

FREETHINKER

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Views and Opinions.

Sunday and the Parsons.

It was not to be expected that the clergy would take their defeat on the London County Council quietly. When the Council decided to open the parks for sports on Sunday, and so place games in the open-air in competition with the public-house, the chapel, and street corner lounging, it took a step which the clergy knew struck at one of their dearest possessions. And as they did not defeat the proposal they set themselves to save what they could from the disaster. In this endeavour they have scored to the extent of the Council's not permitting boys under fourteen to play games in the parks on Sunday. This is a ridiculous provision, one that robs the new move of a great deal of its value, and we hope the Council will soon remove the prohibition. For, of all the classes who may use the parks for Sunday games it is to none more important than to boys of, say, from ten to fourteen years of age. Boys are then at the dawn of adolescence, subject to the play of newly developing feelings and attractions, and every physician knows that reasonable indulgence in games at that age is of vital importance to physical, mental, and moral health. And of all ways of picking up undesirable habits, there are none quite so effective as the way in which Sunday is necessarily spent where the proper freedom does not exist. Only the other day, no less a paper than the *Times* pointed out the disastrous effects the Puritan Sunday had on the character of the young, and in doing that the *Times* was only saying what is self-evident to those who study social life from any point of view other than that of a narrow Sabbatarianism. The party on the Council in favour of a free Sunday have won a fine victory. We hope they will soon succeed in making their victory complete by not only permitting, but inducing boys and girls to use the parks on Sundays for healthful recreation.

* * *

The Love of Compulsion.

The professional interest of the clergy in obstructing the rational use of a day of rest is so obvious that one may almost call it naked and unashamed. Of course, they talk of the danger to morality, and the danger that the day of rest will be made a day of toil, but one would be more impressed with this talk if the

clergy showed the same eagerness for lightening toil during the rest of the week. Driven into a corner they always come back—openly or inferentially—to the fact that Sunday games and Sunday entertainments act as a successful counter attraction to church-going. One could excuse the position of the clergy if there was a move on foot to prevent people going to church. But there is not. No one has the least desire to stop those going to church who wish to go. And in favour of their going the clergy have behind them all the force of custom, all the power of the Press and of publications which do their best to keep away from the body of the public the influence of those forces which make for the destruction of religious belief. But that is not enough. The clergy are not content to fight with weapons that are so heavily weighted in their favour. They are not happy unless they are permitted to use the instrument of compulsion. They say, not merely that *we* will not use the parks on Sunday, but they also say that no one else shall use them either. We will leave the young boys, girls, and their elders, no other alternative than that of demoralizing idleness or attendance at a mind soddening religious service. The clergy stand for the most stupid form of protection conceivable. Competition is the thing they dread most.

* * *

Cornering the Market.

Prohibiting youngsters using the parks on Sunday was quite evidently a concession on the part of the L.C.C. to the clerical opposition. And it is also evident that what the clergy are dreading is the influence of the action of the Council on the rest of the country. When it is seen that boys playing cricket on Sunday, and girls playing tennis, will not lead to any tremendous development of housebreaking or murder, it is almost certain that other towns and cities will also take the plunge. And one day we hope to see men and women spending Sunday as though they really were civilized beings, instead of converting themselves into savages, plus a little more clothing and a more elaborate ceremonial before their selected Joss. But the opposition will fight hard. At the Wesleyan Conference the other day a telegram of protest was sent to the L.C.C., and the Rev. Scott Lidgett was thanked for his "heroic services" in opposing on the Council the proposition to throw open the parks—although why a man trying to shut up opposition to his own business should be called "heroic," it is rather difficult to say. One does not usually call this kind of thing heroic. In the commercial world it is considered to be on the borderland between reputable and disreputable business methods—it is called cornering the market. And on the shadier sides of the commercial world the method of driving a competitor out of the market so that an inferior article may be forced on the public is a not unknown policy.

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Appealing to the "Upper" Circles.

A very artful appeal to the "upper classes" to support Sunday prohibition was made at the Wesleyan

Conference, but like many artful appeals it overreached itself. It was said that the strong appeal on the Council came from the fact that well-to-do people had their tennis and golf on Sundays, and there was no reason why the poorer ones should not have it also. So it was hoped that these well-to-do people would refrain from playing on Sundays *because they have plenty of time to play during the week.* The italics are mine, but they throw light on the mentality of these parsons. The well-to-do people are not asked to forgo their play altogether, but simply to be satisfied with the time they have during the week. And then it is hoped that the poorer classes will be compelled to go without their recreation on the one day when they have ample time to indulge themselves. Anyone but a parson would have realized that the fact that the well-to-do people can get certain recreations during the week is a good reason for giving other classes a chance on Sunday. But of course if the "upper classes" do not set the proper example to the "lower" ones—it is worth noting that the distinction between an upper and a lower class in this Christian country is based solely on the possession of cash—the lower classes will get out of hand, and the self-interest of the "upper" class is enlisted on the side of Sabbatarianism. And yet I venture to say that there is far more danger to everybody concerned from a generation brought up with one-seventh of its life spent in brain deadening attendance at Church, or idle, character-destroying lounging, than in a generation that has had every encouragement to spend its spare time in clean and healthy recreation. The stability of a State was never disturbed by clean games. It has often been disturbed by religious fanaticism or by numbers of individuals denied opportunity of legitimate enjoyment.

* * *

The Rule of the Dead.

And, after all, one may wonder how long it will be before the general public strongly resent this impertinent intrusion of a trading corporation, attempting by force to compel them to spend their leisure time in this or that manner. Again it must be remembered that the "godly" are not being forced to do anything they do not believe in doing. Their position, in all its naked impudence, is that they object to large numbers of their fellow citizens passing their spare time in a quite harmless manner because it does not agree with certain views on religion which they happen to hold. It is the kind of claim that hardly anyone but a Christian would dream of putting forward, and even then only where his religion is concerned. He would not dream of interfering with the kind of wallpaper I care to use, or the colour of the hat I care to wear. He would not attempt to regulate in what way I should spend my time during six days out of the seven. It is only where his peculiarly outlandish, and wholly barbarous religion is concerned that he makes himself both a private and a public nuisance. And he is sustained in this attitude by the fact that for many centuries the accident of position, combined with a quite unscrupulous exercise of power has enabled him to force his views upon others and compel acquiescence. It is high time that these fussy and impertinent clerics were taught that we are living in the twentieth century and not in the sixteenth. Christians must be made to realize that they are only one section of the community, and that their peculiar religious opinions can be permitted no greater share in the determination of public affairs than the religious opinions of any other section of society. It is monstrous that the question of whether the boys of London should be permitted the use of the public parks should be determined by what the mythical deity of a tribe of semi-civilized Semites was believed to have said several thousand years ago. A people who will permit their

public affairs to be regulated on that kind of basis cannot be expected to act with wisdom when the critical moments of life arise. It was this same deity that ordered his followers to kill their first-born, to murder heretics, and to burn witches. We have grown ashamed of his savagery in these directions. It is high time we discarded his savagery in others.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Godless World.

THE very men of God who, during the Great War, assured us that God had at last intervened to put an end for ever to all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, are now tearfully deploring the prevailing irresponsiveness to all Divine claims and appeals, and the strong, defiant, resistless wave of reckless impiety and crime that is sweeping with such terrific menace over the whole of Christendom. The Bishop of London, who regarded the war as a gracious day of the Lord, and who after a visit to the different fighting centres in France, declared that our soldiers were already showing the nation an example of wonderful devotion to religion which all were called upon to lay to heart, is now lamenting the complete departure from God of his own beloved diocese, and asking all and sundry to help him to bring it back. A week of prayer and self-denial is to be held during the autumn. He says that "the real need of the diocese, and perhaps of the whole Church, is an enthusiasm for God himself." He is fully aware that, "as a metaphor," this is faulty, but he is convinced "that we are in danger of being 'snowed under by machinery,' or, to use another metaphor, 'losing the sight of the wood for the trees.'"

The week of devotion, prayer, and self denial will be the week already arranged for the mission in the Westminster Deanery, Nov. 18-27, comprising the two Sundays; but there will be a week of preparation earlier in the autumn, October 7-14, when the whole scheme will be explained to the diocese.

The Bishop himself proposes to address several central gatherings of the clergy and their people within the diocese. He is also summoning a synod of all the clergy at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. Such is the scheme, as described by the Bishop, for bringing the diocese of London back to God; and so confident is he that it will succeed in achieving the desired object that "on Saturday, December 2, at 5.30 p.m., a great service of thanksgiving will be held in St. Paul's Cathedral." Curiously enough, however, the climax of that thanksgiving service will be reached when, "deanery by deanery, every parish, through its representatives, will offer the fruit of the self-denial effort which will accompany the week of prayer and devotion." It is also, a by no means insignificant fact that the organizers of the scheme place "self denial" after "devotion and prayer" in the list of requisites for the great culminating week.

Will the Bishop pardon us if we ask him how and why the Diocese of London has been allowed to sink into so wretched, calamitous, and pitiable condition? Has it happened through any fault of himself and his clergy, or has the Diocese taken the reins into its own hands and wickedly bolted? The Church is still here, with its Bishop and full list of clergy; what explanation can be given of the diocese's absence from God? Can none of the responsibility be laid at God's own door? It may help us to understand the situation if we bear in mind that these weeks of special devotion, prayer, and self-denial, these attempts to bring certain dioceses or the whole nation back to God have been periodically recurring events or spurts from time immemorial, from which fact we may legitimately

infer that the state of religion in the Anglican Church next Christmas will be very much what it has been at the same season of the year for at least a hundred years, with perhaps the only difference that the intervals between these ever recurring spurts become shorter and shorter as time goes on.

Among present-day ecclesiastics possibly no two are, in some respects, so much alike, and in others so unlike as the Bishop of London and Dr. R. F. Horton, of Hampstead, whose fame is in all the Nonconformist Churches. The title of the latter's latest monthly lecture, published in the *Christian World Pulpit* of July 13, is "Shall We Turn to God?" Like the Bishop, Dr. Horton is an incorrigible dogmatist, and his dogmatism reaches its highest point when he is dealing with subjects he knows nothing about. For example, he asserts that God "is neither ready nor able to help men who will not pray." On whose authority does he make such an atrociously immoral and inhuman statement? Certainly not on God's; and even if it were so made it would only reflect the greatest discredit on the character of the Father of the race. If the reverend gentleman were himself a parent would he help his child only on condition that it made a definite appeal to him? Is it not always the supreme glory of parenthood to help the helpless offspring without the intervention of any prayer? The need for protection and care and supervision is the sole requisite appeal. And yet Dr. Horton offers us a vile, contemptible caricature of fatherhood in the statement that, according to a law of the spiritual world, the loving Heavenly Father "is neither ready nor able" to help his human children unless they entreat him to do so. Is it any wonder that, with such a horrible picture of Deity held up to its gaze by the pulpit, the world has become godless? This Hampstead divine admits that many problems—political, economic, social, international—are clamouring for solution, but which, he oracularly declares, "never will be settled, never, until men get upon their knees and pray." Then he adds: "Unless this modern world can get on its knees and recover the power of prayer, it is a very gloomy future for humanity."

This is the sole string upon which Dr. Horton harps throughout his lengthy discourse. He maintains that during the war the only relief, the only ground for hope, that came to our British side, at any stage, was a direct answer to our prayer. He quotes a saying attributed to Admirals Jellicoe and Beatty, "that we should not win through until the nation repented and turned to God," adding:—

You may remember that that appeal, coming from the Admirals of the Fleet and put up on the walls of the city, at last stirred the community very deeply. Coming from such a quarter it seemed to lay on everybody an obligation to act, and you may remember that at last the feeling became so strong and intense that there was a day of penitence and prayer. And you may remember that—though very likely you do not, for how strangely we forget these things—directly after that day of penitence and prayer the tide turned, the situation began to change, and steadily, surely, that process of events went on which resulted in that wonderful day of the Armistice, surely the gladdest day that any of us ever saw, when at a moment's notice this building was crowded with people in the evening to offer up their thanksgiving to God, because we recognized then that God had heard our prayer.

Dr. Horton, however, forgets or purposely ignores two most important facts with a direct bearing upon his superstitions and entirely groundless contention. The exercise of penitence and prayer, in moments of panic, was not confined to British Christians. We learned from German sources that the churches of our opponents, on similar occasions, were crowded to the doors by men and women who, likewise, fell on their

knees and prayed with passion to the same God; and we also remember that, a few years prior to the outbreak of the war, the Germans were publicly eulogized by an English Bishop who knew them very well as a nation of exemplary believers in and loyal servants of Jesus Christ. This fact Dr. Horton prudently ignores, as he does another fact of much greater import, namely the advent of the Americans as our active allies on the battlefield. Whoever publicly champions the efficacy of prayer on the British side during the war is bound, to be logically and ethically consistent, to give those two facts a dispassionate and unprejudiced consideration.

According to Dr. Horton, the British people are a nation of quick-changing moods. When panic-stricken from any cause, they flock to their churches and chapels; but after a few days or weeks the excitement dies down, the dread of the unknown falls asleep, and their pastors angrily denounce them as "a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers," who have forsaken the Lord and despised the Holy One of Israel. We were in the latter case during the sordid treaty of Versailles. Prior to and during the Washington Conference, a subdued, prayerful mood prevailed, with the result that "on the first day of the Washington Conference deliverance came." By the time the Genoa Conference met the mood had changed again, and hopeless squabbling became the order of each day. This mood still prevails throughout our unhappy land, and the Christian tide is at the lowest ebb in all its history. Of course, in his state of imagined all-knowingness, Dr. Horton falls into several obvious errors. Had he ever read and studied Lang's *History of Materialism*, or the Right Hon. J. M. Robertson's *Short History of Freethought*, he would have been incapable of honestly indulging in the following wild asseveration:—

It is by knowing God, by approaching him, by appealing to him that there is any real hope for humanity; and those people who do know him, who wait upon him, who appeal to him, though they be but a small minority, are the only real power that is working in the world for the regeneration of society. They may be very insignificant people, but they are indispensable people, the people, men and women, who know God, who can pray, who can believe and can wield the weapons of the Spirit. It is strange that we should have to urge this, *which has been recognized by every great man that ever existed until we came to this Godless age.* It is strange that we should have to remind ourselves of what is a truism. *No thinker that ever thought doubted that man depends upon that Supreme Power that made him.*

In those two sentences which we have italicized Dr. Horton touches the very zenith of religious egotism, which always has its roots in invincible ignorance or obstinate prejudice, or in both. In almost every age, from the beginning until now, particularly from Epicurus and his great Latin interpreter, Lucretius, down to Hobbes, Locke, Bacon, and multitudes of others, many of the keenest and deepest thinkers have been zealous advocates of man's natural and inalienable right to doubt and even deny the existence of all supernatural beings and forces, and to rely upon himself alone. Dr. Horton is of opinion that "there is no society ever known amongst men that can ever escape immediate ruin and degradation when it loses the sense of God." He knows full well that no society has as yet had the chance to make such an experiment. It is consoling to know that Bacon, a much greater and wiser man, though by no means an Atheist, entertained a wholly different opinion, thus expressed:—

Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation: all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not; but superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute monarchy in the minds of men.

Therefore Atheism did never perturb states; for it makes men wary of themselves, as looking no further; and we see the times inclined to Atheism (as the time of Augustus Cæsar) were civil times. But superstition hath been the confusion of many states, and bringeth a new *primum mobile*, that ravisheth all the spheres of Government. (*Philosophical Works*, p. 756.)

J. T. LLOYD.

The End of a Chapter.

The moving finger writes, and having writ, moves on.
—Omar Khayyam.

VOLTAIRE once said that there is no man who has not something interesting in him; but there are comparatively few who will quite honestly attempt to tell us the matters of interest. Rousseau unbosomed himself in his *Confessions*, and the world has been grateful to him ever since. Old Montaigne was sincerity itself, and he showed himself with all his amiable weaknesses. Like Oliver Cromwell, who told the artist to paint his portrait showing the warts, he wished posterity to have a truthful picture. British autobiographies, however, usually suffer from the vice of discretion, and are too respectable to be entertaining. So much was this the case, that once the only lives worth reading were those of theatrical people. For actors and actresses were not then expected to be respectable. Nowadays, actors are more respected than bishops, and not half so entertaining. Hence a book of reminiscences, which has a spice of audacity, is sure of a welcome. Such a volume is Shane Leslie's *The End of a Chapter*, which I found in a library list of second-hand books. It is entertaining from cover to cover, and is as full of human interest as an egg is full of meat.

"People who are old enough to write memoirs have usually lost their memory," says Mr. Leslie blandly. The accusation cannot be levelled at him, for he wrote his book in the very prime of life, and perhaps this is one of the reasons why there is hardly a dull page in the volume. Mr. Leslie comes of a good stock, for his grandfather was a cousin of the great Duke of Wellington. Mr. Leslie himself fought in the late war, and buried his brother at Armentieres, between the guns of two armies, and it is to the memory of this brother that he dedicated his book.

Whilst invalided home, Mr. Leslie wrote his reminiscences, and turned his convalescence to excellent account. His recollections are candid, and not candied. He recalls, with gusto, his schooldays at Eton College, and has some very amusing passages concerning the religion taught at that ancient seat of knowledge, where brawn is more thought of than brains. He says:—

The Sunday sermon was a mild appeal to take holy orders or grow up like Lord Roberts. On Sunday boys were made to write answers to Scriptural questions—a hateful tribute to the Sabbath God, which made Sunday the chosen day for smoking, or catapulting the royal rabbits in Windsor.

The result of the teaching given at Eton was that the boys were good Pagans rather than indifferent Christians. It is as well for the country in which they live, Mr. Leslie says, sagaciously, that the Jesuits are the only people who have tried seriously to impose religion on English boys; and adds, with fine sarcasm:—

Their ideal is Saint Aloysius, a delicate youth with a lily. The popular Etonian inclines to a tomboy with a cricket-bat.

Schoolboy religion is not the only variety that interests Mr. Leslie. In a cynical chapter on *The*

Religion of England, he has some caustic comments:—

The State bishops are objects of envy rather than of reverence. The depths of religious awe between a foreign Catholic and an Anglican appear in the story of the honest Briton arguing with an astonished Frenchman, and ending: "To hell with the Pope." With a pallor befitting the terrible words of his reply, the Frenchman drew himself up and uttered: "To hell with the Archbishop of Canterbury." Whereat the Briton dissolved in laughter. "To hell with the Gold-Stick-in-Waiting" would sound as comic to him.

As may be seen, Mr. Leslie has no objection to a mild profanity, and the following concerning a former Prime Minister visiting some French delegates is amusing:—

Mr. Asquith wore the brave uniform of an Elder of Trinity House; and this drew a query from a visitor. The incarnation of English Dissent explained in his best French: "I am an elder brother of the Trinity." The Frenchman bowed politely, and said: "Ah! We have discarded all that in France."

With a twinkle in his eye, Mr. Leslie tells a story of the sensation caused by a Scottish prelate who went to France in the purple cassock of the Continental bishops, who, of course, are supposed to be celibates:—

As he brought his wife with him, the pious innkeeper refused to let her in. "But I am on holiday," said the paragon of diocesan respectability. "There is no doubt that Monseigneur is on holiday," replied the poor innkeeper, to whom the situation was with difficulty explained.

The evangelical and loquacious Lord Radstock is the subject of another humorous story. He once went to preach to the "infidel" French, and was heard to entreat them, with tears in his voice: "Drink of the *eau de vie*, drink of the *eau de vie*, my sinful brothers." He meant the water of life, but the Godless French inquired, smilingly, if brandy was used in the English sacrament.

Mr. Leslie is an Irishman, and some of his stories concern his native country. There is one of the rival ecclesiastics, which concerns an Anglican and a Catholic Archbishop, and a Papal Legate:—

The interchange of humour and respect kept Archbishop Logue and Archbishop Alexander friends. When Cardinal Vanutelli came to consecrate the new cathedral at Armagh, Alexander left a card on the Pope's Legate. The two Cardinals paid the Protestant Primate a visit. As the three old men were gossiping genially under the roof most sacred to Protestant ascendancy a tumult was heard in the streets, and great was their amusement on learning afterwards that rival religious mobs had broken heads and windows in their honour.

There are also many delightful glimpses of people worth remembering, and Mr. Leslie gossips pleasantly to the end, with that genial, cultured manner of his. He is a clever and entertaining *raconteur*.

MIMNERMUS.

Yea, if no morning must behold
Man, other than were they now cold,
And other deeds than past deeds done,
Nor any near or far-off sun
Salute him risen and sunlike-souled,
Free, boundless, fearless, perfect, one,
Let man's world die like worlds of old,
And here in heaven's sight only be
The sole sun on the worldless sea.

—A. C. Swinburne.

"Curioser and Curioser."

EACH of the innumerable and ever multiplying religious sects might have as their motto, "We are fearfully and wonderfully made." Only they are not fearful, but faithful all, in a fanatical degree. Each is cocksure its creed is the only correct one. As Pope said:—

"Tis with our judgments as our watches, none are quite correct, yet each believes his own.

To be quite fair, there are also, of course, various brands and degrees of Freethought, but these differ in methods only, not in matters of "faith." We know, for instance, that Agnostic and Atheist are synonymous terms, with which our much divided, much mistaken opponents include the Socialist—the Socialist, who in most cases is himself unconsciously "deeply religious," and bound in the same invisible chains as those who slander and proclaim him. Very often the Socialist is a Spiritualist; often a good Roman Catholic, a staunch Presbyterian, etc., etc., or he believes in a kind of a sort of a something, somewhere, somehow. The sects, and the Socialists, and the mild agnostics, are apt to show a deference for "divines" and "divine things," and will much resent the vulgar fellow who calls a spade a spade. These, and the sects referred to, are still suffering, more or less convalescent, the curable and the incurable, from the "original impression," the primal blight of early and ignorant speculations about this wonderful universe. They are still searching for God as a responsible religious mission. It never dawns upon them that any God worthy of their search is able and willing, and that it is up to him to find them. Behold I stand at the door and knock. Daily the sun rises and sets in silver and gold, and has done so for millions of years. Nightly the stars look down from their silent, cold, unimaginable altitudes, and have done so for millions of years. Summer and winter, life and death, follow each other in monotonous succession, and have done so for millions of years. Behind all phenomena is the "Silence of God," and it has been so for millions of years. Man has been knocking at the wrong door! And while he knocks the people perish for lack of his merely human care. Man searches for God. Each religious sect has found him, the original and true God, or God has found his peculiar people—and, by God, they are peculiar! Take the Pastor Russellites, with their "Divine Plan of the Ages." Take the Seventh Day Adventists, whatever is their idea of the Ages. This sect has an enormous following, with mission stations in at least fifteen countries, the output of one firm alone amounting to £230,000, and claims to have been formed seventy years ago. Their modest reason for existing as a separate denomination is that of acting the part of Heaven's messengers to the people of their generation, proclaiming the special truth now due to the world, because the Christian Church (which one?) as Heaven's professed Light-bearer is not doing its work. This same community deplores the fact that all the other denominations have been slowly but surely drifting away from the great principles of Bible truth in this way: The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ is denied; the Scriptures are no longer regarded as the revelation of God to man; such doctrines as the Virgin Birth, the miracles of Christ, Resurrection, Ascension, etc., are rejected by many religious teachers; while the purpose of God's message to-day is to call men back to the simplicity of Bible faith and living. The Adventists repudiate all modification of the "original" Word. Their articles of faith, twenty-five in number, are a selection from the most impossible and absurd dogmas of Holy Writ. Like to the old Scotchman viewing the sunset from the top of Ben Nevis, we

exclaim: Man, is no' the works o' Almighty God most deevilish!

A friend of mine has been doing a round of the Churches, and affirms that nothing is so well calculated to revive the faltering "faith" of the Freethinker as to hear again the confusing and devastating teachings of the Christian Church of all denominations. Here and there is heard an eloquent sermon from a good preacher, from some of the truly magnificent texts to be found in the Bible; but the best of these are moral, material, human, dramatic, poetical; not the Holy but the Human Scriptures, and to which is given, and more than sufficient, by the trials, cares, pains, hopes, fears, loves and separations of mortal life, all their poignancy and significance. But the "message" is mutilated in the mould. The Kirk smells of the graveyard. Prayer, praise, and exordium, are a funeral service. The clergyman is an actor in a solemn farce. A most excellent actor. The songs are all sung to "the tune the auld coo dee'd wi'". Life is real and of deadly earnestness. Death is the great compelling king of terrors still. But for the life beyond, and for the fear of the eternal death beyond, the Valiant for Truth must hack his way to glory with a broken sword and bloody hands. God is not content that the poor mortal soul sleeps at night with the half of a broken hope for a pillow, or that he toils—when he can get toiling—with one foot on the crumbling edge of the economic precipice—

With Death swooping down o'er his failures,
And all but his faith overthrown.

No, our dread Deity is not content with all this, but has prepared a "place" for him where he will perish eternally "to feed the hunger, ravenous as famine, of a God's revenge." The Adventists, and others, believe all this. Thank God they do not act it. We need a new idea of God, certainly—or more mad-houses—or no god at all; but the peculiar people still increase, and no wonder when we see what children are taught. After all, I have not justified my text, nothing could well be curioser than those "Varieties of Religious Experience."

E. WILLIAMS.

Religion and the War.

O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance;
thy holy temple have they defiled. —Psalm lxxix.

I WAS asked, some little time ago, by a friend who is aware of my sympathies with the Freethought cause, whether I could account for the scenes of extraordinary fervour which attended many of the church services held by Army chaplains in France and Flanders during the war. My friend pointed out that the men who displayed considerable emotion at these services "cursed and swore at anything and everything"—as he expressed it—when they were over; and, indeed, probably never "even prayed" when at home.

I immediately replied that in my opinion these "scenes" needed little or no explanation, for the men's nerves must have been "screwed up" to an almost incredible degree when in the trenches, and naturally relieved themselves ("let themselves go" in the Army vernacular) when singing or praying; though the clergy would say it was because "they realized that only God could help them in their trials," or some such rubbish.

That is why soft and pleasing tunes found great favour with the troops, and hymns like "Abide With Me," "Rock of Ages," and "Jesu Lover of My Soul" were sung by all; not for the sake of the hymns, but for their tunes, which are admittedly suggestive of comfort. "Home, Sweet Home" was, in this respect, "too much for them," though songs of their childhood and others like "Tipperary" were very popular.

I pointed out, too, that the war had undoubtedly done a great deal to strengthen the position of Secularism.

It was a fine argument for the clergy during the war that when the soldiers, etc., returned, the churches would be filled again, and faith, taught by the "lesson" of the war, would reign supreme; for the war, they said, would bring the people—the too indulgent, indolent people—"back to their senses," and the apathy which hitherto had been shown towards "spiritual life" would vanish, and the "Spirit of the Holy Ghost" would be in every soul.

Well, the war ended four years ago; the soldiers, sailors, and airmen—minus some hundreds of thousands whose lives were so abruptly cut short—are home again, and they have learnt a lesson. But it is a very different one from that which the clerics hoped it would be. And it is a lesson which will not be forgotten.

"Is there a God," these ex-Service men argue, "that would allow such a catastrophe as the Great War to occur? Is there a God who would allow us to suffer as we did?"

They say, "No."

You may say their argument is sentimental or unscientific or elementary, but you can neither gainsay nor ignore it. It is the opinion of the quite ordinary individual, the person whose voice always counts for a great deal, despite the ridicule of the snobbish.

But the question is needless. They themselves know. And that is why the churches are empty.

So the clergy were surprised when, though the war was long past, congregations were no larger than those during the war. And they were afraid, these bishops and deans and canons, that they were losing the "good opinion" of the public, as indeed they were. And so they wrote, one after another, those strange and rather amusing letters to certain organs of the Press protesting that "church-going is on the increase," that "side by side with the fact of the growing congregations is noted a new note of earnestness in discussion," and other statements of a similar strain. And yet, although congregations were growing, it was considered necessary to distribute half-a-million manifestoes, headed "A Call to Adventure in Faith and Service" in order to assist the churches in "exerting their fullest possible influence upon our time."—Comment is hardly needed in such a case.

The Bishop of London's secretary "thought it probable that many people are beginning to think that, after all, there is something in religion." "After all" are strange words to come from Winnington-Ingram's secretary, and the whole campaign, instead of camouflaging the panic of the Church, exposed it. Still, there is something in religion—bluff, superstition, and hypocrisy especially.

While the campaign was at its height, too, a clergyman was so unwary as to admit that "you have only to look around the world to-day to see that it is practically pagan." I wonder what his superiors thought!

And then some ingenious soul thought of the use of advertisement in such a case. "Ah, yes," exclaimed the Church, gleefully, "let's advertise!" and a few obliging news-editors promptly wrote a half-column on the subject. But nothing further happened; probably the clergy realized that it would be useless, and decided not to throw money away.

And so the whole affair lingers on, and the clerics are daily growing more and more disheartened. They are just beginning to see, for all their bluff, that the rotten structure of superstition and meaningless ritual upon which the Church is built has been decaying for years, and they realize, too, that the spread of Free-thought is inevitable.

EUSTACE TAINE.

Freethought in Austria.

The Austrian writer, Mr. Johann Ferch, who has been attending the Birth Control Conference held in London, has placed at our disposal the following article:—

AUSTRIA and Spain are the two countries mostly under the influence of the ecclesiastical polity of Rome. The dynasty of Hapsburg has been its obedient servant, and the Austrian laws are a mixture of dogmas and jurisprudence. The religious fights which produce a vast and terrible misery of mankind raged in Austria for hundreds of years, and always the Catholic Church were victorious over their opponents (Protestants and so forth). Its victory has been rendered possible only by the support of the authorities and the Hapsburg dynasty, as it transformed the faithful into a political voting machine and placed them at the disposal of the reactionary party. The authorities wielding the supreme power of the country prohibited any work or publication directed against the Church, and doubt of the most ridiculous legends has been avenged with imprisonment and confiscation.

After the cursed war brewed by the Hapsburgs, Austria became a republic and deposed this pest of Europe with the result that the Church lost its strongest pillar as also the aristocracy had been abolished. The liberty of speech and writing rendered it possible that the various movements for humanity and civilization could take action against the old fiend of humanity, viz., against the dogmatics of the Catholic Church, who blesses the sword and uses religion as a political weapon, and thus it has been possible to enlighten the broad masses of the people. By means of scientific and serious books, lectures and articles in the newspapers, the utmost is done to show up the hollowness and harmfulness of a political religion, as well as the discrepancies between dogmas and scientific investigations based upon common sense.

We in Austria do not fight against religion as the private affair of every individual, but we lead a desperate fight against the political power of the hierarchy who embody the war-shouters, which will entangle us into a new war if we do not fight with all our might. All the anti-human and reactionary thinking and feeling human beings are taking refuge in the ecclesiastical politics which have become the stronghold of inhumanity, are corrupting the legislative council and are creating exceptional laws, and even to-day they have the majority of the Austrian population behind them, as they falsify religion to suit their own purposes.

Nowhere is the Church so intolerant and spiteful as in Austria. During the political fights its ethical laws have been denied long ago, and nowadays the Church will fear only one opponent and that is the enlightenment of the masses of the people. Therefore the exponents of the Churchwork hard to retain their influence in the schools and in the legislative council, they incite the middle classes, sow discord in the families, and have influential newspapers at their disposal. It is characteristic of their conduct in religious matters that the rich monasteries and convents of Austria did not raise a hand to save the Austrian children from starvation, this having been done by kind people in foreign countries.

The *Verein der Freidenker*, of XX Wallensteinstrasse 64, Vienna, has set its aim in breaking the political power of the Catholic Church, and the work is done out of sheer idealism. However, the funds at the disposal of this society are insignificant compared with the wealth of these powerful opponents. It may not be a great burden to the British friends of Free-thinkers to strengthen the funds of the Austrian

society. One pound sterling means to us 80,000 crowns that are thousands of pamphlets which are bullets for civilization fired against the dogmatical inhumanity. Anybody willing to help us may forward his contribution to the Editor of this paper, who will be so kind to forward the same to the Austrian Society of Freethinkers.

I may be allowed to repeat it, that the Austrian Society has no Bolshevistic aims and is not directed against the religious feeling, but is fighting only for enlightenment, against the empty dogmas, and a new war, and against inhumanity.

Help these fighters.

JOHANN FERCH.

Vienna.

Acid Drops.

A few months ago we spoke at some length of Mr. David Lloyd George and his mental make-up. We said that his intellectual equipment was redolent of the average suburban bethel. His address to Free Churchmen on July 28 confirms this in every detail. He told them a lot about the Church of Christ and its mission. He told them, too, that the Allies won the war. "Why did they win? They had righteousness on their side." (Cheers.) The Englishman's capacity for cheering this sort of utterance is marvellous. He regards "righteousness" as a nicely blended union of certain attributes, and knows where to look for it. German Protestantism used to be a highly enlightened and praiseworthy member of the household of faith. But that was several years ago. Another remark of the Premier's which commanded approval had reference to "the young men of Britain." "They have found no satisfaction in pure materialism." Our religious Press, then, in making the growing materialism of our youth one of its central themes is simply gulling its readers. Perhaps they like to be gulled.

At the Sheffield Wesleyan Conference the Rev. S. Chadwick put in a plea that the educational standard of admission to the ministry should be lowered. One must draw a distinction between the educational standard and the standard of ability. The two things are not at all synonymous, and we take it that the standard of educational admission only means a knowledge of certain things connected with Christian theology which requires a very moderate capacity to master. As to the standard of mental ability, that was lowered long since—not by special resolution, but by the force of events. In proportion as advancing knowledge left theology further and further behind, so the men who were attracted to the ministry in any of the Churches were men of a lower order of intellectual capacity. Anyone with a good pair of lungs and plenty of cheek can enter the ministry nowadays.

We confess to having regarded the Boy Scout movement with some amount of suspicion. It was so easy to make it a feeding ground for the army, and there were many things connected with it that seemed to feed the passions out of which wars were made, as well as developing a fatal attraction for a uniform. But if Sir R. Baden Powell's opinion is that the Boy Scout movement might be used to form an international educational movement which should aim at an international fellowship, teaching the young to think of the members of other nations in terms of peace instead of war, then the Boy Scouts would prove very useful indeed. For if the youth of the world could only be brought together, they might soon put the dangerous old men of Europe out of the running. For it is the old men who make war and who trade on the enthusiasm of youth to keep it going. We should, however, be still more impressed by what Sir R. Baden Powell says if he would give the Boy Scouts a definite movement in this direction.

Lambeth Borough Council has decided to allow games to be played in Vauxhall Park on Sunday afternoons. Brighton Council has decided, by 29 votes to 17, not to

permit Sunday games. The turn of the 17 will come. Meanwhile the 29 will experience some degree of pleasure in feeling that they have prevented the rest of the people enjoying themselves. To make oneself a nuisance makes some folk feel that they are of consequence to the community.

On the other side of the ledger, the *Church Times*, summing up the situation with regard to Sunday games, says:—

It is the idle Sunday which is really the dangerous Sunday. When young people have nothing to do but to lounge at street corners in varying stages of boredom, they are far more likely to get into mischief and to form undesirable habits than those engaged in playing games.

Another echo of Freethinking teaching. It is a case of "We lead, others follow." We do not get the acknowledgment, but that matters little.

What the *Church Times* suggests is that religion should be made more attractive than it is at present. Well, why not take the bull by the horns and arrange for the parson and his officers to play Sunday matches with the congregation after a ten minutes' sermon? Then there might be tennis parties arranged in the church-yard, and whist drives in the vestries. These with picture shows during the long evening might make religion more attractive. And the expression must mean something of this kind, because you cannot make religion more attractive than it is. All you can do is to mix it up with a number of other things which people want, and so get them to take the religion as a means of getting the other things. And that is what usually happens.

It is to be hoped that judges will confine themselves while on the Bench to their judicial duties and not give way to the tendency to preach. When they do their observations are not always helpful, and not always wise. Thus, in sentencing a woman charged with having incendiary bombs in her possession, Mr. Justice Shearman said that he desired to make some observations. And in the course of these remarks he said, "The principles of Christianity, of morality, and justice that I have to administer are exactly the same." One need not go further than to say without hesitation that the opinion is absolute nonsense. I do not think that any man in the world, with a reputation for learning or common-sense would claim that the law, justice, and Christianity are absolutely identical. The law is not always just, strict morality does not always agree with the law, and Christianity, on almost any reading does not always agree with both or either. It is one of those extravagant claims that argue a mind extraordinarily obtuse to the facts of life. The law often has to act in a way that is determined by the emergencies of the moment. None, for example, would claim that many of the laws set up during war-time were justifiable on grounds of either abstract morality or strict justice. It was enough that exceptional circumstances justified their enactment. And it is precisely because the law and morality do not always coincide that popular sentiment so often sides with one who acts contrary to the established law on a particular matter.

And what on earth does Mr. Justice Shearman mean by the law being identical with Christianity? He had just sentenced two men to death for the murder of General Wilson. On the New Testament teaching he should have refused to judge, and have returned good for evil by turning one cheek to those who had smitten the other. A far better judge of Christianity, Archbishop Magee, said that any nation which tried to put the Sermon on the Mount into practice would not last six months. And that was far nearer the truth than the ridiculous statement of Justice Shearman. And even a judge might reflect that to make such highly disputable statements in circumstances where no contradiction is permitted, is to come very near a serious abuse of his position. Mr. Justice Shearman is placed where he is to administer the law, and observations of the kind cited will not increase the respect of the thoughtful and educated public for either the law or for those who administer it.

The Rev. G. G. W. Herring, M.A., writing in the *Challenge* (July 14), says that the clerical mind is a blight upon the Church, which, in consequence, is sick from head to foot. The influence of the clerical mind is seen in the whole gamut of clergy from bishops to curates. The former contribute little fine thought to the world nowadays. Mr. Herring urges, as a remedy for this state of things, the cultivation of a more virile mentality, and courses of reading in the higher walks of literature and science. He especially condemns "thoughtless phrasing" and its effects. The clerical mind must see that it has to address the world, not a mere section of it.

We do not think any impartial observer can rebut this estimate of the clerical mind. Yet the influence which this mind is allowed to exercise in our educational and social life is still very extensive. Organized religion, and the professionalism associated with its institutions, inevitably tend to produce both the clerical mentality and the grooves in which it works. But at a period in which honest adherence to the doctrines taught is at a low ebb, the reaction on the intellectual life is nothing less than tragic. And its effect extends to the moral life also.

Mr. Herring's remarks will not be particularly palatable to his brethren of the cloth; but we very much doubt whether the type of mentality complained of can ever be eradicated from organized religion. It is not confined to any one body or sect, and may become still more in evidence with the growing decline in the intellectual status of candidates for "holy orders." This statement is hardly open to question, but it applies equally to the Church as a whole. The Establishment will never give us another South or Hooker; no modern representative of Puritanism will produce another *Paradise Lost*. Christianity, of course, will be "kept going" for some time yet, but as a cultural influence it will be about as nutritive as Dead Sea fruit or apples of Sodom. The "clerical mind," however, for this very reason will probably assume still more unattractive forms. In the evolution of the historical religions the decay of sincere belief has usually, for a time, proceeded side by side with a recrudescence of formula and ritual—not unlike in some aspects what we see in the Establishment now. You cannot combine mental freedom with a "safe" gospel of salvation, based upon authority, and intimately associated with "duly ordained" official expounders.

"Christians make funerals too solemn," said the Bishop of Guildford recently. With their exalted ideas of sin, salvation, heaven, and hell, many of them undoubtedly do so. At the same time it would perhaps say a little more for Christian character if some of the official mouthpieces of Christianity took a more "solemn" view of their priestly offices on the occasion of some funerals.

Quite recently a convinced Secularist, of fifty years' standing in his adhesion to our cause, was buried in consecrated ground, with the usual religious ceremony both in the church and at the grave-side. His widow declares that he would have looked forward with strong distaste to the prospect of a religious service over his remains. And we know of other cases to which a precisely similar statement is applicable. Could any man of high mental and moral stature, if aware of the facts, go through the ceremony of repeating his phrase and formula over a dead unbeliever?

A visitor to our suburbs can hardly avoid noticing, posted in front of many churches, the undignified appeals to outsiders to "come in" and help at least to swell the family circle. "Bright music" and "all welcome" are not particularly objectionable; but during the week we came across the following in Walthamstow: "An empty seat in the church means someone's vote that God shall be forgotten." Such a notice is eloquent of the attitude of Christianity to those whom it can no longer "compel to come in."

"Artifex" in the *Manchester Guardian* (July 26), writes at some length on the subject, "Is a Religious Revival Probable?" There are three causes of decay of religion in England: (1) clash of science and revelation; (2) higher criticism; (3) the conviction that this world was a "pleasant and comfortable place." The last has been the most potent influence of the three. Otherworldliness is looked upon as needless. This is correct as far as it goes. But the world has become a "pleasant and comfortable place" largely because it has triumphed in the competition with religion's claims and pretensions. How could the world be a pleasant place when human hopes and fears were at the mercy of the consequences of the future which religion had created? It was by forcibly crushing competing intellectual and moral influences that Christianity for so long kept these consequences in the foreground of men's accepted interests.

Professor Wilfrid Moulton, speaking at the Wesleyan Conference, Sheffield, last week, said that the Church "never deals with the ministry as if it were a profession." He pleaded for devotion rather than scholarship. "Soul counts for more than intellectuality." We respectfully ask Professor Moulton if he seriously thinks that he has broken any new ground. From the beginning the "assured" message was "foolishness to the Greeks," and strict evangelicals have always shaken their heads very solemnly at those who "set intellect above faith." Indeed, to the extent of their power, they shook other things, much harder than their heads, at the presumptuous ones who demanded arguments and verification in support of the data of "the faith once delivered to the saints."

The Rev. R. Davies, of Leigh-on-Sea, has resigned his curacy to enter upon a commercial career. This is not good news for the Establishment, which finds it hard enough to induce new blood to "put on Christ," without having to witness its men of God "putting off" the ecclesiastical garb.

Another cleric has had to put off his "frock" by order of the Consistory Court, Truro. The newspaper reports merely announce that a "grave offence" was committed. Such lapses from the straight and narrow way have always been more or less in evidence in the history of organized Christianity. They are worth noting at a time when some men are pleading for a frank recognition of the clerical vocation as one of the "professions."

In a review of *English Mystics* by Dr. Hodgson, the *Yorkshire Post* quotes a number of passages which show some of the reactionary currents at work in the English-speaking religious world. The Middle Ages, we are assured, were not dark. "Learning shone through those centuries like a candle in a naughty world." The Reformation, again, brought distinct losses—"loss of serene security, of accepted certainty." This sort of pleading is becoming fairly common with a certain school of thought. The "serene security" was that of the charnel-house, and progress since the Reformation has largely consisted in substituting for it a substantial measure of mental unrest. "They make a desert and call it peace." That represents "serene security" in a nutshell.

The Melanesian Mission reports that a hurricane has destroyed all stations, including fifty churches, in the New Hebrides. The development of this group has long been retarded owing to the difficulties and friction due to nearly all forms of joint administration, the islands being administered under the Anglo-French Convention of 1906. The Roman Catholic and the Protestant missionaries have never worked very smoothly in the Pacific—nor anywhere else. Christians take great credit for their missionary labours, but in many fields a considerable part of the story of Europe's own "conversion" has been reproduced. And Providence occasionally crowns their efforts with a hurricane or another flood.

To Correspondents.

- A. J. MARRIOTT.—Programme of the Peace Demonstration at Reading received. The hymns sung and the speeches made at some of the meetings stand in marked contrast with the attitude of a large section of the clergy of all denominations throughout the war. But the majority of the clergy speak "by the book." When have they done anything else?
- L. M.—We have not the details before us at the moment. Will try to get them for you.
- A. L. BRAÏNE.—We are obliged for cutting. See "Acid Drops."
- J. E. SIMPSON.—Thanks for verses which shall appear as soon as we have space.
- H. FERMOND.—We really cannot say what Dean Inge means when he talks about God. He is too shrewd to mean what the ordinary believer means, and not bold enough to make this fact clear to the ordinary believer. "God" means anything or nothing to such men—usually nothing. 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.
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- 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.
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- 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.
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Sugar Plums.

On Sunday next (Aug. 13) Mr. Cohen will lecture twice at the Secular School, Pole Lane, Failsworth. In the afternoon his subject will be "The Case for Freethought." In the evening at 6.30, "Some Delusions About a Future Life." Failsworth is only a tram ride from Manchester, so that there will no doubt be many visitors from there. Mr. Cohen has also arranged to visit Leeds about the middle of September, when he will open a new meeting place for the local branch.

The Newcastle Branch, as a result of Mr. Whitehead's recent Tyneside campaign, have had a fair influx of new members, and they now propose to carry on the fight for Reason by running a Discussion Circle with a view to training members as speakers. Last Sunday evening Mr. Atkinson, of Greenside, made his maiden essay as a Secularist speaker with an address entitled "A Young Man's View of Christianity," on the Town Moor. A sympathetic crowd bought a fair quantity of literature afterwards. Mr. Atkinson will speak there again next Sunday.

Mr. A. D. McLaren visited Wormwood Scrubs Goal on Thursday afternoon and again saw Mr. Gott. This will be his last visit in connection with the present sentence, for Mr. Gott expects to be released in a few weeks. But one incident arising out of Thursday's visit deserves to be recorded. It shows that the Christian spirit in

England is not dead, but is still a living thing even inside the very walls of our prisons. After Mr. McLaren had been conversing with Mr. Gott for about a quarter of an hour, he tells us, a warder entered the room, said the visit was stopped, and asked Mr. McLaren to see the governor of the goal. The latter then addressing him with considerable vehemence said: "Your visits are stopped. You have no right whatever to make them the occasion for Freethought propaganda. You have communicated with the Press, and that is contrary to the regulations." He admitted that the "propaganda" complained of was the paragraph in the *Freethinker* of July 9. We reproduce it in order to give our readers an opportunity of judging of its nature:—

Commenting on his half-hour in the goal, Mr. McLaren said that the sight of a fellow creature, placarded with a number, wearing the garb of the broad arrow, and undergoing incarceration for what is called blasphemy, was a convincing proof of the close connection in England between "crime" and punishment. It would not, he told us, be among his most cherished experiences, but it had its lasting lesson of real value. He thought of other times and occasions. A similar visit might show some of the nation's latter-day apostles of "sweetness and light" how much that is essentially Christian still flourishes in their midst.

At the very moment when our daily newspapers are treating the public to details of Mr. Horatio Bottomley's life in gaol, including the information that, according to his wife, his principal solace there is listening to the psalms and hymns in the chapel, a paragraph in the *Freethinker* is made the excuse for excluding a Secularist representative altogether. Christianity always inspires its votaries with pluck, especially when they are in positions of authority.

"Recognize your soul as Blatchford now does." This appears in the advertisement column, "Religious Announcements," in the *Press*, of Christchurch, N.Z., June 24. It was in this city that Mr. Glover, the manager of the *Maoriland Worker*, was recently prosecuted for blasphemy. Mr. Blatchford has achieved fame. First, as the writer of *Merric England*, he appealed to a school of Socialists; secondly, in *God and My Neighbour*, he entered the lists as the valiant knight attacking the very citadel of certain current religious beliefs. Now he winds up by serving as an acceptable text for a soul-saving discourse in a Baptist Chapel in New Zealand. Of all the goals which Mr. Blatchford has set before him, surely the last was the most difficult to reach. "But oh the joy of winning when once the thing is done!" By the way, did Mr. Blatchford record his protest against the prosecution of either Glover or Gott?

The *Autobiography* of Countess Sophie Tolstoy is anything but cheerful reading. It is evident that the religious bent of Tolstoy's mental and emotional make-up noticeably extended its melancholy influence to his wife. One reviewer of the *Autobiography* declares that the Count's greatest need was common sense. Nowadays many Christian apologists appear to regard the question of the truth or falsehood of the faith as a secondary matter, and dwell upon the danger to morals which will follow the break-up of religion, and the pessimism which overtakes those who lose their cherished beliefs. The *Autobiography* is an illuminating comment on this latter view. Tolstoy was a great writer, and his personality was not devoid of its elements of real bigness, but his attachment to the New Testament did not add sunshine to his outlook upon life.

Mr. A. D. McLaren had another excellent meeting in Regent's Park last Sunday, when he spoke on "The Old Faith and the New." At the conclusion there was a good batch of questions. Mr. McLaren tells us that on leaving the park he distributed, from the entrance gate, fifty or sixty old copies of the *Freethinker*. They were eagerly accepted by "all sorts and conditions of men," and he could have disposed of several times the number. This is an excellent way of advancing the cause, and we again remind our readers that back numbers of the *Freethinker* will be sent gratis from the office to those willing to distribute them.

Early English Freethought.

THE insular position which our country enjoys, and the mixed races of which our people are composed, have doubtless contributed to form that spirit of independence in which English Freethought has found its basis, and which, through the long course of its history, has given it a stamp whereby one can recognize our Freethought no less than our philosophy and our literature to be the genuine outcome of English character, and to evince the native qualities of the English mind. None the less, the development of Freethought in this country, as well as on the Continent, owes something to contact with the Jews, and still more with the Mohammedans. Under William the Conqueror the Jews took up important positions in England. Although, as Mr. Freeman observes, it may be doubted whether his son William Rufus was in any strict sense an intellectual sceptic, his conduct was well calculated to promote scepticism. He bade the Jewish rabbis and the bishops of England to dispute before him on the tenets of their several creeds, vowing by St. Luke's face that he would embrace the side which had the better argument. Of course, each party claimed the victory. The incident is as significant of the rise of a spirit of Freethought as the fact of St. Anselm writing a treatise to prove the existence of God. But whatever doubts might assail the solitary thinker, the Church was too strong to make it safe to publicly express them. We read that in 1160, when St. Thomas Becket was Lord High Chancellor, a party of thirty heretics, who came over from Germany to propagate their opinions, were branded in the forehead, publicly whipped and left naked in the streets in mid-winter, when, none daring to relieve them, they died of cold and hunger. The monkish chronicler makes the following comment: "This pious severity not only purified the kingdom of the plague which had already crept into it, but, by striking terror into the heretics, guarded against any future irruption of the evil."

Can we wonder that Æthelhard or Adelard of Bath, the first English Freethinker, was fain to put forth his views under the guise of being those of the Arabians. Adelard had travelled to Spain, Morocco, Greece, and Asia Minor. He translated Euclid's *Elements* from the Arabic into Latin before any Greek copies were discovered. His philosophy was an attempt to reconcile Platonic idealism with Aristotelian empiricism, but he writes with the air of a man who has burst the swathing-bands of authority, speaking boldly of the privileges and utility of reason, and contemptuously of those who submit to slumber in a bestial credulity. Such at least, he says, are the opinions of the Arabians.

The universities of the Moors in Spain, and the works of such men as Avicenna, Almanzor, and Averroes, attracted the attention of those few whose native bent constrained them to the pursuit of knowledge. A Latin translation from Arabic of the Book of Ptolemy on the Astrolabe was made at Oxford in 1185, and about 1190 Daniel Morley went to Spain and studied at Toledo. The first Latin translation of the Koran was made early in the thirteenth century by an Englishman, Robert Ketenensis, who went to Spain for that purpose. While the Crusades exasperated Christendom against the infidels, and enhanced the hatred of heretics as also enemies of God deserving to be remorselessly slain wherever met, they nevertheless brought Christians into contact with a heathen civilization, and their failure forced Christians to see that their divine religion did not always ensure secular superiority. As Voltaire wittily remarks of this period, "The king's fool was always a native; but his physician was either an Arabian or a Jew."

Roger Bacon, as is well known, was greatly indebted

to the Arabians, both for his philosophy, well termed by Whewell the *Encyclopædia* and *Novum Organum* of the thirteenth century, and for those inventions which for so long gave him the renown of being a magician—"Old Hodge Bacon," as he was long known to British story—who acquired his skill by promising himself to the Devil, whether he died in the Church or out of it, and at last cheated Satan by dying in a hole in the church wall. Spectacles, gunpowder, and burning glasses, with the invention of which he has been credited, were known to the Arabians before his time. It was only the common people who suspected Bacon. Bonaventura, the general of the Franciscans, interdicted his lectures at Oxford, and commanded him to leave that city and place himself under the surveillance of the order at Paris. Here, for ten years, he remained under constant supervision, denied all opportunities of writing, and the most jealous care being taken that he had no communication with the secular world. But after he had regained his liberty through the intervention of Clement IV, he was again condemned by Jerome di Ascoli, general of the Franciscans. He was then thrown into prison, where he remained fourteen years. Such were the penalties of pursuing science and philosophy when Christianity was powerful. In no point does the service of "the wonderful doctor" to Freethought stand out more clearly than in his famous anticipation of the enumeration of *Idola* by his great namesake, Francis of Verulam. Roger Bacon distinguished four chief causes of error: dependence upon authority, yielding to custom, giving way to the opinions of the unskilled, and the pretence of knowledge by the ignorant.

His grand-nephew, John Baconthorpe, the diminutive "resolute doctor" who sought to reconcile Averroism with orthodoxy, is notable for his influence on Vanini, who claimed to be his pupil.

Bacon's friend and patron, Robert Grosseteste, or Greathead, the vainly excommunicated Bishop of Lincoln, was the clerical representative of manly English thought, and in repelling the papal encroachments rendered a service to his countrymen, which long enshrined him in their hearts. From the day when coward John surrendered his crown to Pandolf, and agreed to pay a thousand marks as tribute to the Pope, all that was patriotic in England strove for release from a bondage which enthralled both mind and estate.

Draper, in the twenty-first chapter of his *Intellectual Development of Europe*, has depicted the degradation and misery of England caused by the drain of its money into Italy. Nor was this all. Foreign—mostly Italian—ecclesiastics were appointed to English livings, and privileges were claimed by the clericals that threatened to override all civil government. A priest might not be apprehended for murder. If a jury found a true bill against a priest, he must not be brought before the secular courts, but handed over to his diocesan. All Church patronage must rest with the Church. It is true the State never surrendered all that was asked, but as C. H. Pearson, in his able *History of England during the Early and Middle Ages*, remarks:—

Generally, it may be said that the Church always retrieved under a bad king, an Edward II or Richard II, the ground which it lost under just and competent sovereigns. Thus, the worthless son of Edward I repealed a great part of his father's salutary legislation, renounced the right of distraint upon old church lands, restrained the Judges from forcing clerks who had confessed a felony to abjure the realm, and forbade them to take the confessions of clerks who were willing to turn king's evidence and renounce their benefit of clergy (vol. ii, p. 489).

It is evident from the letter of the Emperor Frederick II to Henry II that that freethinking monarch desired an alliance with England against the

usurpations of Rome. From the avidity with which the report had been spread that even coward John contemplated turning Mohammedan rather than submit to Rome, we may judge there were those who would have welcomed such an alliance. It was, however, rather political opposition, excited by papal aggression and clerical corruption, that manifested itself than any specific dissent from religious dogmas. When, early in the fourteenth century, charges of infidelity were sought against the Templars little was elicited to substantiate the charge.

In challenging the orthodox school of realism, represented in England by the followers of Duns Scotus and Anselm, William Occam, the invincible doctor, proved himself on the side of progress and free inquiry. Nominalism was in spirit inductive and critical, realism deductive and dogmatic. Occam allowed theology the dominion of faith just because it was seen to be irrational. He taught that knowledge had a double inadequacy arising from the needs of thinking and of expressing thought in language, and by denying that causes should be multiplied, and that universals existed out of the mind; and by opposing scholastic logomachy he was a progenitor of the philosophy which, under Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, and Mill, has gone hand in hand with knowledge of things as they are, instead of as they may be supposed to be. Occam proved his title to invincibility by his resolution in opposing Pope Boniface VIII and John XXII. "Defend me with your sword, and I will defend you with my pen," he wrote to Philip the Fair. He boldly contended against the supremacy of the Pope in temporal affairs, and attacked the lucre-loving propensities of the pretended followers of Jesus. To argue as he did on the principle that the Church and the Papacy were human was, in that age, temerity entitling him to the honour of excommunication. It indicated the whole gulf which separated the teachings of authority from those of reason and conscience. But in that age new ideas did not pass rapidly into the current of the nation's blood.

Had Wiclif, the details of whose career are too well known to need entering upon here, confined his teachings to Oxford, he would neither have gained the ears of the people nor have drawn down the wrath of Convocation. This he escaped for some time, for the indignation excited by the arrogant renewal in 1365 of the papal claim of feudatory tribute, and the great western schism of the papacy which arose in 1378, greatly facilitated the spread of his views, and Wiclif was unmolested until the Church was aided by prejudice arising from the abortive peasant rising under Wat Tyler. Wiclif's services as the morning star of the Reformation have been amply recognized, and by his appeals to the laity and his translation of the Bible for their use, a merit which he shares with John Purvey, he did much to direct the future course of the Reformation in England.

"Chaucer," says John Fox, the martyrologist, "was a right Wicklavian, or else there never was any." A recent German investigator, Mr. H. Simon, of Schmalkalden, whose essay is published by the Chaucer Society, has come to the same conclusion. He finds that there is good reason to believe that those portions of the *Canterbury Pilgrimage* which touch most closely on the points at issue between Wiclif and the Church of Rome have been grossly tampered with by clerical copyists. The picture of the simple parson, he thinks, represents one of Wiclif's itinerant preachers, not a Catholic priest. It is known how sedulously it was reported that Chaucer, before his death, made his peace with the Church. A recantation, the spuriousness of which is universally admitted, was appended to his works, and remains itself a proof of our poet's heresy. That he largely sympathized with Wiclif is certain, and his contempt for the clergy

and the corruptions of the Church continually appear in his delineation of such characters as those of the Pardoner and Sompnour, who

"would suffer for a quart of wine
A good fellow to have his concubine."

But Chaucer was no "Wiclifite."

Our morning star of song was our first great Humanist. In Italy he had heard, with Petrarch and Boccaccio, the first creakings of the ice of the Middle Ages which announced the coming spring of Renaissance. His sympathies were too broad to be confined within the bounds of a sect.

In Langland's *Piers Plowman* we also find the hypocritical clergy scourged and a new prominence given to reason and conscience in the direction of the human mind.

(The late) J. M. WHEELER.

(To be Continued.)

Fido and Carlo as Children of God.

Stern law of every mortal lot!
Which man, proud man, finds hard to bear,
And builds himself I know not what
Of second life I know not where.

But thou, when struck thine hour to go,
On us, who stood despondent by,
A meek last glance of love didst throw,
And humbly lay thee down to die.

Yet would we keep thee in our heart—
Would fix our favourite on the scene,
Nor let thee utterly depart
And be as if thou ne'er hadst been.

—Matthew Arnold, "Geist's Grave."

"MAN is his dog's god." It is an old saying and, properly regarded, there may well be a kernel of truth in it. Carlo watches for man, hunts for him, and works for him. Isn't that very much what we do for God? Should not, then, a well-bred dog have a well-bred master, and a well-bred man have a God whose mark of nobility really does impose some sort of obligation? Carlo, let us not forget it, has the same opinion of his god's power and benevolence as men have of theirs.

The cult of the dog goes back to the early stages of human development. In modern times it occasionally assumes rather extravagant forms, in spite of the fact that the Christian believer heightens man's superiority over the lower animals by contrasting his god-like nature with the condition of a "mere" dog. In the humbler ranks of those who are so full of the "joyful tidings" this comparison is often drawn, special stress being laid upon the manner in which the human being dies—if saved, of course. Man is a fallen creature, it is true, but he has a means of grace which poor Carlo lacks.

There are several dogs' cemeteries in London, and my peregrinations recently took me to the vicinity of one of them. I looked in for a few minutes. Here was a forest of neat little headstones, which announced certain details concerning the life of the deceased. What was even more striking—most of them bore in addition a short scriptural text. "Not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God." This, I think, was the favourite text chosen. In another of Carlo's consecrated grounds, I have been told, an inscription on one of the headstones reads: "Entered into the glorious liberty of the children of God." I have no difficulty in imagining how some Christians, from their spiritual elevation, must regard this claim made on behalf of the members of a lower order of creation. To many it will appear to be a near approach to blasphemy. If, however, these inscriptions mean anything at all, then the lords and masters of those once

faithful pets at least hope that there is a Beyond in store for them somewhere.

But should Carlo and Fido ever acquire a knowledge of the future awaiting them, what will be the effect on their character? One asks the question with fear and trembling. We know how the assured conviction of another life affects human beings; but they have a conscience to regulate their conduct, the very thing which the orthodox Christian denies to the brute creation. Would the new knowledge call for a renunciation of the instincts of the natural dog in order to usher in the spiritual dog? Would there be a sorting out of souls, according to species or qualities, and a grading of future states of existence corresponding to man's heaven, hell, and purgatory? In these days, too, when we hear so much of the spirit-world, we feel justified in asking whether the future canine existence merely implies a state of mind or requires a definite locality for its spiritual development.

Carlo's ignorance on all these heads should be accounted real bliss. Think of what it must mean to him to be spared the process of compulsory, or even voluntary conversion, not to be burdened with a sense of sin or made the butt of well-seasoned stories of infidel death-beds. Besides, he might be puffed up with pride in the conviction that for him, at any rate, the life to come did not rest upon anything so heavy as an inspired book, or so light as the speculation of a metaphysician.

That the animals were only created for the use of man, was at one time the stock Christian proof that they had no souls, and consequently could not survive physical dissolution; but this convenient doctrine could not apply to some animals I have met. Nowadays, however, many Christians base their claim to a future life on the nature of mind, which, they assert, implies an "immaterial principle." May not he, then, who hopes for a life "beyond the veil" for his devoted dog, contend that mind in all creation is equally independent of the bodily structure, and this from the human family right down to the jelly fish? Nor should he fail to note very carefully that Christians almost without number now proclaim that the evolutionary doctrine only strengthens their faith.

I have many a time been asked if I believed that dogs had souls. My answer has usually been a simple one—I have never made a profound study of canine eschatology. In a discussion on the subject which I heard not long ago, the general opinion certainly was that "dogs have souls just as much as we have." I should perhaps feel on fairly safe ground in agreeing with this.

Various accounts have been given from time to time of the sumptuous funerals accorded some of the pets buried in these cemeteries. Oak coffins, silver handles, inconsolable mourners—the public has already heard all these details. Quite lately I asked an old Londoner if he thought the reports were accurate or only journalistic exaggerations, touched up to meet the English taste. He said there was probably considerable truth in them, because England is a land of contrasts. My visit to Carlo's dead-house undoubtedly led me to a similar conclusion. Whatever England may have been at one time, I am almost convinced that she is a Christian country now. VIATOR.

I found in the temple of Dér el Bahri mummies which were undoubtedly Christian. On the linen in which they were wrapped might be seen the cup, the ear of corn, the bread and the wine, the symbols of the Last Supper, side by side with other emblems derived from the religion of the old Pharaohs. And Gnosticism, which plays so great a part in Christian Egypt, is certainly a product of the old religious conceptions.—*Edouard Naville, "The Old Egyptian Faith."*

A Quartet of Sonnets.

FROM "SONNETS ON THE THOUGHT OF DEATH."

These questions all men ask; but none can make
Fit answer for their anguish here below.
The howling whirlwinds of existence blow
Onward for ever o'er an endless lake:
We watch the struggling barks around us take
Their fated course; and that is all we know;
They sail, they sink; no sign the waters show;
While straining myriads follow in our wake.
The force that speeds our flight we cannot see;
No voice of man or god survives the storm;
Nor 'mid the weltering waves hath any form
Risen to fill the vast vacuity;
Nay, if at times there stream athwart the night
Some forkéd flame, it dazzles but to blight.

—*John Addington Symonds.*

AN OLD GORDIAN KNOT.

Let man with man, let race with race, let age
With age æonian linked in serried line,
Scale the celestial station crystalline
And with high God continual battle wage;
Nay, let them pace in patient pilgrimage
Toward that unknown mysterious hidden shrine
Where dwells the very truth and life divine,
If haply they may greet and kiss their liege.
O whither, whither shall their steps be led?
Upward or downward, on what paths of thought?
Have ye not seen the clouds that morning bred,
Storming Olympus with fierce thunder fraught?
Ere noon they went their way, and overhead
The same clear web of limpid light was wrought.

—*John Addington Symonds.*

RENUNCIATION.

Wakeful I lay all night and thought of God,
Of heaven, and of the crowns pale martyrs gain,
Of souls in high and purgatorial pain,
And the red path which murdered seers have trod;
I heard the trumpets which the angels blow,
I saw the cleaving sword, the measuring rod,
I watched the stream of sand continuous flow,
Past the gold towers where seraphs make abode.
But now I let the aching splendour go,
I dare not call the crownéd angels peers,
Henceforth! I am content to dwell below,
'Mid common joys, with humble smiles and tears,
Delighted in the sun and breeze to grow,
A child of human hopes and human fears.

—*W. M. W. Call.*

THE PRIEST'S PRAYER.

Have pity, Lord! Let me not die alone!
'Though once I dared my fellow-souls to shrive,
I am unclean; with pangs of death I strive.
Alas, what healing balm to me was known
For every heart that made its fevered moan!
But now that I am sick, who shall revive
My hopeless faith, or save my soul alive,
Since that elixir fails, which was mine own?
Spirit of God, Who dwellest e'en in me,
Who speakest even by this doubtful breath,
Whether for good or ill 'Thou set me free,
Withhold not 'Truth, although its price be Death:
I faint, I die, in scorching plains accurst,
Let me drink hemlock, if it slake my thirst!

—*Constance Caroline Woodhill Naden.*

The International Movement.

THE PRESENT POSITION OF FREETHOUGHT IN FRANCE.

THE National Congress which is to be held at Paris on Aug. 14 and 15 is my excuse for reviewing the position of Freethought in France for the benefit of English sympathizers. Let me begin by remarking that, after 1914, our Freethought societies practically ceased to exist. As soon as the appeal went out to all Frenchmen to put an end to internal intellectual hostilities, and present a solid front to the enemy, the promoters of the *Union Sacrée* were relieved from all fear of attacks on the Church and religion. Indeed, any attempt to criticise the clergy, or to analyse the international politics of the Vatican would have been promptly dealt with. The critic's intentions would have been regarded with suspicion, and the filthiest epithets thrown at him. To spread Freethought during the war was looked upon as playing into the hands of the enemy, and you would have been lucky if you escaped denunciation as a German spy.

But, curiously enough, the Church itself preserved no such neutrality. The clergy continued to preach from their pulpits, and, on occasion, would even abuse the Government, assuring their hearers that the war was God's punishment on them for unbelief and impiety, for the sacrilegious laws against the Church and the religious bodies. Freethought papers died, but the religious papers all over the country increased their sales, and were scattered broadcast among the troops in the trenches, together with thousands of pamphlets and leaflets in which the action of the Church and the devotion of its priests were ridiculously eulogized.

Non-clerical propagandists had held up all forms of propaganda, but monks of every order returned to France under the protection of the war, the non-clerical laws being in suspension, as indeed they still are at this moment. Chaplains in the front line, or in the hospitals, where they were supported by Catholic male nurses, by fashionable women full of good-will towards these monkish gentlemen, and by "sisters" whose tolerance and breadth of mind are proverbial; all these were the precious instruments of religious propaganda; there is no doubt that our adversaries knew how to profit by the situation—distribution of delicacies to soldiers who were willing to wear medals, scapularies and other amulets, or to attend mass; favours reserved for believers or hypocrites in hospital, all these means were used in the service of the Faith.

I must remind my reader that this state of things was not peculiar to France. Everywhere the *Union Sacrée* practised its double-dealing, it destroyed all independent thought, and left a free field to the Church which was closely associated with the belligerent nations, giving its support in every land to the hateful work of butchery and devastation which was to go on for over four years.

French Freethought, moreover, was ill-prepared to react against the clerical attack. After the separation of Church and State, the greater number of militant Freethinkers, erroneously believing that the enemy was put out of action for ever, gave up the struggle altogether, or slackened considerably, while the Church got its forces together and rapidly regained what it had lost.

In 1913 it was evident to all of us that the clerical party was preparing a new attack and that its power was not broken. Unfortunately there was a profound cleavage in the more advanced elements. Most of the radicals remained anti-clerical but in so luke-warm a fashion, and with views so narrow, so limited, that the popular element separated from them more and more. The Socialists and Revolutionaries, with a few exceptions, pretended that the anti-religious struggle was

a thing of the past and useless. They gave the first place to economic action, to the struggle against capitalism and the wage-system, not understanding that the intellectual and moral emancipation of the proletariat, which will never come about if we neglect the struggle against religious prejudices, and the hateful politics of the Vatican, can never be effected by mere material changes.

This state of things went on after the war. It even became worse through the falling away of the greater part of the Radicals who, at the 1919 elections, agreed to fraternize with the "right" parties, through fear of Bolshevism, thus playing into the hands of the reactionaries and the *Bloc National* (the combined groups of Nationalists).

The Freethought organization (*Union Fédérative*) had reacted as effectively as possible, it had multiplied its new beginnings. Unfortunately these new beginnings were too verbal (articles, orders of the day, communications to the Press). They were unsupported by active propaganda in the country. Anti-clerical action was almost defunct during the war, for want of material means at first, but in the main, for want of enthusiasm and vitality. Certainly we confine ourselves too much to the mere talk of congresses and committees, neglecting to create in the great mass of men deep and living currents of thought.

About this time a new society was founded under the title: *The National Federation of Freethought and Social Action*.¹ Younger and more ardent than the old federation, it called the militants to the conflict, it pointed out to them the immediate danger, it formulated the principles of an active Freethought which would not be contented with a superficial anti-clericalism, but which would attack the Church in whatever positions it took up, which would convert our societies into a force at once philosophic and social, which would attack militarism, the sworn ally of clericalism and every form of prejudice, and all the other institutions opposed to the liberation of man.

Yet, in spite of this, the *Fédération Nationale* refused to have anything to do with politics. It appealed to all anti-clericals, from simple Republicans to Communists and Anarchists, to present a solid front against the enemy of all thought and all liberty.

Since its formation (August 1921, at the Lyons Congress) it has developed in a very satisfactory manner. It succeeded in bringing out a small monthly, *L'Anti-Religieux*, which is a reflection of the Society's life and work, and it is educating Freethinkers by the publication of articles, and philosophic and social studies. The *Fédération Nationale* includes a number of very important federations, important from the point of view of numbers, and of vitality:—

The *Fédération du Rhône* with the splendid group formed by our Lyons comrades, and their work for solidarity; the *Maison Fraternelle de la Libre Pensée*, well within sight of realization, where the children of Freethinkers and aged fighters for the cause, who are without resources, find a cordial protection.

The *Fédération du Nord et du Pas-de-Calais*, one of the strongest societies in France. It is made up of eighty compact groups and 3,000 members who all receive a copy of our paper.

The *Ligue d'Action Anti-Catholique*, a supple and combative federation formed of individual members from every part of France, together with a purely Parisian group, is equally active, more especially in the direction of publications. It has already issued nearly a million pamphlets, an anti-religious calendar, and other things.

¹ *Fédération Nationale de Libre Pensée et d'Action Sociale*; General Secretary, Marius Roche, 6 rue Ozanam, LYONS (Rhône); Treasurer, J.-B. Jacobs, 28 rue Saint-Druon, LILLE (Nord); Propaganda Delegate, André Lorulot, CONFLANS-STE.-HONORINE (Seine et Oise).

The *Fédération de Meurthe et Moselle*, that of *Bouches du Rhône*, that of the *Loire*, the groups of *Ain*, of *Drôme*, of *Puy-de-Dôme*, of *Cannes*, of *Lorient*, and many others which I do not remember for the moment, are equally to the front, in close contact with the national organization and ready for action.

A certain number of intelligent people, I believe, are inclined to object to two federations. Although these are not opposed, up to the present, and although no regrettable difference of ideals and opinions has yet brought them into conflict we cannot but deplore this want of unity. Is it likely that we shall see these two bodies become one in the future? No doubt it is a consummation to be desired, but it seems indisputable, that in view of the present state of things, the moment for fusion has not arrived. The *Union Fédérative* lacks vitality, if I may say so in all friendliness, it also lacks audacity and fails to get its teaching down to the masses. The *Fédération Nationale*, although a younger society (its membership is at least equal to that of the older group), is in a much better position for active work. Under these conditions a premature fusion might set up a sort of partial paralysis, for the temerity of some of its members would be a dead weight on its forward movement.

But it is permissible to imagine (the Paris Congress will discuss this point) the creation of an interfederal committee, in which the militant members of the two organizations will meet for friendly discussion and for united action according to circumstances.

It is also to be desired that the *Internationale de la Libre Pensée*, on its part, should make every effort to throw off its languor, and to hold a really brilliant International Congress, one which will be a stimulus to our energies and show our adversaries that Free-thought is not dead.

But why should not our English friends take the initiative and next year, at London, bring together all the Freethinkers of the world? A movement in that desirable direction would bring them the thanks and sympathy of all militant Freethinkers who are now suffering from intellectual stagnation.

ANDRÉ LORULOT.

Englished by G. U.

Newcastle Lecturing Tour.

My second visit to the Newcastle district lasted three weeks. Two of the meetings of the first week were marred by rain, and the two substituted, held at the village of Blaydon, were not very successful. The second of these, arranged for on the Saturday evening, might have developed into a good meeting, but just as a decent crowd had been gathered together the local Salvation Army band turned out of the barracks. We had previously ascertained from one of its members that the band usually performed some distance away. On this occasion, however, after marching down the street the band returned, and stationing itself a few inches from my platform literally blared me down. A heavy storm fell a minute or two later and moved all of us from the pitch. All hopes of a meeting vanished as we were not allowed by the police to speak elsewhere and the "Army" saw to it we should not be heard there. It is Christian tolerance once more in evidence! But worse followed at Crawcrook village on the following Wednesday. When we arrived there we found the bills had been torn from the walls and a local Catholic doctor had the villagers arrayed ready for action. He literally herded them away from wherever I put the platform. The speaker had to follow the crowd, which retreated as he advanced. At last, however, when there seemed a possibility of getting a hearing, the doctor requisitioned the services of all the children in the village, encouraging them to yell and "boo!" every time I

attempted to speak. At the end some horseplay ensued and a supporter got a nasty dig in the ribs. Nothing serious happened; but eventually, as something approaching a free fight seemed imminent, we had to give up the attempt.

For the rest, nothing but unqualified success need be reported. Some eighteen meetings were held on the Moor and in the Bigg Market. Large enthusiastic crowds night after night assembled awaiting our arrival, and as a result we usually had to convene the meetings a quarter of an hour before the advertised time. I got the most sympathetic hearing possible, and, considering the state of industry in Newcastle, large quantities of literature were sold. A good number of new members were made, the branch was revived, and at a special Sunday afternoon meeting I laid down a number of proposals for educative and social work for the future. One or two young men promised to address future meetings, the first of which will have been held, I hope, before this appears in print, and altogether the situation in Newcastle looks much better as a result of the mission.

Messrs. Bartram, the Misses Bartram, Armstrong and Peacock, were indefatigable in their assistance whilst I was at Newcastle, and Messrs. Atkinson and Batey gallantly carried on an uphill fight as our standard-bearers in the villages.

GEORGE WHITEHEAD.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON:

INDOOR.

THE "LAURIE" DISCUSSION CIRCLE: Every Thursday at the Laurie Arms Hotel, Crawford Place, W. Social reunion at 7.30 p.m. Chair taken 8 p.m.

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