

# The FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions.

### The Defeat of Puritanism.

As we anticipated, the proposal that the London County Council should refuse to permit the continuation of the Sunday games in the parks met with a decisive defeat. The petitions sent into the Council in favour of the games came from working-class organizations, from clerks, and from all whom we should expect would value the opportunity of spending Sunday in a healthy and rational manner. The opposing petitions came from chapels, churches, Sunday-schools and the like—in a word, from all those who did not want to play on Sunday. It was a contest between those who wanted to play and those who did not. Those who did want to play had no intention of forcing others to join them in the games. Those who did not wish to play did desire to compel others to join in their brain and moral destroying inactivity. That we are right in our classification of the two classes is admitted by the *Christian World* which speaks of the defeat of the “representatives of the Churches and the Sunday-schools.” It was wholly a religious opposition in which the physical and moral health of the younger portion of the community was not permitted to outweigh the interests of a narrow and ignorant sectarianism. We heartily congratulate all concerned on the victory gained, and in view of the amount of unadvertised work we have put into this question we also feel that we are entitled to congratulate ourselves. Sabbatarianism is one of the outposts of British Christianity, and to capture that means a step towards taking the main position.

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### The Cant of Morality.

Newspaper comments on the situation are rather interesting. Some of the religious papers maintain a discreet silence. The *Christian World*, which has to satisfy the more liberal section of its readers without offending the narrower Nonconformist body, hopes that it will somehow strengthen the Churches by leaving the attendance to the more convinced class, but throws a sop to the Sabbatarians by saying that the results will be carefully watched, and “if they are plainly and palpably evil” the decision will be reversed. One would like to know from the *Christian World* what are the plain and palpable evils that

would follow from Sunday games? So long as one takes shelter in vague generalities it is easy to talk of the plain and palpable evils in connection with games on Sunday. When we come down to definite statements I hardly think the *Christian World* would suggest that young men and women are likely to become more vicious by playing Sunday games. The real reason, and what is meant by evil consequences, is found in the remark that the work of Churches and Sunday-schools will not be made easier by the seduction of open-air sports. In other words, the root reason for the Churches and Chapels wanting to stop the games is that they may keep young people away from their places of business. The games appeal to the customers of the Churches, and with the protective instinct of the short-sighted tradesmen they desire to stop all competition. That is all there is in it. Talk of moral effects is mere nonsense. As to that the testimony of the police all over the country is decisive. There is less work for the authorities and less need for them to be looking after people where proper opportunities exist for healthy recreation on Sunday, or on any day when people are not otherwise employed.

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### Our Taboo Day.

From the institution of the throne downward our society is honeycombed with superstitions, and as miserable a one as any is this superstition concerning Sunday. All the excuses put forward for perpetuating this miserable Puritanical legacy are wide of the truth—and they who use them know it. They may be sincere about their own belief in Sunday, but they are deliberately untruthful when they put forward the alleged reason for their action. They are not concerned about the increase of labour needed (the L.C.C. has required eleven extra men over the whole of London, while the work of the police has been made easier) for these same people were not at all concerned when men, women, and children were working long hours for starvation wages. It is not better conduct they are interested in, or they would welcome any movement which provided good recreation in public in place of an aimless hanging about the streets. The clergy are only concerned with the one thing, and that is the effect of competition of this kind on church attendance. As to the laymen who signed the petitions at the instigation of the clergy, these poor dupes are merely perpetuating one of the savage superstitions that Christianity enshrines. The Sabbath is a taboo day. It is a day that several thousand years ago was made “sacred” to a God with an evil influence, and on that day nothing must be done that could by any possibility be avoided, and to that primitive superstition Christianity gave its own contribution of the sinfulness of taking pleasure in anything belonging to this life. Earth was a graveyard and life no more than a funeral procession. It is this superstition and this view of life that our Sabbatarians wish to perpetuate, and provided they can do that, the way in which people live—granting due observance of the rest of their stupid superstitions—would trouble them but little.

### The Force of Example.

One of the fears expressed by the Sabbatarians is that the action of the L.C.C. will be followed by the rest of the country. I sincerely trust that events will justify their misgivings. There is no reason that I can see why common-sense should be confined to London, and common-sense may be as contagious as foolishness. True it is not usually so, but that is because our environment places a greater value on folly than it does on sense. At present the supreme value is placed upon superstitions of one kind or another, and few have enough courage to set them at defiance. Indeed, one of the curious features of the situation is that the vast majority of the people to-day do not want the Puritanical Sunday. It is observed in only the minority of homes, and in many of these the adult members break observances which they force upon the younger ones. The majority would welcome a change which gave them freedom to be healthy and natural during a seventh of their lives, but only the minority have the strength to openly protest both by word and action against this miserable hotch-potch of cant, insincerity, humbug, and religious tyranny. The majority would, I am quite sure, welcome their freedom once it was obtained for them, and if they could only summon enough courage to openly defy this superstition of Sunday they would probably be surprised to find out for how long they have been held in terrorism by soldiers armed with wooden swords and dummy guns. It is always the first step that counts, and that remains true whether the thing to be fought is something commended by the common-sense of many, or one of the most senseless of superstitions that ever bemused the mind of man.

### The Deeper Issues. \* \* \*

There are many more issues involved in this question of Sunday than appear at first sight. That is why we so often recur to it. There is first of all the question of the moral and physical health of the community with which we have already dealt. Next, we have the question of the interference of the State in matters of religion. That is an issue which has been before the world for centuries, and there is no denying that here the whole tendency of civilization is in the direction of non-interference. So long as the tribal or national Gods are believed to be specially interested in certain groups, or even so long as the whole of the people formally profess the same religious belief, there is some ground for State action; but when the first idea is rejected for what it is, a mere relic of barbarism, and when the State is split religiously into conflicting fragments, the perpetuation of State interference becomes absurd and unjust. The State has no more right to say whether certain things that are permitted during the rest of the week shall not be permitted on Sunday than it has to prohibit the eating of fish on Friday. These are matters that lie outside the province of the modern State, and so far as we fight the idea of State enforcement of the Christian Sabbath we are fighting the idea of State interference in matters of religion in all directions. It is a move towards the complete secularizing of the State. Finally, there is involved the refutation of the ridiculous idea that the religious opinions of certain people are entitled to special consideration. A man's opinions on or his feelings about religion are no more entitled to special consideration than are his opinions or feelings about any other matter. He has the right to express the one and to gratify the other—so long as their gratification does not interfere with the freedom of others, and that is all. The opening of places of entertainment on Sunday, the playing of games, can interfere with no one. It is only the impertinent intolerance of Christians that makes them a cause of

annoyance. A Christian who does not wish to go to a theatre or a concert, or to see games played, can stay away. No compulsion is brought to bear on him, and no one wishes to prevent his being miserable in his own way. The plea for a "quiet Sunday" is a piece of hypocrisy. A concert in a hall disturbs the quietness of a Sunday, but a blaring brass band—provided it is connected with a religious meeting—does not. Church bells clanging away do not. Quietude is not always rest. The quietest place on earth is a cemetery, and if all Christians were collected there the world might be the happier. What we ought to desire on a day of rest is a different kind of noise from that which we have during the rest of the week. Games, sports, enjoyment of all kind evoke noise, and the more of that kind of noise we have the better. There is life in the market place, but in the monastery there is a living death.

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### The Advance of Freethought.

Little more than half a century ago this country was still in the grip of the Puritanical Sunday. The clergy upheld it almost to a man. Games and enjoyments were forbidden. Concerts were taboo, art galleries and museums were closed, but two places were open—the church and the public-house. These were the twin attractions which Christianity had left the people. To get drunk or to get religious—or both. And the partnership was such that care was taken for them not to compete the one with the other. When the church opened the public-house closed. When the public-house opened the church shut its doors. Against that state of things a handful of militant Freethinkers set themselves. They lacked money, position, social influence, everything except a good principle and determination, and gradually their work told. One by one the fetters that made the day of rest a day of demoralization were broken. Sunday excursions were organized, Sunday concerts were attempted. Sunday games were played. All the arguments now used were used then. It was disturbing the quiet of our English Sunday, it was demoralizing the people, it would lead to Sunday labour, above all it was contrary to Christian teaching. But the noise of healthy enjoyment was preferred to the quietude of unhealthy religious observance, and as there were greater opportunities for recreation and entertainment so the hours of labour were curtailed. The behaviour of people underwent a marked improvement, and the weakening of religious belief broke whatever strength the religious argument possessed. The growth of the idea of a rational Sunday was a triumph for Freethought, although only the minority know how much they owe to the fighting Freethinkers of the last two generations for the freedom they have. The claim for a free Sunday is now often put forward in the name of "true religion." But the battle was fought and substantially won in the name of Freethought. What we have to do now is to see that none of the ground won is lost, and the only way to make sure that this shall not happen is to see that Christianity is reduced to its proper proportions in the public mind—a creation of the uncivilized intellect, a friend to obscurantism and stagnation, and a fit possession for fanatics and fools.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Christian Church has left nothing untouched with its depravity; it has made a worthlessness out of every value, a lie out of every truth, a baseness of soul out of every straightforwardness. Let a person dare to speak to me of its "humanitarian" blessings. To do away with any state of distress whatsoever was counter to its profoundest expediency; it lived by states of distress, it created states of distress in order to perpetuate itself eternally.—Nietzsche.

## Was Jesus a Mere Man?

In last week's article we supplied a sample of the apologetic method followed in Mr. Boyd-Scott's popular book *Nevertheless We Believe*. In Chapter VI, which deals with the resurrection of Jesus, the evidential value of the Gospel narratives is entirely discredited, the author going so far as to admit that if they had stood alone intelligent belief in the Resurrection would have been utterly impossible, a statement with which we fully agree. We differ only in refusing to attach any higher value to Paul's evidence. Another sample of the method is to be found in Chapter VII, the title of which is "The Perplexing Humanity of Jesus." Mr. Scott begins thus: "Jesus was a very extraordinary man. Was he more than that?" The question naturally occurs: What more could he have been or become? Is there any being known to us of whom it can honestly be said that he is more and higher than man? We venture to affirm in the strongest and most unmistakable terms at our command that man represents the summit, the highest rung yet reached in the ladder of evolution. Mr. Boyd-Scott ought to know that he is not stating the case accurately when he says that not one in a thousand questions that Jesus was "a supreme soul among the children of men." He is evidently ignorant of the fact that there are thousands in his own city to whom Jesus makes no appeal whatever. He does not mean so much to them as Buddha and Confucius do. His ignorance shows itself in the following passage, in which he characterizes the unbeliever thus:—

I have heard a tone in their voice, seen a look in their eye, which indicate that further questionings lie behind. Have none of you detected these things as you discussed Jesus with those whom Christians call unbelievers?

He tells us that once he had a conversation about Jesus with a famous philosopher who had written an article in which the so-called Divinity of Christ was formally denied. The result of that conversation was that the fruitful philosopher was so impressed that "a film grew on his eyes that in most eyes becomes tears," and before the end he was "almost on his knees." Then Mr. Scott innocently said to himself: "If this Jesus is not something more than what we know as man, this reverence on my friend's part is an idolatrous thing." Unfortunately "one of our most fruitful philosophers" remains nameless, and no means whatever of identification are supplied; but we do not hesitate to aver that the unbelievers known to us are made of a much harder, sturdier, and manlier stuff, and display no tendency to fall almost on their knees when talking about Jesus with a clergyman. The only inference we can draw from the evidence before us is that the author of *Nevertheless We Believe* has never made the acquaintance of profoundly convinced and courageous unbelievers.

The reverend gentleman's view is that Jesus was more than man, or, in other words, that he was a man with the God-head in him dwelling. Upon what authority does he base such a view? Strangely enough, upon the statements of the Four Gospels, whose narratives of the resurrection of Jesus he has already rejected as possessing no evidential value whatsoever. Is their testimony more reliable when it deals with the life and character of their hero, as here also there is considerable contradiction of detail? On this point, however, Mr. Scott takes the historicity of the narratives for granted, well-knowing that even so moderate a scholar as Professor Bacon, of America, admits that not a little legendary matter has crept into the composition of the Gospels. Harnack is of the same opinion, while Schmiedel goes further still and

rejects as legendary all passages which ascribe Divinity to Jesus, or in which Jesus is represented as claiming Divinity for himself. Of course, to these scholars, as well as to Liberal theologians and Modernists generally, Jesus was nothing more than man. Schmiedel disowns all passages in which Jesus is reported as claiming to be in any special sense a Child of God. And yet Mr. Scott says:—

One very perplexing feature of the soul of the man Jesus is this: his unsullied conviction of being a Child of God. The more we see of this the more amazing and momentous it becomes. He had an unsullied, unvarying, unchanged conviction that he was within the love of God all the time as a child of God, and that God was with him all the time as a loving, heavenly Father.....This sunny spirit believed himself to be the one chosen of God to sum up that age of the world, to institute the judgment of the peoples, to impregnate mankind with that explosive seed he called the Realm of God. So pronounced is this, and so unexampled are these claims of his, that some people have called him an impossible dreamer of dreams, a hopeless visionary.

To us it is really immaterial whether Jesus indulged in such utterances concerning himself and his mission or not, the fact being that history bears undoubted witness to their complete emptiness of reality. Granting that he did pretend to be the Son of God in a truer and higher sense than all other men could claim to be, of what benefit has that been to the world at large or to any portion of it? What has the explosive seed called the Realm of God done towards the uplifting and ennoblement of the human race? These are questions which Mr. Scott cannot possibly answer, and which, therefore, he conveniently ignores, and the chief of all questions is that concerning the genuineness of the Gospel records which this Scottish preacher does not deem sufficiently important even to mention, although not a few of the greatest biblical scholars of the day regard them as historically untrustworthy.

Mr. Scott is forced to treat Jesus as unique in that he claimed surrender to himself as the one indispensable condition of discipleship; but surely there is nothing perplexing or even surprising in that. Jesus was still in the making when the Gospels were written. Mr. Scott compares him with other teachers of mankind, all of whom, if truly spiritual, urged their followers to leave them out and pay their homage to their message, while Jesus placed himself at the centre of the allegiance; but the preacher forgets, apparently, that in the estimation of the founders of Christianity, Jesus was, primarily, not a teacher, but the Redeemer of the world. Then, again, the Redeemer of the world was not a mere man, but the Son of God made flesh. Consequently salvation was possible only through faith and trust in and unconditional surrender, not merely to the teaching but pre-eminently to the person of the Lord Jesus. As a matter of fact, in his teaching there was absolutely nothing new, practically the whole of it being much older than the Christian period, and occupying prominent positions in primitive religions. It was as Redeemer, not Teacher, that Jesus was to survive in history. Now, in the Gospels we see in full operation the process of converting the human Jesus into the Divine and Eternal Christ, and the simple prophet of Nazareth into the Priest and King of mankind. Mr. Scott must know that the Christology finally adopted by the Church was clearly an evolutionary product, and that in the Gospels we witness the early stages of its evolution.

One of the earliest fruits of the interesting process was the belief in the sinlessness of Jesus. We are told that no one ever convicted Jesus of sin. Of course not, for the simple reason that in the Gospels he is more than halfway up to his throne as the God-man. The truth is that the Gospel Jesus is the least historical of

all persons. We repeat that he is the Christ of the Church in the early stages of his making, and to look upon him as a real character is a stupendous farce. Mr. Scott, however, in his treatment of this point is the most incorrigible literalist that ever put pen on paper. He places the Gospel Jesus in a category which has never represented reality. All human beings are fallible, and to attribute infallibility of either head or heart or both is to remove him, by a purely imaginary act, from the human category altogether, and make him an absurdly impossible being. We repeat that the Christian faith cannot be expressed in terms of modern thought. From the point of view of modern scientific thought it is a self-condemned superstition, now at last, happily, a dying superstition. The Gospel Jesus ranks with the Gods of ancient Greece, which as soon as they became personal began to pass away. The Churches are putting forth well nigh superhuman efforts to keep the Gospel Jesus alive; but despite all their ceaseless activity he is steadily dying, and nothing is more indisputable than that his days are numbered.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Spiritual Swashbucklers.

Christianity has never lost the instinct of universal dominion.

—Bible Society Report.

There has only been one Christian, and he died on the cross.

—Nietzsche.

I HAVE a weakness for works of reference. Even a Kelly's "London Directory," an A. B. C. Railway Guide, or a Baedeker's Handbook will start me on imaginative journeys to alluring towns and delightful villages. A gazetteer to me opens magic casements to lands anything but forlorn. A dictionary is to me a source of real pleasure, especially if it contains illustrative quotations from "the best authors." My favourite work of reference, however, is the annual report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, which has now reached its 118th issue. Although not by any means a centenarian, I have known this particular publication for more years than I care to remember. When I was a small and idle boy, with the ambition to become a pirate and sail under the Jolly Roger, the thrilling and hair-breadth adventures of the brave colporteurs filled me with envy and despair. Indeed, the annual report was to me, in those far-off days of the last century, what the black-whiskered dare-devil desperados of the Pacific Coast are to the young and tender frequenters of cinema theatres to-day. Now I am middle-aged, and have parted with much of my hair and many of my illusions, my dear old bagmen of Orthodoxy are still hard at work, telling the tale, pocketing the pesetas, and other coins, and writing to headquarters glowing accounts of how they risked their lives and got cash for their sacred stock-in-trade.

Such a subject almost compels the artist to dip his brush in crimson-lake. Even the austere accountant who compiles the figures for the Society's huge report of over 200 pages for the year 1922 writes almost like Marie Corelli in describing the adventures of these courageous colporteurs. This is how he does it in the year of grace 1922, and he and his pen-pushing predecessors have done it in much the same devil-may-care way for scores of years. I blush with pleasure and enthusiasm to transcribe the flamboyant language and the purple passage:—

The sun never sets on their footprints. They are busy in Brazil and in Bulgaria, at Port Said and in Singapore. Nearly half of them belong to India and China—lands which contain three-sevenths of the human race. During 1921 the Society sold by colportage altogether nearly 5,000,000 copies of the Word of God.

Is it not romantic, this union of God and Mammon,

piety and profit? No one would pause, churlishly, to ask why half of these warriors for Christ should be yellow people, or why Clinks should predominate over cockneys. These colporteurs are as resourceful as they are courageous. In France, for instance, they meet whimsical gentlemen with philosophical opinions, and with a distressing habit of permitting their views to influence their conduct, so unlike the stolid and unromantic English people. The Report shows that these commercial travellers of the Faith do possess something of the arts and graces of the salesmen of "Whiteley's" and "Selfridge's":—

"I have no use for it, I am a Freethinker," said a man to Colporteur Feaz, who replied: "Sir, I am happy to meet a Freethinker; I hope that you are really free and really a thinker, but I fear you are a slave." "Really," replied the man, "you are right, I am a slave to other people."

The naughty Freethinker is crushed as if he had met Mons. Georges Carpentier in battle. After this encounter, one fancies he buys a large family Bible for Madame, his spouse, and one cheap one each for the children, while he turns to the *Petit Journal pour Rire* for consolation in the hour of distress. Unfortunately, one convert does not transform a nation, and the report admits, more in sorrow than in anger, that "a good half of the French males do not believe and do not want to believe." Despite the proud boast that the Society "has no frontier," and is assisted by Omnipotence, the report has to admit certain other drawbacks. Soviet Russia, it appears, confronts the colporteurs with "barred doors," and such is the civil disturbance in Germany that no secretary has been appointed to guard the spiritual welfare of the Fatherland. What a change from the good, old days when the German Kaiser's name headed the list of royal and titled donors to the Society, and forced the ordinary citizen to shell out for Snobbery's sake. However, there may be balm in Gilead—or Japan, for when the Japanese Prince Regent visited England he was presented with a copy of the Bible, splendidly bound in crimson morocco, extra gilt, by the obsequious and hopeful officials of the Bible Society. To lose one Royal and Imperial patron may be a loss "too deep for tears," but the faith that moves mountains may cause philosophic doubts as to his own religion in the mind of the Prince Regent of Japan.

The report ranges from China to Peru, and the figures and statistics are calculated to make the sceptic's hair turn slowly white and curl afterwards. For example, the receipts for the year totalled £394,230, despite the financial drawbacks of industrial distress and social conflict. Legacies for the year reached £49,180. The receipts from sales totalled £143,437. The brave colporteurs do not work for nothing, and £44,373 went their way. The report also discloses that £2,937 was spent in publicity, which may help to explain why the Society receives such polite attention in Fleet Street, and other newspaper offices.

Figures such as these should make Freethinkers pause and reflect that Freethought has to make headway not only against gross ignorance, but against a most heavily endowed superstition. During its 118 years of existence this Bible Society's income has totalled £19,301,639, and it is only one among many similar institutions. Hardly a week passes but one or the other receives legacies, and collections are constantly made in the various branches associated with them. In fighting the Christian superstition Freethinkers are opposing an enemy entrenched behind mountains of money, and in money lies much of the power of the clergy. If Freethinkers wish to see an end to this endowment of superstition the one sure way is to continue making converts to Freethought principles.

MIMNERMUS.

## A Bible Character Actor.

The greatest casualty of the war was religion.  
—Rev. Thos. Phillips.

THERE can be no doubt that since the war the clergy of all denominations have discovered that religion has been very badly hit in the minds of the most intelligent persons in the community. Christianity, as an organized religion, was at a very low ebb before the war, and, if possible, it has been in a much worse condition since that terrible calamity. Some of the Churches have lost a very large proportion of their congregations; not so much by the deaths of young soldiers who were sent to the slaughter, either for patriotic reasons or otherwise, but from the loss of many who have returned with no further use for religion or with a positive hatred of and disbelief in it. And this decline among the worshippers in the Churches has affected the so-called Free Churches almost as much as it has the Established Church itself.

All the Churches feel the need of fresh efforts to induce the people to attend, and, above all, of fresh methods of advertising. It is of no use to put out a notice that "Christians are cordially invited to attend." In some cases they are almost implored to do so; but still they remain outside. The Established Church attracts the young by its Scout movement for boys and girls. To the young there is nothing more alluring than an attractive uniform, and, of course, there is the additional attraction of the bugle band.

The Dissenting Churches have not adopted this method so far, but with the Salvation Army and its military bands on the one hand, and the Church Army with theirs on the other, there is no knowing what, under stress of competition, the Free Churches may have to do to keep themselves from utter extinction.

A few weeks ago the Rev. Ernest Thorn, of Peckham, revived an old method of advertisement by appearing in his church in the character of Abraham. Being a clever showman he gave the public notice a week beforehand of what he intended to do. Most of the picture papers jumped at the chance of giving the reverend gentleman a free advertisement for his "show" by publishing a portrait of him in the character several days before the performance at his church took place. It was not surprising to learn that he had a crowded audience or congregation on the occasion when he appeared dressed up in the character of Abraham with beard and costume and other theatrical embellishments in the character of the Biblical patriarch. The local papers agreed that he treated the matter quite "reverentially" from the Christian standpoint and preached a sermon on the subject while in character. Personally I am quite prepared to believe that Mr. Thorn is perfectly sincere. He believes he is doing a real service to religion by adopting such methods, but many sincere Christians think he is doing a great deal towards bringing the Christian religion into ridicule and contempt. Before the war, Mr. Thorn announced his intention of appearing on the stage of the "Crown Theatre," Peckham (now the "Hippodrome") in the character of a knight in armour, but when the Sunday night came, the reverend gentleman found it necessary to make the humiliating announcement that he was unable to get the armour on. Even with the aid of earnest prayer he could not get into armour that was a size too small for him. So he contented himself with showing the audience the armour, and getting a very good advertisement for a very poor show. Dressed up in the costume of Abraham he delivered a sermon that pleased the majority of his followers; but as most of

them probably knew little or nothing of the alleged career of Abraham, the task was easy enough. They did not know that among scholars it is very doubtful whether such a personage as Abraham ever lived, and that the Hebrew word merely signifies a "Father of Nations." I do not know, as there was no report in the papers, whether Mr. Thorn told his congregation that Abraham represented his wife Sarah to be his sister, and that the ruling Pharaoh was so smitten with her beauty that he took her into his house, although at that time she was a blushing young wife between the age of sixty and seventy; but we are told that "Pharaoh entreated Abraham well for her sake," and made him a present of sheep and oxen, asses and servants and camels, as the result of the deception (Genesis xii, 16).

Nor do I expect that Mr. Thorn told his hearers that later on Abraham, in order to rescue his relative Lot—with whom he had frequent quarrels over the possession of some land—armed 318 servants and fought with four powerful kings, defeating them utterly. So complete was his victory that the King of Sodom who fled and fell in a previous encounter (see chapter xiv, 10) now presented himself to Abraham alive and congratulated him on his victory. These are small details that I expect quite escaped Mr. Thorn's memory. Also I should like to know how Mr. Thorn justified Abraham's conduct in turning his maid Hagar, with her child Ishmael, of which Abraham was the father, out into the wilderness to starve, to please his wife Sarah. And further, whether Mr. Thorn's congregation laughed when he told them the story of the three men or angels who appeared to Sarah and informed her in confidence that she would bear a child although at the time she was close on ninety years of age and her husband a hundred?

I have been waiting anxiously during the past three or four weeks to see if Mr. Thorn contemplated any further performances, either in the character of Abraham or any other Bible hero. Up to the present, however, there have been no further announcements. Personally I should like to see him try to impersonate Adam in the Garden Scene of the great drama of "The Stolen Apple," assisted by one of the young ladies of his congregation as Eve, but Mr. Thorn is like Bottom the weaver in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he likes to play all the parts himself, and we know that Bottom finally had to play the part of an ass against his will, and assuredly this ought to be a warning to Mr. Thorn under the circumstances. Presently we may have other clerical gentlemen who wish to emulate Mr. Thorn in his new line of business. Some may desire to attempt to impersonate Noah in the character of the collector of the animals of the greatest menagerie on earth; they might not only be able to write another "Insect Play," but if they are clever enough they might write a pantomime in which all the animals that went into the Ark two by two, or seven by seven, might play their part, from the elephant down to the flea. Indeed, there is no knowing what these clerical gentlemen may do if they only get enough encouragement. They might impersonate Moses and Aaron and show us how all the plagues were produced by the throwing down of a magic rod! And finally, one of them might impersonate Samson, and give ocular demonstration of the possibility of a strong man to demolish a thousand persons by the skilful manipulation of the jawbone of an ass.

But enough! Let us hope that Mr. Thorn will continue to give his character sketches of Bible heroes and that many other clerical showmen will follow his example. We may be sure that it will cause many to think, and some to enquire—and in the end will lead many into the path of Freethought.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

## A Great Thinker!

THE Rev. A. C. Dixon, D.D., like the famous parrot, is "the devil of a one for thinking," but, unlike that wise bird, he is also able to speak and even able to write. Moreover, Dr. Dixon has a further advantage over the parrot, for either he himself or some of his friends have been able to spend a considerable sum of money on the publication, as an advertisement in the *Times*, of three closely printed columns of his great thoughts.<sup>1</sup> If one who is, as he repeatedly assures us, "a thinker," "a scientist given to correct thinking," "a freethinker," "a rationalist," "an agnostic," and every other kind of exact thinker, will permit a very ordinary person to proffer him advice, I would like to suggest that *Home Chat*, or the *Children's Magazine*, would have been a more suitable medium of publication than the *Times*, many of whose readers must be too well acquainted with the writings of Huxley, Malthus, and Darwin, to accept Dr. Dixon's thoughts for their actual sayings. For Dr. Dixon is too great a thinker to think only for himself, and he kindly provides thoughts for these other great men as well. Some of his readers will know, for example, that Darwin did not, as Dr. Dixon alleges, "give the strong the scientific right to destroy the weak"; and that Malthus did not make the suggestion that Dr. Dixon attributes to him. The subscribers to *Pretty Prattle for the Home Circle* or the *Churchwomen's Friend* might perhaps accept these ancient and exploded allegations for facts, and not recognize them as the thoughts of our great thinker, Dixon.

Dr. Dixon, though he claims to be a scientist, rejects the theory of the mutation of species. Darwin, whose works this doctor of divinity has either never read, or has failed to understand, collected a vast amount of evidence to show how one species can evolve from another. Dr. Dixon, without producing any evidence at all and without propounding any argument against the doctrine of evolution, tells us that by "correct thinking," he has come to the conclusion that that doctrine is "absurd." By his "exact observation and correct thinking" he has learnt, so he tells us, that the great war was caused, and many other crimes have been caused, by a belief in this doctrine of evolution! He has indeed learnt all manner of wonderful things by this scientific process of thought, which, however, he fails to show us at work though it has apparently led him to conclusions directly opposed to those of all other men of science. Speaking of evolution he says:—

It is unscientific to believe that this can take place without the power of reproduction. The knowledge I have "gained by exact observation and correct thinking" forbids my believing this biological absurdity.

Why indeed should he believe such an absurdity. No upholder of the doctrine of evolution has ever propounded such a theory; and there does not appear to be any necessity for "exact observation" before imputing absurd theories to those whom he wishes to refute. His "exact observation" has apparently never been applied to the theories which he criticizes—or rather denounces. It is a travesty on the arguments of Darwin and Malthus to state that they advocated the right of the strong to kill the weak, and the slaughter by pestilence and famine of redundant populations. These authors merely recorded their observations upon the course of past history, and in so far as either of them advocated anything at all, he

advocated the very opposite to that which Dr. Dixon alleges. For Malthus advocated the practice of self-restraint, and the postponement of marriage, and it is an unwarrantable libel upon that writer to suggest that he was in favour of the slaughter of people by pestilence and famine. The struggle for existence, a struggle in which the weak are ruthlessly extirpated by the strong, is Nature's cruel way—so Darwin proved—of keeping within the limits of subsistence the countless animals born into the world. Pestilence and famine were Nature's method—or as Dr. Dixon would say, God's ways—of keeping uncivilized human populations within the bounds of their food supplies; that is what Malthus fully demonstrated before advocating the substitution of a kindlier method of achieving the same object. If Dr. Dixon had read the "Essay on Population" he would have known this, and been unable to make so unfounded an accusation. And if he has not read a book he should refrain from attributing to its author some of his own overflowing stock of thoughts. His statements about these two great authors are no more justifiable than mine would be if I accused him of advocating murder because he believes in the story of the murder of Abel by Cain, or of advocating the slaughter of women, children and prisoners, because the Bible tells us, and he believes, that God ordered such massacres to take place. To relate what has happened in the past is not the same thing as advocating similar happenings to-day.

Again, it is a travesty of Huxley's attitude towards the theological claim to know the unknowable, to say that he "simply meant to say that he could not find God by looking through a telescope or microscope." To great thinkers like our reverend friend we must of course allow some license in the use of metaphor, but this is a grotesque summing up of Professor Huxley's speeches and writings. If statements of this kind pass muster at meetings of the Bible League, the audiences must be composed of persons who have never, at first hand, studied the writings of Huxley, or Malthus, or Darwin. Such gross misconstructions of the theories and the arguments of famous men would be immediately denounced as false if the speaker's listeners were not entirely illiterate. The main contentions of all these three men are undisputed by any modern thinkers—except, of course, this Dr. Dixon whose claims to be a thinker we must not overlook.

But Dr. Dixon's methods of "correct thinking" appear to preclude any necessity for verifying the statements that he makes. "Before the times of Lord Bacon scientists had their theories and sought to make Nature recognize them," is one of the assertions he makes without citing any evidence to support so extraordinary an accusation. It would have been helpful to us agnostics, to each of whom he applies the epithet, "ignoramus," if this great thinker had quoted even one scientist who sought to make Nature recognize anything! If he merely means that some men, who called themselves scientists, tried to twist facts so as to make them fit theories, he himself offends in this respect. Dr. Dixon in the Arizona Desert observed that the leaves of a certain tree always presented their edges rather than their faces to the wind, that the mesquite tree sent down its roots very deeply into the soil in search of water, and that the vegetation in general was suited to the conditions under which it existed. So from "these proofs of design" Dr. Dixon concluded that there must be "a thinker, and that that thinker can be no other than God"—a conclusion which involves a very long jump from the premises.

As I look out from my window I see a plant perishing from want of water. Will that thinker—I refer now to Dr. Dixon and not to his God—inform me what this observation which I believe to be "exact," really portends. Is my plant a proof of lack of design, since

<sup>1</sup> *Why I am an Evangelical Christian and not a Modernist* (Substance of an Address given under the auspices of the Bible League in Caxton Hall, Westminster, June 22, 1923).—*The Times*, June 28, 1923.

it is apparently ill-suited to the conditions under which it is at present living, or did the great designer overlook my garden—perhaps as a punishment for my infidelity? It would have been helpful to this "free thinker" as he calls himself if he had studied some of the numerous refutations of the old teleological argument which he so confidently trots out again in spite of its obvious unsoundness.

By thought Dr. Dixon apparently expects not only to add to his own stature, but also to alter the facts which all other thinkers acknowledge to be correct. When he, at the commencement of his address, says, "I am a thinker, not necessarily a profound thinker....." one feels inclined to question the modest qualification. For his profundity is such that he appears always to be out of his depth. Dr. Dixon's thinking, wonderful as it is, might—I hope he will excuse me saying so—he even more "correct" and "exact" if he devoted a little time to the study of those theories upon which he heaps such undeserved scorn. He tells us he is a scientist as well as a thinker, but the only science to which he refers is one with which he is evidently wholly unfamiliar. I, too, have a great thought. How easy it must be to obtain the degree of Doctor of Divinity! It is to be feared that the parrot who could not speak will retain its reputation for wisdom longer than this Doctor of Divinity who has learnt to write.

JOCELYN RHYS.

### Acid Drops.

Another verdict of manslaughter has been brought against God by a Staines jury. A Staines schoolboy was killed by lightning, and the jury returned a verdict of "Death by visitation of God." All we can say about it is that a God who goes round killing schoolboys in that fashion is a public nuisance. What harm had the schoolboy done him? The evidence showed that the boy was running for shelter. Are we to assume that God was annoyed with him for trying to get out of his way? The result would seem to show that the boy's distrust in his God was justified. But what should we say to a man who went about discharging strong currents of electricity in such a way as to kill schoolboys? We should hardly want to fall down on our knees and praise him for his unapproachable goodness and inscrutable wisdom. Anyway the verdict of the jury stands. It is not a case of killing by some unknown person—the one who did it is distinctly named. God did it. God killed that schoolboy, and the proper course would be for the court to issue a warrant. It is useless saying God cannot be got at. There are fifty thousand parsons who profess to be in daily communion with him. What a God!

The *Church Times* is disgusted that the Government should have made peace with Turkey. It sheds tears over the peace and laments over the fear that "the throne of the Patriarch" may be sent into exile. It cries out that "the great Church of Saint Sophia, once within the grasp of its rightful owners, will remain a shrine to the false prophet." We like that phrase "rightful owners." St. Sophia was built in the fourth century by the Romans and was captured by the Turks in the fourteenth. Now who the deuce are its rightful owners? One would imagine that the people who built and paid for the building were on the spot. The plain truth is, of course, that the "Church saw a chance of Christians plundering the Mohammedans and is angry at such an opportunity being thrown away. And if that could be done another war would not daunt the *Church Times*. It would all be for the glory of God, and if war came there would be another exemption clause for the clergy in the Military Service Act. If there were not the *Church Times* would soon begin to talk about religious persecution—a term which it actually applies to the disestablishment of the Church in France. But when one has a paper which can talk by the column, and with the greatest gravity about the solemnity and the importance of such diversified stupidities as incense, candles, vestments, prayers for the

dead, and prayers to the Mother of God, etc., one should be prepared for anything.

Up to the present, so far as we can judge, the Roman Church seems to be straining every nerve to consolidating its position in the new Irish Free State. Public buildings are being dedicated to the Sacred Heart—why not the sacred foot or some other part of the Divine anatomy? If a precedent is required, it was not the foot which the Lord showed Moses. Religion is kept well to the front in the Army, and on the Secretary of the Oratory Committee reporting that some of the men were evading the collection when they went to the Mass, it was decided that the collection should be taken while they were on parade.

If that is the way the New State intends carrying on it is building up piles of trouble for Ireland in the future. The Roman Church has been a cause of demoralization in every country in which it has been allowed to consolidate its influence, and it will prove no exception in this case. It is also worth noting that the same Church is making headway in this country, and as the brains forsake the Protestant Church it is likely to continue doing so. Freethinkers here, in spite of the advance made, may yet find themselves faced with a far more severe fight than any of the present generation dream of.

Thus Mr. Lloyd George in the *Daily Chronicle* :—

Of all the bigotries that savage the human temper there is none so stupid as the Anti-Semitic. It has no basis in reason—it is not rooted in faith—it aspires to no idea—it is just one of those dank and unwholesome weeds that grow in the morass of racial hatred.

No one but an Anti-Semite—the sure mark of an ignorant and narrow temperament will seriously dispute this, but Mr. Lloyd George overlooks one thing, without which his description is robbed of a great deal of its practical value. This is that Anti-Semitism, and racial hatred generally, is in the modern world almost wholly a product of Christianity. There was nothing marked of the kind in the ancient world. Civilization in antiquity, marred though it was in some cases by caste, in others by pride of social status, was without that virulent race hatred which has been so common in the modern world. And if Mr. Lloyd George was a better read man with a capacity for philosophical thinking it might pay him to reflect how this came about.

The civilizations of Greece and Rome were saved from this ugly development because they had no sacred books given to a chosen people, and also because the basis of their culture was broadly human and social. Right through the Greek and Roman teaching the humanistic note is strong. With Christianity it is absent, save in those cases where the writer was so strongly under the influence of the Pagan writers that it overcame his Christian tendencies. And when the break up of the Roman Empire came the influence of Christianity showed itself by accentuating national and racial prejudices and antipathies. Men were not members of a common family so much as they were or were not believers in a particular form of religion. If they were Christians they were worthy of consideration, if they were not they were outside the pale. Truth and decency need not be practised towards them, the ordinary courtesies of life did not apply, and the more the Christian Churches strove to gain and retain power the stronger became the barriers between peoples. The Christian hated the Jew because he was not a Christian, he hated the Mohammedan for the same reason, and he hated, within the bounds of Christendom, every other Christian who differed from him in the many absurdities of his creed. And the one thing that would have helped to remedy these evils—the play of reason in the life of men—was sternly and savagely suppressed by the Christian Church. If Mr. Lloyd George would take a rest from his hymn-singing and settle down to serious study of these questions he would find the key to many of them in the savagery, the intolerance, and the narrow egotism which have always been inseparable from Christianity because they are the fundamental passions to which they make appeal.

The *Sunday Express* seems determined to see how far it can go in the art of sheer invention, or in the most rigid economy of the truth. Here is the latest, again about Bradlaugh. Someone, it is said, asked Bradlaugh's opinion about Renan's *Life of Christ*, and Bradlaugh replied:—

I'm a simple sort of person, and I'd rather stick to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. You see they knew him.

Now the man who could imagine Bradlaugh saying anything so idiotic as that would have to be as big a fool as the *Sunday Express* scribblers appear to be. Really the *Sunday Express* might try and get writers who have at least a nodding acquaintance with the truth and an elementary sense of what is probable. And when one reflects that this kind of stuff is swallowed by large sections of the population—not merely when it deals with Freethinkers, but also when dealing with all other matters—it makes one wonder whether after all the popular Press is quite the blessing it is often believed to be. Probably the Press was never at a lower level than it is at present. One only hopes it may improve.

Apart from the fact that the Bishop of Gloucester is poaching on medical preserves we think that there is one factor in his recent speech that may have been overlooked. Hospital treatment has been tightened up, money is very scarce, and a doctor is called in as a last resource. Consequently business is quiet with the medical profession. Taking newspapers as the least reliable source for correct data, our readers will no doubt be able to put together the pieces of this easy jig-saw puzzle. Indeed, we are foolish enough to believe that aerial defence is the little brother to armament firms' dividends; possibly this may be because we do not benuse ourselves with the name of God in smallpox or world-wars. Perhaps the Bishop of Gloucester would be able to see better if he did not take refuge in the name of God, described by Spinoza as the "sanctuary of ignorance."

Sir Edward Clarke, that very staunch Churchman, confesses that some of the Psalms are a terrible cry of revenge. But it is the kind of thing that generations of Christians have nourished themselves on, and with the intense egotism developed by Christianity, we can realize how much the influence of the Bible and of the Church has contributed to the perpetuation of that militarism which has brought Europe to the brink of ruin, and now threatens to complete that ruin with the preparations for another war in this and other countries.

There is much alarm among the members of the Black Army in Bombay over the growth of Sunday games and amusements. In a memorial signed by leaders of the various churches attention is called to the violations of the Sabbath that are taking place, and all Christians are urged to refrain from such conduct in the future. We are not concerned with the professional alarm of the clergy. They are the same all the world over. But it is interesting to note the growth all over the world of the same humanizing tendencies and the same universal disintegration of those barbarous conceptions which underlie and animate genuine Christianity.

We are indebted to a Chicago paper for the information that in Vienna some of the people wish to put away the Christian God and adopt Wodan. Why not? It strikes us that one god is quite as useful as the other. We undertake to get as much from praying to Wodan as any Christian will get from praying to his deity. The same paper also remarks, in a tone of wonder, that some of the country folk actually believe that Wodan still exists. That is really surprising—to anyone who believes in the three-headed god of Christianity.

The Rev. W. H. Draper, Master of the Temple, is one of those clergymen who sense the way the wind is blowing. In the *Weekly Dispatch* for Sunday last he says that he sees no harm in Sunday games. (We fancy it should read that he sees no profit in opposing them.) So he says,

"Let the parks be open for games from, say, two o'clock to 6 p.m." Now that is very generous! The parks may be open for games during the hours when they would be least used. That would at least give the clergy a chance to say they were not required. But why from 2 till 6? Obviously because the churches are open in the morning and evening. So that all Mr. Draper's liberality amounts to is saying, "Let the parks be open for games while my place of business is closed, but when I open let them be shut." That is indeed generous! And the curious thing is that these men say these things without apparently the least notion of how absurd it all is. Quite seriously, if Christianity cannot make a man stupid he may be regarded as immune to folly.

Giving evidence before the Select Committee on Betting the Rev. R. C. Gillie, President of the Sunday-school Union opposed any step towards taxing betting on the ground that it would give it encouragement. He said that the fall of a considerable number of young people was due to betting, and among his own congregation these cases had increased during the war. That does not say very much for the influence of this gentleman and his religion. Now if it had been said of members of some Freethinking Society the parsons would not have been long in drawing a moral from the circumstance.

We do not question for a moment that some of the members of Mr. Gillie's congregation have gone wrong. Indeed if all the members of church and chapel congregations kept straight the decline in criminal cases would be very marked. All the same we question whether betting has more to do with their going wrong than other causes. We have had the same thing said about cinemas, and about the reading of penny dreadfuls, and other things. People may steal to bet, or they may steal to spend on pictures, or they may steal to gratify some other desire, and it is often the case that a young man may steal to take his best girl out. But the purpose for which people steal is never the real cause of their stealing, save so far as a man must have some object in view, and it is a measure of the fitness of the clergy that in such cases they should immediately cry out for repression. They do not realize that what is needed here is not the suppression of one thing after another—generally a fruitless task—but the strengthening of character and the creation of a healthy environment that places the emphasis on the right things and in the right way. The Committee would have done well not to have bothered with the clergy at all. They are never reliable guides at any time, and where genuine morality is concerned they are the worst guides of all.

Canon Peter Green talked a lot of nonsense about a tax on betting bringing money from tainted sources. We wonder how long it is since the Church developed this tenderness as to the source from which money comes? The Canon might have remembered that a great deal of the money of the Churches has come from people who gained their wealth from far worse sources than any that could be obtained from betting. The Church never objected to money that came to it from slavery, from the hideous wrongs of the factory system, from rents derived from slum property, and it is still taking very many thousands yearly as an income of its investments in war stock. Even in that direction it did not do as some laymen did—lend the money to the country when it was needed and forgo the interest. And we are quite certain that if a bookmaker presented any church or chapel with ten thousand pounds there is not one of them that would refuse it.

The Folkestone fisheries were duly blessed by the Rev. W. Pickwen, and the men should now be sure of good catches. But it is all right for the medicine-man who did the job, for if the fishing is not good the Lord will be praised all the same. But we should like one of our Christian readers to point out in what way this ceremony is more effective or more sensible than a similar one by the South Sea savages?



## To Correspondents.

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

H. SILVERSTEIN.—We noticed the announcement that Sir Hall Caine threatens to write a life of Christ. Why not? He knows as much about him as anyone else. Beginning with the New Testament writers all have created the kind of Christ they wished to have, and at that game Sir Hall Caine has as much right as anyone else.

W. MACFARLANE.—The letter you enclose has all the arrogance and impertinence of the typical parson. The hardly concealed air of superiority is nauseating to one who appreciates these men at their proper moral and intellectual value. One striking feature of the letter is the utter inability of the writer to understand either Atheism or the average Atheist. We should like to see some Freethought lectures in Aberdeen.

A. RUSSELL.—Thanks for cutting. All over the world the Labour parties will sooner or later have to face the question of religion. They cannot go on fencing with it for ever. To pretend that they are not concerned with religion when they aim at reorganizing life is absurd. And as a matter of practical policy the Labour Party in this country will have to deal with religion or religion will deal with it. It will not be the first movement that the Churches have patronized, captured, and killed.

"SEARCHLIGHT."—Thanks for "Jottings." We already have a number of leaflets in print. The best way to get the Blasphemy Laws repealed is to go on making Freethinkers. Christians will never act justly towards those who do not agree with them while it pays to act otherwise. We agree with you that there might be a greater distribution of free literature, but that is largely a question of money. Propaganda nowadays is costing quite three times what it did before the war, and at present the tendency is for friends to curtail their subscriptions to voluntary organizations. This is often a matter of necessity.

T. W. EDWARDS.—We noted the case of the vicar and the servant girl, but hardly think the topic worthy of a lengthy letter. Unfortunately the misconduct of these servants of the Lord is far from uncommon.

D. I.—Thanks for note with information contained. The ordinary paper has few scruples in such matters. But we congratulate you on what did appear. Why not write more frequently?

H. R. WRIGHT.—We do not know, and have no way of knowing, what proportion of conscientious objectors were Christians and what proportion were Freethinkers. It must be a matter of opinion with very little fact to go upon, and is not made the clearer by letters which can only be an expression of personal opinion.

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

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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.

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—  
One year 15.; half year, 7. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

## Sugar Plums.

It is so much the set plan for writers when they are dealing with famous men who were Freethinkers never to mention the fact of their heresy that one ceases to feel surprised when a fresh instance is met with. All the same it is one of the ways in which history is falsified and the progress of genuine freedom of thought hindered. One may take as an illustration of this the case of Robert Owen. No man did more than he to promote the cause of education and for the benefit of the people. These things are not hidden, or there would be little for the ordinary writer to tell him about. But that Robert Owen was a confirmed Atheist, regarding the religions of the world as "so many forms of geographical insanity," is an aspect of the man that is carefully kept out of sight. The process, in his and in other cases, runs somewhat like this. In the first instance the heresy of the reformer is carefully omitted or is referred to as liberal religious views. That will not hurt anyone. Then the next one talks of him as being a truly religious man, and after several stages we have him presented to the world as a genuine Christian, although not recognized as such by the Church of his day. And as these falsified biographies become the text-books for future students the truth is gradually buried, sometimes beyond the possibility of recovery. The worst of it is that often those who claim to be reformers help in the work.

We were reminded of this policy by an article in a recent issue of the *Daily Herald* by Marjorie Bowen on William Godwin. Of course the writer may not have known what Godwin's opinions were on religion, and may have taken the books about him nearest to her hand as the authority. But his opinions on Christianity were very plain to those who read his books attentively, and were well known to his friends. Although Miss Bowen gives the titles of a number of Godwin's books, she does not mention his essays which contain an elaborate attack on Christianity, and for all the article tells its readers Godwin might have been a liberal minded Christian, something of the F. D. Maurice type. It never seems to strike a number of the *Daily Herald* writers who deal with this kind of subject from time to time that to suppress the truth about a man's views on religion, to refrain from saying to its readers that this man was an Atheist or a Freethinker when pretending to give an outline of his life, is inferentially to lie to those who read. The *Daily Herald* at least ought not to be above telling the truth about Freethinkers.

Godwin's "Essays" (On Jesus, God, the influence of Christianity, etc.) were written towards the end of his life. They are not profound, but they are straightforward, and they express a condemnation of Christianity root and branch. Godwin expressed a hope that they would be issued after his death, and this task fell naturally to his daughter, Mary Woolstonecraft Shelley, but for some reason this was not done. The Essays first appeared after her death in 1873, and were published by the firm of H. S. King. We do not know whether any subsequent edition was ever issued, but the book is there for all to consult who are writing about Godwin. There is a certain grim fitness in what Godwin says about the profession of to-day, "It renders every man in some degree a hypocrite." He might have said as truthfully that it makes them in some degree untruthful. For a lie may be told by keeping back the truth as well as in express words. And that kind of falsehood is the safest to tell, the most cowardly in the telling, the hardest to expose, and the most dangerous in its consequences.

Having said what we have concerning one article in the *Daily Herald* we are the more pleased to copy the following from a review of *Isles of Illusion*, by Bohun Lynch, a record of the South Seas. Speaking of missionaries, the author says:—

The missionaries are just like kings to the natives. They pinch all their copra and all their land, and forbid them to trade with anyone else. There is perpetual war between the Presbyterians and the Catholics. The Pres-

byterians spread the most abominable lies about the priests who are really good chaps.....the Presbyterian missionaries are medically trained. They are the only doctors in a group of islands teeming with diseases.....

They are paid £300 a year and get a house, a large launch, and all the provisions free. They get all goods free of freight, and use this privilege to undersell the wretched men who are trying to earn a hard living by "trading" in this pestilential climate. They use their spiritual influence over the superstitious natives to make them bring all the copra to the mission instead of to the store, frankly telling the wretched Kanaka that "great big devil, he get you belong night if you no bring plenty copra.".....

After a few years they have accumulated enough money to go and live in England, when they talk of the martyrs of the mission field. The other variety that prevails here, the Melanesian mission, I have not struck yet.....I believe they are better.....

The reviewer, Mr. W. J. Turner, says that he has seen a number of notices of the book, but not one has called attention to this passage about missionaries. Of course not. That is the way the Press serves the Churches and the way in which the two work to keep the people in ignorance. And yet there are millions spent every year on this imposture of foreign missions, and the Press remains silent because, as one editor frankly confessed to us some years ago, it does not pay to rouse religious prejudice against one.

Those of our readers who are fortunate enough to be able to take holidays this year might remember that some good may be done by taking an extra copy of the *Freethinker* and introducing it into likely quarters. Many new readers are gained in this way. There is great need at present for all the help that can be given us in the direction of increasing sales. Trade is bad and prices are again on the rise. We have had one notice of an increase in the price of paper and expect another will come so soon as the paper ring sees its chance.

Mr. Whitehead is having a very successful time in the North. At Nelson and Preston he has been holding some good meetings, and he will continue at Preston, in the Sessions Ground, Market Square, to-day (July 22) at 7, and every evening during the week at 7.45.

The Birmingham Branch of the N.S.S. are having an outing on Sunday, July 22. The destination is to be Sutton. Members and friends are invited to meet at Steelhouse Lane tram terminus at 2.30 p.m., or Chester Road terminus at 3.15 p.m. Tea can be arranged for at a moderate charge.

Mr. Corrigan is holding a series of open-air meetings on Clapham Common every Tuesday evening. The audiences have hitherto been good and attentive. The meetings commence at 7.45. South London Freethinkers will please note. Mr. Corrigan will also lecture at Finsbury Park to-day (July 22) in the morning, and in Victoria Park in the evening.

Mr. Councillor Monks, President of the Manchester Branch of the N.S.S., was the speaker at the Sunday afternoon meeting of the Regent Road Wesleyan Church, Salford, last week. His subject was "Death and the Beyond," and must have served as an eye-opener to many of the usual attendants. Mr. Monks, we are informed, dealt with his subject in a very exhaustive manner, but there was little or no discussion. One illuminating comment came from the chairman, a Christian, who said that if this life were all, there was nothing left but to eat, drink, and be merry. That, of course, is quite good Christianity, but it is wretched counsel, and shows how far a Christian may be, and often is, from an understanding of what morality is. In any case the address was a very useful bit of propaganda work.

We are asked to announce that Mr. A. B. Moss will speak in Regent's Park, near the bandstand, this evening (July 22). Particulars will be found in the "Lecture Notices."

## Immortality.

### IV.

(Concluded from page 438.)

3.—*Future Completion Inferred from Present Incompleteness.* It is said that because a great many people exhibit faculties which from shortness of time or adversity of fortune are not developed to the full extent in this sphere of existence, they must be reserved for another, where their capacities will unfold under the best conditions. Even as regards men with no less success than ability, Shakespeare and Milton for instance, it is urged that they are just as likely as the others to be kept for activity in a future state, because to judge from their works they were capable of still higher achievements than any they attained unto. Thus, from the incompleteness of man in the life that now is, the present argument infers his completion in a life to be. Those who maintain this also say that man cannot be supposed to finish his course on reaching perfection, because his value being then the greatest, it would be a piece of inconceivable wastefulness to destroy him, or to let him perish. It may well be replied, however, that the majority of mankind give no suggestion of latent powers, and appear complete enough in their respectable mediocrity. People of this class have very little trouble in bringing their common-place faculties to the proper use. But why should this exercise be perpetual? Is the ploughman to have immortality that he may cut a better furrow in heaven than on earth? Besides, the reason why we attach such importance to great men, and think them likely to survive for further triumphs, is simply because they are rare. If greatness were universal and not exceptional, no one would ever notice it, whilst everyone would observe gravitation more if it only occurred here and there, for all would say what a might power that must be which can bring down before it masses elsewhere immovable. Again, wastefulness is purely relative, and in presence of vast resources like those of Nature becomes ridiculous. If things be evolved by the law of inward necessity, there is no question of waste. But if they are the effects of design, the same holds good under the circumstances. The carpenter who twists a nail and throws it away, still goes on to finish the box he is constructing, provided there are nails enough at his disposal. Thus, assuming the existence of a cosmic plan, it does not follow that part of this plan is to utilize to the full every member of the economy designed, much less to bring each one to perfection; for the object may be nothing more than the realization of a system whereof the constituents at any given time and in any given combination are only subsidiary instruments, and not things or beings of independent importance destined all of them to attain their full development. This last seems to be what is taught throughout by the natural order of events. The creature vanishes, the creative energy survives. The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal. Year by year Nature repeats the self-same wonder. The dry twigs become indwelt by the vivifying sap; the buds shoot, and, as the warmth increases and the dews lave them, they gently burst asunder, and the green leaf appears and lingers for a while; then come the heats of summer and the blasts of autumn, and the foliage darkens and yellows, and by and by withers and falls away, and the branches are left bare as aforetime; and next spring the marvel begins afresh and runs the same course. This is repeated over and over again whilst long ages roll by and tender shrubs become monarchs of the forest, grow old and rot, and go to pieces; and from the dust of the dead other trees in multitudes

innumerable spring forth and flourish for a time, and then wither and decay, and find oblivion like their sires of the distant past; and this effort to trace in thought, over boundless tracts of space, and through unmeasured depths of time the widening out of what is symbolically rehearsed in the spectacle witnessed each successive year, brings us only to the fringe of the mystery, for we know that when the earth shall have ceased to yield her increase, and the verdure of spring and the deep hues of summer and the myriad tints of autumn are departed hence, and a dry and crumbling husk is all that remains of a world once instinct with life and beauty, there will endure mighty and unimpaired as of old, the mystic power that in days gone by wrought the wonders of the seasons and planted the immemorial forests that have fled, and raised the perpetual hills that have passed away; and this "Ancient of Days," serene amid the chaos, will go on to accomplish its inner destiny, to realize its self-determined purpose by evolving forms of being that reason fails to indicate, or imagination to divine.

Finally, it would seem that we are not justified in believing man to be immortal as man, or under his own formality. Still, however, it is possible to regard him as immortal in another way. Individuality is due to contrast, and therefore implies limitation. For the individual has one or more characteristics different from and therefore limited by those of others. Thus, of six balls, each of different colour, every one has five limitations, these being five colours which it has not, because the rest have them respectively. But that which is limited and dependent is imperfect, and has no original principle of continuity. Hence, individuals, as such, are liable to corruption; and an object which appears likely to continue the same may have one individuality to-day and another to-morrow, and so on indefinitely. Formation, transformation, and reformation, is the unvariable course of Nature. But the perpetual change going on around us implies the presence of a changeless activity which alone is immortal, because it alone has a native power to be. True existence is from this ultimate source, and the extent of the real being of anything is its vital union with the same. Hence our immortality does not depend upon the preservation of our separate selves, but upon the losing of all that tends to mark us off from the supreme reality whence we have come. For whatsoever sets apart our existence as something distinct from the true font of being lessens our participation in immortal life, because it makes us different from that which alone possesses immortality.

This truth has been perceived in one form or another by most of the great moral and religious teachers. To be is to be in God. Sin is self-will, and the punishment thereof destruction, because to follow our own peculiarities and distinctive tendencies deprives us of immortality by separating us from the Immortal One, even God who is our home. C. CLAYTON DOVE.

#### A SOCIAL ANACHRONISM.

Every member of the State has certain privileges, but he has also to perform certain duties and discharge certain obligations. This is true from the king to the crossing sweeper. But there is one member of the State who has no duties and no obligations, but who has a number of privileges. He has an army of men to look after his interests, his name is used in our civic and social functions, and his importance is impressed upon the receptive mind of the child. He has, moreover, special laws which aim at preventing criticism of him and his alleged actions. This privileged but irresponsible member of the State is known as God. The only member of the State who has no duties and no obligations, but has more privileges than any other person. The existence of God is a challenge to democracy and a denial of social equality.—*Simple Simon.*

## The Right of Way Between Two Blades of Grass.

OUR readers who were fortunate enough to see "The Insect Play" by the Brothers Capek<sup>1</sup> during its brief run must congratulate themselves. They will have glimpsed, in a negative manner, that New World of which we have heard so much. For those who buy daily papers for amusement, for those who do not care two pins for popularity or orthodoxy, in a world of smashed values, for all who can calmly contemplate plutocrats and aristocrats in the struggle for a supremacy that never arrives, even if this play had never been produced, there is the certainty that humbug, hypocrisy, and the delusion of force have come to an end. We are optimistic enough to think that this number of enlightened ones is not a few, for we are living at the end of an old dispensation and at the beginning of a new one. There is just the possibility, by a miscarriage of Providence, that the human race may take the right turning, but it is a question of time and its relation to those events in universal affairs which are incapable of being scratched by the pens of needy novelists and journalists.

This play was produced at the Regent Theatre by Mr. Nigel Playfair. It was adapted for the stage from a literal translation made by Mr. Paul Selver, for whose activities we are indebted in many directions. It has been produced in Moscow, Berlin and Prague, and for a few weeks it lived in the limelight in London and then disappeared.

We are not disappointed with its reception. It is, if we may use a biblical simile, a John the Baptist play, apparently preaching in the wilderness, but like John Davidson's prophecy, it is the type of play that is *to be*, for the world cannot be sustained by bipeds who must have peppermints and Miss Ethel M. Dell, or even beefsteak and Rudyard Kipling. As we were entering the theatre, a tender-hearted lady gave a penny each to three ragged urchins. She had apparently forgotten to count for she wanted to give the first another penny, which was resolutely refused: "I got mine," he said, and scampered off. The senseless little brat had no initiative—or he could have had two-pence.

The curtain goes up on the Prologue, in which a chaser of butterflies explains to a Tramp the reason for catching these pretty little playthings of Time. To the Tramp's question of "What's it all for?" the Lepidopterist replies, "Love of Nature." In a world where phrases are incantations, this is as good a reason as any; for those who like it, there is not much difference between a horse-chestnut and a chestnut-horse.

The first act is an epitome of all those social vapourings so dear to the heart of the pale-faced girl typist who clutches her *Daily Mirror* or *Daily Sketch* as she seeks to find her workman's ticket in a vanity bag. It is life in the classes. It is a satirical sketch of well-dressed men and women. It is the social side of life with no value ever likely to be stamped upon it; it is simply a distorted view, and as hopeless in its direction as the life at the extreme opposite. This act is entitled "The Butterflies," and the only woman in it is attracted by the naturalness of the tramp who repulses her in spade-like language. It was a glorious laugh from beginning to end.

In the second act, called "Creepers and Crawlers," we approach the sacred rights of property from a new angle. Two characters representing Mr. and Mrs. Beetle roll a ball on to the stage; they jangle about it, and eventually, when they are away, a stranger comes

<sup>1</sup> "And so *ad infinitum*" (*The Life of the Insects*), by the Brothers Capek, price 2s. The authorized translation from the Czech by Paul Selver. Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press.

and takes it. The ball is their capital. Then a character called the Ichneumon Fly appears dragging the corpse of a cricket to its lair. This is food for its larva. In advice tendered to the Tramp, the Ichneumon Fly explains, as it were in an interview with great men, the secret of his success. He has stabbed crickets in the back, and to the Tramp he says, after committing the deeds: "Well, did you see that neat piece of work, eh? It's not everyone who could do that. Ah, my boy, that's what you want—brains, expert knowledge, enterprise, imagination, initiative—and love of work, let me tell you." The Tramp is not convinced.

Act III brings us to the ant world. There is biblical injunction to go to the ant for instruction, but probably this was one of those cases where the inspired writer dropped into witticism or wrote it to convince slaves that incessant work was a noble aim. In the centre of the stage there is a blind ant counting time. Drab figures are walking to and fro to its ceaseless count of one, two, three, four—one, two three, four. The Tramp is astonished. The Chief Engineer calls out to the blind ant, "Quicker! Quicker!" It responds, and the whole of the figures move more quickly. The Second Engineer then rushes on with a discovery—a new method of speeding up. If the blind ant will count "blank, two, three, four," the creatures will move more rapidly; this is done—and the Tramp feels giddy.

Here, my readers, is the gem of the setting. The Engineer's remarks are simply a travesty of what are called leading articles taken from any newspaper. We transcribe freely, and it must be imagined that these two characters are talking at the Tramp in the same manner that various humbugs unload their nonsense at broadcasting centres. We, of course, refer to that stuff which can be found in the twopenny box at secondhand booksellers. Asked by the Tramp as to who gives them their orders the following ensues:—

Chief Engineer: Reason.

Second Engineer: Law.

Chief Engineer: The interests of the State.

Second Engineer: That's it—that's it.

Tramp: I like that—all for the whole, and the whole for all.

Chief Engineer: For its majesty.

Second Engineer: And against its enemies.

Tramp: What's that? Against whom?

Chief Engineer: Against all.

Second Engineer: We are surrounded by enemies.

Chief Engineer: We defeated the Black Ants—

Second Engineer: And starved out the Brown—

Chief Engineer: And subjugated the Greys, and only the Yellows are left; we must starve out the Yellows—

Second Engineer: We must starve them all out.

Tramp: Why?

Chief Engineer: In the interests of the whole.

Second Engineer: The interests of the whole are the highest.

Chief Engineer: Interests of race.

Second Engineer: Industrial interests.

Chief Engineer: Colonial interests.

Second Engineer: World interests.

Chief Engineer: Interests of the world.

Second Engineer: Yes, yes, that's it.

Chief Engineer: All interests are the whole's.

Second Engineer: Nobody may have interests but the whole.

Chief Engineer: Interests preserve the whole.

Second Engineer: And wars nourish it.

This jabber pitched at the Tramp in a mechanical and staccato manner reaches such a climax that he shouts out: "Slowly, for the love of Mike, slowly, let me think."

The ants, as a result of one dropping dead, are instructed to pick up the corpse by numbers to save time. An inventor enters with a big glass head—inside it he says is a machine, the swiftest, most effective crusher of life—but no one must knock against his head or it would burst, smash, bang. *Æsop's* fables are very tame in comparison with this.

Chief Engineer: Great is Science, and it will prevail—there will be war.

Tramp: Why war?

Chief Engineer: Because we have a new war machine.

Second Engineer: Because we still need a bit of the world.

Chief Engineer: A bit of the world from the Birch-tree to the Pine-tree.

Second Engineer: The road between two blades of grass.

Naturally war is declared on the Yellow Ants after finding a *casus belli*. The blind ant is still counting, "blank, two, three, four." The din increases and the Tramp soliloquises:—

It makes yer think o' them ole scenes,  
With star-shells over 'ead,  
The night we left a thousan' dead—  
And kepture two latrines.

If the writer may add his quota to these four lines, it was within his knowledge that he estimated the enemy had spent about three hundred and sixty pounds on "bumping" a latrine near his battery. For the disturbance of the ground, now probably cultivated, the peoples of Germany have to foot the bill.

We are afraid that this article is already too long, but, to briefly summarize the play, it may be described as the red lightning of satire. Each of the commanders thank God for the victory. The Tramp, exasperated, crushes one of them with his heel. A flagseller comes on the scene among the wounded and dying, and two ladies in front of us got up and went out. In the Epilogue, the Tramp is found in the wood, dead; the Woodcutter points out to the woman who is taking her sister's baby to be christened that one dies and another is born. In terms of eternity, wars, conquests, empires—what are they all but the fluttering of the wings of a moth? As we write, the bees, reckless of Sabbath breaking are gathering honey from the blooms of a bramble-tree. Great white clouds are floating across a Naples-blue sky, the wind is swaying the poplar-trees. If we project our thoughts into the past, Homer, Virgil, Horace, the highest and the lowest have experienced all this as well as the horrors of war; they are dead and gone. There may be a trick in time; there may be nothing but the eternal now, but we should like to think that the present generation will reverse the hard saying of Hegel "that we learn from history that mankind learns nothing from history." Is there anything in Europe now for any statesman of any country to be proud of? And since we are in a querulous mood, *Why did Mr. Nigel Playfair withdraw the Insect Play?* Forty-one performances could not possibly reach all the intelligent people in England who are just as interested in saving the world as anyone, although their methods may be somewhat different from those who chase their own tails in the dialogue of the Ant Engineers.

WILLIAM REPTON.

#### BLASPHEMY.

Blasphemy consists in words or discourses which are attached to unknown objects that are not fitting to them, or which deprive them of the ideas which the priests have judged fitting to them. Whence it results that to blaspheme is to differ in opinion from the clergy, clearly one of the most horrible of crimes.—*Voltaire*.

## George Santayana.

## II.

(Concluded from page 444)

HAVING postulated what he has of poetry, it is not surprising to find that Santayana disapproves of poems that deal only with dramatic situations or the most elevated quality of the sex passion. He has little of good to say of Browning. Browning is the poet of possession, while Santayana feels that the only good is abnegation. In his judgment giving up the physical develops the spiritual; he is almost Anglo-Saxon in the ferocity of his contempt for the physical.

For Santayana poetry has no connection with what we fail to describe by the term "reality." Like religion, it is concerned with man's projection of his consciousness upon his environment in an endeavour to explain phenomena, which is continued throughout the ages. Poetry, like art, becomes an attempt to explain the inexplicable, and it is thus closely allied to the religion, which it is its function to systematize. "Poetry," says Santayana, "is called religion when it intervenes in life, and religion when it merely supervenes upon life is seen to be nothing but poetry."

The modern mind has turned its attention in another direction; it is no longer concerned with the mystery and wonder of religion, but it attempts to find its ultimate explanation in a concise examination of phenomena, and the construction of an empirical catalogue, which it is pleased to call science. Probably it is sufficiently accurate to say that the various systems of science, which have been developed, have been accurate so far as they have been believed in, modern science only being true because it is constituted by the modern type of mind, and because its method affords the possibility of continuous development. The line of investigation pursued by the mediæval alchemist did not possess this possibility, and therefore rapidly became sterile.

Throughout his work Santayana emphasizes the modern conception that external phenomena are discerned by man, and that the actual laws he is pleased to impose upon them are merely methods of his own order of perception. What he does not know he is forced to make great through the medium of poetry and mystery. "The theories of science are creations of human reason; they change with the growth of reason, and express the intellectual impulses of each nation and age. Theories about the higher good do the same, only being less applicable in practice, less controllable by experiment, they seldom attain the same distinctness and articulation."

But from time to time there arises a man or men capable of creating what seems to be an irrefutable theory of reality which is, for the time being, accepted by the generality of men, becoming serviceable to and true for them. These systems have generally, Santayana maintains, been brought to perfection by some great poet, but to-day the perfection of our system of knowledge is only in its essence imaginative, and is described in prose. At such periods, when "the powers of the human mind are adequate to the task of digesting experience, clearness and order inevitably supervene. The moulds of thought are imposed upon Nature, and the fiction of a definite truth arises, together with the vision of a supreme perfection."

It is a remarkable thing that those who are more particularly concerned with understanding the nature of an art, as indeed most scholars are to-day, are more interested in discovery than with working in the art itself and are not often capable of the highest order of creative work. When Santayana's theories and his organization of them are considered, it might be ex-

pected that he would attempt, in his poems, to do something in the nature of what he has indicated as the *métier* of the to-be great modern poetry. But nothing of the kind happens. It is readily comprehensible why his poetic achievements are of the slighter order, although he does occasionally attempt to direct his impulses towards the absolute and the infinite. There is one achievement, however, upon which he can plume himself. There have been many sonnets written in the English language. They have varying beauties, but few of them could be described as really musical. The sonnet does not lend itself in our language to the production of music. Its rhythms are somewhat harsh, its rhyme sequences are very orderly. It is rather as if the sonnet must be carved out of ivory, or some even more difficult material, when it is written in English. Santayana's nineteenth sonnet is musical, and in that respect it is a real poetic achievement. It also contains something of the essence of poetry which has dominated that art in its manifestations throughout time:—

Above the battlements of heaven rise  
The glittering domes of the god's golden dwelling,  
Whence, like a constellation, passion quelling,  
The truth of all things feeds immortal eyes.  
There all forgotten dreams of paradise  
From the deep caves of memory upwelling,  
All tender joys beyond our dim foretelling  
Are ever bright beneath the flooded skies.  
There we live o'er, amid angelic powers,  
Our lives without remorse, as if not ours;  
And others' lives with love, as if our own;  
For we behold, from those eternal towers,  
The deathless beauty of all winged hours,  
And have our being in their truth alone.

Again, in a similar attempt, he has endeavoured to express his theory of life in sonnet six:—

Love not as do the flesh-imprisoned men  
Whose dreams are of a bitter bought caress,  
Or even of a maiden's tenderness  
Whom they love only that she loves again.  
For it is but thyself thou lovest then,  
Or what thy thoughts would glory to possess;  
But love thou nothing thou would love the less  
If henceforth hidden from thy ken.  
Love but the formless and eternal Whole  
From whose effulgence one unheeded ray  
Breaks on this prism of dissolving clay  
Into the flickering colours of thy soul.  
These flash and vanish; bid them not to stay,  
For wisdom brightens as they fade away.

Although he has spent so much thought in the attempt to understand beauty, and to understand why man has created poetry and what its relation to religion is, Santayana finally settled to abnegate, or rather to deny, the particular and specific value of such investigation. He has had to admit that "to feel beauty is a better thing than to come to understand why we feel it.....To have imagination, to love the best, to be carried away by the contemplation of Nature to a vivid faith in the ideal, all this is a great deal more than any science can hope to be. The poets and philosophers who stimulate the same feeling in us by their example do a greater service to mankind and deserve higher honour than the discoverers of historical truth."

This is a harsh dictum, and it is a condemnation of Santayana's own life work, for although he has written some original poems, and has translated others, he has spent more of his time in what he describes as the less valuable attempt to discover historical truth.

G. E. FUSSELL.

This world is eloquent to a man of worth,  
Why should he seek a heaven above the earth?  
Through joy and pain triumphant let him ride,  
Still pressing on and still unsatisfied.

—Goethe.

## Correspondence.

"MOTHER TOLD ME SO."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The above article, by the late G. W. Foote, in your last issue, July 15, deals with a really vital matter, and I venture to ask that you will allow me to add a few words, which possibly may result in an organized method of putting the suggestion usefully in motion.

It has often occurred to me that a great deal more might be done by Freethinkers if they would only begin at home. I have often heard men remark, "Oh! I never interfere with my wife's opinions," or "You can never argue with a woman." Now this point of view is entirely wrong, not only wrong, but extremely harmful to one's children. When a boy leaves school he will hear his father ridicule the Bible, and he may see him smile at their anthropomorphic conception of God. His mother, meanwhile, reads the Bible with a devout and reverent air. How is the boy going to reconcile these facts? Either his father must be wicked, or his mother foolish, and, whichever alternative he accepts, there is injury done to his young moral nature. He ceases to look up equally to both parents. He rejects the one or the other as a trustworthy guide in the conduct of life, and very probably he throws off all authoritative restraint in consequence of the conflicting influences around him.

A mother must expect her boys to be logical, even if her girls are not so, and it is difficult to see how conscience can be maintained, far less strengthened and further developed, in homes where the intellectual atmosphere is full of antagonistic ideas.

Owing to the stupid and antiquated method adopted in our system of education, morals are taught only on the basis of Christianity, children are shown no other justification of duty than the arbitrary command of God. It is right to honour one's father and mother and wrong to covet and steal, because God said so to the Jews about 5,000 years ago, and wrote it with his finger on a tablet of stone.

Were the women of the present day bravely to adopt the negative standpoint, and insist on education being freed from all theological assumptions, and above all were they to see to it that moral precepts were inculcated without reference to supernatural agency, then assuredly the next generation would be spared much suffering which they themselves have passed through. It appears then that the woman's highest and most sacred human interests require of her to enter into the struggle, and acquaint herself of the reason why so many men are no longer Christians, for if they are wrong she must defend her Christian position logically before them; if they are right an all-important work has to be done, in laying a secure foundation for moral teaching, and sweeping away the cob-webs and dust that are sure to dim the eyes of conscience in the young.

I earnestly urge the above to the careful consideration of the male members of our party. Get your wives, your sweethearts and lady friends interested in the subject of Freethought. Point out to them the absurdity of the god idea. Explain to them that Man is not a special creation, but has evolved. Get them to withdraw their children from religious instruction at school, and once they realize that they are not under the heel of a mythical deity, you will have a purer womanhood, a more intelligent mother, and a better wife.

JOSEPHINE MASON.

## Obituary.

It is with unutterable sadness that I have to record the death of my dear wife Sybil Irene, at the early age of twenty-three, and after only five short weeks of married life. In life her influence was my richest blessing, as in death her memory continues my greatest inspiration.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

Nottingham, July 14, 1923.

## 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, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "Romance and Reality."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park) : Near the Fountain) : 6.15, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

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

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park) : 6—10, Mr. Keeling, Mr. Mowbray, Mr. Blady; also every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 7—10. The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 at the "Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1.

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

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park) : Mr. R. H. Rosetti, 3.30, "Religion in Russia and Humbug in England"; 6.30, "Freethought According to Facts and According to Christians."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.) : 7, Mr. Shaller, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.—Trip to "Loch Libo." Meet at Rouken Glen Park Gate at 12 o'clock punctually.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor, near North Road entrance) : 7, Mr. F. Carlton, a Lecture.

PRESTON.—Mr. George Whitehead, Sessions Ground, Market Square, at 7, and every evening during week at 7.45.

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