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Views and Opinions.

The Church and the Age.

Some time ago a sensation was created in the orthodox world by Canon Barnes. This gentleman had the daring to say that he preferred the evolutionary account of man's origin to the Garden of Eden story. That does not strike one as being in itself a thing to be proud of, indeed it is very much like claiming to be lauded as a first-class thinker because one does not believe that the world rests on the back of an elephant. But reputations for daring are gained easily among the orthodox, and I have no doubt but that Canon Barnes does seem a very daring sort of a man to those whose minds still move on the level of the cave-dwellers. In the kingdom of the blind the one-eyed man is king, and where foolishness is common an amount of intelligence that in ordinary matters would pass without comment may well excite wonderment. But the test of intelligence in the Church is one thing, the test of intelligence in the outside world is quite another. Elsewhere we call attention to the notable confession of the *Church Times* that many of the men now entering the clerical profession are of very poor ability and would not be able to earn a living in any other capacity. That is exactly what one would expect, and it is what must happen to any system that is out of touch with the more robust thought of the day. Where a system cannot be accepted without a loss of one's sense of intellectual self-respect, and where its acceptance involves so much explaining and reinterpreting and apologising, the inevitable consequence is that the better type rejects it and the lower one has it pretty much its own way. For a man of mediocre attainments with an itch for distinction the Christian Church, in any of its branches, offers the best openings.

* * *

Bluff.

It is this assumed or attributed superiority as a consequence of one being a little in advance of the body of believers which leads me to note a lecture recently given by Canon Barnes to his fellow cave-dwellers who have not yet moved from the ground floor to the upper chambers occupied by himself. He commented sarcastically upon the attitude of believers with their "little, well-rounded, yet quite inadequate schemes of

thought," and said that these embody "ideas of a century ago, before modern science had taught us how old and how complex the universe is." And then he delivered himself of "what we know," thus:—

To-day we know that God's plan for Christ's coming must be traced back, not merely from the beginning of Jewish religion, but through the million years of unrecorded human history which preceded it, and through the previous thousand million of years during which the evolution of lower forms of life has been going on. The coming of Christ was a break in that long order of evolution only so far as each of the earlier big steps in the cosmic process had been, like the step from inorganic to organic matter, or the first appearance of self-consciousness.

That confident "we know" is very interesting, and one would much like to put to Canon Barnes the question, "How do we know?" in such a way as to compel a straightforward answer. Do we know, or is it merely an assumption of knowledge? Is Canon Barnes doing more than trade upon the ignorance of those who do not know? And is he in this respect any better than those who hold the "quite inadequate schemes of thought" upon which he looks down with so much contempt? The contempt is deserved from some, but is it deserved or justifiable from him?

* * *

Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

What fundamental difference is there between believing in a God of the most orthodox description, who acts in the manner believed in by the most old-fashioned believer, and the God that Canon Barnes believes exists? The god who was pleased or angry, forgiving or revengeful, who could laugh at man's attempts to outwit him, who could show his "back-parts" to Moses, and who exhibited every passion and appetite that man exhibited, was quite obviously a creation built on the pattern of man himself. But what is the god who loves without hating, is charitable without being uncharitable, manifesting mind without possessing a body, and planning a scheme which extends to millions of years instead of scheming from hand to mouth like an opportunist politician—what is this kind of a god but the same person with some of the more objectionable qualities and short-comings knocked off? The early God was plainly a magnified man; the later one is merely an emasculated human. The early God was, it is admitted, a myth, but it was an intelligible conception. The later God of the apologetic theologian is not even intelligible, it vanishes the moment one tries to reduce it to terms of mental clarity. It is the ghost of God without the justification which earlier generations had for believing in his existence. How, then, is Canon Barnes justified in regarding the other believers as moving on a lower mental level than himself? In everything essential to the position they are exactly on the same level. Canon Barnes has sufficient keenness to see that the form of the old idea is no longer defensible; but he is not keen enough to realize that the idea itself is completely discredited by modern science.

Omniscience at Work.

And the question of the "plan" in evolution? Could anything be more hopelessly antiquated and pre-scientific than that? What reason has anyone for discerning a plan in Nature? Men like Canon Barnes see how things lead up to a certain result, and because that is so at once conclude that this is the working out of a prepared plan. But so long as things happen there must be events and there must be consequences of these events. A series of events end in a consequent because it is their resultant, but it does not follow that the events were pre-ordained to produce it. The statement of Canon Barnes is not science, it is the crudest of theology expressed with a designed vagueness in order that its nature may not be discerned. To talk vaguely of a "Plan"—with a capital letter—does not lift one into the region of science, it is still the mentality of the cave-man that is at work, albeit it is the cave-man grown more crafty in the expression of his views. And consider what is involved in the expression, "We know that God's plan for Christ's coming must be traced back," etc. The significance of Christ's coming, from the point of view of Christian theology was the fall of man (in which Canon Barnes professes disbelief). So we are to assume that millions of years ago God planned that he would one day create human beings, he would then arrange matters that there would be a "fall," and also that after the race had gone blundering on for a time, he would send one-third of himself to earth in order to see if an improvement could not be made. And as a consequence of this wise plan, we have had the past nineteen centuries of European history with its bloodshed, its greed, its brutalities, and its barbarities, finishing up—although only to date—with a war on a first-class scale, and waged by his avowed followers who lacked the humanity to conduct the war with tolerable decency or arrange a peace with passable wisdom. For either all that happens is part of God's plan, or the whole theory drops to the ground. And the man who propounds this phantasmagoria of unredeemed folly looks down on others because they are old-fashioned, and sneers at their "inadequate schemes of thought"? In all essentials he is as primitive in his outlook as they. Expressing this primitiveness in vague language, and aping the nomenclature of science does not alter this basic fact, if possible it only makes it the more objectionable.

* * *

God and Evolution.

In the sermon from which I have been quoting, Canon Barnes advised the study of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Excellent, although better still if they would study the same author's greater work, *The Descent of Man*. But when the advice is given as the best preparation for a devout observance of Christmas, one wonders whether the speaker was poking fun at his audience. The very essence of Darwinism is the utter absence of anything in the shape of a "Plan" throughout the whole of inorganic and organic nature. It gives us the machinery of the process by which things are as they are, and it leaves God entirely out of account. And the supposed wisdom shown in the machinery of natural selection by an assumed selection of the better is a sheer misreading of the process. Evolution does not preserve anything. What it does is to kill, and where it cannot kill there is no evolution. It acts exactly as society would act were it to take all babies born into the world and deliberately kill all that did not come up to a given standard of physical perfection. Those who would be horrified at this being done, should bethink themselves that it is exactly the "Plan" of creation which men like Canon Barnes profess to find and admire as the expression of almighty love and benevolence. For my own part I have a much greater respect for both the honesty and

intelligence of the earlier generations of Christians who denounced Darwinism as ungodly and shocking, than I have for those men who so soon as it is not found possible to oppose scientific generalizations with profit, spend their energies in seeing by what tricks of language or confusing of thought they can bring the science of the twentieth century into harmony with the philosophy of the cave-men.

* * *

Down with the Cave Men!

And it is really the philosophy of the cave-men with which we are dealing. Let us make no mistake about that. If there is one distinguishing mark between the savage and the civilized man it must be found in a difference of mental outlook. It is not to be found in mere manners—for savages are found who are as kindly in their nature as any civilized person. Nor can it be found in the use of many of the things that exist with "civilized" peoples—mechanical devices, etc.—which most "uncivilized" people can be taught to use as well as ourselves in a very little time. The differentiating factor is the difference of mental attitude with which life and the world are faced; and disguise it how we may the things for which a man like Canon Barnes stands—as a minister of the Christian Church—are those things for which the cave-men stood thousands of generations ago when they brought into existence the gods of whom the Canon's emaciated deity is the lineal descendant. We pay these men an unnecessary and an unearned compliment in treating their ideas of deity as though they were civilized products. They are not. They represent just so much of the savage original as modern times will stand. For just as you do not convert a savage into a civilized person by clothing him in broadcloth instead of skins or feathers, neither do you make religion a civilized thing by rubbing out the plain and honest expression of the religious idea and presenting it in a disguised form. It is still the cave-man who is addressing us, it is still the ideas of the cave-man that are being foisted upon us. The cathedral has replaced the cave, the robes of the priest have replaced the feathers and paint of the medicine-man, the tuneful singing of the trained choir has replaced the primitive chant of the tribal gathering, but the ideas expressed are the same. We are still with the cave-men and their teachings.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Sabbatarianism.

In the *Christian World Pulpit* of January 4 there appeared a statement issued on behalf of the National Free Church Council on the subject of Sunday Protection. The statement is made in furtherance of the violent campaign now going on against the recent decision of the London County Council to authorize Sunday games on the public spaces under its control. This decision, the Free Church Council declares, raises once more "the whole question, not only of Sunday Observance, but also of Sunday Protection." Free Church people fanatically object to and are determined to vehemently oppose every attempt to "encroach on Sunday as the day of rest and worship" on the ground that, if successful, it would be the beginning of "far-reaching changes, seriously weakening the religious opportunity and the moral influence of the day." To them, illogically enough, "religious opportunity" and "moral influence" are indissolubly united, and consequently they dare not enter into competition with any secular agency on the Lord's Day. As to the decision of the London County Council they clearly discern its real significance:—

We have to recognize that this is only part of a larger warfare. The whole subject of the obligations

and excellences of Sunday Observance has been reopened. We must not only resist this encroachment, but also demand the Sunday closing of public-houses, the closing of Sunday cinemas, where they have been opened, and the continued limitation of Sunday work.

Here is revealed, in all its nakedness, the hateful spirit of intolerance. In effect, these Free Churchmen, though forming but an insignificant minority of the population, insist upon being treated by the legislature as a specially privileged class. Their forefathers were the sworn enemies of all privileged classes, putting their supreme emphasis upon the essential equality of all men before the law. The privileged Church was the object of their most fiery denunciation. But their present-day descendants claim to be the only people worthy of the least consideration in the matter of Sunday observance. Sunday is their day, and they demand the sole monopoly of it.

"In the meantime, however, the pressing question is whether Sunday games are to be encouraged and legalized." At this point the statement undertakes to describe the situation, calling attention to six "outstanding facts." We are fully prepared to face all facts, whether outstanding or not. We readily admit that there are greater facilities for weekday recreation for all who desire it than ever before. It is doubtless true that "there is more provision for games during the week-days than ever before." It may be true that the Churches have done their share in organizing games for young people, though we distinctly remember that not so long ago a distinguished Calvinistic Methodist divine in Wales was severely censured by his Monthly Meeting for serving as chairman of a cricket club. It may also be true that "no proof has been given that there is a considerable number of people who cannot get weekday recreation." It may be admitted further that as yet only a few have availed themselves of the opportunity for Sunday games offered by the London County Council. We do not hesitate to accept as a fact the claim that "this is the first encroachment on Sunday Observance which threatens definitely the influence of Sunday-schools and Bible-classes held on Sunday afternoon." The sixth "outstanding fact" is submitted very cautiously as follows:—

The decision of the L.C.C. was carried in the teeth of public opinion, so far as it was expressed. There was an overwhelming majority of letters, resolutions, and petitions against the change. These figures have never been denied, and no explanation has been offered for the opposition to public opinion as expressed.

Without a doubt the members of the L.C.C., in coming to the decision complained of, knew that public opinion was behind them, for all who voted for it represented that opinion. Very significant, therefore, are the qualifying phrases employed, "so far as it was expressed" and "as expressed." The public, in the various districts concerned, did not take the trouble to send in numerous letters, resolutions, and petitions in favour of the change, for they trusted their representatives on the Board. It was the kill-joys, chiefly the Nonconformist ministers and their followers, who deluged the L.C.C. with passionate letters, tearful resolutions, and desperate petitions, for the simple reason that they feared the change. Our contention, however, is that it is wholly immaterial whether there is a widespread demand for the change or not, whether the conditions of weekday recreation justify any change or not, and whether the opponents of the change have done much to provide weekday recreation or not, the only real point at issue being whether a comparatively small section of the community has a right to force its own method of keeping Sunday upon the far bigger section to which Sunday is no more sacred than any other day. Without

a moment's hesitation we affirm that it has no such right, and that the demand for it is made on purely selfish grounds. Though we deny the justice of the case presented by the opponents of Sunday recreation, we do not blame them, for we are aware that in presenting and stressing it they are merely obeying the instinct of self-preservation.

Having thus found the account of the situation, which forms the first part of the statement, wholly unsatisfactory because it evades the only really vital question, we come to the second part, entitled *Our Plea*. A double appeal is made, one to the citizen, and one to the Christian, and here again six alleged facts are cited. Three are addressed to the citizen, the first being that the process of emancipating Sunday has been going on for half a century until "there is no shred of Sabbatarianism left." There lurks a dangerous disingenuousness in that assertion. Sabbatarianism still exists and reigns in certain circles, though the bulk of the population have entirely repudiated the justice of its claims, but its yoke still galls their necks. The citizen is still in bondage to the law of the Sabbath. The theatre, the music-hall, and with very few exceptions the cinema, have their doors locked and barred against him. Until quite lately he was prohibited from playing games on any public space in the kingdom. It is true that he cannot be coerced to do this or that on Sunday, and it is true that "he is not compelled by law to do anything but what he chooses"; but it is equally true that he is prevented by law from doing things he would like to do. He has to submit to many humiliating restrictions imposed upon him by the kill-joys of the past, and if the narrow-minded Christian leaders of to-day had the power many more would be laid upon him.

The statement speaks of Sunday as the rest-day, while it is anything but a rest-day in the Churches. Unless one goes to sleep, it is impossible to rest while listening to a sermon, whether it is brilliant or dull, wise or silly, and certainly the preacher himself cannot rest. It is a well-known fact that one of the greatest of living preachers is suffering from a prolonged nervous collapse. Children do not go to Sunday-school for rest, and teaching in it is anything but a species of resting. Those engaged in Christian work as well as those for whom they work have no opportunity of resting on Sunday. Besides, they are obliged to spend the day often in ill-ventilated churches and stuffy rooms, after spending the previous weekdays poring over account books or serving behind counters. If the parsons verily believe that Sunday is a rest-day their first bounden duty is to close their churches and Sunday-schools, and give their people the chance to spend the day in the open-air, in quiet communion with Nature and one mother. Until they do that their talk about Sunday as the rest-day is a demoralizing form of hypocrisy. In wholesome recreation one does find genuine rest. It is a lie to say that Sunday excursions, Sunday concerts, and Sunday games mean the robbery of the rest-day from some people, unless the same charge is brought against Sunday services, Sunday-schools, Sunday Bible-classes, and Sunday mission meetings in open spaces.

The statement dwells on the fact that "the chief need of the nation is for quietened nerves, not for fresh excitement; for more thoughtfulness, not for more physical enjoyment." Assuming that this is true, is there anything on earth more exciting than a religious revival, with its emotional appeals to superstitious fears and hopes; anything more nerve-wearing than listening to fiery pulpit attacks upon the sins and follies of the world outside, and equally theatrical descriptions of the thrilling blisses that await true believers after death; anything more disquieting than an hour in a Bible-class, where all sorts of metaphysical or imaginary problems are often discussed with tempers

running high? Very seldom indeed are churches and chapels places of quietude and soothing rest. As a matter of fact, however, life in London shops and offices is not at all exciting, but grey and humdrum enough in all conscience; nor is it a life of physical enjoyment. On the contrary it is an unnatural, unhealthy life, and when Sunday comes round the chief need of the tens of thousands of these young women and men is a breath of fresh air on the river, in the parks, in excursions into the country, or in other recreations which bring fresh vigour into body and mind. There can be no healthy mind apart from a healthy body.

Free Church leaders seem to imagine that mental and moral cultivation is possible only under their guidance and in their Sunday-schools, but the vast majority of the people no longer believe that they are the best moral guides of the nation, nor pay any heed to their messages from heaven. Every right-minded citizen *does* "desire the moral and mental improvement of the children and young people of our nation; but he does not necessarily regard the Sunday-school and Bible-class as the best agencies for achieving it. Many of the noblest characters of this generation never once attended church or Sunday-school in their early years. Not a few of them represent the third and fourth generation of convinced Secularists. The truth is that a religious observance of Sunday does not have an ennobling effect on character, and Sunday-school teaching generally is in reality an obstacle to the development of a virile, self-reliant, and exalted manhood. The belief in supernatural aid inevitably discourages all natural attempts at self-expression. And yet these Free Churchmen would restore Sabbatarianism if they could, forgetting that on this subject they are not followers of the Apostle Paul, in whose estimation every day was alike.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Antics of St. Augustine.

In material things we may advance by strides, but it is by steps only, and not strides, and by slow and unsteady steps, that intellectual improvement is effected.

—W. E. Gladstone.

A GOOD story was told recently concerning Mr. Augustine Birrell. Asked whether he was going to follow the fashion set by Mrs. Asquith and the biographer of Horatio Bottomley and write his reminiscences, he replied: "I have reached a serene and philosophic height from which I do not want to upset anybody. If I wrote my reminiscences and told the truth, I should lose some very good friends, and if I do not tell the truth the book would be valueless. So I shall do nothing." It is a pity that Mr. Birrell cannot screw his courage to the sticking-place, and, like George Washington, "tell the truth." He possesses a whimsical humour of his own which is as marked, as personal, as "the Correggiosity of Correggio," to adopt his own clever jest.

Whether Mr. Birrell writes on the Bronte Sisters, or Marie Bashkirsteff, William Hazlitt, or Cardinal Newman, he usually proves himself a rare and refreshing humorist and a close student of literature. The flashes of humour are, perhaps, the best things in his books. Hazlitt once said: "I started in life with the French Revolution," and he was baptized in a meeting-house. Mr. Birrell genially remarks that "there were always more traces of the Revolution about Hazlitt than of the rite of Christian baptism." Concerning Hazlitt's fervid admiration for Napoleon, Mr. Birrell comments: "It is wisest to hate your country's enemies. The Church allows it, the National Anthem demands it, and the experience of mankind

proves it." Hazlitt said that Tom Moore ought never to have written his poem, *Lalla Rookh*, for three thousand guineas—which, observes Mr. Birrell, is a hard saying. "Had he written it for nothing one might have wondered."

How good, too, is Mr. Birrell's remark that "the thought of Milton's pipe sanctifies your own." There is sly fun in the statement that "the motives that prompt men and women to go to lectures on winter nights are varied, and include many which have nothing to do with respect for the lecturer or interest in his subject." Writing of the marriage of Roman Catholics and Protestants, Mr. Birrell observes pleasantly: "The severer spirit now dominating Catholic councils has condemned these marriages; but the practical politician cannot but regret that so good an opportunity of lubricating religious differences with the sweet oil of the domestic affections should be lost to us in these days of bitterness and dissension."

The following remark on nationality is irresistible: "No foreigner needs to ask the nationality of the man who treads on his corns, smiles at his religion, and does not want to know anything about his aspirations." Another example of Birrellesque humour is worth quoting: "The attitude of his countrymen towards Ruskin was amusing. The *Times* newspaper alternately ridiculed his doctrines and demanded his burial in Westminster Abbey. He was, it thought, so glorious an impostor, so supreme a humbug, so paradoxical a preacher, so false a reasoner, so dangerous a character, that there was only one place for his bones—the Abbey."

There are spots on the sun, and occasionally Mr. Birrell permits his sense of humour to sleep. Nowadays books are often produced in a hurry without adequate revision. Writers have developed a most reprehensible habit of reprinting in book form articles contributed to periodicals. Even Mr. Birrell has succumbed to this fashion, and in *Self-Selected Essays* he has given us a gross example of how not to do it. In their original form these essays were pardonable, but placed together in a book they lack form and judgment. As the essays were selected by the author himself, it is astonishing that Mr. Birrell should have permitted the inclusion of his absurd essay on Thomas Paine, which was originally written as a hasty review of Moncure Conway's *Life of Paine*, a careful perusal of which would have saved Mr. Birrell from much misconception. What is more serious, however, is the animus displayed in the essay, because, as a rule, Mr. Birrell is an urbane and genial critic. "Nobody now," he assures his readers, "is ever likely to read the *Age of Reason* for instruction and amusement." As a fact, Paine's book has never been out of print since its original publication over a century ago. It is a Freethought classic, and has always been in demand. Mr. Birrell attacks Paine's style, and he dubs him "a coarse writer without refinement of nature." Whether Mr. Birrell really thought that Paine was "coarse," or whether he was merely tickling the ears of the Non-conformist groundlings, it is an amazing criticism from a man who has gone out of his way to praise William Hazlitt, and who has defended old Doctor Johnson's swashbuckling dialectics.

It cannot be too often emphasized that Paine was a great writer, and the proof is that his written words roused men like trumpets that sing to battle. It was the pen of Paine, no less than the sword of Washington, that made the United States a reality. It is idle to pretend that Paine's works lack ordinary graces of imagery and metaphor. Many of his phrases are proverbial. "These are the times that try men's souls" was quoted everywhere during the late war. So great a stylist as Burke might have envied the illustration of his exclusive compassion for the nobility in the Revolution. "Mr. Burke pities the plumage, but he forgets

the dying bird." Shelley, a keen judge of literary artistry, thought this so excellent that he used it as part of the title of one of his own pamphlets.

Another of Mr. Birrell's objections to Paine is that he was not a teetotaller, although he lived in an age of drunkenness. Gibbon, indeed, described the dons of Oxford as being "sunk in prejudice and port," and Paine's many activities clearly absolve him from any serious accusations of drunkenness. Mr. Birrell would do well to ponder a story told of President Lincoln, when some Pussyfoots reported to him that General Grant was intemperate. "Find out what he drinks," said Lincoln, "and send some to the other generals."

One might fill columns in defence of Paine, but enough has been said; and, moreover, Mr. Birrell is seldom in that mood. "Can you emit sparks?" said the cat to the ugly duckling in the old fairy tale. Mr. Birrell can emit sparks of humour, and therein lies his superiority to so many writers who give themselves greater airs.

MIMNERMUS.

The Yoga Straits of Patanjali and an Interpretation.

Does not the great mouth mock at a gift, and the narrow eyelids mock at the labour that is above payment?
—William Blake.

It was our pleasure and privilege some time ago to write in these pages on "Plotinus, the Labourer and Dean Inge." In that series we ventured to set out what we understood to be the common-sense view of mysticism. Arising from that short and imperfect study we recommended our readers to examine a slight book entitled, *Patanjali for Western Readers*,¹ and also the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*.² We are inclined to think that Freethinkers are as catholic in their reading as any other body or party, and we believe that the majority have preferences but no prejudices. For example, an examination and rejection of Christianity by any critic argues, at least, the bringing forward of a certain amount of sympathy to the subject. And, what is more to the point, Freethinkers rightly reject Christianity on firm ground; mighty volumes of wearisome arguments in favour of Christianity can be reduced to two words. Those two words are: Reason or Faith. Hindu philosophy is not aggressive, and this fact explains the lack of attention it receives. Yet we venture to state that one aphorism, or one Sutra, taken from the above books is sufficient to challenge a man's life. It is sufficient to arrest and hold attention—and it makes no supernatural appeal either with hope of Heaven or fear of Hell. It will be noticed that in the above notes we mention Christianity and Hindu philosophy; these two attitudes to life, in our opinion, represent Faith and persecution, against Reason and indifference.

Writing on the question of Eastern religion, the late J. M. Kennedy in his *Philosophies of the East*, we find the Western attitude well stated in the following terms:—

It has, unfortunately, happened that nearly all the English works dealing with this question (Eastern Religion) have been written either by missionaries or by travellers and Government officials without any psychological insight. As a consequence nearly every book by these people is written with a conscious or unconscious prejudice—that Christianity is the final word in religion, and that all other faiths must necessarily be inferior.

We have exactly the same complaint to make about the interpretation of the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* by the commentator Charles Johnston (Bengal Civil Service, Retired; Indian Civil Service, Sanskrit Prize-man; Dublin University, Sanskrit Prizeman). This writer ingeniously works the name of God into his remarks on the original text, quotes St. Paul, and seems at every opportunity to introduce passages from the Bible to illuminate the text. This text or collection of aphorisms was originally written in Sanskrit a considerable time before the Christian era. The commentator wishes to make the boots of the Bible fit the feet of the text. It is a very clever attempt, especially when the name of God is thrown into the interpretation—without an interpretation of the name of God.

It is possible that one may study *The Tempest* for a lifetime and still leave much to be learned. It is a fact that the student may take the jewels from the text of *Patanjali* and be dazzled by their splendour, by their reflection of that reality which cannot be touched or tasted but only experienced. Each gem contains pure wisdom. Knowledge is one of the slopes of Heaven—the Heaven we can all experience, but Wisdom is Heaven itself, and Hell also, for wisdom contains both knowledge and ignorance. There is abundant evidence that Hindu religion or philosophy is Atheistical, utterly devoid of the supernatural, and its simplicity so simple that to casual readers it becomes mysterious.

At some later date we shall endeavour with the Editor's permission and the reader's indulgence to bring the text of the above book to light, in the firm conviction that its direction is simply a development of the lives of those who have put away childish things—one of them being this imposture called Christianity.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Ireland in Scotland.

GEOGRAPHICALLY the South-west of Scotland favours Irish immigration. Emigrants take their virtues and their vices with them, but particularly their religion, which is always the only true, or the best in the world. Roman Catholics in this district never were so bold and aggressive. They are to be found now as professors in our universities, medical officers in education authorities, professional disputants in the Press, numerous beyond their numbers as members of public bodies, and professional nurses in better class families. Nothing wrong in this, but no medical missionary more transparently seeks converts through his powers than most of these utilize their advantageous position for proselytising ends. The generation living of the old stock of native is more ignorant of Romish doctrines and Church history than his fathers, and regardless of ecclesiastical doings.

"Stands Scotland where it did" in this respect? Certainly not, as the New Education Act conclusively proves. Denominational school buildings, almost exclusively Roman Catholic, have under it been bought or rented, and in many cases enlarged. Teachers, a large proportion with poor qualifications (paid on the national scale), have unlimited freedom given to them to continue teaching the Roman Catholic religion. In the ordinary schools religious teaching is not enjoined by the Department, but is left optional to the local authorities, and not even prevailing Presbyterianism enjoys such privileges as are now conceded to Roman Catholics. The Act is being exploited to the utmost limit that ingenuity and scheming can devise. It is safe to say that Catholic schools which before the passing of the Act cost their managers £1,000 per annum, now cost the public £4,000. Luxuries are being multiplied beyond the dreams of priestly ex-

¹ Theosophical Publishing Society, 161 New Bond Street, London, W.

² J. M. Watkins, 21 Cecil Court, Charing Cross, London, W.C.

pectations. A favourite device is to get these primary schools turned into higher grade schools, necessitating large additions to buildings, increased staffs, and more important to observe, the teachers paid on the more generous higher grade scale. The greater number of teachers have had their salaries doubled, and some have jumped from £200 to £700. Yet there are not sufficient numbers of Roman Catholic teachers in Scotland qualified to teach in these schools, but it is not a long way to Tipperary and they are being sought for in that neighbourhood. To put them right in the future indulgent authorities have secured buildings and established colleges exclusively for training Roman Catholic teachers at the public expense. Why is this possible in Covenanting Scotland. The answer must be sheer indifference on the part of the electorate, and superb vigilance on the part of the Holy Mother Church, and the way made easier in the administrative bodies in certain counties by a combination of the Holy Church and Labour members. For weeks before the passing of the New Act priests, Protestant and Catholic, walked the lobby of the House of Commons both seeking concessions alike in principle, and the latter have been lavishly rewarded. By the transference of these denominational schools from private to public management the public have gained nothing, the sects represented by them, everything. Some may ask why do Scottish Presbyterians make no protest? That is easy of explanation, they also were out for power and privilege by seeking to secure that clerical "supervision" of the religious education in the ordinary schools should be made a clause in the Act. "Supervision" would have proved another name for "Inquisition," but by their past attitude and that latest demand they rendered themselves dumb and impotent. To go deeper down, this practical endowment of Roman Catholicism in Scotland could never have happened had the national schools been hitherto run on a secular basis. Not that Roman Catholics would then have sent their children to such schools, for they demand more, they must have the atmosphere of Roman Catholicism, but they would then be without an argument or plea for any concessions. The story is just another evidence of how the priesthood, Protestant and Catholic, limit freedom, hinder progress, and place burdens on the community. W. ALLAN.

The Long and the Short of It.

MR. JONES of Jones and Co.,
Looked up to Heaven and thought
He'd like the God up there to know
That life was far too short.

"These bustling days so swiftly go,
Oh, Lord, some respite give,
And grant to Jones of Jones and Co.
A little time to live."

The God of Love from Heaven replied:
"A respite shall be sent."
Jones' wealthiest aunt of cancer died,
And Jones was well content.

But, after Jones had had his fling,
This verdict did he give:
"Life is a long and dreary thing,
When man has time to live!"

But, as the gilded days grew dim,
The terror of the thought
That Death was creeping after him
Made life, once more, too short.

The God of Love, he did his best
To right this long-felt wrong;
And Jones, with cancer in his chest,
Found life was all too long.

STEPHEN SCHOFIELD.

Acid Drops.

The Bywaters-Thompson affair is a squalid and a sorry business, and while it is one of those things that may occur in any stage of civilization, the prominence given it in the Press, with the flood of morbid curiosity displayed at the trial, says very little for the state of the public mind. It evidences the existence of a radically unhealthy streak in our life, a streak that is made the broader by the manner in which the Press exploits every passing passion, no matter what its character, so long as it can send up its sales. The publicity given to special articles by members of the family is again a deplorable sign. As matters are we have not the slightest doubt but that if Bywaters had been liberated he could have earned a splendid living going round the country exhibiting himself, while on the evangelical platform as a converted sinner he would have put everyone else in the shade.

It was left for some unnamed religious person to attempt to make capital out of Mrs. Thompson. The brother of the murdered man writes in *Lloyds News* of January 7 that he has received numerous letters as a result of an article written by him, and among them one from a woman who asks whether Mrs. Thompson had a religion, because she had noted from her work among the poor that in the great majority of cases women criminals had no religious sense at all. We do not like to tell a lady—even an unnamed one—that she is not speaking the truth, but she frankly contradicts all that well-known writers on criminology have said over and over again. The strong feature of confirmed criminals is their religiosity, and it is to be noted that Bywaters was confirmed a day or two before his execution and took the Communion before the final scene. If this unnamed woman worker will go to some of the prisons she will find ninety-nine per cent. of the inmates belonging to some religion or other. If religion cannot make its followers tell the truth, or refrain from slandering those whose opinions they do not share, we fail to see how it can be cited as an aid to morals.

The *Church Times* complains that in some dioceses men are being ordained "who are notoriously and evidently incompetent, men who would scarcely find it possible to earn a modest competency in any other calling." We are glad to find a paper like the *Church Times* admitting the truth of what we have so often said. It is quite certain that if one looks at the calibre of, not merely the ordinary clergyman in either the Church of England or in the dissenting churches, there are very few of them who would be getting anything like the salaries they at present get, or who in any other position would have anything like the status they now enjoy. At all times the Church has provided a soft pillow for fools, and a sure position for mediocrity. But in earlier years this was overlooked in contemplation of the men of real ability the Churches had in their service. To-day the fools or their near relations get more and more numerous, the men of ability more and more scarce. A Winnington Ingram can get as Bishop of London a salary of £10,000. Outside the Church anyone would probably consider him dear at a couple of guineas a week. When we hear talk of the poor pay of many of the clergy it is well to bear these things in mind. The real question here is, "What would their ability entitle them to outside the Church?" It is not wise economy to pay the salary of a man of genius to an obvious mediocrity.

This decline of ability in the Churches is, as we have often pointed out, neither accidental nor removable. No raising of salaries can attract better men, although they might draw a few adventurous ones of small moral scruples—those whose desire for an easy livelihood is stronger than their concern for truth and honour. But the difficulty of the Church is inherent in its teaching and position. In the early ages the medicine-man may have been a quite honest man. If he deceived others he also

deceived himself. The hocus-pocus he used to get rain or secure a good harvest was to him part of the machinery through which the rain fell or the crops grew. He was no better informed than those around him; but as knowledge grew honesty became impossible, save on the ground of his being less informed or more stupid than those around him. And at that stage ability became a bar to the profession of the medicine-man—if honesty were present also. If honest they could lay no claim to first-rate intelligence. If of first-rate intelligence they could lay no claim to thorough honesty. There is no possible way by which one can combine the beliefs of a savage with up-to-date knowledge and intellectual rectitude.

This is really the position of the Church. If anyone takes the trouble to analyse the position of the Church and the character of its clergy, generation after generation, he will find that their calibre has sunk exactly in proportion as scientific knowledge has advanced. A couple of centuries ago it was possible for men of ability and learning to enter the Church without paltering with their sense of right and wrong, and without feeling the imperative calls of other aspects of life. But little by little, as our knowledge of the world grew, it became more and more difficult for a man to take up with the profession of a Christian preacher without any amount of apologising and explaining that quite ignored the obvious meaning of the creed he possessed; and side by side with this went the opening of other avenues of employment that were quite apart from the Church and which left no bad taste in the mouth, and carried with them no slight on either one's intelligence or straightforwardness. The real enemy of the Church is life. It must control that if it is to live; and that is also the reason why the fight with the Church is ultimately a fight for the direction of civilization.

Here is another expression from the same issue of the *Church Times* which contains its moral. The editor thinks the Italian Government would rejoice in effecting some accommodation with the Church, "the greatest of all conservative agencies." We have not the slightest desire to deny the Church its full right to that title. It is the greatest of conservative agencies—it conserves not in the intelligent way, because the thing conserved is really useful, but merely because it is established, and that is a stupid and harmful form of conservatism. The Church must try to preserve the past, because it is out of the past it comes, and the past gives the only environment to which it is fitted.

The report of the committee appointed to consider the way in which titles are gained is what might have been expected. All are solemnly warned that titles must not be bought in the future, but must only be given for genuinely national services. Nothing is said of the titles that have been bought, and one must be blessed with a considerable degree of simplicity to believe they will not be bought in the future. If the committee had reported in the case of titles that had been bought, and had advised their cancellation, the example would have been much more effective. There seem to us only two ways to end this squalid business. The one is for men of real merit to decline these trumpery things, the other to make all titles, from knight-hoods to dukedoms purchasable at a government office with no more formality than one has to go through in buying a dog licence. Those who like titles would then be at liberty to indulge their fancy, but no one would be under suspicion, and none would be under misapprehension.

A number of the articles discovered in the tomb of the Pharaoh Tutankhamen, who died some 3,600 years ago, have now been photographed, and illustrations have appeared in the papers. One of these articles discovered is a candle and candlestick, and we invite the attention of Christians to the handle of the latter article. This is formed of a well-shaped cross. Of course, the antiquity of the cross as a religious symbol is well known to those who know anything at all of the history of religions, but

the vast multitude of Christian believers who do not may find food for reflection that here in Egypt, and used as an adornment, centuries before the world had ever heard of Jesus Christ, is the symbol of their own faith. Another point worth noting is that the cross is the well-known form which combines the symbolism of the male and female generative organs. That the cross was a sexual symbol is again a fact of which most Christians are quite ignorant.

We see that one of the papers referring to this dead and gone Pharaoh remarks that he "approximated to a knowledge of the true God." The writer is evidently one of those who know all about it, and we regret that he did not append his name and address. A man who knows which is the true God should not veil himself in obscurity. And the remark is made as though it were a discovery in science that one could put to the test in any laboratory. What a sense of cocksureness religion does give? Perhaps that is why it is so hospitable to fools and charlatans.

General Booth has written a letter to the papers saying that his experience among the poor has shown the evils of the present divorce laws, and he has "been driven to consider the possibility of a more humane and sympathetic construction of Our Lord's words by the appalling evils" he has seen. Now that is very curious. Without the hampering influence of our Lord he might have come to a sensible conclusion long ago. But it needed the continued pressure of "appalling evils" to drive him to recognise that wrong, and to consider whether one could not give a different meaning to the words of "Our Lord." And even then the chronic mental obliquity generated by Christianity shows itself, for it is not what "Our Lord" did mean, but can we make him so as to make his sayings read more sensibly than they actually are. No wonder they make Jesus Christ a perfect character! There is not a criminal in the country who could not be made good or an idiot made sensible by the same policy.

When the London County Council resolved to break the Christian taboo day and allow games to be played in the parks, it was warned that so dangerous an experiment would soon find imitators—and it has. So far away as Australia there is an agitation in both Sydney and Melbourne for the Council to permit Sunday games. Hitherto the Councils have not given way, but a *Times* report says that the movement is growing rapidly. One indignant citizen writes that he saw some boys playing cricket on Sunday and shook his umbrella at them. The response was one of the boys sent a cricket ball right over his head. We regret the ball went so high. It was quite wasted.

In this respect of Sunday observance the colonies appear to be rather more backward than we are at home. Thus, a Church of England grammar school permitted the boys to play cricket on Sunday. When protests were made the head of the school showed his good sense by declining to interfere; but the Melbourne Council, which includes an archbishop amongst its members, interfered and stopped the games. In England the archbishop would have had to go to work in a more surreptitious manner; but if the Council has authority to interfere with games that are played on Sunday in what is substantially a private enclosure, it is about time the inhabitants of Melbourne made up their minds to teach the authorities the lesson that such an action is nothing less than a piece of gross religious impertinence.

We said recently that there would be an attempt before long to reintroduce an Education Bill, with the object of satisfying the religious bodies by giving them a larger measure of definite religious instruction in the schools than exists at present. The question has been raised at several of the educational conferences lately, and it is to be hoped that the teachers, as much in their own interests as in that of education, will raise their voices against the

Bill. For they need be under no delusion here. The Bill, as proposed, if carried into law will mean that the parson will establish control over them, and although it will not be done openly, the control will be there all the same. It is a difficult thing to get teachers to speak out on the subject of religious instruction—the fear of injuring their chances of promotion seems to paralyse their energies—but unless they do add their voices to whatever protests are made they are certain to regret their silence.

The Conference of Nonconformists and Churchmen that has been sitting to draw up a plan on which the Bill—probably a Government Bill—will be based agreed upon the following principles, although they have not yet agreed on the details:—

That in all schools supported or subsidized by the State religious instruction should form an integral part of the education given, and that religious observance and instruction should have a place in the regular curriculum, and be available, subject to the conscience clause, for all children. The proper authority should be in a position to ascertain from time to time that such instruction is regularly and efficiently given.

That religious teaching, if it is to be worth having, must be given by men and women who are qualified to give it and can give it conscientiously.

That religious teaching must not be of a vague or indefinite character, but must mean for Christian children the definite teaching of the elements of the Christian Faith.

That is the plan, and with that before them teachers and others will know what they have to expect. The children will be separated into denominational groups, and denominational religious teaching will be a fixed part of the school curriculum. We say nothing about the infernal impudence of these two bodies of Christians meeting to settle what the educational policy shall be, that sort of thing is so common that most people have ceased to feel surprised at it. But unless these representatives of primitive savagery are put into their place, and they and their foolishness banished for ever from the nation's schools, we shall never have education taken as seriously as it ought to be taken.

One other note on this question of education while we are about it. The *Isle of Man Examiner* for December 29 prints a brief summary of the regulations in the island's schools concerning religious education. The director of education says that the "Central Education Authority, regards religious instruction as of supreme importance," and it decrees that the faith to be taught must be that of the Apostles' Creed; the teachers must explain to the children that the Old Testament records the preparation for Jesus Christ, and the New records his coming. The religious instruction is to be part of the school lesson, and all teachers are expected to give it, no one being excused except on conscientious grounds. There shall be a liberal supply of Bibles and suitable text-books and pictures illustrating the religion taught. Forms of prayer, of grace, etc., are selected, and the Education Authority is seeing to it—so far as they can—that the children when they leave school shall be so muddled and mystified that their capacity for clear thinking is reduced to a minimum. That is what many are trying for in England, only they would like more of it. And we shall get it if we do not look out. We won the war, and we have been paying for it ever since. We may be certain that the reactionaries will make the most of the opportunity the war has given them.

Some of the readers of the *Daily Herald* we see have been writing to the editor complaining that there is too much religion in the paper. We hope the protest will have its effect. The sentimental gush about Jesus and true Christianity which appears in its pages can do little to commend either it or the cause it represents to the minds of intelligent men and women. If the Labour movement is worth anything it will be worth it without pandering to the unintellectual sentiment of a crowd of chapel-goers; and if it is not a good cause, all the Jesus gush in the world will not make it any better.

A young woman was sent to prison at Hastings for stealing from people while they were at church and engaged in prayer. Two detectives said they watched her and saw her go from place to place, kneel beside certain people and steal various articles. Well, the Bible says, "Watch and Pray," but it is bad to divide the labour. The trouble is that the detectives watched, while the woman *preyed*. Hence the trouble.

That reminds us that in St. Paul's Cathedral there used to be displayed a notice, "Beware of Pickpockets." The notice may still be there, but it is curious that if Christians cannot trust each other not to steal while they are at "divine service" they should not continue to talk of the moralising power of their religion.

Says the *Times*, "In war our first line of defence is the navy, or the army, or the air force, as time and circumstances may determine. But in peace, which we now, with some uncertainty enjoy, our first line of defence is education." We are glad to see this recognition of the importance of education, but we do not agree that, even in times of war, education should take a back seat. The counsel is bad for two reasons. First, even in a time of war a nation would certainly be better off if it kept firmly before it that the real problem to solve was not the mere winning of war but the gaining of a suitable peace; and to gain this the pursuance of a sound educational policy must never be relaxed for a moment. Had this been borne in mind during the past war we should not have been saddled with a peace that was no peace, and which at the moment looks like landing us in yet another war. Nor would it have placed the one country in Europe in which the military tradition is the strongest with the largest army in the world, and with all the power to complete the ruin of Europe.

In the next place a country that keeps education supreme at all times would be likely to have a public so far informed as to recognise war for what it is, and to realize that the real problem is not how to outfight your neighbour, but how to live with him; not how to get a better army, or a better navy than he has, but how to act so as to make both his and your own military forces obsolete or useless. We could not well spend too much money on that kind of education, although we may easily spend too much on the flag-wagging, "Britain Rules the Seas," or the "Boys of the Old Brigade" order. An education which impressed the lesson that a nation's real greatness lies in the arts of peace, and its best school of courage and of virtue in civic and intellectual achievement, would find that an excellent way of cutting down its military expenditure. It is the habit of putting education on one side when things such as wars are on, the habit of treating it as an expensive luxury for more or less idle moments, that is responsible for many of the evils from which we are now suffering.

The Leeds Council rejected a proposal to allow Sunday games in the parks. There were 10,000 signatures to a petition against the games being permitted, but as they were the signatures of those who did not want to play we do not see that it had anything to do with it. No one wished to force these people to play, if anyone had wished to do so the signatures would have been quite in order. The proposal was that people who wished to play on Sundays in their own parks should not be prevented doing so. We wish that question could be kept to the front, and these long-faced Sabbatarians made to face the plain question, "Why do you wish to stop me playing a harmless game on Sunday, and by what right do you do so?" If that question were brought to the front it would make the tyranny of these representatives of the primitive ages more apparent. There were the usual fears expressed that Sunday games would lower the moral tone of Leeds people. That would seem to indicate that the moral character of the Leeds folk is not very robust. We hope it is not so bad as it looks, and that a Leeds man could play cricket on Sunday without at once going home and murdering his wife.

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.

R. LEWIS.—Thanks for good wishes. Will you be good enough to repeat your newsagent's full address, with name, for our list? Brigadier General Makins must be quite a lovable person. He evidently disagrees with anyone existing but himself. Perhaps his army life is responsible for his intolerance.

H. C. LONG.—The destruction of so many people with the courage to express their opinions, with the consequent creation of an environment inimical to honesty of speech and thought, is perhaps the greatest evil that the Christian Church has committed.

W. REPTON.—We are glad you are returning to London. Shall look forward to seeing you. Perhaps you may be back in time for the Annual Dinner.

MR. L. BRADSHAW, of 19 Howard House, Cleveland Street, would like to enter into correspondence with some Freethinker of about his own age—26. We suggest that Mr. Bradshaw joins the North London Branch of the N.S.S., which is the nearest to his address.

S. CONWAY.—See "Acid Drops." There is no end to the impudence of Christians when they are doing what they believe will promote their faith, which is generally only another name for gratifying a monstrously developed egotism.

C. BENTLEY.—Papers are being sent to the address given. Thanks.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges: Josiah Pendlebury, £5 5s.; R. J. Thompson, 3s.

P. MURPHY.—We have seen *The Divinity of Blunders* before, and although it is somewhat in the style of Burns, we have our doubts whether he was the actual author. We may use it later.

J. P. HARDING.—We have yards of similar wonderful experiences reported at Spiritualistic meetings; but the value of evidence depends upon the veracity of the witnesses, their liability to be deceived or mistaken, their power to report exactly what occurred, with their ability to give all the attendant circumstances. There are, as a matter of fact, very few who can report a thing exactly as it occurred, and very few who will not unconsciously add or suppress when they wish to convince; and the possibility of deception is always there. We do not know when Mr. Cohen will visit Ferndale again.

FREETHINKER SUSTENTATION FUND.—J. Lauder, £2; G. Alward, £2; H. Forster, 1s.; A. Akehurst, £1 19s.

J. MITCHINSON.—Sorry for the misreading of your name. Letter sent.

H. ELMES.—If you try to think exactly what you mean by saying that the mind is separate from the body you will discover that you mean nothing at all. Assuming that the "mind" is something separable from the body, we know nothing of it, and therefore can form no conception of it. We can only think of mind as a function of body whether it is actually so or not. In most of these matters the spiritualist is drugging himself with words.

E. SMEDLEY.—A copy of *Other Side of Death* is being sent. Will try to see the articles you name.

J. DAVIES.—Pleased you found the books go so readily, and that the sales of the *Freethinker* promise an increase in your district.

C. LITTLE.—Your letter, dated January 1, was not delivered at this office until the 8th, obviously too late for a lecture notice for the 7th. There must have been some delay in the post.

A. AKEHURST.—We noted the phrase "Unchartered Sea," but as it was so in the copy, and there was a possible meaning in the sense of unlicensed or unowned we let it stand. We hope we have placed the balance of your cheque as you desire.

We have to thank those of our correspondents who have sent us on the names of newsagents who supply the *Freethinker*, and we hope that all who do not see the names there that ought to appear will help us to make good the omission. We also thank those who have taken advantage of our offer to send the *Freethinker* free to any address, and for as many weeks as we receive postage—one penny per copy. This is an excellent way of introducing the paper to new readers, and of sowing the seeds of Freethought.

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.

To-day (January 14) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Rusholme Public Hall, Dickenson Road, at 3, on "How the Gods Came; The Roots of Religion," and at 6.30, "How the Gods Go; Religion and Civilization." The Hall can be reached from all parts of the City, and we are hoping to see a good muster of Manchester Freethinkers, with, we hope a fair number of Christians.

Once more, and, as the auctioneers say, for the last time we remind our readers of the London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner on January 16. The function will be at the Midland Hotel, St. Pancras Station, and there will be the usual accompaniments of music, song, and speeches. There are a few tickets on hand, and those who wish for them should apply at once. We hear of some friends who are coming from the Provinces in order to be with us, and we shall be heartily glad to see them all. We have very few functions of this kind, and it is well to take advantage of them when we may.

Mr. Whitehead visits Birmingham to-day (January 14) and will lecture at 8 o'clock in the Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street. We hope that our Birmingham friends will do what they can to make the lecture widely known. Admission is free.

The next meeting of the N.S.S. Discussion Circle will be held on Tuesday, January 30, at 7 p.m. Mr. R. Reynolds will open the discussion, his subject being, "Socialism and Religion."

To-day (January 14) at 7 o'clock Mr. A. D. McLaren will give an address on "What is Progress?" at the rooms of the South London Branch of the N.S.S., Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W.9. The question is one that is often asked and very variously answered. It ought to attract an interested audience and provoke considerable discussion.

We are glad the Shoreditch Public Libraries Committee has seen the error of its ways. On January 4 we received the following:—

Dear Sir,—After further consideration the Shoreditch Public Libraries Committee have agreed to accept the continuance of your kindness in presenting a copy of the

Freethinker to this Library and to our Branch Library at 236 Kingsland Road, E.2., regularly as published.

Yours faithfully,

W. C. PLANT,
Borough Librarian.

So all is well that ends well, but it would be just as well if *all* the members of public bodies remembered that they are not where they are to air their own petty prejudices, but to act honestly by the general public. We supply the *Freethinker* to a number of public libraries free, and if we do not hesitate to give we see no reason or justification for their refusing to have.

Wesley and Voltaire.

I HAVE often wondered why some Rationalists should be so surprised and hurt that the moral character of a few of our great Freethinkers can be attacked by Christians. After all if a man gives up Christianity it does not mean that he immediately becomes an angel in the Christian sense—a being utterly without a vice or those particular faults which Christians love to call vices. A man can be the foulest of blackguards and yet quite a good Christian—even Christ's Vicar on earth. I could give a list of well-known names in this connection. And a man can give up Christianity and all religion and yet be straight and true and gentle—and it would not be difficult to name quite a number of famous Freethinkers who possess these qualities and more. The vilification of a Freethought opponent by the followers of gentle Jesus is one of the oldest methods of Christian controversy ever since they have been deprived of the power to burn and torture heretics. Can any true man read the story of Thomas Paine without feeling thoroughly ashamed of the inhumanity of his Christian opponents? Were not slander and foul abuse the principal weapons in the Christian answers to the great apostle of Reason?

In *Great Thoughts* for August 1920 appeared an article contrasting the moral character of Wesley and Voltaire—a contrast which often comes up in debate and which a good many Christians seem to consider a triumphant victory for Christianity. Now even if it were proved that Voltaire was all that was bad and Wesley everything that Christians believe makes up the character of one of God's glorious angels, it would not prove the truth of Christianity. How can it? The truth of the orthodox religion rests on entirely different foundations from the moral character of any two individuals. Let us see, however, what *Great Thoughts* says:—

Voltaire was born in 1694. John Wesley in 1703.....Wesley was born in England, Voltaire in France. Both were men of keen intellects. Both wielded great power. Both lived in stirring times. Both lived to a ripe old age. Both wrote voluminously. Each of them lived very differently from the other. The deaths of each were widely unlike. Wesley lived a godly life. Voltaire's life was ungodly. Wesley was pure. Voltaire was impure. Wesley was a Christian. Voltaire was an infidel. Wesley's life and writings and labours were for the defence and propagation of Christianity. Voltaire's lifelong efforts were exerted and directed for the overthrow of Christianity. Wesley's life was a benison to multitudes while he lived; to millions after he died. Voltaire's shameless adultery illustrated his contempt for law—human and divine.....When death approached this hoary veteran of evil, Voltaire said: "I hate life and yet I am afraid to die." When John Wesley was in his last illness, he said: "The best of all is, God is with us." The world is brighter and happier for John Wesley's life. The world has darker tracery and more wretchedness for the life-work of Voltaire.

The brilliant Christian writer responsible for the above must have laid down his pen with a grin of

satisfaction. He was perhaps hearing the flapping of the angel-wings of Wesley and the sound of Voltaire's shovel piling on the Devil's coal in Hell! And yet even bigoted Christians must have a sort of uneasy feeling that a man of "keen intellect" and "great power" could not have been wholly bad, and that there must have been something else which made him, if not the greatest, one of the greatest men France ever produced.

Now it would not be unfair to say that the crime which has shocked Christians most is undoubtedly Voltaire's "shameless adultery." I am not at all sure if they would not call that a greater crime than sinning against the Holy Ghost (whatever that means, for frankly I do not know). At the outset I wish it to be distinctly understood that I do not uphold adultery in general or Voltaire's in particular. I am perhaps old-fashioned enough to believe in marriage with the one man or woman you love, and I believe in children (just the number you can love and decently provide for) and a home. But circumstances alter cases. I have no right to say to anyone that he or she must share my views. I have no right to say to George Eliot, for instance, that her "shameless adultery" shows her "contempt for law—human and divine." It was impossible for her to marry George Henry Lewes, but can anyone say that she was not truly his wife? It was impossible for various reasons for Voltaire to marry Madame du Chatelet, but were not the fifteen years they spent together comparatively happy and productive on both sides of wonderful literary activity? And after all what more than happiness is required for any sexual union? Not a day passes but one reads in the daily Press of hundreds of people clamouring to be freed from marital unhappiness so that (as they are in most cases Christians) a Christian marriage does not necessarily mean supreme bliss. And the most shocking cases of cruelty to children reported with sickening frequency every day in our newspapers—are they not as a rule crimes committed by Christian lawfully-wedded parents?

Voltaire's awful example is given us as the sort of thing which "infidelity" brings in its train, but you will notice that our gallant Christian writer says nothing whatever about Wesley's Christian marriage. On this he is discreetly silent. And the curious might venture to ask him why? After all if Voltaire's shameless adultery is the result of his Freethought, Wesley's marriage ought to have been one of the happiest ever celebrated in Christendom. And the truth is it was not. Mrs. Wesley left her noble husband a number of times (or *vice-versa*), and the picture one witness gives of the dear lady dragging her venerable partner round the room by the hair of his head does not tend to elevate, in the minds of un-biassed people, Christian marriage. The truth is that just as Freethought does not necessarily mean free-love, so Christian marriage does not necessarily mean true happiness—at least not so long as human nature is what it normally is. Heloise, Emma Hamilton, Jane Shore, and a thousand others—what has religion or non-religion to do with them and their lovers?

Let me admit that Wesley was a great man in many ways, but the religion he fought for so earnestly is rapidly becoming a relic of the past. "Giving up witchcraft is, in effect, giving up the Bible," Wesley wrote in his *Journal*, and it would prove interesting to know how many Christians honestly believe in witches and would plump for their instant execution. The fact is, we have advanced far more rapidly to Voltaire's position with regard to the Bible than to Wesley's. When you get a Christian scholar like Dr. T. R. Glover writing in such a paper as the *Daily News* (November 4, 1922) that "there is no doubt but that modern scholarship and the abandonment of belief in verbal and literal inspiration have changed the

mind of Christian people," and "the mass of the English community are just waking up to the notion that the rationalism of the 'seventies and 'eighties has a lot in it," you begin to see that Voltaire did not write in vain, and that Dr. Glover is only too glad to fall back on *his* position rather than on Wesley's. Of course while throwing over a good deal of the Old Testament Dr. Glover finds additional reasons for clinging to the New, but one can safely hazard a prophecy that a few years hence another Dr. Glover will throw over most of the New Testament and pass by Voltaire as too orthodox. The truth is that while Voltaire's Freethought could now find many Christian followers, particularly from the Deistic standpoint, outside the narrowest sections of Wesleyan Methodism you would not find an excessive rush to champion all Wesley's positions in Christianity. In other words Wesleyanism, as an intellectual force, is as dead as a door nail.

In literature there is no comparison between the two men. Voltaire is one of the glories of France. He succeeded in nearly every department of writing, and as an historian, poet, dramatist, letter writer, novelist, pamphleteer, or journalist, he can rub shoulders with the greatest. Can Wesley? There is not a work on French literature which is not bound to mention Voltaire and devote pages to him. Most works on English literature dismiss Wesley with a line (compare, for example, Saintsbury's *Short History of English Literature* with Lanson's *Littérature Française*).

But what did Voltaire do for humanity, and what did Wesley? In a short paper like this there is no space to give the details of the Calas, de la Barre, and Lally cases—infamous judicial murders of the foulest description, over which Voltaire spent many years of fierce effort in fighting before finally succeeding in rehabilitating the unfortunate victims of Catholic persecution. Read what the late J. M. Wheeler in his pamphlet on *Voltaire* or Mr. J. M. Robertson in his brilliant study just published, has to say about the way in which the wonderful old man, with marvellous energy, spurred on by tremendous indignation, fought the French Government and won his case. Voltaire succeeded in righting three men, but his battle cry, "*Ecrasez l'Infame*," was for the whole world. What did Wesley do? Dickens, in the preface to *Barnaby Rudge*, quotes Sir William Meredith's speech in Parliament in 1777 on "Frequent Executions," giving the case of one, Mary Jones, under nineteen years of age, with two small children, whose husband had been press-ganged and who was, in consequence, turned out into the street, starving. The poor girl stole a bit of coarse linen from a linendraper, was caught, sentenced and hanged! (A child was suckling at her breast when she set out for Tyburn). There were hundreds of cases similar to this in the Christian England of the eighteenth century—but what did Wesley do? Nothing!

What did great men think of Voltaire? Goethe says:—

Voltaire will ever be regarded as the greatest name in literature in modern times and perhaps even in all ages, as the most astonishing creation of nature, in which she united, in one frail human organization, all the varieties of talent, all the glories of genius, all the potencies of thought.

Macaulay said:—

In truth of all the intellectual weapons which have ever been wielded by man, the most terrible was the mockery of Voltaire. Bigots and tyrants, who had never been moved by the wailing and cursing of millions, turned pale at his name.

Carlyle, who hated Voltaire, was forced to admit that—

Voltaire gave the death-stab to modern superstition!.....It was a most weighty service.

Ruskin said:—

My scholars are welcome to read as much of Voltaire as they like. His voice is mighty among the ages.

Victor Hugo said:—

Voltaire waged the splendid kind of warfare, the war of one against all—that is to say, the grand warfare; the war of thought against matter, the war of reason against prejudice; the war of the just against the unjust; the war of the oppressed against the oppressor; the war of goodness; the war of kindness.....He was a great mind and an immense heart.....He raised the populace to the dignity of people.....He taught, pacified and civilized.....He conquered violence by a smile, despotism by sarcasm, infallibility by irony, obstinancy by perseverance, ignorance by truth.

Buckle said:—

Voltaire had to deal with men impervious to argument.....He therefore used ridicule, not as the truth, but as the scourge of folly.....and with such effect was the punishment administered that not only did the pedants and theologians of his own time wince under the lash, but even their successors feel their ears tingle when they read his biting words; and they revenge themselves by reviling the memory of the great writer whose works are as a thorn in their side, and whose very name they hold in undisguised abhorrence.

Lecky said:—

Voltaire was at all times the unflinching opponent of persecution.....Beneath his withering irony, persecution appeared not only criminal but loathsome, and since his time it has ever shrunk from observation, and masked its features under another name.

Swinburne said:—

Voltaire's great work was to have done more than any other man on record to make the instinct of cruelty not only detestable but ludicrous; and so to accomplish what the holiest and wisest of saints and philosophers had failed to achieve.....to make tyrants and torturers look not merely horrible and hateful, but pitiful and ridiculous.

Lamartine said:—

If we judge of men by what they have *done*, then Voltaire is incontestably the greatest writer of modern Europe.....His pen aroused a sleeping world and shook a far mightier empire than that of Charlemagne.....His genius was not *force* but *light*.....Reason—which is light—had destined him to be, first her poet, then her apostle, and lastly her idol.

Goethe, Macaulay, Ruskin, Victor Hugo, Buckle, Lecky, Swinburne, Lamartine—one could fill pages with their praises and eulogies of Voltaire, but could we find similar praise and appreciation of Wesley's work from equally great men? I doubt it. The late J. M. Wheeler, to whom I am indebted for the above extracts, gives page upon page of wonderful tributes to Voltaire's uniqueness, not only as one of the greatest of writers in nearly all departments of literature but as one of the world's greatest humanists and reformers. And the answer of his Christian enemies is, as the quite unknown writer in *Great Thoughts* so brilliantly puts it—"Voltaire was an infidel, he was impure, and he committed shameless adultery!"

The work of Wesley as far as Christianity is concerned, is *dead*. What other work he may have accomplished as a Humanist owes nothing whatever to his Christianity, whatever he may have thought, but is part and parcel of the impulse most men feel towards their kind and, when all is said and done, is nothing but *Secularism*. For this work, he like Voltaire, shares our gratitude with other workers in the same field, but to Voltaire we owe far more. As Wheeler puts it, "He stood for the rights of conscience, for the dignity of human reason, for the gospel of Freethought"—and can a man stand for anything much greater?

H. CUTNER.

South African Jottings.

WRITING in the *Bloemfontein Diocesan Magazine*, the Bishop says:—

It is curious to observe the lines of cleavage on the subject of this healing mission. The Dutch Reformed people are quite extraordinarily keen; Mr. Pollock, the Presbyterian minister (who is always a friend to any good and Christian cause) has proved a real rock of support and sympathy, and plenty of our own people are full of faith and hope. But others have proved mere mud-slingers. I quite understand people who are jealous for truth and reality, and fear charlatanism, but in face of the great volume of evidence for the good done I do think they might stand aside and give Mr. Hickson air. Some of them seem to want to crab him before he starts. One even goes so far as to write to the paper and ask, "What is the motive of the Church in bringing Mr. Hickson to Africa?" I can answer this question because I was one of the promoters of the scheme. We brought him out because we wanted sick people to be healed if possible. That is the sole and complete answer. Any other suggested motive is simply and absolutely an untruth. But behind a great deal of this criticism lies a blank disbelief in God or in spiritual things. These folk don't believe in God, a loving God, a healing God. They don't believe that God loved the world enough to send Jesus to heal and save us. They don't believe that God is operative in the world to-day. They are perfectly willing to believe that the sick are healed by suggestion or auto-suggestion or any form of psycho-therapy, but if you suggest that God can heal you, their blank materialism leaps up to deny.....Our biggest danger to-day is an ugly, blank materialism.

That Hickson's main strength should consist in adherents of the Dutch Reformed Church—that staunch upholder of the most rigid Calvinism is not particularly surprising. And when we remember that very many of these people believe in the magic powers of the Kaffir witch-doctor and refuse to credit that the earth revolves round the sun—that they believe it to be impious to kill locusts and the scab insect—and that they receive implicitly the absurdities and crudities depending on a literal interpretation of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures we realize how true it is that the belief in miracles and the supernatural flourishes in a psychological medium intellectually at its lowest. That the bishop should stigmatise his critics as "mere mud-slingers" is not surprising either. To abuse the other side has always been the favourite line with those who are dialectically bankrupt. It has been the failing of more brilliant theologians than the Bishop, and the expletives used were too frequently of the grossest and foulest description. In fact it is not exceeding the limits of strict accuracy to say that lying, calumny, forgery, and the foulest personal abuse have characterized Christian theologians from the earliest ages. In spite of his asseverations to the contrary it is quite clear that the Bishop does not understand "people who are jealous for truth and reality, and fear charlatanism." For the "people" so described by him are those who constitute his keenest critics. It is precisely because we are "jealous for truth" and hate falsehood that we oppose the Bishop and all his tribe. To speak of "the great volume of evidence" is sheer camouflage, and will impose upon none but imbeciles and fools. There is not a tittle of evidence forthcoming that Hickson is anything more than a vulgar charlatan masquerading in ecclesiastical garb, and "curing" his dupes under false pretences. The Bishop takes great exception to "Searchlight's" question. But if some of his own flock were inclined to be as communicative to him as they have been to "Searchlight" he might learn that the motive of the Church which is most generally credited is a very different one to that assigned by him. The fact of the matter is that the Church was failing dismally. Attendances were falling off and backsliders numerous. Finances were in an alarming state, and clearly something had to be done in the way of a sensation. The solution was Hickson. When the Bishop protests that it is otherwise he is simply following in the footsteps of the arch-priests of modern spiritualism, who, in the words of that brilliant journalist, Mr. Jas. Douglas, "not only lie to others, they lie to themselves." In fact, what Mr. Douglas says about the spiritualists applies with equal force to all supernaturalists, as witness this passage:

"The casuistry in spiritualism is staggering. I know men who are incapable of casuistry in any other region or realm of their experience, but who are subtle and refined liars in relation to psychic phenomena." Substitute "theology" for "spiritualism," and "religion" for "psychic phenomena," and the parallel is complete. When the Bishop speaks of the prevailing unbelief in a "loving God" and "spiritual things," he is doing no more than recognising a fact. Probably if we knew the psychology of the different units composing the Bishop's flock we should not find 75 per cent of them having any real belief in a "loving God." But too cowardly to break with the old traditions and social conventions they maintain an outward conformity at variance with inward conviction. But faith is dead. But why should they or anybody else have any faith in any of the things the Bishop contends for? "Spiritual things" are synonymous with prehistoric fears and ignorance, and the God idea had its germ in savage ignorance of natural law. Every theist has negated a million gods but one; the Atheist does but negate the millionth. He has taken one step further that is all. Atheism means dispensing with narcotics. The Christian is under their influence all the time. Then again, how can the Bishop expect any really intelligent man or woman to believe that a "loving God" exists when all the facts of natural experience point the other way? A study of the processes of Nature and the facts of common experience give the lie to such a supposition. Is the Bishop so mentally blind as to suppose that the lessons of the Great War have not sunk deep into the hearts of millions? The conduct of the Church during this great tragedy shines in as lurid a light as do the flames that illuminated the actual conflagration. Deep down in the inner consciousness of millions echo the words of Bernard Shaw, "The Church has behaved infamously." In a letter to the Press the Rev. W. H. Dodds, of Bloemfontein, demurs to the definition of "miracle" given by "Searchlight" from the Oxford English Dictionary, and says, "A modern dictionary is not an altogether satisfactory authority for a definition of the technicalities either of science, philosophy, psychology, or theology." He much prefers "the 'North African Augustine' of fifteen centuries ago," and Sir Oliver Lodge, between whose mentality and scientific outlook he sees no difference at all. But he does touch the climax of absurdity when he quotes the following passage from Sir Oliver Lodge's *Raymond*:—

The region of the miraculous and the bare possibility of its existence has been hastily and illegitimately denied. The existence of such a region may be established by experience; its non-existence might merely mean that owing to the deficiencies of our sense organs it was beyond our ken. They (miracles) need be no more impossible, no more lawless, than the interference of a human being would seem to a colony of ants or bees (*Raymond*, p. 390).

That dictionaries are not always satisfactory in their definitions I think will be generally admitted. But the point here seems to be as to the particular instance cited by "Searchlight." It was for Mr. Dodds to show that it was illegitimate, and this he certainly did not do. The author of *Raymond* is one of those men of science who, in the words of Mr. J. M. Robertson, "by analysis widen the bounds of physical knowledge while accepting in ways which other men find grotesquely uncritical loose propositions on psychic existence." As a man of science and an acknowledged expert in the realm of physics, Sir Oliver Lodge commands our respect. But as the author of the nauseous rubbish contained in *Raymond*, and as the high priest of modern spiritualism, he forfeits our respect utterly, and we are justified in treating his merely speculative views on psychic existence and the miraculous with as scant respect as we would do those of the most ignorant peasant from the wilds of Russia. These are of no greater scientific value than the statements of the celebrated medium, Mrs. Piper, who professed to have received a "spirit message" not only from the authoress of *Adam Bede*, but from Adam Bede himself. It does seem rather singular that Mr. Dodds who calls himself a "Catholic" priest should not have chosen a more orthodox authority. For not only is Sir Oliver Lodge not an orthodox Christian, but the cult of modern spiritualism is, in its trend inimical to Christianity.

A miracle to be a miracle involves the suspension or contravention of all natural laws known or unknown, and had Mr. Dodds referred to the theological standard authority accepted by the Western Church to-day, viz., Aquinas, he would have found that he unequivocally defines a miracle in this way as being *praeter naturam, supra et contra naturam*.

The clergy are very indignant over the controversy started by "Searchlight's" query in the daily Press relative to Hickson's receipts. Canon Belbin thinks that what Mr. Hickson "does with his money is a matter that concerns God and himself," and he wishes "to protest against the impertinence of 'Dutch Reformed's' demand that Mr. Hickson should tell the readers of *The Friend* what his takings are, and what he does with them."

The Rev. de Laude Falkner, Rector of Bethlehem, O.F.S., is even more indignant, and he says:—

I desire to protest against the scurvy treatment meted out by a certain section of the public to Mr. Hickson. Inasmuch as he claims to cure through the power of Jesus Christ, it is natural that he should be accused of working by the power of the Devil, for so accused they his Master. But when he is asked to tell the public how he spends his income the matter passes beyond the point of decency.

Evidently Mr. Falkner considers curiosity as to the financial side of Mr. Hickson's operations is a far more heinous sin than the accusation of sorcery. Perhaps he thinks it is the unforgivable sin! Well, well!

Another correspondent writes:—

I do not see why Mr. Hickson should be called upon to satisfy the curiosity of a few sceptics. There are quite enough right thinking and Christian men and women, in which list I include "Dutch Reformed," who feel that Mr. Hickson's mission here is not for pecuniary ends, but that he is merely an instrument in the hands of the Almighty doing His work for the sufferings of humanity.

All this is deeply instructive. You can say what you like about the creed of the average parson, but only touch him in his purse, and he will curse you to your face. After all it is money that makes the wheels go round, and most of us wish we had more of it. But why? Oh, why do the parsons everlastingly preach, "Blessed be ye poor!"

SEARCHLIGHT.

Providence.

A BABY giraffe was born in New York's big zoo and died. William J. Bryan should apostrophize the long-legged little corpse thus:—

"Never believe anything about evolution, O dead baby giraffe! It is not true that those long front legs, that long neck came gradually, as your ancestors reached up higher and higher to get leaves from trees. Your father must stretch his long front legs far apart to reach the ground with his mouth, and that hurts. But evolution had nothing to do with it. As you are, so you were created, ready made. Divine Wisdom said, 'I have made everything else, I will now make a giraffe, with very long front legs, very short hind legs, and a very long neck and thus prove my power.'"

The whole of evolution is that baby giraffe.

James Lebrasca and his wife, nineteen, have a new-born baby pitifully deformed, without legs or arms. The father, indignant at the suggestion that his child should be deprived of life says: "Let Providence decide what shall become of the baby it created."

"Thou shalt not kill," is the commandment.

Life as it comes must stay. Those suffering extreme agony ask in vain for death. The most hideously deformed, including those idiotic at birth, must go all the way through.

But is it just to drag "Providence" into our miserable problem? What would your idea be of a providence, possessing omnipotence and omniscience, that would create a child without arms or legs? It can't be to punish a child just made that has done nothing wrong. It certainly could not be to punish the parents, for the vilest fiend ever invented by man's unhealthy imagination could hardly be capable of that crime against innocence.—
Arthur Brisbane in "The Detroit Times."

What Will You Put in Its Place?

You hear a great deal of talk these days about "destructive criticism." It comes, as a rule, from amiable, optimistic, immature minds whose reasoning runs something like this:—

"Do not destroy people's beliefs unless you can give them something better in return. Do not tear down unless you can build up. Do not point out errors unless you can indicate the truth. Do not take away unless you can restore."

It makes rather pleasant reading. These apostles of hope never have difficulty in finding an audience. Most people would rather look toward a rosy future than take a cold-blooded inventory of the present. But it accomplishes no good. The path of learning and of improvement does not run in this direction.

When my lady has a tiny wart on her face she goes to a doctor to have it removed. Supposing the doctor said:—

"That is a perfectly harmless wart, madam. If I take it away I can give you nothing in return. Take my advice and keep your wart."

The lady would probably have a fit. Because, you see, she is deeply interested in her face and wants every blemish removed.

With her mind it is entirely different. As long as no one sees her intellectual warts she does not bother about them. And, if they were removed, the blank spaces that would result would worry her. She would have no more false notions to believe in.

The shattering of illusions is the beginning of wisdom. If you want to learn you have to pay, quite often, in the coin of disappointment.

If you are happy in the belief that the earth is flat, as so many millions of people were for ages—you must put up with the shock that comes when you discover it is round.

The child gets his first lesson, as a rule, when it learns that Santa Claus is a myth. It would be nice, when you shatter this delusion, if you could substitute some other fictitious character. But you can't.

We are groping for the truth. Those warts on the mind that represent all of our cherished but erroneous beliefs and convictions are an obstacle to our progress.

Do not be afraid of pessimism. It challenges your mind and helps you sift the true from the false. It may fail to replace what it has removed. But the groping of your brain to find something to take its place will exercise that organ; and when the brain begins to exercise, the real process of thinking is born.—*Bruno Lessing in "The Detroit Times."*

Correspondence.

"OUT TO KILL."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The passage in my article "Out to Kill" quoted by Mr. V. Wilson and upon which he raises his query is, I admit, somewhat vague. By "commendable diversion" I did not, of course, mean to imply that I condone the chasing of a fox and the consequent cruelty which it obviously inflicts upon it (for that, to my mind, is worse than the actual killing). What I wished to imply was that the same amount of health-giving exercise and beneficial enjoyment could and ought to be obtained out of life without that sickening blood-lust which seems to be the main incentive to a certain section of so-called "sports-people."

To live and to let live is apparently too tame for their liking. They must secure their enjoyment always at the expense of a less fortunate creature than themselves, and I often wish that that less fortunate animal could be suddenly endowed, like Balaam's Ass, with the power of speech. He might then be able to make them realize that he, too, is a living creature, and such a miracle might almost have the desired effect of inducing them to view their "sport" from his point of view; a thing they seem otherwise incapable of doing. FRANK W. ROBINSON.

CHRISTIANITY IN THE WORKHOUSE.

SIR,—In the Poor Law Home (formerly called the Workhouse), in Northumberland Street, Marylebone, W.1, the number of Church of England communicants having become so "woefully small," it was recently arranged that some measures should be taken to make a better show. Accordingly on Christmas Day the whole of the inmates of the Female Imbecile Ward (A) together with several men of weak intellect were marched into the little chapel, with the result that it was crowded.

Probably the Chaplain of the institution really felt anxious to more thoroughly earn his stipend, but what a terrible confession of a clerical "fallow!"

FRED WHITBY EDWARDS.

THE WEALTH OF SUPERSTITION IN IRELAND.

SIR,—Mr. H. Cutner wants information as to the duties of the aristocratic English Tory Cardinals at Rome, with their names, pay, etc. With regards to their pay I may inform him the British Government never lets the public know the salary roll of their Secret Service Agents, lay or cleric.

My "authority" for statements is Michael Davitt's famous book *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland*, and all Mr. Cutner wants to know is contained in one chapter, "Rome in Ireland."

If a person gets a present of or speculates a sum of money on a few acres of land, and then gets the land "blessed" and sells eight-foot plots to the public to bury their dead, I call that Capitalism; perhaps Mr. Cutner would term it "Christianity." Outside Drogheda there is one such graveyard run by a priest, and the great Cemetery of Glasnevin in Dublin is run on the same "capitalistic lines," with its infamous "Pit" to quicklime the poor, who are unable to buy a green plot. My authority for British Government grants of money to Roman institutions in Ireland can be found in John Mitchel's *History of Ireland*.

P. MURPHY.

Obituary.

With regret we record the death, after a long and painful illness, of Mr. James Fletcher, of 26 Beamish Road, Lower Edmonton, at the age of thirty-nine years. He suffered greatly for many years. He was an ardent Atheist, and for more than twenty years a constant reader of the *Freethinker*. He was a member of the Edmonton Branch of the N.S.S. and regularly attended all its meetings. He was buried in the Edmonton Public Cemetery on Monday, January 8, when a secular service was conducted.—J. T. L.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (160 Great Portland Street, W.1, side entrance down steps): 8, Mr. Royle, "The Evolution of the Idea of God."

N.S.S. DISCUSSION CIRCLE (62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): Tuesday, January 30, at 7, Mr. R. Reynolds, "Socialism and Religion."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Mr. George Bedborough, "Race Improvement."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W.9, three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Mr. A. D. McLaren, "What is Progress?"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Professor Graham Wallas, "Jeremy Bentham."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street): 8, Mr. G. Whitehead, "Is There a God?"

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street): 11.30, Mr. Service, "Psychology; The Guiding Principles of Conduct." Questions invited. Silver Collection.

HIGH SPEN AND DISTRICT (Chopwell Store Hall): Mr. R. Atkinson, "Why the Workers Should Avoid Christianity."

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (2 Central Road, Duncan Street, Shop Assistants' Rooms): 6.45, Mr. McNatty Palmer will lecture and present Grand Pathé Concert with latest examples of recording. Members please attend.

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. (Rusholme Public Hall, over Free Library, Dickenson Road): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "How the Gods Came; The Roots of Religion"; 6.30, "How the Gods Go; Religion and Civilization."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Frankfort Street): Mr. Guy Aldred, 3, "Famous Heretics, Their Truths and Errors"; 7, "The Father of Damnation."

STOCKPORT BRANCH N.S.S. (191 Higher Hillgate): Thursday, January 18, at 7.30, Mr. George Ambler, "Energy." Questions and discussion. A hearty invitation extended to all.

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 6 Room, Dockers' Hall, High Street): 6.30, Branch Meeting.

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NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

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CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary:

MISS E. M. VANCE, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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Secularism teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

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