ceased at the Reformation. The subsequent exercise of similar jurisdiction by the Courts of Star Chamber and High Commission is not testimony that it was a valid jurisdiction, since the legality of those courts was afterwards denied by Parliament. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the practice of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in order to ascertain how far our Courts have accepted the Canon Law as English Law. The answer is inconclusive. There are authorities either way. Among those in favour of the validity of Canon Law is the "Common Law" of Sir Henry Finch, which was the chief manual of English Law in the century before Blackstone. "Holy Scripture is of Sovereign Authority,"

says Finch (Common Law, I, 3)....."To such laws as have warrant in Holy Scripture our law giveth credence." He quotes as his authority Prisot, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, in 1449, and one of the experts who collaborated to compose Littleton's "Tenures." Prisot made a vague *obiter dictum* to this effect in the case of *Quare Impedit, ex parte Humphry Bohun* (reported Year Book, 34 Henry VI, folio 38), which he decided in 1458; but later research—to which Dr. Kenny has ably contributed—has shown that his *obiter* was not necessary to the point he was there deciding. Against this view comes the definite opinion of Lord Denman, in *Bishop Hampden's Case* (17 I. J., Q.B., at p. 268), who expressed it in these terms: "The Canon Law forms no part of the Common Law of this realm unless practice can be shown to the contrary." This indicates clearly the view now generally accepted. The Canon Law is not, *quod* Canon Law, part of our Common Law. But where any rules of the Canon Law have been habitually acted on in England, then these are part of the "General Custom of the Realm," and as such are Common Law—just in the same way as any other customs. "It is ancient and inveterate usage within the Realm by the people, and not the authority of the Church and its courts, which gives legal validity to the not inconsiderable part of the Canon Law which we have incorporated."

Once this guiding principle is accepted, it is then necessary to examine the claim to be "ancient and inveterate custom" advanced on behalf of any rule of the Canon Law which is asserted to be English Law. In the case of blasphemy it is essential to turn to the post-Commonwealth decisions and see whether or no they imported into our law the Canonical doctrine which forbade any questioning of the truth of Christianity. The first modern prosecution took place in 1663, that of *Rex v. Sir Charles Sedley and others* (15 State Trials, 155). Here the defendants enacted a scene from the Garden of Eden in a state of nudity on a tavern balcony in Covent Garden; they were convicted and fined £500 by Chief Justice Foster. In 1676 Sir Matthew Hale went a step further and declared all blasphemy punishable by the criminal courts of the country: *Rex v. Taylor* (1 Ventr. 293; 3 Keble, 607). In this case the defendant Taylor had attacked Christianity orally in terms of "contumelious reproach." Sir Matthew Hale held that: "Contumelious reproaches of God or of the religion established are punishable here (i.e., in a Common Law Court).....The Christian Religion is a part of the law itself.....such kind of wicked blasphemies are.....a crime against the laws, state, and government, and therefore punishable in this court." The facts here, obviously, are consistent with the view that blasphemy was not punishable at Common Law unless expressed in offensive terms; but the *obiter* of Hale undoubtedly went further, and it became accepted law that "Christianity was parcel of the Law of England." Blackstone's and Stephen's Commentaries both contain this statement, and Lord Sumner recently re-stated it as correct: *Bowman v. Secularist Society Lim.* (1917, A.C., at p. 455). That case, however, was not a blasphemy prosecution, and it was decided by the House of Lords that the old Canon Law prohibition of religious endowments for non-Christian purposes is no longer part of the Common Law; it has become obsolete.

Finally, after a great number of prosecutions for Common Law blasphemy had occurred in the years of repression, 1790-1830, during which Hale's *dictum* was relied on as forbidding all criticism of Christianity in public, the Commission on Criminal Law (Sixth Report, 1841) laid it down as beyond doubt that "the Law distinctly forbids all denial of the Christian religion," but added that in actual practice "the course has been to withhold the application of the penal law unless insulting language is used." Curiously enough, shortly after this pronouncement had been made, it was decided by Vice-Chancellor Shadwell, in *Briggs v. Hartley* (19 I.J., Ch. 416), that an endowment for a prize essay on "Natural Theology" was illegal since it implied the proposition that the Christian Revelation was not necessary to true religion—an extraordinary decision now practically overruled by *Bowman v. Secularist Society* (*supra*). This was not a criminal prosecution, but the decision was based on a review of the criminal cases and an acceptance of the various *dicta*, just enumerated, therein discovered.

Indeed, it was not until 1882 that the bigoted principle, forbidding all criticism of the Christian Religion, seems to have been doubted by any of our judges. In that year came the celebrated prosecution of Foote and Ramsey before Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, who ruled "If the decencies of controversy are observed, even the fundamentals of religion may be attacked without the attackers being guilty of blasphemous libel." In the actual case, after several successive arguments, Foote was convicted and sentenced; so that the decision carries no legal weight. But the broader spirit of the new age fully approved of the rule laid down, and it became accepted by most text-book authorities on Criminal Law as a correct statement of the rule so far as the Common Law is concerned. Finally, in *Rex v. Boulter* (72 J.P. 188), Mr. Justice Phillimore, as he then was, accepted the rule in a criminal case, but in *Bowman's Case* (*supra*), so recently as 1917, the House of Lords affirmed the Coleridge principle. While historically unsound, it may therefore be regarded as a correct statement of the present-day law.

It is unnecessary to discuss at length the statute-law on the subject, which is now regarded as obsolete by the Home Secretary. The chief anti-blasphemy statute is that of 9 & 10 Will. III, c. 32, which makes it a criminal offence:—

- (1) to maintain, either in writing or in advised speaking, that there are more Gods than one; and
- (2) to deny [in similar manner] the doctrine of the Trinity, or the truth of the Christian Religion, or the divine authority of the Scriptures; provided that the offender had been educated or had professed the Christian religion.

The provision is obviously intended to protect Jews and Orientals. An earlier statute is that of 1 Edw. VI, c. 1, s. 1, which punishes the use of contemptuous words concerning the Eucharist. Another unrepealed Act, 1 Eliz. c. 2, s. 3, threatens a fine for speaking in derogation of the Prayer Book. These are the three enactments, presumably, which Mr. Shortt considers ought to be repealed, a point of view which no one who is acquainted with modern literature from "Essays and Reviews" onward is likely to disagree.

—*The Solicitors' Journal and Weekly Reporter.*

The Fifth International Birth Control Conference.

I ONCE looked through a book called *Christianity Triumphant* by that curious mixture of religious fervour and opposition to religion, Joseph Barker, and the title, with a slight difference recurred to me as I sat listening to the speeches and papers given at the above conference. For if ever there was a case of *Freethought Triumphant* here, in the heart of London, in the year of grace, 1922, was a living example of it. A number of distinguished men and women from all parts of the world, many of them bearing world famous names were here calmly assembled discussing a subject which, for a hundred years at least was not only tabooed in polite society, but for the open discussion of which other men and women have been foully besmirched and vilely prosecuted. For a hundred years, a small but gallant band of Freethinkers have, side by side with their anti-religious propaganda, insisted on the right to discuss the population question as formulated by Malthus and also the remedy proposed by those who saw the tremendous part played by sex in the life of the normal man and woman. The savage fury which this attitude aroused in the mass of gentle Christians generally and Christian leaders in particular, is fortunately available to any student of history, and it will be found later on, of pretty big importance in the already large indictment against orthodox religion. I hope to deal some other time with the connection of Freethought and Birth Control, but here I am glad to point out that the work done by the great pioneers was gratefully recognized at the conference. The National Secular Society was represented by Miss Vance, who has ever been, as readers of this paper know well, foremost in the battle for the right of free speech and free thought, her

devoted companion Miss Kough, and the veteran Mr. Arthur B. Moss, one of the oldest members of the Malthusian League and one of the staunchest Freethinkers in the movement.

If this year is the centenary of Shelley it is also the centenary of the first Neo-Malthusian work ever written—by Francis Place, the "Radical tailor," and, as J. M. Wheeler tells us, the "convinced Atheist"; and it was a pleasure to hear at the conference dinner, Mr. H. G. Wells' fine tribute to Place and his work, for which he suffered all sorts of accusations and persecutions the rest of his life. Dr. Binnie Dunlop followed by a brief reference to the pioneers of the movement—all Freethinkers—but it was reserved for Mr. A. B. Moss, at the invitation of Dr. Drysdale, to give us a magnificent tribute to Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant. Mr. Moss was, I think, the only person present who was also at the famous trial of 1876—that famous prosecution which did more than anything else in the world to bring birth control definitely before the people who ought to know all about it. It was the wonderful stand for the principles of free speech and thought taken by those two great leaders that has made the movement possible *without persecution* in this country this day, and some of us at least will never forget what we owe to Charles Bradlaugh.

It takes a long time to educate Christians. Look how long it was before they ceased to burn poor old women for witches, and how long it took to persuade them that they had no right to enslave their fellow men, or that women had as much right to vote on any subject as men had. Well, we are actually making Christians agree that Birth Control is after all moral, and that those Christians who say it is not, are quite wrong. At least that is the attitude of the Rev. Gordon Lang, a convinced Birth Controller, whose speeches, I thought, smacked a great deal more of Secularism than of Christianity. I half expected him to claim Jesus as the world's greatest Neo-Malthusian, but fortunately he did not, though I am sure that that claim will be made before long now that the movement wants everybody, irrespective of creed or politics to take part in it. Mr. Lang, however, proved a great force, and I am pleased to record it.

Mr. Harold Cox, at the packed public meeting at Kingsway Hall, caused roars of laughter with his reference to the biblical injunction, "Be fruitful and multiply," given to Noah and the seven survivors of the flood. Here was a huge crowd actually roaring with laughter at a Bible story: Shades of Ingersoll and Foote, what are we coming to? That laugh did not come from a Freethought audience, but from an ostensible Christian one. Have we not conquered? Is not Freethought triumphant?

H. CUTNER.

Obituary.

We regret to have to record the death, on the 8th inst., at Millbrook Road, Lower Edmonton, of Mrs. Caroline Jones, wife of Mr. Charles Jones. Death was the result of an internal operation. Mrs. Jones was forty-seven years of age and leaves three grown-up daughters and a son aged eleven. For many years she was a resident of Birmingham, where, with her husband, she frequently attended Freethought lectures. The funeral took place at Edmonton on July 15, the Secular Burial Service being read by Mr. A. D. McLaren. M.

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