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Views and Opinions.

Freethinkers and the Election.

With the issue of this number of the *Freethinker* the British public will be in the midst of the excitement—even though there may be small chance of their approaching the profit—of a general election. Considerably over a thousand self-sacrificing gentlemen, each vying with the other in the purity of his purpose and the nobility of his aims, will be imploring the electorate to inflict upon them the burden and the expense of attending Parliament on their behalf. The purity of the candidates equals the purity of the Bishops who, in Dean Swift's time, were appointed by the Government to the Irish bishoprics. And looking at the outcome one is inclined to adopt the Dean's conclusion that between the elections and the actual occupancy of office the elected ones are quietly murdered and others of a less desirable type take their places. Personally, our interest in the election is slight, and if it were otherwise this would not be the place in which to discuss purely political issues. But we Freethinkers are members of the State—a circumstance which is apparently forgotten by many Christians, who seem to regard us as visitors here only on sufferance—and our votes will be asked for just as though we had never given birth to a thought morally or mentally above an ordinary dissenting chapel. We are citizens of a great State when a candidate is asking us for something; we are mere nobodies, or somebodies that are properly subject to disabling regulations, or special restrictions once we have helped to put Christians or half-hearted Liberals in a position of power. And for this state of things Freethinkers have themselves partly to blame.

* * *

The Blasphemy Laws.

Now there are at least two questions, vitally affecting all Freethinkers, which trench on the field of politics, and which cannot be finally settled without appeal to political effort. The first of these is the law against blasphemy, both statute and common law. These laws were devised in the interests of Christianity, they are maintained in the interests of Christianity, and their effect is to give a particular body of Christians a privilege and a protection such as is possessed by no other party in the State. Blasphemy

originally meant in this country teaching anything that was opposed to the dogmas of the reigning Christian sect. It has now come to mean saying anything about Christianity in such a way as to offend a Christian. The first plan involved bigotry plus honesty. The current plan involves bigotry plus hypocrisy. As they become more "liberal"—which usually means as they find it impossible to exercise their old intolerance—Christians try to achieve the end they have always aimed at in a more underhand manner. But the Blasphemy Laws remain, however disguised, laws against opinion. The fact that you cannot at law blaspheme any religion but the Christian religion, and if the matter be pressed, any form of Christianity but the established one, is proof of this. And therefore the Freethinker has a very plain and just claim to urge on every candidate who solicits his vote. Find out whether he is in favour of the repeal of these survivals of religious intolerance or not. Make it plain that your vote and the vote of all whom you can influence depend upon his answer. It is not a mere theoretical matter. The laws are actually enforced, fighting them has cost the Freethought Party thousands of pounds, and at the present moment one man is lying dangerously ill as a consequence of serving the infamous sentence of nine months' imprisonment for having spoken disrespectfully of some of the idiotic stories that go to make up the Christian mythology. If a Freethinker's vote and influence is worth having it should be worth while politicians promising to deal justly with those who do not believe in the current religion. A vote is about the only thing the average politician troubles himself about. It is for Freethinkers to say whether they will allow themselves to be treated as so much negligible voting power or not. They will never get justice till they show themselves strong enough to demand it. Make the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws a test question with all candidates.

* * *

Secular Education.

Secular education is another test question. We have had the spectacle of the retiring minister of education, who, one suspects, really believes in the principle of secular education, making bargains with the Churches, which mean the still firmer planting of religious instruction in the State schools. One may do Mr. Fisher the credit of believing that he would have acted up to a plain principle of justice and common-sense had the political conditions been more favourable. And had all Freethinkers throughout the country done what they ought to have done and kept this question to the front in their political fights, Mr. Fisher—or any other education minister—would realize that this question is not the mere hobby of a handful of cranks, but a principle that is held by a considerable body of thoughtful men and women, who if they were so inclined could exercise an influence extending beyond the power of their own individual vote when the time of election comes round. Candidates should be forced to give an answer to this question. It is one of simple justice to all sections of the public, and it is, moreover,

an act in the best interests of education, of the child, and the future of the country. All over the civilized world it is found necessary, sooner or later, to keep the priest out of the schools. It is the plain business of the State, so far as it interferes in the matter of educating the child, to see that it is brought up to use its intelligence in the best possible way; sectarian religious education admittedly does not do this, and it should be left, where it is given, to those parents who desire it, under the influence of those priests who feel that without it they will lose their hold on the rising generation.

* * *

Religion and the State.

There are other questions that enter more or less directly into the political field. There is, for example, the whole question of the relation of the State to religious organizations. The trend of civilization here is towards the secularization of the State. This is so general that it may almost take rank as a law of social development. We have long since passed the stage when any one religion can with any pretence of truthfulness be described as the religion of the country. The greater the growth of a people in civilization the more divergent become their opinions concerning religion, and while a growing number put it on one side altogether, even with those who profess to believe there is hopeless divergence as to what constitutes religious truth. The State cannot patronize *all* religions, that would be too absurd. And so by the sheer pressure of events it is driven more and more to complete neutrality. There is not the slightest justification to-day why our civic and public life should be mixed up with religious ceremonies. It cannot be claimed that they make the public services less corrupt or more efficient than they would be otherwise. It cannot be urged that religious ceremonies are there because the people as a whole believe in them. They do not. Their persistence stands for no more than the tyranny of a section of the population which maintains its hold because they stand for a condition of things that belongs to the past, and the removal of which is prevented by the inertia of the mass.

* * *

Questions for Candidates.

Here, then, are two questions that should be put to every candidate in the field:—

1. Are you in favour of the abolition of the Common and Statute Law of Blasphemy, thus abolishing the distinction between religious and civil offences, and leaving offences against public order and decency to be dealt with under the ordinary law which applies to all citizens alike?
2. Are you in favour of the complete neutrality of the State in the matter of education in all State supported schools, leaving religious instruction to those parents who desire it for their children, and to the Churches whose business it is to impart it, thus confining the State to the giving of such education as is recognized as "secular" in the official code?

There are other questions that might be added, but the above two are the questions of the moment. And in neither of them is there the slightest suggestion of an injustice to anyone, no matter what his religious opinion may be. We are not asking the State to persecute or to hinder any religious opinion. We are not asking that the State in abolishing religious instruction in the schools shall teach children that religion is false or dangerous, or to say anything about it. We are only asking that the State shall not, with money levied from all, teach the religious opinions of a section, or place before children as absolute truth opinions which are matters of the liveliest controversy outside the schools. Injustice is done by the maintenance of the

present law and practice—not by their abolition. We do not ask for any special privileges for Freethinkers or for special penalties for believers. We are only opposed to the endowment of religious opinion by the State and to its patronage by the State. That is the plain issue, and during the election it should be driven home as plainly as possible.

Be Ye Not Meek. * * *

I appeal to Freethinkers to be up and doing. If we will not fight our own battle, we cannot expect others to fight for us. We are all too apt to take it for granted that we belong to a poor party, a small party, a weak party. In the sense of an actual organization that may be true, although it is not so true as many may imagine. But if we use the term "party" to cover those who agree with the opinions for which a paper such as the *Freethinker* stands, then we are neither weak, nor small, nor poor. There are quite enough of us, and we are placed well enough to make our opinions felt and to secure fair play if we only will that it shall be so. But tradition is a funny thing and a powerful thing. There was a time when Freethought was actually poor and weak, and when Christianity was in full power and could work its will without hindrance. And largely because of that time, and because of the tradition of it, Christians on the one hand arrogate to themselves a right to which they are not entitled and a power they need not possess, while Freethinkers, on the other hand, take it for granted that they must continue in the position of a poor persecuted minority. I am convinced that the power of persecution and of intolerance at present enjoyed—I use the word advisedly—is largely due to the fact that Freethinkers are not assertive enough. The present election gives us all an opportunity to let the enemy and the world know that we are not quite so puny as they may think. Let us make a start at all events by making the casting of our vote and influence dependent upon those who ask for it carrying out their public duties with a due sense of justice towards all. And assuredly political life will be none the worse by the return to Parliament of a number of representatives who have had their sense of justice quickened into an unwonted activity.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Bible.

NOTHING new can be written about the Bible. Those who treat it as a revelation of God are utterly unable to justify their position by irrefutable argument. They can only deal in assertions which cannot be established by any solid reasoning. Consequently unbelievers in the Bible as the Word of God have very little to do in defence of their attitude. Of course, no accredited Christian scholar of to-day can hold and advocate the views on the Bible cherished by his predecessors of even fifty years ago. The present writer was automatically taught to believe that every word in the Scriptures had come down from heaven; and even at the present time there are many congregations which receive the same assurance from the pulpit. Naturally no attempt is ever made to demonstrate the truth of such an assurance, for the simple reason that it cannot be done. There are preachers not a few, however, who deliberately conceal their real opinions on the subject, but so express themselves in public as to make it possible for their hearers to regard them as still orthodox. But Professors at theological colleges, almost to a man, accept and teach the assured results of modern criticism. Only a few weeks ago we called attention to Principal Selbie's deliverance on this question; and now we have before us an address given

by Professor Green, M.A., at the opening of the session 1922-23 of Hackney, New, and Regent's Park Colleges. Professor Green undertakes to reproduce what he considers to be "the voice of the Bible to the Age." One champion of the old theory of Inspiration declares that "the professional ring is almost completely sceptical," and that "the students at our colleges are resolutely drilled in the sceptical criticism, and can escape only through martyrdom."

The Professor characterizes that accusation as "foolishly untrue," but we are convinced that he is radically mistaken. The Bible is or is not the Word of God. If it is it is of necessity infallible, no matter what scholars may say to the contrary; but if it is not, it cannot even contain the Word of God. Again, if the Bible is a revelation of God there can certainly be but one permissible way of interpreting it. For argument's sake, we assume the existence of God and the possibility of his being revealed to mankind; and without fear of intelligent contradiction we maintain that if the Bible is fallible and contains mistakes it cannot be a revelation of an infallible Being. However erroneous and absurd the belief in a fully and verbally inspired and infallible Bible may be pronounced by scholars, it must be candidly admitted that it is perfectly consistent. On no other condition can the Bible either be or contain a revelation of God.

Professor Green avers that the new view of the Bible is in no sense sceptical, and vehemently condemns those who say that it is:—

Sceptical of the Divine inspiration and authority of the Bible? A thousand times, no! But the danger is, lest from our studious seclusion we should silently ignore these outbursts with such contempt as Christian charity may allow. Matthew Arnold wrote of the onset of the Roman armies eastward:

The East bowed low before the blast
In patient deep disdain;
She let the legions thunder past
And plunged in thought again.

But the legions do not thunder past; they return again and again to the charge and wage a guerilla warfare in our Churches, Bible Classes and Sunday-schools. Has not the time come, since we are being forced to it, for some counter-propaganda more serious than the devotion of one-third of a crowded session of the Congregational Union assembly last week to an address on "Evangelical Faith and the Bible"?

The Professor is evidently eager to start a vigorous propaganda in favour of the ascertained conclusions of modern criticism in regard to the Bible. When the literalists sarcastically ask what *are* those ascertained conclusions he turns the tables by asking them, "What *are* the assured results of the traditional interpretation of the Scriptures?" In point of fact the one question is as easily answered as the other; but neither the one answer nor the other would have the slightest bearing upon the question really at issue, which is whether or not a fallible Bible can legitimately be looked upon as being or as containing a Divine revelation. Professor Peake, in the introductory essay of his Commentary, contends that it can:—

The Bible is charged with a mission and message for humanity at large whose significance has deepened with the lapse of ages and whose influence is still the profoundest and most far-reaching in the whole world. It brings man near to God, it brings God home to man. And this it does, whatever theory we may have of its origin, its nature, and its method of appeal. In the future, as in the past, its revelation of God to man, of man to himself as a subject of a Divine redemption flowing from the Person and Cross of Christ, will continue to shine forth with an undimmed and ever-growing lustre.

In that short extract Dr. Peake indulges in two wholly unwarrantable statements. The assertion that

the influence of the Bible must always be the profoundest and most far-reaching in the world, whatever theory we may hold of the nature of its inspiration, rests upon no historical foundation, because until within living memory only one theory of the Bible held the field, and even to-day the new view is only held by advanced Biblical scholars, whilst the religious public is almost entirely ignorant of it. Nor has Dr. Peake any moral right to predict what place the Bible will fill in men's minds a hundred years hence. At present, as far as people generally are concerned, the Bible is already practically a dead book. Multitudes who profess to believe in it never read it. What sign is there that it will mean more to them in the future than it does now?

What is the religious value of the Bible? The number of profoundly religious people in any country is extremely small, and getting smaller every year. The overwhelming majority everywhere are non-religious to a degree that pains the parsons. The bitter complaint at the last Church Congress, held at Hull, was that the Church is a lamentable failure. Professor Green says that "faith cannot be touched by criticism unless you choose to base faith on what may be criticized." Surely he is aware of the astonishing "slump" religion is at present undergoing, but has he seriously faced the question as to the cause of the decline? We have no hesitation in coming to the conclusion that faith is dying out because it is "based on what may be criticized." The belief in the Bible as a Divine revelation is rapidly decaying partly as the result of criticism, but chiefly because the belief in the existence of a personal God is fast becoming a thing of the past. If there be no God the religious value of the Bible falls to the ground as an empty phrase. Dr. Glover is in total error when he declares that "criticism has saved the Bible." In reality, criticism has done for the Bible what Voltaire foresaw would happen to it in a hundred years from his day.

It should be borne in mind that the Bible is but one of many sacred writings in the world, and that the makers of such works were also the creators of Gods, Christs, and unseen worlds into which men and women go at death. Without a doubt the supernatural in all its aspects is a human creation, and like all other human creations it cannot last for ever. Indeed, for several centuries it has been steadily crumbling to pieces. Professor Green makes hilarious game of the "irrational shifts to which defenders of the traditional view of the Bible are driven, as well illustrated in a little book by an M.A. and B.D. of the University of London." He lampoons the little volume thus:—

With all respect, it is pious nonsense, written in all good faith in support of an impossible assumption. It is no surprise to find that the little book finds it worth while to devote two pages out of a total of 204 on "How to Master the Bible," to some results of a microscopic analysis of the English Bible. It seems that in the Old Testament there are 2,728,100 letters; that the word "and" occurs 35,543 times; that the middle verse would be I Chron. xxix, 17 if there were a verse more, and I Chron. xxix, 18 if there were a verse less; and much more to the same edifying effect for the young student of the Bible. One ventures to affirm that for sheer, unconscious irreverence towards the Word of God it would not be easy to match these two pages from the most lurid writings of the higher critics.

Even on the assumption that God exists and is revealed in the Bible, we can see no irreverence, conscious or unconscious, towards the Bible in the reviled two pages of the little book uncomplimentarily mentioned, though we are by no means blind to the defencelessness and absurdity of the orthodox doctrine of inspiration; but we are more sensible of the lurid

illogicality and incongruousness of the theory of the Bible advocated by those theologians who have accepted the assured results of the higher criticism. To be consistent they would have to reject either the ascertained conclusions of criticism or the belief that the Bible is the Word of God. We put the Bible in the same category as all other sacred writings, neither more nor less true than they. As human productions they are all both interesting and valuable, and should be carefully preserved; but as alleged Words of God they are all equally false and exert a harmful influence on human life.

J. T. LLOYD.

Harpooning the Heathen.

Exeter Hall holds us in mortal submission to missionaries, who (Livingstone always excepted) are perfect nuisances, and leave every place worse than they found it.

—Charles Dickens.

A CERTAIN liveliness is now being shown in British religious circles concerning the question of the reinstatement in the Lord's vineyard of the German missionaries. The patriotic journalists, who regard the Union Jack as being among the most sacred symbols of holy religion, are dead against the proposition. They suggest, probably with truth, that Teutonic missionaries were actuated by other motives than purely theological ones. They even say that the savers of souls are followed by the commercial travellers, and that the unhappy heathen who gets a Bible given to him may gain Salvation, but he most certainly loses his home. The charge sounds reasonable, for the phenomenon has been witnessed in other missionary fields. But we remember that these same high authorities a short time since regarded all Germans as adjectived Atheists. So that this flamboyant use of language forbids us all to regard Teutonic missionaries as being worse than any other. It does, however, raise the far more important question: "Are missions doing the good work they are credited with?"

China, for example, is a corner of the Lord's vineyard which yields a very small crop, but consumes an amount of money and labour which might far more profitably be expended elsewhere. There are circumstances which take that enormous country out of the category of ordinary mission fields. It is only from the narrow Sunday-school point of view that the Chinese can be called barbarians. They have a civilization which was old while as yet our forefathers were half-naked and painted savages. They have native religions of their own, and, like ourselves, they do not readily favour foreign ideas. It is we, who in their eyes, are the barbarians, and, truth to tell, what with the animosities and quarrels of the many Christian sects who seek to make converts, and the wide divergence between our precept and our practice, the spectacle offered by European civilization cannot be a very edifying one.

Left to herself China would have none of us nor of our Bible. We happen, however, to have battleships and soldiers, so we force our missionaries where we will, and are rewarded with the undisguised contempt of the Chinese. Perhaps we could better understand their attitude if the positions were reversed. That is to say, if the Chinese were able by force to extort terms for their almond-eyed and pig-tailed missionaries to preach Buddhism, Confucianism or Taoism among ourselves. In some places the missionary is a civilizing agency, that is to say, he introduces Western social habits. That characteristic he does not possess in China. He has nothing but the Christian religion to offer the people in various contradictory versions. Not only do they conflict with each other, but they

all run counter to the most cherished and ingrained ideas of Chinese society. For example, to the Chinaman the highest of all virtues is filial piety. In his eyes, therefore, some of the texts of the Christian Bible must appear shocking and immoral. We ought to look at these things from a Chinese point of view. It is not pleasant to think what fate might befall Chinese missionaries with their unfamiliar rites and doctrines if they were imposed by bayonets upon the sturdy population of our Black Country, or upon the impulsive Roman Catholics of Ireland.

What it costs to convert a Chinaman in blood and treasure we do not know, but it is certain that missionary societies expend upon China an amount of energy and money which might be used to better purpose in remedying serious social shortcomings at home among men and women, who, destitute of the ethics of Confucius, stand in as much need of reclamation as the almond-eyed race whom Christians pretend to pity.

Some time ago it was gravely calculated that the mission harvest, on the most favourable computation, amounted to the very modest figures of two Chinese per missionary per year, and that even so, the quality and reputation of the converts was open to distressing suspicion. The renegade Chinese has a confirmed habit of turning his spiritual studies to material account, and is said to frequent mission stations, and even to succeed in being converted in turn by all the missionaries, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Wesleyan, Presbyterian, and to patronize the German as well as the English and American, in return for money and rice. The unfortunate sequel to this unworthy rule of conduct is that one oily scoundrel figures as a dozen converts to Christianity, and a bad Chinaman is converted into a worse Christian to the greater glory of God and the profit of the Churches.

Unquestionably, the matter of missionaries will have to be duly considered, and as Hindoos, and so many other races, are looked upon in Christian quarters with hardly less benevolent regard than is the Chinaman, we must be interested in seeing what public opinion determines. The adoption of the Christian religion by a country is, in itself, but the substitution of one superstition for another. Abyssinia, for example, has had the blessings of Christianity longer than England, and remains an awful example which religious persons discreetly forget. The whole question of missionary enterprise requires reconsideration, especially as the various Churches of Christ are losing far more members at home than they are buying abroad.

MIMNERMUS.

Pagan and Christian Civilization.

VII.

(Continued from page 699.)

Amianus and St. Jerome level very much the same charges against the nobles of the fourth century which satire makes against the nobles of the first. When one hears the same anathemas of luxury in the days of Lucullus and in the reign of Honorius, separated by an interval of more than five centuries, in which the Roman race stamped itself on the page of history and on the face of Nature by the most splendid achievements of military virtue and of civilizing energy, we are inclined to question the report of our authorities, or the satirists' interpretation of social facts.—Sir Samuel Dill, "Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius," p. 67.

FAR from the Roman civilization being deficient in charity and benevolence, there never was a time characterized by such generosity and liberality to the poor and needy as in the days of the Roman Empire: the bounty of the rich in our own Christian time is contemptible in comparison. Friedländer, "than

whom," says the historian Warde Fowler, "no higher authority can be quoted,"¹ says:—

The rich and great were still always expected to employ their excess both to support the poor—an object served by the huge system of *clientela*—and to allow them to participate largely in their pleasures, and to afford them advantages and amusements, in which the modern world gives them no share..... "To build and to give" was then the rich man's duty. In public buildings, institutions, and feeding the poor, private generosity went hand in hand with communal authorities. Endowments, gifts, and legacies for purchases of oil and meal for free distribution or cheap sale were frequent; and endowments to put poor parents in the position to educate their children up to the wage-earning age, not unusual; there is one instance known in the time of Augustus. Further, there were endowments for destitute aged. Burial places for the poor were laid out by the communes and by individuals. Finally, the communes in their educational work were helped by the public spirit of the rich.²

Friedländer gives many examples of the large sums given by the rich for these purposes, and concludes:—

Hundreds of municipal inscriptions testify that in all the cities of the Empire the whole population received much of the wealth of the rich, who gave up much more than could have been extracted by the heaviest income-tax.³

If our merchant princes had exhibited a tithe of the public spirit of Pagan Rome, what magnificent towns and cities we should possess to-day, instead of the vulgar and unsightly congeries of bricks and mortar of which, for the most part, our towns consist. Added to that we should have no indigent unemployed.

We are now in a position to appreciate the astonishing statement of Mr. Loring Brace in his *Gesta Christi* (p. 97):—

Anything like the modern sentiment or conviction, born of Christianity, of the obligation resting upon each man of doing all in his power to wisely relieve human misery; and the wide-spread, thorough, conscientious benefactions by individuals, so common in modern days, were things almost unknown in the ancient world.

Thus is history made to bear false witness in support of Christianity, and Mr. Brace's work is considered by Christians as the best and most candid apology for Christianity of modern times!

Then again we hear a great deal from Christians about the luxury of the Pagan Empire. They have evoked, says Professor Tucker:—

Visions of splendour worthy only of the *Arabian Nights*; and sometimes the comment is added that it was all won from the blood and sweat heartlessly wrung from a world of miserable slaves. It is not too much to say that none of these descriptions could come from a writer or speaker who knew the period at first hand.⁴

No doubt there were reckless and dissolute men in ancient Rome. What modern Christian city is without them? But, as the same historian remarks:—

We do not judge the civilization of the British Empire by the choicest scandals of London, nor the good sense of the United States by the freak follies of New York. We do not take it that the modern satirist who vents his spleen on an individual or class is describing each and all of his contemporaries,

nor even that what he says is necessarily true of such individual or class. Nor is the professional moralist himself immune from jaundice or from the disease of exaggeration.⁵

He adds:—

It is extremely doubtful whether at an ordinary Roman dinner-party there was any such lavish luxury as to surpass that of a modern aldermanic banquet.⁶

Sometimes, no doubt, there was over-eating and drinking, and the table manners and conversation would not have been approved by us, observes the same writer, but:—

The same might be said of our own Elizabethan age. But anyone intimately acquainted with Latin literature as a whole, and not merely with the more savoury passages commonly selected, will necessarily incline to the belief that novelistic historians have too often been taking what was exceptional, eccentric, and strongly disapproved by contemporaries, for the usual and the normal.⁷

Friedländer also draws attention to the indiscriminating compilation of tales of Roman luxury, taken from epochs widely apart and of any sort, all jumbled together, and of the drawing of false conclusions from isolated cases, and mistaking the exception for the rule. "But above all," says Friedländer:—

The tales of luxury of individual emperors should have been excluded. A Caligula or a Nero became abnormal in this respect, because they had a mania to inspire the world with the idea of their omnipotence, to prove the superhuman greatness of Cæsar-dom.

In Caligula this mania "seems to have been tainted with actual insanity," and it is recorded of Nero that he "strove most of all to realize what most men deemed impossible."

But in the first two centuries Caligula and Nero are isolated exceptions. Not even Lucius Verus is comparable; Vitellius' luxury was the satiating of a monstrous gluttony. On the other hand, Tiberius, Galba, Vespasian and Pertinax were economical and even mean; the rest were never spendthrifts. And it is doubtful whether even the luxury of Caligula and Nero was more extravagant and pernicious than that of many a petty German prince of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Augustus the Strong of Saxony spent 80,000 thalers on one opera, and five millions on his pleasure camp at Mühlberg. Charles of Wurtemberg, the founder of the Karlsruhe, made his court the most brilliant in Europe, had the best actors playing in his theatre, gave the mostly costly gifts by lot to his guests, had fountains of wine for the multitude, fireworks that cost half a ton of gold, dug lakes out of mountains, gave sledging parties on snow transported from miles around; and all the money for this wild extravagance was extorted from countries whose taxable wealth was hardly equal to that of a single Roman province..... It would be as just to deduce the manners of Germany of that time from the habits of these absolute Courts, as to infer from the luxury of Caligula and Nero the manners of Rome.⁸

He might have added the example of Ludwig II, King of Bavaria, who had operas performed of which he was the only witness, and squandered the revenues of the kingdom in building immense palaces of fabulous luxury until put under restraint by his subjects.

Moreover, as Prof. Tucker is at pains to point out, the tyranny and cruelty of Caligula and Nero, was mainly a tyranny confined to the Romans themselves,

¹ Warde Fowler, *Social Life at Rome in the Age of Cicero*, p. 214.

² Friedländer, *Roman Life and Manners Under the Early Empire*, Vol. II, p. 228.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 229.

⁴ T. G. Tucker, *Life in the Roman World of Nero and St. Paul*, p. 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 228-229.

⁷ Tucker, *Life in the Roman World of Nero and St. Paul*, p. 229.

⁸ Friedländer, *Roman Life and Manners*, Vol. II, pp. 132-133.

affecting the lives and property of Senators and other prominent citizens with whom they came in contact:—

It is a mistake to think of Nero as habitually and without scruple trampling under his blood-stained foot the rights and privileges of the provinces or grinding from them the last penny, or harrying, slaying, and violating throughout the empire. There is nothing to show that during the greater part of his reign, the provinces at large felt any material difference between the rule of Nero and the rule of Claudius, or that they rejoiced particularly in his fall.⁹

As Mr. Stuart Hay, speaking of the boy-emperor Heliogabalus says:—

What mattered the extravagances of a foolish boy to the merchants of Lyons or to the traders of Alexandria, so long as they were undisturbed and taxation was at a minimum? What mattered the blatant outburst of a Semitic monotheism (the worship of Elagabal introduced by Heliogabalus) when men's minds—among the superstitious—were already attuned to the kindred mysteries of Mithra and the spiritual chicanery of Isis? The harm had been done both to reason and to ancient belief by the dissemination of other superstitions, whose effete neuroticism, whose enervating and softening influences had done almost more to ruin the glorious fighting strength of the Empire than all the luxury and effeminacy of the bygone world.¹⁰

And the principal among these "other superstitions" was Christianity. W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

The Work and Worth of Bradlaugh.

ADDRESS BY HIS PARLIAMENTARY SUCCESSOR.

A MOST interesting sketch of the life of Charles Bradlaugh was given by the Right Hon. C. A. McCurdy, K.C., M.P., at Sunday afternoon's meeting of the Northampton Race-course Pavilion Brotherhood. Mr. A. W. Poulton (President) presided, and also on the platform were Mr. F. J. Tillson (Secretary) and Mr. J. W. Clarke (Coalition Liberal Agent at Northampton).

Mr. McCurdy opened by describing the scenes at the funeral of Bradlaugh, and asked what there was in his career to command such a touching and noble tribute of affection. It was to the innate qualities of his own character, heart, and intellect rather than to any extraneous advantages that fortune gave to him that he owed his great reputation. Mr. McCurdy traced the early events of Bradlaugh's life and spoke of the time when, as a Sunday-school teacher of fifteen years of age, he pointed out to his Rector what he considered some inconsistencies in the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, and was suspended from the school, and eventually expelled from home, on account of his Atheistic tendencies. His work as errand boy to a baker and as clerk to a firm of coal merchants, and his service in the Army, were briefly touched upon; and Mr. McCurdy, in proceeding to describe Bradlaugh's public activities, dealt with the "dogmatic and repellent theology and science" of the Victorian period, which he described as an age of intellectual conceit. Ruskin to-day, he said, would be regarded as a perfectly intolerable bore. Darwin explained the Creation as if he had been present when the world was made; and other great men mentioned in like fashion were Huxley and Herbert Spencer. The theologians were just as bad. "Jonah swallowed the whale, or the whale swallowed Jonah, I don't know which," Mr. McCurdy added amid laughter; "but one is at least as likely as the other."

Except so far as they assisted in the formation of a great character, many of the years of Bradlaugh's life spent in arguing the merits of Secularism versus Chris-

tianity, or the claims of Freethought against established religion, were really apparently worthless. None of those controversies had the least relation to the Christian religion to-day. He (Mr. McCurdy) was thinking that day that the doctrines now preached were not the trappings of creeds and formalities, nor the theological hypotheses contained in Articles and Catechisms, but the profound fundamental doctrine of the golden rule, "Love your neighbour."

For twelve years Bradlaugh was political candidate for Northampton, owing very little to any political party, but everything to those great gifts of character which impressed all who came into contact with him. Bradlaugh's six years in Parliament were an unexampled battle in which one man possessed of no wealth, no rich friends, and no influence found himself arrayed not merely against all kinds of private people but against all the might and majesty of Parliament. Mr. McCurdy touched on the early refusals to allow Bradlaugh to take his seat and the physical violence he suffered, and said he did not think he would have pulled through but for the friendship and esteem of his friends and constituents in Northampton. (Applause.) What followed when at last he got into the House of Commons was that in a very few years animosities began to be softened, asperities began to disappear, and, brought face to face with those men by whom he had been regarded as a monster, they found he was a very man after all. The result was that before his death he had won the goodwill, affection, and esteem of men of all parties.

Mr. McCurdy spoke of Bradlaugh's work for the abolition of the "truck" system, and for rural allotments, and in making himself the spokesman for the unrepresented millions in India. He was glad, as a member of the House of Commons, to think that when Bradlaugh was dying in his little house almost next door to where he (the speaker) now lived the House passed by an overwhelming majority a resolution expunging from the journals of the House all the resolutions which prohibited Bradlaugh taking his seat. But Bradlaugh died without knowing that act of recognition of his sterling work.—From the "Northampton Daily Chronicle."

Acid Drops.

The *Daily Mail*, in its issue for October 28, tries to make the blood of its readers run cold by assuring them that Atheism lies at the "root of the Red régime" in Russia. We fail to see why of necessity Atheism. If all the stories of bloodshed and cruelty be true, we quite fail to see in what way Atheism can be held responsible. Most of the notorious massacres of the past thousand years have been motivated by religion, and of these the Christian religion has been responsible for a goodly share. Atheism has nothing to teach Christians on the score of bloodshed and brutality, and if that had been the aim of the Bolsheviks they could not have achieved the end better than by perpetuating the Christian Church in Russia, which for a millennium has aided or instigated the torture and murdering of a people in the interests of an autoeracy. But as Carlyle pointed out when dealing with the "horrors" of the French Revolution, there is a world of difference between murders when committed in the name of the people, and murders committed in the name of Church and king. Neither are justifiable, but the world overlooks the latter with considerable ease, and relieves its conscience with intensified denunciations of the former.

To still further harrow the feelings of its readers the *Daily Mail* reprints the following which it asserts Trotsky read approvingly from Bishop Browne's *Communism and Christianity* to an audience of young men:—

The God who played any part, even the slightest, in the Anglo-German War, the Versailles Peace, or the blockade of Russia is to me not God but the devil. If you say that the Christian God did not take part in the war—and this, of course, applies to all the remaining gods—then I ask in reply why we should have recourse to God at all, if he could not or would not prevent the frightful sufferings through which humanity passed during recent years.

⁹ Tucker, *Life in the Roman World of Nero and St. Paul*, p. 74.

¹⁰ Stuart Hay, *The Amazing Emperor Heliogabalus*, p. 2.

If a simple, passable, honourable, humane, and wise man were placed at the head of the universe there would be much better order in it and less cruelty and bloodshed than now.

We feel quite horrified to think that for some months we have been selling such a horrible book from the *Freethinker* Office. And yet on re-reading it, it strikes us as containing a deal of common-sense. If there be a god such as the Christian religion has pictured and taught, and has tortured men and women for denying, then he ought really to have played a batter part in the war than he did. He might have prevented war altogether. Or failing to prevent it, he might have done something to have made its course different from what it was. Apparently he did nothing, and the world clearly has no use for a god who simply sits up aloft seeing things go. There are over a million and a quarter unemployed in this country, and the cost of maintaining them is very heavy indeed. In such circumstances it seems quite inadvisable to add to the number of the unemployed. And the cost of maintaining a do-nothing-deity is far greater than the cost of all the rest of the unemployed.

And does anyone doubt but that if there were at the head of the universe someone honourable, humane, wise, and gifted with power there would be much better order and much less bloodshed than there is now? The proof that there would be is that decent men and women are all the time trying to introduce a better state of things than exists at present. Indeed, one has only to put the same point in another way, "Would you, if you had the power, arrange things better than they are at present arranged, and do away with bloodshed?" to realize that the quotation puts as desirable what every right-minded man or woman is trying to do. I admit that when the ideal is put in connection with belief in the Christian deity it sounds very shocking to Christian ears, and particularly to the chaste ears of the *Daily Mail*, but that is only because Christianity posits such a ridiculous kind of a deity, and because every attempt to make things better than they are is an indictment of the God who made them as bad as they are.

The convict who escaped from prison in the Isle of Wight surrendered after having been two days at large, during which time he was dressed in a clergyman's clothes. Probably he preferred prison to the dress.

The Roman Catholic journals are naturally rejoicing over the proposal for a united Christian Church, and we may yet witness the phenomenon of the Pope blessing the Archbishop of Canterbury, or Dean Inge shaking hands with Cardinal Bourne. Yet the proposal is hardly surprising. How little is the difference between the faiths of various Christian sects will be readily seen upon reflection. Combination, moreover, is essential if the religionists are to present a strong front to their opponents, and it is undoubtedly this factor which was responsible for the suggestion. And yet we think that it will be decidedly strange and un-Christianlike if such a project is fulfilled.

At Seven Kings a doctor's wife was kneeling at the bedside saying her prayers. A spark from the fire set light to her nightdress. She was fatally burned. A verdict of "accidental death" was returned. This is the simple sequence of a story which tells us as much about Providence as any "inspired" revelation.

"The pulpit is a great training ground for the dodging of awkward questions, and for the uttering of platitudes." This quotation is from a recent issue of *Reynolds*. It is not flattering to the pulpit or to the organization which runs it. But the all important question is: Is the statement true? If so, it means that one of the most powerful institutions in England is not only propagating false ideas, but is initiating men into the business of propagating them. The clergy have indeed an "established reputation." Perhaps it is this reputation that makes them so desirable as allies in the view of the professional politician.

Quite a smart man is Bishop Welldon—that is as smartness is counted in the Church, where men who would be relegated to an outside place in any other branch of life become prominent and draw fat salaries by living on the credulity of other people. So, says Bishop Welldon, when he is talking to Freethinkers, "Don't spend your time in girding at the clergy. Let us assume that the clergy are all fools, but go and do something. Build a hospital or endow a hospital." That is really remarkable, but we should like to know (if it would not tax the Bishop's brain too heavily), in what way the building of a hospital would prove the truth of the resurrection or of any single Christian doctrine? Freethinkers are not challenging Christians to a hospital building competition, they are challenging the truth and utility of Christian doctrines. So we might reply to the Bishop, "Don't spend your time in talking about hospital building. Let us assume that Christians build all the hospitals. And now let us see your proof that a single one of your doctrines is more than an established and endowed lie, and that your religion is not one of the greatest impostures on the face of history."

And we should like to know what is a Christian hospital, and whether Christians do keep the hospitals going? Some Christians subscribe to their upkeep, of course, but so do all other classes of the community. And it is so like the Christian sense of truth to claim that because some Christians subscribe, and others do not give their donations a sectarian badge, therefore these institutions are Christian. A Christian hospital would be one in which the teachings of the Bible were carried into practice. In that case you would cure disease by faith and prayer, leprosy by incantations, and seek to check a plague by humiliation and fasting. All we can say of Bishop Welldon is that his intellect is worthy of his Church. That is rather a severe thing to say of any man, but he deserves it.

A correspondent of the *Church Times* writes concerning the matter of prayer that he finds it puzzling what to pray for unless he is sufficiently informed as to the position of affairs. He does not believe in the old formula "he knows, and we don't," and so offering a general kind of petition that God will do what he wills, and do it properly. Presumably he will do what he wills anyhow, and no believer in God can afford to believe that he will not do things properly unless he advises him what is to be done. So he argues that we must know "how to besiege the throne," and say exactly what we want and when we want it. Otherwise how is a poor troubled deity to know what he is to do.

We have considerable sympathy with this point of view. England, for example, is a small island, yet it covers a considerable part of the earth's surface, and the atmospheric conditions are various. What is the use, therefore, to pray vaguely for rain without saying precisely how much is required and where it is wanted? That way invites trouble, and a promiscuous prayer must expect a promiscuous answer. Last year we had a very dry summer, and towards the end of the season prayers were offered in the usual vague way. This year we have had too much rain, and it seems to us unreasonable to blame the Lord. It may be that the prayers were delayed in transmission, and as there was no date and no place mentioned the recent surplus of rain may be the answer to last year's prayers. So it would be a deal more sensible if in future a prayer said quite plainly, "Rain wanted in such a district, at such a time, and in such quantities." The Lord would then know exactly what he had to do. We sympathize with the *Church Times* correspondent as to the need for greater precision when we pray. How can the Lord cure us of a disease if we don't take the trouble to fully describe the nature of our complaint? No doctor on earth would work under such conditions.

One of the candidates for a ward in Bolton, in the municipal elections, Mr. Percy Edge, announced that he would "strenuously oppose any attempt to introduce Sunday games or other attractions which will tend to

interfere with due religious observances." One would imagine that Mr. Edge was putting up for some chapel post, whereas he is probably only striving to get chapel votes. If Mr. Edge were really fitted for public service he would realize that it is not his function to vote so as to advance the sectarian views of any religious organization, but to hold the scales level between people of all shades of religious or no-religious opinion. But that would be to suppose the existence of a sense of justice which good Christians rarely display when dealing with those who are opposed to them. We hope that Mr. Edge will confine his public activity to taking round the plate at the conclusion of a service. All that is required for that is just enough honesty to hand over the proceeds without deduction of any kind, and that is a task we have no doubt Mr. Edge would discharge quite well.

It bears out what we have said as to the influence of the Churches, here and in America, in working for war with the Turks to gratify sectarian feelings and advance what are believed to be Church interests, to find an American paper, the *Glendale Evening News*, saying that the United States will "refuse to be stampeded into war at the behest of organized Church interests." The same paper points out that the insistence upon American interference came from American Churchmen who were most under European Christian influence. It is quite certain that if large numbers of Christians had had their way we should have been at war with the Turks, for the reason that these gentlemen could not tolerate that Christians should be under the rule of Mohammedans.

We should dearly like some really competent and impartial man to write a book dealing with the way in which the Christian Churches—for missionary and other reasons—have poisoned and misled public opinion about the coloured and non-religious peoples of the world. We do not think it is an exaggeration to say that the popular impression of the black race is that the negro is always an animal of a more or less bestial type, the yellow man is a monument of cunning and unbridled sensuality, and that the Mohammedan is a master in the art of deception and almost unthinkable brutality. That is one of the reasons why it is so easy to stir up Christian indignation when desired. And it serves the purpose of the Churches because people so degraded and so undesirable in their present condition obviously need the missionary attention of the Christian world. And, incidentally, there is a fine lesson given the world in the superiority of Christian teaching—or lying.

Further confirmation of the dangerous character of Christian agitation in international affairs comes from an address by Canon Gairdner to the Scotch Missionary Congress. Canon Gairdner called attention to the fact that Islam did offer its converts a real brotherhood, and asked, "What kind of fraternity has Christendom to offer as a substitute to Islam? What programme for human unity.....with Christendom rent through and through, and hardly even the will to mend the rents.....Truly in practice Christian fraternity has been more limited than Islamic." Other things equal Mohammedanism is more successful as a missionary creed in Africa than is Christianity. Canon Gairdner pointed out that with the Islamic mission there is little of the expensive machinery that accompanies the Christian mission—in other words, it is not such a business profession as is Christianity. Naturally, these Christians, with their age-long tradition and practice of suppressing opposition by force or bribery, welcome the chance of a political defeat of a Mohammedan power because they think it may advance the pretensions of Christianity as a world religion. And the religion that could inspire the Crusades will not to-day hesitate at encouraging a war if it is felt that its interests may be promoted.

Interviewed on the subject of the faith-healing "miracles," Dr. Johnson Taylor said that he did not believe there was anything more in the reported cures than the power of suggestion acting in the case of functional disorders. Dr. Johnson does not believe that the

gift of healing "as possessed by Christ" is to be found in anyone to-day. Neither, we should say, is the power of being born without a father, or rising from the dead, or interviewing devils. Dr. Johnson said that "No doubt miracles were performed in Christ's day." This is limiting them over-much. They are still performed. There is not a tribe of savages that is without its miracles. They occur still in some of the less civilized parts of Europe, in evangelistic meetings, and among savages generally. Miracles always occur where people are ignorant enough to expect them. That is what Dr. Johnson ought to have pointed out. "Christ's day" was, and is, the day of ignorance. That is all there is about it.

The Rev. Canon William Barry, D.D., writing in the *Catholic Times*, is grievously disappointed with conditions in the Near East. Christian powers have furnished arms to the enemies of Christendom. But after all we would remind the reverend gentleman that devoutly Catholic Austria was Turkey's ally in the war, and was giving her moral support, in every way possible, to Turkey throughout the Balkan War of 1912.

A telegram from Bombay states that the Akali Sikhs, a body of religious enthusiasts, are trying to evict some of their priests. Many of the latter, it is alleged, lead loose lives and spend temple funds on pleasure. The sacerdotal saint is just the sacerdotal saint, alike in Bombay and in London. That God should appoint or permit such representatives to carry on his work, affords some idea of his own conception of the human race.

Canon Hensley "cannot understand" people who support Sunday recreation. Of course he can't. The Puritan could not "understand" any change from his own rigid Sabbatarianism. The "Continental Sunday" bogey is still the last word in the vocabulary of anathema uttered by many of the cloth who know next to nothing of the Continent. "Recreation" and "rest" are words of wide meaning, and the public is not quite so ready as it used to be to submit tamely to professional soul-savers who presume to dictate methods of spending "the Sabbath."

Mr. William Robb, in *The Charm of Teaching Children*, refers to a teacher who explained to a class the meaning of B.C., "before Christ," and then wrote on the blackboard A.D., calling for suggestions as to its meaning. One of the more intelligent youths soon found a satisfactory solution of the meaning of the cryptic letters. They stood for "After the Devil." We are inclined to think that the time spent in teaching this lad religion and history was not entirely wasted.

Another gem was brought to light at a recent examination for county scholarships. Asked to give some account of Joan of Arc, one boy wrote that she took an active part in the late war. "She had a vision, went to an office and got a horse, fought for her country, and was burnt at the steak." Perhaps this young candidate had been taught that Christians have changed their tactics of late. Or he may have been told that a substantial beef-steak, just done to a turn, goes a long way towards adjusting the faculties of men and women that have visions.

The Bishop of Birmingham says that he could raise fifteen footballers from the local clergy capable of tackling the best local teams. We do not doubt it. What we want to know is why these doughty sportsmen were exempted from military service.

Speaking at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, the Archdeacon of London compared King Solomon's fleet with George V's. He did not mention the number of the former's dreadnoughts, but Solomon certainly had some. We should also be inclined to conclude from the sacred record that he knew as much about battle-axes as about battle-ships.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

November 5, Stratford Town Hall; November 12, Birmingham; November 16, Weston-Super-Mare; 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.

D. DUNCAN.—Your lecture notice for the Leeds Branch was not delivered until Wednesday morning. Lecture notices must reach us by the first post on Tuesday morning if they are to appear in the forthcoming issue of the paper.

H. B.—We hardly care to tell people *how* much they ought to do for Freethought. What each one does must depend upon their inclinations and capacity. We are quite content that each one can do something. In "Views and Opinions" this week we point out how Freethinkers may act in connection with the Parliamentary election.

II. LORD.—We are inclined to think that confusion is caused by speaking of consciousness "emerging" as though it made its appearance as a chicken does from an egg. Consciousness is awareness, and if we ask ourselves in what way living material becomes aware of its environment in such a way as to give certain definite response to particular stimuli, we rid the subject of a deal of unnecessary confusion.

P. O'DEA.—The *Freethinker* goes to all parts of the world, but we are pleased to know that we have so many readers in your far-away spot. Glad you found our *Other Side of Death* so satisfactory. The pre-existence of the soul is a very old doctrine, and if the soul is immortal the doctrine is logical enough. But the idea is a purely fanciful one, and only exists to give coherence to an unprovable belief.

BENEVOLENT FUND N.S.S.—Miss R. M. Vance, acknowledges: T. D., 108.

D. MACCONNELL.—We believe the passage to be genuine, but the language was quite conventional, and it is difficult to say how far it would represent Dickens's ideas if accepted at its face value.

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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When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

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

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

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

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

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

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Goethe did not hope for universal peace, but he certainly could not have anticipated that chronic state of war into which we have drifted, and which in the annals of future historians, will place our vaunted nineteenth century lower than the age of the Huns and Vandals.—
Max Müller.

J. W. Gott.

WE regret to publish very grave news concerning the health of Mr. J. W. Gott. We have before explained that he had been taken to a hospital in Blackpool as a paying patient, and the intention was to perform an operation as soon as possible. Unfortunately he grew rapidly weaker, and on Sunday last his married daughter, the only surviving member of his family, was sent for and told that it was only a question of a few days. And now, just as we are going to press we get a telegram from his daughter saying: "Dad weaker, sinking fast." I am afraid that by the time the next issue of the paper is out the end will have come, and the Christian bigots who rejoiced over the savage sentence of nine months' hard labour will know that one more enemy to their miserable faith has gone to his rest—and a few more enemies made.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Sugar Plums.

To-day (November 5) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Town Hall, Stratford, on "The Challenge of Freethought to the Churches." The lecture will commence at 7 o'clock, and all seats are free. Stratford Town Hall is easily accessible by car or bus or train from all parts of London, and we hope to see the hall crowded. Our East End friends would do well to make it a point of bringing one or two Christian friends to the meeting. It may be Mr. Cohen's only visit to this part of London this season.

Next Sunday (November 12) Mr. Cohen visits Birmingham. The meeting will be in the Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street. We presume the time will be 7 o'clock. We hope that Birmingham friends will make the meeting known as widely as possible.

This lecture was to have been followed by one from Mr. Lloyd. Unfortunately the Town Hall will be required in connection with the elections, and the meeting has had to be abandoned. An endeavour will be made to arrange another meeting for Mr. Lloyd later in the season.

In last week's "Acid Drops" we offered some comments on a speech by the Right. Hon. Mr. McCurdy, and referred readers to another part of the paper for the speech. Unfortunately the speech was overlooked in making up the paper. It is reprinted in this issue, and will be none the worse for the delay.

At its last meeting the Executive had under consideration the revival of the Annual Dinner for London Freethinkers. It was decided to renew them in January, and full particulars will be announced when the arrangements are complete. The price of the tickets will be somewhere between eight and ten shillings each. Meanwhile it will assist arrangements if some of those who intend being present will just drop a postcard to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, saying how many tickets they will require. The number will be limited in any case, but it will assist in securing the comfort of all attending if notification of a desire to attend is given as early as maybe.

The first meeting of the Discussion Circle, which was held at the N.S.S. Office, passed off in a very satisfactory manner, and a strong desire was expressed for their continuance. It was therefore decided to hold the next meeting on Tuesday, November 7, at 7 o'clock, when Mr. A. D. McLaren will open a discussion on "Religious Decay and National Decadence." The meeting is open to Freethinkers and others, and the place of meeting will be for the present the National Secular Society's Offices, 62 Farringdon Street (First Floor).

We are pleased to hear the Discussion Circle arranged in connection with the West Ham Branch is making steady progress. It has had the effect of stirring some of the members to attempt out-door speaking, and so is achieving one of the objects for which the circle was formed. Those interested will please note that the Circle meets every Wednesday at 8 at 32 Richford Road, Portway, West Ham. Mr. and Mrs. Warner are kind enough to provide the meeting place.

Manchester friends will please note that to-day (November 5) Mr. A. B. Moss visits Manchester and will lecture at 3 and 6.30 in the Rusholme Public Hall, Dickenson Road. His subjects are: "George Jacob Holyoake, the Father of Secularism," and "The Problems of Free-thought." Both are subjects that should prove attractive, and we hope they will have the effect of crowding the hall on both occasions. And that can be done if those interested in the success of the meetings will do what they can to make them well-known among Christians and others. On Saturday evening the Branch is holding an "American Tea" from 3 till 6 o'clock.

Mr. Lloyd visits Glasgow to-day (November 5) and will lecture in the City Hall Saloon at 11.30 on "Ghosts," and in the evening at 6.30 on "The Manger and the Star." Mr. Lloyd has many friends and admirers in Glasgow as elsewhere, and there should be no difficulty in their crowding the hall. It is a capital opportunity for Free-thinkers to bring along a Christian friend. Mr. Lloyd talks as one who has known Christianity from within, and can, therefore, speak on it with the greater authority.

We are pleased to know that Spain has at last revindicated the memory of Francisco Ferrer, the noble martyr for Free-thought. The High Court of Justice have just placed it beyond the shadow of a doubt that he was in no way connected with the Barcelona riots either directly or indirectly, and that his teaching and efforts for popular education were not politically subversive or a danger to anything except ecclesiastical domination. His property, which was confiscated, is now returned to his heirs, and their interest in his school is confirmed. It is undoubtedly a good sign when a priest-ridden country like Spain is prepared to make a stand for freedom of thought and speech. We wonder what the Vatican will say to so direct a condemnation of its policy.

In another part of this issue we have written on the matter of the Blasphemy Laws. Those of our readers who wish for a brief statement of the case against the continuance of these laws will find it in Mr. Cohen's pamphlet *Blasphemy*, which will be found advertised on the back page of this copy of the *Freethinker*. During the election we will send carriage paid twelve copies of this pamphlet for 2s. 6d. This will enable all to do a little propaganda work in the constituencies at a very moderate outlay.

Two True Stories.

I.

Scene: An up-country bungalow in Ceylon. A turbaned Mahomedan tailor is dressmaking in the verandah, under "lady's" supervision. Polite conversation varies the monotony of stitchings and seams. "Religions" are lightly and amicably discussed. The tailor concludes the whole matter: "Lady, God not making Mahomedans or Christians; God making everybody alike."

II.

Scene: A small village school in Sussex some fifteen miles from Brighton. The Divinity Inspector, a white-bearded person of benignant and innocent aspect, is examining the scholars.

"Now, children, can you tell me—when do people become Christians?"

Bright boy (who knows a thing or two) promptly: "After vaccination, sir!"

The late George R. Sims on Spiritualism and Superstition.

TOWARDS the end of last year Mr. Sims received an invitation to attend a spiritualistic séance somewhere up Highgate way. In the account he gave of his visit to a large house in the north of London he related how he got out at Tufnell Park Tube Station and only had a short walk before he arrived at his destination. From what transpired at the séance and from what occurred a short time after, when another journalist attended, I have no doubt that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle gave the invitation to which Mr. Sims responded. When Mr. Sims returned he gave, in the *Referee*, a long and detailed account of what he alleged occurred at the séance. How the little party, comprising some distinguished persons, sat round in a circle, and when the lights were lowered began to sing hymns, which they followed very lustily with the chorus of well-known songs, such as "Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag," a strange mixture of so-called sacred hymns, and profane songs, such as soldiers on the march might sing to enliven the dull monotony of a long journey. After a good deal of this kind of entertainment, they were informed that the conditions seemed favourable for some extraordinary spiritual phenomena. In a little while, when the company had produced among themselves a suitable atmosphere, a voice from a trumpet was heard, first rather indistinctly, and then quite audibly, making certain statements, either in a Yorkshire or Lancashire dialect, and which Mr. Sims described in the *Referee* in very graphic style. The famous journalist said quite frankly that he did not know how these alleged phenomena were produced. Unless the medium were a ventriloquist of extraordinary skill or a mimic of wonderful talent, or the voice of the spirit was genuine, he did not know how such sentences as were uttered through the medium of the trumpet could be produced; and if there were no trickery, the phenomenon of the voice of a departed spirit talking in such a fashion was at once not only perplexing but inexplicable. The vivid account given by Mr. Sims of his experience at this spiritualist séance was so graphic and thrilling that a most interesting correspondence followed in the columns of the *Referee*, and after it had gone on for some weeks I wrote to Mr. Sims and told him that I never joined in such correspondence, because all the disputants took for granted the very matter in dispute, viz., that man possessed an immortal soul, and that this soul had the power of communication with the living, after it had left the body with which it had been associated on the earth. But to me, it seemed that the first thing the spiritualist had to do was to tell us what the soul was, where it was located in the body, and what were its functions; also when it came into the body, whether there were millions of souls waiting about in the vast expanse of the universe, ready to take possession of the body of each child the moment it was born; and on the assumption that man is the last link in the chain of evolution from the lowest form of animal life, beginning, say, with fishes, then reptiles, birds, mammals, and then through an ape-like ancestry, such as the orang outang, the chimpanzee and the gorilla, up to man, whether there was any break, and if not, had each and all of these creatures immortal souls, and would their souls live again; and if not why not?

From long experience I knew perfectly well that no London editor would insert a letter that sought to examine fundamentally a question like that. Editors as a rule are not out in search of truth for the edification of their readers on questions of religion or science; like journalists they are merely out in search of material which they think will please or satisfy the

majority of their readers. And therefore I told Mr. Sims that I would not send a letter to the *Referee* that I knew perfectly well would find its way, for a certainty, into the waste paper basket.

After Mr. Sims had written several times on the subject of Spiritualism, there were some people who were under the impression that he was gradually becoming converted to that cult. Consequently, as an old and intimate friend of Mr. Sims I wrote the letter referred to above, and received the following reply, which in my judgment is decisive:—

Feb. 22, 1922.

MY DEAR MOSS,—I quite appreciate all you say. I have always appreciated it. I am writing on Spiritualism as a *journalist*. It is a *good scoop*. There may be something in it and there may not. I don't know. There may be a future and there may not. I don't know. And, with all your omniscience, neither do you. But you can make up your mind, old chap, to the fact that whatever you think won't alter your future. You will either die and know nothing, or die and learn a lot. I have always held that man made God in his own image and gave himself an immortal soul in pure swank. I don't believe that I am so important that it is necessary that I should live through all eternity, and I don't believe that even you are. But there may be "more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Horatio." There are a lot of jolly funny things, old chap, and I have seen some of them. Telepathy is responsible for some very remarkable things. But I should want something very much more tangible than anything I have seen to convince me that the dead come back to earth, or that, wherever they are, or whatever they are, they know anything of earthly things.

But, as I have said to you previously, what the dickens does it all matter? If they do, they do, and if they don't, they don't. If they do and I should have the misfortune to survive you, it is just possible that you may come back to me and tell me that you were all wrong, and that your occupation up above is gone, because I don't think even you would attempt to preach Atheism in Heaven. I am presuming that you might get there, not for your fidelity, but for your good works, because all men who do good works co-operate with God here below. What God is I do not presume to suggest, because I don't know. So we will leave it at that. Glad to hear from you again. Kind regards and best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

GEO. R. SIMS.

That was the last letter I received from Mr. Sims, after a friendship extending over forty years. And that letter I shall always treasure, because putting aside its sarcastic remarks concerning myself, which I do not mind in the least, I know that it expressed his sincere views on the subject, and because it will always stand as a complete answer to those who may claim that Mr. Sims became a spiritualist at the end of his strenuous and wonderful career. After he had written this letter he wrote a few more paragraphs in "Mustard and Cress" ridiculing the spiritualistic position. One thing he said was that it was rather curious that spiritualists sometimes had messages from notorious murderers, but never from their victims. And yet if they got messages from these unfortunate creatures they were the very people who could answer for a certainty who were their murderers. Yet they remained for ever silent. Why, if the victims could only be called up from the vasty deep, what a glorious opportunity for clever detectives to be put straight on the track of the latest murderer! And why, if spiritualism were true, did so much crime escape punishment because the perpetrators could not be discovered? This showed that as a man of the world and a criminologist Mr. Sims had not lost his shrewdness or sound common-sense after attending a spiritualistic séance.

A short time after this Mr. Filson Young, editor of the *Saturday Review*, attended a similar séance at the north of London, probably at the same place where the previous one was held. But Mr. Filson Young discovered that the voice from the trumpet did not speak the Yorkshire or Lancashire dialect correctly, but spoke it as though it were a Cockney trying to mimic that dialect, and not able to do it successfully; further, Mr. Young, under cover of the darkness, moved the trumpet to another position, and from that moment no further phenomena were produced. Indeed, Mr. Young was satisfied that the whole thing was a fraud and wrote to that effect in the journal of which he is the editor. And so we may say definitely that the séance which two well-known journalists attended by special invitation, failed to convince either of them. From the above letter it will be seen that Mr. Sims had no belief in the immortality of the soul. Yet he was able to face death quite cheerfully and wanted to be in the limelight to the very last. Here is a little poem he wrote a few weeks before his death and which appeared in the *Referee*:—

THE LAST ACT.

Before the final curtain falls
And I must quit the stage of life
O Fate, be kind and still the strife
That war's deep wound inflames and galls.

Untie the knots, unite the threads,
Defeat the villain's wicked plot,
Leave virtue in the favoured spot
Whereon the lime its lustre sheds.

Lo! at the wings I'm waiting dressed
To play the scene and give the cue
That bids the baize hide all the view;
O let the last act be the best.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

In Fact, a Positive Fad.

NOT long ago a very wise literary critic suggested in my presence the attractiveness of the idea of compiling a funny book about hangings. He pointed out that there were scores of yarns all dealing more or less humorously with the unhumorous subject of hangings, legal and otherwise; he thought such a work might enjoy a large sale. And he thought, too, that a suitable beginning for the volume might be found in the ancient anecdote of the shipwrecked mariner, who, after drifting for days on an improvised raft, was carried by a friendly current within sight of a strange land. As he drew nearer he saw some men on the shore erecting a gallows, and, falling on his knees, he cried out: "Thank Heaven, I have reached a Christian country!"

I do not know whether my friend will ever carry out his threat of compiling such a work, but if he ever does I claim the collection will be incomplete unless in his pages he includes the narrative pertaining to that coloured person who was condemned to death on the scaffold and who was unable to readjust himself to the prospect. The nearer the date of execution came the greater became the reluctance on his part, until toward the end it amounted with him to what might be called a positive diffidence.

On the night before the fatal day a clergyman sat with the prisoner, striving by counsel and admonition to prepare him for the ordeal.

"My brother, my poor brother," said the minister, soothingly, "try to face the fate which confronts you on the morrow with courage and resolution. Remember that thousands and thousands before you all through the ages, some justly condemned and some unjustly, have suffered this same punishment with fortitude. Even the early Christian martyrs died much as you must die."

"Yas, suh, I knows," quavered the condemned, "but—but it wuz a hobby with them." IRVIN S. COBB.
Reprinted.

Historical Misnomers.

LOUIS LE GRAND.

THERE are periods in history, says Bagelot, when great ideas are "in the air" so to speak, when not only the body politic is successful, but art, science, philosophy, and *belles lettres* seem to partake of an "unusual elevation." Such a period was that of Louis le Grand (1643-1715). During the reign of this monarch France enjoyed an ascendancy in European politics which stands unparalleled in her history. Her military prestige was the envy of the world. Her trade and commerce, rising by leaps and bounds, threatened the prosperity of older industrial nations. Her patronage of art, science and literature became a byword. Her brilliant and luxurious courts became the cynosure of all eyes in Europe. It is therefore not to be wondered at that the period should find a distinctive place in culture as well as political history as the "Age of Louis XIV" or the "Louis XIV period." Much of this greatness of seventeenth century France was attributed to the personality of Louis XIV, and he was, indeed, surnamed *Le Grand*. It was the old story that the "outward visible sign" must of necessity reflect an "inward spiritual grace." All that the people saw was the dandied yet dignified king, the luxury and pageantry of the court, and the brilliant martial throng of his camp. That almost sufficed. Thus France's victories on land and sea, and her territorial acquisitions were *his* triumphs and conquests. The events of the period were sufficient perhaps to blur the proper perspective and to throw Louis more into relief than should have been the case. In both the War of Devolution and the Dutch War, the armies of France had been brilliantly victorious, in spite of almost the whole of Europe being arrayed against them, and Louis had been with his armies in person, although never in actual command. Although practically forced to accept peace which terminated these wars, *i.e.*, the treaties of Aix la Chapelle (1668) and Nymegen (1678), by the pressure of the Allies, yet France came out of the struggle with her boundaries extended and greater prestige than ever. It was no wonder that France lost its mental balance in its extravagant adulation of Louis, and saluted him as *Le Grand*, for as A. J. Grant says (*The French Monarchy*, II, 44) to the people, "all their glory seemed to emanate from the King of France." Let us enquire, however, how far this title of *Le Grand Monarque* and its sequential phrase, the "era of Louis XIV," have historical justification. To do this we must first of all glance at the political and industrial situation in France at Louis' succession, and secondly (though probably the more important phase), we must take Louis the man, for only by judging him from his physical characteristics can we sum up his mental outlook, which prompted him throughout his life.

France in the sixteenth century was but a power of secondary importance in European politics. But a statesman arose in the person of Richelieu who was to be the founder of her greatness. The political situation in Europe helped him to accomplish this. Spain was beginning to show its military and industrial decadence. The Holy Roman Empire, wasted by war and dissension, was drained of energy. Britain and Holland were, for the moment, too absorbed in naval and mercantile supremacy to count for much in purely European affairs. Richelieu's policy was to make France at least as powerful as any of these great military powers, and so maintain a sort of balance of power. At the same time, surrounded as France was by enemies, it was necessary that she should possess boundaries more protective than she then held, more especially in the north-east and the south, where she

claimed the Rhine and the Pyrenees as her natural frontiers. To accomplish this end Richelieu re-organized France under a system of centralization which removed at one stroke two serious drawbacks to the body politic, the pretensions of the nobility, and the troublesome religious factions. In his establishment of an absolute monarchy, which was the pivot of his scheme of centralization, it certainly brought despotism, yet it welded France together as a nation. The result was that he was able to organize the army and navy on national and centralized lines, which brought France into line as a European power of the first rank, which she had not been hitherto. In his diplomatic relations, he laid down sound lines of policy which contributed in material ways to the later ascendancy of France. Spain and the Empire (the Holy Roman Empire), the most powerful enemies which France had to contend against, had to be met with other than the purely belligerent means. At home, Richelieu's influence on society and culture was equally far-reaching. It was he who established the *Gazette de France*, founded the *Académie*, and the first to systematically patronize art and literature. It was such political, domestic and cultural legacies which Richelieu left to France and Louis XIV, in whose reign they more properly fructified, and shed such lustre and glory on his period. Indeed, it was upon Louis' shoulders that the glories of his age fell, instead of upon those of Richelieu, for in sheer justice it must be admitted that "he more than any other man is the founder of the 'Age of Louis XIV.'" ¹

Let us now turn to Louis XIV himself and enquire how far he contributed to the political and intellectual greatness of the "Age of Louis XIV" and to deserve the title of *Le Grand*. As Sainte Beuve says, we must know the "whole man," and not merely this or that part of him, and to see Louis *via* the cold external facts of history, without taking into consideration his temperament and education is only to see half of him. ²

Louis seems to have inherited from his mother a certain constitutional vigour. On the other hand, his morbid tendencies and phlegmatic physiognomy revealed him clearly "his father's son." Historians agree that his general mentality was low. Certainly his education had been sadly neglected, due partly to his mother's petting, and partly to inherent stupidity. He was ignorant of Latin, knew nothing of the sciences, and could hardly read or write. Against this, he inherited all the egoism of the Bourbons, which enabled him to some extent to pass as a superior mind. Historians and contemporaries alike agree, however, that he was "every inch a king." His aloofness, his pose, his propriety, his firmness, all contributed to this. To be a king at the age of five, if only in name, was a distinct disadvantage to Louis. To be surrounded by a venal and frivolous court, the victim of his mother's petting on one hand, and the adulation of courtiers on the other, was in itself a danger. Add to this, his lack of education, and one might safely say that the formative years of his life scarcely fitted one who was to adopt the *métier de roi*, as he called kingship. How far these things are to be taken into account in subsequent events we shall see.

During the first period of his reign (1643-61) we are scarcely able to judge Louis, seeing that he took no part whatsoever in the government. Mazarin, who had succeeded Richelieu, was prime minister, and carried on the affairs of state, on the lines of Richelieu practically, without the slightest interference from Louis. On the death of Mazarin, however, a change came over the scene. Mazarin had counselled him (merely out of his dread that his rivals should succeed

¹ A. J. Grant, *The French Monarchy*, I, 262.

² Michelet (*Hist. Franc.*), takes into quite serious consideration the general health of Louis as a factor in his mental outlook.

him) that the king should be his own minister, and had even drawn up certain political maxims for his royal pupil's guidance for the time when he would assume this power. Although we have seen that his lack of culture alone unfitted him for such a rôle, yet this lack of culture simply blinded him to his faults, whilst the promptings of Mazarin intensified his egoism and unbounded faith in his powers. His mother had twitted him with "wanting to play the capable man," and in this we see the *note sensible* of his whole career. Everything was measured by that one factor. He launched wars most certainly in the interests of France, and was perhaps as sincere a patriot as any other, but in everything it was his personal aggrandisement that was ever in his "mind's eye."

H. GEORGE FARMER.

(To be Concluded.)

An Archbishop's Stunt.

THE clergy are in terrible straits. With dwindling congregations fast nearing the vanishing point, with doubt and indifference at a premium, and faith at a discount their position is undoubtedly a parlous one. Like mist in the rays of the rising sun primitive ignorance and fears are being dispelled by the bright beams of science and education. The darkest and most obscure corners are being irradiated by the searchlight of truth. But as their fears increase and their hopes lessen the dark clad host are far from surrender. Like the drowning wretch who snatches at a straw, or the ruined gamester who makes his last despairing throw, they will adopt any expedient no matter how desperate to retrieve the situation and stave off the inevitable. This is well exemplified by what is occurring in South Africa to-day; and the accounts now appearing in the South African Press of the Hickson Healing Mission, engineered by the Metropolitan and bishops of the Anglican Church of the Province of South Africa, show to what desperate lengths the modern mystery-monger will go.

Hitherto, the Anglican Church has been remarkably coy about adopting methods commonly associated with their despised Nonconformist brethren. They have been select, respectable and conservative. But times have changed, and the new age is upon them. Their position or attitude of respectable aloofness will no longer answer, and hence the change of front.

In her dire extremity the Anglican Church will stick at nothing. And from the ethical standpoint we must regard her much in the same light as we do the criminal convicted of obtaining goods under false pretences. But the Archbishop of Capetown, to be successful, will have to resort to something more startling and sensational than a mere vulgar faith-healing stunt, for this is one of the most musty expedients in the repertoire of the ecclesiastical juggler. We can trace it at work in the temples of Aesculapius and the classical deities of ancient Rome. Luther had a go at it, and so did the Moravians and the Waldenses. It has been quite common among most of the Puritan sects such as the Quakers and Baptists, and it is as common as primitive ignorance is to-day. Only the other day a band of 600 devotees under the pilotage of Cardinal Bourne was wending its way on the same stunt to the notorious shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes. Every intelligent and rational minded individual knows what faith-healing means and what it stands for. It is nothing more than "suggestion" in the hands of an agent working under false pretences. And when an Archbishop employs a "healer" to work cures, alleged to be performed by supernatural means, he is as guilty of fraud as the man who obtains goods

by fraudulent misrepresentations. All over the world to-day, guided by the compass of Psychology zealous workers are engaged in the noble work of healing and alleviating the physical and mental ills of suffering humanity. But these workers are honest; they invoke no supernatural aid or name; they claim no miraculous intervention. Beyond natural phenomena they essay not to go, and their only deities are the twin sisters—psychology and physiology. SEARCHLIGHT.
South Africa.

Secular Education and the Elections.

THE Secular Education League has issued the following questions for candidates at the forthcoming elections, and we trust they will be well used:—

1. In the event of being returned to Parliament as member for.....will the candidate support such an amendment of the Education Act as will secure that there shall be no teaching of religion in State-supported Elementary Schools either in school hours or at the public expense?
2. In view of the controversy provoked by the teaching of religion at the public expense in the nation's schools, and the resultant injury to national education and injustice to those who dissent from the beliefs thus taught, will the candidate, in the event of being returned as member for this constituency, support such an amendment of the Education Act as will confine the teaching to subjects defined as "Secular" in the official code?

Correspondence.

CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—From the enclosed cutting you will see that at the Forty-fifth Annual Session of the Bengal Indian Christian Conference, held in Calcutta on September 28, 1922, one of the speakers, Mr. M. K. Patra, said that the Church in India should free itself "from the domination of foreign thoughts, dogmas, rites and rituals, and think independently and bring into being an Indian Church which would be self-supporting, and free in thought and organization. He proposed the formation of a body of Freethinkers to go into the question."

If these proposals were carried out, then surely Christianity itself must be given up by all Indians, because the Christian religion is the religion of foreigners, having its origin in the Semitic Jahweh worship and not at all an Aryan religion, notwithstanding the fact that some years ago a Russian archaeologist, M. Notovich, declared that Jesus, before he was baptised by John the Baptist, was on a visit to Tibet and India and learned everything from Buddhists and Hindus. Moreover, if Christianity is stripped of all its foreign dogmas, rites and rituals, there is very little left worth believing, and there will be no need for a Church in India.

Whatever may be the special meaning in which the word "Freethinker" was used by the speaker at the Bengal Indian Christian Conference, it is clear that Free-thought is slowly, but surely, spreading among the masses, and this fact is worth noting by all Freethinkers.

Allahabad, India.

K. SAMUEL.

EVOLUTION AND DARWINISM.

SIR,—When Mr. Lord speaks of Darwinism as a "chapter of accidents" he is speaking the language of the man in the street. There is no question of chance or accident in the law of the survival of the fittest. If it was a matter of chance, then the unfit would have as good a chance of surviving as the fit, which is absurd. Modern science knows nothing of the hobgoblin chance.

Science teaches that all modes of being are varied operations of energy; that there is not a "life-force" or a "mind-force" apart from and differing from the other physical forces of Nature. They are further develop-

ments of those forces. Life, consciousness, and mind, are progressive steps in the progress of evolution. As we go back to the earliest periods of earth's evolution, as demonstrated by the fossil remains, the evidence of mind gets less and less, until it peters out altogether, and finally, continuing the process still further back, so does the evidence of consciousness and life.

Our points of view are so opposite that it seems a waste of time to argue the matter, especially to our readers. Although we must agree to differ, I cannot conclude without paying tribute to the courtesy and fairness with which Mr. Lord has conducted his case. Would that all our opponents conducted their cases in the same manner.

W. MANN.

GREEK v. TURKISH ATROCITIES.

SIR,—You have shown up rightly the inane "journalese" phrase, "within measurable distance," which, originally spoken by Gladstone in its proper sense, has ever since been aped by journalists as a parrot cry.

It is the more surprising, then, to find you yourself echoing the popular catchword, "Greeks are as bad as Turks," regardless of facts. Granted that in their exasperation the Greek troopers set fire to villages they passed through, there is no comparison between this and the wholesale organized massacres carried out in cold blood by the Turks, especially as their victims were mostly women driven out to die a lingering death in the wilderness, and, most atrocious of all, the compulsory prostitution of the younger girls to the foul lust of the conquerors, which, even in our own popular phrase, is recognized as "worse than murder." It is something new indeed to find those who boast of their supremacy in civilization excusing the abominations of the most barbarous religion that ever existed on this wicked earth!

EVACUSTES A. PHIPSON.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON
OCTOBER 26, 1922.

THE President (Mr. Cohen) in the chair. Also present:—Messrs. McLaren, Moss, Neate, Quinton, Rosetti and Silverstein; Miss Pankhurst, Miss Kough and the Secretary.

The Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

New members were received for Manchester, South London, Swansea, West Ham, and the Parent Society.

The report of the Propagandist Committee was received and adopted.

It was also reported that there had been a successful preliminary meeting of the Discussion Circle and arrangements made to meet on alternate Tuesdays at the Office at 7 p.m.

Correspondence on various matters was dealt with.

It was reported that arrangements had been made for a meeting in the Town Hall, Weston-super-Mare, on Thursday, November 16, to be addressed by Mr. Cohen.

It was resolved that the Annual Dinner be revived, and the Secretary was instructed to make arrangements for the function to take place on the second or third Tuesday in January, at the Midland Grand Hotel, Euston Road, N.W.

The meeting then adjourned. EDITH M. VANCE,
General Secretary.

We feel in every page of his (Goethe's) *Italian Travels* how his whole nature was quickened and exalted by the presence of beautiful things as it had never been before, and at the same time we feel that he possessed his soul in a profound composure—such a peace as we see in a river when, swift and crystalline, it moves forward with all the weight of its waters, meeting no obstacle, but under strict control of its restraining banks.—Edward Dowden, "Goethe in Italy."

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.

N.S.S. DISCUSSION CIRCLE (62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): Tuesday, November 7, at 7, Mr. A. D. McLaren, "Religious Decay and National Decadence."

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY ("Bay Malton," the corner of Clipstone Street and Great Portland Street): 7-45, Opening Meeting—Social and Dancing.

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. E. Baker, "Peace and How to Ensure It."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Joseph McCabe, "My Impressions of Eastern Europe."

STRATFORD (TOWN HALL): 7, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "The Challenge of Freethought to the Churches."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (City Hall Saloon): Mr. J. T. Lloyd, 11.30, "Ghosts"; 6.30, "The Manger and the Star."

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (2 Central Road, Duncan Street, Shop Assistants' Rooms): 7, Social evening. Good programme. No charge. Collection in aid of the Branch.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Sydney A. Gimson, "What is the Meaning and Value of Art?"

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Rusholme Public Hall, over Free Library, Dickenson Road): Mr. A. B. Moss, 3, "George Jacob Holyoake—The Father of Secularism"; 6.30, "The Problems of Freethought."

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