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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

Views and Opinions.

The Great Lying Creed.

One day, said Heine, the Christian era will be known as the sickness period of humanity. With equal, if not with greater truth it might be described as the Great Lying Period; for in no other era has there been so much persistent lying in the interests of religion and in the name of morality. Within the circle of the Church every variety of lie and every kind of liar have been well represented. There has been the lie direct, the lie by implication, the lie by suggestion, the lie by suppression, the lie inferential, and the lie circumstantial. The poor modern who may set out with the ambition to build up a reputation as a first-class liar will, if he is wise, steer clear of theology. There he is doomed to play the part of an imitator. Everywhere he will find that the great and ancient army of the pious has forestalled him. If he takes to forgery, he will find that the Christian Church has during the course of its history produced scores of documents, some of which are still treasured as the word of God. If he wishes to slander, he can cut but a poor figure at the side of the stories of infidel death-beds, or of the evil lives of its enemies which the Church has compiled. So in whatever direction one may turn. Indeed if ever an enterprising publisher decides to issue an encyclopædia of lying—and if it is published it will make one of the most illuminating and interesting of works—he could not do better than make a detailed study of Christian methods and records. Without this his work will have the mark of incompleteness on every page.

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Self-Preservation.

When one sets out with a belief for which no valid evidence can be offered, when that belief becomes the basis of institutions which support large vested interests, and it is felt that the belief must be maintained at all costs, there are only a limited number of ways in which such a belief may protect itself against corrosive criticism. First it must be held as above criticism and independent of verifiable proof. That leads on to the practice of suppressing everything that tells against it. Then, if the forces against it will not be suppressed, and a better informed intelligence demands some sort of evidence, the evidence must be manufactured. The Christian Church followed all these methods, and it is still practising them so far as the greatly changed circumstances permit. To begin with, we do not know, and we never shall know to what extent the Christian Church succeeded in stamping out hostile criticism. We do know that its success was tolerably complete, and that owing to its activity thousands of books and manuscripts were lost to the world. Some of the writings of its enemies are known to us only by the references that are to be found in Christian writings. In this way the very vigour of the Christian writers is made at a later date to furnish evidence against them. How far Christians went in the manufacturing of evidence we have a more certain knowledge, although, here again, our evidence is incomplete. But we have the existence of whole documents such as are found in the apocryphal writings connected with the New Testament, with forgery and interpolation in the New Testament itself, further forgeries in connection with writings such as those of Josephus and Tacitus, and others, all of which go to show that the Christian Church stopped at no form of dishonesty and lying when its interests were to be promoted. "Lying for the greater glory of God" is the oldest and the most honoured of Christian practices.

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The Frauds of Faith.

To please the credulous and to induce belief miracles were manufactured by the hundred and saints by the thousand. And there is here no possible question of mistaken zeal or of a mistake made in pure ignorance. When the Christian Church provided the faithful with bottles of the milk of the Virgin Mary, with enough pieces of the true cross to build a couple of battleships, with bones of saints by the cart-load, with winking pictures, bleeding statues, apologists cannot plead that these were the outcome of honest but mistaken ignorance in an age of credulity. They represent the operations of an utterly unscrupulous corporation striving by every method of fraud and deception to consolidate its power. The same unscrupulous conduct has always been shown by the Christian Church in dealing with its opponents. The lies told about those who questioned its claims or its teachings are too well known to need more than a mention to place them among the counts in the indictment of Christianity. Christians of the better sort to-day express their dislike of these methods, but there is no disputing the fact that the Christian Church has benefited largely by their circulation, and cannot help benefiting by them. They have helped to keep the Christian Church in being, to induce blind belief, and to establish the character of Christianity as something that must not be questioned. Nor did this kind of Christian evidence cease while Christians found it possible and profitable to practise it. It ceased only when and where it became too costly a game to play. But by that time its work was done. Advanced Christians to-day may reject the miracles of the Church, but it was these with the other impostures of the Christian ages which

established the Christian religion in the minds of the people of Europe. To put the matter bluntly, while the liberal Christian of to-day rejects the impostures of the Christian ages he is drawing the full benefits which those impostures have conferred upon him. He is like a wealthy land-owner who, while willing enough to admit that the land came into his possession by robbery, continues to draw the rents with regularity and satisfaction.

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A Contrast.

The business of the scientific historian is to find the causes of any phenomenon that meets him in his studies. And this wholesale lying of the Christian Church was really an expression of its struggle for self-preservation. It dare not admit open examination and free criticism. It does not willingly admit these to-day. It does not allow its followers to know more of the truth than it can help, and by its policy of boycott it suppresses where and when it can. It is true that there has been with Christianity much talk about the need for getting truth, but it was the truth as laid down by Christianity, as taught once and for all by the Church. Of the desire for truth as an end in itself it has shown never a trace. Such a sentence as the following, reported of the Buddha, could never have been produced by Christian teaching:—

> Do not believe in traditions simply because they have been handed down for many generations; nor in anything which is rumoured and spoken of by many, or because the written statement of some old sage is produced. Do not believe that it is truth simply because you have been attached to it by habit, on the authority merely of your teachers and elders. But after observation and analysis and when the thing agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of all, then accept it and live up to it.

One simply cannot conceive such a teaching finding a place in the New Testament or in orthodox Christian teaching. There are, indeed, very few books on behalf of which large claims are made which pay less attention to intellectual culture than does the New Testament. Nowhere is the disinterested search for truth inculcated, and nowhere does independence of thinking receive less encouragement. Even Mohammedanism has shown itself during its history far more tolerant of diversities of opinion and more open to the search for scientific truth than has orthodox Christianity. Had the spirit of the teaching of Buddha been the spirit of the New Testament Jesus the history of Europe would hardly have presented the picture of religious ignorance and brutality it did during the unchecked reign of the Christian Church.

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Religion and Science.

The modern world prides itself upon its greater love of truth and its increased freedom from systematic falsehood. The experience of the last few years would lead to some questioning of these claims, but if admissible there is the significant fact that the increased love of truth has gone on with a marked decline in the influence of theology. Probably the exact position would be, not that there is a greater love of truth with the mass of the people—again very recent experience leads to the conclusion that what the mass of people desire is not so much truth as to have their prejudices flattered—but a less active interference with freedom of expression which gives to the more alert intelligences the chance of expression. But we certainly owe nothing to Christianity on this account. So far as this can be traced to any single influence, the credit must be given to science which has always cultivated and inculcated the benefit of the search for truth for truth's sake. The whole aim of science is to search, to discover, to verify. It has no such teaching as "Blessed is he that hath not seen and yet hath believed." Its message is rather "Cursed be he that believes without seeing and assents without understanding." It is this teaching to which modern civilization owes so much, and against which the Christian Church has always fought. On behalf of its ridiculous dogmas it has lied and forged and persecuted, until it has contaminated the whole of the social atmosphere, and it is in line with its historic falsity that some of its prominent preachers should to-day claim that whatever improvement is manifest in modern life is due to its influence. "The Great Lying Creed" will live up to its nature to the very end. And if its lies to-day are not so outrageous, nor its frauds so palpable, it is because it has to face a more enlightened and a more critical public.

Chapman Cohen.

John Keats.

I.

His Life.

It is a noteworthy fact that three of the greatest English poets who flourished during the early years of the nineteenth century died exceedingly young, Keats at twenty-five years of age, Shelley at thirty, and Byron at thirty-six. Another striking feature is that the intervals between the three deaths were very brief, Keats dying on February 23, 1821, Shelley on July 8, 1822, and Byron on April 19, 1824—within four years. A third remarkable fact concerning these illustrious geniuses is that the three spent the most fruitful years of their lives and died in foreign lands. They were driven out of their native country by cruel persecution, or, as in the case of Keats, by crueller disease.

John Keats was born in Finsbury, London, on October 31, 1795, being Byron's junior by seven years, and Shelley's by three. His parents were neither rich nor poor, being the proprietors of a well-paying livery-stable business called the Swan and Hoop, in the Pavement, Moorfields, opposite the entrance to Finsbury Circus. John was the eldest of four children, and the only one known to fame. He had two brothers, named George and Thomas, and a sister, called Fanny. At nine years of age he lost his father, and his mother three years later. It had been his parents' ambition to send him to Harrow-on-the-Hill for his education, and on discovering that this would be beyond their means they wisely determined that a cheaper school, the Rev. John Clarke's, at Enfield, would be in every way more suitable, and here he remained for six years, proving "a very orderly scholar," even winning first prizes for certain kinds of work. Towards the end of his school life he became a most assiduous student, finding great delight in making translations from the Latin or the French. It was while at Enfield that he began his translation of the *Æneid*, which he completed the very year he left school. While at Enfield he made the acquaintance of the headmaster's son, Mr. Charles Cowden Clarke, who later ranked himself among the most ardent admirers of his genius. Unfortunately for his future career as a poet who specialized in Greek mythology, he acquired no knowledge of the Greek language, which necessitated his studying the Greek classics by means of imperfect translations.

The ideal which Keats cherished was to become a physician, and so he was apprenticed to Thomas Hammond, a surgeon at Edmonton. The agreement was for five years, and the premium paid £210. Even at Enfield Keats had often displayed an exceptionally

pugnacious disposition, and was not seldom engaged in more or less serious fisticuffs. Whether his natural pugnacity had anything to do with it or not is not clear, but it is quite true that in 1812 there was a rupture with Hammond. His own reference to it in a letter to his brother George, dated September 21, 1819, is somewhat enigmatical :—

> Our bodies, every seven years, are completely fresh-materialed; seven years ago it was not this hand that clenched itself against Hammond.

After so long a time it is impossible to determine what exactly the boy meant by those words; but whatever the dispute may have been there must have been a reconciliation, for he did not leave Hammond until 1814. For a time he attended lectures at St. Thomas's Hospital, of which he entered copious notes in a book still preserved, and in July 1815, he succeeded in passing an examination at Apothecaries' Hall, shortly after which he secured an appointment as dresser at Guy's Hospital under a Mr. Lucas.

Keats' heart, however, was set on becoming a poet, and his constant delight was to give free course to his vivid imagination. One day his friend, Cowden Clarke, asked him how he liked his work at the hospital, and he frankly confessed that he was not in love with anatomy, saying :—

> The other day, for instance, during the lecture, there came a sunbeam into the room, and with it a whole troop of creatures floating in the ray, and I was off with them to Oberon and fairyland.

This friend understood him thoroughly, and loved him dearly, through whom he was introduced into a literary circle, in which John and Leigh Hunt were the central figures, the one the publisher, and the other the editor of the *Examiner*, in which Keats' first poem appeared on May 5, 1816. He had written the *Ode* and *Hymn to Apollo* in 1815. It was towards the end of 1816 that he was introduced to Benjamin Haydon, the brilliant painter, who remained loyal to him to the end. In 1817 his first volume of *Poems* was published. In January, 1818, Wordsworth became his friend and admirer, and they "saw a good deal" of each other. It was at the "immortal dinner" given in Haydon's studio that the two great poets first met, the date of which was December 28, 1817; and it is well known that the heads of both appear, among many others, in the artist's famous picture, *Christ's Entry Into Jerusalem*. During the years 1817-1820 Keats worked hard, and in succession, *Endymion, Isabella, Ode to a Nightingale, Lamia*, and many other poems were written, and several of them published.

It should be borne in mind that Keats' mother died of consumption at a comparatively early age, and that the poet himself, in his twenty-second year, began to suffer from the same dread disease. As W. M. Rossetti, in his excellent *Life* of him says :—

> From this point forwards nothing but misery remains to be recorded of John Keats. The narrative becomes depressing to write and depressing to read. The sensation is like that of being confined in a dark vault at noonday. One knows, indeed, that the sun of the poet's genius is blazing outside, and that, on emerging from the vault, we shall be restored to light and warmth; but the atmosphere within is not the less dark and laden, nor the shades the less murky. In tedious wretchedness, racked and dogged with the pang of body and soul, exasperated and protesting, raging now, and now ground down into patience and acceptance, Keats gropes through the valley of the shadow of death (p. 40).

The story is one of the most tragically sad ever enacted on the human stage. After many months of never ceasing torture he resorted to opium for some relief and found it, but his friend, Brown, persuaded him to discontinue the perilous habit, which he did. Then suddenly he received a staggering blow. As Lord Houghton says :—

> One night, about eleven o'clock, Keats returned home in a state of strange physical excitement; it might have appeared, to those who did not know him, one of fierce intoxication. He told his friend (Brown) he had been outside the stage-coach, had received a severe chill, was a little fevered, but added : "I don't feel it now." He was easily persuaded to go to bed; and as he leapt into the cold sheets, before his head was on the pillow, he slightly coughed, and said : "That is blood from my mouth. Bring me the candle; let me see this blood." He gazed steadfastly some moments at the ruddy stain, and then, looking in his friend's face with an expression of sudden calmness never to be forgotten, said : "I know the colour of that blood—it is arterial blood. I cannot be deceived in that colour. That drop is my death warrant; I must die."

He was not mistaken. Though his health improved for a short time, ere long he broke another blood vessel. Joseph Severn, who had known him since 1813, and loved him with a love beyond a brother's, having in 1820, as an art student at the Royal Academy, won the gold medal entitling him to a three years' free stay in Italy, resolved to take Keats with him to Rome, where they arrived in the autumn of 1820. Here Keats was medically attended to by Dr. (afterwards Sir James) Clark, who engaged a lodging for him opposite his own. Severn tenderly nursed him until he died on February 23, 1821, after enduring the most excruciating agonies for many weeks. On February 14, writing to Mrs. Brawne, the mother of the girl the poet so passionately loved, Severn said : "Among the many things he has requested of me to-night, this is the principal—that on his grave shall be this : 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water.'"

Thus lived and thus died one of the most extraordinary geniuses the world has ever seen. His character, in some respects, was woefully defective, but in others indiscribably beautiful. The following is Haydon's testimony :—

> Keats, too, is gone.....He was the most unselfish of human creatures; unadapted to this world, he cared not for himself, and put himself to any inconvenience for the sake of his friends. He was haughty, and had a fierce hatred of rank, but he had a kind, gentle heart, and would have shared his fortune with any man who wanted it.

We are assured by A. W. Benn, in his *Modern England* (p. 126), that no trace of a struggle with supernatural beliefs has been left in Keats' works. He appears to have grown up a natural Freethinker. Beyond the shadow of a doubt he was not a Christian. He simply ignored the supernatural, treating it as if he had never heard of it. His friend, Felton Mathew, describes him as being "of the sceptical and republican school." He loved Nature with all his heart. This is what Haydon tells us on this point :—

> In fireside conversation he was weak and inconsistent, but he was in his glory in the fields. The humming of a bee, the sight of a flower, the glitter of the sun, seemed to make him tremble; then his eyes flashed, his cheeks glowed, his mouth quivered.

Nature was to him a spacious treasure-house, the home of innumerable living beings with whom he was on terms of intimate friendship, as we shall immediately see.

J. T. Lloyd.

To prevent men thinking and acting for themselves by restraints on the press is like the exploits of that gallant man who thought to pound up the crows by shutting his park gates.—*John Milton, "Arcopagitica."*

Shelley's Mother-in-Law.

Hail to the courage which gave voice to its creed, ere the creed won consecration from time.
—*Matthew Arnold (Lines on Harriet Martineau).*

Shelley's first wife, Harriet, accused Mary Godwin of harping upon the subject of her mother's service to Liberty in order to secure the poet for herself. It was a shrewd thrust at Mary, and surprising in its implied knowledge of Shelley's character. For Shelley not only loved Godwin, the philosopher, "this side of idolatry," but he had an enormous reverence for Mary Wollstonecraft, who may be fairly described as the chief founder of the modern Feminist Movement. So much is this the case that it may even be said that Godwin explains Shelley, and it is equally true that Shelley is the indispensable commentary to Godwin. It is no paradox to add that Godwin formed Shelley's mind, and that the *Prometheus Unbound* and *Hellas* were the greatest of the philosopher's works.

Some innocents imagine that men and women of letters, not being people of action, exert little or no influence in politics and upon politicians, in statesmanship and upon statesmen. It is a fond illusion. What far-reaching influence did not Jean Jacques Rousseau exert in world-politics? Instead of being a mere voice crying in the wilderness, his was the most potent voice in Europe of his day. Who heeded Thomas Paine? Yet his was the hand that first wrote the arresting words, "The United States of America," and the Great Republic of the West owes as much to Paine's live pen as to Washington's sword. The triumph of the modern Woman's movement is a victory for Freethought, and the belated recognition of the rights of women is a tribute to the pioneers from Mary Wollstonecraft to John Stuart Mill.

Mary Wollstonecraft was, if not actually the first advocate of women's rights, at any rate the first of her sex to give public expression of her views and to have the courage to live up to her convictions. Sharing the usual fate of pioneers, she was reviled as "a hyena in petticoats," and "a philosophising serpent" by our pious and prejudiced forefathers. This overflow of abuse was caused by the publication of her famous *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, which was mainly a plea for the universal education of both sexes. From the seed she sowed sprang the goodly fruit of a free national education for boys and girls, and a larger and broader freedom for her hitherto despised and neglected sex.

It is not alone her message that now interests us, but the woman herself, her desires, her aspirations, her struggles, and her love. Pathetic and lonely, she stands out in the faint mists of the past, a woman who will continue to arouse sympathy when her books are no longer read, except by earnest students in the by-paths of literature. And of the woman no more complete revelation could be desired than the pathetic series of letters she wrote to Captain Imlay, who used her so harshly. Other writers have been unhappy, and have known the anguish and terrors of unrequited affection; but Mary Wollstonecraft addressed these letters with a breaking heart to the man whom she adored. They form the most touching and poignant love-letters in our literature.

Later in life Mary Wollstonecraft was united to William Godwin, and their daughter, Mary, married Shelley. This intensifies the interest of Mary Wollstonecraft's association with English literature. Nor is Mary Godwin herself undeserving of notice. Although overshadowed by the greatness of her husband's genius, Mary had literary gifts of her own which merit attention. It was while staying at Byron's villa on the lovely lake of Geneva that she conceived the idea of her famous novel, *Frankenstein*, a grim and powerful work which made an immense and deserved reputation for its author. None of her other novels, including *The Last Man* and *Lodore*, had the same success. She contributed brilliant biographical sketches of foreign writers and artists to Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopædia*, and edited her husband's poems. She survived Shelley nearly thirty years, and latterly made her home with her son, Sir Percy Shelley, at Boscombe Manor, Bournemouth. There, William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Mary Shelley are buried. It was the intention of Sir Percy to erect a monument to his illustrious father in the adjoining church, but the then vicar refused his permission on account of the poet's Freethought, and the splendid memorial had to find refuge at the more hospitable Christchurch place of worship, where it is regarded as one of the literary shrines of England.

Mary Wollstonecraft's life was woven of tragic fate. And yet, perhaps, the last word is one, not of pathos, but of strong human encouragement. For the woman who can in large measure live down disaster and shipwreck of hope, and rise triumphantly over the fell clutch of circumstance, may justly be acclaimed as the victorious mistress of her fate. Mimnermus.

Early English Freethought.

II.

(Continued from page 507.)

There is abundant evidence of the extent to which the Lollard heresy took hold of popular thought. It is on record that in the parts where Wiclif had preached you could hardly meet two men without one of them being a Lollard. Consequences from which Wiclif shrank were boldly drawn by his disciples. One Wiltshire gentleman, who had received the sacramental bread from his parish priest, took it home and lunched upon it with wine, oysters, and onions; others put images of the saints in their cellars. "They called," says Knighton, "our Lady of Lincoln and our Lady of Walsingham the Witch of Lincoln and the Witch of Walsingham." "Good Queen Anne of Bohemia," the wife of Richard II, was favourably disposed to the new views, and through the instrumentality of her courtiers the works of Wiclif had great influence in producing the Hussite reformation in Bohemia. In 1394 the Lollards presented a bold petition to Parliament. It set forth that the celibacy of the clergy produced moral disorder, and that the belief in transubstantiation caused idolatry. It protested against exorcisms and the benedictions of lifeless objects, against masses for the dead, pilgrimages, auricular confessions, and against the holding of secular offices by priests. To these points was added a protest against war as contrary to the spirit of the gospel, probably incited by the recent preaching of a crusade against the antipope by Hereford, Bishop of Norwich, who, in 1389, had vowed to burn or behead any heretic who dared to preach in his diocese. The touch of Socialism which always appeared in Lollardry was represented in this notable petition by a protest against needless trades exercised only for the satisfaction of luxury. His spiritual advisers induced Richard II, whose two good qualities, according to the monkish chroniclers, were his love for religion and his regard for the clergy, to consider this petition dangerous. An oath of abjuration was exacted from the chief men of the Lollard party. Not satisfied with this when Bolingbroke usurped the throne with the assistance of Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Scroop, Archbishop of York, the clergy to whom he was much indebted for his position induced him to pass the infamous statute (2 Henry IV, 15) generally known as *de heretico com-*

burendo. This statute sets our by declaring that certain false and perverse people, damnably thinking, did preach and teach divers new doctrines and wicked erroneous teaching, contrary to the determination of Holy Church. "And of such sect and wicked doctrine and opinions they make unlawful conventicles and confederacies, they hold and exercise schools, they make and write books, they do wickedly instruct and inform people." Wherefore it orders that all heretical books are to be given up within forty days before the diocesans, who are empowered to arrest all heretics. If they refuse to abjure their errors, or, after abjuration, relapse, then the mayor and sheriffs shall, in some high place, burn them before the people, that such punishment shall strike fear in the minds of others. The Rev. J. H. Blunt, in his *History of the Reformation,* 1882, declares that by this law "the English Parliament, not the English Church, introduced into our country the practice of burning heretics"—an assertion unwarranted by fact. The law, it will be noticed, leaves the determination of heresy to the bishop, but the execution of the heretic to the civil power, thus seeking to divide the responsibility. But it was not grounded upon any petition from Parliament, but on one from Convocation. Both the petition and the statute were in Latin, then beginning to be unusual. It was afterwards styled by the Commons, who petitioned to have it modified, "the statute made in the second year of your Majesty's reign at the instance of the prelates and the clergy of your kingdom," which, says Hallam (*Middle Ages,* chap. viii, pt. 3, p. 89), "affords a presumption that it had no regular assent of Parliament." Several historians are of this opinion. At any rate, the Church cannot be exonerated in the matter since the statute was passed upon the petition of Convocation. The Rev. Dr. John Cunningham Geikie, in his work on *The English Reformation* (p. 56), says: "The unutterable shame of such a law rests on the clergy of those days, and on Henry, their tool, alone." Burnet, in his often inaccurate *Annals of the Reformation,* calls William Sawtre, who was burnt early in 1401, almost immediately after the passing of the statute, the first English martyr; and the statement has been frequently repeated. This is certainly incorrect. Fitz-herbert, an old law writer, tells us that burning was previously the punishment for heresy by the common law; and Blackstone says it is thought by some to be as ancient as the common law itself. Popes had long before commended the putting to death of heretics. The fourth Lateran Council, 1216, had ordained their being handed over to the secular power to be burnt, and where the Church had full sway these instructions were carried out. There is reason to believe there was burning for heresy in England before the twelfth century. At the beginning of the thirteenth century several Albigenses came into England, and were burnt to death as heretics (see Lechler's *John Wiclif and his English Precursors,* p. 52). Bracton records that in his time apostates from Christianity were burnt to death. Mr. C. H. Pearson, the most competent historian of that period, in his little book on *English History in the Fourteenth Century* (p. 265), mentions a renegade deacon killed with the sword in 1223, and some Franciscans who were burned alive in 1330. Possibly these participated in the heresies of the celebrated *Everlasting Gospel,* a work which declared there were three dispensations—that of the Father, which ended at the coming of Christ; that of the Son, which had now ended; and that of the Spirit, which was to begin, and of which the religious ideal of the Franciscans was the embodiment. We have seen how the Bishop of Norwich had threatened death to any heretic who preached in his diocese; and Fox considers that William Swynderby was probably burnt to death in 1399. William Sawtre had recanted, but repented of his recantation. Of sterner stuff than this was John Badby, blacksmith, brought to the stake in 1409, for declaring in rough English fashion that John Bates (or Jack Raker), of Bristol, had as much power to make the body of Christ as any priest had. The host, he maintained, was in no sense the body of Christ, and, as something inanimate, was less worthy of reverence than a toad or a spider, which had at least the gift of life. If the host on all the altars were God, then would there be twenty thousand gods in England. Such outspoken heresy ensured his condemnation by the Bishop of Worcester, confirmed by Archbishop Arundel. Badby was delivered to the secular power for execution, and met his fate on March 1, 1410, at Smithfield. He was placed in a barrel, and burning fuel was heaped around him. Prince Henry was present, and offered him a pardon if he recanted. Badby remained firm; but a piteous cry, when the fire was lighted again, excited Henry's hopes of conversion. He caused the fuel to be cleared from around him, and again offered the half-dead victim pardon, and even a pension. With unflinching constancy the martyr refused. The fire was rekindled, and he was burnt to ashes as a hopeless heretic. Badby's case seems to have excited sympathy for the Lollards on the part of the Commons. They shortly afterwards prayed that persons arrested under the obnoxious statute might be bailed and make their purgation, and that they might be arrested only by the civil power. The petition did not secure the king's assent. Still less did he approve the attempt to disendow the Church, which, first made in 1404, was fiercely met by Archbishop Arundel. The attempt was renewed in 1410, when the Commons represented that the revenues of the bishops and abbots would maintain, to the king's honour, full fifteen earls and fifteen hundred knights, six thousand and two hundred good esquires, and one hundred hospitals for care of the infirm. The king peremptorily dismissed the bold petition, commanding that from thenceforth they should not presume to move any such matter. The support of the Church would have been lost to the usurper had he listened to the bold wishes of his Commons.

The beginning of Henry V's reign was signalized by a new triumph of the Church. The king surrendered his friend, Sir John Oldcastle, the chief protector of the Lollards, to the machinations of his persecutors, and a new statute was passed (2 Henry V, 7) ordering all magistrates, from the chancellor to the sheriffs, mayors, and bailiffs, to take an oath "to put their whole power and diligence to put out, cease, and destroy all manner of heresies and errors, commonly called Lollardries," and declaring the lands and tenements, goods and chattels of all persons convicted forfeit to the king. The terror inspired by these executions and enactments drove many into exile. "They fled," says Fox, "into Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, and into the wilds of Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, working there many marvels against their false kingdom, too long to write." It was, of course, the ablest who had most to fear, and were the first to fly.

Besides the thirty-nine who were put to death after Oldcastle's rising in 1414, twenty-eight suffered death in succeeding years. The great majority of the accused wisely recanted and did penance. Oldcastle himself having been taken by treachery in Wales, the Church had the satisfaction of hanging him in chains over a slow fire till he was roasted to death. These severe proceedings served their purpose of checking the open dissemination of Lollard doctrines. The itinerant priests no longer preached openly, though the tracts of Wiclif continued to be read and passed in manuscript from hand to hand until the invention of printing, when they were amongst the first of heretical

books to appear in type. Nine years after the ascent of Henry VI, the Duke of Gloucester was traversing England with men-at-arms for the purpose of repressing the rising of Lollards and hindering the circulation of their invectives against the clergy. The fire of heresy was smothered, but continued to smoulder until the outburst of the Protestant Reformation. During the troubled times of the Wars of the Roses foreign and domestic strife left both the Church and the heretics undisturbed, the very storm proving their shelter. The decay of feudalism and the development of the parliamentary system were, however, making for the cause of liberty. A striking instance occurs in the case of Reginald Pecock, Bishop of Chichester, who, in defending the Church from the Lollards, declared that the interpretation of Scripture must in all cases be accommodated to "the doom of reason." He criticised the fathers as well as quoted them, and even ventured to doubt the genuineness of the Apostles' Creed, and to question the article of the descent into hell. In 1457 he was himself accused of heresy, forced to recant for fear of martyrdom, and was deprived of his bishopric, and immured in a monastery at Canterbury under circumstances of great humiliation. Whether this in any way modified his opinions seems very questionable from the verses which he used to repeat to those who made him a visit :—

> Wit hath wonder, that reason cannot skan,
> How a Moder is Mayd, and God is Man.

Pecock was a man of vastly superior intelligence to the age in which he lived ; but already Oxford was affected with the new movement which in Italy was reviving the arts, literature, and philosophy of ancient Greece and Rome. The Canary Isles had been discovered, and stimulated the desire for maritime adventure. Paper mills were becoming the means of breaking down the monopoly of knowledge. Above all, the invention of printing opened the way of spreading far and wide the new learning. Everywhere might be discerned the coming of that great movement of the Renaissance of which the religious revolt, shaping itself into the Protestant Reformation, was only the most eruptive symptom. (The late) J. M. Wheeler.

(To be Continued.)

The Triumph of Utilitarianism.

> More and more is religious effort being subjected to this test : Does it make for the improvement of society? If not, it stands condemned.....To all political ideals, the final test will be applied : Does it, or does it not, make for the widest interests of the mass of the people involved? —*Norman Angell.*

It is generally agreed that the Christian religion—despite its power and influence—is in a bad way. The wholesale secession from the churches, the slackening of strict Sunday observance, and the apathy of the masses, are signs which should gladden the hearts of all Freethinkers—but strange to say this is not always so. There are those among us—notably Dr. Salkind—who view the present position with alarm and no little disgust. "Is the Church's failure due to our own success?" they ask ; and proceed to answer it with an emphatic "No!" I have much sympathy with their point of view although I do not share it. As an ardent humanitarian I have often had cause to ask myself if humanity is really worth it ; in labouring for humanity one is really doing what humanity is capable of doing for itself, and what, ultimately, it *will* have to do for itself ; but one's labours so far from inspiring gratitude or recognition, often only excite abuse. Again, as a socialist, I have often been compelled to ruminate on the innate cussedness of human nature.

Now I am convinced that the attitude of Dr. Salkind and others is a mistaken one. If they would read aright the signs of the times, they must drop the rôle of the retrospective moralist bewailing the passing of "the good old times ;" and instead of gazing ruefully with a dismal *Quo Vadis?* on the picture palace queues, they must turn their attention to the underlying moral principles that govern, or aim at governing, the great social and political movements of the day—in short, they must study fundamentals.

If they do this they will see that the utilitarian ethic is gradually becoming dominant. They will be able to mark the steady progress of Secular principles. To my mind the most gratifying feature of the age is the abandonment of other-worldliness for this-worldliness ; the ever-growing insistence of the masses on a little happiness *here and now ;* the waning interest in religious problems and the growing enthusiasm for social idealism. This vast change is all the more profound and far-reaching because it is taking place with those who are almost unconscious of it. Many of the clergy are still preaching the ethic of other-worldliness while attending strictly to the social affairs of this ; on Sunday they speak of man's inherent sinfulness, of free-will, and of Christ the *only* Saviour, and on Monday they are to be found strenuously advocating penal reform on lines of scientific determinism! The utilitarian ethic, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," is the inspirer of all contemporary reform. It inspires the League of Nations, prison reform, the Modern Socialist movement (that mighty movement which threatens to dominate all other questions in national and international politics), the Secularist, Rationalist, Positivist and Ethical movements, and above all it is becoming the dominant note in the appeals of the churches.

The more intelligent clergy, seeing the trend of events, are working the Sermon on the Mount—that pale shadow of a rational ethical system—to death ; but it is *too late.* The Sermon on the Mount! Ah! how my fatuous friend the Christian-Socialist clings to this collection of age-old platitudes. With what pathetic earnestness does he plead on its behalf and assure me that it is this same Christ-spirit that animates even me! Then I take him firmly by the shoulders (it is more utilitarian, if less satisfactory, than taking him by the throat) and tell him plainly that it is this very Sermon on the Mount that has been the greatest obstacle to reform in Europe ; that it has filled mankind with airy abstractions and so obscured the way to a better understanding of human needs. Its appeal has been felt by a few good souls, whilst the overwhelming majority have been entirely untouched ; it sounds well in theory but it lacks results—it does not produce what Francis Bacon called "fruit." We are leaving the age of empty platitudes to-day, and are entering on the era of service. The utilitarian ethic is our ideal ; our common need, our common humanity provides the incentive ; and a scientific sociology based on the principles of determinism provides the means of realization. Religion is found wanting. The parson is getting his deserts. The profundity of the metaphysical philosopher turns out to be mere obscurity, he is—as Sir Ray Lankester defined him—"a blind man chasing round a dark room after a black cat that isn't there." God is dead and Man is coming into his own.

In studying the world-position to-day I am under no illusion as to the immensity of the task before us. Freethought has not yet triumphed, the secularization of the State is far from accomplished and superstition is still rampant. But in the gradual triumph of the utilitarian ethic I see firm grounds for hope ; the mills of Man grind slowly but they grind exceeding small, and may it not be that the upheavals of the present age may be the means of ushering in the era of a liberated humanity? I share the spirit of Swinburne when he sang : "Glory to Man in the highest, for Man is the master of things." Vincent J. Hands.

Acid Drops.

Mr. Lloyd George was sure of approval when he told the Free Churches that if they could not prevent war they might as well close their doors. Considering that all the churches felt it to be their duty to preach war from 1914 onward, and to do their very best to develop every feeling and to play to every passion that made war possible, considering also that when the war came to an end the Churches again were almost unanimous in upholding and applauding treaties that have left Europe a fostering mass of hatreds and ineffectiveness, it required the cheek of a politician and the impertinence of a Christian to court this declaration to themselves for righteousness.

What we should like Mr. Lloyd George, or someone else, to tell us is when and where did the Christian Churches make any serious effort to stop the war? And if they have never done so, and have never had to close their doors on that account, why should they be faced with that position now? Again, the fact is that there has never been a war in any country, from any cause whatsoever that the Christian Church does not sanction. It hangs battle-flags in its cathedrals. It blesses battleships and consecrates guns. Its ministers dress in military uniform and ape the soldier in every way. They take substantial pay for their services during war, and join in military displays wherever possible. It is true that the Churches may have to close their doors, but it will not be because they have not prevented war. It will be because while on the one hand the growth of knowledge has cut away the foundations of their doctrines and dogmas, a quickened social sense is pronouncing them to be an imposture at best, and a cause of grave social wrong at worst.

If the churches really wished to stop war there is only one way in which this can be done, and that is by showing war to be what it really is—a brutal, cowardly, indecent, and ineffective thing. But this they dare not do. It would offend too many of their patrons. The Government is spending *sixteen millions* on two battleships. What do the Churches say about this? It is entering upon a new military competition with fighting air-craft which if persisted in must end as the competition in other armaments ended. What are the Churches saying about that? We have still the georgeous military parades and reviews intended to impress the growing generation with the glory and greatness of the life of a soldier. What are the Churches saying about these? They are silent as to their harm, they assist wherever possible. And when the war comes—as come it will unless the people become saner on this topic—we shall find the clergy preaching on its behalf, declaring it to be a Christian war, and once more using the churches as recruiting stations. The knavery of the pulpit and the folly of the pew run well together.

One of our readers thinks that we ought to except the Communists of this country from the charge of playing to the religious gallery. This is written with reference to our "Views and Opinions" dealing with labour leaders and the Churches. We accept the correction, but we had in view those labour men who stand prominently before the country; and it is with those that we are immediately concerned. It is when movements in this country come to the front politically that the "trimming" commences.

A minister in Aberdeen, the Rev. J. A. Martin, is holding a series of open air meetings, and some of them appear to be rather lively. There is plenty of questioning, and from these it is evident that even in Aberdeen Freethought is making headway there as elsewhere. We have a number of readers in that very pious city, and one of them is distributing a number of specimen copies of this paper. We shall be glad to send small parcels of back numbers to others who will undertake their disposal. It is an excellent way of getting the paper into new hands, and we need all the new readers we can get.

One of the questions put to Mr. Martin concerned the operations of missionaries and their converts. Mr. Martin replied that the reason why traders and others did not care to employ converted natives was that a converted native had a much bigger sense of his own worth and refused to submit to degrading conditions. Mr. Martin must try again. It is well known that the reason why missionary "boys" are not wanted is because they are usually such as have lost caste with their own people and manage, while losing their native virtues, to acquire a number of our vices. They are often lazy, dishonest, and untruthful. Almost any layman who has been in India or Africa knows this. The missionaries know it also. It is surprising that Mr. Martin should be unaware of the fact.

The *Daily Chronicle* says the Puritan Sunday offered us the choice "between going to church and abstinence from every other rational enjoyment or recreation." *Every other!* We do not see how the Puritan Sunday can reasonably be brought within the categories of rational, enjoyment, or recreation. Otherwise the description seems good enough.

The congregation at St. Magnus the Martyr, Lower Thames Street, has protested against the introduction into the church of forms of service which deviate from those of the Prayer Book. The same body also calls attention to the use, in other churches, of such adjuncts to worship as the gramophone, kinematograph, magic-lantern, and concertina. It may be that the day of the theatre and the music-hall is nearly over, but we see no reason whatever why their rivals should not pay rates and taxes.

The Rev. Pierrepont Edwards, "the fighting parson," declares that "the unrest since the war is largely due to the fact that working people cannot get beer at the old prices." A high dignitary of the Church once said that he would rather see England "free" than "sober." Freedom is doubtless a noble prize, and this is a noble expression of the Anglican conception of it. Though Mr. Edwards's utterance cannot claim kindred with the higher ecclesiastic's exposition of principle, we hope that the "working people" will note it carefully.

During the morning service at Mitcham Parish Church recently, Mrs. Willson, one of the congregation, died suddenly. At Kingston a few weeks ago a man died whose heart weighed thirty-six ounces—more than three times the normal weight. Last week serious floods were reported from New South Wales. "According to the multitude of thy tender mercies turn thou unto me."

Religious conditions all over those parts of Europe that have been most deeply affected by the results of the war bear striking testimony to the close association of religious authority and political despotism. In the Germany of the Hohenzollern everyone was born into some religious denomination, and could only withdraw from it—declare his *Austritt*—by going through a complicated formality. According to the *Christian World* (July 27), even the nominal Roman Catholics of Germany now appear to be relinquishing Catholicism. In defiance of the Church's stress on the sacramental nature of marriage, 47,000 Catholics in 1919 were satisfied with a merely civil ceremony. In the same year 44,000 children of Catholic parents were withheld from baptism.

The religious situation in Germany, whether viewed from the Roman Catholic or the Protestant standpoint, is by no means devoid of interest. English Protestants at one time emphasized Germany's claims to be considered the home of the Reformation and the scene of some of its greatest triumphs. The recent Wesleyan Conference at Sheffield decided, after the discussion on Christian reunion, "to affirm the adherence of the Wesleyan Methodist Church to the principles of the Reformation." What were those principles? English Protestants, and particularly Nonconformists, contrasted their "purified"

faith, based on God's word, with Romish superstition, as if there could possibly be a greater "superstition" than belief in the divine origin of the Bible, and insistence upon accepting it at the peril of one's eternal "salvation!" In practical administration, these sects never sank so low as the R.C. hierarchy did in the sale of relics and indulgences; but what of the Establishment and its record? What of the sale of "livings" and enforced payment of tithes, which still form part of the Church's material outfit?

The plain English of the whole story is that Germany and our own country alike have reason to keep fresh in their memory Christianity's record in regard to the "conversion" of Europe, and the part which their territorial princes played in it. "Defenders of the faith," like Henry VIII, were the fine flower of a "reformation" that was to put an end to the despoiling of the common people. And none was more eager to pay homage to the new master, whoever he might happen to be, than the State soul-saver, from the bishop down to the curate. The Dissenters revolted against this form of supremacy, and after a bitter struggle secured a large measure of influence. Have they used it to advance the spirit of free inquiry, and to promote the establishment of perfect equality before the law in matters of religion? As ringleaders in demanding compulsory "Lord's day observance," and the Bible in State-aided schools, they have been less "liberal" than the representatives of the "national" Church. Questions of doctrine are their own concern; but even here it is well to remember that they have been the greatest sticklers for a material and endless hell-fire. Now they announce that they are stripping God's word of the non-essentials with which it had become encrusted. To put the case quite plainly, they are offering redemption on greatly reduced terms. And that is the "English Reformation."

"Economist," in a letter to the *Times*, says that he recently received an appeal for funds for a certain "mission" in a foolscap House of Commons envelope of excellent quality. Assuming that a similar envelope was used for other appeals he says that helps one to understand the size of the Government stationery bill—but anything connected with religion very often has the effect of deadening the sense of right and wrong—or to put it in another way, it makes things done in connection with religion appear right that would wear quite another aspect if connected with non-religious affairs.

One of those usual attenuated articles on Shelley appeared over the signature of A. C.-B. in the *Times Literary Supplement*. The metaphors used fade into obscurity, and with the closest reading as recommended by Schopenhauer, nothing new or vital is our reward. "In the parable of the 'Prodigal Son,'" states the writer, "there is a consistency more spontaneous and profound than the consistency of thought." We expect something better from Mr. A. Clutton-Brock. This denial of pure thought, this preference for treacle rather than for water is characteristic of writers who have gained public reputations through denying the only source of the salvation of man. Cue for Mr. G. K. Chesterton. In his best vein we might get the following:—A cabbage, being without reason, is more profound than man.

There is an attempt being made by a number of members of the Roman Catholic Church to do away with the compulsory celibacy of the priesthood. This is one of the "obscene virtues" with which the Christian Church has saddled the world, and if there were none other than this it should be enough to condemn the Church in the minds of healthy men and women. The evils of celibacy are plain and on the surface, but the deeper reason for its existence indicts not only the Catholic Church, but all other Churches. For the root idea of the glorification of celibacy is the essential evil of marriage and the connection of the sexes. To the true Christian, woman was an instrument of evil and a child of the devil. The less one had to do with her the better. These ideas run right through fundamental Christianity. It is seen in the figure of Jesus the celibate, in the teachings of Paul and his glorification of the single state. And it had its fruits in the systematic degradation of womankind during the purely Christian ages. Readers with Catholic friends who are likely to be interested in this controversy might do worse than present them with a copy of Mr. Cohen's *Woman and Christianity*. It might open their eyes a little.

"Old Wesleyan," writing in the *Yorkshire Post* (August 3), contrasts the doctrines and beliefs held by the Wesleyans of to-day, as expounded at annual conferences, with the views on religion and the Bible held by "our Methodist fathers." He has some pointed remarks on the attitude of the modernists who "claim reasonable liberty of interpretation" and yet assert loudly that nothing fundamental has been thrown overboard. "They can declare fealty and faith in the old doctrines, but they don't preach them, and there are those in the pews who know why." Does "Old Wesleyan" imagine that the modernists are not well aware of this fact? The Protestant churches to-day are full of men who are far too wise to proclaim from the pulpit all that their predecessors accepted as "of faith." But it is the dupe in the pew who enables them to maintain their hypocritical system as a "going concern."

We fully anticipated that one result of allowing Sunday games in London would be an agitation for them elsewhere. There has been some vigorous correspondence on the subject recently in the columns of the *Scotsman*. Mr. L. W. Caws, in the issue of August 2, strongly opposes Sunday games in the public parks of auld Scotia. Wherever they have been allowed the effect on attendance both at church and at Sunday schools has been extremely unfavourable—from the religious point of view. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that there are still Sabbatarians in Britain who would make attendance at church compulsory if they could. But even this attitude is more honest than the Sabbatarianism which is put forward in the interests of the poor toiling masses craving for permission to spend one-seventh of their time in the sweet calm of the old-time British Sunday.

Another jeremiad comes from Bradford. The Rev. J. A. Gorman, Vicar of St. John's, referring to the recent decision of the L.C.C., says that "many people are trying to find out the minimum of time they can give to God." They are. In fact, they have been doing so for a long time, and we are glad to see that their effort is now obvious even to the clerical mind.

Two heavily laden trains, carrying pilgrims to the Lourdes Shrine, collided with the result of twenty killed and numerous others injured. Quite evidently God's protective mercies do not extend to people being conveyed to the shrine for cure. And yet it should strike some of these simple-minded that a deity who could work miracles *at* the shrine might extend his influence over the trains conveying his followers. But superstition so blinds men and women to the most elementary common-sense that we doubt whether anything will happen save that the survivors will thank God for their own salvation. Superstition has the consequence of robbing its devotees, not merely of common-sense, but of ordinary good nature and consideration.

There is a world of meaning in one fact recalled by Mr. J. R. Howarth in his history of the British Association. Mr. Howarth mentions that in the 'forties Dean Cockburn's pamphlet, *The Bible Defended Against the British Association*, ran through five editions in a year. The things denied on behalf of the Bible were principles of geology, astronomy, and ethnology that are more accepted as elementary truths. But in those days people did really believe in the Bible, and there was no general endeavour to prove that the Bible taught evolution and that Jesus Christ was keenly interested in main drainage and the nationalization of railways.

To Correspondents.

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

O. J. Boulton (Victoria).—MS. received with thanks, and shall appear. But the theme would bear a little elaboration.

J. Marr.—There is no word used so loosely as "instinct." An instinct can only exist where the whole of the members of a species respond to given stimuli in an identical manner. And there is certainly no such thing as a religious instinct. The expression of one's convictions or feelings in a religious form is entirely a product of information.

W. Brandie.—Glad you are still pegging away and that you have secured three new readers for the *Freethinker*. There are plenty more to be gained if readers will only look for them.

Alferna.—We are obliged for note. You have taken the matter as we expected you would. One day we shall be sailing in smoother water.

A. Morton.—You may take the statement for granted that God has raised up some good men to defend the faith. If he had only created a better religion there would have been no need for men to labour hard to commend it to decent men and women.

T. O. (Sheffield).—The question of securing food is fundamental in the sense that all must have it. But it is not fundamental in the sense of acting as the dominant motive with people living in a society such as ours. Generally speaking food is secured to nearly all, and it needs little study to prove that love of power, of wealth, of position, etc., acts as the dominant motive with many thousands. Food only becomes a fundamental motive when man is reduced to the level of semi-starvation.

C. H. (Winebah, Gold Coast).—Shall be pleased to receive reports at any time of anything occurring which you consider will interest our readers. We cannot afford paid correspondents, and are, therefore, compelled to rely upon the goodness of our friends.

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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.

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Sugar Plums.

To-day (August 13) Mr. Cohen will lecture twice—afternoon and evening—in the Secular School, Pole Lane, Failsworth. His subject in the afternoon is "The Case for Freethought," and in the evening, "Some Delusions About a Future Life."

A fair number of readers have taken advantage of our offer to supply copies of Mr. J. M. Robertson's *History of Freethought* at less than published price, and on the instalment plan where such is desired. It is a work that no Freethinker should be without, and we are writing this note to say that the present offer will be withdrawn at the end of the present month—at least, so far as the instalment plan is concerned.

The *Westminster Gazette* (August 5) gives a detailed account of the ceremony at Woking, when the Princess Hassan was received into the Mohammedan faith. The Persian Ambassador and the Turkish *Chargé d'Affaires* were present, and there was a picturesque display of turban, fez, and praying mat. By birth the lady is an American. Her husband was first cousin of the ex-Khedive Abbas Hilmi, and nephew of King Fuad. She is said to be an intensely sincere convert. We do not doubt it. Most converts are sincere. We have known cases where even devout Protestants have become equally devout Roman Catholics, in the space of a few weeks, when a royal match was the reward of conversion.

Last Tuesday Mr. George Whitehead returned to London, where he will carry on an open-air campaign (Sundays and week-days) during the next fortnight. Freethinkers residing in or near Fulham, Clapham Common, Peckham Rye, Finsbury Park, Hyde Park, or Woolwich, who are willing to assist in organizing the campaign in their respective districts are asked to communicate at once with Miss Vance, Secretary N.S.S., 62 Farringdon Street. Mr. Whitehead will lecture to-day (August 13) at Finsbury Park, at 3 and 7. North London Freethinkers will please note.

The Glasgow Branch of the N.S.S. will hold their next ramble to-day, August 13, this time visiting Killermont. Members and friends who intend to be present will meet at Glassford Street, Trongate, at 11.30 prompt.

Ballade of Those I Love Not.

The Puritanic kill-joy crew
Whose yellow souls are sourly bent
On banishing from public view
All sinful signs of merriment,
Whose vitriolic wrath is spent
On Woman, Wine, and Tango Teas,
While black injustice goes unshent—
Hell's fires leap high for such as these!

Base toss-pots, soaked with sordid brew,
In bestiality content
Ever to sit and gloat a-new
O'er tales of bawdry, crudely blent
Of little wit, much excrement,
And multiplied obscenities.
Brutal, debauched, incontinent—
Hell's fires leap high for such as these!

Financiers fat, whose gains accrue
From toiling millions' discontent;
Pale politician place-men, who
Despise the dupes they represent,
Disgrace the name of Parliament
To get their cousins O.B.E.'s,
Who worship Interest, Profit, Rent—
Hell's fires leap high for such as these!

Envoy.

Prince of the lower firmament
Stir up your boiling sulphur seas,
Let Stygian gloom with flame be rent,
Hell's fires leap high for such as these.

J. E. S.

A Pressing Problem.

"Does the pig make the sty, or the sty make the pig?" While opinions on this question may differ, I believe all will agree that it lies more within our power to change conditions, that is to alter the sty, than to reform heredity. Clean, comfortable housing would be our great ally in transforming the pig's habits. While Freethinkers are prone to stress the power of ideas I would like to devote this article to the urgent necessity of putting our economic house in order.

The world situation of to-day presents curious paradoxes. On one hand, the manufacturers are prevented from producing, for lack of markets; on the other, are the long queues of unemployed, who would gladly produce something in order to live; and between the two are the public, who would be ready to consume the goods if they only had sufficient purchasing power.

The problem to solve is not therefore purely an economic problem. In fact, the productive capacity of the community is far from being exhausted. On the contrary it is greater now than ever in the world's history. The problem is above all a financial one, which may be put thus: *How is the general public to be endowed with sufficient purchasing power to absorb the enormous production which modern science enables man to create?*

This is clearly a banking question, the banks being the organs of the circulation of money, which regulates the purchasing power of individuals.

At present the banks control the credit of a nation, and therefore control the industry of a nation. Their power to give or refuse credit enables them to decide what and how much shall be produced. In order to obtain the credit indispensable to all important transactions in business, the producers must persuade the banks that they will be able to pay back the borrowed credit with interest. The manufacturers act then as tax-collectors for the banks, extracting both credit and interest from the consumers by means of prices.

It has been suggested by Mr. C. H. Douglas that this factor of credit should be removed from price, and by this reduction, the effective demand would be increased. To appreciate this proposal, it should be borne in mind that the credit issued by the banks for their own private profit is the National Credit which has been created by the community.

In order to obtain a correct estimate of the amount of credit contained in the prices of products, the difference must be found between the total national consumption and the total national production of credit. The balance sheet for the nation would be as follows: Credit—production, plus appreciation of capital, plus imports. Debit—consumption of goods, plus depreciation of capital, plus exports. It has been calculated by Mr. Douglas that in England, even with the present restriction of production, the total national production is at least four times greater than the total national consumption. It follows that the prices, minus the factor of credit, should be a quarter of the present prices.

It is not difficult to imagine the activity of the factories, if the money in possession of the people were multiplied by four, and possibly by a still higher figure, for prices would maintain the same relation to cost as national consumption would bear to the national production of credit.

Doubtless there would be various methods to effect the elimination of the credit factor from prices. Mr. Douglas's suggestion is that the present prices should be reduced by 75 per cent, but from America comes the proposal that the purchaser should pay the full price, receiving at the same time a voucher for 75 per cent of the cost, which he could cash at a bank. The manufacturer would be re-imbursed for the difference between price and cost by a credit note drawn on the National Credit Account, or the Treasury.

These proposals have drawn much attention on all sides. That the commission appointed by the Labour Party has condemned them, may not be considered altogether an unfavourable index to their character, for the Labour men are professedly ignorant of business, and nourish themselves on theories instead of facing realities.

It may be asserted that, were these proposals put in practice, all the community would be better off, with the exception of a few financiers who now exact tribute from the whole of society. Unemployment would no longer exist; manufacturers would obtain a new field of operations in the home market, and set the wheels of industry whirring with the utmost rapidity; and the public would be able to satisfy their needs and their desires. To facilitate commerce, credit would be decentralized and made easier of access. The evils which now accompany inflation would not then appear on account of price-regulation. There is no harm in abundant money, provided that prices do not rise.

To those who, faced with this new point of view, refuse to examine it, I would ask, "Have you thought that if this problem remains unsolved, it will shortly bring forth war or revolution?"

The machinery of production has developed to such a point that we are forced, under pain of seeing the extinction of our civilization, to re-mould our other institutions, and above all, our banking system. At present our financial mechanism is narrow; it is an anachronism which takes no account of our increased resources, and which restricts and strangles production until it constitutes a danger, instead of a benefit, to society. These conditions would be only intensified if the financiers should succeed in re-establishing the gold standard. The economic distress from which all industrial countries suffer is principally due to the action of the banks in withholding the facilities of credit, with the avowed object of re-establishing the gold standard.

It is well worth while to examine closely this suggested reform. It is a question of the destiny of our civilization, and this proposal opens up a middle way by which humanity may avoid the revolution towards which the exasperated workers tend, or the war, which is the inevitable consequence of badly adjusted institutions.

Frances Prewett.

Religion, The Masses, and Freethought Propaganda.

With most of what Mr. E. J. Lamel writes in his article in the issue of April 9 I am in agreement; but I cannot concur with the suggestion that the belief in religion can be eradicated by ridicule. Ridicule is a weapon that needs to be handled discriminately, otherwise it may do more harm than good. To ridicule the beliefs of those who sincerely entertain them is to create a positive antipathy to both Rationalism and its exponents, and even with those who are indifferent its staying powers are doubtful. At best it but blunts the weapons of superstition. To do effective work, to get lasting results, the people must be taught the truths of science. It is a common fallacy amongst Rationalists that the strength of Christianity can be accurately gauged by the average attendance at church and chapel. Now the motives for church attendance are many and varied. Apart from the *bona fide* worshippers there are men who attend for business and political motives, and women who make the occasion a dress parade, while with children it is pure com-

pulsion. The great mass of the population do not participate in public worship. But it is a great mistake to assume that they are non-religious, and a still greater mistake to assume that they are anti-religious. Their reasons for non-attendance are mainly poverty and indifference. The great bulk of them believe in God, the divinity of Christ, in some sort of hereafter, and would become quite indignant if you called them unbelievers. In this country (Australia) the census reveals that only a small fraction of the population profess no religion. A revival also shows that superstition is merely latent, not absent from the mental make-up of the indifferent. Of course the churches fume and fret at indifference because it affects revenue and indicates a lower standard of religious vitality. More than once or twice have we seen the devil of Christianity driven from the mind, but after being swept and garnished the same mind was soon inhabited by the seven devils of Theosophy and its near relation, Spiritualism. This comes from not understanding the nature of religion. It seems an insoluble problem that though an Irish Catholic hates Jews and "Dagoes" (Italians), yet his God is a Jew and his chief spiritual adviser and commander a "Dago." But what can the poor man do?—he got his religion ready-made. Nor can we tackle religion effectively until we realize that religion is merely an attempt to explain the origin and destination and meaning of the inorganic universe and life. It is merely a savage meditating on existence, and its why and wherefore. From the very dawn of thought such speculations must have taken place, they are a necessity of our mental construction. Nor could primitive man from the material at hand construct anything but what to us are mere childish fancies. We do not blame the savage nor yet the barbarian for their interpretation of the universe; but it is only ignorance, culpable ignorance, or hypocrisy, that causes such ideas to persist in our age. With the great bulk of the people it is ignorance, and this ignorance, the cause of their superstition, can only be effectively combated by acquainting them with the scientific interpretation of the inorganic universe, life, and mind. When they learn that matter is indestructible and therefore eternal and in perpetual motion, the creation theory will disappear. Once evolution is understood, the formation not only of suns and planets, but of all living creatures, will appear as natural as the growth of grass or trees, or water falling over a precipice—everything will be seen as the unfolding of the potentialities of matter. When it is pointed out that the evidence is conclusive that mankind as man has existed for hundreds of thousands of years, the shade of Eve can eat her apple in peace, and Adam need not worry as to who is to blame, for they were but creatures of yesterday, and nobody will trouble them any more. These truths of science completely demolish Christianity, and they should be known to every adult. Rationalists should endeavour to have them taught in the schools and scientists should be asked to lend their support. Agitation on these lines would show how false is the claim of the churches that religion is not antagonistic to science. It would be quite unnecessary even to mention the word *religion* in the school text-books, the truths of modern science just mentioned automatically destroying Christianity.

For adults, pamphlets and leaflets and books containing the truths mentioned in simple, easily understood language, should be be distributed broadcast. But though this would destroy Christianity it would not necessarily cut the taproot of superstition, namely that belief in supernatural beings which is the essence of religion. Unitarians and others accept modern science and yet profess religion. Successfully to combat religion it must be attacked at every point, it must be displaced by an equally comprehensive explanation and, of course, a more feasible one. The Socialist philosopher Joseph Dietzgen hit the nail squarely on the head when he wrote: "Man does not want religion, he wants system." In other words, we want a reasonable explanation of the universe. The acceptance of Materialism alone fills the bill, it alone provides a rational mind with a satisfying solution of the problem, and with its advent metaphysics is supplanted by science. In addition to the accepted truth that matter is eternal and in perpetual motion, Materialism asserts that matter alone exists and that nothing can possibly exist that is not matter. Everything, therefore, including mental activity, which is but the collecting of sense impressions, and in the case of mankind their co-ordination into ideas and doctrines by the nerve apparatus called the brain, is purely a material process. If thinking cannot be explained on these lines, it cannot be explained at all. The existence of thinking beings without physical apparatus to collect objective impressions and to store them as memories, is utterly unthinkable. However, we must learn to walk before we can run, and Rationalists should first of all endeavour to popularize the *accepted* truths, the truths accepted by modern scientists. Once the masses understand them it will be easy sailing towards Materialism, and once there the beliefs in supernaturalism, all and every one of them will have disappeared "like shapes of night that perish with the dawn." F. Sutherland.

Cairns, Queensland.

W. H. Davies.

All lovely things are rightfully for a poet's use; they are ready to his hand if his eye can see and his tongue find magic words to repeat them to those who listen to his song. The individual poet has each his preference—it were impossible for him to sing an it were otherwise. There are so many lovely things in life that no man could choose his song if he did not select from among this wealth the little part that he can see and sing most clearly and most sweetly. Some choose to sing of flowers, some bathe their spirit in the shining facets of jewels, and others live for love alone, that sacred fire which is the subject of all poet's song, the stir and fount of beauty.

Mr. W. H. Davies sees all these things, and he can sing of them in simple words—so simple that they set the soul on fire. The most magnificently alluring spell that he has found, however, is not of any material beauty, although he is most fully alive to the beauty of material things. It is not external nature that drowns his soul in wonder; it is because within him is a voice, a voice whose words can tell in lovely song what he has seen and felt. It is his wonder at this mystery of song, with which he has been gifted, that gives him his love of birds. All birds are beloved of him, and he can do no less than sing of their songs. Just as he is moved to song by the natural splendour of the bird-notes, so is he stimulated by colour. He sees colour and he hears the warbling of the birds, and little enough as that is in the material sense, it satisfies and stimulates him so that his verse is naturally tuneful as the songs of nature's choristers, and colourful as the broad realm of nature itself.

Of course like all real poets Mr. Davies is a mighty lover, and he does not fail to record his love in song, but for my part I do not find his love lyrics so entirely satisfactory as those others that tell of nature and of his broader love of humanity. The love lyrics, tender and delicate as they are, bear within them a haunting reminiscence of Herrick. At the same time, Mr. Davies has a quite different outlook from Herrick, and his love lyrics are less supremely the expression of a sensuous mind in spite of the fragmentary suggestion

of the earlier writer . For instance, the thought contained in Davies' couplet :—

> To hear her moving petticoat
> For me is music's highest note

carries one back immediately to Herrick's "Whenas in silks my Julia goes," but the content of Mr. Davies' poem *Charms,* in which the couplet occurs is much greater than the content of Herrick's poem. The one is a perfect gem of art, the other seems to be the spontaneous outpouring of natural metaphors in praise of Mr. Davies' woman love, who has led him to a comparison between her attributes and those of the variety of that beauty he had adored before this new and wonderful emotion had come to him.

Too much emphasis has been laid upon such resemblances in the past. It has apparently been the aim of the critics to demand absolute originality of theme and of expression in poetry. Only a limited number of the natural objects forming the material world falls under the observation of any one man, and in the case of poets of the same nation these objects are the same. Even if he is a great traveller, a poet finds that, allowing for differences of dimension, the configuration of the earth is the same as that of his native place. The heavens and the sea are even more permanent, and the relations of man and woman are ever the same, although they are governed by a large variety of customs.

Similarly, the fundamental truths of man's life are universal in their application. It is somewhat difficult for a poet who sings at the end of many thousands of historical and literary years to avoid the use of expression or of themes not completely original. All a critic ought to demand is that the poet shall express his thought freshly, that he shall give it the individual impress of his mind, and that he shall not be guilty of obvious plagiarism.

It can readily be admitted that Mr. Davies conforms to these demands, in spite of the resemblance of some of his love lyrics to those of Herrick, which may be due to a similarity of temperament, as well as to the influence exercised upon the later poet by the work of the earlier.

In the broader aspects of his humanity, in his hatred of the city contrasts, the gorgeousness and degradation of life that they show, in his love for the country sights and sounds and his love of the happiness obtained from rustic content, Mr. Davies has achieved an originality, a fire of expression, to which even the most carping critic could take no exception.

He loathes the evil town that stamps men dead, even while they flock to worship at its shrine. He says :—

> As I walked down the waterside
> This morning, in the cold damp air,
> I saw a hundred men and women
> Huddled in rags and sleeping there;
> These people have no work, thought I,
> And long before their time they die.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Ten cars rushed down the waterside,
> Like lighted coffins in the dark;
> With twenty dead men in each car,
> That must be brought alive to work :
> These people work too hard, thought I,
> And long before their time they die.

In striking contrast is what he sees and hears when he goes from the city :—

> I hear leaves drinking rain;
> I hear rich leaves on top
> Giving the poor beneath
> Drop after drop;
> 'Tis a sweet noise to hear
> These green leaves drinking near.

It is not only the solace and comfort of the countryside that Mr. Davies is enamoured of. He can see clearly the beauty which forms that solace and comfort, and since he is able to see and sing he is ready to declare himself more satisfied than he would be if he were a king surrounded by gewgaws and *objets d'art* of the usual regal description. It would add nothing to his happiness to be draped in robes of state and to be dictated to by matters of state. No! Rather would he retain his vision and the surprising wonder of song with which he has been dowered. For that enables him to see beauties which are denied to the august rulers of states.

> Here's an example from
> A butterfly;
> That on a rough, hard rock
> Happy can lie;
> Friendless and all alone
> On that unsweetened stone.
>
> Now let my bed be hard,
> No care take I;
> I'll make my joy like this
> Small butterfly;
> To make a stone a flower:

It is sometimes difficult to find words of moderate praise, just as it is even more difficult to express moderate condemnation, but if all that enthusiasm stirs is said, it is easy to create an atmosphere of unreality, of artificiality. It is necessary to take refuge in the fact that Mr. Davies' gift of song is a source of wonder and delight to himself, and to say that it is not so to himself alone, but to many people who are not less convinced, but certainly more than he can be, of the joy and happiness which his gift has added to the world.

As he says himself, it is true that his mind is sometimes overclouded by the dour dankness of the hard-faced city. When he looks at the hardships which fall on men in cities he feels it necessary to declare that they should seek happiness elsewhere, but that nevertheless happiness can be perfect nowhere. He finds that even in his own place—

> My mind has thunderstorms
> That brood for heavy hours :
> Until they rain me words,
> My thoughts are drooping flowers
> And sulking, silent birds.
>
> Yet, come, dark thunderstorms,
> And brood your heavy hours;
> For when you rain me words,
> My thoughts are dancing flowers
> And joyful, singing birds.

Great as is the sympathy which must be owed to Mr. Davies when he is afflicted by the overcast hour, it is well that he welcomes it, for his readers are only too happy to think that he is so afflicted, and they cannot fail to hope that the clouds on the firmament of his mind will continue to burst into such fruitful moisture as they have done in the past.

G. E. Fussell.

NO MORE.

> No more! no more!—
> O happy youth, so fearless, frank and fair!
> Thou comest with the blossoms in thy hair
> No more! no more!
>
> No more! no more!
> O happier Love! one fairest fair blush-rose
> Thy garden had, the Flower of Hope, that grows
> No more! no more!
>
> No more! no more!—
> Long-parted joy! ah, whither hast thou flown?
> Youth pass'd, Hope wither'd, and thy voice is known
> No more! no more!

—*William James Linton.*

Book Chat.

Paganism and Modern Verse.

There are no words that come more easily and more frequently to the lips of the irresponsible reviewer and semi-educated literary essayist than "pagan" and "paganism." When one of our minor or major poets, in the fashionable rhetoric of the day, expresses the not unnatural desire of all of us to gather the roses of life before winter comes, or to take refuge from the respectable monotony of legal matrimony in an *amour passagère* with some Juliet of a night, straightway is he written down a pagan. If he is a radiant hedonist for whom death is the ultimate evil, or a soul-questioning pessimistic altruist longing above all things to sink to rest in the bosom of the universal mother, and finding incomplete consolation in the thought that the actions of the just will smell sweet and blossom in the dust; indeed, whatever his emotional or intellectual attitude may be we are given to understand that it is covered by the vague word "paganism."

Now paganism may be roughly defined in the negative mode as a non-Christian conception of life. We have here only a portion of the truth because, as we all know, Pauline or universal Christianity took over the leading ideas of the Oriental mystery-religions. It was leavened with paganism, and this leaven has never been completely worked out except, perhaps, in the Puritan or ultra-protestant forms of the cult. If it is difficult to say precisely what is the Christian view of life, it is incomparably more difficult to fix upon an attitude of pagan thought that will cover the whole field, for this reason, that the field is an immensely wide one. Paganism may be Greek or Roman, Hindu or Chinese. Even if we confine our attention to only one of these forms of civilization, that of the Greeks for instance, it is impossible to say which one of its approaches to life can be accepted as representing the whole. Are we thinking of the Homeric conception of life, or that of the great tragic writers and philosophers, or the very different conceptions of Aristophanes, of Menander, or later still, that of Lucian, when we are pleased to call one of our modern writers a pagan? Nothing of the kind, for many of those we choose to honour with the name, a Wilde, a Pater, a Whitman, or a Swinburne, would be antipathetic, I imagine, to an intelligent Greek of any of the periods I have mentioned. Apparently what our journalists have done is to run through Mr. Mackail's version of the *Greek Anthology* and the pseudo-Anacreon, to note the characteristics that are opposed to the Christian theory of life, or rather what is generally thought to be the Christian conception, and then bring them together under the convenient but vague term "paganism." The modern writer whose work reveals any of these characteristics is dubbed a "pagan." The method has the advantage of simplicity, but unfortunately it does not make for clear thinking.

These obvious reflections were suggested by a book I have been looking through of late. It is a biographical and critical study of Richard Middleton written in a vein of amicable eulogy by Mr. Henry Savage (Cecil Palmer, 12s. 6d. net). Middleton, it may be remembered, was a writer of verse and prose who, weary of struggling with poverty, ill-health and the apathy of a public for which the theory of art for art had no more meaning than it has for me, put an end to his life in Brussels in 1911 at the age of thirty-two. His life, or what there is of it, for like many of us his adventures were rather of the spirit than of the body, is sketched in freely by his friend who naturally is a believer in the genius (or shall I say talent?) of Middleton. There are also others who seem to share his opinion, for I notice that a couple of pages are given to Middleton in the fifth volume of Ward's *English Poets*. But, I am afraid, his presence there does not greatly influence our judgment. Mr. Ward's taste is not infallible. He includes the metrical ineptitudes of Lord Houghton, the dull moralizings of George Eliot and Alfred Lyall in the glorious tradition of our English verse, and as I noted some time ago, shuts out Robert Buchanan, Wilde, and James Elroy Flecker.

Candidly, Middleton's verse does not move me very much. Occasionally, when he discards the conventional poetic rhetoric of the time he can go straight for the subject, and then he does succeed in getting the emotion over to us. His talent, I feel sure, was not a big one, and needed careful nursing. The greatest mistake he made in his life was to give up his job in an insurance office, the light routine work of which would have saved him. If he had put his poems and stories into the hands of an intelligent literary agent, he would have known that they were of no great commercial value. But he was seemingly unfortunate in the choice of some of his friends, and their praise more often than not was unintelligently excessive. Mr. Frank Harris said the poems were finer than Herrick's and nearly as beautiful as Keats' *Grecian Urn*, while a younger critic, Mr. Murry, compared him to Milton. In my opinion, he was not as fine an emotional artist as Stephen Phillips. If he had lived he would have been another Le Gallienne or Watson. He would have forsaken, no doubt, the sordid Bohemian resorts of Soho for New York drawing-rooms, and would have been idolized by ladies brought up on Longfellow and the Yankee Sappho. Fortunately for him, not for me because I am not vastly interested in him, he escaped this awful calamity. Yet he had suffered many things in the house of his friends. I do not know if he ever protested when he was called a "pagan." Perhaps he liked the epithet, although he had no love for Wilde and Pater, who were supposed to be examples of perverted paganism.

Anyhow there is no hint of Christian asceticism in Middleton, and if the note of paganism be an excess of passion there may be some truth in the criticism that he was a belated Greek of the decadence. Yet one has to confess that there is nothing in his verse that gives us perfect satisfaction of emotion and intellect which we get from the minor Greek poets themselves or from some of the poems in Cory's *Ionica;* for example, the one called *Mimnermus in Church* or this epigram in the manner of the *Greek Anthology*, which I quote as the most successful evocation of the Hellenic genius for friendship:—

You come not, as aforetime, to the headstone every day,
And I, who died, I do not chide because, my friend, you play;
Only, in playing think of him who once was kind and dear,
And, if you see a beauteous thing, just say, he is not here.

The wonderful simplicity and restraint, the modest charm, and *not too much*, which is one of the lessons that the Greek poets teach, were outside the range of Middleton. His imagination was too febrile, too romantic. But as the reader may prefer to judge for himself how the Greek spirit is captured by, or to put it another way, how it eludes the later poet, I shall quote his *Pagan Epitaph*:—

Servant of the eternal Must
I lie here, here let me lie
In the ashes and the dust,
Dreaming, dreaming pleasantly;
When I lived I sought no wings,
Schemed no heaven, planned no hell,
But, content with little things,
Made an earth, and it was well.

Song and laughter, food and wine,
Roses, roses red and white,
And a star or two to shine
On my dewy world at night;
Lord, what more could I desire?
With my little heart of clay,
I have lit no eternal fire
To burn my dreams on Judgment Day!

Well I loved, but they who knew
What my laughing heart could be,
What my singing lips could do,
Lie a-dreaming here with me.

I can feel their finger-tips
Stroke the darkness from my face,
And the music of their lips
Fills my pleasant resting-place
In the ashes and the dust,
Where I wonder as I lie,
Servant of the eternal Must,
Dreaming, dreaming pleasantly.

The three volumes of prose, collected after Middleton's death, which contain short stories and essays, show that

he was making a well-defined and interesting progress in an art that, for him, was much more difficult than the one that claimed his early affections. His prose, in my opinion, has more individuality and a weightier body of thought than his verse, which never quite succeeds in escaping from the tradition of Rossetti and Swinburne. In prose he had no such tyrannous masters, and would have soon worked out a style in harmony with his intellectual and emotional predispositions. It is a thousand pities that he deprived us, in a moment of depression, of the pleasure of watching the development of another master of our English prose.

George Underwood.

Correspondence.

PAINE AND WAR DEBTS.

To the Editor of the "Freethinker."

Sir,—I think it was in his *Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance* that Paine showed that *as a direct result* of war, the countries of Europe would become so hopelessly involved with each other financially, that National Debts would have to be *repudiated*. That was over 130 years ago. To-day (August 7, 1922), the *Daily Chronicle* tells us that—

> The Balfour Note indicated what would be the best solution—that Great Britain might surrender her share of German reparations *provided* this were part of the *writing off*, through one great transaction, of the whole body of inter-allied indebtedness.

What's in a name?

Yours in a hard fight, H. Dawson.

Obituary.

London Freethinkers will learn with regret—despite his advanced age—of the death of Robert Henry Side, at an age that brought him within two and a half years of completing his century. Born on January 7, 1825, Mr. Side was from his earliest years a fighting Freethinker, and he carried on the fight at a time when to declare oneself a Freethinker involved greater hardships than we of the present generation can readily conceive. He made no secret of his opinions, and his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren formed a body of convinced Freethinkers of whom he was deservedly proud. We well remember when he last called at the *Freethinker* office, his interesting reminiscences of his earlier years, and how keen was his interest in the cause. His undiminished enthusiasm was a tonic and an inspiration, and it would have been a lesson to those who speak of Freethought as a dreary gospel could they have heard this wonderful old man—then over ninety—fighting his battles over again, and urging us to continued exertions. The Cause owes more than many realize to men of his stamp, who, although never occupying a prominent position, was always there to do what could be done in the fight against superstition.

His son, Mr. E. O. Side, writes us that his father had no real illness. "He fell asleep and his heart failed to carry on." It was a suitable close to a remarkable life. His death snaps a link between us and the days of the fighting 'forties, but he lived to see many of the truths for which he fought in his early years acknowledged even in the churches. We pay our humble tribute of respect to the memory of a brave follower of a great Cause.

C. C.

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 at 8 p.m.

OUTDOOR.

North London Branch N.S.S. (Finsbury Park): 3 and 7, Mr. George Whitehead, "Drawbacks of Christianity."

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

South London Branch N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): Mr. A. D. McLaren; 3.15, "God"; 6, "God's Son."

South Place Ethical Society (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.2.): Ramble to Welwyn and Ayot. Conducted by Mr. W. T. Wixcey. Train from King's Cross 10.30. Take cheap return ticket No. 18, returning from Knebworth, 4s. 8d.

West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Corner Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. Corrigan, A Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

Failsworth Secular Society (Secular Sunday-school, Pole Lane, Failsworth): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 2.45, "The Case for Freethought"; 6.30, "Some Delusions About a Future Life."

Pamphlets.

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