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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
Carrying On.—The Editor - - - - -	657
"The Ruins of Empires."—J. T. Lloyd - - - - -	658
The Decay of Church-Going.—Mimnermus - - - - -	660
The Religion of the late George R. Sims.—Arthur B. Moss - - - - -	660
A Review of One Day's News.—Mancunian - - - - -	662
J. W. Gott Fund.—Chapman Cohen - - - - -	665
Pagan and Christian Civilization.—W. Mann - - - - -	666
"The Parson and the Sex."—H. C. Weston - - - - -	667
Book Chat.—George Underwood - - - - -	668
Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.	

Views and Opinions.

Carrying On.

Some time ago I had the pleasure of "naming" a child, the daughter of one of the members of the Failsworth Secular Society. The ceremony is not uncommon, nor was the fact of the child representing the fourth generation of Freethinkers so unusual as one might imagine. The one special feature about the case was that the child belonged to what is practically a Secular community. The Failsworth Society originated, I think, in the Robert Owen movement. Since those days the Freethinkers in Failsworth have had their own institution, the members have grown up together, there has been considerable intermarrying, and the young people have found among their Freethinking friends the social companionship that other Freethinkers are compelled to find elsewhere. In this way the fact of their belonging to Freethinkers has been kept ever-present in their minds, and in their turn they have brought up their children to take the same broad, healthy view of life as themselves. It may be that the influence of the Failsworth Freethinkers has not been so direct as in other places, but they have held their own, and have played their part in the general life of the community. Let me add that I am no advocate of separatism, nor do I regard the end of Freethought as the establishing of what is in essence a new Church, which while discarding supernaturalism will keep alive all the old sectarian feelings. A sect or a party should be the means to an end, not an end in itself, and when we forget that we are perpetuating one of the evils that religion itself perpetuates. But I have always been impressed with what I have seen at Failsworth, and I think it has an important bearing on our work.

* * *

The Freethinker as a "Sport."

I may best get at this by dealing with a complaint that one often hears. It is said that the children of Freethinkers do not always, perhaps not often, show the same zeal in the advocacy of Freethought as did their parents. From one point of view there is nothing to be surprised at in this. To begin with, it is as true in the mental as in the physical world that action and reaction are equal and opposite. Where religion is harsh and tyrannical the reaction is sharp and uncom-

promising. People are oppressed by it, and are impressed with the need for working against it. But when circumstances force religion into a more accommodating attitude the evil of its existence is not so apparent, it is perceived only by the clearer minded few, and the mass, while not actively believing, feel no call to active opposition. They are content to get through life with the smallest amount of friction, even though they may pay for their superficially smooth journey. In the next place the fighting heretic is bound to be always an exception to the general rule. Normal human nature follows with sheep-like fidelity—and intelligence—the customary paths. The man who strikes out on a new road is something unusual, he is what biologists call a "sport," that is, a departure from the normal type which may or may not give rise to a definite variety. But the whole of a species cannot be made up of sports, if it were it would lose its coherence. Anarchism may be good as a tonic, but it is poison as a regular article of diet. It follows, therefore, that one must expect our children to be, on the average, almost as subject to social pressure, as the children of other people. Some traces of parental influence may be—I think usually are—found, but one must not expect to find with certainty the same degree of dogged individuality which lifted their parents above the level of the crowd. The greater influence of the parent is indirect. It acts on society as a whole, and so modifies the nature of the social environment which affects each of the units more or less. This last factor is of much greater consequence than is usually recognized. The influence of men like Paine, Bradlaugh, Carlile, Holyoake, Foote and others, is most clearly and most powerfully seen in the more liberal tone and freer habits of mind with those to whom the names of these men are often anathema or unknown. The advanced thinker modifies the social medium, and in so doing acts upon the majority of people without their being in the least aware of it.

* * *

Parents and Children.

So far I have put the case in reply to those who complain of the lukewarmness often shown by the children of Freethinkers. But there is something to be said on the other side. Far less concern is paid to Freethought by the children of Freethinkers than should be. It is not that they become religious. Apart from deliberately pretending to be what they are not, or from some pathological cause, that cannot be. One may go on believing things for want of knowledge, but once the knowledge is there nothing can take it away so long as one continues in normal health. One cannot un-know any more than one can un-pull another's nose after it has been wrung. But from various causes—I will deal presently with what I consider a very powerful one—it does happen that the children of Freethinkers are found giving encouragement by their attitude to the perpetuation of frames of mind which their parents worked so hard to destroy. In this way it follows that Freethinkers have to do part of their work over again with each generation. And that ought not to be the case. It is not expecting

too much to look for a sufficient amount of interest in the new generation to realize the importance of Free-thought to the world. Whether they then take an active part in its dissemination must depend on themselves. It is not a matter on which Freethinking parents will be inclined to attempt the same kind of tyranny that is exercised by religious ones, nor should they do so. All the same one cannot but feel that some responsibility rests with them for the comparative lack of interest shown by their children in the propagation of Freethinking opinions.

* * *

The Importance of Opinion.

I suggest that a very probable cause of this state of affairs is that we are too much inclined in the home to take our opinions as something that concerns ourselves alone, or to treat Freethought—when there is no longer the danger of direct suppression to face—as though it were a matter of mere intellectual speculation, much on a level with our speculations concerning the ultimate constitution of matter. Or we may be so impressed with the evil of taking advantage of the helplessness of children, of forcing opinions upon them, that we run to the other extreme. And thus, while as Freethinkers we may be duly impressed with the cardinal importance of opinion, when it comes to the home we pay so much regard to those in our domestic environment that we are apt to altogether minimise the importance of opinion. A consequence of this is that our children grow up in a freer and more tolerant atmosphere than did their parents, they fail to receive the spur to activity that comes from the oppressive activity of religion, and they have not a sufficiently lively sense of responsibility to others in the matter of opinion. They are not impressed with the importance of religious beliefs, but neither are they impressed with the importance of getting rid of them. Sheltered from the direct consequences of religious beliefs, they lack a perception of the fact that the social evil of religion continues, and that given the opportunity religion would become as tyrannous as ever. There is developed a "What-does-it-matter?" state of mind which, besides doing nothing for Free-thought, really helps religion by converting a possibly active enemy into a passive helper. It is a frame of mind which lends itself dangerously to the social pressure which the Churches can bring to bear upon each one, and it leaves the active Freethought propagandist to do his work over again with each generation.

* * *

Why not Begin at Home?

In the case of religion the perpetuation of opinion is secured by the organization of the social environment. The control of the schools, the power of the Press and of general publications, the institutions which take a profession of religion for granted, the performance of religious ceremonies in connection with our civic life, all these secure the automatic transmission of religious beliefs. In the case of Free-thought all these aids are wanting. The environment is not organized to perpetuate freedom of thinking, if it were a great deal of what has been said would have been unnecessary. The only help we can get from the general environment is that which comes from the modification effected through its permeation by our views. But there is one environment in which the Freethinker can act, and act decisively. This is the home. Freethought should be made more of a feature of home life than it is. Every member of a family should be made to feel that he or she has well within reach a principle that is of incalculable value to themselves and to the community. The practice of keeping one's opinion to oneself is wrong. It is never a wise policy to make one's opinions a nuisance,

whether inside or outside the home, and the precise line to be drawn must be determined by the circumstances in each case. But, generally, one may say that the practice of keeping an opinion to oneself is wrong. Opinion, to follow Spencer, is not something that should be thrown upon the wayside to die of neglect, but something that comes to us from the pulsating life of the race, and it is our duty to see that it flowers and bears its proper fruit. We have to convert society as a whole, but we all of us have a miniature society, the home, which we can convert if we will, and if we bring to bear on the task the requisite tact and judgment. It is useless saying "I do not bother the people at home with my opinions." If opinion is to spread it must be brought in to the homes of someone. And if into the homes of others why not into one's own home? I suggest, then, that Freethinkers should see to this work which lies to their hand. Let us see to it that our wives and children, if possible, share our opinions. If they do it will mean that the work once done is done for ever. We have not merely robbed religion of so many supporters, we have secured so many active fighters in the army of liberation. At any rate the end is worthy of a more determined effort than is made in many cases at present. The Churches have always been alive to the value of support from this source. Freethinkers should be at least equally alive to its possibilities.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"The Ruins of Empires."

II.

VOLNEY was a firm believer in progress. He was a glowing optimist despite many temptations to degenerate into a weeping pessimist. He was a great traveller, but his main object always was to get into close touch with the past in order to learn lessons therefrom for the due management of the present. He studied antiquities with such deep interest because he loved his fellow-beings and desired to make known to them the conditions of social happiness and prosperity. He went to Palmyra, once a magnificent Eastern city, situated in a lovely oasis of Syrian desert about a hundred and fifty miles from Damascus, and found it "a most astonishing scene of ruins," with the result that his reflections were extremely mournful. He says:—

To the tumultuous throng which crowded under these porticos, the solitude of death has succeeded. The silence of the tomb is substituted for the hum of the market place. The opulence of a commercial city is changed into hideous poverty. The palaces of kings are become the lair of wild beasts, and obscure reptiles inhabit the sanctuary of the gods. What glory is here eclipsed, and how many labours are annihilated! Thus perish the works of men, and thus do nations and empires vanish away.

Meditating upon the history of past times he was reminded of "those distant ages when twenty celebrated nations inhabited the country around me." He pictured to himself "the Assyrian on the banks of the Tigris, the Chaldean on the Euphrates, the Persian whose power extended from the Indus to the Mediterranean." He "enumerated the kingdoms of Damascus and Idumea; of Jerusalem and Samaria; and the warlike states of the Philistines; and the commercial republics of Phœnicia." Then he exclaims, "Great God! Whence proceed such melancholy revolutions? Why is the fortune of these countries so strikingly changed? Why are so many cities destroyed? Why is not that ancient population reproduced and perpetuated?" (p. 4.)

The author of *Ruins* is sorely perplexed by the fact

that the people who constituted the flourishing empires of the past were not worshippers of the true God. He says:—

It was the Phœnician, offering human sacrifices to Moloch, who brought together within his walls the riches of every climate; it was the Chaldean, prostrating himself before a serpent, who subjugated opulent cities and laid waste the palaces of kings and the temples of the gods; it was the Persian, the worshipper of fire, who collected the tributes of a hundred nations; they were the inhabitants of this very city, adorers of the sun and stars, who erected so many monuments of affluence and luxury. Numerous flocks, fertile fields, abundant harvests, everything that should have been the reward of piety, was in the hands of idolaters; and now that a believing and holy people occupy the countries, nothing is to be seen but solitude and sterility. The earth, under these "blessed" hands, produces only briars and wormwood (pp. 4, 5).

At this stage arrives on the scene "a pale apparition, enveloped in an ample and flowing garment," clearly a supernatural being, who undertakes to interpret the puzzling situation in terms of reason and common-sense. His first task is to convince Volney that God is not responsible for the fortunes or misfortunes of nations and empires, that, in fact, he has nothing to do with either. He gave Nature her laws which are inviolable and which man disregards at his peril. Break them we cannot, and our destiny depends upon whether we obey them or not. This is what is usually meant by Deism. The gods of the Churches and priests are denounced with fierceness and labelled false. God made the world and established its laws, but has no further responsibility whatever. He merely made and set it going, and has done nothing since but play the part of an interested spectator. The apparition, called the Genius, lays down the following principle:—

Man is governed, like the world of which he forms a part, by natural laws, regular in their operation, consequent in their effects, immutable in their essence; and these laws, the common source of good and evil, are neither written in the distant stars, nor concealed in mysterious codes; inherent in the nature of all terrestrial beings, identified with their existence, they are at all times, and in all places, present to the human mind; they act upon the senses, inform the intellect, and annex to every action its punishment and its reward. Let man study these laws, let him understand his own nature, and the nature of the beings that surround him; and he will know the springs of his destiny, the causes of his evils, and the remedies to be applied (pp. 14, 15).

Such is the fundamental teaching of Volney's *Ruins*. From the practical point of view it is sheer Atheism, though there is always running through it a Deistic undertone.

Practically all the religions of the world are weighed in the balance and found wanting. Each religion claims to be the only true and perfect one and condemns all others as false and fatally misleading. Because of this it is proposed to hold a general assembly, representing the whole world, and thereat judge every religious system on its merits. Then the proceedings of the assembly are recorded so far as they went; but the book comes to an end before they are completed. Innumerable are the different religious ideas in the world, and to trace them to their origin is difficult:—

If we ascend to the source of these ideas, we shall find that it is lost in the night of time, in the infancy of nations, in the very origin of the world, to which origin they claim alliance, and there, immersed in the obscurity of chaos and the fabulous empire of tradition, they are attended with so many prodigies as to be seemingly inaccessible to the human understand-

ing. But this prodigious state of things gives birth itself to a ray of reasoning that resolves the difficulty; for if the miracles held out in systems of religion have actually existed; if, for instance, metamorphoses, apparitions, and the conversations of one or more gods, recorded in the sacred books of the Hindus, the Hebrews, and the Parsis, are indeed events in real history, it follows that Nature in those times was perfectly unlike the Nature we are acquainted with now; that men to-day are totally different from men of that age; and consequently that we ought not to trouble our heads about them (pp. 92-3).

Such a book, written towards the end of the eighteenth century, was bound to create a tremendous sensation. When it was published (1791) the French Revolution had broken out, and promised to solve all the social and political problems which had vexed the world for so long. Its antipathy to religion, particularly to Christianity, was unmistakably and vehemently resented, but it was a book that throbbed with sympathy with all oppressed, downtrodden classes and with burning hatred of all forms of tyranny, from which France had so long and so cruelly suffered. Volney had confidence that the submerged sections of the people were capable of rising and taking their parts in the national life as soon as the barriers of ages were broken down. He believed that the race was not degenerating, the causes of its misfortunes being ignorance on the one hand and selfishness on the other. The obstacles to progress seemed at first insurmountable. The privileged class despised the people and treated them as slaves. They claimed that they had laws, customs, and rights peculiar to themselves; that they were made, not to labour, but to govern; that "it would be degrading to mix with the common herd." The priests, of course, deliberately played into the hands of the privileged class whilst pretending to love and serve the people. They said: "The people are superstitious; it is proper to overawe them with the names of God and religion," and addressing them, added: "Our dear brethren, our children, God has appointed us to govern you." The people asked for "the patent of his commission," and were simply answered, "You must have faith; reason leads men into guilt."

At the time the *Ruins* was published it was confidently expected that the French Revolution would result in the abolition of the privileged class and the complete emancipation of the people; but owing to gross mismanagement and the wrongheadedness of Napoleon it failed to achieve that end, but it did, as Professor Bury observes, "liberate the modern social elements from the grip of the ancient powers," and in spite of the most injurious intervention of Napoleon, the cause of progress has permanently benefited by it. Volney solemnly warns us against "supposing that the human race is degenerating"; and he made the following prophecy:—

Individuality will be a term of greater comprehension, and nations, free and enlightened, will hereafter become one complex individual, as single men are now; the consequences will be proportioned to the state of things. The communication of knowledge will extend from society to society, till it comprehends the whole earth. By the law of imitation the example of one people will be followed by others, who will adopt its spirit and its laws. Despots themselves, perceiving that they can no longer maintain their power without justice and beneficence will be induced, both from necessity and rivalry, to soften the rigour of their government, and civilization will be universal (p. 48).

A new edition of the *Ruins of Empires* with a revision of the translation of 1795, and an introduction by George Underwood, was recently issued by the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4, price 5s.

J. T. LLOYD,

The Decay of Church-Going.

There is, I believe, no public religious service which is not offensive to thoughtful and reverent persons.

—Harriet Martineau.

WHEN the world-war started the clergy of this country, of whom there are 50,000, hailed the event as the happy harbinger of a spiritual awakening, but subsequent events have discounted the hope. The war, which tested so many men and institutions, has not spared the many Churches of Christendom. It did, indeed, bring out strongly the unselfish sacrifice of hundreds of thousands who were indifferent to the Churches, but it also revealed, on the part of the clergy and their leaders, a spirit of cant, compromise and cowardice that must have tended to lessen what influence the Black Army possessed with the mass of ordinary citizens.

The plain, blunt fact is that religion is fast losing its hold on the people of this country. To hundreds of thousands, church, or chapel-going, is ignored by the very type of men and women who, forty, or even twenty years ago, would have considered regular attendance at a place of worship as a part of the ordinary routine of life.

Christian apologists sometimes affirm that there is a more truly religious spirit in the world than ever before. It is the language of despair. At no time in the history of England has there been a larger proportion of the population taking no part in public worship. Every Church, from the Roman Catholic to the Unitarian, has the same complaint, that, while the grey-headed men and women have kept up their religious observances, the rising generation is not attracted to the houses of "God," despite the many inducements now offered, from string orchestras to tame Labour Leaders.

The Churches have failed, and, in the nature of things, will continue to fail more and more. Spare congregations re-act upon the minister. Beggarly arrays of empty benches breed dreariness in the pulpit. Numbers, upon the other hand, count for enthusiasm.

There is another aspect of the matter. The Churches no longer attract men of intellect to their priesthoods. Always a caste apart from their fellow-citizens, the assumption of episcopal sanctity and authority in men of very mediocre ability is in itself perilous to religion. The use of outworn ritual, and the professional twang so common in the Churches of England and Rome, removes the whole thing from ordinary life. To the common man, religion, as thus presented, sounds like "the horns of Elfland, faintly blowing." The question is one, not only of the lack of intellectual grip on the part of the priesthood, but the fact that the Churches have ceased to become the career of men of ability and distinction. It thus happens that the quality of the appeals on behalf of organized religion is becoming fine by degrees and beautifully less. Intellectuality, indeed, is almost absent from the present-day sermon. But without intellect there can be no lasting effect, and the trouble of the Churches seems to be that, instead of the bread of knowledge, they give the people sermons like sawdust.

Realizing the growing disfavour of the clergy, and the anachronism of a mediæval priesthood in a democratic country, the Church of England, which is the wealthiest and most powerful of the English Churches, seeks to restore the Church's balance of power by the creation of more and more bishops. So assiduously has this been done, that the Established Church bids fair to resemble the comic-opera army of the Principality of Monaco, in which, it is said, there are more officers than men. The multiplication of bishops cannot affect seriously the final issue. Instead of renewing the youth of the Church, these suffragan

bishops will inevitably drift into the position of being assistants to the titled and begartered prelates who have brought the wealthiest and most powerful Church in the country to its present position of intellectual beggary and spiritual impotence.

The Established Church, indeed, is far removed from democratic hopes and ideals. In the piping times of peace the anachronism of a clerical caste in our midst passed almost unnoticed, but the war brought out in strong relief the position of the selfish and skin-careful clergy. All can recall the fervent appeals made by these priests, coupled with the fact that they were exempted from military service altogether. Is it strange that there should rise a note, not so much of remonstrance as of revolt, which suggests that the nation is dissatisfied with the behaviour of the clergy, from the wealthy bachelor occupant of Fulham Palace to the rotund tenant of Little Peddlington Vicarage, who proved themselves out of touch with the general life of the nation? At a time when the civilized world was in convulsions, the bishops found time to discuss the claims of King Charles the First to the highest rank of saintship. They busied themselves in glossing the barbarities and indecencies of the Holy Bible. On the great issues of the time, how incomparably great should be clear to all, they showed a complete and shameless indifference. Their doom is said.

MIMNERMUS.

The Religion of the late George R. Sims.

THE religious views of an ordinary man are of no public importance, but the views of a famous journalist and author like the late George R. Sims, whether on politics, social problems or religion, are always of interest to the great masses of the people, who desire to know what were the principles and ideals that moved him to try to bring about those reforms with which his name was identified. In these columns I only propose to consider his views on religion.

George R. Sims was born in London on September 2, 1847. His father was a successful business man in the City and his mother, as he tells us in his autobiography,¹ was a lady of advanced views on social and political subjects, and one of the earliest and most enthusiastic advocates of female suffrage. His grandfather, Robert Sims, was a Sandemanian, or Glassite, and his greatest and dearest friend was Michael Faraday, the famous chemist, who was one of the elders. "My father," continues Mr. Sims, "was never a member of the little community. Both he and my mother were Church of England, but they used occasionally to take me and my sister to the chapel on Sundays to see our grandfather." Consequently young Sims grew up to be what may be fairly described as a "liberal minded Christian." For some years he was engaged in his father's office as clerk, and he tells us in his *Life* that he was a little under thirty years of age when he threw up his berth at £600 a year to take on the precarious occupation of working journalist at about £2 a week. I knew him by reputation for three or four years before I had the pleasure of meeting him. As a reader from the first number of the *Referee* I enjoyed his writings under the heading of "Mustard and Cress" which he contributed to that journal every week under the pen-name of "Dagonet"—one of the "Knights of the Round Table." It was early in 1881 that I first met Mr. Sims, and I propose to tell my readers the circum-

¹ *My Life; Sixty Years' Recollections of Bohemian London.*

stances under which I met him and came to know intimately his views on religion.

He was delivering a lecture at a little hall at the rear of the Radical Club, Keetons Road, Bermondsey, on "The Poetical Side of Poverty," and after the lecture I introduced myself to him as an officer of the London School Board. I asked him if he would like to know something about the real prosaic side of poverty, and if so, I should be glad to show him over one of the worst slum areas in South London. He accepted my offer with avidity, and in a few weeks, accompanied by his friend Mr. Fred Barnard, the distinguished artist, who illustrated nearly all the works of Charles Dickens, we were engaged in investigating the conditions under which the great masses of the working population in South London were struggling to exist, nearly fifty years ago. His first work on the subject was *How the Poor Live*, which appeared in the *Pictorial World* and had a good sale, and when it was produced in book form sold in tens of thousands. *The Cry of the Children* was the next production, and then followed *The Pinch of Poverty*, and several other series of articles, for which I prepared the material for investigation. It was in our walks, sometimes in the daytime and sometimes at night, while we were out in search of information that we discussed all kinds of topics.

Early in our walks and conversations I confided to my companions the fact that I was a Freethinker and believed neither in gods, devils, ghosts nor goblins; indeed, that I was a disbeliever in every form of supernaturalism.

Neither Mr. Sims nor Mr. Barnard was at all shocked at my declaration, and in a way it cleared the ground and prevented any misunderstanding as to my views. Mr. Sims had been writing on all kinds of subjects in the *Referee*, political, social and religious, and I was pretty well acquainted with his views. Mr. Barnard, the artist, did not appear to have any definite views on religion, but whenever in self-defence I attacked any phase of religious belief, he generally sided with his friend the famous journalist and playwright.

Our journeys from time to time over London, extended over many years, for I helped not only in supplying material for the works already named, but when Mr. Sims edited for Cassell's the unique publication entitled *Living London*, he not only commissioned me to collect materials for himself and other writers, but engaged me to write two articles myself. While we were walking about we had plenty of time to discuss all sorts of topics. Mr. Sims would generally open by chaffing me about my lack of belief in the gods, and also my disbelief in the alleged inspiration of the Bible. Mr. Sims was a born humorist, witty and clever, and smart in repartee; but like most humorists he exaggerated what he conceived to be his opponent's case, and sometimes I had to retort by making a strong attack upon his attitude on some of the declarations of the Bible. Mr. Sims considered it one of his privileges to ridicule anybody and everybody. Personally I never objected to that, because it often gave me an opportunity of returning the compliment and ridiculing some of his beliefs by way of retort. In this way I soon discovered that he had no belief in the anthropomorphic conception of the God of the Jews. Indeed, he quite understood that the masses of the people, in any age, could not think in abstractions, and therefore the man-like God, who delighted to be known as the Father of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was fit only for the uncultivated minds of the early Jewish races. He often said in our conversations and discussions that his idea of God was that of a good, kind, heavenly father, who cared for and was ever willing to help his children; but I always assured him that I could never find any evidence of such charac-

teristics either in the God of the Bible, or in the manifestations of the multifarious phenomena of Nature. But in the early 'eighties nearly all sincere Christians regarded the Bible as God's inspired word, and in a general way Mr. Sims was no exception to the rule. For instance, he believed in the Bible story of the Creation and the Fall. Further, he regarded the story of the Flood and the story of the Confusion of Tongues at the building of the Tower of Babel as historical events; but when he heard my criticisms of them I fancy his belief was somewhat shaken, especially as he, with his fine sense of humour, could see the ludicrous aspect of the case the moment it was presented to him. Nor could he believe altogether in Joshua commanding the sun to stand still, and the sun actually obeying his command, especially as Joshua's object was to have sufficient light so that he might see more clearly how to slaughter the enemy.

These and other stories of the Bible Mr. Sims and I discussed together many times, and though he never admitted that his belief was shaken, he nevertheless laughed so heartily over some of the criticisms, that I cannot but think that they had some effect upon his belief. In these discussions I also discovered that Mr. Sims had never read Bishop Colenso's *Examination of the Pentateuch*, which work established beyond doubt that the Bible account of Creation, the stories of the Flood, Tower of Babel, and many other such stories, were unscientific, unhistorical, and some of them, utterly immoral. Further, I was unable to find any evidence that Mr. Sims had ever seriously examined such works as Darwin's *Origin of Species* or his *Descent of Man*, except perhaps that he may have read a chapter or two, as many journalists do to make themselves acquainted with the general view of the author, nor that he had grasped the meaning of evolution by studying such works as Hæckel's *Pedigree of Man*. I do not blame Mr. Sims in the least for this. He was a Christian, and a very liberal minded one at that for the early 'eighties, free from bigotry and intolerance of every kind. He took his belief on faith in the teachings of the Church in which he was brought up. And it must be remembered that to be known as a heretic in the early 'eighties was to be damned in the eyes of the masses to all eternity. Personally, I knew from experience that to be known as a Freethinker at that time was to be regarded as worse than a thief, worse even than a murderer, regarded indeed as a person with a black heart, foul and corrupt, and Christians declared that while there was some hope of repentance for thieves and murderers, there was none for an unbeliever like myself. So I do not blame Mr. Sims, who was a popular journalist and a still more popular dramatist writing for the masses, for not troubling himself about the heretical views of noble men like Bishop Colenso and other Biblical critics, or of the still more distinguished scientific heretics, like Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall and Hæckel. Mr. Sims had his reputation to make and the less he troubled his mind about these matters the better for him. Moreover, at that time Mr. Sims, in addition to writing these works on social problems, was engaged in writing melodramas, comedies, stories, musical comedies, etc., and had no time for serious study either of Biblical criticism or scientific works on the evolution of man. His chief reading was fiction, in various languages, from which he often found material for his plays. One incident, however, in his career as a journalist I much regret. He went with his friend Mr. Henry Sampson ("Pendragon" of the *Referee*) and late proprietor of that journal, to the Hall of Science on one occasion, to hear the illustrious Charles Bradlaugh, and wrote an account of his visit in the *Referee* before I knew him. In his account he criticised more the manner of the lecturer than the matter; and, to tell the honest truth, his criticism was

not in the best of taste. But let that pass. Some years after, he told me of a funny incident relating to Bradlaugh which is worth recording. One night after Bradlaugh had tried—successfully—to take his seat in the House of Commons, and had created a scene by going to the table of the House, reading the words of the oath, kissing the New Testament and then taking his seat, much to the astonishment of the Tories, Sir Stafford Northcote (afterwards Lord Iddesleigh) moved that the honourable member be sent to the "Clock Tower" for outraging the feelings of the House by taking the oath. Mr. Sims a few nights after this incident went to the Promenade Concerts at Covent Garden. A gentleman of the name of Crowe (the author of the famous "See-Saw Waltz") was the conductor. In the interval Mr. Sims went into the private room reserved for the conductor and found Mr. Crowe, who was then slightly inebriated with something stronger than "the exuberance of his own verbosity," talking wildly about Mr. Bradlaugh. Between occasional hiccoughs and expletives he exclaimed that he quite agreed with Mr. Bradlaugh; that he (Mr. Crowe) did not believe in Christ. Whereupon Mr. Sims knocked off the following lines:—

We've heard in language highly spiced,
That Crowe does not believe in Christ,
But this at least we'd like to know,
Whether Christ believed in Crowe.

I suggested that it was Peter, perhaps, who believed in "crow." He remembered that the cock crew each time he denied his master, viz., thrice; Mr. Sims looked at me rather severely, but gradually his sense of humour prevailed, and he smiled as though he took the joke as a palpable hit. So far, I have only dealt with Mr. Sims' view of the teachings of the Old Testament. In my next article I shall have something to say concerning his view of "the Christian Faith." For the present it only remains for me to record the fact that Mr. Sims admired the Book of Job as a fine religious drama, and considered that there are some good, lofty sentiments expressed in language of rare beauty to be found in some of the books of the Old Testament, which I never disputed, and which I know most Freethinkers are prepared to acknowledge. And as Freethinkers we claim that everything that is true and beautiful in the Bible belongs just as much to us as to any Christian that ever trod this earth.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

ALAS!

Alas for all high hopes and all desires!

Like leaves in yellow autumn-time they fall;
Alas for prayers and psalms and love's pure fires—
One silence and one darkness ends them all!

Alas for all the world—sad fleeting race!

Alas, my Love, for you and me, Alas!
Grim Death will clasp us in his cold embrace;
We, too, like all the rest from earth must pass.

Alas to think we must forget some hours

Whereof the memory like Love's planet glows—
Forget them as the year her withered flowers—
Forget them as the June forgets the rose!

Our keenest rapture, our most deep despair,

Our hopes, our dreads, our laughter, and our tears
Shall be no more at all upon the air—
No more at all, through all the endless years.

We shall be mute beneath the grass and dew

In that dark kingdom where Death reigns in state—
And you will be as I, and I as you—
One silence shed upon us, and one fate.

—Philip Bourke Marston.

A Review of One Day's News.

THE perusal of the daily newspapers on Thursday, September 28, disclosed all the following quite detached and yet, surely, curiously related incidents.

Three men and a woman were fined 30s. each with the alternative of a month in gaol by the Flint Borough Magistrates for gaming with cards on Sunday.

A South Carnarvonshire farmer was fined 10s. and costs at Pwllheli for cruelty to a drake by nailing it to a board through the webbing of its feet.

The headmaster of Dolgelly Council School complained to his managers that home-work and the curriculum of his classes was upset by the pupils having to attend ten religious functions during the year, and the managers agreed to appeal strongly to the Free Churches to fix thanksgiving festivals so that school attendance will not be interfered with.

So much for Wales. What of Christian England?

The Manchester and Salford Free Church Federation protested against the attempt to introduce Sunday games in the parks because it was calculated "human nature being what it is, to interfere with the moral and religious training which the Church and Sunday-school are seeking to give."

The Liverpool and Stoke-on-Trent public authorities both decided after numerous representations from ministers of religion and the organizations with which they are associated, not to permit Sunday games.

The Manchester authorities were reported to be still hesitating about municipal assistance to the Hallé Orchestra because the concerts proposed to be subsidized are to be given on Sunday nights. The same committee for the municipality had, however, voted money to repair a certain church clock in the city "without prejudice to future applications."

The Nye Free Church Federation decided to appoint a committee to see how religion can be applied to industry, the Lady Mayoress having pointed out to them that the spiritual as well as the economic aspect must be recognized and Christian love must enter into business bargains.

The Rochdale magistrates (a doctor presiding) reprimanded a father for neglecting his boy of twelve who was left to the care of neighbours while his parents went to work and who stole from home to buy a football, some football boots, etc.; and then the doctor told the boy that they would deal kindly with him and not send him to prison (at the age of 12), the kindness consisting of six strokes with the birch rod!

A Rochdale woman, reported to be "deeply religious," drowned herself because she thought she was unworthy of the love she experienced. She disappeared while her husband was at church and her daughter playing the organ. Verdict: Suicide while of unsound mind.

A gentleman, signing himself Frederic W. Coulter, wrote from Liverpool to the *Daily Dispatch* (Manchester) pointing out that the triumphs of knowledge were impotent to cure crime and asking why, as a counterpart to the British Association, we have no "Interdenominational Christian Association meeting annually to give public knowledge of the magnificent triumphs of Christian morality?"

He was apparently quite serious.

It was announced that the late Rev. James Midgley, aged 90, dying in a Yorkshire cottage, and having formerly been a missionary in Zanzibar and a Consular Chaplain in Brazil, left £12,063.

All of which strange things were discovered in three morning papers on a single day by

MANCUNIAN.

Man is born in chains but is everywhere struggling to be free.—L. T. Hobhouse.

Acid Drops.

A week or two ago we called attention to the influence of the Church parties in this country in inflaming passion against the Turks, and to the way in which the stories of atrocities—real and imaginary—were circulated. Meanwhile it is curious to note the silence of the same pious parties and papers when it is the massacre of Turks by Christians that occurs, a fact about which there can now be no question whatever. Since writing our paragraphs we have had sent us the following from *Truth* of September 27:—

It is certain that the Prime Minister has been greatly worried by what we used to call the Nonconformist Conscience, but nowadays style the "Churches." Little Bethel, its ministers and its elders have been at him and their M.P.s to strike a blow for the Cross against the Crescent.

This is confirmation of what we had to say, and we are glad to find it in a journal that cannot be accused of having a Freethought axe to grind.

And we should like to know when the Christians of this country will feel able to have a row with the people of another country without circulating at once a batch of ready-made atrocity stories? It matters very little whom we are having a quarrel with—Germans, Russians, Turks, Burmese, Boers, or Africans. The same atrocity tap is turned on and the gullible public swallow them as though they had never heard such tales before. The evil does not stop with the end of the quarrel. A proper arrangement was prevented after the armistice with Germany because the late Lord Northcliffe's propagandist organization had so inflamed the public with the stories of German atrocities, backed up with the daily hymn of hate sung by the Churches. And we ought to bear in mind that the picture of the Turk as an uncivilized person quite unfit to move in the same circle as Christians—and Eastern Christians at that—cannot but make the peace of the world more difficult than it would be otherwise. For we have to live with the rest of the world whether we like it or not, and peaceful living is impossible while the British Christian continues so immeasurably superior to the rest. So it is to be hoped that for the sake of everybody our good Christians will pretend that they are worse than they are and pretend also that the others are better than they are—more on a level, that is, with us. It is difficult to think thus, but the effort is worth the making.

Part of the antagonism of the Churches to the Turks is due to the fact that in Africa the Christian missionaries make little or no headway against Mohammedanism. In many places they lose ground. And now we see from a report in the *Buddhist Chronicle* of Colombo, there is trouble brewing in China from such converts as Christianity has been able to get. These Chinese Christians wish to manage their own affairs and establish a "Chinese Christianity." We are not quite certain what this is, but we gather that it will not be a Christianity that is recognisable as such by British Christians. But worse than this—from the missionaries' point of view—is that the natives are demanding control of the money that is sent out of England for the establishment of Christianity in China. "But," says the *Chronicle*, "this giving up of the money-bags is precisely what the American and European missionaries refuse to consider; and they are often by no means willing to admit, and often not even then, the qualified Chinaman as their social equal (which he undoubtedly is—if not their superior) or as their co-worker." The truth is that the missionary movement, as we have so often pointed out, is one of the most gigantic impostures of our time. It suits certain interests to give the missionaries testimonials, and on the strength of a few earnest and simple bodies there is kept in being a movement which involves a sheer exploitation of the natives abroad and the simple minded at home.

We also said a couple of weeks ago that the clergy were evidently waiting to see which way the cat would jump before saying anything definite on the subject of

the threatened war with Turkey. Now that the war-party in this country appears to have had a definite set back some of them are coming out strongly against war although the clergy of the Established Church are still silent. Dr. Horton and others are denouncing war and declaring that it is the duty of the Christian churches to put an end to war. It is rather late in the day for the discovery to be made, seeing that in every war that we have had the Churches have, in the main, done their best to fan the war-spirit while the war was on. For our part we are convinced that if the war with Turkey had become an actuality we should have seen the Churches playing their old game, and with the greater eagerness because in this case the war would have been with the followers of a rival religion.

But it should not be forgotten that the hardly averted war with Turkey is part of the fruits we are gathering from the last war, and the part the Churches played during that war. We were almost alone in pointing out that a military victory on either side contained within it the seeds of future wars and a promised disaster to the whole of Europe. We said, and events have borne out what was said, that military victory would teach neither the victors nor the vanquished the lessons that it was to the world's interest should be learned. It would leave the vanquished with the desire for another war to level things up, and the victors with a confirmed faith in the importance of military strength. Moreover, the campaign carried out during the last war—in which the Churches played a leading part—meant the creating of passions that rendered a wise and desirable peace possible. And a consequence of this was a series of dictated treaties which has come near to ruining European civilization. Some of the papers are now beginning to speak out on this subject, which only means that they, like the clergy, were waiting till it was quite safe to let out a little of the truth.

The war left the rulers of the victor countries fully impressed with the overwhelming importance of the operation of brute force. These people were foolish enough to imagine that because they had the command of armies and navies all they had to do was to declare their will and the rest of the world would bow to their decisions. The fools had not learned the real lesson that all the armies in the world are ultimately powerless against the force of ideas which unite a people against them or against social forces which cannot be blasted with explosives or poisoned with chemicals. If we had learned the lesson of the war aright we should not only have insisted on the reduction of the German army to the level of a police force, but we should have seen to it that the armies of the Allies underwent a corresponding reduction. Instead of booming the army, and placarding the country with posters pointing out the superiority of the army life over civilian occupations we should have set to work to see that the army was kept very much in the background, excluded from civic functions, and so taught the people to regard it as at best a necessary evil. It is not the war that has brought Europe to the brink of ruin; that has been done by a "peace" made by victors drunk with the wine of victory, and stupidly impressed with the overwhelming importance of brute force applied to the government of life. The Churches laughed as heartily as any at President Wilson's idea of peace without victory, and as a result they got victory without peace. They had not the wit to see that a peace without victory meant the world-wide discrediting of the military machine; a military victory involved, and could not help involving, a re-establishment of the military ideal, and once more placing the soldier in the forefront instead of in the background. We did not so much conquer Prussianism as annex it.

A maniac rushed into the vestry of a Baptist Church in Baltham the other day, and saying that he had been ordered by God to sacrifice the minister, the Rev. Douglas Brown, tried to murder him. Eventually Mr. Brown was rescued, and is now running a revivalist campaign in Bermondsey. So much for the logic of man! Having just escaped from one religious maniac Mr. Brown proceeds to set a revivalist campaign in motion which, as likely as

not, may lead to a number of other people suffering from religious mania. It is the weak-minded and mentally unstable in every community to whom these revivals appeal. And when it is young people who are made the subject of the experiment it becomes positively criminal.

The Rev. R. J. Campbell, M.A., D.D., once wrote a book called *The New Theology*, which did not cause great joy in the orthodox camp of the Lord. Since then he has done many things to regain the goodwill of the faithful. His latest is a plea for the recognition of the "soul" on the strength of the "truths" established by telepathy, clairvoyance, and clairaudience. While the Rev. Dr. Campbell is urging this view, the Christadelphians are asserting vigorously that the idea of an immortal soul is entirely unscriptural, and are challenging orthodox divines to debate the question. The Second Adventists are likewise active, and assure us that "millions now living will never taste death." All these advocates, of course, bear testimony to the worth of the Scriptures as God's precious gift to a fallen race.

A Ryhope State Club secretary defaulted recently. He told the members to go to Hades for their money. But Hades is a long way off, and they went to the police instead. At Sunderland the defaulter was sentenced to four months' hard. He will have time to reflect that, after all, this is not so bad as Hades, where the punishment is not meant to be remedial and reformatory.

The following is from an American volume of sermons for the use of clergymen. It is from a sermon headed, "Watchman, What of the Night?" :—

Over, and over, and over again; and yet we have failed so often that we have gotten tired. Will no success ever come to us? And why, my friend, do you not look down deeper, and find out that sooner or later, your efforts will find a response, if you only keep heaving away. The time for your celebration will come, and you will have your day. So keep up your spirits, and dig down deeper, and fight, fight, fight, till you've won what you were after.

We are indebted to the *Church Times* for this quotation, and also for the description of it as "flapdoodle." The editor also remarks that this spiritual guidance might as easily, and as fitly, be given by an elderly burglar to an unsuccessful pal. With this we quite agree, but it remains to point out that quite ninety per cent of the sermons that are preached are full of the same "flapdoodle." This is specially true of those that are called liberal sermons, and which usually turn out to be sermons that contain yards of vague moral aspirations and are not, in practice, worth the breath wasted upon them. Merely to be told that one ought to do right never has helped and never will help the world. And yet if we take that kind of thing from the average sermon, what have we left? Flapdoodle!

Turning to another page of the *Church Times* we come across a sentence or two which, if not exactly "flapdoodle," illustrate that kind of mental dishonesty which seems inseparable from Christianity. The writer is reviewing a volume on *Miracles and the New Psychology*, and refers to cases of demonic possession, and concludes that the new psychology in explaining, we presume, on the basis of disassociation, the mediumistic trance with its exhibition of a new personality, appears to imagine that this supports the New Testament narrative. But this is not the case, although it is a line which many preachers take. Admitting that what takes place in the spiritualistic circle answers to what Christians took for cases of demonic possession, this in no wise helps the Christian case. No one denies that there were some facts upon which the religious theory was based. But Christianity stands, not upon there being some facts in which the belief was based, but upon the correctness of its interpretation of the facts. And we know that its proffered interpretation was hopelessly wrong. When Jesus mistook a case of epilepsy or disassociation for demonic possession he proved himself as ignorant as any present-day savage. And the Christian Church in perpetuating that belief showed itself equally ignorant. Christianity

stands or falls by its interpretation of certain facts. If the facts are differently interpreted, and correctly so, there is no further use for the Christian explanation. To argue otherwise is to play on the ignorance or unreflectiveness of those who attend.

A familiar old London landmark has just disappeared. Lockhart's Coffee Rooms, originally associated with the mission of temperance and piety, have been taken over by the Acrated Bread Company, which in all probability will run them on strictly business lines. A special kind of ability is required for the successful combination of business and soul-saving, especially in these degenerate days when the old antagonism between the faith and the world seems to be re-asserting itself.

Smallbridge Primitive Methodist Church, Rochdale, is to be closed up. The building is in need of repair, and there are no funds available for this purpose. Appeals to sister churches have met with the response that they are themselves in a similar position. The Smallbridge Chapel was once a prosperous centre of Methodism. By "prosperous" we mean that a good deal of genuine satisfaction was displayed in delivering the "message." Nowadays, however, the Methodists find that faith is a great venture of the soul, and that its strength lies in its flexibility. As a result of this "venture" we hear that in one district the congregations at twelve chapels could be accommodated in one. Our own advice to the devout—we offer it gratis—is to lay more stress on doctrines than on principles.

From a notice of the life of Abraham Lincoln we take the following comment on the subject of the memoir: "Lincoln was an embodiment of *virtus* with certain qualities which are distinctively Christian, such as modesty, true kindness, and real trust in Providence superimposed." It would not be easy to cram more impertinence, a greater reliance on the unreflectiveness of one's readers, or greater falsity in a single sentence. One wonders whether the writer really thinks that before Christianity the world was unacquainted with modesty, kindness, or trust in God, or whether he really believes that outside of Christians these qualities are still unknown? To ask the question is really to answer it. It is only cited to exhibit the ignorance or the impudence of the writer.

Take the single quality of modesty. There is, of course, much talk of humility and modesty with Christians, but we question whether a more selfish, a more boastful, people ever existed. We are not dealing with the surface of things, but with their essential qualities. To begin with, the very belief in exclusive salvation is itself dependent upon and appeals to a tremendous egotism. That I shall be saved, while millions of others will be damned, calls for a belief in the value of one's personality that is not easy to beat. This egotism is so enormous that its open expression, even to one's self has usually been too much, and it has been masked by talk of one's unworthiness, and of salvation being an act of grace. But the egotism is there all the same, and in political and social matters it has worked itself out in the quite unwarranted sense of superiority which we have already dealt with in what we have had to say on the League of Nations.

In an American film one Walt Whitman takes the rôle of a clergyman. In England a curate of the Establishment rejoices—at least we hope he does—in the name of Herbert Spencer. A Nonconformist minister is named Shakespeare. Grace is a spiritual power, but unfortunately there is no special grace in a name.

According to a Sunday newspaper, the late Major Armstrong, the boy Jacoby, and Lord Northcliffe "appeared" recently at a spiritualistic seance in Norwood. Norwood is a respectable suburb. It affords some indication of life and thought on "the other side" to note that Northcliffe is still mainly concerned about titles and the future of his newspapers.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

October 15, Glasgow; October 22, Preston; November 5, Stratford Town Hall; November 12, Birmingham; November 19, Plymouth; November 26, Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool; December 3, Stockport; December 10, Leicester; December 17, Watford.

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.

VIATOR.—Thanks. Next week.

C. F. BUDGE.—In Greece as elsewhere morals and theology were mixed. There was, however, a distinct move towards their separation, as in the school of Epicurus and to a smaller extent in some of the Socratic dialogues.

MR. F. A. PHIPSON writes us concerning the story of Queen Victoria's alleged handing of a Bible to an African chief with the remark that it was the source of England's greatness, a story to which Mr. Gould recently referred in these columns. Mr. Phipson says that a son of an African chief visited this country some years ago and declared the incident happened to his father. We have never heard before of the incident, and would not take the word of the African unless we had evidence in support. And in this case the truth of the report was emphatically denied by a Court official.

A. GILLAM.—We cannot tell you what the Edinburgh Branch is doing, but like yourself we should like to see the members more active than they are. If we can do anything to help the movement in the city we shall be glad to do so.

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

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

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

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

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Roundel.

LAY him low in the grave,
He that was glad to go,
He that was strong and brave,
Lay him low.

He that had loved life so,
When joy surged up as a wave
And broke into a foam of snow;

He that did never crave
More than the ebb and flow
Of blisses the kind gods gave.
Lay him low.

J. E. S.

J. W. Gott Fund.

It is never a very pleasant task to ask for money, but so far as ready and cheerful response can go to lighten the job one may rely upon *Freethinker* readers. As will be seen, the sum asked for has been more than subscribed, and I have to thank those who have given. I do so on behalf of Mr. Gott as well as my own. The subscription cannot undo the evil done, but it will at least show the bigots that Freethinkers are the last people in the world to be dismayed by persecution, or frightened by finding against them social prestige and vested interests.

The news from Mr. Gott, I regret to say, is not very good. He is not making progress at present, and some complications are threatened which may necessitate an operation, and with his complaint that is not a simple matter. However, he is now going into hospital so that his case may be watched more carefully. We have no doubt the bigots will rejoice. Christian love and charity has generally in this connection immortalized itself as the most brutal and the most savage thing in history; but others will only take the whole matter as one more inducement to work for the ending of one of the most disastrous superstitions that have ever darkened human life.

Previously acknowledged: £47 6s. 9d.

J. B., £1; W. Widdup, 5s.; I. S., 10s.; J. Tipping, 10s.; T. Cox, 2rs.; F. Wood, 10s.; Mrs. S. M. Peacock, £1; J. Davie, £5; J. G. Finlay, 2s. 6d.; Greevz Fysher, £1; F. Billington Grieg, £2; Alan Tyndal, 2s. 6d.; C. Johnson, £1; A. J. Fincken, £2; A. Harden, £1; E. Oliver, £2; J. J. (Glasgow), 2s. 6d.; Mancunian, 10s.; H. Jessop, £2 2s.; M. H., 10s.; C. C. Dove, £1; C. Banks, 10s.; H. Irving, 10s.; V. Neuberg, 3s. 6d.; A few members of the Stockport Branch, 8s.; H. Dawson, 4s.; Mrs. C. M. Renton, £1 10s.; W. Ross, 10s.; E. Truelove, £1; W. Hopper, £2; T. S., 5s.; F. T. Dant, 5s.; J. Partridge, 10s.; M. & E., £2 2s.; I. Silver, 2s. 6d.; G. F. H. McCluskey, £2; Mrs. C. Shepherd, 2s. 6d.; G. Attewell, £1; I. W. Willis, 5s.; Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Rosetti, 4s.; R. Dayton, 2s. 6d.; J. Fothergill, 5s.; S. Hicks, £1; F. Shaller, 10s.; H. W. Davey, 2s. 6d.; A. Ladenburg, 2s. 6d.; A. B., 1s.; W. Leat, 2s. 6d.

Per Manchester Branch N.S.S.: R. English, 2s.; E. Jackson, 1s.; R. Power, 1s.; J. Crampton, 2s. 6d.; Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Rosetti, 5s.; S. Cohen, 5s.; S. H. Hampson, 5s.; G. Bailey, 5s.; X. Y. Z., 10s.; Dr. J. Laing, £1; H. H. Wignall, 2s. 6d.; F. E. M., 5s.; Mr. and Mrs. Mapp and family, 5s.; H. I. B., 1s. Total £89 19s. 9d.

This Fund is now closed. CHAPMAN COHEN.

Sugar Plums.

To-day (October 15) Mr. Cohen will lecture twice in Glasgow. The morning meeting will be in the City Hall Saloon at 11.30, and in the evening in the large City Hall, entrance in the Candleriggs. As the latter hall has a seating capacity of about 3,000 we trust that our friends will see to it that the meeting is as widely advertised as possible. Next Sunday (October 22) Mr. Cohen will lecture in Preston. This is a very religious centre, and as there have been no Freethought lectures there for many years the meeting should attract attention.

The Glasgow Branch holds its annual Social and Dance on November 1 at the Charing Cross Halls. Tickets may be had from the secretary, C. Little, 16, Cathkin Avenue, Rutherglen.

Some time ago it was suggested to the Executive that a Discussion Class should be formed at or under the auspices of headquarters. Having considered the matter the Executive decided to give the matter a trial, and the first meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 24 at 7

o'clock. The purpose of these meetings is not to provide "lectures," but to engage in the profitable discussion of some of the deeper aspects of Freethought and its relation to other aspects of life. For the present the meetings will be held at the National Secular Society's Offices, 62 Far-rington Street, but it is hoped that the gatherings will soon warrant the taking of a more commodious building.

Mr. Cohen has promised to open the first discussion on a subject that will be announced later. The Executive, meanwhile will be glad if those who are interested in the project will do their best to make it a complete success, and so lead to an enlargement of the original idea. The meeting will be open to all, whether they are members of the N.S.S. or not.

Mr. Joseph McCabe, who has just returned from a visit to Crete, has prepared a new course of lantern lectures on "The Evolution of Man in the Present State of Science," partly based on his recent experiences, and the first will be given at Caxton Hall, Westminster, on Monday, October 16, at 8 p.m.

On Saturday (October 21) at 6 p.m. the Manchester Branch is holding a dance and social in Dickenson Road, Rusholme. There will be a good selection of songs, and a very enjoyable evening is anticipated.

To-day (October 15) at 7 p.m. Mr. V. J. Hands will lecture in the Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street, Birmingham. His subject, "Does the World Need Religion?" should attract a large audience and provoke plenty of discussion if any orthodox Christians can be induced to attend.

This evening in Katharine Street, Croydon, at 6.30, Mr. A. D. McLaren will speak on "The Triumphs of the Faith." There is an excellent field to be worked here, and local Freethinkers are asked to assist in making these meetings a success.

Pagan and Christian Civilization

IV.

(Continued from page 645.)

To judge the private morals of the Pagan subjects of the Empire from the descriptions of Suetonius and Lampridius is even more absurd than it would be to portray the domestic life of Christian England from the reports of the Divorce Court. The notion that the poor Greeks and Romans were sunk in wickedness and vice is a calumnious legend which has been assiduously propagated in the interest of ecclesiastical history, and is at the present day a commonplace of pulpit learning. If Pagans, in ignorance or malice, slandered the assemblies and love-feasts of the early Christians, it will be allowed that Christian divines of later ages have by their fable of Pagan corruption, wreaked a more than ample revenge. Prof. J. B. Bury. *Introduction to "The Amazing Emperor Heliogabalus,"* by J. S. Hay, p. 28.

The wickedness and corruption of Paganism is the dark background invented by Christian historians to heighten the supposed virtues of the early Christians, who are claimed to have been the first to introduce moral ideas to the notice of the Pagans, or rather the first to practise them.

Neither Epictetus the slave, nor Marcus Aurelius the Emperor had anything to learn in the knowledge or practice of morality from the Christians; the early Christians had a great deal to learn from them in the matter of tolerance and charity.

Eventually Paganism was crushed out by the Christians, and Christianity reigned in its stead. The Middle Ages were distinctively Christian ages; no unbeliever would have been tolerated for a moment in those times. Are the Middle Ages renowned for

virtue and morality? They are not. Dr. Knighton observes of these times, in the chapter devoted to "The Good Old Times," in his *Struggles for Life* (p. 160):—

Men's lives and properties were then exposed to gross violence and injustice. The neighbouring baron might swoop upon any unprotected citizen or husbandman, reputed to be rich, and despoil him of his goods, perhaps of his life, if resistance were made. The frequent wars of the barons, the one with the other, brought rapine, outrage and death to the doors of the lower classes as constant visitors. There was no redress, there was no compensation. To suffer and to die, if need be, was the lot of the poorer classes. To oppress and to fight were the daily recreations of the nobler portions of society..... Hallowed rites were associated with immoral practices; deeds of rapine, injustice and cruelty were prefaced by acts of devotion. The vilest characters breathed out their aspirations to the Deity and the Virgin. Multitudes were punctilious in the observance of the ritual of the Church, who were totally ignorant of the first principles of morality, or the elementary teaching or duties of Christianity. The whole formed a state of society the most fearful to contemplate.

Good old times indeed. These are the times which the Roman Catholic historians are always looking back so longingly to. It is these historians who have invented the myth of the "Golden Age," when the Church held undisputed rule, which has imposed upon so many who should know better. Many of our Labour writers and leaders firmly hold this belief, than which nothing can be more false. The historian, Cotter Morison, declares that:—

Taking them broadly, the ages of Faith were emphatically the ages of crime, of gross and scandalous wickedness, of cruelty, and, in a word, of immorality. And it is noteworthy that in proportion as we recede backward from the present age, and return into the ages of Faith, we find that the crime and the sin become denser and blacker.¹

This, remarks the same historian, is a remarkable result, if morality is so dependent on Christianity, as is commonly supposed. When all men believed, we should have found a devout people living in the fear of the Lord and the judgment, and crushing down the lusts of the flesh:—

But we find nothing of the kind. On the contrary, we find a state of things to which our imaginations are scarcely able to do justice in these comparatively tame and moral days. A progressive improvement has taken place in man's conduct, both public and private, but it has coincided not with an increase, but with a decay of faith. This, beyond any question, is the most moral age which the world has seen; and it is as certainly the least believing age since Christianity became the religion of the West. The inference is plain, that Christianity has not been so favourable to morality as is usually assumed.²

So much for the assumed superiority of Christian over Pagan morality. What about Pagan civilization? Let us see.

The Roman Empire at the advent of Christianity was at the very zenith of its glory and power. Rome had been watching a crescendo that had mounted with the ages. "It was a wonderful and a beautiful age, full of colour, full of the joy of living." Says Mr. Hay:—

Rome was at the apex of her power, the empire was consolidated, the Temple of Janus was closed; the Pax Romana reigned supreme, and with it order and government in the remotest corner of that vast dominion.

Rome itself was filled with magnificent buildings, public baths, theatres, temples, palaces, government

¹ J. C. Morison, *The Service of Man*, p. 88.

² *Ibid*, pp. 83-89.

buildings, and adorned with multitudes of marble statues. The Empire abounded with great cities which followed her example. The ruins of them excite our admiration and amazement even to-day. Connecting these cities :—

Magnificent roads, which modern nations have rarely equalled and never surpassed, intersected the entire Empire, and relays of post-horses enabled the voyager to proceed with an astonishing rapidity.³

That was the condition of the civilized world under Paganism. More than a thousand years later—in the fifteenth century—this was the condition under Christianity :—

The surface of the Continent was for the most part covered with pathless forests, here and there it was dotted with monasteries and towns. In the lowlands and along the river-courses were fens, sometimes hundreds of miles in extent, exhaling their pestiferous miasms, and spreading agues far and wide. In Paris and London the houses were of wood daubed with clay and thatched with straw or reeds. They had no windows, and, until the invention of the saw-mill, very few had wooden floors. The luxury of a carpet was unknown; some straw, scattered in the room, supplied its place. There were no chimneys; the smoke of the ill-fed, cheerless fire escaped through a hole in the roof. In such habitations there was scarcely any protection from the weather.....The streets had no sewers; they were without pavement or lamps. After nightfall the chamber-shutters were thrown open, and slops unceremoniously emptied down, to the discomfort of the wayfarer tracking his path through the narrow streets with his dismal lantern in his hand.⁴

Professor Max Müller tells us that :—

Even in Paris no street was paved before 1185. In London, Holborn was first paved in 1417, and Smithfield in 1614, while Berlin was without paved streets far into the seventeenth century. No houses had windows of glass before the twelfth century, and as late as the fourteenth century anything might be thrown out of the window at Paris, after three times calling out "*Gare l'eau!*"⁵

Who would not rather have lived under Pagan rule than Christian?

W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

"The Parson and the Sex."

AN article appeared in a recent issue of the *Evening News* in which a reverend gentleman by the name of Stanley B. James endeavoured to show that the fact that church congregations are becoming more and more restricted to feminine worshippers is no reflection upon the power of the Church and its Gospel. The reverend gentleman, in support of his contention, asserts that the idea of women's intellectual inferiority is passing away into the Limbo of archaic pseudodoxy, and that it must be taken as an indication of their mental calibre that women are the mainstay of that particular brand of religion called Christianity.

Now I very much doubt that the Rev. Stanley B. James really entertains such an exalted opinion of feminine faculties. It is much more likely that he desires to secure some implied recommendation for his own wares by boosting the good taste and acumen of his best customers. It is certainly quite a new fashion for Christian clergymen to do homage at the shrine of Hypatia. Christianity is an Asiatic religion, and its teachings with regard to women are appropriately Oriental, for anyone who reads the Bible—right from

the amusing little fable about Adam and Jehovah's afterthought, Eve—can see that its self-styled "inspired" writers certainly regarded women from a point of view altogether out of sympathy with modern feministic principles.

I am aware that it is now the rage to exaggerate feminine qualities, particularly so with a large section of the Penny Press which, for obvious commercial reasons, holds it politic to sing the praises of a vast concourse of potential new supporters, but although it is not my intention to add my voice to the crazy chorus, which is merely a hectic reaction from the narrow views of woman's function in human society which formerly prevailed, yet I will at any rate say that I do not think that the majority of women would be deceived by Mr. James' transparent diplomacy. The truth is that the rapid falling away from church attendance on the part of the male section of the community constitutes a great and increasing menace to Christianity. The Church has recognized and bewailed this fact for some time past entirely without avail, and now that it has given up hope of regaining the support of its former male adherents it is doing its utmost to encourage and flatter its remaining members by indulging in a little judicious feminism.

In his article—which he aptly enough entitles "*Priest-Ridden Women*"—the clerical writer endeavours to account for the hold which priests and parsons are popularly supposed to have upon women by maintaining that this phenomenon is no more remarkable than the hero-worship which falls to the lot of—handsome matinée idols! But it is quite certain that there is no comparison between the two instances—except, perhaps, in the well-known cases of the fond, elderly, husband-hunting spinsters whose delight it is to knit socks and comforters for the parish curate.

No! Mr. James, women admire courage, strength, élan, and bearing in men, qualities which are conspicuous by their absence in the average parson, and in a race for feminine appreciation the latter would be a long way down the field behind say the soldier and the actor. The fact is that women are much more fascinated by the mysticism of religion and the glamour of religious ceremony than they are by the personalities of religious functionaries, many of whom would not come up to the requirements of a boarding-house "slavey" as far as real manliness is concerned.

Although the attitude of the Christian Church from its inception until very recently has authorized and encouraged the idea that women are entirely unfitted to play any prominent part in the world outside their own narrow domestic and social circles and should be content in the rôle of patient, submissive, stay-at-home help-mates to their men-folk, yet it is hardly surprising, in view of feminine psychology, that in spite of their awakening opposition to that tradition women should still constitute the chief support which props up the crumbling edifice of an out-worn religion.

Women are well known to be conventional and conservative, very reluctant to break away from time-established ideas and customs. They are also noted for a blind loyalty which does not always depend upon the worthiness of the thing or person which commands their loyalty. They do not possess the mental elasticity and adaptability or partiality for intellectual speculation which is, generally speaking, characteristic of men, but prefer a set of immutable, cut-and-dried opinions, prejudices and dogmas upon which they rely for guidance when confronted by any philosophical problem. It is also not unlikely that their constitutional timidity renders them specially amenable to such theological thunderings as the Hell-fire and Eternal Punishment of Christianity. Bearing these traits in mind then, it is not to be wondered at that professors of theology have taken advantage of a

³ Lecky, *European Morals*, Vol. I., p. 234.

⁴ Draper, *The Conflict Between Religion and Science*, pp. 264-265.

⁵ *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1885.

natural weakness or susceptibility in feminine psychology to make women the chief instruments for postponing the demise of that hotch-potch of archaic dogma, Pagan superstition and hollow ceremonialism which trades under the name of Christianity. This religion, boosted and belauded by a vast horde of professional advocates and backed by various forms of vested interest, has managed to entwine itself like a great choking creeper round the whole fabric of Western civilization, whilst the said professional advocates, with their customary shameless impudence, claim that it is the fabric of civilization which is being supported by the "creeper" rather than admit that it is the creeper of State-endowed superstition which is the burden and parasite upon the edifice. Thus for some centuries we have been at a position where society has accepted Christianity at its own false valuation which makes the word "religion" appear synonymous with "goodness" and "respectability," so that even now no one can openly attack it without incurring a certain amount of social odium and prejudice—a consideration which counts for much with women, who by virtue of biological necessity are social before they are philosophical.

Besides, it must not be forgotten that sexual appetite plays a large part in an emotional, irrational religion such as Christianity. The god of the Christians, boiled down to its essence and divested of its mystical trappings, is a man—a man who has filled many gloomy convents with his deluded sex-degenerate "brides." I wonder whether this is a manifestation of the "subtle and rapid mental processes of the woman" to which the Rev. Stanley James pays tribute in his article. As he also states that women are prone to "prostrate themselves before objects of devotion," a frame of mind which is the sublimation of Christianity, a religion which finds its power "not so much in reasoned discourse as in silent sacrament and pictured symbols," I do not think that any avowed misogynist could slander the female sex to a greater extent, or that any Atheist could more conclusively show how far Christianity is sunk in, and relies on, stupefying emotionalism. For, whilst he finds his only hope and consolation in women's, or some women's, sentimentality, blind devotion and irrationality, he writes with contempt of men's "laborious rational processes."

But the reverend gentleman should not rest under any delusion about the future. An ever increasing number of women are taking advantage of their freer scope and expanded sphere to enquire critically into subjects which they formerly regarded as taboo and about which they were in a state of, by no means blissful, ignorance. The sand-bedded foundations of the Jerry-built castle of theological humbug are fast being undermined by the advancing tide of Free-thought and education, and when the Rev. Stanley James asserts that the presence of so many women in every church congregation does not prove the failure of organized Christianity, he is merely avoiding the issue. What he has to face is the fact that the *absence* of so many *men* (and women) does prove that there is something rotten in the state of commercialized supernaturalism.

H. C. WESTON.

Some feeble and hasty efforts were made for the defence of Jerusalem (1187 A.D.); but in the space of fourteen days a victorious army drove back the sallies of the besieged, planted their engines, opened the wall to the breadth of fifteen cubits, applied their scaling-ladders, and erected on the breach twelve banners of the prophet and the Sultan. It was in vain that a bare-foot procession of the Queen, the women, and the monks, implored the Son of God to save his tomb and his inheritance from impious violation.—Gibbon, "Decline and Fall."

Book Chat.

LITERATURE AND THE WORKER.

To anyone who has the leisure and the inclination I would suggest as an interesting study an inquiry as to what precisely are the bookish proclivities of our English proletariat. It is always difficult to get at averages in such matters. I do not know that lawyers, parsons, or doctors are a bit more interested in history, poetry and fiction than are grocers, bakers or bricklayers. The least intelligent man I ever came across was a bank-manager, while the most intelligent was a chimney-sweeper, a man who had the economic and social history of England at his fingers' ends, and was besides an excellent connoisseur of the more recondite qualities of our poetry and prose. Naturally enough the working man who has become conscious of the class-struggle will give most of his time to the history and philosophy of the Labour movement. If he is just a little contemptuous of what he would call belletristic triflers it is because he has so little time in which to learn the many things that seem to him vastly more important. When he can see his way out of the economic wood I expect that he will revolutionize the world of letters. Literature and art are no monopoly of the educated class. We have proof of this in an institution like the "Old Vic.," and further proof, if we need it, in the fine performances of the Leeds players recruited from factory-workers.

There is, however, one sort of literature the worker does not take kindly to. It is the moral uplift business, the beauty and holiness of work stunt, the Samuel Smiles glorification of the industrious and loyal apprentice, the self-made man. We all know that work is a good thing if we do not get too much of it, and if we are able to choose the job we are best fitted for. But the curious thing is that those who talk with emphasis and vigour about the beauty of work are usually those who are contented to live on the labour of others. Tolstoi and Ruskin are more impressive on this tedious subject than old William Cobbett and the late Mr. F. E. Green, who both knew what hard work was, and were contented to leave evangelical admonition out of the account.

The obvious reflections I have set down above were suggested by a little anthology of prose and verse, entitled *Literature and Labour* (Dent's Kings Treasuries Series, 1s. 6d. net). It begins with an account of that week of strenuous work, the Creation, and ends with a description of one of the vigorous efforts of Sentimental Tommy. Another selection from the Bible, this time from the New Testament, the parable of the workers in the vineyard, will not, I am afraid, commend itself to those of my readers who are jealous of the rights of labour. It will be remembered that one of the workmen objects emphatically when a man who has worked only one hour, and that in the cool of the evening, is paid as much as one who had worked hard throughout the whole day. The master, a typical employer and landowner, is angry when his capricious action is questioned. Is he to be told that he cannot do what he likes with his own? The Jesus of the Gospels was so little of an economist that he didn't even dream of a Trades Union rate of wages.

While the workman is sure to be disappointed if he expects to find a sympathetic treatment of the claims and rights of labour in the Old or New Testament, it may perhaps surprise him to know that he will get no light from that typical aristocrat William Shakespeare. The anthologist was hard put to it to find something from the Stratford playwright to put alongside Ruskin and Carlyle. He can give us nothing more apposite than the scene in *Richard II.* (Act iii. Scene iv.), where the gardeners discuss the affairs of the realm in terms of their own handicraft. It is a pretty bit of allegory, but it has nothing to do with labour. It would have been no less effective if the criticism of the king had been conveyed to his queen through a more aristocratic source.

There is no use blinking the plain fact that Shakespeare

had a whole-hearted contempt for what he called the "paltry, servile, abject drudges." It is absurd to say that he could not have chosen subjects that would have brought out the nobler qualities of the common man. He had such subjects in Greek and Roman history—he had Plutarch before him, a writer who did not find the good qualities on one side only—he had also the chronicles of his own country. I have no doubt that he made it his business as well as pleasure to please his aristocratic patrons; but if he had not shared their contempt for the tradesman and manual worker he would have shown that honest diligence in work and sturdy independence, courage and intelligence, were the outstanding qualities of the common people. The only lower class he seems to have any respect for is that of the personal servant whose one over-praised virtue is a dog-like devotion to the master who keeps him, or rather, permits him to live.

Chaucer was not blind to the sterling qualities of the common folk, and he had a sympathetic ear for their suffering. William Langland, a large-hearted democrat, was a special pleader in poetry for the poor ploughman and the exploited tiller of the soil. The great aristocrat statesman Sir Thomas More was a more sympathetic and more broad-minded student of human nature than the plebeian dramatist whom Coleridge in fatuous idolatry characterized as "myriad-minded." What is more, there were play-writers of Shakespeare's time who were able to look at human nature from the standpoint of the common man. Robert Greene made a hero out of a sturdy pound-keeper who stands up even against a king, and finally refuses to accept knighthood at his hands. Shakespeare, indeed, has no place in an anthology of democratic literature, his place is with those who hold that the "true characteristics of the people are accessibility to flattery and ingratitude to their benefactors."

Naturally there are a number of writers in all periods who take pride in recognizing the good qualities and virtues of the people, and our anthologist brings together some of the finest expressions of their ideas and sentiments. But he leans a little too much to the negative side, to the side of obedience, loyalty, unthinking, non-constructive labour. He does not quote this from Shelley:—

The Man

Of virtuous soul commands not, nor obeys;
Power, like a desolating pestilence,
Pollutes whate'er it touches.

Or this from Stevenson:—

To know what you prefer instead of humbly saying
"Amen" to what the world tells you you ought to prefer
is to have kept your soul alive.

The only valuable anthology of exhortation to labour nowadays would be based on Walt Whitman's *Resist Much, Obey Little*.

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

Correspondence.

WAR AND ARBITRATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—There is no reason why the proposed organization of citizens on an "arbitration or we won't fight" basis should be confined to Church members. Freethinkers might well have some organization of their own which they could turn to, and my reference to the Churches was merely intended as an illustration. This, of course, is a matter in connection with which I do not intend to raise any general political or religious problems. My sole concern is to rouse the peoples of the world and to offer something practical which the individual can do for the cause of goodwill. I believe that issue can be found in a "No war service unless the issue has been submitted to International Court of Justice or other body for arbitration." I would be glad if you would publish the following reply to objections which covers most of the points raised in your interesting and informed comment:—

REPLY TO SOME OBJECTIONS.

1.—That the next war will be waged in the air by a small force highly trained. The "Arbitrate First" men

would be no hindrance in such a case, for they only take a stand *when their own government refuses to arbitrate*. To assume anything else is to confuse the suggestion with a non-resistance policy advocated by some of the extreme pacifists. It has no resemblance to the conscientious objector position which most people believe would encourage military aggression. At this stage of human development non-resistance is not possible. But if the Churches', Freethinkers' and ex-Service Men's Associations in all countries organized their followers on the definite pledge of no support for any action which had not received the support of the International Court of Justice, how difficult would be the position of a civilized government which attempted to carry on a war with these recalcitrants within its own borders. War might be started in the air; it could not be carried on without the assistance of naval and military force on a considerable scale.

2.—Reliance on pledges useless because they have not been effective in the past. There is no ground for this assumption so far as individual pledges backed by organized power of Church are concerned, for never in the past has such a scheme been put in operation. There is no parallel in general declarations against war which have been made in all countries at all times. In the past, no International Court of Justice had been set up, round which men could rally and feel assured of fair treatment.

3.—That Germany should start first. As a matter of fact the strongest point of the scheme is that *it does not* require an equal development of pacifist opinion in all countries as the country with the greatest number of Arbitrate First men *is in no way weakened*, for they would go forward at once in the event of the other party to the dispute refusing to arbitrate. The scheme would of course be put into operation in all countries.

4.—Objection by military people on the ground of the effect on the discipline of Army and Navy. This would be natural and desirable in so far as it was a check on bellicose governments, and only such governments would find it a check—the others would be willing to arbitrate. Such an objection is in fact a real tribute to the effectiveness of the suggestion—that it would make organized warfare very difficult for aggressive governments but not difficult for governments acting on the defensive and willing to arbitrate.

D. A. PEAT.

EVOLUTION AND DARWINISM.

SIR,—I have followed with much interest the correspondence between Mr. Mann and Mr. Lord, all the more because some months ago I had the pleasure of hearing Mr. C. E. Joad lecture on "Vitalism Re-Stated," and he put his case uncommonly well. I am not prepared to say that I unreservedly accept his conclusions—but I do venture to suggest that belief in the Life-Force need not necessarily be "reactionary" in its effect—that depends on the individual. It does not profess to be a moral guide, nor a "loving providence"—it is surely rather an intellectual concept that has no actual bearing upon conduct. The belief in a Life-Force would hardly influence one's course of action in practical matters, that is the function of religions as Freethinkers in this country know to their cost.

May I take this opportunity of also expressing my interest in the letter from "Mancurian" concerning the *Daily Herald*, of which I have for two or more years been a regular and attentive reader. No one appreciates more sincerely than I do the untiring and unselfish efforts of Mr. Lansbury on behalf of the workers, but one deprecates his narrow religious outlook; perhaps Mr. Hamilton Fyfe will prove more progressive in this direction.

C. M. RENTON.

SIR,—Mr. Mann's explanation of Darwinism is exactly what I thought it would be. The theory has its possibilities, and is not finally refutable; but think what it involves. Life as we find it to-day becomes the result of a series of accidents. We are able to reason out things only because accidental selection, by some unexplained process, produced a mind. Reason itself revolts against the idea, especially when contrasted with creative evolution.

Lamarckian evolution explains the causation of the variation of all living things by deducing (in a similar manner to Darwin) that use and disuse or functional

adaptation are the factors. Darwin himself admitted that use and disuse were minor factors in evolution. It certainly seems reasonable to say that if disuse can account for the rudimentary organs, then use, provided there is something to begin with, can build up an organism. We at any rate know that we can "put up a muscle," and that a child walks upright only after repeatedly trying to do so. Use and disuse then are to creative evolutionists the main methods of evolution, and natural selection the minor method.

Mr. Mann must know that the evidence for Lamarckian evolution, formerly called Functional Adaptation and now Creative Evolution, can no more be disproved than can that for Circumstantial Selection. That mind is the product of a series of accidents I certainly cannot believe. Mind must be at the beginning of biological evolution.

The giraffe offers a suitable contrast between the two methods of evolution. Mr. Shaw points out in *Back to Methuselah* that granted the accidental selections be numerous enough, a long neck might have been produced:—

Without the intervention of any stock breeder, human or divine, and without will, purpose, design, or even consciousness beyond the blind will to satisfy hunger. It is true that blind will, being in effect a will to live, gives away the whole case; but still, as compared to the open-eyed intelligent wanting and trying of Lamarck, the Darwinian process may be described as a chapter of accidents. (*Methuselah* p. 40.)

I suppose Mr. Mann realizes that Darwinism followed to its logical conclusion means that his writings are merely the product of a series of accidents. May I be allowed the pleasure of telling him they are not. The fact that I am an opponent of Darwinism and still an evolutionist will also show him that my incapacities are not what they seemed to him.

I have yet to meet the theologian or the religious who identify the "Life Force" with their God, but know many of them who accept Darwinism. (Shaw puts forward the reason as to why Darwinism appealed to them in *Methuselah*.)

I see no reason why Shaw should "turn round and rend his deluded followers," though the fact that a majority hold a certain view is always sufficient to arouse mistrust of that view.

P.S.—Perhaps Mr. Mann would find it interesting to re-study Paley's evidences for design in the light of the creative evolution theory. Paley was much nearer the truth than we were wont to allow, and his theory broke down because his personal god could not be proved to exist.

HERBERT LORD.

Beaver!

It is irresistible; I murmur the word to myself, when I come across a "gentleman with a duster"—but bad boys pronounce it audibly, and the old party, if he is sensible, merely smiles, or ignores them, and no harm comes. But this puts some of us in mind of a Hebrew preacher in the face of the irreverent youngsters of long ago. His tribal god took sanguinary vengeance upon bad manners, though it is not related that the prophet's baldness was ever cured. How different the whole affair looks if we alter the setting. Suppose an infuriated modern Beaver set two fierce dogs on to maul the brats who had offended his dignity. Can we not imagine him in the dock, and the magistrate, who had read the Bible story of his god's doings on the previous Sunday, committing the prisoner for trial as a brute who had been guilty of a barbarous act?

TAB CAN.

No worship was equally popular among the lower orders of the population in the capital: When the senate ordered the temples of Isis constructed within the ring-wall to be pulled down, no labourer ventured to lay the first hand on them, and the consul Lucius Paullus was himself obliged to apply the first stroke of the axe; a wager might be laid, that the more loose any woman was, the more piously she worshipped Isis.—*Theodore Mommsen, "History of Rome."*

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.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W.9, three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Mr. A. Hyatt, "An Evening with Poets and Authors."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.2): 11, H. W. Nevinson, "In a Bankrupt City."

OUTDOOR.

CROYDON (Katharine Street): 6.30, Mr. A. D. McLaren, "The Triumphs of the Faith."

PECKHAM RYE.—11.15, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, A Lecture.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street): 7, Mr. V. J. Hands, "Does the World Need Religion?"

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (City Hall Saloon): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 11.30, "Is Materialism Dead?" 6.30 (City Hall), "The Challenge of Freethought to the Churches."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Major C. H. Douglas, "The Misdirection of Effort."

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (2 Central Road, Duncan Street, Shop Assistants' Institute): 7, Rev. H. F. Runacres, "The Value of Mysticism to Society." Questions and Discussion invited. Seats free.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Rusholme Public Hall, over Free Library, Dickenson Road): Mr. George Whitehead, 3, "Why Man Made God"; 6.30, "How Man Made God."

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (The Newcastle Socialist Society's premises, 23 Royal Arcade): Discussion Circle. The subject for next Tuesday's discussion (October 17) at 7.30 will be "Freethought and the Poets," to be opened by Mrs. R. J. Atkinson.

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