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Views and Opinions.

Are We Practical?

We are a practical people. The man in the street says so. The newspapers, which live on the man in the street (or do they make him?), say so. We are not led away by abstract theories or by any foolish love of logic. We do not permit ourselves to be swayed by a desire for empty "glory," but consider the solid value of anything that is offered us. A public man never beseeches his audience to be logical, and if he does condescend to expound what he calls the logical view of a subject, one knows that it is only preparatory to setting it on one side as not coming within the region of the practicable. If you wish to damn a thing or an opinion in the mind of the average Englishman, call it Utopian. He probably does not quite know what it means, but from his morning paper he gathers that it means just the kind of thing no "practical" man would bother his head with. "Practical" is one of those blessed words so satisfying to one who never asks what it means. It not only saves the trouble of thinking, but it convinces one that in the act of avoiding that painful task he is establishing his superiority. It never strikes these practical men that their boasted hard-headedness and worldly shrewdness may perhaps expose them to forms of imposture and exploitation from which the less "practical" but more imaginative person is protected, for the imagination of this very practical person moves within narrow limits, and while he does see certain aspects of life quite clearly, he is blind to others that may be still more important. Thus he will appreciate the invention of a new gun because that has an obvious use—someone is to be killed with it. But he cannot so well appreciate the value of the man who goes on working to create conditions that will make the gun unnecessary. He will appreciate the discovery of a new dye, or a new method of manufacture, because these things have a clear and immediate commercial value. But he will not see the value of paying for the support of men who from sheer love of discovery strive to give man a greater mastery over Nature. As a practical man he will cheerfully give large sums of money to a successful soldier. As a practical man he will permit the scientific investigator to starve.

Reductio ad Absurdum.

The practical man is at his best in the matter of religion. There was, of course, a time when religion really was a matter of genuine practical importance. It not only saved man in the next world, but it looked after him in this. If he was troubled with disease religion took him in hand and cured him. If he sowed seeds the gods saw to it that they fructified. If he needed rain his prayers produced it. If he wished to know anything about himself, or about the earth on which he stood, or about the heavens above him, or about the nature of life or death, religion was ready with instruction. Naturally, all this instruction and help cost something, but at least man got some return for his money—or believed he did, and that amounted to the same thing. Religion was not then so much a question of theory, but of apparently hard-headed fact. But to-day the "practical" man goes on spending on religion in spite of the altered conditions. The doctor and the sanatorium have taken the place of the priest, but the priest is still there. Science has taught the farmer that if he wishes to raise good crops he must attend to his ground in a proper manner, but the priest is still installed mumbling the old formulæ, and when the harvest is a good one, taking the credit to his particular mumbo-jumbo. There is no body of educated men and women who look to the Churches for light and leading on any subject of importance, but the clergy still maintain their position in the nation as though they were of real use to it. We spend millions annually on the maintenance of an army of men who do nothing and produce nothing, and who, when they wish for guidance, have to go to the same sources as the rest of us. It is a blessed thing to be a "practical" people and not to be misled by idle Utopias!

* * *

What is the Use of Religion?

Religious teachers to-day pride themselves that they no longer oppose science but that religion is willing to take from science whatever it has to offer. What then? Will anyone pretend that the maintenance of these huge religious organizations is justified because its leaders instead of opposing science are willing to be guided by it and to re-echo its teachings? Do we starve our scientists and overpay our priests for that? To justify the expenditure of time and money on religion it should be shown that it can reach truths science is unable to reach and perform services to the community that cannot be performed in its absence. In what direction are we to look for proofs of either statement? If we are to be guided by religion, well and good. If we are to be guided by science, well and good also. In either case we shall know exactly where we are. But let us at least have done with this solemn humbug of maintaining a religion, ostensibly for the benefit of the nation, and at the same time assert that religion only repeats such truths as science has discovered without her aid. There is only one way in which religion can justify its existence in a community, and that is by performing some function that cannot be performed in its absence. Does anyone know what that is?

Opportunism.

The present attitude of the leading churchmen towards science is not without its significance. It is indeed part of the game that vested interest and privileged teaching always play in the face of a conquering enemy. We see the same thing when a decaying aristocracy professes great concern that the "will of the people" shall prevail. In the face of the advance of science religion has one of two courses it must follow. It may strive to crush it, and thus remain openly master of the situation, or it must make a pretence of accepting scientific teachings and attempt to harmonize them with its own doctrines at the cost of trickery and dishonesty. It tried the first plan and for a long time met with a considerable measure of success. Times changed, and it has now definitely adopted the second policy. But it must ultimately fail here likewise. Ideas are much like plants in this connection. If a cutting is to thrive it must throw out rootlets and draw its nourishment from the soil around it. In the same way if ideas are to live they must find their nourishment in the social life of the community in which they exist. But the one certain fact is that religion cannot get this nourishment from the life and thought of to-day. To the scientific observer it is plain that religion is dying as one sees a tree that has rotted at the roots still putting forth a semblance of life in a few of its branches.

* * *

Perpetuating the Savage.

The vitalistic reasonings of primitive mankind, and the mechanistic reasonings of Newton, Lyell, Laplace, and Darwin represent the two extreme limits of a continuous line of development. The beginning of the line gives us religion; the end gives us a universe in which religion has no legitimate place. The story of that struggle involves the fiercest fight that mankind has known, and its battlefields have been marked by a dogged bravery which puts in the shade the glitter of the military pageants with which history is filled. The mechanical theory of things has not been established easily, but once established, it is practically indestructible. A people may rub along without knowledge, but once a certain knowledge is acquired and has permeated their lives it is not again completely surrendered. It becomes so much a part of their thinking that it is impossible to exclude it from their speech, their literature, and their social intercourse. The consequence of this is that all men to-day, be they religious or non-religious, have a varying appreciation of the value of scientific work. The regrettable thing is that along with the partial appreciation of the fact that organized knowledge is our only guide, and organized industry our only help, there should so often be given support to a system of thought which offers no useful guidance and to a body of men whose existence can only be properly described as parasitic. Had we a little livelier imagination, and were we genuinely practical, we should recognize that this attempted reconciliation of science and religion is the attempted fusion of two wholly irreconcilable states of mind. We are trying to keep the savage alive in a civilized environment, and as a result what takes place when a primitive people are swamped by an advanced and complex civilization has taken place with religion. Just as a savage people under such conditions are decimated by the vices and the diseases of a civilized people, without being able to acquire the strength and virtues of their rulers, so religion has lost the savage strength and unsophisticated honesty it once possessed. It has lost the opportunity for the expression of its primitive virtues, and can only retain a selection of vices—both original and acquired.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Why We Are Not Christians.

THE Rev. Hugh Alexander, M.A., of North Leith, holds the view that "to be a Christian is a vital necessity, a matter of life and death." His sermon in the *Christian World Pulpit* of June 21 is an attempted answer to the question, "Why be a Christian?" We use the term "attempted" advisedly because the whole discourse is an outrage upon reason, an insult to common sense, and an affront to the judgment. To reason the matter out is not even attempted. What is thrown at us is a mass of effeminate, inane, and futile assertions. To the question, "Why be a Christian?" Mr. Alexander offers the following twofold answer: "(1) I have a life to live and I cannot live it without Christ; and (2) I have a death to die and I daren't die without Christ." Therefore, "for life and for death I ought to be a Christian." We have read and heard all that a million times before, and it has never appealed to us as true and manly. There was a time, it is true, when ignorant and superstitious people were frightened out of their wits when those two points used to be eloquently and solemnly enlarged upon in the pulpit, but to-day the overwhelming majority in all communities regard them as intolerable puerilities.

In his treatment of the present life the preacher displays his colossal inability to offer any intelligible reason why a man cannot live it without Jesus Christ, or to convey any definite conception of what Jesus Christ actually does for those who profess to follow him. Mr. Alexander seems to be under the impression that to non-Christians life "means merely eating and drinking and sleeping and working and being amused." To him, "that is not life at all; that is only animal existence, and the folk who live that kind of life, who spend their days in that fashion, are not true men and women; the essence of such a life is selfishness and greed." Mr. Alexander forgets, however, that apart from "that kind of life" no life at all is possible. Man is fundamentally an animal, and must live an animal's life; but being the highest of animals known to us his life becomes correspondingly higher and nobler. He can say in the preacher's very words:—

By life I mean seeking after what we know to be best, striving after the highest form of goodness..... And that is real life—in fact, the only form of life that is worthy of the name.

We have intentionally left out a few clauses in that short extract, such as that life means "being and doing what we know God would have us be and do," and also that this is life "according to God's purpose, life that has for its one aim and object the glory of God and the good of our fellow-men." We omitted those clauses simply because they are founded on no known facts, and also because all the facts known to us flatly contradict them. Theism is an intellectual invention to account for and explain existence; but existence needs no accounting for nor any explanation; and all we require to do is to discover and group together as many of its facts as we possibly can, and logically and practically relate our own lives thereto.

The preacher may be right when he states that "there are multitudes around us who do not really live," but whose fault is that? Certainly not their own, but probably their inheritance from the past is almost wholly to blame. In any case, the sociological problem is how to deal with them and bring them up to the standard of human efficiency. This problem Mr. Alexander discreetly evades, and without rhyme or reason jumps to the following irrelevant conclusion:—

Now to live in the highest sense we need to be Christians—we need Christ. To merely exist we do

not need to be Christians; to live like animals we don't need Christ. But to live the life that God calls us all to live, it is quite otherwise. We must be Christians; we must have Christ; and the reason is not far to seek. We cannot live such a life in our own strength, to fight the good fight and to conquer the sins that so easily beset us and to subdue our passions that prove so often unruly is not within our power. Sin, we all know, is the plague of the human heart. Men everywhere feel that their lives are under its power and curse and that they need some power greater than their own to deliver them.

Here we find the preacher at the mercy of his own antiquated theology. Sin is the grandest and most profitable discovery the Church ever made. The curious thing about this discovery is that the object of it has never outwardly existed. It was in fact a subjective discovery, and it has been working subjectively in and upon the human mind through all the ages. As Nietzsche so well puts it: "Sin has up to the present been the greatest event in the history of the diseased soul: in sin we find the most perilous and fatal masterpiece of religious interpretation." Sin is within us as a disease which we cannot cure ourselves, as a form of guilt which crushes us to the ground, and from which there is no escape except through a supernatural act of Divine grace. Mr. Alexander is mistaken, however, when he says that "men everywhere feel that their lives are under its power and curse," but he forgets that Greece was a land in which there was no sense of sin. India under Buddhism was free from all the terrors to which the belief in sin gives rise. Practically the same fact is applicable to China and Japan. It was in Palestine that the idea of sin had its origin. From Judaism it was absorbed into Christianity, and by the latter it has been skilfully manipulated and exploited almost to our own day. It was Judaism that first invented sin and forgiveness, and Christianity made both more central and more important still. Every sin is, of course, against God, not against mankind, and it is God alone who upon repentance, can forgive it. In reality sin is a creation of a diseased imagination, with the result that people of certain temperament have suffered terribly from a morbid preoccupation with it. Under its dominion mankind have portrayed themselves as horrible monsters, deserving only of hell-fire for ever. But Mr. Alexander believes that there is just one way of deliverance. He says:—

My point is this: that to deal effectually with sin, to get rid of sin, to conquer sin's power, to be freed from sin's tyranny and curse, we need Christ. For—

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free.

If we kneel at the foot of the Cross and accept God's forgiveness; if we resolve by God's grace to serve him in newness of life; if by prayer and daily obedience and trust we have communion and fellowship with Christ, there enters into our lives the power of God unto salvation—power to triumph over every foe, power to fight successfully the good fight of faith.

It may be frankly admitted that this simple Gospel may prove experimentally true in the case of an ignorant and superstitious believer. On accepting such a message the imaginary burden of sin may fall away and the sense of it die out; but the message is not true. We agree with Nietzsche's following statement:—

All those things which mankind has valued with such earnestness heretofore are not even real; they are mere creations of fancy, or, more strictly speaking, lies born of the evil instincts of diseased and, in the deepest sense, noxious natures—all the concepts, God, soul, virtue, sin, Beyond, truth, eternal life (*Ecce Homo*, p. 52).

Thus we have no choice but to leave man in Nature's hands, subject to her laws, and getting from her neither love nor hatred, neither tenderness nor cruelty, neither pardon nor retribution. If he obeys her laws he is happy; if he resists them he suffers; but both the happiness and the suffering are direct consequences of his active attitude towards them. Man's only possible salvation comes through a life-long struggle against low desires, evil passions, and other perilous tendencies, inherent in his nature. What he needs for this great battle is strength, and as George Meredith tells us:—

Lo, Strength is of the plain root—Virtues born;
Strength shall ye gain by service, prove in scorn,
Train by endurance, by devotion shape.
Strength is not won by miracle or rape.
It is the offspring of the modest years,
The gift of sire to son, thro' those firm laws
Which we name Gods; which are the righteous cause,
The cause of man, and manhood's ministers.
—(France, 1870.)

Yes, surely, we have a life to live, and we can live it very well, as tens of thousands testify, without Christ. To such people Christ means nothing. They neither know nor care whether he existed or not, for the world once teemed with Saviour-Gods, constructed on essentially similar lines; and they all went the way Christ is going now. Yes, we have a life to live which we do live most comfortably without Christ, and we have a death to die, and we dare to meet it without any assistance from Christ.

Death is the natural termination of an individual's life, and in itself there is nothing whatever to make us afraid. The fear of death is a product of religious beliefs. In the next world there are two localities, heaven and hell, and prior to death no one, however heavenly minded, is absolutely certain to which of the two places he may have to go. Therefore, the act of dying is dreaded even by the most devout Christian believer. To those who do not believe in the supernatural, who number many millions, death has no terrors. It is a natural event, quite as natural and quite as necessary as sleep, and under perfectly normal conditions, fully as painless. As we are living without faith and trust in Christ, so when our turns come we shall die a happy death without him.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Pioneer Pilgrim's Progress.

The freethinking of one age is the common-sense of the next.
—Matthew Arnold.

The Bible is that great cord with which the people are bound; cut this, and the mass will be more free to appreciate facts instead of faiths.
—Charles Bradlaugh.

THE life of Harriet Martineau is the record of a pioneer woman Freethinker in the stormy days of the nineteenth century. Her place in the history of Free-thought is fixed, not so much by the actual value of her contribution to literature as by her bold assertion of a woman's right to think.

So far back as 1832 Lucy Aikin wrote to Dr. Channing: "You must know that a great new light has risen among Englishwomen." Lord Brougham, a still better authority, remarked to a friend about the same time: "There is at Norwich a deaf girl, who is doing more good than any man in the country."

It was in that quiet backwater of thought that Harriet Martineau was born. She has given us a picture of life in that cathedral city, of its clerical exclusiveness and intellectual stagnation, only modified by the social gatherings of a few cultured families, and by an infusion of French blood, the result of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The Martineaus themselves were among the "aliens" whom that in-

tolerant priestly measure drove to our then hospitable shores. At Norwich they had flourished for about a century, part of the family devoting itself to silk weaving, while others were in the medical profession. Harriet's father died young, leaving a family of eight children, of whom Harriet and her brother James, the distinguished Unitarian theologian, are both famous.

Harriet was barely of age when she published her first book, *Devotional Exercises for Young Persons*, a modest religious publication of the Unitarian body, in which she had been brought up. It is a work of small consequence, but it was the harbinger of a series of works which were destined to make a noise in her generation.

Her mind soon ripened. She attended the coronation of Queen Victoria, and this is what she wrote afterwards:—

There is, I believe, no public religious service which is not offensive to thoughtful and reverent persons, from the ascription of human faculties, affections, qualities, and actions, to the assumed First Cause of the Universe, but the Jewish or heathen ascription to Him of military and aristocratic rank and prerogative, side by side with the same ascription to the Queen, was the most coarse and irreverent celebration that I was ever a witness to.

This was, indeed, a long step from the pious puerilities of her *Devotional Exercises*, but she was to travel much further. Soon there was a marked improvement in her choice of subjects. Works of fiction, travel, folk-lore, biography, and sociology, followed in rapid succession. Her fertile pen even attempted a series of stories illustrating the working of the principles of Political Economy, which had been laid down in an abstract manner by Adam Smith, Bentham and Romilly. These stories had a wide circulation, and were translated into several European languages. She found time for travel, visiting the United States, and meeting with a cordial reception. On her return home she associated herself with Charles Knight, a democratic publisher, and contributed a number of useful books to the popular series which earned for him a well-deserved reputation.

With the object of lightening her literary labours by variety, she next employed her busy pen on a series of tales for children, of which *The Settlers at Home* and *Feats on the Fiord* are still read. At the same time she produced two novels of a marked character, called *Deerbrook* and *The Hour and the Man*, the latter dealing with the unfortunate Toussant L'Ouverture and the Haytian Rebellion. This last work passed through many editions, and remains, perhaps, her most popular work.

About this time her health failed, and Lord Melbourne pressed upon her acceptance a Government pension, but she was too high-minded and conscientious to take it. In declining this pension, she pointed out that she could not share in the proceeds of a system of taxation which she had criticized adversely. Her illness lasted several years, but she characteristically turned her misfortunes to account by writing *Life in a Sick Room*, a work which alike proves her rare courage and serenity under the iron hand of affliction. Soon after her restoration to health she visited the Orient and recorded her impressions in *Eastern Life*, a work still full of interest, for in it she shows her Freethought.

During all these years her mind had been irresistibly growing, and the result of her mature thought was embodied in *Letters on Man's Nature and Development*, written conjointly with Henry G. Atkinson, who was afterwards a frequent contributor to the *National Reformer* and other Freethought journals. This volume revealed to all the world that Harriet Martineau was an Atheist. Nor was this her most

notable contribution to Freethought literature, for she introduced to the English-speaking world a version of Auguste Comte's *Positive Philosophy*, a work destined to have an enormous effect on contemporary thought. While thus employed she yet found time to write her *History of England During the Thirty Years' Peace*, which is characterized by extreme clarity and fine impartiality, and is, perhaps, the finest historical work written by a woman in our language.

From this time it was mainly as a leader-writer in the *Daily News* and as a contributor to *Once a Week* that her literary ability showed itself. To the last, in spite of bad health, she took the greatest interest in every movement for the bettering of Humanity. She lived through a long, happy, useful life, and sank calmly, full of years, into the grave, regretted and esteemed by all. I like the proud, indomitable spirit which shows itself in her thoughts on death, lines which fitly form her epitaph:—

Under the eternal laws of the universe I came into being, and, under them, I have lived a life so full that its fullness is equivalent to length. I am frankly satisfied to have done with life. I have had a noble share of it, and I desire no more. I neither wish to live longer here, nor to find life again elsewhere.

MIMNERMUS.

Immortality.

II.

(Continued from page 411.)

LET us then consider:—

I.—THE POPULAR ARGUMENTS.

1.—*Some Apparent Intimations of Nature.* (i) It is observed that the loss of a man's limbs does not necessarily involve a diminution of his consciousness, whence it is inferred that this faculty has its source in a part of his nature which is different from his body, and which may therefore survive it. Here, however, what applies to consciousness applies to life. The mutilated man could not have lived on had the mutilation extended to his vital organs. For upon the removal of any of these, he would have died even though the rest of his body had never been injured. Thus also as long as the nervous system is unimpaired by exhaustion, or by violence, there will be consciousness throughout the body till the end of life, whereas the impairment of that system may cause a part or even the whole of the body to be without consciousness, although its members exist intact. Hence, if the mutilated man survives, and remains fully conscious, it is because this injury has not affected him in any of the organs necessary for life, or for consciousness, as is plainly shown by what transpires in the opposite case.

(ii) It is argued that because certain creatures, as for instance, caterpillars and tadpoles, pass through different modes of existence, man also may exist in some other fashion after his present life. When, however, the materialists contend that the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile, the spiritualists reply that the analogy is vicious, because in the case of the liver both the organ and the product are material, whereas in the case of the brain the organ is material and the product immaterial. The principle underlying this objection certainly holds good of what is inferred from caterpillars and tadpoles with respect to man. The change of caterpillars into butterflies, and of tadpoles into frogs, does not involve the dissolution of the natural conditions of their existence; whereas, the change of man into dust involves the loss of every natural condition of his life. Again, as regards caterpillars and tadpoles the process of their development

into butterflies and frogs can be traced at all its stages, and is obviously the result of strict adaptation; whereas the change of man into another state of being after his resolution into dust cannot be traced, and is obviously at variance with all existing adaptations.

(iii) It is asserted that the disappearance and re-appearance of certain natural objects confirms the belief that man also may be brought back to life after having left it; or that in case his soul endures, his dead body may be reconstituted and reunited with it. But nature, closely questioned, gives no countenance to such surmises. The primrose, lashed from its delicate stalk by the ruthless whip of Peter Bell, perishes wholly; and, though next spring and a myriad of succeeding springs tint the meadows with the golden hues of primroses innumerable as the grains of ocean sand, there cometh not again the little flower that Peter Bell destroyed.

2.—*Some Instinctive Hopes and Fears.* (i) It seems to many that because of the sorrow therein, this existence must be followed by another where suffering is unknown, and where the fleeting pains formerly endured are recompensed with delights which last for ever. The thought here expressed is often supported by faith in the goodness and the power of God. Now, it is certainly true that every winter turns to spring; but, it is equally true that every summer turns to autumn, and every autumn to winter; besides if God is really so kind and so mighty, why does he let any of his creatures suffer even for a moment. The fact is, that in the case of the present view, the desire of happiness, pathetically enough, causes us to abandon our ordinary mode of reasoning and to adopt the contrary. For it persuades us that, although we have a more or less unhappy life here, we shall have a perfectly happy one hereafter; and that although God is hard to us now, he will be full of mercy towards us in the future; whereas, in general, we argue from what is to what will be, not trusting to-morrow if to-day is bad, and having little confidence in the prospective kindness of those cruel to us in the past.

(ii) The wish to resume familiar intercourse with the loved ones removed by death is no doubt a strong inducement to believe there will be another existence. This is especially true of a mother who has lost her child. But, even here, the common way of Nature exposes the fallacy, because as Fouqué in his exquisite tale of *Vdine* most beautifully and touchingly observes, one hardly knows whether to be sad or glad that affliction from bereavement is so temporary. If the child she has lost were not an only one, or if it were an only one, and she bears again, the mother invariably learns to find consolation in her offspring through the ministry of loving care and the daily interchange of endearments. For, as time goes on, these renewed joys, aided by the transitoriness of past impressions, abate the sharpness of her grief and cause the tiny vanished form to fade from memory, till at length she feels no yearning to embrace it any more. There is another, and perhaps sadder instance of this forgetfulness of the heart, where snowy-haired men—sometimes of the greatest eminence and of the highest moral pretensions—have been known to marry as soon upon the death of their wives as ever public decency would allow it, even though the wife lost had been the loving and beloved companion of long years, and was the devoted and revered mother of surviving children.

(iii) The horror of losing existence. This feeling is said to show that we are immortal. The argument, however, is bad in many respects. To begin with, the sick often yearn for extinction, and the aged sometimes become so tired of life that the prospect of having

to run their course afresh would fill them with dismay. Again, the instinct of self-preservation and the fear of death, are here mistaken for the dread of ceasing to be. But the instinct referred to is found in other animals as well as in man, and it is certainly not the apprehension of nonentity that impels the former to defend their lives; besides which, man is the only animal known to violate the said instinct by wilfully destroying itself. As to the fear of death, this is far from being wholly caused by the horror of losing existence. There is the pain of dying, both that which manifests itself by its visible effects, and that which the imagination portrays. Then there is the anxiety which arises as to the future, whenever death is regarded as being certainly, or even possibly, the transition to another life. Here religion is responsible. The Christian doctrine of hell, for instance, has done more than anything else to clothe death with terrors. The ancients contemplated the event indifferently for the most part. But the Church has used her supremacy to make it appear frightful by all sorts of horrid representations in painting and in literature. Works like Bellarmine's *De Arte bene moriendi* have hideous scenes where fiends assail the righteous on their last bed, and bear away the souls of the wicked in exultation. The above teaching has passed into flesh and blood to the advantage of the priest, who in this case as in that of "the sense of sin," has occasioned the malady he professes to cure. The fear of death is common, but it is neither universal in extent nor uniform in degree. There are some who have never felt it, and many more who have lost it completely in moments of exultation. Indeed, as Bacon says, every passion of human nature has "mated and mastered" it in turn. For the rest it varies greatly in different persons, and in the same person at different times; and it is obviously dependent upon heredity, constitution, education, age, health, fortune, and other circumstances.

3.—*Narratives of Survival after Death, and of Resurrection from the Dead.* There was a time, and that not far distant, when all but the very few believed in ghosts. Earlier still everybody took them for granted. Hence there is no wonder that at such periods ghosts were often reported. For we are naturally inclined to see what we are taught to expect, and this holds good not only of individuals, but even more so of groups, at least where these are in a state of exalted emotion rendering the members susceptible to mutual suggestion. Hence the existence of collective as well as of individual hallucinations, and the fact that a plurality of witnesses does not suffice to assure truth in the cases specified. To-day, among civilized nations, the proportion of persons who claim to have seen ghosts is small indeed, although nearly everyone has lost a friend whom he would be likely to see if dead friends were visible. This is not surprising for it is a rule universally attested by experience that the lower a race, or the more illiterate an individual, the firmer and the fuller is the faith which that race or that individual has in the existence of ghosts. The fact that in our age of enlightenment a certain number of persons, and even a few educated persons, still credit ghost stories, is but an apparent exception to the above rule. Education, save in its elementary stages, is always more or less special, because the young are instructed according to their prospective parts in life, wherefore a thorough training in science is comparatively rare. Again, teachers avoid giving any instruction that the parents of their scholars might dislike for its remote tendency. Finally, there are in all of us strong hereditary instincts, and thus, for example, many whose forefathers resorted to wizards, resort to faith-healers. Besides these general causes, however, there is a particular cause furnished

by the present state of religion. The orthodox Churches, now as ever, teach the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the dead as a part of their creed, and all their faithful adherents receive this teaching in obedience to authority. But a great and increasing distrust of ecclesiastical traditions has got abroad, and therefore many who desire to believe in immortality find themselves unconvinced by what the Church has to say about it. This causes them to turn elsewhere in search of proofs which the Church cannot or will not supply. The result is what might be expected. There has sprung up a class of persons who profess to give the evidence required. Of these the greater part are swindlers who profit by the credulity of their fellows, but some are simply the dupes of their confederates, and of their own propensities. Among the latter may be reckoned a few who have acquired celebrity in certain branches of science, and whose names give an air of respectability to the movement. These men are used to making experiments touching matters where there is no room for trickery, and no moral interest at stake. Hence, they are ill prepared to grapple with subjects complicated by dishonest interference and obscured by a cloud of venerable prejudices. This accounts for some painful cases where eminent scientists have been "rolled" by charlatans, or betrayed by their pious delusions. Moreover, especially here and in North America, there are to be found persons who aspire to shine as leaders of religion and who find their account in offering spiritual novelties to the public. Some of these men are doubtless imposters, but many are the victims of self-conceit. Indeed owing to the anarchy of views in the so-called Free Churches and to the distress among religious apologists, a man ready to dedicate his abilities, or to offer the prestige of his name, may easily acquire in the religious world an ascendance flattering to his vanity, and even beneficial to his purse. Hence, the temptation is great, and there is a disposition to mistake it for a divine call. These circumstances are enough to explain how it is that although the faith in ghosts diminishes in proportion to the progress of knowledge; yet, nevertheless, it still survives to some extent in civilized communities, and even receives a little support from educated people.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be Continued.)

The International Movement in Freethought—Japan.

My friend Mr. Yoshiro Oyama, the distinguished Japanese Freethinker and publicist, tells me that he is delighted to know that we English Freethinkers appreciate his comments on the various currents and cross currents of emancipated thought in the Far East. He also pays us the compliment of averring that the *Freethinker* is an encouraging sign of vitality of free thought and free speech in England, and that he feels drawn towards us by bonds of intellectual sympathy and social ideals. He tells me that he intends to make an extended tour of Europe and America next year for the purpose of studying the intellectual and social conditions. He will be accompanied by his friend, Dr. Kaji, a doctor of medicine and a prominent worker in the movement for reform in Japan. Dr. Kaji was at one time a devout Buddhist, but has now thrown in his lot with the Freethought movement. Mr. Oyama writes to me under the date of April 27 as follows:—

I have no sort of sympathy with the methods of Japanese newspapers and magazines. They are too capitalistic and bureaucratic; in a word, they are puppets worked by the moneyed class. But I am glad to be able to say that there are signs of improvement. Some of them are even printing articles on Freethought, and many of them are liberal in a vague way.

The greater part of our men of science are still superstitious, but there are a number of freethinking or anti-religious thinkers among them. Mr. Tanaka (editor) and Mr. Nagao (sub-editor) of *Medicina Sienco Kaj Politiko*, a medical monthly, are celebrated freethinking physicians who have extended the sphere of medical freethought in Japan. This magazine is a centre of European Freethought and helps to develop the minds of our younger medical men. Mr. Nagao is an able man, with a fine analytical mind, and a knack of getting to the root of things. He is, moreover, a Chinese poet of distinction. Mr. Tanaka is a pronounced Freethinker and Secularist. He is a careful and thoughtful writer on many subjects—medicine, politics, freethought, literature, sociology and culture-history.

I have read recently a number of our novels, and have found some convinced Freethinkers. Mr. Kikuchi Yuko, one of our famous novelists has written many anti-religious novels with his usual care, candour and ability. Mr. Yoshi Isamu, a well-known dramatist, wrote an anti-Salvation Army play printed in the *Taiyo* ("The Sun"), one of our leading vernacular monthlies. Most educated people here are attracted towards English literature and European philosophy. Mr. Tsubonchi is called a Japanese Shakespeare. The plays of Mr. Bernard Shaw and the novels of Mr. H. G. Wells have found translators, and many admirers. A few days ago the *Shincho-Sha* (The New Current Publishing Co.) issued a complete Nietzsche. The translation was made by Mr. Choke Ikuta, a well-known writer of fiction.

I regret to say that our theatres of the old-fashioned order often put on a religious Buddhist drama. The religious plays are unfortunately favoured by our government. We Freethinkers set our faces against all religious and superstitious drama. We share Nietzsche's scornful contempt for Wagner's erotico-religious music-drama, and we extend our contempt to our Shinto-music. We Freethinkers are distrustful of the association of religion and labour. It seems to us that if it keeps such bad company one of your limericks. You know the one I mean:—

There was a young lady of Riga
Who went for a ride on a tiger.
They returned from that ride
With the lady inside,
And a smile on the face of the tiger.

A little while ago I was amazed to hear from Mr. Mendelsohn, one of our foreign Freethinkers in Yokohama, that he was indirectly requested by our Government not to hold regular rationalist meetings in the foreign quarter. It would appear that the Government is afraid of Freethought, and particularly afraid of its permeating the mass of the people. However, I am glad to be able to say that our Freethought movement is going along steadily. I have never been seriously hindered in addressing meetings for the last ten years. The Government, I fancy, has come to the conclusion that its best policy is to ignore them. I know, of course, that they take place for I am frequently shadowed by a detective. But although the authorities are not likely to look with favour on my propagandist efforts they have not yet ordered me to discontinue them. I sympathize with my friend Mendelsohn, who, as a foreign resident and a business man, cannot, of course, afford to run counter to the wishes of the Government

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

The Sovereignty of the People.

THE people is a beast of muddy brain
That knows not its own force, and therefore stands
Loaded with wood and stone; the powerless hands
Of a mere child guide it with bit and reins.
One kick would be enough to break the chain;
But the beast fears, and what the child demands
It does; nor its own terror understands,
Confused and stupefied by bugbears vain.
Most wonderful! With its own hand it ties
And gags itself, gives itself death and war
For pence doled out by kings from its own store.
Its own are all things between earth and heaven;
But this it knows not, and if one arise
To tell the truth, it kills him unforgiven.

TOMMASO CAMPANELLA (1568-1639).

(Translated by John Addington Symonds, 1877.)

Acid Drops.

There seems no room for further doubt but that we have again entered into a race for armaments, this time it is for fighting aircraft. There can be no doubt either that this competition will end exactly as the other ended—in a new war. We have so far learned nothing from the last war, and we are definitely committed to a policy of getting ready for another one. It is of no use arguing that so long as one nation makes ready another must follow suit, that at most only distributes the guilt instead of localizing it. The plain truth facing us is that not one of the nations engaged in the late war is sufficiently civilized to trust its neighbour unless it feels itself strong enough to overcome it in war. Another unpleasant feature is that these preparations are accompanied with the same hypocrisy as were the last. Everyone with eyes and a brain must know that the only one in Europe against whom France is arming is Britain, and therefore the only one against whom Britain is arming is France. Neither of these have the honesty nor the courage to say as much. If France and Britain would speak plainly to each other there is a strong probability that this insanity would cease, for plain speech would mean speech to the people, and the people of both countries have every reason to wish the era of war at an end. We venture one prophecy. If war does happen between these two countries the competition will be for the friendship of Germany.

But this is all the boasted preaching of Christian love and brotherhood has brought the world to. Not a single nation in Europe that can trust another one, each one trusting to force rather than to reason, and the Churches are silent in the face of the growing militarization of the European world. The Churches can organize their forces against permitting games on Sunday, but they are silent against the war policy that is now threatening the little of good the war has left us. Yet, if the Churches would only decline to have anything to do with war in any form, if they would stand absolutely aloof from it, lending themselves at most to the use of force in the shape of an international force that should be under international control, the war-mongers in each country would soon find themselves in the background. This, however, is, we are afraid a mere council of perfection. The Churches have, right through their history done their best to discredit the use of reason in the affairs of men, and when reason is discredited there are only two things left with a clear field—superstition and force. And of both the Christian Church has always been the great champion.

Freethought, so long as it is not called by its proper name, is becoming quite respectable. Mr. Alfred Fawkes, who has our deepest sympathy in his task, had to review a batch of religious books for a column in the *Daily News*. In the course of his adventures with these various mediaeval lights, he states that "even with regard to what is called 'Dogmatic Theology' we do not ask are these beliefs true, but how did people come to think them true?" We invite this reviewer to cut and come again, and take with both hands from this journal the next time—in fact we give him *carte blanche*, and at the same time ask him and his friends to hurry up and popularize this vocabulary. Western civilization is in a race with time and the barbarians in our midst. As the grand climax of barbarian thought can be stated in a few words here it is as they say in the child's picture book. "We must have a big air force. If the enemy wipe out London, we must wipe out their metropolis." Mr. H. G. Wells has hit the mark; this is barbarian thought, devoid of logic, and the sum total of Christian superstition and superstition in finance. So, Mr. Fawkes, for the second time, cut and come again, and in the name of *Man* this time, not God. Hurry up.

Dr. Headlam, Bishop of Gloucester, has written an official letter to be read in all the churches concerning the outbreak of smallpox in Gloucester. He says that all should be vaccinated, and the outbreak "is a judgment

for neglecting to obey His laws and to fulfil his will." That is so like "Him." Because some refuse to be vaccinated he sends smallpox on everybody promiscuously. "He" first sends the smallpox, and then wishes people to be vaccinated so as not to get it? And if he wishes them to get it why desire them to be vaccinated? No wonder the pious say that the ways of God pass understanding. In a human being such conduct would be said to be bordering on the idiotic. And the Bishop? All that one can say is that if the study of theology doesn't find a man stupid it usually leaves him so.

We may venture to remind the Bishop of Gloucester that when vaccination was first proposed its bitterest opponents were to be found among the clergy and the very religious. This opposition was not based upon the ground that it was unsafe, or that it was useless, but that it interfered with the "divine plan." God had sent the smallpox, and it was an invention of the Devil to prevent it. Pretty much the same sort of thing occurred when Sir James Simpson used chloroform as an anæsthetic in cases of child-birth. That was said to be a wicked attempt to remove from woman the curse pronounced on her in Genesis. Since then the clergy have become more cautious. To-day the shrewder among them usually find out what is thought to be correct, or what is most popular, and then declare that that is the "will of God." Hence the Bishop of Gloucester's letter.

The Salvation Army announces that six more of its agents have reached Calcutta. They will have about as much effect on those Hindoos who are purchasable as water will have on a duck's back. But the poor fools at home seem to hail the news of the arrival of more missionaries as though it meant the triumph of Christianity over the entire Continent.

A Finchley man who wheeled his wife in a bathchair to church dropped dead in the church, presumably as a consequence of his exertions. One would have thought that "Providence" might have exerted itself to prevent this. It could not have managed things more carelessly had the man been bringing his wife to a Freethought lecture.

If the Christians around Etna possess the average amount of common-sense, and use it, their religion should receive a bit of a jar. Thousands of people have had to stand helplessly by and see their homes and their fields swallowed up by the advancing lava stream. The priests have had religious services to keep the terrible enemy at bay, sacred relics have been placed in the track of the lava to turn it aside, but all without result. Whether the results will shake faith in the goodness and the providence of God remains to be seen. Doubtless it will with some, but the majority of Christians seldom bring their intelligence to bear on their religion. It is only in connection with religion that a man prides himself on putting his intelligence on one side, and making it appear as though idiocy is one of the surest passports to heaven.

We see that in spite of the bogus petitions received by the London County Council in favour of the stopping of Sunday games the Parks Committee has refused by an overwhelming majority to interfere with the present arrangement. The matter has still to come before the full Council, and the bigots are hopeful of getting this decision reversed. We hardly think they will succeed. We believe Sunday games have come to stay. If the parsons cannot get people to come to church of their own inclination they will have to preach to empty benches. The growth of the movement for Sunday games is one of the strongest evidences of the good of the Freethought propaganda of the last fifty or sixty years.

In a previous issue we commented on the case of the natives who were charged at Salisbury, S.A., with the sacrifice of a young girl who was killed for the purpose

of producing rain. Six of the natives have now been sentenced to death, although it was brought out in court that these men were quite conscientious in what they thought to be the discharge of a religious duty. It also appears that certain portions of the Bible, illustrated, and printed in the Mashona tongue, are circulated by the missionaries, and among the illustrations is one depicting Abraham offering up his son Isaac. The natives have been probably strengthened in their belief in the value of sacrifices by the Bible, but when they come to know the white Christians better they will discover that what they profess to believe and what they practise are quite different things. When they reach that stage they may embrace the Bible without practising much of its savagery and will become as great humbugs as any Christian on the planet. Meanwhile they are left to reflect that conduct which is approved in the Bible may get a man hung in a civilized country to-day.

In an official report just issued it is stated that a third of the murders committed in Nigeria are due to the religious beliefs of the people. That is not at all surprising to anyone who knows the beliefs of uncivilized races. It is one of the blessings of religion which is generally overlooked. The majority of the ugliest customs among the less civilized peoples such as infanticide, the killing of an aged relative, the sacrifice of human beings to secure rain, deaths for sorcery, etc., are due to religious beliefs. When the clergy tell us of the blessings which religion has given the world they conveniently overlook the existence of these and similar facts, and of the mountains of evil religion has done in this way. The only difference between our religion and that of primitive peoples is that we have come to the point of glossing over the barbarisms, without having the intellectual straightforwardness to disown them altogether.

We are indebted to the *Railway Review* for the following couple of handbills which were issued by the Sabbatarians of eighty years ago when the railway companies first arranged for Sunday excursions:—

ANOTHER SABBATH TRAIN.

MY DEAR FELLOW-SINNER,

Below you have notice of the Devil's BAIT FOR SABBATH-BREAKERS. Will Newcastle swallow it? Lest any should, and be HOOKED INTO HELL, we shall meet, if God will, at THE CATTLE MARKET, on Sabbath Morning at 7 o'clock, when Satan will be carrying off his victims, to plead for their safe return to Newcastle and to God. We shall meet also in the same place at 5 o'clock p.m., and plead that if they return alive, they may begin to live to Jesus, and never again reach over Hell's yawning mouth to pluck the Devil's poisoned fruit.

Come along with us, dear fellow-sinner, and seek the Lord. Is the hour too early? What! if men are on foot for Hell so soon, may not we for Heaven? Shame! Perhaps God may lay Satan's Towers as low as the old walls of your town near which we meet.

I am, a lover of your soul,

WM. C. BURNS.

41, Carlisle Street, August 25, 1841.

A REWARD FOR SABBATH BREAKING.

People Taken Safely and Swiftly to

HELL,

Next Lord's Day,

By

THE CARLISLE RAILWAY,

For 7s. 6d.

IT IS A PLEASURE TRIP!

The Devil will give a cheaper Passage to poor People by the River Boats.

Mad Sinners!—will you put a Knife into your own Bowels?

Ye that have shares in this Iniquity, your Profits will be a Share in JEHOVAH'S WRATH.

The Devil is murdering sinners wholesale in Newcastle and professed Christians are helping him!

IN THE NAME OF GOD,

WM. C. BURNS.

Ezek. chap. xxxiii, verse 9.

KEEP THIS.

Freethought propaganda has made these pious numbskulls a little more cautious than they were, although their aim still remains the same. But the Sabbatarians of eighty years ago never thought of the excuse that Sunday games involved labour, etc., etc. They were so far better than the present generation of killjoys that they were at least honest and outspoken in their opposition to a healthy enjoyment.

We have no knowledge as to who finances the Bible League, but it has evidently sufficient money on hand to pay for the insertion in the *Times* of a three-column report (as an advertisement) of a sermon by the Rev. A. G. Dixon on "Why I am an Evangelical Christian." It is a sermon which is away back in the Stone Age. It accepts the Bible as containing the beginning and end of all knowledge, it dismisses evolution because there must have been a hen to lay the first egg (Mr. Dixon insists that the first egg must have been laid by God), and Mr. Dixon believes in a God on the evidence of design he sees everywhere around him. It is a sermon that is protected against criticism by its own invincible ignorance.

But we do not refer to Mr. Dixon's sermon for the purpose of pointing out its nature. The sermon is paid for as an advertisement, and the rate would be pretty heavy. The Bible League was responsible for the delivery of the lecture at Caxton Hall, and may be responsible for the payment to the *Times*. We point to these things because they come as a very apt reminder to those who think that the fight with Christianity is over because Freethought has made some very rapid advances and because some opportunist clergymen are a little more careful or a little more tactful in their speech. We wish that were true. But the fact is that we have only scratched the surface of the grossest of superstitions of this country. Large sums of money are forthcoming for the advocacy of the most ignorant of teachings concerning the Bible. Bodies of sick people are leaving the country to pay a visit to the Lourdes Virgin in the hope of being miraculously cured from disease. Many thousands of men and women can be found who will seriously discuss the importance of vestments, candles, and prayers for the dead, the adoration of relics, etc. In other directions there is the faith in mascots and the craze for superstition generally. All these things witness to the persistence of beliefs which, in spite of the use of many scientific inventions and the use of a more cultured speech, are yet but little removed from those of a central African savage.

It is quite evident that in this mass of superstition there lies the elements of a grave social danger. It would be downright folly to assume that the liberal sentiments of the clergy are the outcome of any genuine love for scientific thinking. It is simply something that is forced upon them by the circumstances of the moment. It is also clear that when there is the slightest chance they are as willing as ever to take their stand with the forces of unreason, and whenever that opportunity presents itself it is to this mass of raw superstition that the clergy will appeal. Some use of it is already being made by the Roman Catholic Church which is to-day conducting a very energetic propaganda both in the open-air and elsewhere. Judging from what one can see it is fair to assume that this Church is meeting with some success. True this success is at the expense of other Churches, but that does not make the danger to civilization less but more. Freethought may yet find itself at death grips with the Church which, to use Kingdon Clifford's expression, destroyed two civilizations and came very near destroying a third. Those who read the signs of the times aright will agree with us that the need for greater activity in Freethinking propaganda was never greater than it is at the moment.

Supernatural visions [are] permitted to him or her gifted with the special grace of possessing a cracked brain, a hysterical temperament, a disordered digestion, but above all the art of lying with effrontery.—*Voltaire*.

To Correspondents.

V. M. HARDY.—Please notice in future that all lecture notices should be sent in a separate form. All that is required is a postcard giving the information it is necessary to make public. Owing to the way in which your notice came there was no announcement of Mr. Atkinson's meeting.

J. PARTRIDGE.—We hardly needed your assurance that you would continue to do what you could to help the good old Cause. But we are glad to have our conviction confirmed all the same.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—B. Bryan (South Africa) per Miss Vance, 10s.

M. L. (South Africa).—Mr. Cohen will be glad to see you when you call.

R. MAYSTON.—We can usually find space for an article on any topic provided it is of general interest and ably written, but we must always have an eye to what is the main purpose of keeping the *Freethinker* in existence.

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 at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—
One year 15.; half year, 7. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

We have received several letters from readers with regard to the suggestion of a correspondent that some attempt should be made to use the wireless in order to broadcast Freethought and thus counteract the propaganda which the parsons are carrying on. As we said, the idea is a good one, but it would need careful organizing. A broadcasting licence would have to be obtained, and that would only be given to one who thoroughly understood the work. But we hope that something will come of it. We shall preserve the names and addresses of those who have written, and when the time is ripe will communicate with them. But everything will depend upon the number and qualifications of those who interest themselves in the project. All we can do is to put them into touch with one another.

It will be remembered that a few weeks ago Mr. Cohen made a statement regarding a resolution carried at the annual conference that in future an honorarium should be paid the President as a means of covering the out of pocket expenditure attendant on his office. Since his election to office, eight years ago, there has been no charge on the Society's funds on that account. The Executive discussed the matter at its last meeting, and although Mr. Cohen suggested that it should be deferred till the next conference, it was decided that an honorarium of £100 per year should attach to the Presidential office. All that need be said here is that it will be paid provided the state of the Society's finances warrant its payment. Mr. Cohen would certainly not accept it under other conditions. It therefore remains for the friends of the Society

to see that its financial state continues healthy. But the funds for carrying on the work must be the first consideration.

The results of Mr. Whitehead's Freethought Mission in Barnsley have been so gratifying that it was decided to keep him there for another week. He will hold two meetings there on Sunday, and he will be in Nelson until July 13. For particulars see Lecture Notice. Will local Freethinkers in Nelson please get into touch with Mr. W. A. Holroyd, Marlboro' House, Nelson, who will furnish them with all particulars and be glad of any help they can give with the meetings?

At the last meeting of the Poplar Borough Council it was resolved that certain papers be placed on the tables of the Free Libraries. A lady member of the Council thereupon moved that the *Freethinker* be also placed on the tables. That was evidently a more serious question, for after some discussion it was decided to refer the matter back to the Libraries Committee for consideration. How afraid some people are of the *Freethinker*! Now if we were harmless, or stupid, there would not be quite so much hesitation in dealing fairly with us. But that is, after all, a compliment.

We take this opportunity of thanking those who have sent us the names and addresses of likely readers of the *Freethinker*. This plan constantly leads to new readers, which means new friends for the movement. Our plan is to send the paper for six weeks to any number of addresses that are sent us on payment of postage—one halfpenny per copy. This makes very effective propaganda at a trifling cost to all concerned.

We regret a misprint in the article last week by "Mimnermus" when the word "haud" was printed "hand." It was an easy mistake for a compositor to make and for a proofreader to pass. But the number of letters we have received bears witness to the carelessness with which the *Freethinker* is read.

The West Ham Branch will have its annual excursion to-day (July 8). The objective is Hainault Forest, and the train will leave Maryland Point Station at 9.53, and Forest Gate at 9.55. An alternative route is from Leyton or Leytonstone at 9.45-7. In each case the booking is to Grange Hill. Members and friends are heartily welcome. Now that the weather appears to be a little more settled one may wish the excursionists a pleasant time without being accused of sarcasm.

Two good meetings were held on Sunday last by Mr. Corrigan in Finsbury and Victoria Park. Great interest was taken in the lectures, and there were many questions asked. To-day (July 10) Mr. Corrigan will lecture, afternoon and evening, in Brockwell Park.

The Skull.

You are the empty box of all the brain,
The seething cauldron of the hopes and fears,
Where boiled the horrid mess of smiles and tears,
Which momentarily have vanished, with the pain
Of that drab life, you cannot know again.
Where went that poor lost pair of fleshy ears?
They do not hear her voice through all the years,
Nor wake to the pæan with love's refrain.

You were the seat of the prayer and the thought;
You built the castles that you were to win;
You were the flower that your love once wrought;
You were the passion to suffer and sin;
Your dreams were the battles you would have fought;
And—there is left but this bone with its grin.

G. E. FUSSELL.

The Devil's Chaplain.

CHAPTER ONE.—CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

ROBERT TAYLOR is known to fame as the Devil's Chaplain owing to this nickname being bestowed upon him by Henry Hunt, the political reformer and hero of Peterloo. Hunt intended the phrase to be abusive, though he used it not so much from any ill-will towards Taylor as from a desire to curry favour with the respectability of his time. Taylor gladly seized upon it as affording him a rare opportunity of displaying his scholarship and exposing the errors, plagiarisms, and solar origins of the Christian religion. Whatever political good this witticism may have secured to Hunt whilst living has been more than atoned for by the injury it has done to his reputation since as a man of principle. Whatever harm it may have done Taylor is also atoned for by the fact that it serves more and more as a suitable epitaph of his ripe learning and power as a pioneer of useful heresy.

Taylor was born on August 18, 1784, at the Walnut Tree House in the then village of Edmonton. He was a sixth son of well-to-do parents and received his early education at a boarding-school, and subsequently from a private tutor at Ponders End. The death of his father made it necessary for the eight children that constituted the family to eke out his fortune by some effort on their own part. This interrupted Robert's education, but he succeeded in passing the examination of the Royal College of Surgeons with high honours in 1807, after walking the floors of Guy's and St. Thomas' Hospitals in 1805, and previously studying the theory of medicine and the art of surgery at the General Hospital, Birmingham. He was articled as a House pupil to the then resident House Surgeon of this hospital shortly after his father's death, as his mother desired him to become a doctor. At Birmingham he came in contact with the Reverend Thomas Cotterell, of Lane End, Staffordshire, who was impressed more by Taylor's strong natural eloquence than by his successes as a medical student. He accordingly persuaded Taylor to attach no importance to his medical studies and successes, since a more suitable vocation would be found in holy orders. Taylor's mother was pleased at the prospect of her son becoming a clergyman, and he accordingly proceeded to Cambridge where he matriculated in 1809, instantly becoming Queen Margaret's Scholar at St. John's College, and taking his B.A. degree in 1813.

At college he attended the classes of the Reverend Charles Simeon, minister of Trinity, famed for his gift of sermonizing, and noted for being "the first Church of England Evangelical." Taylor was his favourite pupil, and is said to have distinguished himself as *facile princeps* and *incomparabilis* in the art of sermon making. Numbered among his fellow students was John Frederick William Herschel, the distinguished son of the distinguished astronomer Sir Friedrich Wilhelm Herschel. The son became a greater authority on astronomy than his father; and it can be understood that his school studies influenced Taylor's thought and played an important part in preparing his mind for those astronomico-theological sermons and writings that have ranked his name second only to that of Volney in the order of Free-thought scholars.

Taylor left St. John's to accept a much underpaid curacy under the Reverend Lloyd, the pluralist Rector of St. Dunstan's, Fleet Street, and Midhurst, Sussex. Lloyd had applied to Simeon for a good Christian curate—possibly to atone for his own sins—and Simeon unhesitatingly recommended Taylor as "the cleverest and most religious young man at the university." Doctor Craven, the master of St. John's, also recom-

mended Taylor "as a singular honour to the university in his scholarship, such as Cambridge has not for some time known."

Taylor was ordained Deacon by Dr. Buckner, Bishop of Chichester, on Sunday, March 14, 1813, at St. James', Piccadilly. He preached his first sermon on that same day at St. Dunstan's, Fleet Street, and at once entered upon his curacy at Midhurst. Here his zeal attracted the attention of a Mr. Pontz, who offered him, in 1818, a rectorship that brought in hundreds every year to his patron and secured to him, the scholar and preacher, a beggarly £20 for his occasional services. At Midhurst, also, he made the acquaintance of an infidel tradesman who insisted on lending him sceptical books and tracts and acquainting him with the biographies of men who, despite persecution and imprisonment, had insisted on pioneering criticism of Christian evidences. This reading seriously undermined Taylor's belief and he determined to preach a farewell sermon and retire from the Church. He carried this resolution into effect on Trinity Sunday, when he preached a Freethought sermon on Jonah and the Whale, ridiculing the holy scriptures and greatly offending his somewhat astonished congregation. He wrote that day to the Bishop of Chichester tending his resignation on the ground of the insupportable pain of conscience he would experience if he continued to preach from the pulpit of a Church whose faith he no longer believed.

Dr. Buckner was but a bishop, and professed no great understanding of the finer scruples of conscience. Theology or divinity, to his mind, was not a truth but a career. He was not shocked at Taylor's unbelief for he did not himself believe. But he was shocked and disturbed, firstly at Taylor's scruples, and secondly at his public avowal of unbelief. Buckner's creed was very simple. It was this: Gentlemen, naturally, did not believe the marvels and mysteries of revealed religion. They explained their doubts to each other privately, over the wine when the servants were not about; but they knew that it was necessary to affect a belief in public since theological wonder was necessary to keep the people quiet. Buckner gave no heed to the Church's spiritual bread, because his concern was with its temporal bread. He believed thoroughly in the gospel of loaves and fishes, and he found Taylor's attitude a menace to the future maintenance of that most comforting gospel. He was as angry as only a man of such easy principle can be when his material interests are endangered. He wrote an immediate reply to Taylor urging him, with some vehemence, to recant his heresy without delay and not be such a fool as to relinquish his prospects of early advancement in the Church because he had ceased to think with the orthodox. Had he thought Taylor could entertain such silly scruples he, the Bishop, would never have ordained him. The Christian religion was but a Promethian nose of wax, and Taylor was not required to believe in its teachings though he remained a minister of the Church. His belief was his private affair so long as he was willing to discharge his duties satisfactorily.

At this crisis in his career, Taylor's brothers and sisters urged on him the non-respectable nature of his conduct and the disgrace his confession of unbelief brought on the family. What possible harm could it do him to continue to believe and pursue his career as a clergyman. His mother was prostrate with grief and lamented the idea that her favourite son should turn an infidel. She considered Dr. Buckner's epistle very kind and considerate, and she begged of Robert to agree to the Bishop's suggestion of recanting the sentiments of his Jonah and Whale sermon. One regrets to say that Taylor finally fell in with this suggestion and apologized for his sermon in the presence

of William Howley, then Bishop of London, and subsequently Archbishop of Canterbury. This recantation did him no good for he was informed that he would need to remain in the background for a time until the effect of his heresy had worn down. He accordingly sought to establish a school, but instead of acquiring a school he was induced, by misrepresentation, to sign a bill which tricked him out of what little fortune he possessed and subsequently caused him to be thrown into a debtor's prison.

Being without any means of livelihood he was induced by a friend to accept the Curacy of Yardley near Birmingham. The Bishop of Worcester soon discovered the intruder amongst his flock and treated his recantation with contempt. He insisted on his giving up the curacy and seeking an occupation outside the Church. I do not wish to defend this conduct of the faltering hero. It is good that he should have learnt from experience the folly and the uselessness of attempting to pervert, conceal and put aside his infidelity in the hopes of retaining the means of a livelihood. Ignorance is ever the foe and oppressor of knowledge, and try as one will to conceal the latter, it must burst forth clothed in glory and in brilliancy. Taylor's conduct is not so infamous as it appears. No scholar among Church theologians has subscribed to the creed as required by the Thirty-nine Articles. The higher critics of our own day avowedly do not, and they represent the Church's one claim to spiritual vision—that is, real divinity. Down to the time of his dismissal from the Yardley Curacy, Taylor's scepticism had not exceeded the limits of the Deism of Conyers Middleton, the celebrated Freethinking Divine, whose remarkable *Letters from Rome, Free Inquiry into the Miraculous*, and classic *Life of Cicero*, at once maintain the reputation of the Anglican Church for scholarship and prove such severe blows to Christian evidence. Middleton suffered no inconvenience from his attacks on orthodoxy, but rather enjoyed celebrity as a scholar and a wit and a writer of charming, pertinent, and inconsequential letters, whose fame continue to our own time. The Middletonian style of attacking the Church was the extreme of Taylor's acquirements till the year 1824, when he became an avowed Atheist. So that one might have thought that since the Church had room for a Middleton, it would have an equally vacant space for a Taylor. But no! Which is well, since tolerance would have robbed us of the Devil's Chaplain. And until his elevation to that rank Taylor's scholarship remained passive and found expression in none of those valuable criticisms of theology which have since delighted and inspired so many students of Freethought.

GUY A. ALDRED.

(To be Continued.)

The Gospel of Man.

The myth of Prometheus is true, and the myth of Christ is true; the neglect of the former does not devitalize it, and the misuse of the latter will be the cause of the birth of many strong-hearted men to whom the imperial race of mankind will be sacred in a manner undreamt of by those who kneel to plaster images. Man had not finished in his great adventure when he discovered, as by miracle, that he could rise from all fours and balance on two legs. He had not finished when speech could convey his thought, and he has not finished although nearly every scientific weapon has been used in the wrong manner. Man's use of aeroplanes up to the present, if we may strain our reader's imagination, resembles the action of an idiot son of a farmer who has by cunning, caught foxes in the autumn and let them loose in cornfields with firebrands to their tails. A conspiracy of idiots

to catch more foxes for the same purpose is not unthinkable in the present, but our faith in man is stronger than it is in the class that does not know what it is to be hungry and regards personal cleanliness among the poor as a subject *pour rire*. More than the destruction of *things* took place in the last war; false values were destroyed. As in the vision of St. Antony, sand can now be seen trickling from the bellies of those old gods of value that served for a brief season. The year that brought the great peace did not close the book of agony with a snap, and although there are no signs at present to cheer the butterflies of any advanced movement, it is at least amusing to witness the struggles of various factions in their endeavours to display social superiority. The distinction, however, between a duke and a dustman in terms of social quality is so fine as not to be noticed. Judged by the standard of function alone there is no difference. In so far as their two functions are concerned they are both men, and this is just what snobocracy cannot or will not see, and their consequent troubles are their own affairs. Man will not forever be content to touch his hat to a collection of figures who have finished growing and who are now unable to prove their social worth—that is one truth. Outside the compromise and expediency of law, our relics of aristocracy, our tender shoots of democracy, fair and frail clippings of radicalism, may, if they please in this moment of eternity, stamp for ever on this dispensation the name of "man"—that is another truth. One of the trumpeters of this event was Whitman, and another was the late John Davidson. In *The Testament of John Davidson*¹ we find that this poet keeps steadily in view his vision of man, and in the completest manner possible thrusts out of the way Pagan and Christian gods. The dedication was addressed to the Peers Temporal, and the omission of Lords Spiritual is significant and needs no amplification by us in this paper. He states: "And hark, sirs! A last word: Get rid of your priests; be done with Other World." Further on we find: "Thus I break the world out of the imaginary chrysalis or cocoon of Other World in which it has slumbered so long; and man beholds himself, not now as that fabulous monster, half-god, half-devil of the Christian era, but as *man*, the very form and substance of the universe, the material of eternity, eternity itself, become conscious and self-conscious." Finally our herald of the birth of man, in language that is vibrant with sincerity, emphasizes this new beginning and concludes that that is the meaning of his Testaments and Tragedies. We are still looking with expectant eyes for the fitting response from Peers Temporal; it was and is, their move, but we must presume that they are busy keeping things as they are in the interests of huntin', shootin', and fishin'. The trinity of a horse, a gun, and a fishing rod cannot keep pace with the spirit of man; we exclude the shepherd's crook as this was named by the voice of unconscious irony, and irony may be truth protesting. We quote one verse from the Prologue:—

The dawn and the dusk are crowned
With chaplets of roses and gold;
We two are invincibly bound
For a kingdom our faith can create
In a present of beauty untold;
O Love, we are certainly bound
For the ultimate haven of Fate
On a voyage with happiness crowned.

The fifth line is significant (italics own); our poet is aware of the trickery of time. He says that time is a juggler's trick 'twixt the sun and the moon. The fact that our own lives are relatively no longer than

¹ *The Testament of John Davidson*, Grant Richards, Ltd., 8 St. Martin's Street, W.C.2.

that of moths should awaken us to the importance of *now*. Freethinkers, not endowed with that pious sense of humility, that self-effacement, that assurance of a Christian eternal life, that conglomerated botch of irrationality that gives Christianity the lie, we repeat, Freethinkers who do not possess the attributes of hot ice, should be most concerned with *now*. Procrastination is the very essence of Christianity.

We should like to quote more from *The Testament*, which is insistent on the claims and needs of man and a relegation of superstition to the departed times of his unhappy past. The language is forceful, expressive, imaginative, and its high level of excellence is sustained throughout. It exudes an Elizabethan atmosphere, and is as old and new as any high endeavour to help man to stand erect and laugh intelligently at the shadow of his Tussaud's gallery of gods, and to look within himself from whence they came.

John Davidson was one of the prophets of the literature to be; his was the Promethean spirit to suffer for mankind—for man's kingdom on earth. He is at the opposite pole of thought to those who follow their teacher in fine raiment, and whose wills alone are testaments to the absurdity, incongruity, and glaring contradictions of a creed ostensibly for the good of mankind, but in reality used for the propagation of fear.

We conclude with a letter written by the author to the late G. W. Foote:—

If we accept the name Atheist we limit ourselves, we distort our growth; we will become depraved; we will develop a cancer or a wen. The power of a name when the name stands for a tenet is incalculable, and the effect of its adoption is always disastrous, because a name is adopted only when the tenet is ripe and ready to decay. Consider, for example, Conservatism and Liberalism; the moment they were named and known they began to putrify. I think the time has come for Freethinkers to rise above Theism and Atheism, to come out of it altogether. We must, if we are to grow. There is the word, "Man," a virgin word, a zero. Let us call ourselves "Men," and begin all things over again.

This idea of "Man" is an entrancing one. It was present in Abraham Lincoln, in Ingersoll, in Burns, and in the writings of Davidson to mention only a few instances where this electric spark was seen. When the present generation may see Lord Curzon or any other of his colleagues sweeping the steps of the House of Lords or mounting a ladder with a hod of bricks, they will be assisting to hasten the Birth of Man and, to slightly alter Browning:—

All service ranks the same with Man,
There is no last or first.

WILLIAM REPTON.

"Shakespeare"; Was it Oxford, Bacon, or Derby?

II.

(Concluded from page 413.)

No treatment of this subject would be satisfactory without some slight mention of contemporary references. One sign that the Elizabethan Age was becoming conscious of its own literary greatness was the contemporary issue of three works signaling its achievements. In 1586, whilst the movement was still adolescent, Webbe put forth his *Discourse of English Poetrie*. In 1589, that is, on the eve of the great outburst, *The Arte of Poesie*, later on ascribed to George Puttenham, made its appearance. In 1598 Francis Meres' peculiar compilation, *Wit's Treasury*, seemed almost to mark the close of the great decade. And in all the three works the Earl of Oxford holds

a central position, marking him as a leader, first as a poet, then as a dramatist, in that classic period of our literature. Yet the most considerable writings published under his name during his lifetime were a few short lyrics that appeared in 1576; before the Elizabethan movement was properly started. In "Puttenham" he is mentioned as chief of some aristocratic writers whose works could not "be found out or made known," and as one of the two best writers of comedy. Yet not a single line of any play of his has survived as such, and nothing of his poetry that can with confidence be assigned to the period of his recognized eminence. A later historian "presumed" that all his plays must have been "lost or worn out"; yet, I believe, he is the only dramatist mentioned by any of these authorities no trace of whose plays can be found. The two outstanding mysteries of Elizabethan drama are, in fact, the Oxford mystery and the Shakespeare mystery; and these, as we see, fit into and explain one another. On the other hand not one of these contemporary witnesses so much as mentions either Bacon or Derby as a dramatist.

Naturally the most vital body of evidence must be sought inside the writings; but of this only some slight indications are here possible.

Take, for example, the *Sonnets*. The first set, urging a young man to marry, are supposed to have been addressed in 1590 to the young Earl of Southampton, to whom "Shakespeare's" long poems were dedicated, and who at that time was resisting a marriage project arranged for him by his friends, the poet speaking of himself as one, "By Time's injurious hand crush'd and o'er-worn." Both Stratfordians and Baconians have pointed to this marriage proposal as the probable occasion of the *Sonnets*. Now the lady whom Southampton was to have married was the daughter of the Earl of Oxford, the granddaughter of Bacon's uncle, and the future wife of the Earl of Derby. Surely there can be little doubt which of the three was most likely to have penned these exhortations, and also which of them would be least likely to have done it.

So extraordinary is the evidence connecting Oxford with "Bertram" in *All's Well* that critics have freely conceded the identification, objecting only to its having been done by himself. The evidence published in the first number of *The Golden Hind*, identifying Oxford with "Fenton" in *The Merry Wives*, though less sensational, is in its way quite as conclusive; and no attempt has yet been made to meet it. It is the *Hamlet* argument, however, which is perhaps most complete in itself, and which, combined with the *Sonnets*, is probably destined to win recognition for Edward de Vere.

In spite of all philosophizing upon subjective poetry and objective drama, the best literary criticism supports the view that *Hamlet* is one of the most subjective poems extant anywhere in literature; that "Hamlet" is "Shakespeare." The conviction that Elizabethan personalities would therefore be found in the play, led first to the identification of "Polonius" with Burghley, and in 1869 George Russel French was led to identify "Laertes" with Robert Cecil and "Ophelia" with Anne Cecil. French had no axe to grind, no pet theories to support, and therefore offers an unbiased judgment upon the facts. If, then, we consider that Anne Cecil was the wife of Oxford, was cousin to Bacon, and mother-in-law to the Earl of Derby, there can be no doubt as to which of the three was "Hamlet," an identification amply supported by recent research into the life of the Earl of Oxford. Surely such a combination of identifications with an exact fitting of external conditions ought to leave no room for doubt respecting the superiority of Oxford's claims.

It would have been strange indeed if any single objection could have overthrown so weighty and many-sided a body of evidence. Against it, so far, we have only arbitrary estimates of literary values, a material much too flimsy and elusive to set up against a solid body of practical evidence.

The early poems of the Earl of Oxford, the critics keep on repeating, destroy his chances. Yet all who have studied the question must know by now that when these poems were written the great Elizabethan movement was in the groping, stumbling stage of its infancy, and that the work of even the greatest genius can only be a high expression of a social mind. By the time the "Shakespeare" period was reached this phenomenal movement had created a new vocabulary, compressing and enriching all literary diction; it had thrown up new models and had established criteria; and it had helped to evolve all that thought material embodied in the Shakespeare plays. Under any supposition "Shakespeare's" work in 1576 was bound to be immeasurably inferior to his work from 1593 to 1604.

In 1576 writers were experimenting in poetic forms which by 1596 were felt to be weak and were becoming obsolete. Nevertheless, when critics have been induced to abandon generalities and state a case against Oxford's poetry, I have invariably found the identical defects in the early Shakespeare work.

Fortunately Oxford's poems had been examined by men of recognized competency, like Courthope, before his name had been connected with Shakespeare's; and just those distinctive qualities of the great dramas—terseness, epigram, ingenuity, concinnity—had been noticed in them. Now it has been found that practically every idea, figure, turn of expression and characteristic fault is repeated in the so-called "Shakespeare" writings; in some instance reproducing striking sequences of conception found only in manuscript lyrics discovered in recent years.

Examined patiently and scientifically, then, the early lyrics of the Earl of Oxford will, I am confident, strengthen his claim to the authorship of the Shakespeare works.

J. THOMAS LOONEY.

Correspondence.

F. W. WALSH.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Referring to your memorial notes on F. W. Walsh, I have been reminded of the experience related to me of his feelings when the progress of his thought towards Atheism was complete.

Soon after I first met him, many years ago, he had been telling me of his liberal Christian attitude, which he had defended in writings before his accident. I understood that his holding of the idea of "God" resulted in some resentment or bitterness of spirit at his fate, so unjust and needless and incomprehensible. This was cured by his growing to see that it was, apart from unintentional human negligence, a non-personal unmoral fact of life and Nature.

I said, as near as I remember, "You felt that the bitterness was taken out of it, that it was an accident, with no malevolence behind it." He made assent with that characteristic, emphatic, and earnest gesture of the head. It was not surprising to an Atheist, but I thought it was a striking refutation of the religious claims for the monopoly of consolation and relief. It was the more striking because we were discussing that particular subject, and it gives some understanding of the philosophic part of the basis of his endurance.

I agree that it is distasteful to advertise on these things, but I have thought you might like to know this fact. After all, the test of an opinion is not whether it brings consolation, but if it is supported by fact or truth. Ideas determine the kind and source of consolation.

Fred Walsh's will, courage, and cheerfulness were remarkable in face of his terrible lot, and I am glad these features enabled him to obtain some alleviation and even compensation. These qualities created an atmosphere that tended to obscure the invalid, and his demeanour never made a visit to him a more trying experience.

But I shall not forget the first time I went to his bedside, unprepared for the extent of his incapacity. He had a little note of welcome ready!

He had a keen appreciation of the joys of life, great and small, and his letters evinced interest in others and reticence regarding his lot. He had interest in many departments of life's activities, and this was his "salvation." On one occasion, he accepted the "ministrations" of a quartette of glee singers in his room with great delight.

I see no reference to Mr. Partridge in the "Obituary"—perhaps this is desired. But if it was supplied by him, I must suppose that self-effacement is the reason why it is not stated that Mr. Partridge read very effectively and becomingly the Burial Service of Austin Holyoake's, as I believe. And he was, as usual, quietly attentive in the background as well.

A. G. TYE.

[The report we received was from Mr. Partridge, and, as usual, he did himself less than justice, but we had no means of checking his report.—EDITOR.]

WHY THE CHURCH FAILS.

SIR,—There are various reasons why religion, as professionally practised, could never impress me (including the fact that it is one of the "softest jobs" combined with the biggest of remunerations), but here is perhaps the principal reason of all for thinking people having no faith in the Church, the clergy, or their alleged Christianity to-day:—

A human fiend, named William Jackson, was recently fined 30s. at Highgate for throwing a kitten across a road and dashing it against some railings, whereby it was so dreadfully injured that it had to be destroyed. Another demon, named David Ridler, was fined at Bristol for beating a cat with an iron bar.

What said the Church? Absolutely nothing! Did a single member of the clergy indignantly protest at these fearful outrages? Not a word, nor a murmur! *Do they ever do anything practical to stop these inhumanities?* Never—though they devote much energy and lung power to prohibition and stopping the people's innocent Sunday games, which only amounts to an irritating interference with the public rights and personal liberty.

There is an obvious lack of sincerity in the preaching of Christianity which they do not practise; a mere game of bluff and hypocrisy it seems to me, hence the Church utterly fails to convince anyone of intelligence.

A. LEONARD SUMMERS.

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

SIR,—The first of the two articles which have recently appeared in the *Freethinker* in criticism of the League of Nations began by saying that the writer did not question the underlying principles of the League. May I be allowed to suggest that it is precisely in these basic principles that the failure of the League is to be found?

The popular mind does not appear to discern anything incongruous in the idea of a number of diseased nationals expecting by unity to become a healthy super-national, but if the parts are defective the whole cannot escape intact. The whole scheme of the League seems to be built upon the assumption that economic problems become simpler with the square of the distance, yet before the League can even begin its role of schoolmaster to the world it must tackle the fundamental problem of economic balance which is essentially an individual problem for all constituents. Peace means balance, and the author of the League of Nations idea, in his after-thoughts on the late war, gave a truer diagnosis than that on which the League is founded. "Peace?" said Ex-President Wilson in 1919, "Why, my fellow citizens, is there any man here, or any woman—let me say, is there any child—who does not know that the seed of war in the modern world is industrial and commercial rivalry?"

What is the League of Nations doing to eliminate the rivalry which leads to war? It is preaching disarmament.

ment. But armaments and antagonisms are not causes but the effects of something deeper and more profound. The evil itself is fundamental. War is inherent in the trading organization of the world, and until some nation gets down to the examination of fundamentals there seems no prospect of peace in our generation. Up to the present the League of Nations has shown no sort of concern with the real problem of economic balance, and, having no independent control of finance, which is the ultimate source of power, it has still to be shown how the League could back its authority upon any decision of major importance. Its impotence is evidenced in the fact that it has for some time been in trouble with its bank overdrafts, which means that it has no defence against capture by International Finance.

In principle, and regarded as an instrument of peace (it may have many other salutary uses), the League of Nations is an inversion; it begins at the wrong end, attacking the symptoms instead of the disease, like a doctor trying to cure measles by painting out the spots. The writer of the second article, "Heresy and the League of Nations," in your issue of June 24, gets nearer realities and deals with the real lever of the situation, *i.e.*, the necessity to keep solvent. The basis of the modern world is that all organized activity has to conform to the rules of solvency, the desperate scramble for foreign trade which throws nations against one another and forces them to build armaments and militarisms to consolidate their gains, being merely one of the effects of the general endeavour to sell goods and keep solvent. But solvency is a game like other games, and may be (the evidence is all for it) it is a game in which the rules are wrong. Nobody is worrying about the rules. Everybody, the League of Nations included, is blaming the players. But somewhere, before or after the next world-war, some nation will protest that it cannot help doing what it is doing, that there is no choice for a statesman between bankruptcy and aggression, and that something should be done to change the conditions upon which nations may keep solvent. At present no one is facing this problem with the earnestness which the world situation demands, and financial necessity is driving us to the edge of the vortex. It is always open for man to be master of his fate, but it seems almost as though we must wait for grim necessity to make us face the issue. The League of Nations certainly knows nothing of it, yet this, as the founder of the League has since avowed, is the real and only problem of peace.

R. L. PEARSON.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JUNE 28, 1923.

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

This being the first meeting of the new Executive the following committees were elected:—

Propagandist Committee: Messrs. Corrigan, Moss, Quinton and Rosetti.

Benevolent Fund Committee: Mrs. Quinton, Miss Kough, Messrs. Rosetti and Samuels.

New members were received for Leeds, Stockport, South Shields, New Herrington and the Parent Society, and permission given for the formation of a branch at New Herrington, subject to the completion of the conditions.

Instructions were given *in re* correspondence from Plymouth, Porth, South Shields and Stockport, and favourable reports of the successful work in the Provinces of Messrs. Atkinson and Whitehead were received.

The question raised at the Conference as to an Honorarium for the President, and remitted to the Executive, with instructions to take whatever steps were necessary, was then discussed, and it was agreed that the Society should provide according to its means, for the out-of-pocket expenses of its President. Resolved unanimously: "That the President receive an Honorarium of £100 per annum."

The President reported the death of the heroic Freethinker, Mr. F. Walsh, of Leamington, whose fortitude

in the face of the most severe bodily affliction and pain was an example to all who had been privileged to know him. The Secretary was instructed to convey to the relatives the sympathy of all present on behalf of the National Secular Society, of which Mr. Walsh had been a member.

The meeting then closed.

E. M. VANCE,
General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "The Outlawry of War."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.15, Mr. A. B. Moss, Christianity and Evolution."

FINSBURY PARK.—11.15, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

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

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3.30 and 6.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan will lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Outing to Hainault Forest. Train Stratford, 9.51 a.m.; Maryland Point, 9.53; Forest Gate, 9.55. Book to Grange Hill and change at Ilford. Another route: Leyton (N.E.R.), 9.45; Leytonstone (N.E.R.), 9.47; Snaresbrook, 9.49; Woodford, 10.7. Those joining the party will carry lunch and tea will be carried. Mr. H. Spence, B.Sc., will act as guide and take charge at Grange Hill Station.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. ("Derricourt's" Restaurant, High Street): 6.30, Eighth Annual Meeting of Members.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—Discussion Circle (Mrs. Ballard's, 49 Norway Street, Stretford): 6.30, "Religion and the Child."

OUTDOOR.

BARNESLEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Technical School Yard, Market Street, Nelson): Every evening from Monday, July 9, to Friday, July 13, at 7.30, Mr. George Whitehead will lecture.

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