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Views and Opinions.

The Clergy and Parliament.

As the law stands at present a clergyman of the Established Church may not be elected to Parliament. In the case of an ordinary man the prohibition would be unjust and unreasonable. But a clergyman, as such, is not an ordinary man, and so long as this is the case none must complain if in some directions he is not treated as plain John Smith. A clergyman of the Established Church holds a privileged position. He is "called" to his work by the special grace of God, his function in the State is of a "spiritual" nature, and although mere men may appoint him, they are merely the instruments of the deity in so doing. Theoretically, a clergyman's interest in this world is only incidental and subsidiary to preparing man for the next one. As to the value of that none can say till they arrive there, and as none return, a dogmatic opinion on that point is impossible. We all know that we must have faith in the Lord—whom we do not know—but when this involves faith in his representative on earth—whom we do know—the most robust faith is required to carry us through. At any rate, the clergy in virtue of this peculiar position of theirs are relieved from many of the obligations which fall upon the ordinary citizen. They cannot be compelled to serve on a jury, during the war they were relieved from military service, along with the insane and the physically unfit, their buildings are relieved of taxation, and they receive many other privileges from the State. The parson cannot really have it both ways. If a man is not content to shoulder all the burdens of citizenship he must not expect to enjoy all its privileges. If the clergy will put on one side all State support, patronage, and privilege, and take rank as ordinary citizens, their claim to enter Parliament on the same terms as others will be incontestable. In such circumstances no one would or could dispute their right.

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The Function of the Teacher.

But there is an organized attempt to get rid of this restriction on the freedom of the clergy, and it is not paying the clergy an extravagant compliment, nor slandering those who are already in the House of Commons, to say that if they were admitted they

would probably be as good as those that are already there. Neither can a Freethinker, as a matter of mere principle, support the exclusion of a class on the ground of their having peculiar religious opinions. Disabilities imposed on account of religion are not more defensible than those imposed on account of heresy. Nevertheless there are grounds of both expediency and principle which would make it inadvisable for the clergy to enter Parliament, and inadvisable for the people to send them there if they had the chance. To take the question of principle first. One bishop, writing to the *Times*, considers that it would not make for the betterment of the clergyman to be preaching religion on Sunday, and on Monday delivering a political address. For once in a while I find myself in agreement with a bishop, and my agreement rests on the plain principle that the teacher is one person, and the legislator—particularly the elected legislator—is quite another and quite a different person. The teacher is primarily concerned with principles; the politician is primarily concerned with expediency. The former is concerned with the formation of opinion, the latter with its manipulation. This concern with expediency, with the manipulation of opinion in view of a given end, is not characteristic of one group of politicians only, it is the badge of the tribe and has been ever since the politician made his appearance as a distinct variety of the *genus homo*. Nor is it a question of honesty versus dishonesty. It is simply that politics is essentially the field of compromise, an arena in which the gaining of popular applause is one of the main things considered. The teacher, however, is not concerned with compromise, he has no room for it. The two functions—that of the legislator and that of the teacher—are distinct, and to combine the two in the one person is almost always to injure the more important of the pair.

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A Question of Principle.

These two functions are not only distinct, in the main they appeal to two different types of mind. The politician is not alone at the mercy of impermanent circumstances—a threatened war, a wave of popular emotion, etc.—he prides himself on his ability to take advantage of it to his own ends. It is what is involved in such statements as, the times are not ripe for this or that measure, or, the public do not want it. The teacher moves, or should move, on a different level. It is his task to mould the opinion with which the politician must reckon, and which he finds so troublesome. The politician is never too kindly disposed towards the real teacher because he is a disturbing factor in his plans or plots; and it is for this just reason that so much evil results when the attempt is made to combine the two functions in the one person. Opinion is poisoned at its source, and we are prevented from getting that free play of independent and informed ideas which are at the root of all progress. Once the legislator attempts to control the teacher, whether it be the Governmental control of the Press or in other directions, a sound education gives place to a calculated "doping" of the public mind. It does not

matter in the least what the prevailing form of government is—Bolshevism in Russia, or Democracy in Britain—there is not a government in the world that does not, to the limit of its opportunities, seek to control the play of opinion. And the measure of its success in doing this is, roughly, the measure of the evil it does. It is the duty of the teacher to lay down principles. It is the work of the politician—when he is honest—to see how far these may be carried into practice; and to keep the functions of the two separate is one of the surest methods of getting movement in the direction of genuine progress.

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Religion and Politics.

So much for principle, and one that goes far beyond the special question of the clergy. But there is the matter of expediency, and that resolves itself into the question of whether—even if all impediments were removed—the people of this country would do well to return to Parliament a body of clergymen. There is no mistaking the verdict of history on this issue. The introduction of religion, and particularly of the ecclesiastical element into politics, has been wholly and irredeemably evil. The outstanding example of the evil of introducing religion into politics is the Roman Catholic Church. This is not because the other Churches have been less desirous of controlling political life, but because the circumstances that gave rise to religious dissent have also limited the power the clergy could exercise over secular life. And, again, the evil effect of the Church on secular life is not accidental, it is part and parcel of the clerical relation to social affairs. The clergy do not judge policies or peoples from the standpoint of the common welfare, but from that of specific beliefs. If a man holds a particular opinion he is, *prima facie*, a good citizen. If he does not he is, *prima facie*, a bad one. It is this attitude which is largely responsible for the many persecutions that have disgraced Christian history. And, in all probability, it has been responsible for more evils than any other single factor one could select. The action of the Church in Spain crippled for generations its commercial, scientific, and industrial prosperity. In France the persecutions of the Huguenots drove out an important industrial community. In Ireland religion is largely responsible for the murderous warfare between the two sects. From the time when the Christian Church first exercised a dominating influence on secular life down to its present stand against a reform of the divorce laws and the reasonable use of the day of rest, the interference of the clergy in the political and social life of the people has been one long catalogue of disasters. The one lesson of human experience is, "Keep the priest out of politics."

* * *

The Lesson of Experience.

The leopard does not change its spots nor the Ethiopian his skin. A clergyman that is honest in his profession of religious belief cannot look at social and political life from the standpoint of a healthy citizenship. He has one ultimate standard of social value, and that is conformity with his peculiar religious opinions. We see this in all discussions on education, on the proper use of Sunday, and on every other question of social value. In none of these cases is he content to take the fact of social well-being as the test of what is advisable; and it is because the clergy have always shown themselves substantially incapable of divesting themselves of their sectarian passions that the secular power has so often had to step in and curtail the activities of the Churches. To-day the clergy find the people surely slipping from their control. Few that are outside the Roman Church now tremble at their thunders. The clergy can no longer command, they

can only cajole. But because they are losing their hold on people religiously they are the more eager to maintain an influence through other channels. Their emergence in the political field of recent years has been one of the ugliest features of the times. If they were really enamoured of political work there is an easy way for them to gratify their passion. Let them leave the Church and devote themselves to other fields of work. But we should be blind to all the lessons that history has to teach if we failed to see in their interference in political matters merely another move in the game of perpetuating the power of one of the most dangerous superstitions that have ever afflicted human society.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"The Faith of a Modernist."

WALTER EVERETT BURNETT, D.D., is a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, U.S.A. He calls himself a Modernist, and a sermon he recently delivered, for the purpose of helping modern doubters, was published in the *Christian World Pulpit* of December 7, 1922, in which he tries to express the beliefs of a person who frankly accepts the modern viewpoints and yet holds fast to the great essentials of the Christian faith. Dr. Burnett regrets the fact that there are "little towns where the ministers preach the necessity of believing the Bible literally," because when boys and girls from such places "get into a university classroom where evolution is taken for granted they are as cruelly shocked and chilled as a baby would be that was taken from its mother's arms and plunged into an icy pool." He severely blames the people who "try to brush the whole matter aside after the manner of the dear old lady who, when first informed that some leading thinkers really believed that the human race had come from lower orders, said aghast, 'Well, if it's true we certainly should try to hush it up.'" He is convinced that "a hush it up" policy would prove suicidal to the Church. The policy of opposing the new learning would be equally disastrous. Dr. Burnett says:—

We can fume against it, call it Atheistic, denounce it energetically, and do our best to hold the thinking of the world to the old beliefs. Some good men follow this course. William Jennings Bryan is going up and down the land denouncing evolution and all its works, and calling the faithful back to the old paths. He is an upright and an eloquent man, but for him to plunge into this field, where he is a novice, and undertake to overthrow what the mass of expert scientific opinion of to-day accepts as proved beyond question, reminds one of Don Quixote tilting at windmills, and is not to be taken seriously. I take it that we cannot vociferously shout the facts down. Facts must be respected wherever found.

In sheer justice to Mr. Bryan and those who agree with him, however, it should be borne in mind that they vociferously shout evolution down simply because to them it is not a fact. Mr. Bryan is a journalist, and two well-known British journalists are vigorous opponents of the theory of evolution. In America, it must be added, though its watchword is Liberty, there is religiously much greater conservatism than in Great Britain. The Presbyterian Church, for example, is noted for its theological narrowness. Its fidelity to the Westminster Confession is of the most literal character. It is true that a few of its ministers are wonderfully broad-minded, and these, as a rule, belong to what used to be the New School, while those who belong to what used to be the Old School are generally distinguished for their orthodoxy. The Rev. Dr. Fosdick, minister of the First Presbyterian Church, New York, is being prosecuted for heresy; and he is

closely associated with Professors Foakes Jackson and Lake, of Union Theological Seminary, who are probably more heterodox than himself. But our present point is that the orthodox divines are anti-scientists because they regard science as a deliberate enemy of God's truth, which it undoubtedly is if the Bible is God's Word.

Dr. Burnett is a thorough-going evolutionist. He furnishes several of the well-known evidences of the truth of the theory; and then he dwells upon the bearings of modern scientific thought upon the Bible. Of the New Testament he has the courage to speak thus:—

It is not possible to conceive of it as an absolutely defined body of truth, fitted part to part with perfect accuracy and to be taken literally. The study of the writings themselves disproves such a belief, and the processes by which men arrive at truth disprove it no less conclusively.

Surely such a theory of the writing of the Bible undermines completely the belief in its Divine inspiration and in miracles of all kinds. Dr. Burnett himself states that point as follows:—

If we place the main emphasis upon the natural processes by which the world has taken form, the human type developed, the literature of the Bible evolved, do we not thereby so strongly discount miracles as to practically rule them out. Even though we believe that these natural processes are guided by an inward directive urge that we describe in terms of an indwelling Creative Intelligence and Will, do we not practically bind him to act only in orderly, natural ways? Miracles then seem to vanish.

Of course, the reverend gentleman is a firm believer in miracles, though his reasoning concerning them is wholly inconclusive. Nobody doubts the wonderfulness of natural processes or the depth of mystery that characterizes all mental activity; but the wonders of the universe are in no sense whatever supernatural, or even miraculous in the theological acceptance of that term. Professor Haeckel wrote a fascinating book entitled *The Wonders of Life*; but nowhere did he discern the faintest trace of supernatural operation. Dr. Burnett is much cleverer and more far-seeing than Professor Haeckel was, because he makes a miraculous mental leap and discovers "a human mind in which the indwelling God has come to fullest, clearest realization." That discovery was not made through any natural process whatever, and we have no hesitation in pronouncing it utterly false. The reverend gentleman does not know that God exists. God is not a recognizable being, but merely an object of belief. Those who do not believe in him do not see in natural processes any sign of a supernatural guidance or direction.

At this point Dr. Burnett becomes purely dogmatic. It is an unverifiable dogmatism to declare that "an unprejudiced person cannot read the New Testament without receiving a profound impression that the career of Jesus was marked throughout by achievements that are out of the range of the human as we have known it." We know people who have read the New Testament as often and quite as free from prejudice, to say the least, as Dr. Burnett himself has done, and who have arrived at an entirely different conclusion concerning the Gospel Jesus. To them he is a manufactured being, like Osiris, Adonis, Attis, and Mithra, who never lived at all. What the Four Gospels give us is an interesting collection of legends, which cannot be taken as facts except by supernatural believers, and by them only with blinded eyes.

As a matter of fact Dr. Burnett is not a Modernist. His Christology is identical with that cherished by the Catholic Church from the fourth century. To the genuine Modernist it is absolutely unbelievable; and yet the reverend gentleman treats it as if no other were

conceivable, and as recommending itself to every one who is prepared to think. Take the following:—

I met an unusually intelligent young man some weeks ago, who seemed like a promising candidate for Church-membership, so high-minded was he. But at the first mention of the matter he veered off with the laughing remark: "Oh, I don't believe in religion." "I don't believe in God or in Christ," he said later with beautiful frankness. An interview disclosed that he believed in Nature and her processes, but could not accept the Christian doctrines. "Well, let us think about this Nature in which you believe," I said. "It is orderly, is it not, more wonderfully so than we can fully grasp as yet, because there are laws operating in it that we do not understand? And a part of this orderliness is the reality of human personalities, for man is in the order and a very important part of it. But a very essential part of man is his ethical sense—his sense of righteousness. So Nature is very wonderful after all. It is an order of things that finally brings forth the human type with its spiritual endowments. But the finest flower of spiritual manhood is Jesus. He is your Nature's highest product. Isn't it reasonable to believe that Nature fulfilling itself thus in a perfect spiritual personality is itself intelligent and purposeful? Why not call this Creative Intelligence God? And if Jesus is the highest that we know, are we not bound to obey him—to cultivate a Spirit like his and live our lives by his teachings? To these questions he could only answer, "Yes."

He does not tell us whether the young man was sufficiently converted to become a candidate for church membership or not; but if he answered Dr. Burnett's questions in the affirmative, as represented in that extract, we seriously doubt his possession of unusual intelligence. It is perfectly true that man is a natural product; but "spiritual manhood" is a theological invention, and has only an imaginative existence. The Jesus described by Dr. Burnett is likewise a theological creation, and never was an objective reality. Had that young man been unusually intelligent he would have cross questioned the divine, and shown him the worthlessness of his argument.

We thus conclude that the faith of a Modernist, as delineated by Dr. Burnett, gives the lie direct to the theory of evolution, and that the man who holds such a faith cannot consistently be an evolutionist. Modern knowledge and the ancient faith are at irrepressible conflict with each other. It is the Fundamentalists alone who are consistent believers. Science and organized Christianity can never be reconciled.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Comedian in a Cassock.

I had rather be a dog and bay the moon than such a Roman.
—Shakespeare.

The great modern need is to uneducate the people.
—G. K. Chesterton.

RESPLENDENT in the motley of the jester, full of quips and cranks, Mr. Gilbert K. Chesterton is one of the most familiar figures in the literary arena. Some innocent folks regard him as being up-to-date as one of the Midnight Follies. Yet it is as plain as a pikestaff that Chesterton does not represent contemporary thought. What he does represent is as sorry and reactionary as the black-shirted Fascisti of Italy. He has attacked Woman's Suffrage; he dislikes Jewish people; he is never happier than when telling the working classes when and where they are wrong. The truth is, probably, that Chesterton is a Democrat who finds himself in the fold of the Catholic Church, and, being in Rome, does as the Romans do. He is not a

hard-shell Tory, for his humour is continually coming to his rescue, but he has delighted the Tories far more than the Intellectuals. His humour, too, excellent though it be, is of the Peter Pan brand, that of the high-spirited schoolboy who has never grown up, and the printed page remains to show his freakish, Puck-like prejudices and perversity. Quixote, democrat, Roman Catholic, humorist, he is one of the oddest human combinations.

In his *Victorian Age of Literature* (Williams and Norgate), Chesterton used his talents most tyrannously in the service of the most hide-bound and reactionary of the Churches. He has nothing but studied jibes and calculated insults for the great "intellectuals." Ignoring the shelf-full of masterpieces that has come from the greatest of living English novelists, Chesterton says of Thomas Hardy that he is "a sort of village Atheist brooding and blaspheming over the village idiot." Swinburne, a poet of extraordinary genius, is accused of composing "a learned and sympathetic and indecent parody on the Litany of the Blessed Virgin"; surely a most ironical suggestion in a Protestant country, where but five per cent. of the population care a straw concerning the Catholic Church. In speaking of *Songs Before Sunrise* he tries to belittle these superb lyrics with the cheap joke that they were songs to a sunrise that never arrived. According to Chesterton the great Victorian authors were "lame giants." Robert Browning, who threw out masterpieces as a volcano does lava, is reproached with making "spluttering and spiteful puns" about three half-forgotten Catholic priests. One of the most remarkable women of the century, Emily Bronte, is described as being as "unsociable as a storm at midnight." The only Freethinker to whom Chesterton is decently civil is that shy genius James Thomson, the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, who, he says, pontifically, "knew how to be democratic in the dark." As Chesterton spells the poet's name wrongly, the compliment is a doubtful one after all. This precious volume is intended by the publishers to be a guide to beginners in literature, and Chesterton, forsooth, is the man who challenges the dogmatism of the Freethinker; convicts science of irrationality; and who, with the eye of faith, finds liberty inside the barred cells of monasteries, nunneries, and other retreats for the feeble-minded.

In many of his books Chesterton speaks well of Charles Dickens, but, doubtless, he remembers that this novelist, throughout his literary career, poked fun at the Nonconformists, whom he regarded with the same affection that most people display towards fleas. Chesterton is really too cavalier in his likes and dislikes, and he always prefers the bludgeon to the rapier. Far too much has been made of Chesterton's supposed likeness to old Doctor Johnson. Thus, when someone said, "You cannot put the clock back," meaning that you cannot put events back, Chesterton answers with a shout, "The reply is, you can put the clock back." Johnson was fond of verbal victory, but he would have disdained such word-juggling as this. The fact is, Chesterton uses his undoubted ability too much as an Old Bailey special pleader. His sense of humour, too, is sometimes smothered by his piety, especially when he discards his motley and ascends the pulpit. "Mythology and newspapers cannot co-exist" would be a lively and true epigram if newspapers were edited by honest men. But did it never occur to Chesterton that in introducing superstition to a mixed audience he had done a rash thing? And if it had, would he have been better pleased at the knowledge that Chesterton in cap and bells cuts a braver and more pleasing figure than Chesterton, with lengthened features, wearing a cassock? It is too late in England for a jocose apologist for mediævalism to be regarded seriously.

MIMNERMUS.

Winter Fire-Festivals.

WITH variations on the material side of life there must of necessity take place changes in the methods by which men and women give expression to their emotions and thoughts, especially when those emotions and thoughts are concerned with mankind's attitude towards the rest of the universe. Changes in the economic structure of society, such as from the manor with its serfs to the factory with its wage-slaves, bring with them new ideas or old ideas modified to fit the new conditions; and consequently many an old custom and many an ancient festivity is to some extent deprived of its one time significance, even for those who keep up the old custom or festivity in a modified way with the nearest approach to the old way. It may be that in many places in Europe there are people who, at the present time, consciously retain many of the old superstitions, because their mode of life has not been greatly altered by the march of modern civilization. But there must be thousands of men and women in country districts where modern methods of wealth production have changed the habits of living, who put a special block of wood on the fire for Christmas eve without thinking of it as a relic of non-Christian days. With all our modern variations in ways of living, whether in the sphere of economics, or of general social intercourse, or the realms of thought and art, there remain with us ghosts of the past. This is seen in the persistence of the Yule-fire, even where an actual log is not to be had, but the family gathers around a specially large fire on Christmas eve, or on some night during the Christmas and New Year festivities.

Let us take ourselves back to the old days of England, at a time when many of the Pagan Yuletide superstitions were, doubtless, comparatively fresh in the minds of the people, even though the Church had given them a Christian gloss. The Yule-log was to be burned in the hall of the ancient manor. Having been cut down in readiness, it was hauled in by the servants and such of the people who cared to help, followed by a procession of retainers and the remainder of the people, who did their share in creating merriment. Blowing of horns and trumpets, blazing lights, shouting and beating of drums contributed to making the ceremony as joyous as possible. At last the log was placed upon the hearth of the manorial hall, and the latter was soon filled with the bright and cheering light from the flames and sparks, as the huge fire roared up the great chimney. Men, women, and children gambled, danced, ate and drank, and masqueraded before the symbol of the Sun-god, the giver of life, who was to make the earth bring forth plenty in the coming year, when the winter powers of darkness have been subdued. Or, perhaps, the sacred fire was looked upon as the means of purifying life of its ills and diseases, and driving the powers of evil away from the homes and haunts of men. As the earthly representative of the great orb of heaven, it had power to protect human beings against the influence of the spirits who brought disease, ill-health, and misfortune to mankind.

The burning of the Yule-log was but the beginning of the entertainment given in many an old English mansion to the servants, tenants, and neighbours. When the strong beer had been broached, the black-jacks were sent round and toast, sugar, nutmeg, and cheese were distributed as the merry-making went on. From now until the Christmas holidays were over the tables were kept groaning beneath their weight of food and drink. Surloins of beef, capons, turkeys, minced-pies, geese, plum-puddings, and beer were ready to be partaken of by all. But the most important dish on Christmas Day, was at one time the boar's head. The

carrying of this to the head of the table was a preliminary ceremony to the Christmas dinner, and was accompanied by the singing of a carol which was more concerned with feasting than with Christ, as the following will show:—

Be glad, lords, both more and lasse,
For this hath ordained our steward
To cheer you all this Christmasse,
The Boar's Head with mustard.¹

In order to realize that the burning of the Yule-log was not a Christian ceremony in its origin, and that it was not simply a case of making a big fire for the sake of warmth on a holiday night during winter, it is necessary to review some of the non-Christian Yuletide superstitions, many of which came to do service under Christianity, the arch-plagiariſt. Those who wish for further details than such as I can give here may consult Frazer's *Golden Bough*, Abridged Ed.; Rhys' *Celtic Heathendom*; Squire's *Celtic Myth and Legend*, and Wheeler's *Footsteps of the Past*.

In ancient Europe it was the custom to celebrate not only a midwinter, but also a midsummer fire festival, and both appear to have been connected with the sun who, as solar deity, gave life and warmth to man and made possible the arts of agriculture and husbandry, and drove away or destroyed the powers of darkness, disease, and misfortune.

Frazer, in discussing the interpretation of fire-festivals, casts his vote in favour of the theory that the fires are but purifying agents which burn up everything that is impure or evil, as against the solar theory which connects the fires with the sun. But I am at a loss to understand why the fires, even as purifying agents, could not be considered by the ancient Europeans as the earthly representatives of the sun, and at the same time be regarded as symbols of the Sun-god in his capacity of giver of life, light, and warmth to man, and fructifier of the earth in general.

As S. Reinach says:—

Germans and Celts agreed in the practice of helping the sun by lighting brands, especially at the beginning of spring and in the solstices, and by carrying about and finally immersing fiery wheels. The fire on the hearth was assimilated to the sun and participated in his sanctity; in the event of an epidemic it was extinguished and replaced by a *new fire*, produced by rubbing two pieces of wood together (*Orpheus*, p. 126).

It appears that as late as the middle of the nineteenth century the Yule-log rites were kept in various places in Central Germany. Often the oak log was fixed into the floor of the hearth and there kept aglow day after day until next Yuletide. Then it was replaced by a new log, and the ashes of the old log were made into powder to be scattered over the fields, in the hope of the crops being thereby fertilised. In Westphalia it was believed that lightning would not harm a house in which there was a sacred Yule-log. In view of this it was the custom to keep the partly burned log in order to place it on the fire whenever a thunder-storm occurred.

According to the popular notion in many provinces of France the charred Yule-log, if kept in the house was a preventive against chilblains in winter, a cure for many of the maladies with which cattle are plagued, and, if steeped in the water which was given to cows to drink it had some magic influence upon them, as a kind of fructifier, and enabled them to calve more easily.

To the Yule-log was also attributed the virtue of preventing wheat from becoming mildewed if its ashes were sprinkled over the fields. While in Peri-

gord an application of the charcoal and ashes from the log was considered to be an excellent cure for swollen glands.

Similar beliefs were held by the Southern Slavs, and in England the old custom of lighting the new log with a fragment of the old one was popular at one time. This portion of the old Yule-log, which had been religiously preserved for a twelvemonth, possessed the sacred power of destroying the influence of fiends and witches, and was a preventive against fire and lightning to the house in which it was kept.

In the Celtic winter fire-festivals held on the eve of November or, as it is now called, All-halloween, there was a note of sadness. Known in Ireland and Scotland as the festival of "Samhain," and in Wales as the "Night of the Winter Calends," the eve of November, which appears to have been at one time the end of the year, saw the Sun-god's power in its declension, and the strength of the gods of darkness and the underworld increasing. Winter, with its long black nights and its days devoid of the sun's glorious rays, was at hand. The time when evil spirits and the fiends of darkness and mischief were abroad working their ill-will against mankind had arrived. Hence, some means of protection had to be resorted to. Bonfires were lit, and thus men and women were, in some measure, able to avail themselves of the Sun-god's power against the world of evil beings, if only by sympathetic magic. In a sense the Sun-god was in the midst of his people when they were gathered together, if it were but round a bonfire.

Until quite recent days in Wales it was the custom to light a huge bonfire on the last night of October at the top of a hill. The bonfire was watched until it went out, and then the people ran like fury down the hillsides, shouting something to the effect of "the devil take the hindmost." And no doubt in ancient days, not only in Wales, but also, in England, Scotland, and Ireland, the last to reach the foot of the hill was offered up as an actual sacrifice to the power of evil. At one time, in Ireland, a great bonfire was made on the eve of November, or All-halloween, at a place called Tlachtga after the daughter of the magician Mog Ruith. From this, according to the legend, all the hearths in Ireland were supplied with the sacred fire, which was to protect the people from evil spirits and witches during the winter months.

In the Rev. James Gardner's *Faiths of the World*, a sufficiently old and orthodox dictionary of religions, the author says, "The All-Hallow-Even fire seems to have been a relic of Druidism" (Vol. I, p. 64), and he relates how on All Saints' Eve, in Perthshire, a bonfire was made in every village. After the fire had gone out the ashes were collected and formed into a circle, and round the circle were placed stones representing each person who had watched the bonfire. Any person whose stone moved out of its place by next morning was believed to be doomed to die during the year. In Druid days the people received sacred fire from the priest during the morning after the bonfire, and remained under its divine protection for the ensuing twelve months, the symbolic fire doing duty for the Sun-god while the powers of darkness were for a time in great evidence.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

Nowadays an historical view is often supposed to mean a conservative one. This results partly from the fact that learning has often allowed itself, for gold and honour, to be misapplied in supporting obsolete powers, and in serving predatory interests, by pointing to departed splendours and the historical acquisition of rights hurtful to the common weal. Natural science cannot easily be misused for such purposes.—Lange, "History of Materialism."

¹ Quoted in Knight's *Old England*, Vol. II, p. 122, on which I have drawn for some details.



The Fear of Poetry.

ALMOST any man who is asked to look at a picture or to read a poem because it is beautiful will shrink into himself in a mood partly suspicious and partly fearful. He is afraid either to assume interest which perhaps he does not feel or to allow the interest which he does feel its natural expression. He has been taught to regard art as rather effeminate, and his natural love of beauty something to be rather ashamed of, certainly to be repressed. He cannot see how either a picture or poem can have any possible interest or practical value for a really masculine man. Three parts of this is an egoistic fear of appearing sentimental, what in his disregard for the beautiful in words he would call "being sloppy." At the same time, most people are inclined to consider poetry as essentially a thing which is of no practical value and distinctly not business. They know quite well that there is no money in it. They know that the poet rarely makes a fortune, and they feel certain that the reading of his work will not by any chance have any influence upon their position in life so far as regards the addition to their financial welfare. Generally the man who is asked to look at a picture or to read a poem protects himself with an assumed astonishment at the request and the remark, "I shouldn't have thought you were interested in that sort of thing."

The value of poetry, apart from the musical quality which it possesses or should possess, that has an immediately practical aspect is inherent in the fact that a poem is the expression of an epitome of experience. It is the concrete expression of an ideal which has arisen in the poet's mind and which is the outcome of his observations of his fellow-men or of Nature. His mode of expression is chosen because poetry is the form in which an additional beauty can be given to experience by its utterance in metrical rhythm. Quite apart, therefore, from the beauty of this method of expression, which is something that modern education tends to deaden in the comprehension of most people, there is in most poems a distinct and practical value, which is that extension of experience everyone has now agreed to regard as true education, and it cannot be denied that all education is of the utmost practical value. But besides this practical value, a poem possesses something more. It possesses the wonder of words used to produce a sensation similar to that which is produced by beautiful music of the instrumental type. This wonder of words it is given to only a very small proportion of people to appreciate, and their appreciation rests not upon some special function or special development of their intellect but upon the happy chance that they have been brought to the realization of words by some enthusiast who has passed on to them the light which has illumined his own experience.

The great majority of people, however, remember their unfortunate school days, and they do not remember them with the joy which they pretend. Particularly is this the case with regard to whatever slight attempt may have been made to acquaint them with poetry. The attempt certainly never did anything to arouse their enthusiasm. It did, on the contrary, everything that was possible to dull the taste for words which I am quite sure every child possesses. A selected passage learned by heart may have some value from an educational point of view. It may be an excellent exercise in the useful and necessary development of mnemonics, but it certainly does nothing to cultivate a taste for the poetic art.

Poetry has degenerated in our schools into a horrid monotonous task, in the repetition of phrases that have become meaningless. Just as the majority of people never read the Bible because it is supposed to be the

word of God, so they never read Shakespeare because they have been taught that he expressed something inspired which they can hardly be expected to understand, although they have had to learn some passages of his writings by rote without attaching any meaning or value to them. In short, the majority of the adult population of this country to-day, whatever may have been their possibilities as children, can find no fun in poetry, and they can put it to no useful purpose, even that hedonistic purpose of passing their leisure time pleasantly.

A different result might perhaps be achieved if a child's introduction to poetry were not so brutal. Most children love to recite all kinds of nonsense which they pick up at the music-halls, and to repeat what are known as the "art titles," which they read on the screen of the cinema. There is no doubt whatever that they would equally love to recite poetry if they were shown that it was something other than a dull and very deadly task. The nonsense rhymes of Lewis Carroll are perhaps unsuitable, although there is really very little reason to regard them as unsuitable. Intelligent fun should hardly be reserved for the adult, but there are very many simple ballads which would make an immediate appeal to the child's mind, if it is feared that the youthful intelligence might be strained by its acquaintance with such a piece as Keats' *Ode to a Grecian Urn*.

The English love of narrative art is exemplified in the children's love of the penny dreadful. In the case of boys, Sexton Blake and Deadwood Dick, and in the case of girls, tales of remarkable school-girls contained in such publications as *The School Friend*. These publications, while they do no harm and are certainly stimulating to children's imaginations, show quite clearly that the average child would be immediately interested in the ballad poetry in which our literature is so rich. They would find the adventure, the excitement, the search for which is not only confined to children, in this realm of beauty. They would come to understand more clearly that all the experiences of life are capable of being regarded as adventures, something to look forward to, containing perhaps some hidden spark of stimulant, instead of looking upon the occurrences of every day as dull and uninteresting, as well as quite uninspired. They would indeed adventure in the realm of beauty.

Perhaps it would be considered desirable, as indeed in the majority of cases it is desirable, when introducing a student to literature, to give to school children, not the archaic beauty of Shakespeare, but the best poems of the writers of our own time. If that were so, it is easily possible to select suitable matter, and to lead very simple verse on to the study of our mystical poets whose intuitional experience is so much vaster than that of the average citizen.

Poetry in its excellence is a beautiful story expressed in beautiful and rhythmic words. For a human being to care for poetry is extremely natural. The only reason why the modern man does not care for poetry is that his natural instinct to make the most of words and to appreciate their texture and context was stultified at school by the lack of a gentle and kindly introduction to literature and letters, and a complete stultification of his natural desires by a routine and grindingly monotonous memory lesson in the repetition of none too carefully selected lines. That is why it is impossible to discuss poetry with the majority of people who shrink into themselves merely at the mention of the word art.

G. E. FUSSELL.

The Titans are the foil of polytheism, as the devil may be considered the foil of monotheism, though, like the only God to whom he stands in contrast, he is not a poetic figure.—Goethe, "*Wahrheit und Dichtung*."

Acid Drops.

1922 is at an end, and one way or another there are few who will regret its decease. It has been a year of depression and disappointment. In the political world our leaders have shown themselves as inapt as ever at understanding the real nature of social movements, with the result that the world is as unsettled to-day as it was when the "Great" war concluded. Experience has shown that once the cementing force of a common danger was removed the allies were unable to act together in a single direction that made for the real peace of the world. It was a common danger that drew them together, motivated by a hatred of a common enemy; and some better basis than that must be found for real unity and profitable work. After all the basis of social life is not repulsion but attraction, and the man or the nation who forgets this is apt to be reminded of it in a more or less unpleasant manner. To-day Europe and its armies, larger than they were in 1914, with its air fleets, its unashamed talk of future wars, its suspicions, its warring nationalities, and its disorganized social life, are evidences that we have not, after all, learned very much from one of the most blood-thirsty and devastating wars of history.

In all this the impotence of the Churches is one of the outstanding facts. During the war, when it was a matter of calling men to the slaughter, the voices of the Churches could be heard on every hand. When the time of armistice came, and the nation was in sore need of counsels of moderation and of mercy—which in that case would have been ultimately counsels of commonsense and of ultimate profit—they remained dumb or their voices were heard on the wrong side. In this the Churches proved themselves true to their traditions, ever ready to ally themselves to the reactionary force of militarism, and to shout whatever was the popular cry of the moment so long as it did not threaten their own immediate well-being. The Churches are to-day suffering the contempt they richly deserve.

But though under a cloud it would be a grievous error for Freethinkers to imagine that the Churches are incapable of mischief. There are multitudes of the people still sunk in the grossest of superstitions, and these always form a nucleus to which the Churches can make a profitable appeal. The Churches are active in the matter of obstructing a rational reform of our divorce laws, of the right use of a day of rest, and in other directions; and there is the ever present danger that the vested interests of the country know only too well that for bending the people to their will, and to blind them to the real social issues before them there is no other agency so powerful as is that of religion. In the matter of education there is also another fight before us. The Church party is in power once more, and there is every probability that before long the Government will introduce a Bill, based on a backstairs agreement between Nonconformists and Episcopalians, which will give a much larger measure of denominational religious teaching that exists at present.

All this means that Freethinkers must be up and doing if they desire things to go as they should go. It is idle to think that Christianity is dead. Intellectually, it is beneath contempt, but its power for evil still remains. And there is only one sure way of preventing Christianity doing more evil, that is to go on making Freethinkers. There are signs that the Roman Catholic Church is making headway, it is certainly maintaining a growing campaign of popular advocacy, and there is no mistaking the ultimate aim of that body. And by sheer pressure of circumstances the Churches will be driven together for mutual protection. To make Freethinkers, and still more Freethinkers is our only wise policy. Every one we secure is a fresh recruit for the army of the light. Every copy of the *Freethinker* that is put into circulation is new shot and shell against the common enemy. We must not allow ourselves to be lulled into inactivity by a fancied security. "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance."

That is a golden maxim, and they who forget it usually recall it when it is too late.

A Christmas item from the daily papers of December 21:—

Sixteen aeroplanes have made a surprise raid on a number of enemy Waziri villages. Bombs were dropped and fire was opened on the natives from machine guns. Several people were killed and a number of cattle destroyed.

And only the other day these same papers were writing indignant articles on Germans dropping bombs on undefended towns! Yet some folk question the barbarising influence of war. It is cheering to learn that "The aeroplanes returned safely." It is a pity we have not something in the nature of the Iron Cross to give for so daringly bombing a number of native huts. It is quite evident, however, that we are setting the example for the unlimited use of bombing in all future wars.

A fakir at Lahore, India, has been charged with causing the death of a man by a series of incantations and experiments devised to get rid of the devils that possessed him. The man was sick, and "spirits" was diagnosed. Then the fakir proceeded to burn a number of evil-smelling things under the man's nose and burned him with red hot irons to drive the devils out. Christians who are inclined to smile at this sort of thing should reflect that it is quite in line with New Testament teaching, and also with the practice of the Christian Church. In the New Testament sickness and insanity are invariably treated as being due to possession, and this was the explanation of Jesus Christ himself. Fasting was a common method of getting rid of the devils, and during the middle ages the Church had quite an elaborate system of treatment to make the devils so uncomfortable that they would leave. Lunatics were whipped and branded right down to the end of the eighteenth century in order to get rid of the possessing spirits. Even to-day the Church of England Clergyman is, according to the prayer book, given the power to cast out evil spirits. That Indian fakir is helping Christians to see their own religion as it was before modern science took it in hand and divested it of some of its savagery.

A couple of clergymen at Burton are holding what they call a series of conferences, and one of the recent ones was upon the subject of "Conscience." They are a very nice pair, and quite liberal, since they agreed that an Atheist might have a conscience, but it could not be as tender as that of one who believed in God. Now that is very condescending, and we suppose that Atheists are allowed to be so far human as this concession would imply. But of all the impertinent ignorarmuses the world holds commend us to the average Christian parson—and he goes through life under the delusion that he is a cultured gentleman! That is the only circumstance which gives a spice of humour to the situation.

Keep on saying the same thing and in the end mere repetition will have the effect of making a number of people accept it as true. That is the policy of the clergy, and as evidence there is the following from Dean Welldon:—

Nineteen centuries have passed away since Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem. But he remains the perfect man, the archetypal man, the acknowledged head of the human family; there is, and there can be, no other like Him.

Now if that is not trading on the lack of thinking of the average man and woman, what is it? Consider the way in which the birth of the New Testament Jesus Christ is taken as an accepted historic fact. Dean Welldon knows just as well as we do, whether he believes it or not does not matter, that it is very doubtful whether any such character actually existed. That is trick number one—passing off a myth on the people as though it were an historical truth as unquestionable as the birth of Julius Caesar.

Then take the rest of the paragraph. Who says he is the perfect man? Dean Welldon and other Christians. Who says he is the acknowledged head of the human family? None but Christians. There are millions of Freethinkers who do not accept him as such. There are four hundred million Buddhists who do not accept him as such. There are two hundred and fifty million Mohammedans who will not have him in that capacity. Even nominal Christians do not number more than a third of the earth's inhabitants. And a spokesman of this nominal third has the impudence to write that Jesus Christ is the acknowledged head of the human family! It is a fine example of Christian arrogance and impertinence.

It is that, but it is more than that. Dean Welldon is not merely saying that which is untrue, he knows it is not true. It is not a question of whether Jesus is a perfect character or not, but merely whether the human race as a whole acknowledge him as its head; and that is so clearly not the case that one cannot excuse anyone outside an idiot asylum on the ground that they thought it was the case. Dean Welldon is simply trading on the thoughtlessness of his readers; and, yet, when the claims of Christianity are examined they will be found to be mostly built on such statements as these; and they are allowed to pass muster because most do not think about them, and many of those who do, hardly care to denounce them for what they really are—deliberate falsehoods told for the deliberate purpose of misleading the people.

It was a saying among the cultured people of Pagan Rome that two priests could not meet in the street without smiling in each other's face. Our priests can meet in their hundreds, but without the smile. That cannot surely be because they do not recognise in each other a fellow practitioner on human credulity. It only means that they have more control over the muscles of their faces.

According to a statement made by the Rev. J. Hagger at a meeting of the Scottish Baptist Assembly, the number of Baptists in Russia have increased from 110,000 to nearly two millions. We have no means of testing the figures, but assuming their accuracy one wonders on what the stories of the Bolshevik Government suppressing religious observances are based. We suspect the truth that lies in the fact that the Bolshevik Government is openly opposed to religions, whereas all other governments find it to their interest to see that the people get plenty of it. And as the difficulties of the Russian Government increase we shall be quite prepared to see them make some sort of a deal with the various Churches. And this will be, not that Christianity is of any real use to the people, but because it is the most efficient form of "dope" which any government can have at its disposal. Constantine the Great found it so, and other governments have found it so since. That is why no matter what else the people go short of they are never allowed to go short of religion.

Apropos of what has been said on religion in Russia, we notice that the special correspondent of the *Christian World* is very incensed on account of the circulation in Russia of official (?) attacks on Christianity through the circulation of pamphlets attacking the sacredness of festivals and the character of priests and popes. The latter it describes as a—

scurrilous, almost an unreadable vilification of the Russian clergy—priests and monks alike. There is not one injunction of the Decalogue, we are told, which has not been violated in village manse, monastery, and bishop's palace.

But the dissolute character of the Russian clergy has for several generations been a commonplace with the best of the Russian novelists, and the ignorance of masses of the village clergy could only be appreciated by those who knew something of the ignorance of the Russian peasantry as a whole. But the *Christian World* never protested against the character of the clergy as drawn by the principal novelists and writers of Russia, including Tolstoi.

Why then is it so shocked when the same things are said by the present day writers? The distinction appears to be that the one was done in the name of a mythical "pure" Christianity, and the other in the name of anti-Christianity. Now if the *Christian World* had protested against this kind of propaganda being carried on by the government we should have sympathized with it in its protest. For we hold that the right attitude of a government is to leave religion severely alone. But that is not what the *Christian World* means. It has no objection to a government interfering in the matter of religion, so long as it is backing the religion with which it agrees.

The path leading to the Church at Sutton-under-Brailles (Warwick) is overgrown with weeds, and the Church officials asked the Council to clear the path. The chairman replied that if the congregation went to church regularly there would be no weeds there. That was a very palpable hit.

At University College, Bangor, Wales, a Chair of Theology has just been established. Theology has been weak on its legs for some time, but we doubt very much whether any number of chairs can save it now. What it really needs is a coffin.

What has become of the clerical interest that was shown soon after the war in the question of care for infants. It will be remembered that many of the bishops, with quite a number of the other clergy were preaching that we must take more care of the young, the main reason being that if we did not we should be quite unable to put another army into the field when called upon to do so. But since the slump in trade and the presence of a huge army of unemployed has made recruiting fairly easy, the clergy have been quite silent on this question of care for infants. In 1919 they were shrieking, "Get plenty of babies and look after them." The latter part of the message was quite good, however one might query the value of the first part. But why are they silent now? It cannot be that there is less need for the care of infants now than in 1919. We suppose that as usual the clergy were quite ready to take hold of any cry that promised to get the public ear, but without any particular interest in the thing about which they were shouting.

The contributor of "Current Comment" to the *Catholic Herald* (December 30) quotes from Mr. G. K. Chesterton the statement that Protestantism is helpless. "It destroyed the only world-wide fellowship man had ever known, and broke up the unity of belief on which it rested." A divine institution, the depository of the "faith once delivered to the saints," which could not hold its own against what is called "Protestantism," is truly a worthy foundation on which to erect a "world-wide fellowship." The Roman Catholic Church is a divine institution as long as it has no competitors. Hence its golden rule, Infallibility must not allow spiritual rivals within the arena of religion.

The same issue of our contemporary calls to task the Rev. J. H. Shakespeare, M.A., D.D.—the immortal William had no such alphabetical array after his name—for seeking the reunion of Christendom outside the one true fold. In the Roman Catholic view, says the *Herald*, the Baptist's "Lord's Supper," is not "our Lord's Sacrament" at all. These displays of Christian humility are not likely to make an impression on British Nonconformists. Their "progressive revelation," it is true, has brought them some distance away from the tombs of their ancestors; but not quite so far that they have forgotten all about them.

Desplein had no doubts; he was positive. His bold and unqualified Atheism was like that of many scientific men, the best men in the world, but invincible Atheists—Atheists such as religious people declare to be impossible.—Balzac, "The Atheist's Mass."

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.

W. BINDON.—We have not seen the article, and so cannot say what exactly was meant by the phrase "Matter has no aim or purpose." On the face of it, it is downright nonsense. "Matter," in both science and philosophy has a perfectly definite meaning and function, and it is always suspicious to find anyone over anxious to disown a word that is exposed to fashionable or popular obloquy. "Matter" is a methodological concept without which much of our science would be meaningless and our philosophy a mere jangle of words.

J. ALMOND.—We had some suspicion as to your motive in writing, which is one reason why we answered as we did. The attitude of your friend is only one more illustration of the power of pre-conceived ideas over the mind of the average man or woman.

S. SCHOFIELD.—We are obliged. Shall appear at an early date.

R. CRANK.—Thanks for what you are doing to make the *Freethinker* known. We can send more specimen copies when they are required.

E. E. STAFFORD.—Sorry, owing to holiday rush could not manage for the 31st. Hope you are quite well. It is time Liverpool got to work again.

A. RUSSELL.—We agree with the moral of your letter, namely, that in dealing with the coquetting of the political parties with the churches one should get to close quarters with the opposing forces, but we can only accept your conclusion that religion and politics should not be mixed with certain qualifications. We believe that it should be so, because we believe that the State should not concern itself at all with religion. But, on the other hand, so long as a man really believes in his religion, and also believes that it is of vital interest to the well-being of the State, we do not see that he can keep his religion apart from his politics. That is one of the justifications of our attempts to make people realize the folly and the worthlessness of all religion.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: G. Hollanby, 10s.; R. Green, 10s.; Walter Stewart, 1s.; T. Saunders, 5s.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—Mrs. M. Rogerson, New Year's Gift, £1.

G. AND S. ROLF.—Thanks for New Year's Greetings. Accept same from us. We can all do with a better year than the one that has just closed.

H. MOORE.—Sorry we have no literature dealing with the question of prohibition. Some temperance organization might be able to give you what you want.

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

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

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

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

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

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press" and crossed "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."

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

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

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

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

Foreign and Colonial.—One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

This is almost the last occasion on which we shall be able to call attention to the Annual Dinner, an advertisement of which appears on the back page of this issue. Usually there is a rush for tickets at the last moment, and as in this case the number of tickets is limited, the waiting policy may be dangerous. Besides that it is not fair to those who have the arrangements in hand. The sooner they know how many to expect the better, which means the sooner those who intend coming apply for tickets the better. There will be a good dinner, a good concert, good speeches, and a good company. What could one ask for more?

Next Sunday Mr. Cohen will lecture twice in the Public Hall, Dickenson Road, Rusholme. His afternoon subject will be "How the Gods Came; the Roots of Religion," and in the evening "How the Gods Go; Religion and Civilization." We hope that our Manchester friends will do what they can to advertise these meetings. Until the Branch succeeds in getting a more central hall there will always be special difficulties in getting the audiences that should be got in so large a place as Manchester, but the present should be packed with very little effort on the part of our friends in the city.

Will members of the National Secular Society please note that all subscriptions are due on the first day of January in each year. Those who have not already done so will oblige by remitting to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, so soon as is convenient; and those who are a day or so late may fine themselves to any amount they feel justifiable and attach it to their ordinary subscription. Even if they invent a pretext for the fine, there will be no harm done. The National Secular Society has had more calls on it this past four years than it has had for very many years, and it has hitherto been able to meet every call received, beside spending more than it has usually done on propaganda of its own initiating. It has not found it necessary to make any special appeal for funds—thanks to one or two small legacies that have fallen to it. But it is imperative that its friends and members should remember that the National Secular Society is in existence and that, like other fighting organizations, some attention must be paid to the financial side if we are to continue as we would wish.

We are not printing an index to the *Freethinker* this year. In response to requests for it we printed it for two or three years, but the demand justified neither the time nor the trouble spent on its preparation. We shall, however, have the bound volumes for 1922 on sale. They will be 17s. 6d. per volume, and only a limited number will be available.

The next meeting of the Manchester Discussion Circle will be held to-day (January 7) at 34 Goulde Street, Pendleton. We presume the meeting will be in the evening, but no time is given. Mr. Bayford will open the discussion.

We have not yet received particulars of the circumstances that led to the local Council's action, but we take the following from the *Hackney and Kingsland Gazette* :—

At the meeting of the Shoreditch Borough Council on Tuesday, Councillor J. Bellamy (I.L.) asked the Chairman of the Libraries Committee if it were true that two publications had recently been removed from the public libraries. What were the publications, and what was the reason for their withdrawal?

Councillor E. Reed (R.), the Chairman, replied that the periodicals in question were the *Communist* and the *Freethinker*. The reason for the action of the Committee was that a motion was brought forward by one of the members, seconded, and carried unanimously.

Councillor J. H. Agombar (L.) : Not unanimously!

Councillor Reed : There were no objections. Therefore I took the decision as unanimous.

Councillor Bellamy : Will the Chairman of the Libraries Committee indicate to the Council any objectionable feature in the *Freethinker* that might have persuaded the Committee that it was unsuitable for the public libraries? As they are withdrawn, are they going to allow the bust of the late Charles Bradlaugh to remain there?

The Chairman : With regard to the bust, as he was born in Shoreditch, we are proud of him whatever his creed may have been, and we are going to keep it there.

Councillor Bellamy : In view of the reply, will you let me ask ten members to rise in order to discuss the matter?

The Mayor (Councillor W. T. Smither, J.P.) : I cannot rule that the withdrawal of two publications from the Library is a matter of public urgency.

Councillor Sillitoe (L.) : Is it not a fact that the mover of the resolution had the *Freethinker* removed because he was afraid it might make him a Freethinker if he read it through? (Laughter.)

We are indebted to Councillor Bellamy for raising the question, and we hope the matter will not be allowed to rest where it is. It looks as though some of the Councillors are taking advantage of the accident of their position to establish a form of Press censorship.

John O' London fills half of one of its pages in a recent issue with quotations from Mr. Fallows' *Realistic Aphorisms and Purple Patches*—one of our most recent publications. The book, we are pleased to say, is selling very satisfactorily, and makes an ideal present to one who has an appetite for thoughtful and witty selections from the world's writers. It is published by the Pioneer Press at 5s. in cloth, and 3s. 6d. in paper covers. As it covers over 300 pages and is printed on excellent paper, no one can complain of the price.

The Pioneer Press hopes to publish early in the new year the first series of a selection of Mr. Cohen's articles under the title of *Essays in Freethinking*. It will be bound in cloth and the price will be 2s. 6d. Towards the autumn a second series will be issued. For many years there have been requests for a republication in permanent form of some of Mr. Cohen's articles, and we have no doubt but that the sale will justify the venture.

The North London Branch of the N.S.S. will hold the first of its indoor meetings this winter on Sunday, January 7, at 7.30, when Mr. J. Selway and Mr. T. F. Palmer will debate the question, "Is Christian Socialism the Remedy for our Economic and Social Ills?" Mr. Selway will take the affirmative and Mr. Palmer the negative view. These meetings are held at the St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.

The South London Branch of the N.S.S. will hold a social on Sunday evening, January 7, at Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road. On Monday, January 8, at 8 p.m., a meeting of the Discussion Circle will be held, when Mr. F. P. Corrigan will open with the subject, "Mince Pies and Morals." We hope there will be a good gathering on each occasion.

However offensive the proposition may appear to many religious persons, they should be willing to look in the face the undeniable fact that the order of nature, in so far as unmodified by man, is such as no being, whose attributes are justice and benevolence, would have made with the intention that his rational creatures should follow it as an example.—*John Stuart Mill*, "Three Essays on Religion."

O hapless race of men, who charged such deeds upon the gods, and with the deeds such wrath! What groanings then did humanity beget for itself, what wounds for us, what tears for our children's children!—*Lucretius*, "On the Nature of Things."

A Chapter of Contradictions.

ST. ATHANASIUS'S CREED EXPOSED.

THERE is in the Church of England prayer-book a wonderful piece of literature called Saint Athanasius's Creed, which professes to be the main entrance to salvation.

"Whosoever will be saved," says this creed, "before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith." And it proceeds to explain what the Catholic Faith is.

To hold a faith means to have a belief. It is interesting to see what is the belief which, "except a man do keep whole, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly."

Before seeing whether it is in human or divine power to keep this creed whole, it is necessary to review to some extent the meaning of the word "belief," and to ascertain what are the essentials to holding a belief. There are three: the first is the possibility that the creed may be true; the second that some real idea of the belief to be held should be conceived by the mind; and the third is that the balance of evidence should support the probability of such idea being, in fact, a truth. By "the balance of evidence" one does not mean, scientific evidence merely, this being only one factor. The experiences of everyday life, the truths and falsehoods taught in our youth, our predisposition or antipathy to worship, our taste or aversion for this that or the other of the arts, etc., are all factors in the mind as "evidence" for or against a belief. These are very personal factors, and it is evident from this—as one is already aware—that the definition of truth is a very hard one indeed; and there is hardly one established doctrine or truth—not even that of gravity, which to a scientist is about the most well established of the facts—which is not in imminent danger of overthrow.

Evidently, then, to criticise St. Athanasius's creed from the point of view of plausibility, or balance of evidence, would be quite futile; it might be easy to show that scientifically it is logical or illogical; that artistically it is beautiful or ugly; that spiritually it is beneficial or injurious; but it would be impossible to deal with the million other factors in each individual mind which help to cause belief or disbelief in the creed, because it would take an infinity of time to do it.

But if plausibility is an illusive quantity to combat, *possibility* presents no such difficulty, and, as has already been pointed out, it is one of the essentials without which no belief can be held. And it is also possible to demonstrate whether or not a paragraph of words contains a real idea, without which it is obviously meaningless, and therefore a statement in which nobody can possibly have faith, although a person might himself be under the illusion that he believes in it. The word illusion is used advisedly here, because, although it is quite possible for a man to believe in a lie, it is beyond his power really to believe in a lie which could not by any stretch of imagination be true; and it is not possible for that person to believe in a form or words which contain no idea at all.

The question of possibility and the question of the expression of a real idea are bound up together. A sentence might express a real idea, yet be impossible (such as, for example, the statement "There is a limit to space"). On the other hand, a sentence which expresses no idea, must be impossible by reason of that fact.

Meaningless sentences are really more common than is generally supposed, and might be found in abundance in parliamentary speeches. The following example will give an example of what is meant by

this term: "Milk travels at eight miles a pint." The words are quite right, and the sentence is grammatical, yet no idea is conveyed. Why? Because there is no idea there. This is obvious at first sight in this particular instance, but most of the meaningless sentences that find their way into print look quite plausible until one ceases to take them on trust and analyses them, or tries to form them into a definite image.

Here it is necessary to explain what is meant by "taking on trust," which is a very expressive term indeed in describing our normal mode of thinking. When we are told that two from three leaves one, we are able to check quite easily the statement by definitely visualizing three articles and going through the mental process of taking two away, when we perceive that, in fact, one only remains. When we are told that nine from ten leaves one, we are quite able, with a little extra effort, to perceive mentally the ten articles and to deduct nine from them. Generally, however, one does not do so. At some earlier stage one has seen nine articles taken from ten, and the result, and one is willing to take on trust that the same result would happen again. It is possible that one has never seen nine hundred and ninety-nine articles taken from a thousand, so one has to take a little more on this time and to assume that the analogy between figures is so unalterable that they can deduce the result of such a sum from items of knowledge (such as nine from ten) which they have definitely been able to verify. Even more trust is necessary in dealing with a sum such as 999,999 from a million. Probably nobody has ever set out a million articles and taken all but one away; yet one is so confident of the analogy between figures, as to be prepared positively to affirm that the answer to the last sum is "one." This is what Herbert Spencer describes as thinking by symbols. We have not checked the sum, but we are sure that, if necessary, it could be checked, and the result found to be just the same in dealing with the actual quantities, as it is in dealing with the symbols (i.e., the figures).

One is quite willing to "take on trust" the statement that 999 from 1,000 leaves one, because one is immediately able to check the symbols or figures and verify the statement. But at least one would first check the symbols in this case and form some definite mental conception—if only a symbolic one—of the proposition, which would entitle one to speak with authority as to the answer. But a great many people would be willing to accept the word of a great mathematician that $(77-33)/11=198/99$ leaves one also. Their case, however, would be different, because they would not have made a mental conception of the statement at all, not even a symbolic one; if they had, they would be unable to reconcile the statement of the mathematician with their pre-existing knowledge, seeing that the result of the subtraction in this case is not *one* but *two*. Before they could believe the mathematician they would have to consider whether, in the event of turning the symbols into actual realities, it would be more likely that one would find the mathematician was wrong or that the symbols, in this one particular instance, do not truly represent the actual facts, notwithstanding that in the millions of other cases that have been actually checked, they have always been found to do so. The result of such a deliberation would be that one would unhesitatingly conclude that the mathematician was wrong. We hope we do not confuse the issue when we digress to say that perhaps, in that one special instance, he was not wrong, and that that instance really might be found to be an exception to the general laws of mathematics; but the balance of probability is so considerably against this that nobody would trouble to make the matter absolutely definite by test.

It will be noticed that before one could see the error

of the mathematician in this case, it was necessary to reduce even the symbols to their simplest form, that is to say, to work the sum out to the proposition "two from four." Some people would have been able to perceive the error by consciously working the sum no further than $44/11=198/99$, but even then certainty would not come until the mind had (unconsciously perhaps) carried the process to its complete conclusion.

No apology is offered for this long preamble in consideration of the importance of the subject under review.

"Whosoever will be saved," says the creed, which means to say that every individual who does not believe this creed is damned. In order to see whether one really believes, it is necessary first of all to see whether it is possible to believe in this creed as it stands.

The creed says:—

(a) "For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son; and another of the Holy Ghost."

(b) "Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost."

(c) "And in this trinity, none is afore or after other; none is greater or less than another; but the whole three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal."

(d) "For the right faith is.....that.....the Son of God is God and Man."

(e) "Perfect God and perfect man of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting."

(f) "Equal to the Father as touching his God-head; and inferior to the Father as touching his manhood, who, although he be God and Man, yet he is not two, but one Christ."

From paragraph (c) we learn with the utmost clarity that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are absolutely equal; and from paragraph (b) we learn that they are absolutely equal in all respects. From paragraph (d) we learn the true definition of "Son," which is amplified in paragraph (e). What, then, is to be said of paragraph (f)? This says distinctly that in one particular, at least, the Son is inferior to the Father, notwithstanding that paragraph (c) categorically states the exact contrary.

Let us think for a moment if it be possible to imagine two entities being co-equal, neither greater nor less than each other, no afore no after, yet one entity being inferior to the other. It is a repetition of the mathematician's little sum and requires reducing to its simplest form of expression in order to see how impossible it is to conceive these two statements being both right at the same time. Reduced to the simplest terms, paragraphs (b) and (c) mean that the Father and Son are equal, and (f) means that they are not equal.

These paragraphs, then, logical as they first appeared, prove to be a form of words which convey no definite idea. It is not possible to conceive two entities being both equal and not equal at the same time; the mind can no more accept such a statement as a fact than it could accept as a fact the equation $3-2=4$. People who read all the words from beginning to end without reducing them to their simplest terms are in exactly the same position as the people who are willing to accept the statement that the answer to the sum previously set out is "one" when, in fact, it is "two." These people do not really believe, but (to borrow the expression from Spencer) they only believe they believe.

The creed says:—

(1) "That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;

(2) Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance."

(3) "For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost."

(4) "So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet there are not three Gods but one God."

(5) "For like as we are compelled by the Christian Verity to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord;

(6) So are we forbidden by the Catholic religion to say there be three Gods or three Lords."

From (3) and (5) it will be seen very definitely that there are three persons, and that we are compelled to acknowledge every person *by himself* to be God and Lord. But from (4) and (6) it will be seen that there are not three Gods, but one God. From (2) it will be seen that we are neither to confound the persons nor confuse the substance. Not to confound the persons means that we must definitely keep in mind that there are three distinct entities; whereas not to divide the substance means that we must bear in mind that there is only one entity. Reduced to its simplest form of expression, (3) and (5) say "There are three," and (4) and (6) say "There is only one." Paragraph one, in the short space of two lines says "Three equals one; one equals three"; paragraph (2) says "The three are separate; the three are not separate."

It is simply impossible to frame in the mind a mental conception of these contradictions. They give rise to the same mental process as the sentence "He kept silence and made a noise." One is able definitely to visualise a man keeping silence, or to visualise a man making a noise; but one has only to try to imagine the man doing both at once to see that it cannot be done. But without a definite mental impression there can be no belief. How, then, can we be saved?

The creed says:—

(a) "Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost."

(b) "The Father is made of none; neither created nor begotten."

(c) "The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created, but begotten."

Here (a) states categorically that such as the Father is, so is the Son; which, if it means anything, means that they are in all respects similar. If an algebraist says "Such as x is, so is y ," one would express that as x equals y , and use them as interchangeable terms. But (b), (c), and (d) state with equal precision that there is a factor peculiar to the Son which the Father does not possess, so that, in respect of that factor, they are different. Hence we get the peculiarity of two entities being similar and different at the same time, which is no more to be conceived than a red sound.

The creed says:—

(1) "The Father Eternal, the Son Eternal, and the Holy Ghost Eternal."

(2) "The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son; neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding."

But surely, "to proceed" means in this case "to come from." An "eternal" means lasting back and forward to infinity. But to conceive anything "proceeding" or "coming from" anything else implies a simultaneous conception of origin. Yet one cannot have a conception of origin, however nebulous, simultaneously with a recognition of an eternal existence. Either one must accept the pseudo-conception that the Holy Ghost has existed for ever, or one must suppose that it "proceeded from," with the consequent implication of origin; and it is quite impossible to reconcile these two ideas into one conception.

Yet "this is the Catholic Faith, which, except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved."

J. C. WARBIS.

Writers and Readers.

I IMAGINE that the less serious and more emancipated sort of Freethinker, who I understand has acquired the bad habit of reading my articles with a certain amount of pleasure, will not be inclined to set me down as laboriously paradoxical if I say that next to the pleasure of reading a good book is that of reading or, shall I say, perusing, a bad one. I ventured to try this mild kind of paradox the other day on one of my friends, a novelist of distinction. He remarked that as there seemed to be no end to the supply of bad books, I could look forward to unlimited enjoyment. But, unfortunately, things are not so simple as they appear. There are just as few really bad books as there are good ones. Most of them are disappointingly indifferent. The question then is this: Can we be said to enjoy a really bad book? I think we can; because, as a shrewd observer of human nature noted long ago, we all find a certain malign pleasure in detecting and expanding the foolishness and incompetence of other people. The obviously eager delight with which the critic underlines the ignorance, the vulgarity, or what not, of a writer belies the protestation that he censures with sorrow. If he had the courage of unconventional sincerity he would say: "It gives me exquisite pleasure to be able to prove that Mr. —'s novels are as vulgar as they are pretentious, and that he never had, and never will have, the ghost of a chance of being included among even fifth-rate English novelists." As far as I am concerned, I experience the incommunicable thrill of perfect aesthetic dissatisfaction when I read a so-called "literary" article by "Claudius Clear," or a quatrain like the following one which I take from a volume presented to me by a friend who knows my weakness for the egregiously foolish:—

Where in the spring-time leaves are wet,
Oh, lay my love beneath the shades
Where men remember to forget,
And are forgot in Hades.

For anything equal to this the curious reader must turn either to the odes of the divine Ella, the Sappho of Illinois, who, with engaging simplicity would charm you by pronouncing Persephone as if the word rhymed to "telephone," or to this ingenious and ingenuous stanza from a lyrical poem addressed to our satellite and based on the scientific fact that we see only one side of the moon:—

O beautiful moon!
When I gaze on thy face
Careering among the boundaries of space,
The thought has often come to my mind
If I ever shall see thy glorious behind.

Here we have, if I am not mistaken, examples of radiant foolishness, of bewitching ineptitude; but I am sadly afraid that these qualities are present without extenuation in the passages which I came across in an article on Shelley by Mr. Joseph McCabe. Among other things he vouchsafes these for our critical edification:—

I have never seen any particular courage in calling oneself an Atheist.....Shelley may have been quite as great a poet as our centenary celebrators say. *I have read most of the great poets in their own tongues*; but I am no artist, and I leave that matter to others. Shelley was a magnificent man.

I confidently leave my readers to make their own comment on Mr. McCabe's asseverations, merely reminding them that he is not perhaps the best judge of the amount of courage required in calling yourself an Atheist instead of a Rationalist; and also reminding them that Mr. McCabe's confession that he is no artist is particularly interesting to those of us who have read his novel, and looked into his studies of Goethe and Mr. Bernard Shaw. I am glad that he has himself confirmed the conclusion I had arrived at long ago.

I have not, of late, added many new examples of literary incompetence to my collection of writers who, I imagine, are likely to enjoy what a friend of mine calls an "inverted immortality." But I have reason to think that I found an excellent stimulant to malign pleasure in a new French book called *Les Mauvais Maitres* (Bad

Masters), by a M. Jean Carrère. I am glad to be able to say that it is the first I have heard of this gentleman, and I hope the last. He seems to be the French equivalent of our Mr. Harold Begbie, and the success of his book serves to show that critical intelligence in France, as in England, is an aristocratic privilege. Before I give the impatient reader an idea of what the book contains, I should like to say that it has been translated by Mr. Joseph McCabe under the long-winded title of *Degeneration in the Great French Masters—Rousseau, Chateaubriand, etc.* The original title, *Bad Masters*, was considered too subtle for English readers brought up on the naïve obviousness of a Wilde, a Pater, or a Mr. Santayana. There is obviously a Gallic subtlety about Mr. McCabe, and the French critic of literary morality was lucky to find so sympathetic a translator. Evidently Mr. McCabe's task was a labour of love; but I am afraid it is labour lost, because those who revel in verbose and flabby sentiment will think twice before they part with fifteen shillings, while those of us who feel the attraction of really bad writers will prefer to read them in their own tongues. Besides, the book in French can be bought for something less than three shillings.

M. Carrère's thesis—an absolutely wrong-headed one in my opinion—is that great creative writers implant in the generations that succeed them the seeds of good or evil, of heroism or cowardice, of moral strength or moral slackness, of radiant expansiveness or introspective gloom. There is some truth in this; but I am afraid M. Carrère's knowledge of European literature is not wide and broad enough for his subject. With a very different apparatus of criticism a good case could be made against Romanticism, indeed it has been made by M. P. Lasserre, whose brilliantly virulent attack is not unknown to some of my readers. M. Carrère's attempt to discredit ten great nineteenth century creative artists is not made in the name of art, but in that of morals. Surely this is as absurd as it would be to apply the canons of æsthetics to Spencerian ethics, or Marxian socialism.

Rousseau, the progenitor of modern European literature, is the primal cause of all our moral trouble. He was powerful enough to alter the whole current of ideas. He is in Goethe and Schiller, in Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron, and Hazlitt. In them he counts for strength as well as weakness, and not as we are asked to believe for weakness only. He brought Nature into life and art, *la nature brute et sauvage*, and with it colour and emotion. He destroyed at one blow the classical ideal of beauty which has been compared to pure water as having no particular savour. M. Carrère would seem to contend that it is to the influence of Rousseau that we must attribute the lack of energy in the French nation about the early part of the nineteenth century. The physical lassitude, the intense melancholy, the *ennui* and indolence of the youth at this period were, in my opinion, more likely due to the Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, and perhaps, as Maxime du Camp points out, to the stupid practice of bleeding for every form of complaint. However that may be, we do find that many of the writers of the period were listless, melancholy, or grotesquely violent. There is much that is disturbing to the lover of classical beauty in the work of Hugo and Lamartine, whom M. Carrère puts outside the bad influence of Rousseau.

In Chateaubriand M. Carrère finds another bad master and planter of seeds of evil. There is not a little of the *poseur* in him, just as there is in Byron. But it is just a little ridiculous to try to make out that he tapped the vigour of the next generation. We have to remember that at any time the number of people who read is a very small proportion of the mass. M. Carrère, if he were acquainted with English literature, I have no doubt, would be very much grieved at the pessimistic outlook of Mr. Thomas Hardy and would attribute our moral slackness to our preference of *Jude the Obscure*. But unfortunately for the thesis Mr. Hardy has one reader, while Mr. J. D. Beresford and Mr. Oppenheim have a thousand. The creative artist is not the stark moral force we are asked

to believe he is. If Balzac created the plunderer of society and the adventurer, it was because this type of human being was close at hand, and being a part of life was as good a subject of fiction as any other. It is absurd to ask us to believe that a Bevan or a Bottomley of an earlier time were turned from the path of virtue by too careful a study of Balzac.

George Sand, Alfred de Musset, Flaubert, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Zola, are all teachers of evil moral doctrine. We are now gathering in the harvest of rotten weeds, the seeds of which they planted long ago. Was there ever a thesis more stupidly wrong-headed, more woefully beside the mark? What we get from these great writers is neither more nor less than what we bring to them. The fool will get folly even from those writers whom M. Carrère delights to honour, from a Dante or a Shakespeare, the wise man will get wisdom from a Petronius or a Restif de la Bretonne. He gets it not through edification or amusement, but through imaginative contemplation by which the things that are evil in life are removed to a safe distance. In imaginative work of any kind, as Renan once remarked with the detachment from ethics of the true amateur of fine letters, the moralist has no place, he has simply nothing to say. "Nothing," he goes on to say, "is immoral in the way of art save that which has no style or shapeliness." I commend this dictum of an artist to those who, while admitting they are no artists, are tempted foolishly to spread themselves over subjects from which the moral critic is rightly debarred.

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

Correspondence.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Please allow me to thank Mr. Arch for his splendid letter, which I fancy expresses the views of most Freethinkers on this horrible subject. It is difficult for some of us to think clearly or write coherently about it; the horror of the whole thing obsesses one. Ever since the Jacoby-True case I have signed every reprieve petition that I could get hold of and written also to the Home Office—anything one could do to try and save the victims from their fate.

The Churches! At last they are waking up to the consciousness of this, the worst of their numberless sins of omission. But if we Secularists start a campaign of our own to abolish this barbarous anachronism, will the Churches welcome our move? Not they; their hatred and dread of us are stronger than their desire for any reform whatsoever. The fact is, as Voltaire would have put it, "we live in a war-zone" starting very often with our nearest of kin.

Could anything equal the horror of the case of Symonds (now happily reprieved)? Crippled in both legs—which were patched up to enable him to undergo the trial—carried into dock, and then sentenced, but I will not repeat the ghastly formula.

C. M. RENTON.

OUT TO KILL.

SIR,—Mr. Frank Robinson's article in this week's paper is very well timed, coming as it does at a season which might very appropriately be described as a veritable carnival of blood; and the majority of Freethinkers in this respect, despite their superior attitude, are no less guilty than the Christ-loving, animal-devouring, guzzling Christian. The grandest spectacle on Christmas Day is without doubt the dinner table laden with the steaming carcasses of slaughtered fellow creatures. And while Freethinkers may not bless the Lord from whom all blessings flow for this display, it is evident he still reckons the butcher and the man with a gun as indispensable to his welfare—institutions as much hindrances to civilization as the blessed lord himself. But it was to clear up a passage rather obscure in its meaning in Mr. Robinson's article that prompted this note. After referring to the barbarism of the chase, "Especially when one sees a fox-

hunt in full cry with its elaborate paraphernalia of snarling hounds, steaming horses and numerous followers on, all chasing one small and practically defenceless animal," he goes on to remark, quite truly, that there are still people amongst us who can derive pleasure from "a kill" as the final object of what would otherwise be a commendable diversion from the daily routine of life." It is the last few words that seem mysterious in face of the foregoing. I do not think Mr. Robinson means to condone the chase of "one small and practically defenceless animal" and even to be a "commendable diversion" if only stripped of the final kill? V. WILSON.

THE WEALTH OF SUPERSTITION IN IRELAND.

SIR,—It is a pity that Mr. Murphy was not a little more precise in some of his statements in the above article. He says, ".....this foreign Church which, posing as Irish, takes its orders from Rome *via* the aristocratic English Tory Cardinals maintained by the British Government in the Vatican for the sole purpose of keeping Irish slaves 'humble, lowly, and obedient.'" Would he give us the names of these Cardinals, how much they are paid, and from what fund? Also full authority for his statement as to "the sole purpose?" He also says that "In County Meath they run graveyards on purely capitalistic lines." Who are "they," and what is meant by purely "capitalistic" lines, and if "capitalists" are meant, are they such because they are (1) Irish, or (2) Roman Catholics, or (3) both? Then we are informed that "Every Roman college, school, etc., in Ireland is run on British Government grants." May we have some authority for this statement? Lastly Mr. Murphy tells us that the "Irregulars" are all Roman Catholics, and are making a desperate fight against superstition and slavery." Now I happen to have read a good deal about Roman Catholicism, but this is the first time I have come across a statement by a professed Freethinker that any Roman Catholics ever put up a desperate fight against superstition and slavery—it has always been the other way about. But there is one uncontroverted fact in Irish history, and that is there have *always* been bands of Irishmen ready to commit the foulest murders and outrages on those who have ventured to disagree with them on religion or politics, and the only thing that has changed throughout the centuries is their *name*, which happens in this case to be "Irregulars." The brand has never changed, and it would be interesting to know from Mr. Murphy whether the activities of the people are due to the fact that they are (1) Irish, or (2) Roman Catholics, or (3) both?

H. CUTNER.

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD.

SIR,—In the Glasgow Corporation Accounts for 1921-22, the following appears under the heading of "Corporal Punishment for Juvenile Offenders": Whipping, £7 12s.; Doctors' Fees, £29 11s.

This is in the Year of Our Lord 1921-22. "Suffer little children to come unto me!" H. G. F.

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INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (160 Great Portland Street, W.1, side entrance down steps): 8, Mr. Blady, "Love."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Debate, "Is Christian Socialism the Remedy for our Social Ills?" Affirmative, Mr. J. Selway; Negative, Mr. T. F. Palmer.

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, Instrumental and Vocal Music—Recitals. Discussion Circle—Monday, January 8, at 8 p.m., Mr. F. P. Corrigan, "Mince Pies and Morals."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Right Hon. John M. Robertson, "The Theory of Cosmic Purpose."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street): A Tea at 5 p.m., Tickets 2s. each; to be followed by a Social, to which all friends are invited.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (2 Central Road, Duncan Street, Shop Assistants' Rooms): 7, J. Clough, "Cosmosity and the Illusion of Self." Will all members please attend? Questions and discussion invited. All seats free.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, The Hon. Bertrand A. W. Russell, F.R.S., M.A., A Lecture.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—A meeting of the Discussion Class will be held on January 7 (Sunday) at Mr. Greenall's, 34 Goulde Street, Pendleton. Mr. Bayford will open on last three chapters of *The Evolution of the Idea of God*.

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