

# The FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions.

### An Easter Lament.

We are not at all inclined to endorse whole-heartedly the many lamentations that are going up from preachers and magistrates and others as to the supposed present degeneracy of human nature. Magistrates are not usually good authorities on such matters. They are brought into close touch with the seamy side of life mainly, and the number of offenders they have before them depends upon very casual causes rather than upon a reliable study of the state of human society. As to parsons, they are notoriously the most independable of commentators. There is a fashion in what they say, and not often much judgment. When it suits their policy to proclaim the goodness of human nature they will proclaim it, and when another card suits the game they will play that one. Much of what is said about the worsening of present day manners is based upon the after effects of a very lengthy and a very barbarous war, and as we did nothing during the war to encourage the stupid and criminal talk about the uplifting character of the war upon our soldiers, but steadily insisted that we must be prepared for a certain amount of brutalization as an inevitable consequence of it, we are the more at liberty to criticize those who now rush to the other extreme and proclaim that the "heroes" and "saints"—who were heroes and saints only while they were engaged in the work of killing the enemy—are brutes, blackguards, etc., and who even advocate the use of the "cat" to bring men into a more moral frame of mind. One day we shall realize that we must bear the consequences of whatever we do, and that a process of brutalization does not become moralization because we disguise from ourselves its real nature by a number of fine sounding phrases. We must pay a price for what we have passed through, and if we recognize that quite clearly we shall have gone no small distance towards wiping off the debt.

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### Heresy and Morals.

So far as the clergy are concerned they may safely be trusted to play their usual game. When the war was on they used it to promote sectarian interests. Now it is over and they are left facing its consequences, they strive to use these to the same end. Thus, in its Easter issue the *Church Times* has a

couple of leading articles in which it deals with (1) the unmistakable decay of belief in Christian doctrines, and (2) the alleged decay of morals. Concerning the first it says:—

Can anyone doubt, looking at the movements of the modern mind, that we are in the presence of a general revolt against the Cross? It is not merely that all suffering, whether in ourselves or others, is angrily resented, and a God who inflicts it or permits it is indicted as cruel and unjust. There is also the decay of the idea of sin and the intellectual restiveness which is excited by the idea of sacrificial atonement and propitiation of divine wrath.

In the second article it finds the cause of the supposed demoralization of conduct in the percolation down to the mass of the people of an intellectually discredited anti-Christian philosophy. So far, both statements are far from unwelcome to Freethinkers. It is good to see the admission that there is a general revolt against "the Cross," and it is good also to get the confession that the consequences of nineteenth century scientific work are percolating down to masses of the people. Heresy is no longer the property of the upper classes; and the democratization of knowledge is one of the surest methods of its preservation. The knowledge gained by antiquity would not have been so easily and so quickly lost had it not been the property of a class. It is, indeed, one of the offences that Freethought has given the vested interests of this country that it has for the last century and a half tried to bring home to the masses of the people the results of scholarship and research. There would not have been nearly the outcry there was against such books as Paine's *Age of Reason* had it been written in an academic manner and published at a price that placed it beyond the reach of the masses.

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### The Revolt Against Christianity.

The two statements of the *Church Times* do not go well together. It is true that part of the revolt against the doctrines mentioned is purely intellectual. All that is known of the history of thought in relation to religious beliefs is wholly against the Christian faith. There is the origin of Christian beliefs in the superstitions of savages, where we find such doctrines as god-killing and god-eating substantially as we have them in the Christian ritual, and when such knowledge—thanks to the efforts of militant Freethinkers—was made accessible to the people by means of cheap literature and popular lectures, the intellectual revolt was certain to come sooner or later; and actually, for the most part, the clergy permit, on this count, judgment to go against them by default. They make no reply, because no reply is possible. Quite naturally many are not slow to draw the correct inference from their silence, but apart from this a large part of the revolt is moral. The whole idea of worshipping a God as good who has ordained as part of his plan that things should be as they are, or who is angry for man not being better than he made him, who demands a sacrificial atonement in the person of an innocent person before he will abate his anger, is, and ought to be, morally revolting. The repudiation of these doctrines

is not a sign of a dead moral sense, but of its greater activity. It was only a generation that accepted the teaching of eternal damnation in all its brutal ferocity, and which lived in a social environment to which that teaching was adapted that could go down on its knees and thank God that he had provided a way out. The Christian conception becomes morally revolting just so soon as men get sufficient courage to get up from their knees and calmly examine it.

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#### Supernaturalism and Morals.

To protect Christianity the *Church Times* is driven to defend the thesis that morality must be based upon supernaturalism or it is ineffective. This is a very depressing doctrine, but it is quite Christian, although we should be more impressed with the pragmatism of the argument if the ages when the supernatural conception of morality was generally held stood out for their moral excellence. But moral right was never so carelessly trampled underfoot as it was during those ages, and except for religious sentimentalists and romancers the ages of faith carry their own moral condemnation. But the position is quite Christian, and we quite agree with the *Church Times* when it says that the ethical teaching of the New Testament becomes nugatory when the "impossible effort" is made to separate it from its supernaturalism. The historical and the supernaturalistic Jesus are one, to which we should add that the only Jesus is the supernaturalistic one, and those who make play with the "good man Jesus," are themselves in a state of hopeless confusion or are trying to deceive those who look to them for guidance. The Christian Church was not built upon a good man, but on an incarnated deity. Let go that and everything that is vitally Christian is lost. All the same the assertion of the supernaturalistic character of effective moral teaching involves a conception of human nature that is both absurd and demoralizing. It is tantamount to saying that there is nothing in conduct in itself to commend decent human action to men and women; we must rely upon a system of rewards and punishments which emanate from some outside source. That being granted there is no need for surprise at the moral failure of the Christian Church. There is nothing so certain to make a man a brute or a pig, or a combination of the two, as to deal with him on that level. If there is no other reason for good conduct than a conviction about certain supernatural persons and certain supernatural happenings, then man's sense of right and wrong will alter with every variation of the truth of those alleged happenings. It is fortunate for the world that conduct actually does rest upon some better basis than this. If it did not the variations of Christian belief would long since have made a consistent morality impossible.

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#### Religion and Morals.

"To-day's lowered standard of practice," says the *Church Times*, "is the fruit, to a degree we seldom realize, of a bygone period of scepticism." It is a pity that the leader writers of the paper are not more agreed upon a vital matter. Where the one asserts as an undeniable fact that there is a general revolt against the Christian creed, the other, to suit his thesis, refers to a "bygone period of scepticism" as responsible for the alleged lower conduct. We should much like to know where to look for this bygone scepticism. It is not evident to us in either our travels or in our reading. What the writer has in his mind is what he calls "the agnosticism of nineteenth century science," and that is responsible for the assumed lower morality because it sapped the foundations of supernaturalism. But here the writer takes comfort because "the very foundations upon which the Victorian scientists built their structure of thought have crumbled," and that is

indeed information. One of these foundations was the universality of natural causation, another was the conception of evolution, and we should dearly like to know in what quarters these are questioned. We are told "our religion is no longer impugned on scientific grounds." Well, we should like to know what branch of science gives support to the belief in miracles, to the belief in a virgin-birth, or to the resurrection of a Palestinian Jew some nineteen centuries since. The "mechanistic interpretation of the universe" is also gone. Easily said are all these things, and to the ordinary reader of the religious paper who wishes to see only what he believes, and counts its value as it lulls him to a comfortable sense of security, they bring much satisfaction. But those who try to understand the methods and the principles of science know that mechanism and materialism were never so strongly and so widely held as to-day. It is not one branch of science that gives supernaturalism the lie, but the whole of modern science. If prominent scientific men are not so persistent as they might be in the direct attack on Christianity, it is because Christianity has itself become more cautious than it was. It is not less dangerous, but it is more politic. It strives to get by craft what it once sought to get by force. It dares no longer denounce science, it is quite happy if science will give it a certificate of good character, or at least of its harmlessness. Even in the past scientific men seldom went out of their way to attack religion. Their attack was always a form of defence, and having beaten back the attack they went on with their special work, and, properly understood, that work involves the undermining of all religion, from that of the primitive savage to the elaborated fetishism of the *Church Times*. It is the work of militant Freethought to drive home this lesson, and the fruits of its efforts are seen in the crumbling creeds and discarded doctrines of the Christian Church.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### "At the Midnight Hour."

THE Rev. Samuel Chadwick is an exceedingly popular Wesleyan Methodist minister. He is the Principal of Cliff College, an institution for the training of lay preachers. As a public speaker he is noted for his amazing fluency, which enables him to feel very much at home both on the platform and in the pulpit. His chief characteristic, perhaps, is dauntless loyalty to Wesleyan theology. He is essentially an evangelist, and was for some time in charge of the Leeds Central Mission. At Lincoln, not long ago, he preached a remarkable sermon entitled "At the Midnight Hour," which appeared in the *Christian World Pulpit* of March 1. The text was Ephesians i, 9, 10, and the preacher fastened upon "the statement that in the fulness of the time God has summed up all things in Christ." Mr. Chadwick indulges in many assertions which are fundamentally false. He tells a story about Dr. Watts, the celebrated hymn writer, who was of an unusually short stature. One day he was involved in a heated controversy with six men exceptionally tall. On being asked afterwards what he felt like among such big men he answered, "Like a sixpenny-bit among sixpennyworth of coppers." After observing that it takes twenty shillings to make a sovereign, and that everyone of the twenty shillings is in the sovereign, Mr. Chadwick adds:—

The teaching of the passage is that as a sixpenny-bit stands for six coppers, and as a golden sovereign stands for twenty shillings, so is Jesus Christ in relation to all things in heaven and all things upon earth. He sums them all up. He brings them all into one. They are all included in him, and completed in him, and consummated in him.

Such a claim is laughably absurd. No one ever lived for whom such a claim could justly be advanced. Mr. Chadwick is equally astray when he declares that "all the leading thinkers and teachers of the day have come to the conclusion that nobody can do anything for the world as it is except Jesus Christ." In plain language, that is a self-evident lie. It is not the conviction of the world that Jesus Christ is its Saviour. It is not the conviction of half the world, nor even of half the people in any so-called Christian country. But the preacher is hopelessly infatuated with the falsehood, and keeps on repeating it:—

If Jesus does not save the world, nobody else can. That is not simply the conviction of Methodist preachers; it is the deliberate and reasoned conclusion of the publicists, and the philosophers, and the scientists, and the politicians, and the reformers.

Take the scientists for example, and everyone who thinks at all must admit that in their opinion the only thing that can save the world is, not faith, but knowledge. Already the gradual spread of knowledge has in unnumbered instances dealt the death-blow to supernatural belief, and multitudes of intelligent and well-informed people have learned the art of walking by knowledge rather than by faith. For God and Christ they feel no need whatever. This is one of the reasons why churches and chapels are being so largely deserted. As a class scientific people are completely out of touch with Mr. Chadwick's superstitious Gospel.

Curiously enough, Mr. Chadwick himself unconsciously presents one of the strongest arguments against the truth of Christianity. It is well known that Jesus Christ has had nineteen hundred years in which to justify the claim that he is the Saviour of the world; and yet, speaking in the third decade of the twentieth Christian century, the preacher makes the following dismal statement:—

I have been stranded on the moors at midnight, and it is desolation itself. In the morning and afternoon it does not matter, but at midnight nobody is within reach or within sight. If you have been stranded in a strange town at that hour it is nearly as bad, for the world is frightfully bad-tempered at twelve o'clock at night, and nobody wants to be disturbed. So it is the midnight hour of the world. The world is just a stranded pilgrim at the end of the day, homeless and shelterless.

Poor old world! Early in the fourth century the Roman Empire took Christ into its official bosom as its omnipotent Saviour. What was the result? Ever deepening chaos, ever growing corruption. During the Ages of Faith the worst forms of wickedness flourished triumphantly, and even Peter's seat was often occupied by adulterers and murderers, men utterly devoid of the moral sense. Even to-day the world is said to be "just a stranded pilgrim, homeless and shelterless." All through these dark ages of the past where has the world's Saviour been, and what has he been doing? Very strangely, Mr. Chadwick does not venture to affirm that Christ *has* saved the world; all he claims is that if he does not do so, nobody else can. He meets what he calls the world's challenge by the proclamation "that Christ is the Saviour of the world; that there is no other name under heaven whereby the world can be saved." Our challenge is, if Christ *can* save the world why has he not done so long ago? If he sums up all truth, all humanity, and all saving and redeeming grace, how is it that the world is at the midnight hour "just a stranded pilgrim, homeless and shelterless"?

This is by no means the first time that Mr. Chadwick has been guilty of misrepresenting science. He did so as President of the Free Church Council when it met at Liverpool, when he averred that in "the world of thought there was a changed mentality," which new mentality was, of course, favourable to

supernatural religion. In the sermon now under review he announces that Materialism is dead. His cocksureness is amazing, as the following extract shows:—

The axiom that lay at the foundation of scientific calculation for two thousand years has been exploded, and all scientific construction has had to begin again. For two thousand years it was assumed that the atom was the last analysis of matter and all materialistic interpretations of the universe began with the unit of matter. Everything, it was said, could be accounted for by the unity and the relativity and changing associations of these atoms of matter. They did not need a God. You simply assumed matter in its unit and in its final analysis, and the unbeliever said he could account for the building up of a universe without any God. Then Madame Curie discovered some remarkable things about this unit of matter. She found first of all that it was not a unit; secondly, she found it was not matter. So the assumptions upon which science had rested were exploded in a night, and exploded at the touch of a woman's brain. We had to begin all over again, with the result that there is not anybody with any intelligence who is a Materialist to-day!

It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible to pack more inaccuracies into a short paragraph than we find in the above. The present view of the nature of the atom we owe to two Cambridge professors, Larmor and Thomson, the one a mathematician and the other a physicist. They discovered that electricity exists in small particles called electrons. Every atom is made up of many thousands of these electrons, an electron being a thousand millions million times smaller than an atom. In the *Outline of Science* (p. 187) the difference in size is illustrated thus: "If an atom were magnified to the size of St. Paul's Cathedral, each electron in the atom (as represented by the Cathedral) would then be about the size of a small bullet." As a great scientist says, "electrons are a constituent of the atoms of matter, and we have discovered that they can be released from the atom by a variety of agencies. Electrons are to be found everywhere, forming part of every atom." The point of importance to us, however, is that electrons are particles of matter quite as truly as atoms. Madame Curie did not find that the atom is not matter. It is, therefore, wholly false to allege that "the assumptions upon which science rested were exploded in a night." The indivisibility of the atom was not the foundation upon which science rested. It was simply a theory which modern experiments shattered, but without in the least discrediting Materialism. Whatever may be true of Mr. Chadwick as a theologian, his ignorance of modern science is phenomenal. There are no physicists of any reputation who define the world as "a diaphanous vestment," or who "see that what they touch and handle is the expression of an invisible reality." There are "people" who make such assertions, but they are not scientists. They are people of the same mental calibre as Mr. Chadwick himself. It is not true that "the biggest brains" are exploring the invisible. The biggest brains are engaged upon material problems. Biologists regard the problems of life as essentially problems of matter. Indeed, there are no other problems; and these Mr. Chadwick has never really faced.

Mr. Chadwick's attitude to science is an enormous puzzle. What he wants to make out is that science and Christianity are like hand and glove, a position which he establishes by misrepresenting science, which is a species of dishonesty. We have much more respect for those orthodox theologians who look upon science as a dangerous enemy and treat it accordingly. Without a moment's hesitation these pronounce the so-called discoveries of modern science as fundamentally untrue. The theory of evolution flatly contradicts the Bible, and on that account must be wholly

rejected. The Bible being God's word, whatever is out of harmony with it is of necessity the Devil's word. To us the belief in God and the spiritual world is utterly groundless, and the Bible is of value in so far as it traces, on one of its lines, the evolution of that belief. It is science alone that deserves our active support because it represents the only genuine method of searching after truth.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Under the Cap and Bells.

In religion,  
What damned error, but some sober brow  
Will bless it and approve it with a text.

—Shakespeare.

MARK TWAIN is largely regarded in England as a prince of jesters, and justly so. He was, however, so much more than that, for he was a great man, a great citizen, and a great writer. Mark Twain was the national author of the United States in a sense in which we, in England to-day, have no national writer. The feeling for him among his own people was like that of the Scots for Walter Scott ninety years ago, or like that of our fathers for Charles Dickens. There was admiration in it, gratitude, pride, and, above all, affection. This was shown at one of the last public dinners Mark Twain attended. When he came in he was escorted to the table, and the whole company, in which no man was undistinguished, rose to greet him, and remained standing until he had taken his seat.

This full flame of personal affection went out to Mark Twain for what he had written and what he had done. His fiery dashes against tyranny, humbug, and corruption, attracted men no less than the irresistible laughter of his humour. The incident of his financial failure, which, like Walter Scott's, was wholly the work of others, raised him to the rank of the heroes of literature. For he assumed a moral where there was no legal responsibility, and he set to work at double the pace and paid off the debts. It takes more than an ordinary man to engage in and win such a fight with fate as that. Such a man's humour was bound to be based on seriousness. "Papa," said his daughter, "can make bright jokes, and he enjoys funny things, but still he is more interested in earnest books and earnest subjects."

Mark Twain was a thorough Freethinker, but he always wrote under the restraint of a family full of religious prejudice. His brother was, at one time, a preacher, and his wife was very religious. With more than a touch of fanaticism, his pious wife edited his jokes, and some of his serious attempts at philosophical writing, such as *What is Man?* were suppressed altogether, or else withdrawn from circulation by the unseen hand of piety. We shall never know what we lost by this Puritanical procedure, or what we missed by this kindly philosopher being trammelled by the critic on the hearth.

For this reason all Freethinkers will be pleased at the posthumous publication of Mark Twain's *Mysterious Stranger* (Harpers), an hitherto unpublished manuscript discovered amongst his papers by his literary executor, Mr. Bigelow Paine. The book is the strongest and most outspoken expression of Twain's religious views that has appeared, and must prove of unusual interest to all those who share the author's sceptical and philosophical views.

The book reveals a new Mark Twain, for the jester lays aside his cap and bells. Gone are the gibes and jests which make *The New Pilgrim's Progress* a feast of riotous and profane laughter. The posthumous work deals with the follies and crimes that men are led into by religion, and the mysterious stranger, indicated in the title is "Satan," who appears as a

handsome and intellectual youth named "Philip Traum." A fierce attack is made on the god-idea, which is described as so monstrous that "Satan" wonders why man does not regard the universe as a nightmare. The profanity is not veiled, for "Philip" goes on:—

Strange, because they are so frankly and hysterically insane—like all dreams: a god who could make good children as easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones; who could have made every one of them happy, yet never made a single happy one; who made them prize their bitter life, yet stingily cut it short; who gave his angels eternal happiness unearned, yet required his other children to earn it; who gave his angels painless lives, yet cursed his other children with biting miseries and maladies of mind and body; who mouths justice and invented hell, mouths mercy and invented hell, mouths golden rules, and forgiveness multiplied by seventy times seven, and invented hell; who mouths morals to other people and has none himself; who frowns upon crimes, yet commits them all; who created man without invitation, then tries to shuffle the responsibility for man's acts upon man, instead of honourably placing it where it belongs, upon himself; and finally, with altogether divine obtuseness, invites this poor, abused slave to worship him.

The philosophic "Philip" sums up by saying:—

You perceive now that these things are all impossible except in a dream. You perceive that they are pure and puerile insanities, the silly creations of an imagination that is not conscious of its freaks.

So Mark Twain goes on, like Robert Ingersoll, holding the noses of his readers to the grindstone of thought, forcing them from complacency to discontent, stinging them into sensitiveness. Under the relentless rhetoric we are pierced through and through with a sense of the contrast between what life is and what it might be.

What are so-called religious folk making of life? This is really Mark Twain's question, and the burden of his "dream." His is the corrosive acid that eats into Christian complacency. Quieter in tone than any of his other books, with no jesting at all, *The Mysterious Stranger* is a volume that thrills with the life, the questioning, of to-day. Most significant is this attack on the god-idea, written by one who was, in his generation, the most eminent man-of-letters in America, and whose books are still a large asset of national pride.

MIMNERMUS.

## The Silence.

HAVE the dumb skies heard the voices  
That have called upon them?  
Have the hurtling spheres awakened  
To the passionate enquiry  
Made by men throughout the ages?  
No!

For the why, and for the wherefore,  
For the whither also,  
Men have sought and men have questioned;  
They have made their omni-knowers,  
But what answer made these wise ones?  
None!

Out of reeds and out of grasses,  
Out of stocks and stones;  
Then of strange, malignant insects,  
Then of stars, and then of spirit,  
Came the wise ones, but their answer?  
None!

Still the voices rise up, crying,  
Why and whither? Wherefore?  
In most passionate enquiry,  
But the silence never answers,  
Nor the man-made, God-like, wise ones.  
No!

G. E. FUSSELL.

## Luther in the Light of To-day.

An unfavourable estimate of the Reformers, whether just or unjust, is unquestionably gaining ground among our advanced thinkers. A greater man than either Macaulay or Buckle—the German poet, Goethe—says of Luther that he threw back the intellectual progress of mankind for centuries by calling in the passions of the multitude to decide on subjects which ought to have been left to the learned. Goethe, in saying this, was alluding especially to Erasmus. Goethe thought that Erasmus, and men like Erasmus, had struck upon the right track, and if they could have retained the direction of the mind of Europe, there would have been more truth and less falsehood among us at this present time. The party hatreds, the theological rivalries, the persecutions, the civil wars, the religious animosities which have so long distracted us, would have been all avoided, and the mind of mankind would have expanded gradually and equably with the growth of knowledge.—*J. A. Froude, "Short Studies on Great Subjects,"* pp. 39-40.

In the year 1517, when Luther started his campaign against the Indulgences, Erasmus was the greatest living man of letters and the greatest scholar in Europe. Born in 1466 of middle-class parents, he was now fifty-one years of age, Luther being thirty-four. The parents of Erasmus dying while he was yet a child, he became heir to a moderate fortune. His guardians, desiring to appropriate it, bullied him into entering a monastery, and when about twenty he took the vows and became a monk. His experience of the monkish life may be gauged by what he wrote later:—

A monk's holy obedience consists in—what? In leading an honest, chaste and sober life? Not in the least. In acquiring learning, in study, and industry? Still less. A monk may be a glutton, a drunkard, a whoremonger, an ignorant, stupid, malignant, envious brute, but he has broken no vow, he is within his holy obedience. He has only to be a slave of a superior as good for nothing as himself, and he is an excellent brother.

And again:—

The stupid monks say mass as a cobbler makes a shoe; they come to the altar reeking from their filthy pleasures. Confession with the monks is a cloak to steal the people's money, to rob girls of their virtue, and commit other crimes too horrible to name! Yet these people are the tyrants of Europe. The Pope himself is afraid of them.<sup>1</sup>

Erasmus grew into a brilliant, witty and sarcastic youth, and notwithstanding the disadvantages of his position distinguished himself by his pursuit of knowledge. It was the time of the Renaissance—the revival of the ancient literature of Greece and Rome. For these studies Erasmus displayed an extraordinary aptitude:—

He taught himself Greek when Greek was the language which, in the opinion of the monks, only the devils spoke in the wrong place. His Latin was as polished as Cicero's, and at length the Archbishop of Cambay heard of him, and sent him to the University of Paris.<sup>2</sup>

After several years struggle with poverty in Paris, he made the acquaintance of two young English noblemen who were travelling on the Continent, one of whom, Lord Mountjoy, being intensely attracted by his brilliance, took him for his tutor, brought him to England, and introduced him at the Court of Henry the Seventh. His fortune was made. Erasmus was one of the few foreigners who were thoroughly charmed and delighted with England and the English. Our climate, our manners and our unsociability, have been especially animadverted upon; but Erasmus was delighted with the country and the people, with the English character, English manners, with everything English except the English beer. He remarked especi-

ally that the English have an excellent custom among them, wherever you go the girls kiss you when you come, and they kiss you when you go, also at intervening opportunities. Perhaps his own fascinating personality may have had something to do with this, at any rate, for the intervening ones.

From England his reputation as a writer spread over the world. He obtained a release from his monastic vows from Pope Julius II, and when Leo X succeeded to the Papal Chair he invited Erasmus to visit him at Rome, where he was received with princely distinction. He could have had the highest dignities in the gift of the Church for the asking, but he cared more for his liberty than for the Pope's uniform, and of wealth he already had abundance. No writer—with the possible exception of Voltaire—ever achieved such an eminence during their lifetime. Writing to Polydore Vergil in 1527, he says: "I have drawers full of letters from kings, princes, cardinals, dukes, nobles, bishops, written with the utmost civility. I receive uncommon and valuable presents from many of them."

"'The Emperor implores me to come to Spain,' he tells the Bishop of Augsburg, 'King Ferdinand wants me at Vienna, Margaret in Brabant, and Henry in England; Sigismund asks me to go to Poland, and Francis to France, and all offer me rich emoluments.' 'Everywhere the greatest monarchs invite me,' he told Carondelet, April 30, 1526. Charles V nominated him a councillor and gave him a pension. Ferdinand, the brother of the Emperor, evinced the warmest regard for him; so, too, did Sigismund, the king of Poland. Francis I envied the glory of his rival in possessing such a subject, tried to attract him to Paris, 'promising him mountains of gold,' and writing him a letter with his own hand..... 'They say that it is only the third he has written since he ascended the throne.'..... Henry VIII was equally attracted by him, assigning him a pension, corresponding with him, and almost becoming his collaborator."<sup>3</sup>

Although Erasmus had been trained as a monk and adhered to the Romish Church all his life, he was no fanatic, he had no enthusiasms or superstitions. It should be remembered that it was possible at that time to believe the teachings of the Church without incurring the suspicion of being either intellectually maimed, or dishonest. Evolutionary science, which revealed the rottenness of the foundations upon which the Church was reared was yet unborn. In those days there was no reason why a man should doubt that the world was created in six days, less than six thousand years ago. Or that Adam and Eve were our first parents. Or that Noah's Ark contained specimens of every living creature. Or that diversity of language began at the Tower of Babel. Or any other of the amusing tales in the Bible. But Erasmus could see that the ignorance, vice, and brutality of the monks and the corruption of the Church could not go on indefinitely, therefore he wished for a reform of the Church from within. Writing to the Archbishop of Mayence, he says, speaking of the monks and friars:—

With these gentlemen the world has borne too long. They care only for their own vanity, their own stomachs, their own power; and they believe that if the people are enlightened their kingdom cannot stand.

If Erasmus was alarmed at the licence of the monks, the religious orders, for their part, were alarmed at the revival of learning, the authors of which appeared to them to be inspired by the Devil. The Dominicans, "the hounds of orthodoxy," regarded Erasmus as their worst enemy; they tried to compel him to re-enter the order, but holding the Pope's dispensa-

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Froude, *Short Studies*, pp. 62-71.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> Murray, *Erasmus and Luther*, 1920, pp. 5-6.

tion, he was able to defy them, and in his *Praise of Folly* he set all Europe laughing at them. It will be thought strange that Erasmus should be allowed such licence, seeing how Huss, Jerome, and Savonarola perished in their attempts at reform, but the fact is, as Froude observes:—

The great secular clergy, who hated the regular orders, were delighted to see them scourged, and themselves to have the reputation of being patrons of toleration and reform.<sup>4</sup>

The monks declared that Erasmus laid the egg of the Reformation and Luther hatched a cockatrice. Luther, for his part, was fond of saying that he merely spoke out plainly what Erasmus in his timidity only hinted at. At first Erasmus felt well-disposed towards Luther. Indeed, but for the support of Erasmus in the commencement it might have gone hard with Luther, for many princes, spiritual and temporal, wrote to Erasmus for guidance in the matter, and his replies were favourable to the reformer. On April 14, 1519, Erasmus writing to Frederick, Elector of Saxony—Luther's sovereign—urges him not to abandon an innocent man to his enemies, and Grisar says "it was probably this letter which confirmed the Elector in his determination not to withdraw from Luther his protection" (Grisar, *Luther*, p. 247). If he had done so nothing would have prevented Luther's being delivered up to Rome, as the Emperor wished and the Pope demanded. Erasmus also wrote in similar terms to Duke George of Saxony, to Archbishop Albert of Mayence, in whose diocese Wittenberg was situated, and to his friends in England. At the most critical time Luther had much to be grateful for to Erasmus, but they soon began to diverge, both saw that they had different objects in view.

W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

## Characters in the Christian Drama.

SCHOLARS and biblical critics like the Rev. Robert Taylor, B.A., and Gerald Massey, the poet, have demonstrated with a good show of evidence the mythical character of the Jesus of the Gospels, and demonstrated that the story of the alleged virgin-birth, as well as that of the crucifixion, are based upon astrological phenomena, and that the key to the understanding of such matters, is to be found in the study of the signs of the zodiac. Other distinguished critics, after carefully weighing all the evidence, are satisfied that the Jesus of the Gospels is not an historic character at all, in fact, that there is no evidence that such a person ever lived. There is, also, another side of the question that is worthy of the consideration of every student of religion, and that is whether, after all, the main features of the alleged career of Jesus do not constitute a series of episodes of a dramatic character that might very well have formed the groundwork of a sacred drama, which might have been, and probably was, performed in various Eastern countries long before the Christian era. This play might also have formed the groundwork of the Gospel story of the Nazarene. The plot is there, all the necessary characters are there, and it would only require a dramatist of ordinary skill to construct a drama of thrilling interest from such materials. When, however, we come to consider the characters as real individuals we are confronted with many difficulties.

Take John the Baptist, for instance; he does not seem very much like a real character. The Rev.

Robert Taylor in a sermon delivered at "The Rotunda," Blackfriars Road, as far back as 1830, described John the Baptist as "John the Dipper":—

"In those days came John the Baptist"—and what days were those?—"preaching in the wilderness of Judea." And what wilderness was that? And if it was a wilderness that he was preaching in, what sort of a congregation must he have had but the squirrels and the rabbits and the monkeys and the chimpanzees, and the orang outangs and the wild beasts and the wild men of the woods, and everything that was wild? It is sure he must have looked wild enough himself, with no shoes and stockings, and nothing else but an old mat of camel's hair, tied with a strap of leather round his body; and nothing to eat but woodlice, grubs and maggots and locusts and wild honey; so that his very victuals were wild. And in faith! if his doctrine wasn't quite as wild, when he told the wild things to repent because "the kingdom of heaven was at hand" (Sermon on "John the Baptist" in the *Devil's Pulpit*, p. 49).

And so it seems extremely doubtful whether John the Baptist was a real character after all, and as for the names of the disciples of Jesus—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—they are certainly not Jewish names, and I have never heard of such names among all the Jewish families I have known. But if we assume, for the sake of argument, that all the characters in the so-called sacred drama are real and that Jesus went about preaching and performing miracles wherever he went, is it not strange that he did not succeed in getting a much larger following and that even his own disciples appeared to believe so little in him that at a critical period they all "forsook him and fled"? At Easter, Christians when referring to "The Tragedy of the Cross," give vent to their indignation and contempt for the character of Judas Iscariot because of his alleged betrayal of his master. But if it was part of the Divine scheme that Jesus was to die upon the cross it was necessary that someone should betray him, otherwise there would have been no crucifixion, and consequently no salvation for the great masses of believers in the Christian faith. If it was no part of the Christian scheme that Judas was to betray Jesus, then the betrayal was an accidental incident, or rather an unforeseen incident that Jesus himself could only have anticipated on the assumption that, like God the Father, he was all-knowing. But the Gospels give us no warrant for that. On the contrary, there are many passages which show that Jesus did not know everything, otherwise how could we understand him saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. xxvi, 39). And if it was part of the pre-ordained plan that Judas was to betray his brother Jesus, what right have Christians to blame him for selling his master for thirty pieces of silver, when in the very nature of things he could not help it?

That Jesus understood that the betrayal was part of the scheme may be seen from the fact that he said: "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me" (Matt. xxiv, 23). This ought to be sufficient evidence. Moreover, several of the disciples saw Judas partake of the sop, and therefore knew that he was the man chosen by the Christian God, or by fate, to do the deed that would culminate in the death of his master. According to the Gospels Judas repented of his deed, and returned the money to the priests, but there is no record that God ever forgave him, although he forgave Peter who, with an oath, had denied his master thrice.

Why should not the repentance of Judas be just as acceptable to God as that of Peter—especially as Judas returned the money he had accepted in payment of his treacherous act? According to the Gospel Judas was so sincere in his repentance that he went out and hanged himself. Of course, I am well aware that

<sup>4</sup> Froude, *Short Studies*, p. 66.

according to the Acts Judas bought a field with the money, and then had a fall and his bowels gushed out ; but I am not concerned here in trying to reconcile the contradictions of holy writ. Perhaps in the plays that were performed by the strolling actors they found it more practicable to let Judas die by accident rather than to appear to die by being hanged. Maybe the actor who played the part drew the line at being strung up and almost strangled for the gratification of an ignorant and excited crowd. In this so-called sacred drama we observe that there is no female interest. Jesus was a bachelor, and though he appears to have had a number of female admirers, none of them succeeded in fanning into flame the divine spark of love.

It is true that the dramatists might have invented a heroine for their play, but women in the early ages of the Christian faith were kept in such complete subjection that we may take it that they were not allowed to take any important part in the sacred drama, although they may have been allowed on special occasions to help to make up the crowd. The trial and crucifixion of Jesus would form good material for a drama of themselves, for in the trial we have the strong character of Pilate introduced, and in the crucifixion the ignorant and brutal crowd who would take delight in the sacrifice of the noblest and best of mankind to satisfy their own lust for human blood and sensation. The cry of "crucify him, crucify him," would have gone up just as vehemently if Jesus had been a despised Atheist, as it is supposed to have done in the case of one who claimed to be "the Son of God," as well as "the King of the Jews." In all ages bigotry and intolerance manifest themselves in the same way. The bigots are just as eager to kill the saints as the sinners. In fact we can imagine them crying as eagerly for the blood of the martyrs in all ages as for that of the greatest criminals whose foul and atrocious deeds have turned this fair earth into a veritable slaughter-house ; or, as Tyrrel says in Richard III :—

The tyrannous and bloody act is done,  
The most arch deed of piteous massacre,  
That ever yet this land was guilty of.

But the tyrant may go free.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

### Acid Drops.

Canon Sturdee continues his series of sermons in Rothley Parish Church, one of which we noted last week, and each one is more wonderful than the last—that is if the newspaper summary is trustworthy. Thus we learn that the Church fostered the State because the bishops began, in the earlier centuries, to look to Canterbury as its head, and so lead to unity ; the first Convocation was held in 1225, and the first parliament in 1265 ; bishops and priests looked after the repair of the roads, bishops were among the chief officers of the state, the monasteries looked after the physical well-being of the poor, and education was under the care of the Church till the passing of the Education Act of 1870. In fact there would have been nothing worth having without the fatherly and fostering care of the Church. The only things, apparently, for which we have not to thank the Church are the law of gravitation, the principle of causation, and wireless telephony. These managed to get themselves established without the fostering care of the holy Church.

All this, as we said last week, makes one wonder what kind of a congregation assembles at Rothley Parish Church. For so great a travesty of history would hardly deceive the average well trained schoolboy. We wonder if it is so unusual in the early history of a country for it to develop a movement of combination among its warring parts for the occurrence in England to demand

a Church to bring it about. It is true that the bishops were some of the officers of the State, but there were State officials before the Christian Church was heard of, and the bishops and the clergy were deprived of much of their power in secular affairs because experience proved that they nearly ruined every country in which they were allowed to exercise that power. Again, the charities dispensed by the Church were but a small portion of the plunder taken by the Church from the people, and it is very curious to find a Church which at one time had nearly half the land of Europe within its greedy grasp standing forward as the friends of the poor ; and as to the education being attended to by the Church Canon Sturdee must know that it was the deplorable state into which education had fallen under the control of the Church that forced the Government to bring in a bill to deal with the matter. How bad was the education given is shown by one of the Government reports—prior to the Education Act—which stated that although the State was then only giving £20,000 annually to assist education, it was not getting value for its money.

If Canon Sturdee really does not know what was the State of England after centuries of Christian rule we advise him to read the pamphlet just published by the Pioneer Press—*Christianity and Civilization*. It is a chapter from Dr. Draper's standard work on the intellectual development of Europe, and is a calm and judicial indictment of the whole rule of the Christian Church.

"The world has swung into an irreligious period, and the Church has given up the struggle against the times," declares Mr. J. Ramsay Macdonald, M.P. One would expect better logic from a Scotsman. What sort of "an irreligious period" is it that supports 50,000 priests in this country alone? There are also forty bishops in the House of Lords.

At an East London chapel a Pleasant Sunday Afternoon speaker was announced to speak on the subject of "Stuff and Nonsense." Such outspoken honesty in the choice of a title is rare in religious circles.

Mr. W. L. George, the well-known novelist, says "religion is tumbling down, Churchman, Roman Catholic, Jew, Nonconformist, all are slowly turning away from the idea of a personal god. The Mussulman, the Buddhist, will follow. The time will come when no man believes." Someone will be sending Mr. George a tract.

How far we are making towards peace, and further to ratify the useless sacrifice of our young men in the late war, may be judged by a glance at a review of a book entitled *Air Raid Damage in London*, price five shillings. It is stated that the British Fire Prevention Committee urge raid shelters, permanent and temporary to be supplied for those living in houses of fragile construction. If this is the best that these poulticers of human misery can recommend the sooner the earth meets that friendly comet the better. We wish the book a speedy transit to the twopenny box, and the authors many happy returns of the next war when *everybody* will be in the firing line.

A friend from overseas gives us a rather amusing instance of the effects of Christian belief upon morality. From a public library—we suppress names for certain reasons—a number of books had been missing. Eventually they were traced to an assistant in the library, a very sincere Christian. He had not stolen the books to make money on them, neither had he taken them for his own reading. They were Freethinking, and therefore, wicked books, and he had taken them in order to keep the poison from unwary readers. His religion did not teach him to tolerate difference of opinion, but it did permit him to steal in its interests. We feel quite certain that many Christians would agree with him in what he

did, for he was, after all, only carrying on so far as modern conditions would permit, the general policy of the Christian Church in suppressing opinions with which it did not agree.

Who says Providence is devoid of a sense of humour? At a Hammersmith inquest on a man, it was stated that he collapsed and died in a cinema-theatre, after laughing at a comedy-film. Anyhow, the poor fellow had his laugh, which is not always the case with the jokes of Providence.

The irrepressible Father Degen bids fair to rival the Bishop of London with his jeremiads. His latest screed is to call upon England to wake up to a realization of "the hellish tendencies of a creedless age in which Satan is running up the biggest score that he has ever made." The idea of Satan, dressed in cream flannel, playing cricket is quite funny. Father Degen is out of his element preaching the religion of "the Man of Sorrows."

A remarkable criticism of our boasted Christian civilization was delivered by Mr. Philip Snowden, M.P., in the House of Commons recently in the debate on Socialism. He said that the last census showed that in London on that night there were 616 families living and sleeping six persons to a room. Thirty per cent. of the population of London was living in overcrowded conditions. Eighty-eight per cent. of the wealth of the country was owned by two-and-a-half per cent. of the population. Mr. Snowden did not mention that the poor people who submit to these conditions are soothed by a promise of "a beautiful land"—after death.

According to the reviewer, the curate of St. Mary Abbots, Kensington, makes a gallant attempt to preserve the integrity of human free-will in face of the mechanistic determinism of modern science. In his book, *Recent Psychology and the Christian Religion*, the author suggests that the findings and methods of the psycho-analysts may be of service to the priest. We were always under the impression that the confessional box was the exit for repressed complexes. We also trust that scientists are fully aware of the danger to be expected from the curate of St. Mary Abbots.

The latest Anglican Bishop, Dr. Headlam, paid a visit to Cheltenham the other day and solemnly dedicated the new vicarage. The Bishop visited each room in turn, not forgetting the kitchen, and pronounced a blessing in each room. Then, having made the tour of the inside of the house he went outside and dedicated that part. We sincerely congratulate Dr. Headlam on his ability to keep a straight face during the whole of these proceedings. It is almost impossible to believe that an educated man can, at this time of day, seriously attribute more value to these particular rooms than to any others; and yet, while we have these performances at home, we have the impudence to send out missionaries to convert the heathen! They could not be more foolish than these things would indicate. The only consolation—by which we save intelligence at the price of honesty—is that they are not seriously believed.

We noticed a book the other day with the title *The Melodies of God*. Whether it means the songs that God sings or the songs that God likes, we know not, but in either case we should like to know how the writer gets his information. If God likes all the things that are sung to him, his taste, like his mercies, are past understanding.

Miss Sarah Berrow, of Manchester, left £20,000 for missionary societies and religious institutions. Comparing the amounts used by religion in its warfare against Free-thought and the amounts with which religion is fought, we appear to be very heavily handicapped; but we make headway all the same.

We see that the London County Council has numerous letters of protest from both societies and individuals protesting against and restrictions of Sunday games in the parks. We trust that more will be sent. It is little short of a public scandal that a number of religious busybodies, not content with spending their day of rest as they see fit, should arrogate to themselves to say what others should do. If someone were to propose that people should be prohibited attending church on Sunday there would be an outcry. We wonder what greater justification there is for prohibiting games on the day of rest?

The Vicar of St. Matthew's, Surbiton, says that some plays are better than sermons. We have no hesitation in saying that a play that is not better than a sermon would not run in a decent theatre for a fortnight. When people go to a theatre they keep their critical powers active. A sermon finds them in a state of quiescence.

Lady Tristram Eve has been appointed to the chairmanship of the London County Council Parks Committee. She says that "crime has diminished since games were played in the parks on Sundays—so many of the offences were committed on Sunday." That is what one would expect, and it is on all fours with the testimony of the police everywhere. Young men who are playing games are at least out of mischief, but they are not at church. That is their offence in the eyes of the sour-faced Sabatarian.

A Farnborough jury severely censured a woman whose baby had died without medical attendance. She said that she had prayed for forty hours for the child's recovery, but in vain. If that jury had been logical and courageous it would have censured the teachings of a book like the New Testament, which plainly told the woman that the Lord would cure illness in that way. It is monstrous that 50,000 clergymen should be holding this book up as the word of God, and asserting that we must base our lives upon its teaching, and then a Christian jury charge a woman with criminal negligence for acting upon its plainest instructions.

The *Times*, in the course of a review of Mr. Cohen's *Essays in Freethinking*, ventures the opinion that many of the beliefs he writes against are no longer held. We presume the reviewer means by what are called "advanced Christians," but even this is not true. Seeing that some of the essays deal with the anthropological roots of religion and the origin of the belief in God, one is puzzled to see the application of the comment. We fancy it is just an expression of the common trick of pooh-poohing a criticism which it is not easy to answer. As to the crasser form of Christian beliefs, these are not by any means so dead as some would have us believe. Such a body as the Bible Students' Association can conduct a huge campaign which obviously demands large sums of money and is supported by large numbers of people. What is true is that many educated people who have not come to the point of ceasing to call themselves Christians, are so heartily ashamed of having genuine Christianity put before them that they prefer to pretend that that form of Christian belief is no longer held. When the clergy cease to preach it, and publicly disavow orthodox Christianity we shall be impressed with the criticism, but not before, we fancy.

#### EASTER JOY.

On Easter Sunday afternoon I met one of my best workmen returning from the village in a state of blissful intoxication, and singing at the top of his voice. He stopped and saluted me courteously. "You are very drunk, Choque," I said to him. "Yes, Señor," he replied, beaming with satisfaction. "You see," he went on, "to-day is Easter Day, and one must get drunk in honour of God."—*Six Years in Bolivia: the Adventures of a Mining Engineer* (p 57). By A. V. L. Guise. Published by Fisher Unwin, 1922.



### 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. H. LOVEBIN.—Far from being "bored" we are greatly indebted to those of our readers who are good enough to send us cuttings which they think may prove of interest. The cutting you enclose is interesting, but it is a pity that these people fail to see—or at least they fail to make clear to their readers—that the stronghold of bat-eyed tradition and stupid custom is religion. To jibe at tradition while leaving religion alone is a stupid procedure.

ONE of our readers asks for the exact reference to "unclassed, creedless and nationless." (Shelley) and the author of *Let Man Will and Thou Art God No More*.

MRS. WRIGHT.—We should have liked to arrange a meeting, but conditions were not very promising. At some future time perhaps. We appreciate your interest in the matter.

L. MARCAN.—We did not see the account of the deputation of parsons who waited on the Water Board to get their water free of cost, but it is quite in line with clerical impertinence. These gentlemen never mind saddling themselves on the rates if they can possibly do so.

G. S. MACILVAINE.—Thanks for reference to reviews. Will look the matter up.

A. MILLAR.—Papers have been sent. We do not remember receiving the previous application.

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

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### Sugar Plums.

To-day (April 8) Mr. Cohen will visit Plymouth. He will lecture in the Co-operative Hall, Frankfort Street, at 3 and 7. There will be some reserved seats at 1s., otherwise admission will be free. Judging from previous experiences the meetings are likely to be good ones. We hope so as there is need for more active Freethought propaganda in the West of England. It is too late this season, but with the autumn we should like to see the west much more active than it has been of recent years.

The Manchester Branch N.S.S. holds its annual meeting at the Cromford Court, Café, Market Street, on Saturday, April 7 at 3 o'clock. We hope there will be a full attendance of members. There is important business to transact.

The N.S.S. Propagandist Committee desire to call the attention of individual members living in provincial towns where no branch of the N.S.S. exists, to the fact that, provided they have sufficient interest in the Cause and a little time at their disposal to make the necessary arrangements, the Executive will be prepared to take the full financial responsibility of a visit from Mr. Whitehead for a week or longer during July and August. Any member sufficiently enthusiastic to take advantage of this opportunity for Freethought propaganda should write to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, at the N.S.S. Offices, who will give all necessary information.

There was an unfortunate happening at Mr. Rosetti's recent meeting at Manchester. During the course of the lecture an elderly gentleman leaned forward in his chair, and those near him thought that he had fainted. When medical attendance was obtained it was found he was dead. In reporting the occurrence the *Manchester Evening Chronicle* said that he died while speaking. A correction was sent by the secretary of the Manchester Branch, and in a subsequent edition it was correctly stated that the dead man was not speaking, neither was he a member of the Society. All the same we venture to tender our sympathy with the relatives of the deceased.

We are asked to call the attention of East London Freethinkers to the last of the season's socials organized by the West Ham Branch. It will take place on Saturday, April 7, at Earlham Hall, Earlham Grove, Forest Gate, E. The proceedings commence at 7, and all Freethinkers are welcome. Admission is free.

The Swansea Branch has arranged for a Lecture Recital by Mrs. Margaret Murch, assisted by Marian and Philip Murch. The subject is "An Evening with the Poets," and the place, the Elysium, High Street, Swansea. The prices of admission are 1s. and 6d. As this is the close of the season's meetings, we hope that there will be a good attendance.

To attack by way of epithet is a very common method of gaining victory. Here, for example, is a string of words which may mean something, but usually mean no more than that the one who uses them is opposed to those he is fighting: Sedition, treason, blasphemy, infidelity, atheism, anarchy. Analyse the meaning of each of these, and take that in conjunction with the attack launched, and in nine cases out of ten it will be found to involve no more than that one is attacking established authority. People pride themselves on their "faith" or their loyalty, on their devotion to a king or an institution, as though that were of necessity a good thing and opposition a bad thing. It is nothing of the kind. Intelligent devotion to truth, to progress, to the welfare of one's country, and to the prosperity of one's fellow citizens may involve all that is covered by the above terms when used as symbols of condemnation. There is not a man in the world's history who has made a contribution of value to the world's progress who has not been accused—and from the muddle-headed one's standpoint, rightly accused—of blasphemy, disloyalty, treason, anarchy, or atheism. Words they say do not break bones. Unfortunately they break more than bones, they break men. And there are many thousands who to-day are afraid to speak, too timid to move, because of the names that are thrown at them. Men who might face the stake, are afraid of a name.

We again call the attention of our London readers to the course of Sunday afternoon lectures arranged to take place at South Place Institute. The lecturer to-day (April 8) will be Mr. R. H. Rosetti, and we trust that there will be a good send off to the course. South Place is very "getatable," and can be easily reached from any part of London. It is within three minutes' walk of the 'bus terminus at Liverpool Street, and from Liverpool Street Stations (G.E.R. and Underground). The meetings commence at 3.30. Mr. Whitehead and Mr. Corrigan will follow Mr. Rosetti, and Mr. Cohen will wind up the course on April 29.

## Richard Carlile.

### I.—EARLY YEARS.

RICHARD CARLILE was born on November 8, 1790, at Ashburton, in Devonshire. His father was a cobbler, much too talented to possess any business acumen, who had published some essays on mathematics, and died when Richard was four years old. His mother worked hard and long in order to keep the family in food, clothes and shelter.

The following facts and all the circumstances of his life prior to his imprisonment are related by Carlile himself:—

Every man is an ignorant man; knowledge can only exist in degrees; perfection is unattainable; though improvement will never cease; therefore, the state or degree of a man's learning is the state or degree of his ignorance. Learning and ignorance are synonymous words. The most ignorant man has learned something; the most learned is ignorant of something. The duty of all is to increase the degrees of knowledge in all, and of each to increase his own, which he can do by resolution.

To state correctly what I now am, it is necessary that I should state the means which I have had to acquire knowledge; and though this will set me to speak of myself, from infancy upwards, it is a story which none can tell as well as myself. But this speaking of one's self is pleasure, at all times, whatever affectation might have affected to the contrary; particularly where a man is not ashamed to expose his past career to the knowledge of all.

In my youth there was nothing singular; as a boy among boys I thought more of excelling them in their foibles than in their virtues; and having no father to guide me, I may say that, until twenty years of age, I was a weed left to pursue its own course. I had some of the works of Paine in my hands before then, but I did not read them, whether from prejudice or a total lack of ideas upon politics I know not; for although I heard them praised, I felt no desire to read them.

At the pressing wish of my mother I was apprenticed to a business which I never liked—that of tinsmithing. My apprenticeship, which was seven years and three months, was a most painful one. I had a master who taught me nothing but that which was profitable to himself, and cared no further about me than as to the largest quantity of labour he could obtain from me upon the smallest quantity of food.

The maximum on one side, and the minimum on the other, was his domestic economy; or I should rather say that the master looked after the labour, and the mistress after the food. These unpleasant extremes did not fail to create war, and after suffering such an apprenticeship, imprisonment, such as mine now is, is to me no punishment. But I merely introduce this point to show that, through a seven years' apprenticeship, I did not gain an iota of book knowledge, beyond what my own disposition led me to seek, and that was very little, until the last year that I had fought myself independent of the master's table and bed. I do not say that I was faultless, but I taught that master, as I shall teach my present oppressors, that mine is a temperament from which persecution can wring nothing but perseverance in resisting it, and that neither pains nor poverty can subdue me, where I see myself to be right; and, even if in error, a good word, a soft word will do in a moment that which no menace or punishment will ever do. In short, as to temper, I may say, that I flatter myself of mine being precisely that which was required to accomplish that object which I have undertaken. I know that my body is not indestructible;

but I also know, by experience, that its moral part cannot be separately destroyed nor subdued in a contest for that which is fair and right.

The master considered that the only time necessary for recreation was five or six hours for sleep. By my play-fellows and companions I was both blamed and derided for being a slave, and the master depicted as a negro-driver. I soon began to show a disposition to lay claim to, not the "Rights of Man," but the rights of apprentices, which my master professed to be ignorant of, and, like some of our aristocrats with respect to the "Rights of Man," he endeavoured to convince me that apprentices had no rights at all.

As to school education, I had but little. I was so far unfortunate in parents as to have a father that neither cared about wife nor children, which left an amiable mother no alternative but to seek bread for me and my two sisters by her needle. She was a widow before I was five years old, and was kept a widow by the strength of her maternal affection. But this widowhood was our rescue from misery. Her character spotless, and manners, to the witness of which I can call all the inhabitants of the town, she was assisted so far as to be put into an old-established shop, and at once placed above all want.

My first schoolmistress was old Cherry Chalk, who taught the alphabet on a horn book, and performed all sorts of cures without medicine by the potent power of charms! She was not a witch, but much respected as one who performed wonderful cures. There was another old woman who had the title of the witch, and one in a town is enough on whom Christian ignorance might vent its spleen. I had two other schoolmistresses of a more respectable stamp than old Cherry. I believe the first taught for three-halfpence a week, and the other two at twopence. When I got to a fivepenny school it was considered an extravagant affair, too expensive to be borne, and a successful effort was made to put me upon the list of free scholars.

It is a singular circumstance, but I can trace both *The Quarterly Review* and *The Republican* to the free schools of Ashburton. William Gifford and Doctor Ireland, the Dean of Westminster, both received the rudiments of their education at these free schools, and I came after them to undo, I hope, all the mischief that they, as politicians, have done. These free schools of Ashburton were not so free for the poor as for the rich. One of them was a school for Latin and Greek, wholly free of endowment, and here only the children of the richer persons were admitted. Here, also, I followed Dr. Ireland and William Gifford.

From the age of six to nine I was at writing and arithmetic, from nine to twelve at Latin. At twelve years of age I was taken from school, under the recommendation of the father of a Mrs. Lee, and placed in consequence of my knowledge of Latin with Mr. Lee, the chemist and druggist of Exeter. Here my stay did not exceed four months. Too much of a man to go to school again, I lay idle for three months, and amused myself with drawing and colouring pictures to sell in my mother's shop to the people who came thither from the country. It is rather singular that my mother should keep a retail shop, and that one of her principal wholesale dealers should be the firm which consisted of the brothers of the Attorney-General, Gifford.

For my own part, I had no more idea of school education than that it was a pastime for boys, and I sought an exchange from "Cock Hannaford" to the Latin school with no idea but that of more play and less punishment, and because all the better dressed boys were there. But I found after that this smattering of Latin gave me everywhere an air of superiority, and, among such company as I was able to keep, I

passed for a scholar. The very vanity and flattery attached to this state of mind, I believe, was my chief inducement to seek further knowledge. In Exeter, as an apprentice, I became acquainted with several bookbinders, which led alike to a reading of, and a conversation about, books. Young as they were, they avowed themselves Deists, whilst I received no impression from the word, and was wholly ignorant as to what a Deist signified as distinct from Christianity. At times they ridiculed my going to a particular church out of compliment to or by the persuasion of a friend, but I understood nothing that they meant, and attributed their remarks to youthful levity, or a tinge of profligacy. In fact, I knew nothing about the particulars of politics or religion until I read the writings of Thomas Paine at twenty-seven years of age. My young friends were Painites, but they wholly failed in making an impression upon me as to the true principles of politics and religion. The subject seemed to me to be foreign and useless, and this, I can suppose, is the state of mind of those who now oppose me, or are indifferent as to what I am doing. We are generally either too dull for fair and free enquiry, or too apt to reject proposed changes because we did not discover the defects of existing systems, or because of the persons who offer these changes.

GUY A. ALDRED.

(To be Continued.)

## The Busy Clergy.

A CLERICAL writer in the *Manchester Guardian* of March 12 discusses the more "effectual calling" of his colleagues of the cloth, and after much sympathetic searching of heart and objective inquiry agrees with the conclusion that what is hindering the true ministry of Free Church divines is "the plague of busy-ness." It would be good, he says in conclusion, if, in every place where ministers and laymen meet together, two New Testament texts could be written up in letters of gold:—

Called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.

It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God and serve at tables.

From the *Manchester Guardian* writer's point of view these are apt and wise sayings. Freethinkers, of course, could suggest other and wiser, illuminated and illuminating texts from a more universal gospel. But circumstances alter cases, and needs must when the Devil drives, even within the fold. The fact is that the clergy were never so busy before, never so cursed with secular concerns, never so driven to the desperate expedient of doing something mundane and useful. Social functions, the mere devouring of material dainties, the presiding over church concerts by the local stars, lectures by the town and village savants eat up the parson's precious time which might be quite well attended to by the elders and ladies of the church. The writer, also, quite justly refers to the immense amount of clerical work—much of it of the most trivial character, yet all needing to be done by somebody—which often falls to the minister's lot, who is doomed to spend weary hours every week doing work which could be bought at a shilling an hour. Verily, the way of the righteous, as well as of the transgressor, is hard. Now one may understand why our churchmen are, for the most part, such earnest, sad-faced men. Manfully they bear their cross in secret, do good by stealth, and hardly blush to find it fame; it is an ungrateful world. Yet, if to do so is not irreverent and impertinent, one may reflect in passing that millions toil much more painfully and

ignobly for much less than a shilling an hour. The fact remains the clergy are busy, busier than they ever were, busy as the Devil is; they are waking up, they are coming down from the clouds and, alas, are so much further off from heaven! This way lies not the Churches' salvation—as a Church. Patently perishing of inutility, if it stoops at last, as at the moment it seems so eager to do, it will perish all the more quickly. As a Church its kingdom is not of this world, its only salvation, and no lasting one either, is its sacred mystery, its solemn uselessness. Its clergy, as has so often been pointed out in these columns, are a class apart. So long as they can perpetuate that sacred isolation their calling is secure; and such is the force of traditional usage and habits of mind we may expect that long after all religious beliefs have been given up, even by the unthinking, religious practices of a kind will endure for a time. Indeed, if we except the earnest, fanatical, foam-flecked salvationists of so many sects—the respectable preacher's strange bed-fellows and brothers in distress—the inertia stage has been reached. The hoary and revered fallacies are slowly dying out with the generations who possessed them, but the Church is still a power in the land; one might say more attractive than ever, more powerful than before. Though it can no longer be called Christian, it is still the Church. Apart from its original credentials it is still looked up to; it is the focus of respectability; it is attended, or held in respect, by all the "best people" in every little town—merchants, doctors, teachers, bankers, landlords, factors, etc., etc., whose wives and daughters give themselves to its service with pious and patriotic zeal. No man however eminent must say an ill word of the Church. It may be quite true, but, tut-tut! bless your heart! it is not good form, and no gentleman will be so rude. Fashion helps along the good work, and emulation hath a thousand sons and daughters, but mainly the women of the congregations, in baking, knitting, handicrafts of many kinds—the ladies, old and young, good, kind and beautiful, bless their dear hearts, who think in this way they can best serve God and man. It is all a mean and pious fraud on the part of those who know better. To be sure, the minister often sits by a sick-bed, in home or hospital, and tries to leave a ray of hope and happiness there, but it is all part of the religious game—unconscious fraud, perhaps often human and sincere, but sympathy to order, the pretence of more than mortal consolation. And so the clergy are infernally busy. So is the Atheist still confounded for having slowly and laboriously, but surely destroyed the "foundations of belief"; the superstructure yet stands, proudly beflagged, defiant still. Having destroyed all, there is nothing left to destroy, nothing but this house not made with hands, these walls intangible, but impregnable as was the ancient rock of holy Scripture. The Church at this moment retains not only the nominal Christians but half at least of the unavowed Atheists—a superb compliment to the power of the Church but rather to that of Society and Fashion, economic necessity, and so on. But let not the Atheist despair, the communications are cut and the Christian garrisons, real and renegade, are slowly perishing of inanition. Time and the human intellect, and the human heart are on his side—*courage mon ami, le diable est mort!* Aye, and more, he is gone from our religious demonology, or godology—the same things.

Few Freethinkers, one supposes, can stand a church service, but surely few can resist the church concert. A Christian friend, a big, jolly Highlander, remarked to the undersigned: "Ye weren't at the (Socialist) meetin' last night?" "No," was the reply, "I was at a beautiful Catholic concert instead, where I heard

a Roman Catholic priest sing divinely, with all the power and charm and modulation of a magnificent voice, magnificent in the passionate crescendo, in the softer passages like zephyr sighing in the trees, a man of noble presence with a good brow and eye. I cared nothing for his priesthood, but all for his well-trained power of song, I loved him for his art and passion then and there. *Danny Boy*, to a Hebridean tune, was magnificently done. *Annie Laurie*, as an encore, was transformed into a love song of greater, purer love." So, you see, I am not bigoted.

"Why should his religion," said Donald, "prevent him being a goot singer?"

"Why," said I, "should the want of it prevent me?" "You see," I added, "the religion does not matter."

"Aye," said he sorrowfully, "it will matter to your immortal soul!"

And so I found there was still one true believer left.

There were angels as well as ministers at this concert; one, a tall vestal draped in pure white with braided yellow hair, who sang as only angels can and walked on and off the stage as only a goddess might. Next there stumbled to the footlights a charming child-woman in velvet, with a fiddle—a "matchless violin" that gleamed and sparkled in the light. Its mistress nodded to the conductor, then the white and supple, graceful arm plied the bow, the left digits clove and climbed the strings to strains of pure delight. Oh, the art of this artless maid! The motion and the music ceased—bobbed hair, bright smile, a little proud curtsey, and she, too, was gone!

Such are the attractions of the Church to-day; all earthly things. How long will we give the credit to the clouds?

A. MILLAR.

## Easter.

### II.

(Continued from page 199.)

THE Spring equinox was observed among all the ancient nations of the East as the beginning of the new year, and as a season of rejoicing in honour of the sun-god, and of his return to clothe the earth with verdure, and "fill men's hearts with food and gladness." He appeared then to rise triumphant over darkness and death, and to bring back life and light to the world. Hence the fable of the sun dancing on Easter Day. The sun was said to dance because the chief or high priest who represented the sun actually did dance at this season. In Sussex Good Friday is still known as "Marble Day," because marbles were also played as a sun-charm, as also were shuttlecocks.

A rare book entitled *Recreation for Ingenious Head-pieces*, published in London in 1667, contains a ballad by Sir John Suckling, in which this belief is alluded to:—

But Dick, she dances such a way!  
No sun upon an Easter Day,  
Is half so fine a sight.

Sir Thomas Browne says:—

We shall not, I hope, disparage the resurrection of our Redeemer, if we say the sun doth not dance on Easter Day; and although we would willingly assent unto any sympathetical exaltation, yet we cannot conceive therein anything more than a tropical expression.

In the early days of Christianity in Britain both ecclesiastics and laics used to play at ball in the Church at Eastertide. Chambers' *Book of Days* tells us how bishops and deans took the ball into the church, and at the commencement of the antiphone

began to dance, throwing the ball to the choristers, after which they had refreshments, a gammon of bacon (said to be eaten in abhorrence of the Jews) being the standard dish. The Easter cakes, which in olden times the clergy presented to their parishioners, were, like Good Friday buns, also survivals of the solar worship, a sign of which so evidently remains in all our churches having their altars built to the east.

The Rev. T. D. Fosbroke, in his *British Monachism*, thus naively describes the ball dance:—

A ball not of size to be grasped by one hand only, being given out at Easter, the dean and his representative began an antiphone suited to Easter Day; then, taking the ball in his left hand, he commenced a dance to the tune of the antiphone, the others dancing round hand in hand. At intervals the ball was bandied, or passed to each of the choristers. The organ played according to the dance and sport. The dancing and antiphone being concluded, the choir went to take refreshment. It was the privilege of the lord, or his *locum tenens*, to throw the ball; even the Archbishop did it (p. 56).

Among significant Easter customs was that of putting out all the church fires and re-lighting them on Easter morning from a flint. In parts of Ireland great preparations were made on Easter to wind up the seven penitential weeks. The cotter's wife placed a fat hen and a piece of bacon in the pot about eight or nine o'clock. At midnight the monotonous silence would be suddenly broken by the clapping of hands, laughter and uproarious merriment, combined with the cry from lusty lungs of "Out with the Lent!" The merriment continued about four hours, when each family would retire, and before break of day rise to see the sun dance, a practice not confined to rustics.

At Twickenham it was an ancient custom every Easter Day to divide two great cakes in the parish church and distribute pieces among the young people. In 1645 it was ordained by Parliament that such a relic of superstition should cease, and that bread should instead be given to the poor of the parish. Loaves used to be thrown from the church steeple at Paddington, to be scrambled for, a practice followed in other parishes. This was a remnant of scrambling for the body of the sacrifice, as seen in the worship of Dionysus, or its distribution, as with the Meriah victim of the Khonds. At the village of Islip, Northamptonshire, every Good Friday, the baker of the village receives instructions from the vicar to make a large cross of dough containing currants. This cross is deposited in the church, and at noon on Good Friday it is cut up and distributed to the parishioners. Mr. J. G. Frazer gives many instances of the corn spirit being eaten sacramentally. Sometimes "the corn spirit is conceived as an animal, this divine animal being slain and eaten." Again, as a substitute for the real flesh of the divine being, bread or dumplings are made in his image. Mr. Frazer suggests that the loaves in human form, baked at Aricia, were sacramental bread, and that "in the old days, when the divine King of the Wood was annually slain, loaves were made in his image, like the paste figures of the gods in Mexico, and were eaten sacramentally by his worshippers." The interesting survival at Islip is one of many indications that the death and resurrection of Christ was like the death and resurrection of John Barleycorn, an emblem of the renewal of Nature in the spring.

"Heaving" or "lifting" was a favourite pastime with the people of England on the Monday and Tuesday in Easter week. Sometimes it was practised within doors, but more generally in the public streets. People formed into groups, and from each one "lifted" they extorted a contribution. The ceremony was incomplete without three distinct elevations. The women's "heaving" day, Tuesday, was con-

sidered the most amusing. When a man was seized he was "heaved" and kissed, and forced to pay sixpence "for leave and licence to depart." The lifting or elevation was a sign of the raising of vegetative life. It was an indecent parallel of Christ being lifted up on the cross. The practice apparently prevailed among all ranks. According to Durand, it was customary for wives to beat their husbands on Easter Monday, and on the following day for husbands to retaliate the chastisement upon their spouses.

In Lancashire, Cheshire, Staffordshire, and Warwickshire the "lifting" is still practised. On Easter Monday the men lift the women, and on Easter Tuesday the women lift the men.

Mr. Lyons, the Keeper of the Records of the Tower of London, has given an extract from one of the rolls in his custody, which mentions a payment made to certain ladies and maids of honour for "lifting" King Edward the First on Easter Monday. The sum that "Longshanks" paid for this luxury was no trifle, for it was equal to near five hundred pounds.

Not a century ago it was customary in Durham for boys to assemble on Easter Day, and at four o'clock to scour the streets and accost every female they met with the demand, "Pay for your shoes, if you please." The shoes were carried off by force provided pence were not forthcoming, money thus obtained being either squandered at public-houses, or divided in shares amongst the freebooters. A like privilege was claimed by the women on Easter Monday. They began earlier in the day, and attacked every male they met. If their victim wore boots which could not easily be taken off, they would seize his hat, which they would hand about from one to another, until the owner paid sixpence for its restitution. In Yorkshire it was usual to stop those who rode on horseback and strip them of their spurs. A plan pursued in other parts was to stretch a rope across the roads and demand hock-money. These were all relics of the change in position indicated by the death of the old king of the wood and the advent of the new one. In the thirteenth century, whenever an ecclesiastic appeared in the streets between Easter and Pentecost, he was sure to be seized, and could only obtain his liberty by payment of a fine. But the priests turned this inconvenient custom against the Jews, and Jew-baiting became the fashionable sport at Eastertide. In some French towns it was the practice to lay hold of a Jew, lead him to the nearest church, and openly buffet him on the face. In Rome they always baptize a Jew on Good Friday; it is said the same one serves every year. Mr. Story says he probably finds it worth his while, in view of the zeal of the Church, and in remembrance of the fifteenth verse of the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, if he ever reads that portion of the Bible.

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be Concluded.)

#### A TRIAL OF ORTHODOXY.

The clinging children at their mother's knee  
Slain; and the sire and kindred one by one  
Flayed or hewn piecemeal; and things nameless done,  
Not to be told: While imperturbably  
The nations gaze, where Rhine unto the sea,  
Where Seine and Danube, Thames and Tiber run,  
And where great armies glitter in the sun,  
And great kings rule, and man is boasted free!  
What wonder if you torn and naked throng  
Should doubt a Heaven that seems to wink and nod,  
And having moaned at noontide, "Lord, how long?"  
Should cry, "Where hidest Thou?" at evenfall,  
At midnight, "Is He deaf and blind, our God?"  
And ere day dawn, "Is He indeed at all?"

—William Watson.

## Correspondence.

### THE NEW DIVORCE BILL.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I most earnestly beg of you to grant me space in your columns to plead for Divorce Law Reform at this most critical period.

At a moment when the Lunacy Clause has been ruthlessly swept from the Equality Bill now pursuing a normal and almost unopposed course in the House, we read in the papers that this very Clause, which was passed in Queensland last session, has actually received the Royal Assent. Are we to be for ever behind our colonies in matters of legislation? Is this country, which we tell ourselves with pride is always called the "Mother Country" by our colonies, to degenerate gradually into the rôle of a narrow-minded mid-Victorian parent?

That we who place so high a value on child-welfare should disregard the advantages which this Clause would give to our coming generation is little short of remarkable. The oft repeated argument against the Clause that no doctor can definitely certify the incurability of insanity matters not at all, for the chance of a recurrence to one apparently cured and returned home proves the greatest menace of all, in that it affects any possible child born of the re-union.

I have pleaded in vain for suffering humanity, but feel that if the country could but be awakened to the necessity for a law that adequately protects generations to come, it would not be found wanting in justice and wisdom.

It has often struck me as amazing that whilst the discussions on Divorce Reform rage hotly round the exact meaning of certain ambiguous scriptural texts relating to marriage and divorce, not one word is ever uttered touching on the very definite and solemn duty that is imposed upon us all in the matter of protection to little children.

Alice W. Rutherford.

### HAIL!

SIR,—Who "Prince Hopkins" may be is the cause of some little speculation with us, but of more immediate importance to all your readers is the quality and clarity of what we hail as a direct, revivifying, and invigorating article on this world-disease called religion. We await with impatience his findings on the system of Gurdiev, and, as Fontainebleau now holds some of Nature's aristocrats, we incline to think that a renaissance in that direction is going to give final marching orders to the black brood at the same time as it gives mankind a clear lead. In other words, sir, as the plough in the sky is loved by Freethinkers, we believe it is now the time for some of us to survey the harvest prospects.

Sagittarius.

### THIS MAN NIETZSCHE.

SIR,—As an advocate of the higher man, Nietzsche should command the careful consideration of the liberal-minded. As the "first psychologist of Christianity" he should deserve our praise and thanks for clearly defining the slave morality of that religion with the consequent bringing to the top of an undesirable type of man. A modern example can be seen in the figures of the Bishop of London and Cardinal Bourne. These two wield more power than a Professor Soddy or anyone who attempts to bring about a better type of man; they also throw up and throw off abundant material to cause Freethought speakers and writers to go grey in contesting and refuting their influence and imbecilities. The two professional religious leaders mentioned not only hold their followers in chains but prevent the growth of any better type that cannot be measured by their sheep crook.

Homage to a genius can be paid without neglect to others who have done their best to sweeten the earth, and for this reason and many others that cannot be packed into a short letter, we take the pure gold of Nietzsche with a grateful heart. It is hardly necessary to state that he is full of inconsistencies—what genius is not?—and all the quotations from *Good and Evil* by Mr. Robert Arch may be easily cancelled by others, although we do not agree with the conclusions drawn from his particular list.

The quotation from Papini was deliberately chosen to give a key-note to the philosophy of one who took the path of lightning instead of a beaten track. We are not concerned in defending the top-hat of our article, but we fear that a discussion of Truth and Humanity would lead us on to the back page of the Freethinker. However, not to quibble, we feel sure that Mr. Arch means by "humanity," the best as opposed to the worthless; Nietzsche is his own defence. We do hear occasionally that one man was crucified to save both, and the preaching of it has produced (1) port-wine necks, (2) fat bellies, and (3) treasure on earth. As we are guilty of none of the three, the question of what we are "out for" need not be answered.

WILLIAM REPTON.

### Glasgow Branch N.S.S.

THE Glasgow Secular Society wound up the winter with a social in St. Enoch Tea Rooms on Thursday, March 29. After tea, which was deservedly enjoyed, harmony became the order of the night under the able guidance of Mr. Mr. William McEwan. The list of those who contributed to the enjoyment is almost too long for printing, but mention must be made of the solo dancing by Miss MacEwan and the violin playing of Mr. Pollock. Mr. Falconer's song about Esau and other Bible "heroes" was a real treat. Readings and stories by Messrs. Williams, Curry, and Wilcock; songs by Messrs. Muir, Little, senr., Little, jr., and Miss Turnbull, and piano solos by Mr. Sophar, Mr. Falconer, and Miss Hale, filled up one of the most enjoyable evenings in the long and somewhat varied history of the Society.

But why is there so often a fly in the ointment? The meeting was also an occasion of farewell. Mr. C. Little has been our secretary during the last year, and like so many more of our young men is being compelled by the prevailing unemployment to try his fortune abroad. Before this is printed Mr. Little will be on his way to the United States. Mr. MacEwan made suitable reference in the course of the evening to Mr. Little's past services and his prospects in the near future, conveying the best wishes of all who knew him. Mr. Little replied. A promise was made by Mr. MacEwan that he and his sub-committee would invite the members to these functions more frequently in the future. Let us hope that they receive the support they deserve.

E. H.

### National Secular Society.

#### REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON MARCH 29, 1923.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Corrigan, Moss, Neate, Quinton and Silverstein, Mrs. Quinton, Miss Kough and the Secretary.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed. New members were received for Derwent, Leeds, Manchester, South London Branches, and the Parent Society.

Re the Annual Conference.—The vote of the Branches being in favour of Leeds, the Secretary was instructed to make arrangements for the Conference of 1923 to be held in that town.

The report of the Propagandist Committee was received and its recommendations *re* Provincial Out-door Propaganda adopted.

Resolutions for the Conference Agenda were received from various Branches and remitted, together with those prepared by the Executive, to the Agenda Committee. Messrs. Moss and Corrigan were elected with the President as an agenda committee.

Good meetings were reported at Weston-super-Mare and Stratford Town Hall. It was further reported that a grant of £5 had been made to the Plymouth Branch towards their deficit on account of propaganda.

The meeting adjourned until April 26.

E. M. VANCE,  
General Secretary.

### 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): 8, Debate—"Is there a God?" Mr. Shaller *v.* Mr. Baker. Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, W.1., at 8.

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. T. F. Palmer, "Morality in the Light of Science."

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

SOUTH PLACE (Moorgate Street, E.C.) : 3.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, "Christianity's Harmony with Science—Anthropology."

#### COUNTRY.

##### INDOOR.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (2 Central Road, Duncan Street, Shop Assistants' Rooms): 7, Central Hall Orchestra. Herbert Youngman, director.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Cromford Court Café, Market Street): 3, Annual Meeting. All members are invited to attend.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Frankfort Street): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "The Meaning and Morals of Materialism"; 7, "What the World Gains from Unbelief."

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (Elysium, High Street): 7, Lecture Recital by Mrs. Margaret Murch, assisted by Marian and Philip Murch, entitled "An Evening with the Poets." Seats—Circle, 1s.; downstairs, 6d.

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