

The FREETHINKER

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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
Boycotting the "Freethinker."—The Editor	241
"Concerning Prayer."—J. T. Lloyd	242
Bobby Burns and the Bigots.—Mimnermus	244
Luther in the Light of To-day.—W. Mann	244
The Old Morality Play—"Everyman."—Arthur B. Moss	245
Richard Carlile.—Guy A. Aldred	250
The Advance of Civilization.—G. E. Fussell	251
South African Jottings.—Searchlight	252
More Truth than Poetry.—S. E. Kiser	254
Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.	

Views and Opinions.

Boycotting the "Freethinker."

We made a brief reference last week to an incident that had occurred on the Salford Borough Council in connection with the *Freethinker*. The matter arose in this way: The late secretary of the Manchester Branch, who never misses a chance of introducing this journal to new readers, offered to supply two of the Salford public libraries with free copies of the *Freethinker* weekly. When the libraries sub-committee met in February it was moved by Alderman Lees, J.P., and seconded by Alderman Rothwell, J.P., that the offer of Mr. H. Black be declined. It was then moved by Councillor Monks and seconded by Councillor Williamson that the matter be adjourned for a month and that meanwhile copies of the *Freethinker* be sent to each of the members of the committee. Alderman Phillips rightly said that the matter involved a question of principle, and asked what had been the policy of the committee in the past. The chief librarian replied that the committee had refused to encourage blasphemy and impurity. That was an answer well calculated to frighten timid members of the committee and encourage bigots. It would give that air of moral superiority which is required nowadays, since even the dullest of that species is apt to be so far infected with common-sense as to be ashamed of bigotry stripped of all its disguises, and it would make the average public man, who is generally not over courageous, afraid of being mixed up with anything that was called blasphemous or was religiously impure.

* * *

Some Prize Bigots.

The next stage of the proceedings was when the committee met a month later. It was then moved by Councillors Monks and Richardson that the offer be accepted. Both argued that it was not the business of the committee to discriminate in favour of or against particular opinions, but to provide for all. Whether the committee agreed with the views expressed was quite beside the point. Councillor Williamson also said that the paper should be accepted so that those who wanted to know what the Atheistic position was should be able to go to the fountain-head and read for themselves. The opposition was—well,

I had better let it speak for itself as merely describing it as it was, and for what it was, would sound like caricature:—

Councillor Bratherton said:

He had read the paper with much pain. It attacked with abuse some of their most cherished convictions.

Councillor Greatorex:

The paper was anti-religious, anti-social, anti-moral, in fact anti-everything and ought to be suppressed.

Alderman Burnley:

Read quotations from the "Acid Drops," showing spiteful animus against the clergy, and even questioning their honesty.

Alderman Phillips:

Did not wish to suppress the paper. Those who wanted it could buy it, but a paper that referred to Christianity as humbug was not to be encouraged. It outraged all those good feelings and Christian teachings that helped us when passing through any grave illness or crisis.

So when the question was put, out of twelve present, four voted for the paper being accepted and eight to the contrary. As no monument is likely to be raised to this gallant eight I may as well give their names. They are Messrs. Bratherton, Greatorex, Crossley, Rothwell, Luckarift, Lees, Burnley, and Phillips. Eight very earnest Christians, eight very good bigots, eight most healthy specimens of a type that a civilized country should and would be ashamed to rear.

* * *

A Creed for Cowards.

I use the last sentence quite deliberately. It would, of course, be quite useless asking this type of person what they mean by the *Freethinker* being anti-social, anti-moral, etc. All they obviously mean by it is that the *Freethinker* is a paper which expresses opinions that they do not like, and I am quite certain do not understand. Whether the *Freethinker* attacks opinions with abuse or not I must leave for readers to decide. For my own part I fancy that this paper will challenge comparison for what its late editor used to call "fundamental brainwork" with any journal in the country. It knows how to be thorough without being dull, and that is what all Christian bigots dread. The heresy that is ladled out in attenuated doses, and expressed in such a dull manner that it is a torture to read, they can tolerate. It is the heresy that is expressed without timidity or apology, that knows how to combine wit with wisdom, they dread; and for that heresy bigotry has its only method of reply. Forceful suppression when it can be used, slander, lies, and misrepresentation when it cannot. These eight municipal legislators, probably elected to office because better educated men were otherwise engaged, do not like to have their cherished convictions attacked. If the New Testament is to be trusted that is exactly what the Brathertons of Jerusalem said about Jesus Christ. It is horrible that Christianity should be referred to as a humbug! What else is one to think of a religion that has to rely upon the tactics of these eight-a-penny Inquisitors for protection? A religion that wishes to

have the respect of honest men and women should act in the person of its followers so as to deserve it, but a religion that can only meet attack with suppression and slander proves itself a humbug and a cheat. Let me assure Alderman Burnley that I for one have no animus against either Christianity or the clergy. Hatred is something I reserve for things that stand much higher in my estimation than does either Christianity or the clergy. I have a contempt for the one, and for the other, well, I simply regard the clergy as I regard any other class that is parasitic in its very nature and can perpetuate its parasitism only by keeping people in a state of ignorance concerning the very subject on which they profess to instruct them. Nor do I say that all the clergy are dishonest. Some unquestionably are. But there are others, the majority perhaps, who are not ignorant, they are simply silly—more on the level of these eight gallant Councillors. We have reached a pass when to remain in the Christian ministry is to place in question either one's honesty or one's intelligence. It is not merely I who say this, it is said by the bulk of educated thought to-day. The medicine-man has had his day as a leader of thought.

* * *

A Question for Christians—

But there are two questions I wish to put on this matter. One is to the more decent class of lay Christians. The other is to Freethinkers everywhere. Do Christians really think that they can silence Freethinkers by such tactics as those dealt with above? If they do they are blind to all that experience has to teach. If Freethinking opinions were completely unsound persecution is the way to give them value in the eyes of those who hold them. If decent Christians do not agree with the policy of the Salford eight, it remains for them to take action. The responsibility is really theirs. Is a religion that needs the protection of suppression, slander, and misrepresentation one that intelligent men and women should hold? And it is quite useless Christians saying they do not believe in this policy so long as they stand quietly by and see it enforced. Men of the type of the Salford eight would alter their conduct if they knew that their Christian constituents did not approve what they have done. Bigots in public office are invariably cowards and time-servers. Christians have in their own hands the means to make Freethinkers respect them—as Christians. Nothing in the world could make a self-respecting Freethinker respect Christianity, but contempt for Christianity need not be accompanied by contempt for those who believe it. It is for the Christians of Salford, and particularly the clergy of Salford, to show of what stuff they are not made. As I have said, the concern is really theirs. It is their honour that is in question not that of Freethinkers. Cowardice never pays in intellectual matters, but it is the cowards who are the last to realize this truth.

* * *

And One for Freethinkers.

My second question is to Freethinkers. What are they going to do about it? After all the *Freethinker* is their paper. It is maintained at considerable personal labour and monetary loss to keep their opinions before the public. What are the Freethinkers of Salford and Manchester going to do about it? Are they going to stand quietly by while a few stupid bigots, endowed with momentary power through the accident of a municipal election, publicly brand them and their opinions as anti-moral and anti-social? A few I know will be active enough, but I am appealing now to the others. All over the country we have to fight the boycott, and in only too many instances Freethinkers take it as a matter of course that they should be boycotted. That is a policy that never

pays. Christians must be taught that Freethinkers cannot be denied their rights and slandered with impunity. Until Christians are taught this lesson they will continue to act as they have always acted. If I had the means at my disposal I would see to it that within the next few weeks the town of Salford was flooded with copies of the *Freethinker*. I would see to it that every person entering the public libraries had a copy of the paper placed in his or her hands. By this and other means I would make the *Freethinker* and these eight-a-penny Torquemadas the most talked of subjects in the district. We should show the bigots that we understand the art of reprisals, and that it is safest to treat us with decency. Hitherto we have beaten the bigots by fighting them, and we shall only continue to conquer by following the same policy. They are afraid of the *Freethinker*—which is an excellent reason for our seeing that it gets into as many hands as possible. There are plenty of Freethinkers in Salford and district, enough to make their presence felt if they are determined that it shall be felt. We must make Christians slow to threaten our rights. In this respect, and to a very considerable extent, the remedy lies in our own hands.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

“Concerning Prayer.”

THE Very Rev. J. Wakefield Willink, D.D., Dean of Norwich, recently preached an extraordinary sermon in the Church of St. Edmund, Lombard Street, London, which was published in the *Christian World Pulpit* of March 1, under the title at the head of this article. Of course, from the religious point of view, prayer is a subject of intense importance, and the Dean considered it an unusual privilege to have such an opportunity to speak upon it. He began by calling attention to the vast difference there is “between saying our prayers and praying our prayers.” Dr. Willink believes in the active existence of the Devil, and says that “when we begin to pray our prayers at once the Devil is up against us, with all his powers and all his marvellous generalship.” How he knows that the Devil is up against those who truly pray he does not condescend to tell us. As a matter of fact, he does not know that such a monster exists at all, and it is his utter ignorance that enables him to speak with such amazing confidence on the subject. He assures us that when people merely say their prayers without putting their hearts into them, the Devil leaves them severely alone, but that when they pray their prayers, when they actually come to grips with God, as the old Scottish divines were in the habit of saying, “then at once the Devil is in arms,” and does his utmost to annoy and hinder them. With all this in mind the Dean comes to the conclusion that “when we pray it is one of the most tremendous things we are doing that the mind of man can conceive.”

But what is it to pray? Dean Willink gives a long-winded illustration or parable in answer to that question. He describes how Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham obtain their water supplies from the mountains of Wales and Cumberland; how the water is brought in pipes to the very homes of the people, and how the water thus brought to the houses of the cities named might as well have remained in Wales and Cumberland if the people refuse to turn their taps. Then the Dean remarks:—

That to me is a great parable of God, a parable telling us about prayer. Think of all that has gone to make God's goodness available for mankind; think of the infinite cost to God and to Jesus Christ of the Incarnation and the Atonement. Think of all that heaven did for human souls, and it is brought down

through the great and wonderful channels of God's grace, right down to the door of every human heart. But unless the human being, each for himself or for herself, turns the tap all is as nothing. There might as well be no God; there might even be no Jesus Christ, and no Atonement, no heaven, no hell, so far as the individual soul is concerned. It rests with that soul whether or not by prayer God's grace is available. But if the human soul will pray, will turn the tap (to use that very homely phrase), then do you not see that immediately, beyond all power of thought or of understanding, the whole of the resources of Omnipotence are at our disposal, and beyond all that we ask or think, we have God's grace poured into our lives?

Such is Dean Willink's conception of prayer. It is the conception of an exceedingly orthodox divine. The first fault we find with it is the mechanistic view of God that underlies it. The preacher tacitly teaches that before God's grace and goodness could be available for mankind certain things had to be done. Two of those things are mentioned, namely, the Incarnation and the Atonement, each of which proved of infinite cost to both God and Jesus Christ. Whence did the Dean derive such an appalling notion about God? We are said to be his children, and yet he is represented as incapable of showing us any kindness without an Incarnation and an Atonement. Though omnipotent and omniscient he cannot be all-loving in his treatment of us without murdering his only begotten Son so as to make him a propitiation for our sins against himself. No human father has ever had to behave in so outrageous a fashion. And yet such is the behaviour attributed to the Christian God by his creators, and the Dean of Norwich is convinced that nothing better could have happened, whilst we denounce the process as beyond measure meaningless and absurd. After stating his strange doctrine concerning God and prayer the Dean proceeds thus:—

Now we are trenching on mysteries that, of course, are too deep for human understanding this side of eternity; but, thank God, that is one of the mysteries that will be revealed in the hereafter, and that is one of the things that make our thoughts of heaven and the revelation of heaven so sweet and so precious. What now is a mystery, and what now is beyond our understanding, will then be made perfectly plain. But there it is for our guidance and our warning and our exhortation now. See to it that you do turn on this bountiful, infinite, supply of God's goodness and make it your own through prayer.

Curiously enough, this extract immediately follows a long and minute narrative of what God found it necessary to do in order to make his goodness and grace available for mankind. The second Person in the Trinity had to become flesh, and in the flesh live a life of suffering and sorrow, die a death of sacrifice for the sins of the world, and rise from the dead a victor on the third day. Ever since those marvellous incidents took place they have served as channels through which God's goodness and grace are brought down to the door of every human heart, and to pray is to turn the tap and let them flow right into it. And yet after treating us to such a full, clear-cut, and dogmatic statement of the plan of salvation through the incarnation and death of Christ, the Dean admits that it is a mystery which, of course, is too deep for our understanding in this world, but affirms that in the next world it will be made perfectly plain. Most astonishing is the Dean's intellectual inconsistency. He lays down his theory of prayer in most definite terms as if he thoroughly understood it, and then calls it a mystery which nobody can unravel here below, but which will be no longer a mystery on the other side of death. The truth is that Dr. Willink is fully as ignorant as we are of so-called supernatural existencies and supernatural deeds.

The little paragraph on mystery is succeeded by nine others which recognize no mystery whatever. Here again we get a telling illustration:—

In the olden days it was thought that a ray of sunlight was one and indivisible, that it was a ray of beautiful white light, and no one looked under the surface, and no one suspected anything more. But modern science, as we all know, breaks up "that single beam of pure white light by passing it through the prism of a spectroscope, and immediately we see that that pure ray of light is compounded of many colours, and all of them must be there in balanced degree if the light is to remain the sunlight that we love.....So it is with prayer. When we pass prayer through the spectrum of Christian thought and Christian examination we see that it becomes a many-sided thing, and unless all the component parts of prayer are perfect, our prayer will not be the balanced, perfect, thing we should like it to be when we offer it in the name of Christ to our Father in heaven.

Now, what are the component parts of prayer? According to the Dean they are these five, adoration, confession, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving. We are told that adoration is the first component part of prayer, "and perhaps in its own way the very highest of all."

For in adoration it is not the thought of what we get but the thought of what we give that is uppermost, and that is one of the highest and holiest aspects of prayer. We give something to God.

What is given to God in prayer? Adoration is only another word for flattery, and this is what is given to God in most prayers. He is politely informed of what he has been doing in the past, of what he is doing at present, and of what he intends to do in the future; and then come these words: "Thy works praise thee, O Lord, and we praise thee with full hearts." If one attends a Nonconformist church and listens to the long prayer before the sermon, one will notice that the minister devotes two or three minutes to telling the Almighty how infinitely and inconceivably holy and good he is, how unsearchable are his knowledge and wisdom, and how absolutely impossible it is to see him in all his glory. Having thus magnified the Lord the minister proceeds to minimize mankind by enumerating its shortcomings and emphasizing its total depravity. He informs the Great King that he and his fellow-worshippers are utterly unworthy to approach his holy throne, and that they venture to do so only in the name of the Beloved. As the Dean puts it:—

The more we think of the splendour of God, the more we look at God's absolute perfection, the more we see how far we come short of that perfection, and we are humbled into the dust by the thought of our sins of omission and commission, in thought and word and deed.

The essence of confession is self-abasement. If God existed how unspeakably hurt and offended he would be by the vain flattery poured into his ears every day and hour through all history by his own children who are said to be partakers of his very image, and how terribly it would pain and humiliate him to be endlessly reminded what miserable and helpless blackguards these his children are. All the other parts of prayer, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving, are equally useless and absurd. No petition is ever granted, no intercession proves effective, and no thanksgiving ever reaches a hearing ear beyond the stars. In these days multitudes are discovering the utter futility of all prayers addressed to heaven. The present writer is on terms of closest friendship with a man who made that lucky discovery more than twenty years ago, with the result that he at once ceased to pray, and has been immeasurably happier ever since than he had ever been before.

J. T. LLOYD.

Bobby Burns and the Bigots.

What good is like to this
To do worthy the writing, and to write
Worthy the reading and the world's delight?

—Samuel Daniel.

ROBERT BURNS has been dead over a century, and his fame is wider and more secure than when he died. His life is now celebrated as an important event, and his poetry is rightly regarded as a real contribution to the world's literature. Admittedly, Scotland's greatest poet, he has been subjected to undue adulation by his countrymen. Had he been a lesser genius, this fulsome praise would have exposed his name to derision.

Burns's heresies have been discreetly overlooked by generations of Christians. Yet they are "four square to all the winds that blow." Oliver Wendell Holmes, indeed, expressed surprise that puritanical Caledonia could take Bobbie Burns to her straight-laced bosom without breaking her stays. For Burns, like Paine and Voltaire, was a Freethinker. Of religion, save what flowed from a very mild Theism, he scarcely showed a trace. In truth, one can scarcely call it a creed. It was mainly a name for a particular mood of sentimentalism. The Holy Willies of Orthodoxy have made the basest uses of this emotionalism; but Christians cannot read Burns without unloosening the shackles of their faith. David Hume's young Freethinking contemporary did not merely express his dissent from Calvinism. He struck at the heart of the Christian superstition. Seeing plainly that priests trade on fear, he sounded a true note when he said scornfully:—

The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip
To hand the wretch in order.

How he lashes the rigidly righteous:—

Sae pious and sae holy,
Y've nought to do but mark and tell
Your naeboor's fauts and folly.

And again:—

Learn three-mile prayers, and half-mile graces,
Wi' weel-spread looves, and lang, wry faces,
Grunt up a solemn, lengthened groan,
And damn all parties but your own,
I'll warrant then ye'er nae deceiver,
A steady, sturdy, staunch believer.

Burns never hesitated to go "over the top" in his attacks on religion:—

D'yrmples mild, D'yrmples mild, tho' your heart's like a
And your life like the new driven snow, [child,
Yet that winna save ye, and Satan must have ye
For preaching that three's ane an' twa.

The "Merciful Great God" of the Christians excites his derision and indignation:—

O Thou wha in the Heavens dost dwell,
Wha, as it pleases best Thyself,
Sends ane to Heaven and ten to Hell,
A' for Thy glory,
And no for any guid or ill
They've done afore Thee.

The real Burns was a labourer endowed with genius. He was a different man altogether from the sentimental Byronic portraits so admired in Scottish manses and drawing-rooms. When the peasant poet was actually received by the "unco-guid" aristocracy of Edinburgh, he was a fish out of water. The company that professed to admire him belonged to one world, and Burns to another. In spite of all the glib phrase-making of the critics, Burns belonged to an entirely different society to that which his patrons inhabited. The barriers between Burns, the labourer and genius, and his purse-proud, if well-meaning, patrons, is not got rid of by pretending that they do not exist.

Burns the rebel had little in common with the drawing-room dilettantes who drank his health and

smiled approbation. They sang "God Save the King," but Burns sang:—

A fig for those by law protected,
Liberty's a glorious feast.
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.

They sang hymns, but Burns chanted far other tunes, none the worse for being some of the best ever written:—

By Oppression's woes and pains,
By your sons in servile chains,
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free.
Lay the proud usurper low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us do or die!

Burns has suffered grievously at the hands of hiccoughing Highlanders and maudlin ministers, but literary critics might well give the corpses of defunct untruths decent burial.

Like all pioneers, Robert Burns was so much alone. So early was he in the field that he could do little more than anticipate Thomas Carlyle's bitter "Exodus from Houndsditch," or his caustic apostrophe to Christ, "Eh, man, ye've had your day!" But what he did was good enough for his generation. He fought at fearful odds, and as Carlyle says, "Granted the ship comes into harbour with shrouds and tackle damaged, the pilot is blameworthy, but to know how blameworthy, tell us first whether his voyage has been round the globe, or only to Ramsgate and the Isle of Dogs."

The noblest quality in Burns's poetry is the eternal quality of honest indignation. It is blunt, simple as daily speech, the man himself talking. It is this trait which makes his "Jolly Beggars" an incomparable poem. The beggars are not merely rebels; for them the laws and conventions have no existence. So with Burns himself. He rises above the network of priestly authority like a skylark.

MIMNERMUS.

Luther in the Light of To-day.

II.

(Continued from page 214.)

According to Luther, justification does not consist in making a man honest, truthful, temperate, but is a fallacious assumption of an appearance of honesty, truthfulness and temperance, borrowed from Christ, and which disguised him as chalking a negro from head to foot might serve to make him pass as a European. Plato, in his *Republic*, would have taught that this is a fraud. And Luther dared to assert that the Almighty not merely connived at a fraud, but actually devised it. This is the doctrine of Imputation of Righteousness so thoughtlessly adopted by Wesley, and which was glibly preached by the Evangelical Fathers. There exist a set of professional rogues who catch common sparrows, and by dyeing their feathers and staining their feet and beaks, pass them off as valuable birds. And, veritably, Luther had the temerity to represent the Almighty as guilty of a like fraud.—*Rev. Baring-Gould, "The Evangelical Revival."* p. 45.

DIFFERING as they did in age—Erasmus being fifty-one and Luther thirty-four—in temperament, in their aims and the means by which they sought to attain them, they were bound, sooner or later, to come to a parting of their ways. Erasmus was a Humanist, full of enthusiasm for the Pagan classics. His idea was to enrich Christian thought by the addition of the best ideas of the Pagans. He declares that Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, are all precursors of Christ: "When I read certain passages of these great men," Erasmus confesses, "I can scarcely avoid saying, 'Holy Socrates, pray for us.'" In Cicero he feels a divine afflatus. "I cannot," he said, "read his books on *Old Age, Friendship, and Duties*, without

stopping and kissing the manuscript.....He is inspired."¹

Luther, on the contrary, declared that they had all been consigned to Hell:—

His [Luther's] opinion with regard to the virtues of the heathen sages is noteworthy. He says that the philosophers of olden time had to be damned, although they may have been virtuous from their very inmost soul (*ex animo et medullis*) because they had at least experienced some self-satisfaction in their virtue, and, in consequence of the sinfulness of nature, must necessarily have succumbed to sinful love of self. Not long after, *i.e.*, as early as 1517, he declares in his MS. Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews their virtues to be merely vices (*revera sunt vitia*).²

Luther declared, "The wisdom of the Greeks, in comparison of the wisdom of the Jews, is altogether bestial."³ Writing to his friend Johann Lang (March 1, 1517), Luther observes: "The times are perilous, and a man may be a great Greek or Hebrew [scholar] without being a wise Christian."

Luther's interests were purely theological. How to gain heaven and avoid damnation he considered was the only question worth troubling about, all others were insignificant in comparison.

The calm and cultured Erasmus, with his greater age and experience, dreamt of a peaceful Renaissance, which, once solidly established in the universities and schools, would ultimately penetrate down to the minds of the people; but he thought that the ignorant, uneducated masses were quite unfitted to discuss the questions at issue.

Luther was dogmatic; he claimed to have found the absolute truth, and those who differed from him were heretics. Erasmus was not so sure, he was always seeking the truth, and wished he was as sure of some things as Luther was of everything. Erasmus was guided in everything by reason. Luther would banish reason from religion altogether; he regarded reason as an invention of the Devil for the destruction of human souls. He declares: "Reason is of no avail in the matter of faith. And for this very reason children should be baptized when they are without reason..... because reason is the greatest hindrance to faith."⁴

Grisar says: "So far was he from the slightest tendency to embracing a religion of pure reason that he could not find terms sufficiently opprobrious to bestow on reason."⁵

Those who assert that Protestantism is the religion of reason, and Catholicism the religion of dogma, are diametrically opposed to Luther the founder of Protestantism, who roundly declares: "The Articles of Faith are contrary to all philosophy, geometry, arithmetic, and indeed to all reason. It is a question of *est, non* (yes and no). This no one can reconcile."⁶

As Prof. Karl Pearson observes:—

Without the pre-existence of faith, reason, according to Luther, is the most complete vanity; it is blind in spiritual matters, and cannot point out the way of life. "In itself it is the most dangerous thing, especially when it touches matters concerning the soul and God." Luther saw in the reason the "arch-enemy of faith," because it led men to believe in salvation by works; nay, he went further, and asserted that whoever trusted to his reason must reject the dogmas of Christianity. In another passage he describes the natural reason as the "archwhore and Devil's bride, who can only scoff and blaspheme all that God says and does." Elsewhere, Luther declares that the reason can only recognize in Christ the

teacher and the holy man, but not the son of the living God; and on this account he pours out his wrath upon it. "Reason or human wisdom and the Devil can dispute wondrous well, so that one might believe it were wisdom, and yet it is not." "Since the beginning of the world reason has been possessed by the Devil, and bred unbelief."⁷

The vast majority of Protestants know nothing of all this, for Protestant historians of the Reformation and Protestant biographers of Luther, preserve a discreet silence upon this matter.

Erasmus was in a difficult position, he wished for a reform of the Church, and had worked hard to bring it about. So far he was in sympathy with Luther and rendered him material assistance at a very critical time. But now Luther had broken with the Church and they were at the parting of the ways. Erasmus stood for a peaceful evolution. Luther stood for a violent revolution. Moreover, how could the great master of literature, the king of learning, serve under Luther's banner, for Luther would tolerate no leader but himself? Erasmus wished to act the part of the moderate man, to stand aloof and take no active part in the controversies then raging. The Emperor, the Pope, the King of England, and multitudes of lesser friends were begging him to declare against Luther. He complains: "The Pope expects me to write against Luther. The orthodox, it appears, can call him names—call him blockhead, fool, heretic, toadstool, schismatic, and anti-Christ—but they must come to me to answer his arguments." On the other hand many of his friends who had gone over to Luther were urging him to support Luther, or at least to refrain from writing against him. Erasmus held his hand for four years. Luther broke with the Church in 1520, and it was in 1524 that Erasmus published his "*De libero arbitrio diatribe*" (Diatribe on the Freedom of the Will) in which he attacked Luther's teaching as to predestination and the freedom of the will, a never failing subject for discussion and argument.

Luther declared that man had no free-will. This was his logical deduction from the fact, as he maintained, of man's inability to do what is good, through the total depravity of human nature resulting from original sin. Since the Fall of Man, through Adam's disobedience, man had lost the power of free-will. His will now was a point of contention between God and Devil, being sometimes controlled by one, and sometimes by the other.

W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

The Old Morality Play— "Everyman."

It has been the custom for several years past for the management of the "Old Vic" to revive the old nativity play entitled "The Hope of the World" (by Father Andrew), at Christmas time, and during Lent to stage the old morality play entitled "Everyman" for the edification and moral instruction of the rising generation of Christians of various denominations. It is usual on such occasions for a well-known clergyman or a prominent man of letters, a dramatist, or a poet, to deliver a short introductory address. This year two bishops (the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Southwark, and the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Kingston), two Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church (Father Andrew, S.D.C., and the Rev. Father Seyzinger, C.R.), the Rev. W. E. Orchard, D.D., Miss Clemence Dane (the playwright author of that fine play "The Bill of Divorcement"), Laurence Binyon, poet and dramatist author of the new play

¹ R. H. Murray, *Erasmus and Luther*, p. 33.

² Hartmann Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. I, p. 101.

³ Michelet, *Life of Luther*, p. 283.

⁴ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, p. 373 (note).

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 8.

⁷ Karl Pearson, *The Ethic of Freethought*, p. 208.

"Arthur" (of the "Round Table"), Wm. Poel (the well-known Shakespearean scholar), G. K. Chesterton, Esq. (author and critic), and Miss Margaret Bondfield have been among those who consented to deliver this introductory address.

On the Saturday afternoon upon which I attended, Mr. G. K. Chesterton was the chosen orator. Not only had I never heard the irrepressible G. K. C. before, but though I had heard and read a great deal about him, I had never up to that occasion even seen him. And let me say at once that those pictures or cartoons that we sometimes see in the papers representing Mr. G. K. Chesterton as a great mountain of flesh, indeed, as a modern Falstaff, very much exaggerate the physical proportions of G. K. C., for though he is a man of some size and weight, in proportion to his height and build he is not abnormally fat. He has simply a good-natured, jolly, appearance and a pleasant cultivated voice and is what he looks, a born humorist. Although G. K. Chesterton has an easy, fluent style of speech, he has none of the arts of the orator. He came on to the stage in a careless sort of fashion, and stood in an ungraceful attitude in one place all the time; he did not appear to know what to do with his hands, and when he wanted to make a humorous remark he began to smooth his long curly hair with his left hand until he had relieved himself of his joke. Although he had a solemn subject to speak upon, his audience which was composed, I should think, very largely of Roman Catholics, was on the look out for every bit of humour that the great man was likely to utter. Unfortunately a good deal of what G. K. C. said was lost before it reached the gallery on account of the conversational tone in which it was uttered. One sentence, however, which I managed to catch was that in which he declared that the play was of a rather gloomy character, and as he again playfully arranged his curly locks, he smilingly remarked that it was certainly more cheerful than some of the comedies of George Bernard Shaw. Of course, there was general laughter at this sly dig at his old friend and brother playwright G. B. S. These great men understand one another, and no doubt to their thinking there is nothing like being kept in the limelight, even by unfavourable criticism.

But to the play. Mr. Chesterton repeated what some of the other ladies and gentlemen who delivered introductory addresses said, viz., that the plot of this fifteenth century morality play was really very skilful considering the age in which it was written. Just for a few moments then let us consider this plot, which was constructed by Peter Dorland, a monk of Diest in Belgium, and which forms one of many morality plays that were performed in the streets and houses in England and Europe during the middle ages. The play opens with the appearance of a messenger who makes a short announcement, after which *the Voice of the Lord* is heard telling us that man is so sunk in sin that he has quite forgotten his duty to the Almighty. Consequently He (God the Father) has decided to have a reckoning with his children and to judge them according to their deserts. Accordingly he tells Death, his mighty messenger, to inform Everyman who is bent upon a life of pleasure, to prepare for his last pilgrimage. Everyman received this message with amazement and consternation; he replies with offers of bribes and earnest entreaties for respite, but Death is relentless, and gives permission to Everyman only to take companions with him on his journey if he can find any brave enough and earnest enough to accompany him. *Fellowship* is the first to volunteer, and says that he is prepared to do anything for his friend—even die for him—but when he learns that there is no return from this journey he declines to accompany his friend. *Cousin* and *Kindred* are then asked to join in the Pilgrimage; but when they have heard all

that the journey involves they too decline. At last, when others have failed him, *Good Deeds*, although weak and ill and lying on the cold ground and bound by her sins so that she can hardly stir, consents to go; she also induces her sister *Knowledge* to act as guide. *Confession* also is willing to accompany them. From the latter Everyman receives the jewel of penance, which gives him strength under adversity. Having received the sacrament, Everyman sets out on his journey clad in the garment of *Contrition*. He is accompanied by *Beauty*, *Strength*, *Discretion*, and *Five Wits*. *Beauty*, however, soon turns back as she is afraid to go down to the open grave to which the path leads. *Strength*, *Discretion*, and the *Five Wits*, also desert him, and *Good Deeds* alone remains steadfast. *Knowledge* declines, however, to continue the journey, though she protests that it is from no fear of danger. Everyman in despair cries: "O Jesu help, all have forsaken me." But *Good Deeds* still remains firm. Everyman sinks into the grave, and *Knowledge* declares that what he has suffered we shall all have to endure. An angel then declares that the penance he has undergone will count before God, and the Doctor brings the play to a close by pointing the moral.

It will thus be seen that though it is a fine conception from a dramatic point of view it is a gloomy kind of play, but it follows closely the gloomy character of the Christian faith. People who believe that the vast majority of their fellows were doomed from the very beginning to everlasting damnation could not very well regard the prospect with a cheerful countenance. It is comforting, however, to think that in the old morality play *Good Deeds* counted as of some value in gaining salvation. In the orthodox faith, however, good deeds are only regarded as "filthy rags," and belief in incredible doctrines of higher value. No doubt Bunyan based his powerful story of *Pilgrims' Progress* on this old morality play, and most of us will remember how in our youth we felt for "Poor Christian" who had to carry the great burden and weight of his sins perpetually upon his back wherever he went.

This old morality play of "Everyman" was splendidly played by the very talented members of the "Old Vic" dramatic company. Mr. Rupert Harvey as "Everyman" was particularly good. His elocutionary talents enabled him to express every emotion, every change of feeling to a nicety, and Mr. Wilfred Walter, who delivered the lines of warning put into the mouth of the Deity, used his beautiful voice with wonderful effect; indeed, if some of the men of God present could only deliver their sermons with something approaching the skill and elocutionary power displayed by this fine young actor, their congregations would not have to complain of the length or lack of interest in their discourses. After the play was over and we got out into the street and stood on the pavement in the glorious sunshine, I noticed that many of the Christians who had wept over the trials and troubles of Everyman, had so far forgotten the gloomy character of their creed and the play as to laugh and talk as though the everlasting punishment of any of the sons of men was as improbable as the stories of the sun standing still at the command of Joshua, or of Elijah ascending to heaven by a whirlwind.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Good old Spurgeon! He stands by "the old standard," as he assures his congregation. He is resolved not to move an inch forward. God forbid! He declares "there is no telling what we shall hear next." Christian ministers are forsaking the Gospel; in other words, they are adjusting themselves, as they know they must or perish, to the spirit of the age.—*Freethinker*, February 7, 1891.

Acid Drops.

We deal elsewhere with the Salford libraries' boycott of the *Freethinker*. All we need add to that is that the matter was again raised by Councillor Monks at a full meeting of the Council, but without securing his end. Mr. Monks made a very able statement of the case for the admission of the paper, but the Christians would have their way. The Chairman of the Libraries Committee, Alderman McDougall, said that the libraries were provided for the edification and uplifting of the community, and the committee were therefore "unable to accept a journal the trend of whose views was anti-social and anti-Christian and not worth the serious consideration of intelligent people." We hope for the sake of Salford that this ignorant and lying bluster—with the exception of the paper being anti-Christian—does not represent the intelligence of the users of the libraries, and we wonder what the Birmingham libraries and other large institutions in which the *Freethinker* is displayed are thinking about to admit so dangerous a paper? Meanwhile the users of the Salford libraries must be content with reports of murder and divorce cases, with "spicy" paragraphs of the "fast" world. So will they remain good Christians and be kept clear of Freethought.

Alderman McDougall said that Mr. Black in offering to give copies of the paper thought only of pushing forward his own opinions. Well, why not? What is every religious paper in the country doing but pushing forward its opinions? What is Alderman McDougall doing but pushing forward his own opinions, and in a very cowardly manner. Mr. Black at least was not asking that other opinions should be suppressed in order to give his own a clear field. Since when has it become a public offence for a man to seek to place his opinions before others? In the eyes of persons of the stamp of Alderman McDougall it has always been an offence, but intelligent and educated people are of a very different opinion. We hope that Freethinkers in Salford, with all others who love fair play, will not be slow in letting this particular bigot know their opinion of him. Meanwhile we challenge Alderman McDougall to reproduce in the public Press those parts of the *Freethinker* which he considers anti-social, anti-moral, and unfit for public reading. That would be a much more manly policy than making lying statements without the slightest vestige of proof.

We offer these Salford Councillors a test. Let them select any number of passages from any issue of the *Freethinker* and we will undertake to read them in the public streets of Salford and defy the police to interfere, or any prosecution for reading them to be successful. On the other hand we will select a number of passages from the Bible, and if they are read in the public streets, in the same way, we will stake our whole case on forcing the police to successfully prosecute the reader for the uttering of indecent language in the public highways. Will they accept the challenge?

An Irish reader informs us that the sweepstake organized by Father Nolan, of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, realized a profit of £35,000. A presentation was made to the church by the staff of clerks employed to conduct the sweepstake, and our correspondent suggests that the church should by rights be dedicated to "Our Lady of Lourdes, Sergeant Murphy (the winner), and the Grand National." We endorse the suggestion. But it is not the first time the Church has taken care to hide the source from which a deal of its money may come.

Rebecca Brown, a Belfast woman, has been sent to prison for a month for fortune-telling. Fifty thousand priests in this country tell people where they will spend eternity, but no one prosecutes them.

A number of the newspapers—particularly the very religious ones—continue to publish accounts of what is

called "The Persecution of Religion in Russia," but the exact truth of the matter it is impossible for anyone to say. If the newspapers and governments could only get over the war accentuated habit of giving the people "prepared" news we should be able to form a better view of the situation. Still, in view of the efforts being made in this country to utilize the Russian situation for the advancement of Church interests here, it is well to bear a few things in mind. First, religion has been disestablished in Russia. There is no State support of religion, and there is no ban whatever on attacks on religion. Each side can go for each other as it pleases. There is no policeman, as in this country, standing on guard to protect God Almighty. Religion has also been abolished in the schools, and there are no schools other than State schools permitted. Finally Church property has been declared to be State property.

Naturally, the Christians in this country do not like it. Such an example may spread, and it is to the interest of all Christian leaders to talk about persecution, etc. But the talk about the suppression of religion is absolute nonsense. There are many thousands of Churches belonging to all sorts of denominations in Russia, anyone is allowed to attend them, and they enjoy far more freedom than in the old days, when many of them were not permitted at all. So far as the State joins in an anti-religious propaganda it is—as we said last week—working along wrong lines. We have stood up for the right of Roman Catholics against Protestants before now and would do so again were it necessary, but up to the present no evidence of the persecution of religion has been produced. The Russian Archbishop, about whose trial so much has been said, is not charged with being a Christian nor with practising his religion. He is charged with what are purely civil offences—resisting the application of the law and entering into treasonable correspondence with the enemies of his country. If he has been guilty of these offences he must abide by the law of the land, and no outsider has the right to object. On this point we are glad to find that both the *Nation* and the *New Statesman* agree with us. In all countries, our own included, these are recognized offences, and to raise the cry of the persecution of religion because the man charged happens to be an archbishop, and the government prosecuting him has disestablished the Church, is nonsense and dishonest nonsense.

Of course, if there is persecution of religious opinions the Government is wrong, absolutely so. But the principle that the State has no right to interfere in matters of religion is just that which our British protesters will not admit. They uphold the Government here in maintaining the Blasphemy Laws, in relieving Churches from the payment of rates and taxes, in keeping religion in the schools, and in maintaining the sanctity of the tabooed day Sunday. But if the right of the State to enforce and protect religion is admitted, then it is quite impossible to logically deny the right of the State to act against religion when it is so inclined. If Christians have either logic or honesty in their protest there is an easy way for them to show their consistency. There is at present a Bill before Parliament for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, which would place religious opinion upon exactly the same level as any other opinion. The Christian clergy—even that number of them that are protesting against the interference of the Russian Government with religion—have only to say that they will support that Bill for it to quickly become law. Will they do so? Everyone knows that they will not. They will protest against a government giving absolute freedom of attack on religion, and support a government which uses the forces of the State in aid of religion.

By the way, we do not hear any outcry about the persecution of religion in Spain. But one of the clauses in the Spanish Constitution says that "No other ceremonies or public manifestations than those of the State religion shall be allowed." This is the clause which the Government proposes to delete, and the Church has met it with threatening the strongest opposition, and it looks as

though the Government will give way. In that case Protestants in Spain will not be permitted the liberty they have in Russia, and those who assert their rights will be prosecuted and imprisoned. Yet we have had no manifesto from the British clergy on the matter. But Spain is governed by a monarchy and a Church, and these prosecutions would take place in the name of God and the king. That circumstance makes a world of difference.

There is much trouble in some Protestant papers over the suggestion that while in Rome the King may visit the Pope. Of course, if he visits him as a private individual, or as a tourist who wishes to see the curiosities or inspect the remains of antiquity, no one has any right to complain. But the people of England have a clear right to express an opinion if it is in any way an official visit. In previous days in Italy the kingdom and the papacy represented distinct things. Now under Mussolini the State appears to be well on the way to identify itself with the Church, and it is as well to have as little as possible to do with such an unhealthy association.

For the rest there are two other considerations that arise. The first is that no country can afford to leave unwatched the Roman Church. It knows how to wait under disaster and bide its time for the moment to strike. In Russia the revolution appears to have made the Catholic Church stronger—at the expense of the Greek Church. In Italy the Bolshevistic revolution of Mussolini has placed the Church in a stronger position than it has enjoyed for many years, and in Ireland the Free State seems to be leaning on the Church, or at least seeking its co-operation for the management of the people. All these things show that one must always keep one's eyes on the Roman Church, which bids fair to outlive the Protestant ones, as it preceded them.

Next, the incident is a fine commentary on the character of the love and brotherhood that Christianity breeds. Here is one of the oldest of Christian Churches, which claims to trace its history right back to the times of the Apostles, and is certainly the one Church which history cannot ignore, and yet the moment the head of a presumably Christian State promises to get into intimate relations with it a large number of his Christian subjects cry out against it. They say that if this Christian Church is given full opportunity to work its will in this country a heavy blow will be struck at the well-being of the nation. And in this we are in full agreement with them—and their own Churches are only better in themselves in a purely negative way. If they did as much as the Catholic Church they would be just as dangerous. They are only more tolerable because the force of circumstances prevents their active interference in many directions.

Belfast is a very religious city and has lately experienced the mental inebriation of a first-class revival conducted by one of the revivalistic mountebanks. But all the same it is, according to a speech by Mr. Joseph Boyce, and reported in a Belfast paper, far from all it might be in matters of education. Mr. Boyce occupies an official position in the educational world, and therefore knows what he is talking about. He says that in Belfast there are 81 unsuitable schools which provide accommodation for about 12,000 pupils. Twelve thousand pupils were being slowly poisoned with fetid air, and their lives were endangered by the insanitary condition of the buildings. Ten days ago a gentleman who had gone into one of these schools to sign some papers said to him: "I found it almost impossible to stand the stench the few minutes I was in the building, and when finished I rushed into the street. The room which I was in was a murder trap!" We have not seen reported any indignation in the world of religion in Belfast at this condition of things, and yet we imagine that if a newspaper were to say that Belfast was lacking in Christianity the editor would be called a liar by all the Churches, and in this respect we should agree with the Churches, for it is

neither religion nor Churches that Belfast lacks. What it needs is better education and better schools.

We notice in the same issue of the paper from which the above cited speech is taken, a leading article dealing with religious instruction in the schools. Some of the clergy are alarmed about a Government measure which may not give them all the religion they would like. (The sanitation of the schools does not matter if the religion is all right.) The editor does his best to reassure them on the point, and pads his article with a deal of the usual newspaper rubbish about the Bible and the English language. We have space for this only—"John Milton, Sir Thomas Browne, John Ruskin, Johnson, Carlyle, and Addison write in Bible English." We wonder whether the man has ever read anything by these writers? If so there must be something the matter with his eyes or his ears, or both. The man who can say that Carlyle and Sir Thomas Browne wrote Bible English is just hopeless. What he probably means is that they use expressions from the Bible. It would have been wonderful if they did not. Most writers use expressions from books they have read, and as most of these authors had read the Bible what followed was to be expected; but the man who can take a page of any of the writers mentioned and call that Bible English simply does not know what he is talking about. A schoolboy could correct a blunder of that kind.

The new Irish Civic Guard, consisting of 1,500 men with officers have been "solemnly consecrated" to the Sacred Heart. The ceremony took place in Dublin, and we regard it as a very bad omen for the future of the Free State. If the leaders of Ireland have not yet learned that religion lies at the very base of the troubles in Ireland, they are so far quite unfitted for the posts they hold. We had hoped that the Irish Government would set an example of maintaining a strict neutrality in matters of religion, but to make a start by identifying the forces of order with the Roman Catholic Church is to take a quite reactionary step. The Roman Church openly aims at control of the civic power, and that is completely at variance with the better tendencies of modern civilization. Sooner or later the Government—as all other governments have had to do—will have to check the pretensions of the Church, and it would have been all the better for it to have made a clean start, and so have avoided trouble later.

"America More Religious" is the heading of a newspaper paragraph that has gone the rounds. The statement is based on the returns of the churches—their own returns, with no means of checking them—that during the year the religious bodies gained over a million more members. We should like to know how many of these have been counted twice over in their transfer from one body to another. Moreover, looking at the population of America, and allowing for the normal increase of population, the Churches would seem to have lost ground rather than to have gained. If the Churches had gained ground it would have been a very serious reflection on the American intellect, but we see no reason for believing the insult to be warranted.

The Bishop of Gloucester says that the underlying significance of the Eastern trouble is the revolt of the East against the civilization of the West, and if it is not checked it will mean the fall of the East into barbarism. It never appears to strike the Bishop that there might be such a thing as an Eastern civilization that could become as good as anything in the West. But this is the usual Christian attitude. There is only one religion that is of any value, that is the Christian religion. There is only one civilization—ours. All else is barbarism. How well the Christian religion goes with all that is narrow, petty, and intolerant! It commences in the little tinpot chapel, damning the whole world with the exception of its own very limited number of supporters, and it expands to national and international relations. Christianity is the religion of the little mind.

THERE IS A NEW READER WAITING

To Correspondents.

Those Subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that the renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

W. ALLAN.—The Catholic Church and the more orthodox Christian circles are very well served on the public Press, and the booming of the medieval period for health and happiness is part of a religious propaganda that is always going on. Dependence is placed upon the general ignorance of history. A good antidote will be found in the chapter from Dr. Draper's *Intellectual Development of Europe*, which we have just issued under the title of *Christianity and Civilization*. Copies of this have been sent you. Will hand on the other suggestion you make.

C. BAKER.—We like your suggestion of a tract on *Present Day Lies of the Parsons*, but to be useful it would have to take the form of a weekly issue in order for it to be quite up-to-date.

R. BELL.—We hope that you will be able to make the acquaintance of Freethinkers in your new locality. Those who say that Christianity is dead are living in a fools paradise. The Churches are still strong enough to make our own Government very cautious of giving them offence, and unless we are cautious we shall have to pay one day for the indifference of those who ought to be more on the alert. The cry that Christianity is dead is too often an excuse for doing nothing. It is noticeable that they who say so only whisper it in confidence. They do not say it openly and loudly.

A. E. POWELL.—Your new address noted. We are always a bit puzzled to decide whether the knave or the fool predominates in these "healing evangelists." It is possible that some of them are too ignorant to see the foolishness of their own pretensions. But it is quite clear to our minds that when they are supported by leading Churchmen all that these latter have in view is someone who will boom their Church for the time being. So long as their business is brightened all is well.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Whence was first implanted in the gods a pattern for begetting things in general, and the preconception of what men are, so that they knew and saw in mind what they wanted to make? In what way was the power of primeval atoms of matter ascertained, and what effect a change in their mutual arrangements would produce, if Nature herself did not give the model for making things. —Lucretius, "On the Nature of Things."

Sugar Plums.

We are again receiving complaints from subscribers about no-delivery of copies of the *Freethinker* from news-agents. There is no reason why this should be so, and the fault for non-delivery must rest between the wholesale and retail agents. We are pretty helpless in the matter, and must depend upon our friends doing what they can to break down this form of persecution. They should insist on getting the paper delivered regularly, or transfer their custom elsewhere. The paper could, of course, be sent direct from this office, but we would prefer that readers should insist on the paper being delivered when ordered. It is evident that there is some sort of a systematic boycott of the paper going on, and we must try and get the better of it somehow. It is hard enough to keep one's head above water in these times under the most favourable conditions, but it is harder still when we find the legitimate trade channels being blocked in so cowardly a fashion.

We again call attention to the forthcoming Conference of the National Secular Society on Whit-Sunday at Leeds. The morning and afternoon meetings of the Conference will be held in the Town Hall, and will be open to all members of the Society. Leeds is very central, geographically, and there should be an excellent muster on this occasion. Those requiring accommodation over the week-end should write to Mr. H. R. Youngman, who is the treasurer of the Leeds Branch (not President as stated last week), stating exactly what they require and for how long. This information should be given as far in advance as possible.

The evening meeting of the Conference will be in the Town Hall, which is one of the largest and handsomest public buildings in the North of England. That will be open to the general public, and will be addressed by Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, Moss, and others. A full list will be printed later.

There was an improved audience at South Place Institute on Sunday last, and we anticipate still larger audiences as the course of lectures proceeds. Last Sunday Mr. George Whitehead was the lecturer, and his discourse on Bernard Shaw was much appreciated by those present. The lecturer to-day (April 22) is Mr. F. P. Corrigan, who will take for his subject, "Immortality, Fact or Fiction?" The lecture commences at 3.30. The final lecture of this course will be given on Sunday next by Mr. Cohen. His subject will be the "Psychology of Faith." We should like to be able to report "House Full" on both occasions.

The Manchester Branch is continuing its Discussion Circle, which has hitherto met with considerable success. At the last meeting a discussion on "Capital Punishment" was opened by the President of the Branch, Councillor Monks, and was followed with the keenest interest. The next meeting will be on May 13, when Mr. S. Cohen will open a discussion on "Freethought and the Freethinker." There is much that is useful to be said on both aspects of the subject.

Our readers will be glad to learn that there is every prospect of the Bill for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws being introduced into the House of Lords at an early date. This will ensure a discussion, and we shall be able to see what is the worst that the opponents of repeal can say. Of one thing we can be quite sure, the more the question of the existence and the nature of the Blasphemy Laws is brought home to the general public the nearer we shall be to the day of their abolition.

It is a bitter thought how different a thing the Christianity of the world might have been if the Christian faith had been adopted as the religion of the empire under the auspices of Marcus Aurelius instead of those of Constantine.—J. S. Mill.

IN EVERY STREET—WHY NOT GET HIM?

Richard Carlile.

(Continued from page 235.)

III.—THE FAMOUS 1819 TRIALS.

RICHARD CARLILE, once established as a publisher and bookseller, published Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* and Elihu Palmer's *Principles of Nature* because they had been repeatedly condemned as blasphemous publications. He felt it incumbent upon him to republish them and to maintain their circulation in vindication of the absolute freedom of the Press. The result was the famous mock trials of 1819.

Richard Carlile was charged on an *ex-officio* information of the Attorney-General, Sir Robert Gifford, at the Court of King's Bench, Guildhall, on Tuesday, October 12, 1819, with being a wicked, impious, and ill-disposed person, who had caused to be printed and published a scandalous and blasphemous libel of, and concerning, the Old Testament. There were eleven counts to the indictment, composed of passages from this work. Carlile conducted his own case.

The nature of the information having been stated, Carlile said that he should require the passages to be read at length at the proper time. Chief Justice Abbott agreed that this should be done if the defendant considered it material, but protested that it was unusual to do so.

Attorney-General Gifford then opened the case for the Crown. He observed, with great satisfaction, that when the jury knew the nature of the charge they would be satisfied that the prosecution did not proceed from any hostility to the liberty of the Press. On the contrary, the Officer of the Crown would have been negligent of his duty had he refrained from filing the information. By their very oaths the jury had pledged themselves to the belief of Christianity. It was idle for him to descend upon its excellence therefore. To discuss its veracity was to deny its constitutional authority and to admit that it might be discussed in the manner that had given rise to the present proceedings. Not to be convicted, the defendant must abolish the Constitution and persuade the jury to ignore the solemn obligation they had taken in the name of their Creator.

Defendant had been prosecuted only according to Common Law, but he had also violated Statute Law. Parliamentary enactments showed that blasphemy had always been considered a criminal offence. There was the case of Taylor, who, in the reign of Charles II, was sentenced to stand thrice in the pillory and to pay a fine of 1,000 marks for uttering horribly blasphemous expressions. In this case that upright and conscientious judge, Sir Matthew Hale, observed:—

Such kind of blasphemous words were not only an offence to God and religion, but a crime against the laws, State and Government, and therefore punishable in that Court. For to say religion is a cheat is to dissolve all those obligations whereby the civil societies are preserved. Christianity is parcel of the laws of England, and, therefore, to reproach the Christian religion is to speak in subversion of the law.

At the beginning of George the Second's reign, Woolston wrote against miracles, and was convicted of four blasphemous discourses against the Saviour. In his defence, he attempted to impugn the miracles, but the Court would not tolerate any discussion on that point, since he wrote generally against Christianity, and did not controvert points of doctrine like a learned theologian might do. In 1793 Williams published part of the *Age of Reason*. The prosecution against him was conducted by one who always professed himself the most liberal champion of a free

Press, Lord Erskine, who insisted that if such impious publications were not checked, they would tend to undermine the religion of the country. That was his (the Attorney-General's) argument in the present case. He did not mean that such publications would undermine the religion of reasonable and thinking men, but only of those who had not the leisure nor inclination to dive into Christian evidences, that part of the community, in fact, to whom religion was of the utmost importance, the Common People.

Williams was convicted. But in the year 1812 another attempt was made to disseminate these horrible doctrines. A person named Eaton was then punished for publishing the very same work. These successive juries and Courts had convicted and punished defendants of offences similar to those imputed to Carlile, and the Attorney-General left it for the jury to judge whether, in this free and enlightened country, where everything was canvassed, where every decision was considered with deliberation, where the most liberal freedom was extended to the Press, where religious tolerance was universal, these successive decisions were not warranted by law.

The prosecution wished to protect the lower and illiterate classes of society from having their faith sapped and their minds diverted from those principles of morality which were so powerfully inculcated by the Christian religion. When such noxious productions were deliberately put into the hands of the ignorant, into the hands of those, who, unlike the rich and powerful, were unable to draw distinctions between ingenious but mischievous arguments and divine truths, like vice, they become familiar to their minds, all respect and veneration for religion and virtue would diminish, and consequences too painful must ensue. The eyes of all the country were upon the jury, who had to decide whether Christianity was a fabulous imposture.

Publication was then formally proved, and the information containing the indicted passages from the *Age of Reason* read out. Carlile then opened his speech for the defence, which occupied the rest of that day, the whole of the next, and a large portion of the third day. On the first, he insisted on reading and commenting on the whole of Paine's *Age of Reason*, his object being to include it in his report of the trial, and thus circulate widely a repetition of the "blasphemy" he was indicted for. The second day he spent in citing lengthy passages from the Koran and the Bible, and the third in quoting passages from a number of writings in favour of toleration. Amongst others he quoted Archbishop Tollotson, who had said: "If your religion be too good to examine, I doubt it is too bad to be believed."

On the second day of his trial he was continually interrupted by the Attorney-General, the junior counsel for the Crown, the judge, and the foreman and other members of the jury. The Attorney-General's interruptions were a series of objections to Carlile's "promulgation of further blasphemous libels" as a defence to the charge brought against him. He was supported in these appeals to the judge not to suffer such conduct by his junior, Mr. Gurney. The judge interrupted to state, repeatedly, that the defendant was charged with publishing a book in which the Holy Scriptures were reviled, and that it was no defence to reiterate the calumnies for which he had been prosecuted. He was indicted under the Common Law, and the most important part of it, since all our institutions had reference to religion, *i.e.*, religion generally. The law permitted every man to worship God according to his particular mode of faith, but it did not allow any man to revile religion generally, and to treat the Scriptures as full of lies. Carlile would be allowed to say anything which did not revile the truth of religion. But his lordship would not sit

on the Bench and hear the Holy Scriptures calumniated.

The subject, said Carlile, was one of deep importance. It was no less a question than whether a man was or was not to be tolerated in indulging whatever creed or opinion he pleased in religious affairs. His endeavour would be to convince the jury that Mr. Paine's *Age of Reason* was not the blasphemous work it was represented to be, and that he was not the wicked and impious individual described in the "Information."

The Attorney-General's speech was a mere repetition of common-place expressions. As to religion, it was merely a parody upon all the Attorney-Generals who had gone before him. His was the usual cant about the liberty of the Press, the licentiousness of the defendant and the mischievous effects of such a book as the *Age of Reason* being put into the hands of children. But why did not the learned gentlemen, who had described this abomination in such glaring colours, caution parents against giving their children the Bible to read in view of the voluptuous and lustful scenes it depicted?

Christianity was said to emanate from the Deity, and not to need the aid of secular power. Then why was he (Carlile) prosecuted? Why did the Attorney-General claim to be defending the cause of God by placing him in the dock when God was an almighty being, capable of defending his own cause? The Attorney-General's singular inconsistency showed he thought differently. Was it not proof that the Christian system was such that nothing but persecution could support it?

They had heard that the present prosecution was founded on the law of the land and that Christianity was part of that law. But he would prove that not Christianity, but Deism, was the law of the land. The first of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England expressly declared that there was one God, all-perfect, all-wise, and all-good, who consisted, nevertheless of three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He confessed that it was utterly impossible for him to admit the divinity of Christianity without embracing the doctrine of "the adorable Trinity." But if that was a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, all who denied it were enemies to the Christian system. It was impossible to destroy one part without destroying the whole of Christianity.

The Unitarians believed that Christ was born in a natural way, but that he was delegated from God. In doing so, and particularly in denying the Trinity they as much opposed the Christian system as he, who professed himself a Deist. For all who denied that doctrine were enemies of the Christian system. Yet, most extraordinary as this might appear, an Act of Parliament was passed a few years before by which persons who impugned the doctrine of the Trinity were exempted from all those pains and penalties which they were subjected to formerly. How could this Act be reconciled to the first of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church, which declared the Trinity to be an essential part of the Christian system. Deism, then, was part of the established law of the land. If a man believed in one God he complied with the provisions of the 53rd of George III, which repealed that part of the Act of 9th William and Mary, which respected the impugning of the Trinity. He, the defendant, impugned the Christian religion, but he defended himself on this statute. By protecting from punishment all those who impugned the doctrine of three persons being one God, it deprived that Court of all jurisdiction.

Abridged from Carlile's own writings by

GUY A. ALDRED.

(To be Continued.)

The Advance of Civilization.

The Proof of the Pudding.

OF course it is not exactly right and proper to call our dignified civilization a pudding, but some headline must be given to the most ephemeral of essays, and when the attempt is to demonstrate a palpable and scientific truth, it is sometimes good to choose a frivolous headline. It attracts attention—which is one of the necessities of civilization.

The theory of evolution maintains that man has risen from the slime, or something equally uncomfortable, in spite of the common knowledge that human nature has not changed. Almost anyone you may ask will tell you that, and the air with which the knowledge is conveyed assures its acceptance.

I think that leads us naturally to the subject of Tutankhamen, and I am going to use the discoveries made in his tomb to prove that our civilization is an advance upon that of ancient Egypt. I am quite well aware that this needs no proof, but that is all the more reason for proving it. The acceptability of this article will no doubt depend upon its containing nothing new.

The wonder of the discoveries I am prepared to accept as absolute. So many of the people who have written on the subject have said so that it is now almost impossible to believe that these things might conceivably leave one cold. Be that as it may, there is no doubt at all that Tutankhamen regarded them as treasures, and the people who buried him certainly accepted the judgment of their times in artistic matters very much as we do to-day. They had to earn their livings just as we do.

It is rather unfortunate that I should have said that, but as these things are paid for by the word I shall let it remain, although it seems to prove the popular contention.

But what I wished to discuss was not the artistic qualities of these treasures. It is sufficient for my purpose that the human beings who owned these things really thought a great deal of them. They were the personal property of Tutankhamen, but no doubt his entourage took just as much pleasure in them as he did while he was alive. When he died he became the sole proprietor of all these wonderful works of art, and he enjoyed them in an hermetically sealed tomb. (It was hermetically sealed, wasn't it?) The pleasure they had bestowed was lost to even so small a number of living men as the servants of a palace for 3,000 years. The whole proceeding was most uncivilized. It not only showed a belief in personal immortality, which has survived in a different form, but it showed all uncharitableness and selfishness. Tutankhamen wanted these things buried with him so that he could have them all to himself.

How different is the state of the modern mind! A collector dies and his things are sold by auction. Some of them go to other private collectors, others are purchased for the nation; occasionally a very good man or woman dies and gives a collection to the people. No one would dream of having a collection of artistic objects buried with them, even if the tomb were to be hermetically sealed. Popular opinion on this subject is expressed as vividly as usual in the phrase, "E cawn't take 'em with 'im."

The civilization of to-day preserves the objects of art it obtains in art galleries and museums. It does not care for the tomb idea. It wants to be conscious of possessing these treasures, and it would inevitably forget them if they were buried with their quondam owner. If that were done there would be no occasion for the newspaper paragraph describing new acquisitions

which are such a source of pride to the nation and afford that superficial information which forms so large a measure of modern conversation.

By means of this change it is easy to demonstrate that there is less selfishness to-day than there was three thousand years ago. People whose lives have been surrounded by treasures of beauty have no objection, after they are dead, to allowing the general public the privilege of seeing their treasures; and it is quite certain that the curators of the various national collections get a great deal of pleasure from them.

Indeed a number of other people obtain pleasure from them as well as the curators, but it is doubtful whether their pleasure is so great. In London the museums and art galleries are visited by a large number of people each year, and these people are all permitted to look at things which were once used by human beings, but for which those human beings, since dead, have no further use.

It is impossible to cast any further doubt upon the theory of evolution. Possibly no one would dream of doing so, but the proof supplied by the excavations in Egypt is overwhelming. The ancient king preserved his treasures in his tomb, and his idea was, apparently, that he would have them for himself. He has been rudely disturbed, but only in order to provide a contrast with modern practice. The modern king usually has no collections that he could truly call his own, but those wealthy men who have, like to ensure their immortality in the minds of men by giving their treasures to the public, when they can no longer retain them. The improvement in the quality of human emotion is obvious, but I fear that it augurs ill for the self-confidence of the ego in the more developed modern man.

G. E. FUSSELL.

South African Jottings.

THE Bishop of Bloemfontein considers that belief in "God" and a "spiritual" world cannot be all a fraud because it is on such a large scale. The argument is a fallacy. On this theory the Bishop should be a supporter of Buddhism which numbers many more millions of adherents than does Christianity. The great number of Christians in the world proves nothing at all, unless it be the truth of Carlyle's dictum. Rather does the force seem to be the other way. If history teaches anything on this score it seems to be that the infidels and unorthodox who form the minority in one age are the orthodox majority of a succeeding one. But is the belief in the things for which the Bishop stands on such a large scale as he supposes? This is a debatable question, but when the clergy admit that never were people so bored with religion as they are to-day, and openly confess that religious belief and practice is steadily declining we must own to some doubts. Our own considered opinion is that religious belief is rapidly declining, and that not more than fifty per cent. of those for whom the Bishop speaks believe either in his God or his "spiritual world." Social conventions and moral cowardice, not to mention the force of old traditional practice, still maintain a strangle hold with many, but faith—faith as the Bishop understands it—is dead. The Bishop likens himself and "Searchlight" to fish and land animals, and says "each talks of a world unknown to the other." But the Bishop's analogy is false, for while he and "Searchlight" are both denizens of the same world, "Searchlight" has stood where he stands: he has never stood where "Searchlight" stands. His spiritual world is hypothetical only and his subjective experiences valueless. The "God" and "spiritual world" of which he speaks are alike the creatures of phantasy—"the baseless vision of a dream." Their origin is to be looked for in the nocturnal experiences of the primitive cave man. The Bishop says it is impossible to prove the "spiritual" to one who only believes in the

phenomenal. Quite so. More brilliant theologians and logicians than the Bishop have said the same in other words, and one of them, the late Cardinal J. H. Newman, said that "apart from an interior and unreasoned conviction" the existence of God could not be proved. The Bishop has formed a corner in truth, honour, beauty, and love, "all of which," he says, "I call God." But biologically these things exist in embryo at least in the animal world. And are we to conclude that the Bishop denies to the "soul-less Atheist" any participation in them? When the Bishop says, "From a material basis I do not doubt 'Searchlight' is right," he confesses that modern science and intellectuality are formidable foes to the supernaturalist. He then goes on to admit that henceforth his reliance is placed on the rotten reed of "religious experience." For he says, "Some of us are compelled by our inner intuitions to believe in the soul of man and a world of spiritual things." But if "inner intuitions" are to be the criterion of truth, what about the "inner intuitions" that tell a different tale to the Bishop's? What about all those millions of people whose "inner intuitions" tell them that the Bishop is talking nonsense? It is like the argument from conscience, which Burton wittily defined as "a chronological and geographical accident."

By a single throw of the dice the Bishop elects to stake all on subjective religious experience, and he has lost. When a brilliant psychologist like the late Professor W. James devotes his best efforts to the cause of those who argue from religious experience, and in doing so furnishes their opponents with the most deadly weapon for attacking supernaturalism the Bishop can throw up the sponge.

The following review, culled from *The Friend Bookshelves* (review column), may be of interest to those sceptical minds who think that the cruder forms of religious literature are disappearing from the market:—

One would have thought that in these days of scientific advancement and educational progress gullibility in religious matters would have been buried with the superstitions of the past. That this is not so is proved in *Foregleams of Coming Days* (Juta and Co., Cape Town), by Mr. G. McDougall, who gives us a prophetic and rather terrifying description of the Day of Judgment and the conditions of life on this planet thereafter. In the form of condensed reports to a religious magazine, the author describes vividly the second coming of Jesus Christ, the separation of the good from the bad with the ultimate destruction of the latter and the rule of Christ on earth. Under this regime adverse climatic conditions have been made favourable, the desert "blossoms like a rose," and diseases and pestilences have been destroyed. The Saints who have taken up their abode here are distinguished by golden crowns awarded them personally by the Saviour, while all religions have been united, the Jews having openly accepted Christ. A new currency of gold and silver, minted from metal brought down from the celestial regions, has been introduced, and conditions of labour lightened and made agreeable to all toilers. Several pages are devoted to the description of this idyllic state, which is to be overthrown by Satan who will test the loyalty and devotion of the earth's inhabitants. Then will come the great and final judgment when, in the author's concluding words: "Shall the earth and the works that are therein be burned up and the new heaven and the new earth shall appear." What the new earth is to be like we are not told at any rate who would like to know?

The clergy of the Dutch Reformed Church and other evangelical bodies have been fulminating in Synod assembled against the godless South African Sabbath. They see religious faith at a discount and material enjoyment at a premium, and therefore with one accord they would restore the glories of old time puritanism, and incidentally replenish their half empty churches and pockets at one fell swoop. The clergy of the Roman and Anglican Communion are equally busy in vehemently opposing, by passing resolutions, the passage of a bill through the Union Parliament extending grounds for divorce. But the signs of the times, for these black-coated emissaries of superstition and obscurantism, are ominous and pregnant with warnings. And Nietzsche's tent is opposite. "Verily a strong wind is Zarathustra to all low lands, and his enemies and everything that spitteth and speweth he counselleth with such advice: Beware of Spitting Against the Wind." A desultory correspondence has been going on in the *Natal Witness* with

regard to the reality of the cures supposed to have been effected by Hickson. "Seek After Truth" writes:—

Sequah, the great quack, could lay claim to a great many more cures than Mr. Hickson could, he also raked in the shekels. The disappointing results shown by personal, and in some cases intimate, friends of mine, and the reading of an article in a home paper caused me to doubt and wonder if we are being sold a pup. Several God-fearing people who assisted at the service during Mr. Hickson's visit to Maritzburg, have been known to state that owing to the poor results shown they don't know what to think about it, and I should like to say that Mr. Hickson will find no disciple in me. I am still of the belief that if a good doctor cannot cure people, Mr. Hickson cannot. One of his great cures, and one out of which great capital was made at the time, is still being wheeled about in our streets.

We are afraid "Seeker After Truth" will learn little from "God-fearing" people, and we thought this type was nearing extinction in course of evolutionary law. There are, however, plenty of members of the various English Freethought Societies in South Africa who will, I am sure, be only too pleased to assist truth seekers generally, and the *Freethinker* is an excellent guide along this path. There is just as much reality about Hickson's "wonderful" cures in South Africa as there was in the reality of the Mons Angels on the Western Battle Front.

A medical friend writes me from the Cape Province:—

I liked your last beam in the *Freethinker* very much..... and the subject although a disgusting one to us, is really an important one as an example of mob madness. Do you know people went to Hickson from here whose eyes and kidneys are on a par with boiled potatoes—no possible hope of restoration. I suppose the Bible miracles make them believe all things possible.

It is time that friends of our movement awoke to the necessity of organized effort on the lines of active militant propaganda in South Africa. Excellent work has been done by Freethinkers in Australia, and it is quite time South Africans got a move on. The great drawback here, as elsewhere, is, of course, the economic one, and we can only trust the financial outlook will soon brighten. In spite of this, however, isolated Freethinkers throughout the sub-Continent can do much spade work by making our papers and publications, etc., known, and by getting fresh subscribers. Where direct propaganda is impossible permeation is always possible, and in this way we are laying the foundation stone of more ambitious undertakings.

SEARCHLIGHT.

THE DOOM OF A CITY.

The moon hung golden, large, and round,
Soothing its beauty up the quiet sky
In swanlike slow pulsations, while I wound
Through dewy meads and gardens of rich flowers,
Whose fragrance like a subtle harmony
Was fascination to the languid hours.
A tender mist of light was interfused
Upon the hills and waters, woods and leas,
Throughout the gloomless gloaming; and I mused
Dim thoughts deep-floating in delicious dream,
Until the long stern lines of cypress trees,
Amidst whose plume funereal there did seem
To creep with quivering sobs a moaning breath,
Awed back my heart to life—to life and death.
Far in the mystic moonlight lay outspread,
In trance of solemn beauty still and weird,
That Camp and City of the ancient dead;
And far around stood up in dense array
Those monumental marbles ever reared
By men still battling with the powers of Life
To those released before them from its sway;
Victors or vanquished in the fearful strife,
What matters?—Ah, within our Mother's breast,
From toil and tumult, sin and sorrow free,
Sphered beyond hope and dread, divinely calm,
They lie, all gathered into perfect rest;
And o'er the trance of their Eternity
The Cypress waves more holy than the palm.

—James Thomson.

Correspondence.

FAITH AND WORKS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In "Faith and Works," under "The Easy Chair," in the *Observer* of to-day, attention is drawn to a recent publication by the Bishop of Norwich—*Good Men Without Faith*—in which "his lordship" speaks of a common experience of finding "the genuinely Christian character where intellectually there is nothing but doubt and even denial." The impudence, the insolence, on the part of so-called Christians towards agnostics is exasperating, meaning, as it does, a definite charge of immorality, the absence of anything moral in the agnostic. Who, in general terms, were the three greatest men, in their own lines, of the last century? Darwin, Tyndall, Huxley, all men of unimpeachable morality, and all absolutely agnostic. On the other side, the Son of Man had not where to lay his head, and was penniless. How does this compare with the palace and income of a bishop? Ask "my lord" what work he has in hand and he will show you a programme for every day in the coming year. How does this compare with his great teacher's injunction to take no thought for to-morrow? "His lordship" wears a fantastic dress, laid down for him to the last button on his knickerbockers and strings on his hat, which he dare not fail to conform to. How does this compare with his orders to take no thought what he shall put on? There is, as the Bishop says, more than doubt, there is certainty, in the minds of those who can look the thing in the face that the whole system of Christianity as practised by "his lordship" of Norwich and other professing Christians is nothing but a hollow mockery.

AGNOSTIC.

PYTHAGORAS AND COPERNICUS.

SIR,—In the letter by W. W. Strickland entitled "Pythagoras and Copernicus" there appear some extraordinary statements when viewed in the light of the present day. Speaking of the ancients we are told: "But all of them.....believed that the sun ran round the earth.....they often all but guessed the riddle of the Cosmos."

In both the *Short History of Science*, by Buckley, and the *Introduction to Astronomy*, by Moulton, we find that although Pythagoras only held the notion that the earth as a body moved in space, yet he paved the way for Aristarchus 300 B.C. Aristarchus taught that the sun was a fixed star about which the earth revolved in an axial and orbital rotation. He explained the seasons as due to the obliquity of the ecliptic, and furthermore accounted for day and night as due to the earth's axial rotation once in twenty-four hours in opposition to the sun.

The wonders of Greek science are not widely known, and yet it was these grand old investigators who laid the foundations of science. Where, indeed, might we not have been if that dreadful intellectual night had not settled upon Europe, obliterating ancient learning and holding back the wheel of progress for 1,500 years?

Mr. Strickland, speaking of the Anglo-Saxon and German people, says "In no great branch of science, neither in astronomy, physics, nor biology have these races ever taken the first step opening out a new world of thought." Such a statement can only be put down to prejudice; it is only necessary to mention the names of Newton, Herschell, Dalton, Faraday, Von Baer, Virchow, Lyell, and Charles Darwin. Science knows no paltry national boundaries—the whole world has contributed.

R. I. TURNEY.

ANCIENT ASTRONOMY.

SIR,—Your correspondent, W. W. Strickland, may be interested in the following, taken from Robert Routledge, *History of Science*, second edition, p. 38:—

Aristarchus of Samos (c. third century B.C.) is famous for his efforts on behalf of the Pythagorean doctrine of the earth's motion. He taught that the sun was stationary, and that the earth revolved about that luminary.....A contemporary of the astronomer raised an objection by declaring that [he] was leaving no space for the gods.....Aristarchus might have incurred no small risk in earning the title of the Greek Galileo.

TAB CAN.

More Truth Than Poetry.

I WANT to live a blameless life,
From every kind of folly free;
I'll not look at another's wife—
That is, if she looks good to me;
I'll be prepared to help to burn
All books but those the censors pass,
And I will do my best to learn
To be a sad and solemn ass.

I want to save my soul; I'm keen
To win a crown, a harp, and wings,
Therefore, I'll start at once to wean
Myself from liking lovely things;
The pleasures I have heretofore
Been tempted blithely to pursue
Shall make appeals to me no more,
My cheerful moments shall be few.

I'll keep away from places where
The lilacs and the roses bloom,
For such things rouse me from despair
And tend to drive away my gloom,
And if a robin or a lark
Begins to sing where I can hear
I'll hunt some corner that is dark
Where I may keep my conscience clear.

If brooks insist on babbling while
I walk beside them I'll turn back;
To make it hard for me to smile
I'll keep my liver out of whack;
Praise shall not bring me any joy
Nor shall good fortune make me proud,
Lest I endanger or destroy
The soul with which I am endowed.

I'm out to win eternal bliss;
A sad old sharp has told me how;
Joy in the life that follows this
Demands dejection here and now.
From every pleasure I will turn,
No cheer shall linger where I pass;
I'll save my soul if I can learn
To be a sad and solemn ass.

—S. E. KISER in *The Detroit Times*.

INCONSISTENCY.

Once in the chancel of a church austere,
Upon the illumined altar-steps I prayed,
While near me knelt, in sombre garb arrayed,
Hosts of repenting sinners thrilled with fear.
Without, the tempest swept by, swift and drear,
When suddenly a fiery livid blade
Of lightning struck the shining spire, and laid
Its Gothic beauty shattered far and near!
And then the germs of doubt dawned in my soul,
Why, if God lived within this house to know
That suppliants bowed and dared to Him aspire,
Did He, with wrath and wondrous uncontrol,
Strike it to dust with His infuriate blow,
And mar its majesty with avenging fire?

—Francis S. Saltus.

'Twould ring the bells of Heaven
The wildest peal of years
If Parson lost his senses
And people came to theirs,
And he and they together
Knelt down with angry prayers
For tamed and shabby tigers
And dancing dogs and bears,
And wretched, blind pit ponies,
And late hunted hares.

—Ralph Hodgson.

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—"Science v. Religion," Mr. Keyling v. Mr. Gad. 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. A. Hyatt, "Recitals."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2) : 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "Comedy."

SOUTH PLACE (Moorgate Street, E.C.) : 3.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, "Immortality—Fact or Fiction?"

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (2 Central Road, Duncan Street, Shop Assistants' Rooms) : 7, Debate—Mr. Hewitt v. Mr. Brooke.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S.* (12a Clayton Street East) : 3, Lecture arrangements.

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W.C.—J. Bull, 24 Grays Inn Road.

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