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Views and Opinions.

Persecution.

I dealt last week with the attempt of Dean Inge to discredit Freethought in this country by dwelling upon what he called "the insane attempt of the Russian Government to proscribe religion altogether." I should agree with him that if the Russian Government had done, or had tried to do any such thing, no words of condemnation could be too strong. But it is not the case, and Dean Inge must know it is not the case. Religion is practised in Russia as elsewhere, and whatever may be the faults of the Russian Government to say that religion is proscribed in Russia is—to put the matter quite plainly—to deliberately lie to those who do not know the facts. As one fact to the contrary it may be pointed out that the Baptists alone, with the sanction of the Government, have sent nearly 100,000 copies of the Bible into Russia. So far as the facts can be got at the cardinal fault of the Russian Government appears to be that to which all governments are more or less prone. This is to dominate opinion, and when the chance offers to coerce opinion. There is hardly a government in the world which sooner or later, and in some form or another does not make this fatal mistake. It does not like to treat opinion as a perfectly free thing because it comes to see that in human society opinion is the one thing that makes and unmakes institutions and governments. If the Russian Government has gone farther—openly—than other governments have done, that, I take it, is because it is committed to a theory of government which makes State action the chief consideration. But whether we agree with this theory or not, we should at least be able to discuss the matter without lying about it—that is if one is not a Christian preacher. In that case we are, perhaps, expecting too much.

* * *

Christianity and Force.

Dean Inge is a Christian of a sort, and at least he holds a post in a Christian Church for which he draws an annual payment. And when a Christian starts denouncing others for indulging in persecution, he is bound to bear in mind the obvious retort that may be made. It is probably with this before him that Dean Inge started his article with some reflections on persecution in general. Persecution, he says, is not

indigenous to Europe. "The Romans did not take easily to persecution. They put down a few cults which they thought criminal or immoral, but they never interfered with the mystery religions which were spreading over the Empire." On the other hand, "The Catholic Church has been by far the most ruthless persecutor in history.....The persecutions of the Jews, Albigenses, Lollards, Hussites, and others are among the most terrible chapters of human history." Here then are factors of the question with which Dean Inge has to deal, but which he fails altogether to answer. Among peoples with whom religious persecution was not indigenous, with an Empire that did not take easily to persecution, persecution assumed its darkest, its most brutal, and its most persistent form. That is a question well worth dealing with, and it would take very much more space than I have at my disposal to answer it fully. But we can at least do more than Dean Inge does, and there is no need to follow his example of stating a question merely for the sake of discrediting an opponent by misrepresentation.

* * *

The Beginnings of Coercion.

Now I do not know that it is strictly accurate to say that persecution was not indigenous to Europe. That is a very shallow generalization, and tells us nothing at all. Europeans can persecute as well as other peoples if the conditions are there to cultivate the persecuting spirit. We get more light if we start with the truth that persecution is fostered more by religion—whether it is of the West or of the East—than it is by any other single factor. Persecution, coercion, appears to be inherent in religion from the very earliest times, and for very obvious reasons. Among primitive peoples there seems no disinclination to discuss matters where things appear to be determined by known and understandable forces. With religion the questioner is invariably silenced on the broad and understandable ground that he is a danger to the tribe. He may invoke the anger of the Gods on the whole of the people. A result of this is the development of two opposite tendencies in social life. On the one hand there is the development of the secular life of the community ever making for toleration, for the settlement of differences by compromise and discussion, and on the other there is the religious tendency to regard all questioning of religious beliefs as fraught with danger to both the individual and the community. And the truth that emerges from this is not the empty generalization of Dean Inge that persecution was not indigenous to Europe, but that in Europe the development of secular life had taken a more rational direction, and had made for a freer play of opinion. In the Roman Empire we had this principle of religious toleration brought to as complete an expression as the world has seen. So far Dean Inge is right in saying that the Romans did not take easily to persecution. It was foreign to their principle of government, and it was unknown to their judicial system. The best gods a man can have, was one Roman saying, are the gods of a man's own country.

The Reign of Terror.

Christianity was to alter all this. Again Dean Inge touches the truth when he says that the Catholic (the Christian) Church put together the Roman Imperialism and Jewish intolerance. But this is not all the truth, nor is it the worst of it. Christianity involved beliefs and principles that could not but make men persecutors, and the better a man was, so long as he believed in Christianity, the worse persecutor he became. It forced upon men's minds the doctrine of exclusive salvation. It made human welfare throughout eternity dependent upon right belief. Above all it forced upon Europe a sacred book—the Bible—one of the greatest disasters that has ever overtaken the European peoples; and that meant an end to the play of free opinion about religion. The beginning and the end of truth about religion was there, and no man dare doubt it. The upshot of it all was that the Christian Church established persecution as it had never before existed. It became a moral, a social, a religious duty to persecute, and this was so well established in theory and practice that not until towards the end of the seventeenth century was it seriously questioned—certainly not among Christians. However much one body of Christians might revolt against persecution by another body of believers, none questioned the right of the State and the Church to suppress by torture and force what they regarded as erroneous opinions. Each body of Christians believed in suppressing erroneous religious opinions upon the moral and religious ground that they ruined life in both this world and the next. And given the Christian premises the theory was logically flawless. As Lea points out, nothing but the strong conviction that the suppression of heresy was the most important of social duties could have reconciled ordinary men and women to the wholesale tortures and killing that were for so long commonplace events in the life of Europe.

Force v. Ideas.

Christianity, like murder, will out, and Dean Inge cannot altogether free himself from the Christian virus. Thus we are informed as though it were axiomatic, that the saying, "Force is no remedy," is the silliest of political aphorisms:—

Force is frequently the only remedy, but in England we usually become squeamish in the middle of the operation. It is true that you cannot kill ideas with a big stick, but it is quite possible to suppress opinions while they are in the infective stage. The object of coercion is not to kill ideas but to check contagious fanaticism.....It is quite right to use force against revolutionists, and if necessary to treat them as mad dogs, if only because their excesses are always followed by a violent reaction which retards progress.

Now if the Russian Government wished for a justification for any suppression of opinion they have made or might make, Dean Inge provides it for them. You may suppress an opinion by force if it is in your opinion revolutionary, and you may treat those who hold that opinion as mad dogs, a dictum that would justify the crucifixion of everyone who has stood against established power from the mythical Jesus of the New Testament onward. It entirely depends upon which side of the hedge one is whether the opinion is poisonous or not, and therefore whether those holding it ought to be suppressed like mad dogs. Only it is difficult to see why Dean Inge should complain at the Bolsheviki for putting into operation the very principles he lays down for the guidance of those who have control of a country's affairs. No wonder Dean Inge remained silent while men were being imprisoned for an offence against Christianity. They held poisonous opinions, that is, they were not those pro-

fessed by himself, and the law was quite right in suppressing them. It is a good doctrine—for the persecutor. Only I for one find it as unlovely, as stupid, and as criminal in a Christian clergyman as I do in a Russian Bolshevik.

Let in the Light.

But Dean Inge is wrong—he is quite Christian, but he is wrong. And he is wrong because he is a Christian. It is admittedly wrong to attempt to suppress right opinions. But if they are wrong it is still unwise to attempt to suppress them. This first, because it can so seldom be done, and gives them a fictitious value in the eyes of those who hold them. Secondly, because the only way to demonstrate that an opinion is wrong is to give it publicity. The falseness, the more fallacious an opinion is, the greater the reason for seeing that it gets as wide a hearing as possible. Nothing will kill it more quickly than dragging it into the light and making it face public discussion. Dean Inge might bethink himself that all really dangerous opinions are bred and developed underground—in secret conclave—and only become more important as Governments and Churches try to root them out by force. If a government intelligently desired to kill anarchism it would do it more effectually by seeing that it had good show in the public Press and a representative in Parliament than by making martyrs of some of its advocates and embarking on a course of violent suppression. But Dean Inge cannot see this because he belongs to a Church which for many centuries made open discussion and the questioning of established opinions the most deadly of offences. So much so, that it was this, as much as anything, which is responsible for those armies and wars which have now come near to wrecking the whole structure of civilization. Prevented from putting their differences to the test of reason, the reign of force was established and legalized, and Dean Inge is in the true Christian line when he says you may suppress opinions by force so long as you believe them to be poisonous. Intellectually he bears the stamp of his heredity, and the records of his progenitors are written in some of the blackest pages of European history.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

What is Civilization?

(Concluded from page 275.)

We repeat the question, why are the ages of faith designated "dark," if they were ages during which "the world made progress, slow but sure"? In other words, why did the old Pagan civilization collapse? What caused the ancient Greek and Roman learning to disappear as if by some magic touch? This is a question which the *Church Times* is discreet enough to completely evade, although it is of vital importance in any intelligent discussion of the subject of civilization. For, after all, what do we mean by the term "civilization"? Here the dictionaries avail us but little, for their definitions are usually too formal, too academic, too narrow and far away from actuality. According to common usage, the word "civilization" presupposes the existence of a more or less organized society, and organized society implies the active presence of some measure of order, culture, and law, otherwise there could be no society. With this fact in mind, we can easily realize that civilization is subject to the universal law of evolution. As Guizot puts it in the first lecture of his famous *History of Civilization*: "Civilization in its most general idea is an improved condition of man resulting from the establishment of social order in place of the individual independence and lawlessness of the savage or bar-

barous life. It may exist in various degrees; it is susceptible of continuous progress." Thus civilization is an evolutionary product, and the various stages in its development can be traced back to the original stone-age culture. Furthermore, we can see the rudiments thereof in most animals below man. For example, there is a degree of social order among the baboons of South Africa, as illustrated by the fact that when a certain number of them form the idea of raiding a field which contains some food they much covet, one is appointed to act as sentinel while the others go down and secure the plunder. The sentinel occupies an elevated position, a rock or a tree, and at the approach of danger gives the alarm, on hearing which the raiders take to flight. Among mankind the stone age represents an extremely low stage of culture, though by no means the lowest. It was the first age during which any real progress began. That was, perhaps, half a million years ago, when the bushman flourished with his small stature and dirty yellow colour; and in all probability this bushman had already passed through not less than a million years of almost imperceptible mental growth. Indeed, prior to the Ice Age progress halted on frenzied feet; there was neither society nor family life; but the rigours and hardships of that age had the effect of driving men together for mutual protection and sympathy, with the result that during the Old Stone Age and the New, progress became more and more rapid. Civilization was now in the making.

In course of time, several different civilizations arose, had their day, and vanished. The first, and possibly, on the whole, the most wonderful of them all, was that of Crete, which had a prosperous and dominating run of some three thousand years. It was in fact a brilliant achievement, showing itself, for example, in a marvellous system of drainage, bath-rooms, with terra cotta baths. The ruins of the royal palace at Knossos, recently discovered, bring before us a building of about five hundred feet square, and two or three storeys high, representing Cretan art at its highest and best, some fifteen hundred years B.C., and the Cretans themselves as undoubtedly possessing an exceptionally fine, powerful, and well-balanced civilization.

The Cretan civilization was brutally destroyed more than three thousand years ago. Then came the civilization of Egypt, of which we have heard and read so much lately, and also, almost contemporaneously, that of Babylonia, both very closely associated with religion. Perhaps the Egyptian code of morality was the most complete and noblest the world has ever seen. But these civilizations had their day and ceased to be except as literature. Then arose the civilization of Greece and Rome, which the writers in the *Times* and the *Church Times* call classical civilization. We are not now concerned with its origin and history, our only business being to find out how it came to an end. The *Church Times* writer explains its fall thus:—

How are we then to explain the fall of an institution so powerful and so popular after its miraculous success? The *Times* writer, following the late Professor Haverfield, attributes the collapse to the strain of frontier defence. The real cause, as Signor Ferrero has shown, lay elsewhere. Human nature could not rise for ever to the sacrifices that the system demanded. The philosopher Emperor Marcus Aurelius, instead of nominating some respectable soldier or statesman designated by the Senate for his successor, brought in his son, the worthless Commodus. Commodus fell, but the Senate could not recover its authority, and military absolutism succeeded in the person of Severus. But force solves no problems, and the Empire was cursed for more than a century by a series of civil wars between rival claimants to the imperial crown.

There is a great deal of truth expressed in that extract, for the things mentioned were certainly contributing causes to the catastrophe; but the main cause lay elsewhere, and it is not even hinted at by either writer. And yet no fact of history has been more firmly established than this, that classical or Pagan civilization was choked to death as a working theory by the Christian religion. No sooner did Christianity become the State religion under Constantine, the first Christian emperor, than it began to persecute Paganism in the determination to get rid of it by force. Under Theodosius the Great atrocities of the most horrible kind were perpetrated to frighten the Pagans into an unwilling acceptance of Christianity. Pagan temples were shorn of their treasures. Gibbon tells the sad story thus:—

A special commission was granted to Cynegius, the Prætorian præfect of the East, and afterwards to the counts Jovius and Gaudentius, two officers of distinguished rank, by which they were directed to shut the temples, to seize or destroy the instruments of idolatry, to abolish the privileges of the priests, and to confiscate the consecrated property for the benefit of the Emperor, of the Church, or of the army. (*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. III, p. 234.)

Everybody remembers the story of this pious emperor's barbarous treatment of the people of Thessalonica. He caused them to be treacherously invited, in his own name, to the games of the Circus. Being ardent lovers of the Circus, the invitation was more than welcome to them, and they attended in their thousands. The wicked emperor had arranged for numerous soldiers to be secretly stationed round about the Circus who, on receiving the signal, did not hesitate to obey their sovereign's command. As Gibbon says:—

The promiscuous carnage continued three hours without discrimination of strangers or natives, of age or sex, of innocence or guilty; the most moderate accounts state the number of the slain at seven thousand; and it is affirmed by some writers that more than fifteen thousand victims were sacrificed to the manes of Boethius.....The apology of the assassins that they were obliged to produce the prescribed number of heads serves only to increase, by an appearance of order and design, the horrors of the massacre which was executed by the commands of Theodosius. (*Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 205-6.)

The great aim Theodosius had always in view was to achieve the total abolition of Pagan civilization, and he very nearly succeeded. The many thousands of the secular schools of Paganism were ruthlessly closed. Gregory the Great became Pope in the year 590. Bishop Desiderius asked for certain privileges which were promised. A little later Gregory wrote to the Bishop in the following illuminating terms:—

We have heard a thing which cannot be repeated without a feeling of shame—namely, that you are teaching grammar to some. This troubled us greatly and filled us with so deep a disdain that we fell from our former praise of you to mourning and sorrow, because the praise of Jove must never be heard from the mouth that praises Christ.

For a bishop to teach grammar was an unforgivable sin, chiefly because it was a secular performance. The Church was the sworn enemy of every form of secularism. Secular knowledge was under the severest ban, Bible knowledge alone being permissible. The fact is that Pagan or classical civilization was in a state of suspended animation in Europe for fully a thousand years, and the Church deserves no thanks whatever for its revival during recent centuries. It is the old civilization, after a thousand years, awakening into newness of life. Christianity never gave birth to

any civilization, its exclusive end being to ignore earth altogether except as a training ground for heaven or for hell. No civilization was required in a world which had no future, and which Holy Writ declared was already passing away. The *Church Times*, by its urgent emphasis on other-worldliness, has given the game away.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Priest-made Crime.

If Christians would teach infidels to be just to Christianity, they should themselves be just to infidelity.

—John Stuart Mill.

ONE of the most pressing legal reforms is that of making a clearance of all those unrepealed statutes which are either superseded, obsolete, or no longer in harmony with the present age, which remain in evidence of the barbarity and tyranny of the past. That in this much-belauded twentieth century persons should be subject to imprisonment for criticizing the Christian religion is simply monstrous, and would be incredible were it not true. English law is saturated with priestly influence and priestcraft. It is, according to law, also a misdemeanour to say anything in derogation of the Book of Common Prayer, although at the present time the Bishops of the Established Church are engaged in pruning that volume of its barbarities and indecencies. It is an offence to speak against the Church of England, as by law established; although every Nonconformist is a living objection to priestly authority.

In the famous Bowman case, one of the judges smilingly refused to declare that Christianity was part and parcel of the law of England. As Jews, Parsees, and Freethinkers have been admitted as members to the House of Commons, the judicial position was a sound one. It is, therefore, quite humiliating to think that there have been more prosecutions for the priest-made crime of blasphemy during the few years of the present century than during the previous fifty years. There have been more prosecutions for spoken blasphemy during this present century than during the previous hundred years, and in no single instance have other than poor, working-men, been prosecuted. Such notorious blasphemers as the Duke of Somerset, the late Marquis of Queensberry, Viscount Amberly, and other offenders, were never proceeded against, although their offence was "gross as a mountain, open, palpable." In poem after poem, Algernon Swinburne treated the fundamentals of the Christian religion with the most fearful scorn and derision, but he was never prosecuted. Matthew Arnold, with a polite smile, compared the Most Holy Trinity to "Three Lord Shaftesburys," but no warrant was issued for his arrest. The Rev. R. J. Campbell has referred to the popular conception of God as "a sort of old woman," but no one proceeded against him for blasphemy. Let there be no misunderstanding on this point. People above a certain social position appear to be able to say or write whatever they like on religion. Mr. Rudyard Kipling has occasionally let himself go; and the late Mr. John Davidson for years "out Heroded Herod" in many purple passages of profanity. Mr. Davidson actually enjoyed the favour of a Civil List Pension during the later years of his life. Other men have been imprisoned for less "blasphemy," which shows the difference between "blaspheming" to the upper circles of society, and "blaspheming" to the working-class. It is only poor men's infidelity that is in danger. Prosecution for opinion is always one of the most serviceable weapons of the rich and powerful against the poor and defenceless.

What has become of our boasted civilization and our belauded freedom of speech? The clergy brag of Christian Brotherhood and of the liberty enjoyed in a Christian country. What ironic comment lies in the plain fact that the days of religious persecution are by no means past, and that priests and their zealous satellites still use cruel laws which ought to have been erased long ago from the Statute Book of a civilized country to crush their opponents. It is a bad blot upon our boasted enlightenment that there are still in existence such laws which no less an authority than the late Judge Stephen characterized as "essentially and fundamentally bad." Freedom of speech is one of the most cherished of human possessions. Milton prized "the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all other liberties." It is perfectly monstrous that any man should be prosecuted for the priest-made crime of blasphemy. It is almost beyond belief that men of the working-class should invariably be selected as victims of persecution whilst those in a superior position in life should be free to say and write what they choose. Prosecutions under the Blasphemy Laws are made in the name of a religion, the followers of which profess to love their enemies. Such prosecutions tend more surely to bring the Christian religion into contempt than the very blasphemy the men are accused of. The Blasphemy Laws should be repealed as speedily as possible, and to that end public opinion must be aroused and organized.

MIMNERMUS.

Some Christian Imbecilities and Immoralities.

St. Abraham the hermit, however, who lived for fifty years after his conversion, rigidly refused from that date to wash his face or his feet. He was, it is said, a person of singular beauty, and his biographer somewhat strangely remarks, that "his face reflected the purity of his soul." St. Ammon had never seen himself naked. A famous virgin named Silvia, though she was sixty years old, and though bodily sickness was a consequence of her habits, resolutely refused on religious principles to wash any part of her body except her fingers.

St. Augustine had named his illegitimate son Adeodatus, or the Gift of God, and had made him a principle interlocutor in one of his religious dialogues.

—Lecky.

OF the numerous absurdities and banalities that students meet in the course of their studies, none can surpass those connected with the history of the rise and zenith of the Christian Church. The characteristic features of the morality of the Church and its adherents and saints are those of nauseating and repulsive vulgarity and viciousness. It is perfectly true that the morals of the Church surpass in degradation anything that can be compared and taken from so-called Pagan life. For sheer folly and stupidity the self-inflicted and other tortures of the civilized Christian have not been equalled in the annals of savage life. The savage tortures for its own sake, the civilized Christian tortures for the "glory of God." The difference is important, and so are the consequences. Torturing for its own sake is ended by the cessation of the torture, but in the other case it is a means to an end. The end may be political, social or spiritual, whichever it may be the dominating factor is the personal selfish end—a characteristic of almost everything Christian. Even at the basis of the "golden rule" lies the desire for ultimate personal benefit.

The numerous penances of the saintly fathers are revolting in the extreme. The disgust that cannot fail to arise when one reads them is a strange concomitant of the imagined intrinsic purity of Christianity. The energy and inventiveness spent on

sordid and absurd penances, ranging from simple hermitage to the most grotesque self-tortures, give grounds for laughter were the consequences not so serious to unconcerned persons.

Informed persons know as a commonplace that the claim of the Christian Church, from its incipience to the present time, of exalted purity and excellence, is the emptiest and most foolish of historic claims. Some of us have not forgotten Gibbon's characteristically informative chapter on the early events of the Church. Nor have they omitted to acquaint themselves with equally informative matter from lesser minds. The contributions of apologetic writers are almost entirely valueless because they set out to prove what is already established in their minds, and not what analysis and investigation may show.

However, the object we have before us is to show in a short and direct way some of the imbecilities and immoralities of Christianity during its development.

It is commonly supposed that the early Christians were splendid examples of piety, purity, and charity. This is not so, and proof can easily be found in their utter defiance of the Roman religion, it being understood that every citizen of the Empire would fulfil the observances of the State religions on the appointed days. Beyond this, absolute freedom in religious matters was allowed. With the violation of the State deities came the persecution of the Christians, but the persecution was not so violent as is commonly accepted. From this time onwards the sordid and stupid asceticism that has been such a marked feature in Christianity continued to develop and culminated in some of the most hideous and ridiculous penance miracles and immoralities imaginable.

The beliefs in the efficacy of hagiology may be gathered from numerous crude stories. In the early and later days of the Church it would readily be expected that the isolated hermit would have powers that were denied his less sanctified brothers. Such sanctification can be found exemplified in stories of how hermits and others were treated by animals, and how the elements favoured them.

Among such stories we find the following examples: St. Theon was attended by wild beasts when he walked abroad, and for the protection thus afforded him he allowed the wild beasts to drink from his well!

St. Poemen had a lion for a companion one night that he was shivering from cold—the lion acting as his covering! (There is nothing unreasonable in this if we are to conclude that the hallowed saint was in the lion's stomach!) Lions appear to have had marked sympathies for saints, for they were in attendance on St. Jerome, St. John the Silent, St. Simeon, St. Geraimus, and they even went so far as to bury St. Paul the hermit and St. Mary of Egypt. Really, such condescending leonine kindness surpasses the dreams of heaven.

Another legend surpasses this one I think. A feeble old monk, by name Zosimas, was journeying to Caesarea. An ass carried his possessions. A lion was met on the way and the unfortunate ass was devoured by the lion, but the lion, after having satisfied his craving for food, was commanded by the monk to carry his burden to the gates of the city. This command was placidly obeyed!

The legends of St. Eustachius and St. Hubert contain a story to the effect that Christ assumed the form of a hunted stag. Turning upon its pursuers it exhibited a glittering crucifix on its brow, and addressing the hunters in a human voice, succeeded in converting them!

St. Colman was fortunate in having a trinity for his constant companions. This trinity was composed of

a cock, a mouse, and a fly. Each, it appears, had its specific duties. The cock announced the hour of devotion, the mouse bit the saintly ear until he awakened, and if the saint indulged in reading, the fly was sufficiently obliging to alight on the place where he left off.

What lies behind the supposed control that the saints had over animals is that their Christian saintliness was so effective that they wielded a charm over the animals. An additional inference is that Christianity alone was kind and sympathetic towards animals. This is not true, because Brahmins and Mohammedans have surpassed Christianity in kindness towards animals. If we pass to Spain and parts of Italy do we not find wanton cruelty to animals there even to-day? And have we not rabbit coursing here and fox hunting in this country, besides the wholesale shooting of partridges and pheasants? No, the imbecility of the claim is at once evident to an impartial student.

However, to pass to some of the Christian immoralities. It is quite a mistake to believe that the Church has been the seat of unsurpassed sanctified chastity and purity. On the contrary many of the most repulsive sexual and other enormities have been the work of the Church. These enormities embrace immoralities ranging from the Agapœ, or love feasts, to the clandestine vice of nunneries and monasteries, and the more bare-faced immoralities of the confessional box. During the Agapœ the greatest licence and excesses were freely permitted, so much so that they find an easy and suitable parallel in similar feasts among savages. The various aspects of clerical celibacy make dismal reading. It is rather important that the word celibacy is used, because there is much difference between celibacy and chastity.

The vice that obtained in nunneries and monasteries affords disgusting yet instructive reading. The general degradation and sensuality pales before any parallel taken from any other religion. Unnatural vice was so prevalent that we are informed that prostitutes openly charged clerics with all forms of vice. It is unquestionably true that nunneries and monasteries were dissolute to an appalling extent. And time after time, pressure had to be brought upon them to try to improve the horrible conditions obtaining within them. We even find monasteries and nunneries converted into brothels and a tax levied on the proceeds! Illegitimate children abounded from the highest to the lowest, and we have seen that even St. Augustine had "a gift from God!"

Cyprian had to rebuke the holy virgins for frequenting the public baths and participating in what we call to-day mixed bathing. This indiscriminate exposure brought about such reactions that Cyprian attributed the ruin and dishonour that affected his Church to their cause. He further records that certain practices became common that were extremely degrading if they were not entitled to be called criminal. In addition to this the virgins often resorted to infanticide for the purpose of covering their secret guilt, and it became necessary to threaten with perpetual excommunication the *virgins sacratae* who had resorted to a life of licentiousness. Those, however, who had been guilty of one lapse only, might have been restored to communion on their death-bed if they had earned it by penitence. During the Carolingian dynasty the practice of infanticide was notorious. To try to overcome the effects of long continence, a system of bleeding was adopted and eventually became part of the monastic discipline. Among the Spanish Visigoths infanticide and abortion became so prevalent that they were punished by death or by blindness.

Century after century we find all kinds of threats against the clergy for all sorts of sensual vices. The

bishops had to forbid the clergy from keeping concubines, fortune-telling, usury, the practice of magic, drinking, and the committing of perjury. The strange thing is that in many instances the bishops were guilty of the offences for which they admonished their clergy. Two bishops were found guilty of unnatural vice, and in consequence they were punished by mutilation. In some instances such vices were extended to the papal throne. Pederasty, too, was prevalent amongst the clergy, and the numerous steps that were taken to suppress it utterly failed.

The fact is, that viewed from whatever point we take, the principles underlying Christianity are so opposed to natural requirements and laws that its practice becomes an impossibility. The principles of asceticism, of enforced celibacy and chastity, being direct contraventions of nature, bring about violent reactions with the consequent evils. The history of the Church proves its utter inability as a means of satisfying rational human requirements. It has always been opposed to science, to art, and to everything that did not receive its benediction. It is only with the advance of modern Freethought that the Church is beginning to be apprehensive of its precarious condition, and, as can be seen everywhere in its present day constitution, is beginning to change its outlook and surreptitiously modifying itself in accordance with modern knowledge and pressure from Freethought tendencies. Or as has been well said by C. Cohen in his *Determinism and Freewill* :—

Man cannot escape the domination of his own mental life. Its unfettered exercise supplies the only freedom he is capable of realizing, as it constitutes the source of his influence as a link in the causative progress of determining his own destiny and moulding that of his successors.

A. MITCHELL.

Cuttings and Comments.

A LADY friend has very thoughtfully sent me some cuttings on Church matters from a Manchester paper. One notes in passing that actual sermons are seldom reported in the ordinary newspaper—for which relief much thanks; for what reading public, however asinine, outside the hypnotic atmosphere of the house of God, could withstand these every day after the sufferings of Sunday? Nor was it true, said Heine, that these were served out to the damned: there was some mercy even in Hell, but other matters, functional, devotional, professional, regarding Church and clergy are gravely and fully referred to in their time and place, the writers (sometimes, no doubt, with tongue in cheek) taking the dear clergy at their own super-excellent valuation. Whether he cometh, or whether he goeth, whatever he doeth, or when he dieth, unlike Cæsar's, the preacher's glory is extenuated wherein he was worthy. The newspapers speak nothing but good of the dead, of the departing, the coming, or the reigning priest. His dress and his ghostly office are his testimonials. Yet with all this perfection, all this "spiritual power" around, within, and above them, these sacred magicians, these movers of the heavens, must stoop to the base uses of the profane and earthly Press. This vile necessity of the Churches is our golden opportunity, and here may we not piously exclaim: The Lord hath delivered them into our hands! For here is no hypnotism, or we are immune, here we have them on the mundane and democratic floor.

In one of the Press cuttings referred to, the Rev. E. J. Saxton, of Leeds, appealed for appreciation, not denunciation, of popular pleasures because the people were at heart religious. The Churches were failing to win them largely because they failed to adapt them-

selves to changing times. The churches had reached a condition of stalemate, and did not only not attract but repelled. There was a ministry of laughter—some plays were as good as sermons.

At the same meeting the Rev. Hugh Jenkins said that with working men it was on the rocks of industrial disputes and dissatisfaction that the work of the Christian ministry was being broken.....A man did not go to the public-house merely for beer. He went also for fellowship, and what the Church had to do was to divert them and make men feel that they had a better form of fellowship in Church than anywhere else in the world.

The speaker did not add that the Churches had also a more deadly and soul-dwarfing intoxicant that made their fellowship possible. So the clerics "talk shop," go into committees of ways and means and never for a moment stop to consider the real reason why the people do not go to church, viz., the decay of belief and the growth of reason.

Another cutting contains a lengthy appreciation of a new book, *A Short History of Our Religion*—from Moses to the Lambeth Conference. No doubt a veracious and sequential narrative, a credible chronicle of incredible things; but why begin with Moses? Why not with his ape-like ancestor of a million years before him. The book is compared with Green's *Short History of the English People*. J. M. Robertson's *Short History of Freethought* is not referred to. The book is written by a schoolmaster, which confirms my opinion that outside his scholastic limits the schoolmaster can be as stupid as the biggest dunce in his class. I may be told I have not read the book. True, but having spent so many melancholy years amongst the material from which it is compiled, I have foreknowledge and a right to be prejudiced. I will be told the Bible does not mean this, and does not mean that. Alas! alas! I can only judge by what it means to me.

In the third cutting lies the charm of this article. Sir Thomas Inskip (the Solicitor-General, no less!) is solicitous regarding "the disturbing and retrograde proposals for Prayer-book revision contained in the measure now before the National Assembly." "Disorders" had arisen within the Church of England. They had not been made to cease, but had continued to grow until to-day the demand was made that a place should be found for them in the Church. (Shame.) And so the Solicitor-General was solicitous; and so we see that law and learning may co-exist with the mentality of the Stone Age. Many of us had noticed it before. At the cinema, for instance, when some barbarous rite was being enacted on the screen; with Law and Learning in petticoats; Religion in lawns and furs, with Castellated headgear, with savage symbols, and solemn faces, and little boys bearing the priestly trains! The picture and the mood returns. We know it is vulgar and unmannerly, but we laugh again as we write. We remember nudging our neighbour, a good Catholic, and whispering in his ear, "the Stone Age!" We learned after that this simple shot had told. A touch of Nature makes the whole world kin. The slightest prick of a pin applied at the proper time, in the right way, and in the right place, will explode the bubble of convention, conceit, and superstition, leaving to us the man, and the man to sense.

Again, I may be told I have not read the Prayer-book, or I have not believed in it. True in both cases. More certain is it, that those who have read, and do believe it, do not understand it, especially its "Incomprehensibles"—or do these belong to the Confession of Faith? But while Freethinkers may not have read the Prayer-book, they are beginning to understand it; and when at last Churchmen, developing a sense of humour, begin to understand it also they will be Freethinkers, too.

A. M.

Acid Drops.

The Sabbatarian members of the National Liberal Club—with one eye on the chapel members of the constituencies—have had a set-back. It will be remembered that the Committee of the Club had permitted games of cards, etc., on Sundays. A number of the Nonconformist members who were afraid of the effects of this on the election results, tried at the annual meeting to reverse the decision of the committee. The motion was defeated by a "decisive majority." If it were not so common in this priest-ridden, Christian bitten country, the sight of a number of men trying to regulate what games a man should play on Sunday, or demanding that he shall not play games at all, would strike one dumb with amazement. But we are accustomed to the absurdity, so it passes without much comment. We are glad these gentlemen of the Stone Age have had a rebuff. There is no rule of the Club which prevents them being as miserable as they please all day on Sunday—and the rest of the week, too, if they are so inclined.

"China had cabs and knew of aeroplanes while our forefathers were painted savages," says the Rev. G. H. Lander. Yet the reverend gentleman persists in saying that the religion of other painted savages is so much more suitable for the Chinese than their own.

The New York *Nation* reprints a manifesto issued by the extreme Mexican Catholics at a time when the expulsion of a clerical dignitary, Monseigneur Filippi (Papal delegate), was under discussion. In this manifesto Catholics are advised to protest against the expulsion of the "sacred person," "even though he may break our laws and make fun of the authorities." Citizens are urged to neglect everything to the one end of bringing "leaders from distant lands to govern our own humble and misguided Mexican clergy." The following passage reads like something from the Middle Ages:—

Do not hesitate, noble women, in your worthy work, to abandon your homes, to neglect your culinary occupations, and to absent yourselves from the enervating affection of your children, for after all, you are doing it for Christ the King.....Forward! Victory is yours; keep for the day is not far off when the Holy Inquisition shall be restored to burn all these heretics.

The manifesto reads to English ears much like a caricature, but it is printed by the *Nation* in all seriousness, and indulgence is granted for reading and circulating it. And we ought not to forget that it is not many years since the Catholic Church caused the execution of Francisco Ferrer for no other crime than that of teaching Freethought in his schools. Given a chance and the Christian Church would not be long before it put off its mask of liberalism and again manifested its true nature.

On seeing a fuller report of the Rev. Rushbrooke's speech, which was dealt with in our "Views and Opinions" last week, we notice one passage that is worth reprinting, and which bears out what we then said. Mr. Rushbrooke said that under licence from the Soviet Government he could have sent into Russia 100,000 Bibles, and only fell short of a few thousands because they were not available. That seems to dispose of the complaint that the Government is suppressing religion there. What does appear to be the case is that religion in Russia has been deprived of all special privileges, and Atheistic propaganda is under no restrictions from the Government. And, as we said, to the Christians in this country, not to see religion specially privileged, and to see Atheism getting exactly the same chances of propaganda as religion, is what men like Dean Inge consider persecution.

We are glad to see Mr. Rushbrooke saying in the course of his speech that he would defend for an Atheist his freedom of speech. In this he says that he speaks for

other Baptists. We hope that is true, and we suggest to him that a very practical sign of this would be for leading Baptists to uphold the Bill for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws.

While we are on the subject of Russia, let us again say that in this paper we have nothing to do with Bolshevism as a form of government. Whether that is good or bad, whether the men in power are angels or villains is not our concern here, but we are concerned with defending Freethought against attack, and we are never inclined to take our opinions of the way in which Christians are treated by non-Christian governments from the Christians themselves. It is our duty to see to this, and we do not think that Freethought gains by declining to join in the hue and cry against an unpopular party because by not doing so may give rise to false impressions. During the war, when the country went almost insane in labelling the whole German people as a nation of scoundrels and cut-throats, we declined to join in this wholesale condemnation of a people because it might expose us to unpopularity to act otherwise. Events showed we were right, and had the Press of this country presented as sane a judgment to the people, things would not be so bad as they are. Besides we are not out to court popularity—even among Freethinkers. We are out to tell the truth as we see it, and we believe we have the good will of our readers in so doing. That we may differ in our judgments follows as a matter of course. But then we are writing for men and women, not for sheep; for Freethinkers, not for fanatical sectarians. And readers of the *Freethinker* would not recognize the old paper if its editor started writing with his mind fixed upon whether they would be pleased or displeased with what he said. We pride ourselves that the *Freethinker* is the one paper in this country that is really free in its utterances. When it ceases to be that we hope it will cease to exist. At any rate it will have outlived its usefulness.

The Chief Rabbi (Dr. Herz) distinctly scored against those Christians in this country who are shrieking about the two archbishops in Russia when he said that while welcoming the protest, the outcry was in striking contrast to the silence maintained when entire communities of Jews were thrown into the Dnieper, buried alive, or thrown into lime pits. But it makes a world of difference when savageries are perpetrated by Christians on others and when others are accused of perpetrating savageries on Christians. As we have often remarked, the Christian conscience is one of the most peculiar things in the world. What is right and wrong is generally determined by whether certain people believe in the resurrection of Jesus and the absurdities of the Christian creed.

Prebendary Carlile heads an appeal for funds for the Church Army with "Christ is the antidote for national unrest," and the *Daily Herald* questions whether a man is justified in using the name of Christ as an advertisement. But it is very generally used for advertising purposes. There is hardly a quack in the country who wishes to run things on a large scale who does not use this form of advertising in some way or another, and we suggest to the *Daily Herald* that this form of advertising is not unknown to many members of the Labour Party. What are the appeals to the example of Christ, the Christ-like spirit, true Christianity, etc., etc., but so many forms of advertising with the general public who respond to the catch of familiar sounds? We should like to see a verbal clearance all round. It would certainly lead to sounder and sauer thinking.

The local *Church Magazine*, Sydenham, announces that a sum of £84 was handed to the Vicar on Easter Day as a personal gift from his parishioners. Another announcement, however, in the same magazine, tells us that the "offertories" on Easter Day would be handed to the Vicar. So it is much like the "Self-Denial" week of the Salvation Army, where cadging is done from the general public.

The lower House of the Florida legislature has adopted a resolution to the effect that it is "subversive of the best intents" for any "professor, teacher, or instructor, in any school, college, or university, supported in part or in whole by taxation, to teach Darwinism, Atheism, Agnosticism, or any other hypothesis that links man in blood relationship to any other form of life." *Vive la Stone Age!*

"Clericus" in the *Yorkshire Observer*, says that he quite agrees with the *Freethinker* that happiness is man's proper aim, but he says that to him happiness is impossible without religion. That may well be the case, but it does not amount to much as an argument. All it means in the case of "Clericus" is that having believed in religion all his life he does not see how he can get on without it. But surely the real test of the necessity of anything is not supplied by the people who get on with it, but by those who can get on without it. So long as people are happy without religion his argument is of no value whatever. Besides there are very many religions in the world, and the followers of each would say the same thing of their particular beliefs. All it really amounts to is that people find pleasure in what they find pleasurable, and that is as true of whisky as it is of religion.

The Archdeacon of Richmond complains that he finds parsonages are much better insured than are the churches. We see nothing out of order in this. Churches, the clergy are constantly assuring us belong to God, and it should be his duty to see that they are all right. To ask mere man to insure God's property to protect it against God himself is a trifle absurd. The Archdeacon should cultivate a livelier faith.

The Rev. D'Arcy Rudd says that the Sunday-school movement has lost 600,000 scholars during the past six years. That is among the most cheerful items of news we have come across lately.

Under the terms of the Trust Deed only Church of England services are permitted in the Redditch Hospital. This does not suit the Nonconformists who want to have one of their medicine men to also hold a service. One of the doctors attached to the institution, Dr. Lewis, said that religious services in a hospital were a nuisance. But that point does not trouble the representatives of the Stone Age. What they want is to be in the limelight, and when they have forced their way in to every institution they can point to their presence as proof of the inextinguishable craving of the human mind for religion.

We are pleased to see that some of the users of wireless sets are beginning to let the Broadcasting Company know of the way in which the company permit the clergy to use this method of inflicting rubbishy sermonettes on the public. We have grounds for saying that a number of letters have been sent and that more will be sent. One user suggested that among others Mr. Cohen might be allowed to give a brief speech one evening. The Broadcasting Company replied that they were asking a certain eminent scientist to speak, and "as evidence of our impartiality" they have arranged for Father Vaughan to give a talk one Sunday evening. There is a delicious humour about the reply. Father Vaughan as a substitute for Mr. Cohen is very good indeed, but the request was, of course, hopeless. It is certain that whatever the private opinions of the persons speaking, no one will be allowed to say anything of a distinctive Freethought kind through that channel. Freethinkers are barred there as elsewhere so far as Freethought is concerned.

A little of the truth will out, do what we may to prevent it. Thus, the Bishop of Southwell, speaking at Bulwell the other day, said:—

The ghastly failure of Christianity in Europe to-day had been brought about by people who professed to be Churchmen and Christians, and not by the open blasphemer, the

drukkard, and the unchaste woman. Christianity as they maintained it had saturated the fields of Europe with the blood of Christians.

Having got so far it would be well for the Bishop to tell us why it is that Christianity has been such a miserable failure as a civilizer, and why throughout the whole of its history the identical things lamented by him have always followed in the track of Christianity. It is useless placing the fault on Christians as individuals. The root of the trouble is that the influence of Christianity has invariably been to make for evil under the guise of good. It has invariably used the better impulses of men to do evil. When the Bishop realizes this he will have touched bottom.

The troubles, the wars, the agitations, the capacities and incapacities of the present may all be traced back to the past, and if one were to estimate generations by the way in which they prepared better things for future generations, we fancy the Victorian era would not come well out. But the truth is that the habit of sharply splitting generations from each other is in the highest degree foolish. The process of human movement must be taken as a whole—or if not as a whole, in sufficiently large portions to do away with the useless policy of treating chunks of it as though it had no relation to other parts.

God made the world. Afterwards he made man. That was a fatal mistake. Had he made man first and then taken his advice about the kind of world he ought to make, a great many much-needed improvements could have been made, or a great many faults avoided.

The advantage of position is always with the conservative. He is defending an established position, and is using tools with which the mass of the people are thoroughly familiar, speaking to them in language easily understood, appealing to feelings that quickly respond to customary stimuli. The Reformer has no such advantages. He must attack, not defend. The tools he uses are new ones, the language he uses is of an unaccustomed kind to which the general ear is not yet attuned, and his appeal is certain to antagonize feeling in the way in which it is accustomed to find expression. In every way the dice are loaded against him—in every way but one. He has time on his side. His ideas, if they be sound, are certain to gain ground because they are based upon fact, and with fact we must all, sooner or later, reckon.

How to Help.

There are thousands of men and women who have left the Churches and who do not know of the existence of this journal. Most of them would become subscribers if only its existence were brought to their notice.

We are unable to reach them through the ordinary channels of commercial advertising, and so must rely upon the willingness of our friends to help. This may be given in many ways:

By taking an extra copy and sending it to a likely acquaintance.

By getting your newsagent to take an extra copy and display it.

By lending your own copy to a friend after you have read it.

By leaving a copy in a train, tram or 'bus.

It is monstrous that after forty years of existence, and in spite of the labour of love given it by those responsible for its existence, the *Freethinker* should not yet be in a sound financial position. It can be done if all will help. And the paper and the Cause is worthy of all that each can do for it.

The National Secular Society.

THE Funds of the National Secular Society are now legally controlled by Trust Deed, and those who wish to benefit the Society by gift or bequest may do so with complete confidence that any money so received will be properly administered and expended.

The following form of bequest is sufficient for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by will:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society, and I direct that a receipt signed by two of the trustees of the said Society shall be a good discharge to my executors for the said legacy.

Any information concerning the Trust Deed and its administration may be had on application.

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.

J. GREEVZ-FYSHER.—Sorry you will be away when the Conference visits Leeds. We shall certainly keep our eyes on any attempt that is made to introduce a chair of theology into the university, and we hope that Leeds friends will keep us informed on the matter. We may trust the clergy to push themselves in wherever possible.

H. HAWORTH.—We are always ready to make very special terms with those friends who care to take quantities of pamphlets for gratuitous distribution. We are also ready to send, carriage paid, parcels of *Freethinkers* to those who will undertake their distribution. That is a real help, and generally leads to new readers.

S. EVANS.—Sorry we have not space for your lengthy letter. You tell us nothing new about spiritualism. It is of no value to cite the number of prominent people who believe in it. There is not an absurdity under the sun in which prominent people have not believed. The question is whether they really understand the subject with which we are dealing. We suggest you read the concluding chapters of Mr. Cohen's *The Other Side of Death*. You will find there an explanation of the main positions of spiritualism in terms of a scientific psychology.

T. O'NEILL.—Glad to see you are engaging in newspaper correspondence on Freethought. The more of this the better. We do not know what there is to answer about the Foote-Warschæur debate. We were present on both nights, and the idea of Mr. Foote being unable to answer a man of Dr. Warschæur's calibre is ridiculous to anyone who knew the two men. Mr. Foote simply declined to answer a string of questions as not being to the point, and because they were flung at him at the end of one of the speeches. There was no report of the debate published, but Dr. Warschæur did reprint his own speeches with comments on those of Mr. Foote. Dr. Warschæur appears to have fallen into obscurity of late years.

A. PEARCE.—Thanks for cuttings. The pamphlet you enclose is, as you say, too absurd for comment. It makes one wonder whether idiocy is on the increase, or whether it is merely the more stupid among the religionists coming to their own as the brains leave the creed.

H. CAIRNEY.—Mr. Cohen is writing you. We are glad to know that there are three shops in Vancouver which supply the *Freethinker*. It ought to be on sale at every shop. There is no paper that is more badly needed. It sounds conceited to say so, but most of our readers will agree with us on that point.

JOSHUA PITTS.—Perhaps on reflection it may strike you that our aim is not merely to interest people, but to interest them in the right kind of things. We have no doubt that if we catered for the crowd we could get the crowd, but when we had got them we should have to play to them in order to keep them, and we cannot see how much better the world would be for that. The *Freethinker* exists for a special purpose, and the dislike shown to it by the bigots

must be taken as a good indication of the manner in which it does its work.

MR. E. SHILLINGTON, of 197 Price Street, Birkenhead, has a large number of copies of the *Freethinker* for distribution which he will send to anyone who cares to pay the cost of carriage.

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

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

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

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

Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

The arrangements for the N.S.S. Conference are now about complete. On the Saturday evening delegates will meet in the Guildford Hotel, which is very near the Town Hall and the main railway stations. The meetings on Sunday, business and public, will take place in the Town Hall. Tea will be provided for delegates and friends at a charge of 1s. 6d., and lunch at a charge of 3s. 6d. It is possible there will be an excursion arranged for the Monday, but that will be settled later. We again remind those who wish accommodation provided that no time should be lost in writing Mr. R. H. Youngman, at 19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds. We are expecting a very good assembly of delegates and members.

A Canadian Secular Society has just been formed with principles and objects similar to those of the National Secular Society. At a well attended inaugural meeting held on April 5, Dr. Jordan was elected President, and Mr. A. Cairney, Vice-President. We wish the new Society, which has its headquarters in Vancouver, every success. Freethought is at present unorganized in Canada, and there should be opportunity for a strong organization.

At the request of the members of the Society, the Vice-President has written Mr. Cohen asking if it would be possible for him to visit Canada on a lecturing tour. Mr. Cohen would be pleased to comply with the request—it would at least give him something in the nature of a rest from the constant grind at home—but the difficulty would be for him to find someone to take his place during the time he was absent, which could not be less than six weeks. He has to run the *Freethinker* single-handed, and those who know what this means for fifty-two weeks every year will realize that it would not be easy for him to find a substitute while he was away. One of these days he will be compelled to get a sub-editor, but while trade is as it is, and there is the compulsion of appealing to friends to pay the recurring deficits he is unwilling to add to the financial burden. Fortunately Mr. Cohen's

health is good, and he need not yet regard himself as an old man.

We have several times called the attention of Branch secretaries to the manner of sending in lecture notices. We must say once more—and we cannot promise insertion unless the instructions are followed—that all announcements of meetings intended for our "Lecture Guide" must be addressed to the editor of the *Freethinker*, and must reach us not later than the first post on Tuesday morning. Where possible the notice should be sent on a postcard. All that is necessary is for the bare information to be written. We hope that secretaries will observe this rule. Failure to do so often adds to our work on press day, and they can often be inserted only at great inconvenience, and we have enough on hand without having unnecessary work and worry added.

Mr. H. Black, who made the Salford Library Committee the offer of free weekly copies of the *Freethinker*, contributes a very good letter on the subject to the *Salford Reporter*. He says that while he does not object to Aldermen making themselves ridiculous, "I do protest at their casting ridicule at me, and what can be more ridiculous than to belong to a town where aldermen can be found to imply that an old-established periodical like the *Freethinker*, is not worthy the acceptance or consideration of the Salford citizens?" Mr. Black asks whether the gospel of Freethought is so new to Salford that aldermen can be so easily affrighted, and properly protests that "the duty of the Libraries Committee is to see that it is supplied, and that it is representative of all opinions." We hope that the many Freethinkers in the district will also make their opinions on the matter known. It is quite certain that these Councillors act as they do because they do not know the full strength of the opinion against them. Freethinkers encourage this belief by their silence, and it is therefore within their rights to see that those who sit on public bodies are better informed on the matter. It is time that we made a very firm stand against this miserable system of boycotting. Christians are shrieking about the persecution of religion in Russia. If some Christians had their way we wonder how long it would be before we had a very lively persecution of Freethinkers in England?

The two lecturers engaged by the Executive for open air work during the summer are now settling down to their work. Mr. Atkinson has lectured in Newcastle for several nights and appears to have made a good impression on the audiences. He will next attack Blydson-on-Tyne, South Shields, and other places in the locality, and hopes to make a start at West Stanley, which once had a very flourishing Branch, and should have one again. These lectures should be kept up, and we fancy that the best results will be yielded by making a regular round of visits, going to each place on the corresponding day of each week. But more local help is required, and those who can assist at the meetings might write Mr. Atkinson at 24 Mather Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

In London Mr. Whitehead is also busy. He opened the meetings in Regents Park on Sunday last, and will be lecturing in South London during the five days following. Particulars will be found in our "Lecture Guide." It is hoped that Mr. Whitehead's efforts in North London may lead to the re-establishment of the Wood Green Branch. Mr. Whitehead commences a week's open air lecturing in West Ham from the evening of Monday 14 to that of Saturday May 20. Full particulars will be found in our "Lecture Guide."

American Freethought has a "Phenomenon" in the shape of Queen Silver, aged twelve, who is announced to lecture in Los Angeles on "Pioneers of Freethought." On the whole we feel that we would rather have Queen Silver's opinions on dolls and their houses. It would be more in the natural order of things.

Shakespeare Celebrations.

NEXT to the Shakespeare Festival at Stratford-on-Avon, the celebrations that took place in Southwark on Saturday, April 21, were perhaps the largest and most important gatherings throughout the country in honour of the memory of England's greatest poet and playwright. Close on four hundred students of the Bard attended St. Saviour's Cathedral to take part in a commemoration service, and afterwards trudged through the narrow streets along the Bankside to the site of the old Globe Playhouse where Shakespeare and his company were wont to perform, and there Mr. Robert Atkins, the producer at the "Old Vic," delivered a brief but eloquent panegyric on Shakespeare, the playwright. Of course, the representatives of the Church took full advantage of the fact that Edmund Shakespeare, the brother of the poet, was buried within the precincts of the cathedral, and that Shakespeare himself might have attended during the time that he was engaged as manager and sometimes as actor, of the old Globe Theatre.

Accordingly the occasion was turned into a perfect civic function, and the Mayor of Southwark, attended by aldermen and councillors, marched in procession to view the site of the old playhouse. Not only that, the Church secured the services of one of the "Old Vic's" most popular actors to read the "lessons" in the person of Mr. Rupert Harvey. And very finely he read them, too, without affectation, or declamation, setting a good example for the clergy who usually perform this office. At the cathedral the address was delivered by the Rev. Professor Dearmer, who boldly claimed Shakespeare as a Christian, and said that we should have to revise our views as to what constituted a saint.

"Why do we meet in this cathedral," he said, "to combine with a worship of God a reverent commemoration of a playwright who frequented this neighbourhood in the days when it was one of the Bohemian quarters of London? One reason was because people had outgrown the old idea that goodness in the true sense of the word, that saintliness could only be a particularly ecclesiastical and mediæval type, and therefore we no longer confined our commemoration to those who had the word 'saint' prefixed to their names."

This no doubt was true enough, but the reverend gentleman did not tell his congregation that in Shakespeare's day actors were classed among "rogues and vagabonds," not only by the law, but were so regarded by the Church also.

The Rev. Professor Dearmer, however, went on to say: "William Shakespeare was not perfect, but perfection was not claimed for the holy saints. Indeed, Shakespeare would have scorned to do many things which some canonized persons had done with impunity, and even with applause."

Well and good! But when the Reverend Professor proceeded to ask: "Was not Shakespeare much nearer to the New Testament ideal than a good many of those who had been called 'saints?'" I fancy he must have had his tongue in his cheek. "Did we not, after all, need to revise our idea of sainthood, and revise it by the teachings of Christ and of the New Testament?" There we got the keynote to the whole Christian philosophy.

If a man was a good man, whether he had outgrown Christian beliefs or not, he would be accepted in the Christian Church, and it would be said that his worldly wisdom was nearer to the ideal set up by Christ than that of the pious Christian with no particular good human qualities who was often elevated to the position of a saint. The Rev. Dr. Dearmer continued:

"The world honoured Shakespeare and England gloried in him, not only because he was a great poet, but because his works proved him a greatly wise and true man. His poetry was so high, not only because he possessed a perfect technique of expression, but because he had revealed a mind so perfect, a soul so tender and full of those gifts of the spirit of wisdom and knowledge, so full of understanding of human nature, so divinely charitable. Shakespeare was one of the chief evidences of what Christianity had done for men. Strange as it might seem his collection of plays was one of the greatest monuments of the Christian religion. They were greater Christian documents than those of the Christian Fathers whom everyone revered and no one read."

There you have in a nutshell Christian audacity with a vengeance! Fancy Shakespeare's plays being put forward as evidence of the truth of the Christian religion! Every student knows that in some of his plays Shakespeare makes his characters poke fun at Christian teachings, and that while he makes his heroes philosophers and thinkers, he invariably makes his clowns religious.

This was pointed out in these columns more than once by the late editor, Mr. G. W. Foote, who was a profound student of Shakespeare, and by "Mimmermus" and other writers; and I think there is abundant evidence of the truth of this declaration.

Another commemoration took place at the Southwark Central Library, Walworth Road, at which Mr. R. W. Mould (the chief librarian), Mr. J. D. Gilbert, M.P., and Sir Sidney Lee, also spoke.

Mr. Mould said: "It was important that Southwark should commemorate the tercentenary of the publication of the 'First Folio,' the first collected edition of the works of Shakespeare, by reason of the poet's active association with the characteristic life of the Borough, namely that of 'the Theatres of Southwark in the times of Eliza and our James.' In 1596 Shakespeare was in lodgings near the Bear Gardens, and his brother Edmund, who had come to share William's fortunes among the theatres of Southwark, lies buried within the precincts of the Cathedral, and many of the players who originally acted in Shakespeare's plays, as named in the 'First Folio,' lived on the Bankside."

The Mayor of Southwark (Councillor J. Holden, J.P.), who hailed from Warwickshire, made a very interesting speech which was followed by a still more interesting and informing address by Sir Sidney Lee, the well-known Shakespearean scholar. Two members of Parliament also addressed the meeting, but it is worthy of note that none of these gentlemen claimed Shakespeare as an ideal exponent of the Christian faith—either in his life or in any of his plays.

But perhaps the best commemoration of the plays of Shakespeare took place at the "Old Vic." on the poet's birthday, Monday, April 23, when scenes from no less than twelve of his great masterpieces were performed by the celebrated company of actors associated with this theatre, assisted by such well-known West End actors and actresses as Arthur Bourchier, Acton Bond, Florence Saunders, and Miss Hutin Britton (Mrs. Matheson Lang). Songs from Shakespeare's plays were also sung by some very talented artists, and altogether a very enjoyable evening was passed by a large and enthusiastic gathering of lovers of Shakespeare and his incomparable productions. I was present at most of these functions and am able to testify to the great interest that is being taken by the rising generation of playgoers in the works of the greatest poet and playwright this country has ever produced.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

God made Man in his own image. The earliest man is hardly distinguishable from an ape.

Luther in the Light of To-day.

V.

(Continued from page 277.)

The resuscitation by Luther of an active personal Devil brought back superstition in a flood upon Northern Europe. Nowhere were witches so prevalent, nowhere were faggots and torture so common as in the Protestant countries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.—*Prof. Karl Pearson, "The Ethic of Freethought," p. 212.*

LUTHER seems to have been a great deal more familiar with the Devil than he was with God; he tells us of his long discussions with Satan, but we have no account of any discussions he had with God, which is quite compatible with his avowed belief that the Devil was the ruler and governor of this world. It has been argued that Luther only disputed with the Devil in his own mind, that although he believed that the Devil suggested thoughts hostile to his religion, yet he never had personal intercourse with him. Of course we know perfectly well that there is no Devil, and therefore the Devil could not have appeared to him. The belief in a personal Devil, even among Christians to-day, is confined almost exclusively to the ignorant and uncultured. But that Luther believed in a personal Devil, and had heard and seen him, is quite indisputable. These appearances were, of course, hallucinations brought about by Luther's constant obsession with the idea of eternal punishment. Similar cases abound in our asylums to-day. Luther tells us:—

Satan once tried to kill our Prior by throwing down a piece of wall upon him, but God miraculously saved him.

And again:—

Once in our monastery at Wittenberg I distinctly heard the Devil making a noise. I was beginning to read the Psalms, after having celebrated matins, when, interrupting my studies, the Devil came into my cell and thrice made a noise behind the stove, just as though he were dragging some wooden measure along the floor. As I found it was going to begin again, I gathered up my books and got into bed. Another time, in the night, I heard him above my cell walking in the Cloister, but as I knew it was the Devil, I paid no attention to him, and went to sleep.¹

Luther told his friends, Dr. Jonas and Michael Coelius, that while saying his prayers "at his open window, he had seen the Devil, who hindered him in all his labours, squatting on the fountain and making faces at him. But God would prove stronger than Satan, that he knew well."²

Another account says that Satan made an obscene gesture to Luther, "jeering at him, insinuating that all his efforts would come to nought."

In a sermon delivered at Coburg, in 1530, which he sent to the Press the following year, Luther declares:—

The Devil sends plagues, famines, worry and war, murder, etc. Whose fault is it that one man breaks a leg, another is drowned, and a third commits murder? Surely the Devil's alone. This we see with our own eyes and touch with our hands.

The Christian ought to know that he sits in the midst of demons and that the Devil is closer to him than his coat or his shirt, nay, even than his skin, that he is all around us and that we must ever be at grips with him and fighting with him.

The Devil is more at home in Holy Scripture than Paris, Cologne, and all the godless make-believes, however learned they may be. Whoever attempts to

¹ Michelet, *Life of Luther*, pp. 318, 319, 320.

² Hartmann Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. VI, p. 132.

dispute with him will assuredly be pitched on the ash heap, and when it comes to a trial of strength, there, too, he wins the day; in one hour he could do to death all the Turks, emperors, kings, and princes.³

The Devil's bow is always bent and his musket always primed, and we are the target; at us he aims, smiting us with pestilence, "Franzosen" [venereal disease], war, fire, hail and cloudburst.

It is also certain that wherever we be, there, too, is a great crowd of demons who lie in wait with sword and long spear. Against these are pitted the holy angels who stand up in our defence. (*Ibid.*)

Luther saw the work of Satan in the appearance of a number of strange caterpillars in his garden, also his interference in the preparation of cheese and milk:—

Every tree has its lurking demon. You can see how, to your damage, Satan knocks down walls and palings that already totter; he also throws you down the stairs so as to make a cripple of you.....Some of them are to be found in the thick black clouds. These cause hailstorms, thunder and lightning, and poison the air, the pasture, etc. Hence *philosophi* ought not to go on explaining these phenomena as though they were natural.⁴

Madness and suicide were also the work of the Devil. In a long letter to his friend Link, in 1528, dealing with a case raised, he proves that mad people must be regarded "as teased or possessed by the Devil." "Medical men who are unversed in theology know not how great is the strength and power of the Devil," but against their natural explanations, we can set first, Holy Scripture (Luke xiii, 16; Acts x, 38); secondly, experience, which proves that the Devil causes deafness, dumbness, lameness and fever; thirdly, the fact that he can even "fill men's minds with thoughts of adultery, murder, robbery, and all other evil lusts." Writing to his friend Frederick Myconius, in 1544, upon the subject of suicide, Luther declares:—

It is my habit to esteem such a one as killed *simpliciter et immediate* by the Devil, just as a traveller might be by highwaymen.....I think we must stick to the belief that the Devil deceives such a man and makes him fancy that he is doing something quite different, for instance, praying or something of that sort.⁵

He was firmly convinced that in the moist and swampy districts of Saxony all the devils "that Christ drove out of the swine in Jerusalem and Judea had congregated.....So much thieving, sorcery and pilfering goes on that the Evil One must indeed be present in person."

Luther also believed that the Devil had intercourse with women, the offspring of such intercourse being "simply devils.....He then lays these children in other peoples cradles, removing the real children and carrying them off."⁶ Luther himself saw at Dessau a child who had no human parents, "but had proceeded from the Devil," and declares:—

If I had the ordering of things here, I would have that child thrown into the [river] Moldau, at the risk of being held its murderer.⁷

Nor did these beliefs of Luther grow weaker with age:—

Luther's views on the power the Devil possesses over mankind and over the whole world were growing ever stronger, till at last they came to colour everything great or small with which he had to deal;

they became, in fact, to him a kind of fixed idea. In his last year (1546), having to travel to Eisleben, he fancies so many fiends must be assembled there on his account, *i.e.*, to oppose him, "that hell and the whole world must for the nonce be empty of devils." At Eisleben he even believed that he had a sight of the Devil himself.

Such ideas became so habitual with him, that, in later years, the conviction that the Devil was persecuting his work developed into an abiding mania, drawing, as it were, everything else into its vortex. Everywhere he hears behind him the footsteps of his old enemy the Devil.⁸

Holding these beliefs as he did, it is only natural that Luther should be a strong believer in witchcraft. "What the Devil himself is unable to do, that he does by means of old hags," says Luther. "The Devil has great power through the sorceresses." He prefers thus to make use of the female sex because "it comes natural to them ever since the time of Mother Eve to let themselves be duped and fooled."

Grisar observes:—

It is worthy of note that he does not merely base his belief in witchcraft on the traditions of the past, but preferably on Scripture directly, and the power of Satan, to which it bears witness.⁹

To the witches themselves he gave no quarter:—

"Show them no mercy!" so he has it on another occasion. "I would burn them myself, as we read in the Law [of Moses] that the priests led the way in stoning the evil-doer.".....Sorcery as such was regarded by him as *lese majeste* [against God], as a rebellion, a crime whereby the Divine Majesty is insulted in the worst of possible ways. "Hence it is rightly punished by bodily pains and death." He first expresses himself in favour of the death-penalty in a sermon in 1526, and to this point of view he adhered to the end.....Luther's words and views on witches generally became immensely popular.....The demonological literature which soon assumed huge proportions, and of which by far the greater part emanated from the pens of Protestant writers, appealed constantly to Luther, and reproduced his theories and stories, and likewise his demands that measures should be taken for the punishment of witches.....Holy Scripture and Luther were as a rule appealed to by the witch-zealots on the Protestant side.¹⁰

"Thus," concludes Grisar, "the making of this regrettable mania was in great part Luther's doing." Grisar also cites the testimony of Janssen, who, in his monumental history of the German people, declares:—

Through Luther and his followers belief in the power and influence of the Devil, who was active in all men, and who exercised his arts especially through witches and sorcerers, received an impetus and spread in a manner never known before.

The sixteenth volume of Janssen's great work, from page 269 to page 526 gives a very full account of the witch mania in Germany. The witch mania, for its injustice and atrocity, constitutes the most hideous chapter in the history of the world.

W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

God is the most unsuccessful of authors. He only wrote one volume, and ever since its publication the world has been quarrelling as to what on earth he meant to say. Pity the Bible was not carefully edited by "another hand" before its alleged author permitted publication.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 279.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 283-286.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 281.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 286.

⁷ Michelet, *Life of Luther*, p. 325.

⁸ Hartmann Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. V, pp. 297-299.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 291.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 294-295.

Richard Carlile.

(Continued from page 283.)

V.—PIOUS POLEMICS.

IN the last chapter we considered the spirit of Mr. Justice Best and Mr. Justice Bailey in dealing with Carlile's shopmen. These two judges were noted for their biblical championships and Christian activities when off the Bench. I have no doubt that posterity, when it chooses to remember them, will note also their judicial character when presiding over the trials of Carlile's ceaseless courage and opposition to authority caused the Government to undertake without glory to itself or benefit to mankind. I wish to throw a little more light on the spirit to which Best and Bailey appealed as their public opinion for applause and sustenance of their pious conscience.

The *Times* spoke in Carlile's time as it does to-day for respectable society. Many were the editorials it published against Richard Carlile and the Free Press. Typical of them all was the one that appeared in its columns for October 16, 1819, commenting on the "mock trials," as Carlile so well termed his Court appearances. I cite the following extract from this militant Christian apology:—

God knows what has made infidels of Paine or Carlile, but we know that they have no right to heap indiscriminate abuse upon the documents of the Christian faith. If, indeed, humane men could have felt any regret at the prosecution of Carlile.....that feeling of compassion would have been wholly extinguished by the system of defence which he set up—a defence which aggravated his previous misconduct, and must have made even infidels ashamed of such a partner in their disbelief. The Court and jury were alike disgusted at seeing him persevere with stupid obstinacy in a course which he was told again and again was contrary to law, and that, without any turn of address or dexterity of manner, which obtains its object while it seems to decline its pursuit.....though there are at all times infidels in the moral world, as there are monsters in the natural world, yet the two are equally rare; and a Paine or Carlile are as seldom seen as a dwarf of thirty inches high, or a bull with two heads.....Carlile, also, it must be remembered, sinned with his eyes open, he was told by an antecedent verdict he ought not to publish the *Age of Reason*.

Paine was a monster only because he had exposed the Church and denounced the vice and ignorance of power. Carlile was a monster because he saw the call for a genius who should write exclusively for the poor and challenge the oppression that weighed them down to the earth.

Naturally, the Czar of Russia was shocked at the depravity which could pursue so uncompromisingly such a career of public usefulness. He became apprehensive of "the people's morals," and, acting on the counsel of his advisers, gave directions to the Russian police to prevent the introduction of all the English newspapers containing reports of Carlile's trial. The Czar probably appreciated the retrograde social tendencies of religion. In its name, the Russian peasants were bidden to obey humbly the dictates of the Czar and his Grand Dukes, lest they were visited with the vengeance of Almighty God. These threats might have become but empty sounds had the details of Carlile's trial been brought to the ears of the vile masses.

Carlile, in prison, with no greater fortune than his indomitable courage and earnest affection, haunted his enemies. Within two months of his imprisonment two Press Acts were passed mainly for his benefit. One of these laid down the definition of sedition which

has been accepted as legal ever since and is repeated, parrot-like, in every modern prosecution for sedition. This definition was recognized to be contradictory and absurd by the very men who rushed it into law. But they were striving to suppress a man who believed in the usefulness of knowledge. So they made their absurdity law and law it has since remained. The temper of its definers and their fearful respect for Carlile is evidenced by the tone of the speeches summarized below:—

1819.—HOUSE OF LORDS.

Earl Bathurst wanted a man to be liable to sentences of transportation, outlawry, and banishment for sedition. That fines and imprisonment were not sufficient to deter men from a repetition of such offences was proven by the fact of Carlile, after he had been charged, repeating his offence up to the very time a verdict had been secured against him (Dec. 9).

The Earl of Carnarvon stated that it appeared from the informations on the table that there had been no prosecutions of libels in 1818, and only Carlile's in 1819 (Dec. 10).

The Duke of Wellington shared Earl Bathurst's views. The existing laws were not strong enough to cope with a man like Carlile, who had continued the sale of his libel after conviction, and had published it also in another form before sentence was passed upon him.

Lord Holland thought that the noble Duke should have gone one step further and have shown that the Court was unable to punish such an offender. Nothing else remained for their lordships except to apply the death penalty.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

The Solicitor-General declared that the House had to judge of the character of the Peterloo Meeting by its leaders. There was Carlile, who in his *Republican* was continually saying things as strong as that "we had a mock king and a mock parliament, it was time to take up arms and play the man" (Nov. 24).

The Attorney-General wished to suppress indoor discussions such as those that had been proposed to be debated at Hopkin's Chapel, Soho, viz. :—

- (1) Which of the three professions has the greatest tendency to harden the human heart—the hangman, the grave-digger, or the parson?
- (2) Whether Lord Chief Justice Abbott's refusal to allow Mr. Carlile to read the Bible in the course of his defence arose out of a real respect for the sacred writings, or from the fear that their supposed absurdity and folly might be exposed thereby? (Dec. 8).

And so the despotic measures were passed into law. Everyone quailed before them except Richard Carlile and his brave shopmen and shopwomen. Their opposition rendered these tyrannous Acts a dead letter.

GUY A. ALDRED.

(To be Continued.)

Correspondence.

FREETHOUGHT IN ECONOMICS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—May I congratulate you on publishing the able article by Mr. A. W. Coleman on "Freethought in Economics." My personal conviction is that financial superstition, if I may use the term, is a greater drag on progress than religious superstitions which you have, from time to time, so ably exposed.

The power of the high priests of finance can be likened to the power of the high priests of religion. In both cases the conditions necessary are ignorance, indolence,

and credulity hobnobbing with a first-class "mystery." The particular mystery in finance is "money" and the "economic laws," or shall we say the "inexorable" (fine impressive word that!) "economic laws" by which it is governed. Financiers are, of course, the experts who dish out the rewards and punishments in giving or withholding purchasing power in accordance with these "laws," "laws" operated conveniently for their own lust of power and hardly ever for the common weal.

The President of an American Labour Bank—the outcome very largely of Major Douglas's and Mr. Kitson's propaganda—is reported to have said: "There is nothing mysterious about the banking business. Like everyone else we had been led to believe there was. But really it is not as complicated as running a grocery store. It is about as complicated as running a pea-nut stand."

With a modification of our financial system, necessitating hardship on nobody, but on the contrary of incalculable benefit to everybody—progressive education and scientific research would be so enormous that the object of your labours would be nearer fulfilment in a few years time than they will be one hundred years hence under present conditions.

I look forward to further articles on this vital subject in your paper.

F. F. BOYD GANDIN.

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN RUSSIA.

SIR,—The clear and level-headed statement under the heading "Views and Opinions" in your issue of May 6, following upon the article written over the signature of "Rose Witcop," and Professor Darwin-Fox's letter in your issue of 29th ult., deal so efficiently with this matter that one has only to congratulate the *Freethinker* on giving fresh proof of its uncompromising courage of opinion.

C. M. RENTON.

Let me now go back to the crowning incident of that long struggle between Charles Bradlaugh and the House of Commons. On May 10, 1881, the House passed a resolution authorizing the Sergeant-at-Arms to prevent Mr. Bradlaugh from entering.....On the morning of Aug. 3, Palace Yard and Westminster Hall were thronged with his supporters. Everyone was armed with a petition, which he had a legal right to take to the House of Commons. Mr. Bradlaugh himself drove up in a hansom cab, and entered the precincts of the House by the private door. He made his way to the door of the House itself and tried to enter by a sudden effort, but he was seized by fourteen officials and stalwart policemen, picked for the work, and thrust back through the private passage into Palace Yard. Not expecting such indignity, he contested every inch of the ground. Inspector Denning said he never thought that one man could have offered such resistance. The small muscles of both his arms were ruptured, and a subsequent attack of erysipelas put his life in jeopardy. When he was finally thrust on to the pavement in Palace Yard he coat was torn and the rest of his garments were disarranged. His face was livid with the intense exertion when I saw him a minute afterwards. There he stood, a great mass of panting, valiant manhood, his features set like granite, and his eyes fixed on the doorway before him. He seemed to see nothing but that doorway. I spoke to him, and he seemed not to hear. I believe a mighty struggle was going on within him, perhaps the greatest of his life. He had suffered a frightful indignity, he must have been tempted to avenge it, and he had but to hold up his hand to bring around and behind him the myriads who stood outside the railings. The action would have been impolitic, but what a temptation he crushed down, and what an effort it necessitated. He justified his mastery of others by his mastery of himself. How small in comparison seemed the mob of his enemies! I never admired him more than at that moment. He was superb, sublime. They had wound their meshes about him, and the lion had burst them. Their plans were frustrated by one swift, daring stroke. He who was to be quietly suppressed by resolutions of the House had cut the knot of their policy asunder, made himself the hero of the hour, and fixed the nation's eyes on his splendid audacity.—*Freethinker*, April 12, 1891.

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.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2) : 11, Laurence Housman, "Natural and Unnatural Morality."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand) : 6.15, Mr. J. J. Darby, a Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain) : 6, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park) : 3 and 6, Mr. G. Whitehead will lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.) : 7, Mr. A. B. Moss, "The Brain and the Soul." Mr. Whitehead's Mission : Monday, May 14, outside Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, 7.45. Tuesday, May 15, The Grove, Stratford, 7.45. Wednesday, May 16, Maryland Point (Leytonstone end), 7.45. Thursday, May 17, outside Forest Gate Station, 7.45. Friday, May 18, outside Raglan Arms, Plaistow Station, 7.45.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—Discussion Class meets at Mrs. Ballard's, 49 Norway Street, Gorse Hill, Stretford. Mr. S. Cohen will speak on "Freethought and the Freethinker."

OUTDOOR.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Newcastle Town Moor, near North Road entrance) : 7, Mr. R. Atkinson, "Christianity a Barrier to Progress." Wednesday, May 16, in the Bigg Market, at 7, "Natural Evolution or the Garden of Eden—Which?" Should the weather be unfavourable the Sunday meeting will be held in the Collingwood Hall, 12a Clayton Street.

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