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Views and Opinions.

Checking the Compass.

Some few years ago I wrote a little book on the question of Determinism which met with a very good reception, not only from Freethinkers, for whose reading it was primarily intended, but also from the outside world. One of our leading psychologists did me the honour of saying that it was the clearest exposition of the subject he had met with. I mention this here, not from any motive of conceit, but merely to illustrate the subject of these notes. For whatever virtue attached to that book was due to one thing and to one thing alone. This was that I let the subject speak for itself. Its quality was due largely to what was left out. Instead of taking a statement of the case from someone else, I cleared away all the verbal rubbish that had gathered round the subject, and merely put the question in its plain essentials. Thus stated the case for Determinism is, I think, unanswerable. And on the strength of over thirty years' experience as a writer and speaker on controverted topics I may, I trust, be excused for laying down a golden rule for all those who enter into argument with others—particularly when these others happen to be defenders of religious beliefs. This is: Never permit an opponent to state your case. If he is permitted to do so you may rely upon it that in the majority of instances you will be driven into defending positions you do not hold, and debating propositions that do not admit of intelligent or even intelligible discussion.

* * *

Has Life a Meaning?

I have been led to the above reflections through reading a little essay by Mr. W. S. Godfrey (Watts and Co., 6d.) on *Philosophies of Life*. The essay is unsatisfactory, it seems to me, precisely because Mr. Godfrey has taken the Theist's statement of the case for granted, and so is led to discuss propositions the terms of which should have been carefully scrutinized, and also to take without serious questioning the Christian assumption that life here must have a "meaning" in relation to some larger existence, or it is an idiot's tale, "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." What meaning can, or ought, a Freethinker attach to

such a sentence as "The meaning of life"? Naturally, the Christian Theist must have such a phrase because he believes the world to have been deliberately created, and that this life, so far as human beings are concerned, is part of a larger scheme which embraces another existence. It is a meaning as part of a purpose that the Theist is after. But what has a scientific Freethinker to do with this? Whenever a Freethinker sets himself the task of finding a "meaning" for life he is permitting the Christian to state the problem for him and accepting it without criticism. For meaning implies purpose, purpose implies intelligence, and an intelligence controlling Nature is the essence of the Theistic position. And there is little use in challenging the Theistic position one moment if the next we give the Theist all he requires by studying Nature in terms of a proposition that is only intelligible so long as we accept the Theistic postulate.

* * *

The Significance of Life.

Very much the same sort of comment may be made on Mr. Godfrey's longing for a "perfect" life. Here we are discussing a proposition that on examination turns out to be quite meaningless, if not self-contradictory. In terms of a scientific biology a perfect life would be perfect adjustment, and perfect adjustment would not be life at all, but death. Life is, in its essence, a striving after a balance that is never attained, and the sense of imperfection—whether mental or moral—is in the terms of the case the spur to improvement or to a further series of adjustments. Life, in short, is a struggle, and struggle is impossible in the absence of the imperfection of which complaint is made. An analysis of the desire for a perfect life will thus show it to be but an aspect of the condition that makes movement possible. It is as foolish and as useless to cry out for the removal of these imperfections as it would be for a bird to cry for the abolition of the atmosphere because it offered resistance to its flight. But I am convinced that the harping on the possibility of a perfect life by some non-Christians is mainly due to their taking the Christian assumption for granted. Because the Christian in his folly prates about some future state where life will be all "beer and skittles," it is thought necessary to insist that we too have our own form of folly even though we decline the Christian one. But there really is no reason why we should follow the Christian in his folly, and because we reject his particular stupidity immediately set up another of the same kind. All we do by this is to demonstrate that our approach to complete sanity is not so set as to preclude the possibility of a return to insanity. What is needed is a little care in analysing the terms of the propositions that are set before us. In terms of exact science there is no such thing in Nature as improvement, there is only change. In terms of human feeling there may be improvement in the sense of a diminution of unhappiness, and an increase of happiness, but it is foolish to assume, because of this, the emergence of conditions that would make even sensation an impossibility.

On the Track of a Fallacy.

It may not be altogether out of place to notice here one expression of Mr. Godfrey's regarding Materialism. I do so because it enshrines a very common error which has its roots in a careless acceptance of a definition framed by one's opponents, aided by an imperfect apprehension of the historic function of Materialism. Mr. Godfrey speaks of Materialism as contemplating "no possibilities beyond observed physical phenomena." It is the introduction of the word "physical" which does the trick and hands over the Materialist bound hand and foot to the tender mercies of the supernaturalist. It is the kind of definition of Materialism which every anti-Materialist gives—for obvious reasons, and which so many accept without examination. But it is quite wrong, obviously so. For there are really other forms of experience besides physical processes. A sensation, for instance, is not a physical thing, however much physical processes may be present, and in the absence of which a sensation would be impossible. It is easy enough to show that you cannot have a sensation of heat without motion, but the movement of atoms or molecules is not the sensation of heat. If it were possible to explain everything in terms of physical phenomena there would be no need for any science save that of physics, whereas the very existence of such sciences as biology and psychology are enough to prove that the descriptive formulæ which serve us in physics are not enough to describe or explain the phenomena which front us in other directions. It may be possible to show that biological phenomena have their roots in chemical and physical processes, but once these biological phenomena have emerged there are required new "laws" to adequately describe them. You cannot, therefore, describe the world of experience in terms of physical phenomena. It is not essential to Materialism that it should be so described. And it is folly to permit the anti-Materialist to define Materialism in such a way as to put his opponent hopelessly in the wrong from the very outset.

* * *

The Meaning of Materialism.

The essence of Materialism is Determinism. It is an assertion of the principle that throughout the whole of Nature (whether the phenomena we are dealing with fall within the category of the physical or the mental or the biological) the principle of invariable causation runs. We see this quite clearly if we take its emergence in the history of philosophic speculation. First we have the era of what we may call animism, in which everything is attributed to the action of intelligent agents. Then we have the search for some principle that will explain the world on mechanistic principles. This is found by one in fire, by another in water, and at length, by Democritus, in atoms of matter. But whatever be the substance out of which it is said the universe springs the aim right through is to find some agent that will explain the development of the world as the necessary consequence of some natural force operating without the interference of gods. The natural and logical antithesis here is naturalism versus supernaturalism. The description which current science gives of the atom or of matter does not concern the Materialist in the least. His position is not affected thereby. Of course, it suits the anti-Materialist to tie his opponent down to a description of matter that was current fifty or a hundred years ago, and then show that this no longer holds good, but it is silly of the Materialist to permit himself to be so tied down. "Matter," after all, is no more than one of the categories into which experience divides itself, it is a working hypothesis which science may modify from time to time as knowledge may dictate. But Materialism—I cannot emphasize this too strongly—is not concerned

with any particular theory of the atom or of matter. It is concerned with one principle and one principle alone. This is that the phenomena of the universe, physical, chemical, biological, and psychological, are all explainable on deterministic lines. If this is accepted Materialism is justified; if it is not, Materialism is rejected. To make Materialism consist in the assertion that there is nothing beyond the possibilities of "observed physical phenomena" is to make a statement that is untrue philosophically, is false to the history of Materialism, and is a striking example of the evil of taking a statement of one's case from one's enemies rather than seeing what it is for one's self.

* * *

Watch the Other Side.

More harm is done to the progress of Freethought than one can express in a paragraph by this policy of allowing the Christian to act as pace-maker. The Christian talks—as he is bound to talk—of the moral government of the universe, and straightaway some Freethinkers feel called upon to offer a moral justification of evolutionary processes. He blathers—as he is bound to blather—about the moral purity of Christianity, and some Freethinkers fall into line by talking about the value of "pure religion" or the moral greatness of Christ without seeing that there is no specific moral aim in Christianity and no moral end in the teaching of the mythical New Testament character. He saddles the Materialist with a conception of matter that is quite out of date, and tells him that he must explain the world in terms of physics, and some self-called Materialists at once accept the definition and set about defending an impossible proposition. Or the Christian talks of a perfect life as one in which there shall be no pain and no struggle, and some Freethinkers, instead of looking at what is meant by life and perfection, try to carry out the impossible programme of the Christian on alleged naturalistic lines. In all these instances, as well as in others that might be mentioned, we are forgetting to apply what I have ventured to call a golden rule of controversy—namely, always examine in the first place the terms of the proposition you are charged with defending. And above all never allow the Christian to act as pace-maker. If you do it will generally be found that you are defending his position instead of your own, and upholding an attenuated supernaturalism in the name of scientific Freethought.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Persecution.

(Concluded from page 515.)

TURNING from the Russians to the Turks, the Bishop of Gloucester begins his attack on Mohammedans by observing that "for the last thirty or forty years, ever since the advent to the throne of Abdul Hamid, the whole aim of the Turkish Government has been the extirpation of the Christians of Asia Minor." Of course, we have all read frightfully exaggerated reports of the various massacres of Christians in Armenia, but in Christian journals and books we have been told practically nothing about the causes of those atrocities. We remember the late Dr. Parker in the middle of a most impassioned discourse startling his crowded congregation by exclaiming at the top of his voice, "God damn the Sultan"; and it was quite common in those days for the Sultan to be denounced as "Abdul the damned," or "the great assassin"; but not a word was ever uttered concerning the revolutionary propaganda on the Nihilist plan carried on by the Armenians. We have no desire whatever to justify the atrocities perpetrated by the Turks, but it must

not be forgotten that they were provoked, to say the least, by the disloyalty of the Armenian Christians who hated their Turkish rulers, and did not deny the fact. On this side of the subject the Bishop is discreetly silent. He tells us, however, that he holds no brief for the Greeks, but this is not wholly true, as the following extract shows:—

I think the absence of consistency, of honour and straightforwardness, which has characterized their relations to this country throughout the war, has made it extremely difficult for us to speak about them.

Mark, it is the inconsistent, dishonourable, and unscrupulous behaviour of the Greeks towards this country during the war that lowers them in Dr. Headlam's estimation; but in their relations to Turkey he does hold a brief for them. Listen to this:—

Many things said against them are not justified. Their invasion of Asia Minor started with the purpose of saving Smyrna and Constantinople from the Turks.

That is a peculiarly Christian way of stating a fact. No doubt, from a Christian point of view it was a highly desirable thing to force Smyrna and Constantinople out of Turkish hands; but it is perfectly well known, and it was openly admitted at the time that, on his return to the throne, king Constantine's fond dream was to set up a vast Greek Empire with Smyrna and Constantinople as conspicuous centres therein. It was a dream which some British statesmen regarded as capable of fulfilment. Indeed there were men of God, not a few, who not only hoped, but fervently prayed that Constantinople might be restored to the Christians, no matter by what means. The Bishop admits that during this invasion the Greeks behaved badly; he does not doubt that they carried on the war with a terrific amount of ruthless devastation, but that was a method "they had learnt from their Mohammedan opponents and their German instructors." Then he supplies a long list of the most atrocious deeds committed by the Turks, many of which are either insusceptible of proof or grossly exaggerated.

Now, nothing is more positively certain than the fact that we hold no brief for either Christianity or Mohammedanism. To us both are but two different forms of the same superstition. To the Bishop, however, Christianity is entirely true and infinitely beneficial to mankind, while Mohammedanism is false and has done incalculable harm to the world. He says:—

Do not think that the recent events in Turkey are unprecedented—that they are as the Dean of St. Paul's describes them, merely the result of the debasing of Mohammedanism by Turkish ferocity; they are the normal, natural, inevitable result of the teaching of Mohammedanism itself. From the beginning the sword as much as the Koran has been the weapon of the advance of Islam.

Those who know the Turks intimately have declared again and again that they are the very opposite of ferocious, and some of those who were taken prisoner by the Turks during the war testified that they were treated with great kindness and consideration. Be this as it may, the fact remains that all nations become cruel in times of war; it is the very nature of war to make them so. War is impossible except when the lowest passions are stirred and the foulest motives prevail. The sword is an instrument of cruelty, and they who handle it inevitably become brutes. The Bishop affirms that "the sword as well as the Koran has been the weapon of the advance of Islam," while we, with more assurance, assert that the sword as much as the Bible has been the weapon of the advance of Christianity. Has his lordship of Gloucester forgotten his Church history, or does he read it through the spectacles of prejudice? Oh, the Bishop is an exceedingly

prudent man in his treatment of persecution in the near East. One would infer naturally from the silence of this remarkable sermon that the Christian Church had never taken a hand in such a nefarious game. And yet, if we pick up any first-class Ecclesiastical History, Milman's or Schaff's, and read it, we find that on almost every page there is a heart-breaking description of the destruction in cold blood by imperial decree of this, that, and the other Pagan temple, of the bloody persecution of some heretical sect or other, of a missionary marching at the head of troops offering all unbelievers Christian baptism at the point of the sword. It is needless to refer to the inhuman and dehumanizing crusades during which some five million lives were vainly sacrificed. They were wars of savage persecution of the Turks. Then how many tens of thousands, now Catholics and now Protestants, were burned at the stake in this country not so very long ago? Probably some of their bones are being uncarthed just now by workmen near Marble Arch, London. Even at present Christ sends anything but peace on the earth. For over four years the chief Christian nations of Europe devoted themselves to the fine art of killing one another when many millions of young men lost their lives on the battlefields, and millions more lost hearing, sight, or limbs, and are finding life nothing but a living death. Is there peace within the different Churches? Everybody is aware that the Anglican Church is rent asunder by two or three sects at never-ending strife with each other. They talk fluently of union and practise division. Again, Episcopacy and Nonconformity are in a state of hopeless irreconcilability. Every attempt at coming together miserably fails. On this point the Bishop of Gloucester delivers himself of a wonderfully illuminating observation:—

If Christianity remains united against Mohammedanism, its power is supreme; if Christianity is divided and weakened by its divisions, then Mohammedanism can assert itself.

That is exactly what the latter is doing at this moment. This is frankly admitted by many Christian missionaries, while the former is steadily losing its hold even upon Christendom itself. Of this the Bishop is fully aware. He traces the cause of all our troubles to the following significant fact:—

I do not mean the immediate cause, but the ultimate cause. Why has Christianity and our Christian civilization received this terrible reverse? There have been, I think, certain broad reasons for it. In the first place, a great part of intellectual Europe has been in the last thirty or forty years disloyal to Christianity. It is on a Christian basis that our Western civilization has been built, and if you destroy that basis you will destroy the civilization which is its product. How far the divorce between the religion and the intellect of Europe may be the fault of the Christian Churches themselves I do not feel it necessary now to investigate. What I desire to do is to draw your attention to the fact that a great body of able people in Europe have been untrue to Christianity, that their influence has spread widely and has broken down many of the sanctions on which society has rested. The Russian revolt is largely the result of the influence of an un-Christian intellectualism, and an unintellectual Christianity. Then, secondly, Christianity exhausted its strength by internecine quarrels.

After all Christianity has not been the brilliant success which one might expect the best religion in the world to have been. It has not rendered the Western world an ideal place to live in. The gigantic evils which have often converted it into a perfect hell are still unscotched. Where are the signs of the happy transformation achieved by Christ so glowingly described by the pulpit? They do not exist, nor did they ever exist. The transformation never took place

except in the fancy of blind enthusiasts. Here the wish is father to the thought, and the thought treated as an objective reality.

The Bishop is radically mistaken when he imagines that Christianity is an intellectual religion. There is no such thing as an intellectual supernaturalism. The belief in it may be and has been given an intellectual appearance. No one has ever believed by the intellect, but by the heart. Creeds are the intellectual moulds into which emotional beliefs have been cast. Civilization, on the contrary, signifies intellectual elegance or culture, the result of education, and has in reality no connection whatever with supernaturalism, though Christianity falsely claims it as its own child. Supernatural sanctions have never worked with any degree of efficiency and satisfaction. All genuine sanctions are wholly natural, lying embedded in human nature itself, but these will never get their innings until the belief in the supernatural ones has completely vanished.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Secular Saint.

Learning is good, but common-sense is better.

—G. W. Foote.

What gasconading rascals those saints must have been if their first boasted these exploits or invented these miracles.

—Charlotte Brontë.

PROTESTANTS are supposed to be adverse from saints, but, like so many other things connected with religion, this is far more accurate in theory than in fact. There is one saint, Saint George, who is treated with unusual honour and respect in this country. This saint's portrait is on the gold coinage, and on some of the bank notes. Or, rather, there is a design of a man riding on a cart-horse, apparently killing a boarding-house flea with a large carving knife. This chaste design is meant to portray Saint George and the dragon, and the man is supposed by child-like and innocent folk to be the patron saint of our tight little island.

It is with regret that we find this saint's biography is painful reading, and quite unsuited for the perusal of young persons, and the still more youthful "buds" of the Primrose League. Historians agree in disclosing a sorry story of a misspent life. From the highest to the lowest, from the great Edward Gibbon to the popular William Smith, they agree in describing the saint as a person entirely unfitted to be invited to a garden party at Fulham Palace. Even Emerson, humanitarian though he was, can find no redeeming traits in the saintly sinner's character. The cultured American tells us that Saint George was "a low parasite," who got-rich-quick, had to flee from justice, was made a bishop, and was finally lynched. This latter is "the unkindest cut of all."

Saint George is not an English saint at all, and he never did anything for England. The chief exploit that he is connected with, the slaying of the dragon, is the one incident that is confessed, even by his warmest supporters, to be a mere solar myth, just a version of Apollo and the python, Bellepheron and the chimera, Perseus and the sea-monster. Even an alternative, and comparatively respectable George, who is alleged to have suffered martyrdom under the Emperor Diocletian, was only fit for the Chamber of Horrors in a travelling waxworks. This particular George was, we are told on the word of Christian gentlemen, killed three times, coming to life again on two of the occasions. Among the commonplace incidents of his humdrum career were that he was roasted, beheaded, and eaten by wild animals. Recovering from these trifles, he was set on a wooden

horse and a fire lighted under him. Sixty nails were driven in his head, he was sawn in four pieces, and these fragments were thrown into boiling pitch. Again he came to life, and the overworked executioners finally forced him into heaven on a wheel spiked with swords.

All this may be edifying to people who profess and call themselves Christians, but it leaves me quite cold. As a rule I do not care for saints, and the only one that I have any respect for is not in the Christian calendar, and, if the theologians are right, is probably in hell. His name is "Saint Lubbock," and he really did something for English people. By founding Bank Holidays Sir John Lubbock brought sunshine into the lives of millions. The idea came to him at a meeting at the Working Men's College, during a discussion on "leisure." If he had been a pious fanatic, he might have thought of pleasant church services. If he had been a high-brow professor, he might even have suggested lectures, which were to be compulsory. But he was a human man, with a love of his fellows. He wished the beautiful and wondrous book of Nature to be open to all, and, as a business man, he took the right steps to secure the leisure. On Bank Holidays banks must be closed, and business is suspended. So, to a business man, we owe the Bank Holidays Act of 1871. Lubbock came to great honours before his death, but, in spite of his patent of nobility, he is ever "Saint Lubbock" to the working people of his own country.

Surely, he deserves that affectionate tribute. He wrote much on scientific subjects. He was president of learned societies, the Anthropological, the Statistical, and the Microscopic, and he was an authority on bees and wasps. Besides his scientific works, he left two little books, *The Pleasures of Life*, and *The Use of Life* which show something of the geniality and humanity of the man. Fortunately for his countrymen, Lubbock was acquainted with the book of the world, and not merely with the world of books. Finding that his fellow citizens had too little leisure, he made it his business to break their fetters and to set them free. The like was not done by all the saints in the Christian calendar.

MIMNERMUS.

"What Church Do You Attend?"

THE late William Jolly, a school inspector, had a great admiration for sturdy types of working-men. He wrote a most interesting biography of *John Duncan, Scotch Weaver and Botanist*. And in 1893 he supplied a prefatory note to the life-story of Joseph Gutteridge, ribbon weaver, of Coventry. As Gutteridge was nearly eighty at the time of the publication of his autobiography, he may not have survived into the present century. He deserved the memorial which the book ensures. I came upon it by chance recently, and venture to extract from it an incident which throws a singular light upon the character of a Coventry clergyman about the year 1840.¹

Joseph Gutteridge was born at Coventry in 1818, and was the son of an honest soldier who fought under Wellington in the Peninsular War. Apprenticed as a ribbon weaver, he had no small struggle in maintaining himself. When he married a girl who had a noble heart but no money, he had a yet harder task to make ends meet. The birth of a child added to the problem. Machinery, which theoretically "saved labour," and actually threw industrious citizens into unemployment and distress, brought starvation to Gutteridge's door. For two days the little family had

¹ The book was published at Coventry, in 1893, by Curtis and Beamish.

no food. A gift of threepence brought salvation, and Gutteridge rushed to a baker's to buy a loaf. "Never was a meal as sweet as this," says his simple record. Not long after this time of trial, and when he had been enabled to return to his weaving occupation, it was suggested to him that, as a Freeman of Coventry, he was entitled to apply for aid from an old foundation known as "Sir Thomas White's Four Pound Gift"; and he did so. Here follows his own account:—

The trustee to whom I was recommended to apply was a clergyman of the Church of England, and on account of the strong and earnest recommendation of my employers, he expressed great pleasure in being able to oblige them. I passed the ordeal of a searching examination as to my habits of life and character, and I thanked the benevolent gentleman for his promise that I should receive the Four Pounds. I had, however, barely stepped off the threshold of his house after bidding him "Good morning," when I was called back to answer the important question: "What church do you attend?" In reply, I truthfully stated my disbelief in the doctrines of modern Christianity, which I believed to be not in accordance with the simple truths laid down by Christ for man's guidance and rule of life. Without being allowed to complete my statement, I was shown the door, but on the threshold I told him I was more sorry for him than for myself.....Of course I did not get the promised Four Pound gift. A note came to my employers next day, complaining of the insult they had given this clergyman in having recommended an infidel and an Atheist to his Christian charity.

As a matter of fact, Gutteridge was a Deist, but, having carefully read works by Paine, Volney, Gibbon and Voltaire, and the *Ecclesiastical History* of Mosheim (a book that reveals many singular facts), he had quite detached himself from orthodoxy. He speaks with appreciation of Robert Owen and G. J. Holyoake.

One is pleased to learn that, in later years, Gutteridge won the general respect of the citizens of Coventry for his splendid independence, his laborious study of natural science, and his intense interest in all things that promoted social progress. In reading the incident just related, the feeling of disgust at the clergyman's lack of common mercy naturally arises. But to my mind a second question occurs: When a Church is morally and socially so constituted that it fails to see the value of personalities such as that of Joseph Gutteridge, and never attempts to understand such a man's objection to its creed, what can we say except that it is cursed with stupidity?

Both uncharitableness and stupidity are fatal to Churches—even Churches that claim a divine basis.

F. J. GOULD.

The Real G. W. Foote.

Conscience is born of love.

—Shakespeare.

THE present editor will not be jealous of the past one. Equal in heart and mind, in endurance, courage and audacity, he but expresses himself in a different way—many think in a better way—a compliment the present editor will be the first to deprecate. He knows the value of the old masters and would merely refine the ruder soil of these other times and tend the seeds planted by the pioneers. That he is a most skilled gardener none of us has any doubt. The flowers of Freethought are in good hands. So much by way of introduction. I feel impelled to say that I was entirely charmed with the July 15 reprint of Foote's article, "Mother Told Me So." Beneath the stern, inflexible, incorruptible leader of Freethought it reveals the tender loving soul. Those of us who knew

him best, while aware of his uncompromising platform strength, had glimpses of his inner gentleness. Like Brutus, we knew:—

His life was gentle; and the elements
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, *This was a man!*

A little husky-voiced at times, his public orations were models of clarity and eloquence. To hear that grand voice at its always intense and perfect concert pitch was to be surprised at its sweetness in private conversation. Nature, or art, or long practice, had acquired him the most beautifully modulated tones. I can remember him—if the reminiscence is not too trivial—as he passed along the corridor leading from a lecture platform, asking a very ordinary person a very ordinary question, but in tones of such dulcet, deferential cadence that they linger in the ear of memory—as I have often recalled them, like summer zephyr sighing in the trees. And now he is gone, with the wind-whispers and wind-storms of yesterday, gone with so many commoner men we knew, regretted all, some sleeping sound like him, some lost estranged or strayed, the stronger fibres of the web of life merging into the mists, nor fading yet, only more finely touched, into the shadowland of time. G. W. Foote was proud of his Shakespeare, not without reason—even Burns grows upon a man, reviewed at the progressive stages of years and culture—say, for instance, in his dedication to Gavin Hamilton, where is found the perfect, pawky, Doric description of an ideal Freethinker, his friend, patron landlord—proud also would Foote be to find the "Shakespeare in himself" in such full accord with that veracious sentiment, human not divine, "Conscience is born of love," the mainspring of all morality. As Burns said of Gavin:—

That he's the poor man's friend in need,
The *gentleman* in word and deed,
It's no' thro' terror of Damnation;
It's just a carnal inclination.

Bravo, Burns! You are greater than we knew—this poem alone proves you are a Freethinker—than you yourself, in your modest magnanimity of soul, ever dreamed. I hear again our good friend Mr. Hampson of the Lancashire moors giving me in his homely and sincere reading a new revelation of the Ayrshire poet, just as he had revealed to me the fine pathos and philosophy of his Lancashire bards. The man of feeling, of intelligence and imagination, not always the scholar, is your true interpreter, and only of such material can our true heaven be made, not of the hell-scared, salvation-demented, soul-stunted believers in those "inconceivable incredibilities" called the Christian religion. I am proud, also, to find myself so much in agreement with G. W. Foote, especially as regards "they movin' things ca'd wives and weans." It may be "drivelling sentimentality"—to have no sentiment might be worse—yet I feel it is this same "carnal inclination" that stirs my emotion, as, for instance, the other night when I passed a ragged and noisy band of urchins, one of whom was protesting tearfully that he had been roughly handled (what little savages boys can be to boys, when neglected or improperly schooled), and in proof pointing to a cavity in his gum whence a tooth had been knocked out! The boy was barefoot, and as he passed I noted his ragged nether garments exposed behind quite an indecent portion of his poor little anatomy. Here surely was the touch of Nature that makes the whole world kin—if it would only make them kind as well, or even sensible! But the Salvationist sees it not, or sets it down to sin, or palliates it with a patch of charity as first aid, immediately useful but ultimately useless, encouraging, at least perpetuating, the disease. In this work the Salvationist is about as helpful, and helpless, as the skilled doctors in a war of a million mutilations. War is not neces-

sary, if, as things are, inevitable. Neither is there any Utopia, religious, secular, or social. Not "original sin," not even material poverty was the trouble here; poverty of mind rather, of spirit, of feeling, with inevitable but deplorable muddle brutality and neglect. And, then, the poor wee urchin, chumming still with his persecutors, honouring his "father" and his "mother"! unconscious of his own nakedness and wretchedness, yet normal in mind and body, more than normal perhaps, with all the material for a man—but words fail us! We can imagine how our late leader would have looked upon such a scene, how he would have felt, with bearded lip set in grim compassion, with heart and mind strained and softened at the sight, yet in the same instant irrevocably steeled against the calamitous results of Christian civilization. He believed, as we do also, that he was setting about the solution of the social question at the right place and in the right way. He, and we, would agree with Mr. Cohen when he said, "It is not hard hearts that is wrong with the people, it is soft heads."

It was said of Jesus, "He had compassion"; he is belauded for having said, "Suffer little children to come unto me"—but who but a brute, or perhaps a busy policeman, would forbid them? We hardened Atheists are proud to know that these are common and purely human qualities. We also have loved the "little ones," with a love widened and intensified by that very Atheism. And in the article referred to, the late Mr. Foote has revealed the true source of what affection, virtue, and intelligence we possess in common with Christians—in it there is revealed to us, also, the real G. W. Foote. As Ingersoll might have said: We loved him living, and we love him dead; the hand of gratitude and remembrance places this little wreath upon his tomb.

ANDREW MILLAR.

The Anti-Religious Movement in Russia.

WITH one accord the newspaper Press of the whole world has cursed the Russian Communists for their strictly legal treatment of priests and bishops convicted of working against the Soviet. Yet these papers are very careful not to protest against the actions of plutocratic and reactionary governments.

A writer in the *Mercure de France*, M. S. Posener, faithfully echoes these unintelligent recriminations. The Russian clergy attempted to prevent the seizure of ecclesiastical treasures. It meant nothing to them that the country was in the strangle grip of famine, and therefore needed all the money it could get. What is more the Church valuables are not private property, but the property of the nation as a whole. What is a matter of deeper concern to the clergy and their supporters is the direct anti-religious propaganda carried on by the Russian Communist party. A number of militants are convinced that the emancipation of the people must remain a mere academic phrase if the proletarian mind is not swept clear of every trace of prejudice. The following sentences from the *Communist Alphabet* (a leaflet by Boukharine, published at the expense of the State and distributed throughout the country) put the matter clearly and forcibly:—

The task of the Communist Party is to make quite clear to the least intelligent of the workers this important truth, that religion has been, and continues to be, in the hands of oppressors, one of the most powerful means of maintaining the inequality, the exploitation, and the slavery of the working-classes. This is why the Communist Party must fight against the Church, and against the ingrained prejudices of the proletariat.

This direct attack is encouraging, but I am afraid that it is not appreciated by those who would like to see the Freethinkers excluded from the French Communist party. To do that would be to play into the hands of the Church; it would make the party a valuable auxiliary to Catholic reaction.

M. Posener also notices an anti-religious journal, *The Atheist*, which the Russian Communists print and circu-

late by the millions. He censures the young Communists for organizing in many towns what he calls "processions calculated to shock the religious feelings of believers." Does he imagine that the Joan of Arc and many other absurd spectacles do not shock the rationalized sentiments of Freethinkers? He is indignant because a Communist lectures to prisoners on the absurdities of the Bible, although he would admit, I suppose, that the militant Freethinker has an equal right with the prison-chaplain to bring people over to his way of thinking by lecture—and discussion, which the parson always bars.

Some reactionaries accuse the Bolsheviks of favouring the Jewish religion. It is not true. M. Posener shows that this religion is treated exactly as the others. Anti-religious manifestations are disturbed by Jewish as well as orthodox believers. In fact religious fanaticism is rampant. It is a gigantic menace to the Revolution. A French paper, *L'Ecole Emancipée* (The Free School), lately printed the following telegram from Moscow (other papers, naturally, do not mention it):—

The Russian writer Séménoff, a friend of Tolstoi, and a translator of Gorki's works into French, lived a quiet life in the village of Volokamskaya. A rumour having got abroad that Séménoff was a wizard, a peasant went to his priest and asked what he ought to do. The man of God replied: "The enemies of mankind must be slain," and he handed the peasant a letter in which he blessed him and promised him eternal life on condition that he killed Séménoff. The peasant and others who were equally desirous of eternal life proceeded at once to stone and beat the Russian writer to death.

We need no better proof that anti-religious action is really urgent in Russia as elsewhere.

We recall the protestation against the Russian Government's short and easy way of dealing with refractory bishops and priests, a protestation signed by Protestants, Catholics, and the representatives of a nondescript crowd of religious sects which are usually occupied in cutting each others throats. We have seen them reconciled for once; united by a common hatred, hatred of the Soviet Government which had dared to attack the idea of religion.

The Russian revolution is a thorn in the flesh of all plutocrats, reactionaries and clericals throughout the world. This fact ought to make our duty clear to us. We must be either *for* or *against* the Revolution and those who have made it, in spite of what we may consider their faults and errors. Let us implore them to be tolerant and liberal, admitting the right of criticism and free inquiry; let us remind them of the gigantic tasks before them, the betterment in matters of hygiene, education and anti-alcoholism, which they must strive to bring about. Let us reserve our judgment on some of the methods, but let us not abandon them, and above all things let us not even indirectly do anything to strengthen the hands of their enemies. Between these and the Russian revolutionaries our choice is made.

ANDRÉ LORULOT.

From *L'Antireligieux* (July 15, 1923).

THE WORD "GOD."

Renan had a sort of affection for the word, finding it useful as a summary of a complete sequence of ideas of which not one is easy to limit verbally. It is indefinable, and yet if it could be defined, it would lose all its value. God is not all that is, God is all that is not. Therein lies the force and attraction of this mysterious word. God is tradition, God is legend, God is folk-lore, God is a fairy tale, God is romance, God is fiction, God is the church-steeple, and the painted-glass windows, God is religion, God is all that is absurd, useless, untouchable, all that is nothing and all that symbolizes nothing. God is *nilhil in tenebris* and humanity has transformed him into light and life and love.—*Remy de Gourmont* (from "*Almanach du Cœnobium*").

In the world of ideas the fight for advance is always with the minority. The mass continues along the beaten path, and by the time the minority has forced its views on the majority the necessity has arisen for a still further advance with a repetition of the old fight, the old repulses, and the long delayed victory.—*Peter Simple*.

Acid Drops.

A little while ago the papers were saying angry and asinine things about the Russian Government for daring to lay democratic and sacrilegious hands on Church property. They never troubled to ask themselves why the Russian orthodox Church is recognized to be a State Church, and therefore its property does not belong to individuals, or particular groups, but to the nation as a whole. That ought to be clear enough even to the average semi-educated newspaper scribe. We, for our part, commend the moderation of the anti-clerical Government in confiscating so few of the treasures, just sufficient to meet the more pressing needs. Even those who were moved to curse the Russian Government had to admit that somehow the money had to be raised, and that the action was not frivolous. The outcry puts the Russian clergy and their friends in a bad light. The peasants who are said to be abjectly devout can now see that their priests would rather leave the people to starve than lose one of their precious idols.

When it happens to leak out that a priest has been turning the property of his Church into money, the clerical papers are strangely silent. We notice from our vigorous little contemporary, *L'Antireligieux*, that a French curé named Got has been selling a few of the superfluous fetishes belonging to his Church (and to the nation) to a dealer in antiquities. Among them was a figure of the Blessed Virgin, for which the dealer offered 2,500 francs (say £34). Our enterprising curé closed with the offer and invested the proceeds in War Bonds, the buyer providing a brand new statue to put in the place of the old one. So far so good; but our country priest was not very intelligent, knew nothing, in fact, of the market value of these idols. The Blessed Virgin went to another dealer for 14,000 francs, and finally reached New York where it came into the possession of a (possibly) freethinking American millionaire who willingly parted with 400,000 francs in order to add it to his collection.

The comment of our contemporary is to the effect that the French Government is more to blame than the parish priest. The ecclesiastical buildings are, for the greater part at least, *national property*. But instead of losing the Roman Catholics gained by the Separation Law. It gave them free possession of the churches, on the sole condition that they formed religious associations for administering the buildings in question. If these associations were not formed the churches were to be made over to communal relief or benevolent institutions. These religious associations were never established. And yet the churches have been left illegally to the clergy. The Separation Law was twisted, violated, and evaded. Legally, the priest should not have been in possession of the church and the statue of the virgin. The responsibility lies with the republican governments from Millerand to Poincaré, who did not enforce the Act of Separation. The Church elected Poincaré to the Presidency; it sowed the seeds of corruption and disruption in the advanced parties; it worked in such a way that the anti-religious campaign was abandoned, and the men whom we regarded as militant Freethinkers acquiesced through indifference or laziness.

It is a lesson for those of us who think that the battle of Freethought is won. There is no difference between priest and presbyter, between Roman Catholic and Protestant; both are superstitious and arrogant. If they do not burn us and our books nowadays it is because they have not the power. The will is there, for all faith implies persecution.

The Christadelphians are not believers in the Trinity. By extracts from the Old and New Testaments they endeavour to prove that there is only one God. This seems to us as sensible as cutting off one's nose to throw at a dead bird. Now if they would use half their energy to

prove that clay and mortar and labour exist in England here at this very moment, glory and fame would be added unto them by at least two brothers known to us who are forced to sleep in the kitchen because houses are scarce. All religions appear to be only useful for clawing the air.

Apropos of the above, we have never seen Christ quoted or introduced in the housing question. Is it possible that the more people there are houseless, the more a Christian nation we shall become? Our archbishops with their palaces follow Christ at a respectful distance. Birds and foxes should appear on their coats of arms—or their lawn sleeves. It is just possible that Nietzsche was right when he wrote that the only Christian who ever lived died on the cross; the professors of Christianity live on it.

From a recent issue of the *Tablet*: "By the intercession of the friends of Caldey, Our Lady and the Little Flower have come miraculously to the assistance of the monks, and by the extraordinary providence of God their liabilities have been reduced to less than one third of the original amount, and all that is now needed is the sum of £10,000 to pay off the final debt and so save Caldey for the Church." Now we wonder who gave all that money to the monks of Caldey. Our Lady, the Little Flower, or only mere mortals?

It would seem that the reader of fiction is about to be inflicted with a romance constructed around the pseudo-historical Jesus by our English Georges Ouimet—Sir Hall Caine. We had expected that Miss Marie Correlli would have been in the field first, but she may be content to wait until she sees what her great competitor will make of the subject. It is sure to be emotionally powerful, but we are afraid it will not be literature. It will go direct to the heart of the vast uneducated reading public, and Sir Hall Caine will have his reward in royalties, the modern equivalent to the thirty pieces of silver for which Judas Iscariot betrayed his Master. Poor Judas who either despised money or was hard up did the ungrateful but, of course, necessary job, if the world was to be saved, for the miserable gratuity of one guinea. The modern novelist for a betrayal which is *not* necessary and which may be more in the nature of a stupid insult than a betrayal, expects to pocket thousands of guineas. Jesus dead is a better commercial proposition than Jesus living.

The publishing house of Cassell is to issue Sir Hall Caine's important contribution to religious fiction. In *Cassell's Weekly* we are told what the greatest of our heart-novelists thinks of his task, how long he has meditated over the subject, and why he has been moved to go one better than Renan, Seeley, Farrar and Papini. To stimulate the imagination of the prospective reader he is shown, not the delightfully malicious portrait of the Maux novelist by Max Beerbohm, but a common-place photograph of the gentleman in top boots and riding breeches holding a vicious looking horse.

Now the editor of *Cassell's Weekly* is, we believe, a member of the publishing firm. He is an intelligent man with tastes which we are pretty certain do not run in the direction of tenth-rate fiction. Naturally we do not expect him to be as strictly veracious in the columns of his paper as he would be if he were discussing the modern novel with (let us say) Mr. Ernest Newman in the smoke-room of the Garrick Club. When he praises the author of *The Decmster* in his own paper he no doubt makes a mental reservation. It would be unreasonable to expect him as a publisher to say what he really thinks of a best seller. Anyhow he doesn't tell us as he did of Papini's *Life of Christ*, that he would like to see the new romance in every British household. He leaves that pious wish to be expressed by Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton's paper, the *British Weekly*.

What makes us think that the editor of our enterprising

if not over intelligent contemporary is not quite so foolish as he would have us believe is his reference to Dostoevsky. In the *Idiot*, he tells us, we have the "life of Christ in modern life written with all the sympathy and understanding which should be the possession of anyone who approaches such a task." It is distinctly unkind to remind Sir Hall Caine that he is not a Dostoevsky.

Passing St. Clement's Church, Leigh-on-Sea, a young girl visitor was heard to say, "They put on that tombstone, 'In Heaven Joined'; how do they know?" Ironically, near to the tombstone a slab announces that it is "unconsecrated" ground. The marvellous part is that grass grows on this plot, and it appears no different from any other ground. It is possible that the clergy will soon have to put their faces in cement masks to keep them straight.

As a set-off to this, it was refreshing to hear the applause at the Ambassador's Theatre, Southend. The play was "Candida," by Mr. George Bernard Shaw. Laughter greeted the utterances of the clergyman, and although our Aristophanes in a tweed suit does not specialize in his attacks on religion, his upper cuts and straight lefts at this particular form of bamboozling are bound to tell. If people can be induced to laugh at what the established clergy stand for, society is wide enough to absorb them when they will be no longer required. The Repertoire Company at the above theatre is producing in addition to Shaw's plays, good modern comedies, and a visit is well spent by those holiday makers who have no desire to take their feet off the ground of common-sense, and desire health of mind as well as health of body.

Kenya Colony is a place where missionaries go to; it is announced that this colony sends excellent cheese to London. We trust that Kenya charges a good price for this article or the exchange will be against her.

Viscountess Grey of Falloden says that most of the books specially provided for children are rubbish. The criticism is specially applicable to religious publications. Not only are they rubbish, but they are also dangerous to Democracy.

Dr. Kaye, president of the Maternity and Child Welfare Section of the Royal Sanitary Congress at Hull, in a presidential address stated that infant mortality to-day was half what it was twenty years ago. A child could be expected to live a dozen years longer than his grandparent so great had been the improvement of public health. This gratifying improvement is not due to religion, but to science.

Strangely enough, a Presbyterian preacher admits that Gallio, spoken of in Acts xviii as one who "cared for none of these (Christian) things," was yet, though not a disciple of Jesus, a man of an "upright, conscientious, just, and most praiseworthy type, of which the world always stands in need." If this is true, as it undoubtedly is, what is the good of being a Christian? What useful purpose does the Church serve in the world?

"I have taught myself by writing books and burning them," says the Dean of Windsor. Quite a tame Torquemada. In the "good old days" the authors were also roasted.

Some extraordinary figures were disclosed at the ninetieth annual meeting in Edinburgh of the Scottish Monthly Visitor Tract Society. During the past year over three and a half million tracts were distributed, showing a monthly average of nearly 300,000. During the ninety years of the Society's existence three hundred and thirty-one million tracts had been printed and distributed. No wonder that Caledonia is still Christian.

Here is a bitter comment on the Bible text: "Love your enemies." The International Labour Office states that 7,124,000 men disabled in the late war are in receipt of pensions in the principal belligerent countries. Statistics are not available for the Balkan States, Turkey, Hungary, and other countries. There is evidence that to put the total of men disabled in the World War at ten millions is not excessive.

One of the results of the late disastrous war has been a widespread distrust and discrediting of religion. The more rational sort of people have discarded religious belief altogether and the more primitive type has returned to its old love. We note from a French paper (we do not of course vouch for the truth of the report which, if not true, is *ben trovato*) that the German Nationalist party of the village of Lens, in Austria, voted for the abolition of the Hebrew-Christian Jehovah, and for the substitution of Odin. The Christian God (said the president) had betrayed the German people, delivering them into the hands of their worst enemies, and we now return to the Gods of our forefathers. The meeting voted unanimously for the suppression of the Christian trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and attached their faith to deities whom they had long ago rejected as barbarous. Odin or Wotan in many respects resembles Zeus or Jupiter. He is a divine law-giver and the creator of the world. His worshippers, we are told (*Introduction to Mythology*, Lewis Spence, 1921), pictured him as a one-eyed man of venerable aspect clad in a wide-brimmed hat and voluminous cloak, and travelling through the world to observe the doings of men. With his brothers Vili and Ve he raised the earth out of chaos. He is the "All-Father," and his wife Freya has much in common with Hera and Juno. She is the matron and housewife deified—the patroness of marriage.

Now, although we may think that the Teutonic barbarians of the town of Lens (perhaps they are not quite the barbarians our French friends make them out to be) would have been better advised to reject all forms of superstitious belief, there is this to be said for them from the social point of view; a god and goddess with a goodly progeny of godlets is an infinitely more humanized conception than the sexless deities of the Hebrew-Christian faith.

"Man is continually annexing new realms of knowledge, casting his nets farther out from shore, cutting clearings in the forest, driving his roads across sandy wastes. He starts a new science or extends an old one..... And there are yet many things whose true meaning is hidden from us," says the *Christian World*. And yet men of science are hampered in their work by religionists who indignantly accuse them of "interfering with God's ways." Why? Because knowledge is deadly in the case of religion.

"Again and again," recalls a missionary journal, "on hearing the words and beholding the works of Jesus, the people were filled with amazement." To our mind the only amazement that is provoked is that such a poor work of mythology as is the New Testament should still be believed in. The only consolation that can be drawn is that Jesus is going the way of all other mythological saviours, and signs are not wanting that all religion is slowly but deliberately being consigned to the limbo of discarded fallacies.

Dr. Harris Kirk, of Baltimore, now preaching in Westminster Chapel, London, like most clergymen who pretend to be scientific, assures us that "science to-day is beginning to appreciate.....its need of a spiritual conception of the universe." Of course, he mentions no name, makes no quotation, cites no authority whatsoever; and yet, judging by the latest utterances of our leading men of science, the reverend gentleman's assertion is absolutely false. We confidently challenge him to adduce the least shred of scientific evidence that he is right.

To Correspondents.

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

J. COLLINS.—We have your report to hand. There is much more to do in organizing open-air meetings than appears at first glance. And as with most propagandist efforts it is persistency that tells. The Birmingham friends, who are among the most persistent in the country, will appreciate this statement.

H. TAYLOR.—Mr. Cohen is writing you. He replied to a letter which he received from you some time back, but cannot, of course, tell if it is the one to which you refer. Hope your health is better.

R. A. CRANK.—We are greatly obliged to yourself and the other Stockport friends for the trouble you have taken in distributing specimen copies of the *Freethinker*, and glad to know that it has led to so many new readers, and also to newsagents displaying the paper. We are certain that the boycott could be broken down in many places if groups of friends all over the country made up their mind that their paper should not be boycotted in the way it is. Of course, the fear the Christians have of the *Freethinker* is a compliment, but is a very costly one to us, and makes the task so much harder.

I. G. ATKINS (Washington).—We do not understand the alteration. It is probably due to the vagary of some postal official. But the address is correct and we assume you have been getting your paper regularly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

We are often asked in what way the general public is compelled to pay for the upkeep of the Church, whether they believe in it or not. Here is a case in point. It is proposed to apply to Parliament for sanction to demolish nineteen City churches which are practically without congregations. It is said that the value of the sites occupied by these churches is about one and three-quarters of a million sterling. There is not one of these churches that pay a penny towards the rates, and it follows that the proportion that should be paid by them is being paid by the public at large. And this remark applies to every church and chapel in the country. They are all State endowed to the extent of their rateable value at least.

To-day (August 26) Mr. G. Whitehead will hold two open-air meetings in Birmingham. He will speak at Pidcock Street, off Lodge Road, at 11, and in the Bull Ring at 6.30. From there he will go to Swansea where

he will conduct a week's "mission" on the Sands and outside the Victoria Park Gates. The local Branch will be pleased if all who care to give a hand will make their intentions known to the secretary, Mr. B. Dupree, 60 Alexandra Road. These open-air meetings involve a deal of labour, and if they are to be successful, it is essential that all friends should lend a hand. They involve the Executive in considerable expense, and it is a pity to see any of the meetings robbed of some of the good they might do for want of a little help.

Mr. A. B. Moss will speak in Regent's Park to-day (August 26) at six o'clock on "Man and Evolution." There is generally a good audience in Regent's Park, and we hope to hear that this time there is a record one.

The Glasgow Branch takes another one of its summer "Rambles" to-day (August 26). The place selected is Blaine field. Members and friends will meet at Canniesburn terminus at 12 o'clock. Tea will be provided.

The Devil's Chaplain.

(Continued from page 474.)

CHAPTER THREE.—SPEECH FROM THE DOCK.

TAYLOR was brought to trial on October 24, 1827, at the Guildhall Court of the King's Bench, before Lord Chief Justice Tenterden (formerly Chief Justice Abbott). Taylor spoke for three hours, but was found guilty. Judgment was reserved until February 7, 1828. Meanwhile, the charge of conspiracy, which it had been attempted to bring to trial in the preceding January, failed through the disinclination of the Lord Chief Justice to entertain the case.

On February 7, 1828, Robert Taylor attended for judgment. Speaking in arrest of judgment before sentence was passed, the defendant said:—

"My Lord, the wisdom of British law allows to a defendant, after a verdict hath been obtained against him, the privilege of pleading in arrest of judgment, and calls upon himself to show why sentence should not be passed upon him.....Of this privilege, I now avail myself, being quite sensible of the restrictions under which, alone, I am allowed to speak, and more than sensible enough, of the melancholy augury of any argument offered by one in my situation, against the power that presides, and the authority that must and will conclude.....

"The reasons I offer in total bar of judgment shall be none other than the most cogent that were ever offered to man, and such as no reason of man could possibly withstand unless its actings were forestalled, as here I have no right to fear that they should be, by a degree of prejudice, against which the power of argument must conflict in vain, and innocence itself be no protection. I offer it first as a reason, why no sentence should be passed upon me, and no punishment at all inflicted: that I have not had a fair trial. And if that fact be valid, that reason is irrefragible..... I had not a fair trial because it was in the nature of things absolutely impossible that I should have. The principle of fairness was itself outraged and surrendered, and could not coexist with the principle that put me upon my trial at all, and called me to give account to man, for that of which I owe account to God only.....

"I had not a fair trial, because any trial of the sort is in its own nature unfair and anomalous, and heterogeneous to all proprieties and intents of a trial.....And hence it hath been that in the whole world's history there occurs not a single instance in which an acquittal hath ever been obtained from a charge of blasphemy. Because such a charge hath never yet been brought

but by the powerful against the weak, by the wolf against the lamb, by rampant cruelty against prostrate innocence; and so, to be sure, my Lord, the proofs were always clear enough, the crime heinous enough, and reasons for punishing it strong enough, for high priesthood itself to rend its garment, and exclaim: 'He hath spoken blasphemy! What need have we of witnesses! You yourselves have heard his blasphemy.'

"My Lord, shall I tell you that the most bloody massacres, the most horrible, remorseless, ruthless villainies, in which Nature disclaims her part, which justice shudders at, and mercy faints to look on, were all—all of them, prosecutions for blasphemy; and might have been justified, and absolutely were justified, by those very arguments, besides which, I defy the wit of man, to produce one other, or one different, for punishing me.

"What was it that irrigated the valleys of Piedmont, Merindol, and Cabriere with the blood of Christian hecatombs but a prosecution for blasphemy? What was it that kindled the fires of Smithfield but a prosecution for blasphemy? What was it that nailed your Saviour on his bitter cross, but a prosecution for blasphemy?

"And wasn't it always necessary, my Lord, for the civil magistracy to protect the religion of the country when the opponents of that religion had taken unwarrantable liberties with it? When they had gone, you see, too far, wasn't it always necessary, when men had a mind to be barbarous and cruel, to find some sort of an excuse for being so?

"My Lord, you feel the force of this argument, and I will conflict against the principle upon which I was brought to trial no further.

"But, taking up the great mathematical axiom, 'One absurdity granted, a thousand will follow,' I want no draft of credit for my challenge that there were particular items of wrong and tort and defect in the process of the trial itself, sufficient to render it imperative on your Lordship's justice to quash the proceedings altogether. The genius of wrong presided over the whole affair—there was nothing but wrong.

"The Grand Jury, who in the first instance found the bill, were every one of them perjurers, in all the heinousness and guilt that can attach to perjury—most heinous and guilty perjurers! They swore to that which they themselves did know to be a lie, what they ought not to have sworn to.

"Those 'Jurors of our Lord the King' did on their oaths present, that that was true, which they not only knew was not true, but which (unless they were idiots) they must have known was impossible to be true: that I did 'by force and arms blaspheme their Lord Jesus Christ,' and that what I had done was 'to the high displeasure of the Almighty God.'

"But this I may be told was a mere technicality, the legal form of words necessary to such an indictment, and I dare say it meant no more; but surely, my Lord, may I ask what is the sanctity of an oath if men are to swear to mere technicalities, or what confidence is to be reposed in men who will swear to anything; who, when they are put upon their oaths, are least particular in their choice of words, and take a licence of exaggeration, of which an honest man would not be guilty in his ordinary conversation?

"Or what such mighty respect for their 'Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' can they have, who, in the very act of swearing (even if what they swore were truth) do the thing which he forbids be done; and are blasphemers themselves just in the very act of punishing me for being such; O transcendent hypocrisy! Thy name is Christian! and yet.....

"The immediate instigators of this prosecution did allege it as a reason, before the Common Council of the

City of London, to justify this prosecution, that 'it was absolutely necessary and expedient to punish me, because, by destroying the Christian religion, my conduct tended directly to destroy the sanctity of an oath'; that is, my Lord, 'destroying the sanctity' of that, which, if Christianity be truth, hath no sanctity in it, but rather a very high degree of criminality, destroying a thing by destroying the thing which doth itself destroy it! But such is Aldermanic logic! The best excuse for it as it is the apology for human nature that its most frightful aberrations are tangents from an original defect in the understanding.....

"I have been convicted on such evidence, as since the days of Empson and Dudley, no Court in England ever received—such as (*Dictum sit salva tua dignitate præcor*) since the days of Bonnor and of Jefferies, no judge in England ever ratified.

"I have no more been tried by a jury of my peers than yourself could be said to have been so had you been tried for heresy by the avowed enemies of your Christian faith, or had the European scholar and accomplished civilian been tried by the wild Arabs of the desert—'By savage Turks and Tartars, never trained to offices of gentle courtesy.'.....

"Had the arguments which I adduced against the Christian religion been weak and insignificant, would not that weakness and insignificance have been their own sufficient refutation? If Christianity hath really nought to fear from any arguments I could bring against it, why doth it fear? Why act its professors so towards me, as no principle else on earth but fear could dictate? Say that they are not afraid, and let me loose that I may have at them.

"Had not my arguments really been irrefutable, and felt to be unanswerable in any other way, should I have been answered thus by the crushing arm of Law—the tyrant's argument and the liar's refuge?.....

"I, my Lord, am not a criminal, but the prosecution which brings me here is itself a crime, because it is a principle directly at war with that great and everlasting law of righteousness, which, when it made man a rational being, did wed his capacity of thought to his faculty of speech, never again to be divorced; and with the power to think, gave him the right to speak the thing he thought!

"Take this right from me, or from any man, under any pretence of the sanctity of established opinions, or any sanctity whatever, and render it politically expedient that either from fear of punishment or hope of reward, a man should feel himself constrained to keep his sentiments locked up in his own bosom, and to seem to be a Christian, while he were in reality a Deist, and a universal sense of degradation and meanness must subdue the majority of reason, and universal hypocrisy sap the foundations of virtue."

Robert Taylor made very appropriate allusions to the persecution of Galileo and to the fact that an Atheist government in power could discover Attorney-Generals and furnish arguments to justify the prosecution of Christians.

The Solicitor-General followed and complained that Taylor had jested against the truth of the Christian religion. Sir James Scarlett, formerly Attorney-General, spoke in support of the prosecution, and accused Taylor of theatrical exhibition. The Recorder followed on the same side and proclaimed the prosecution honest, moral, and religious. Mr. Justice Bayley delivered a religious sermon in passing sentence, and declared that Robert Taylor had been guilty of a most serious crime. He sentenced Taylor to one year's imprisonment in Oakham Gaol, and ordered him to find sureties in £1,000 to be of good behaviour for five years.

GUY A. ALDRED.

(To be Continued.)

"Philosophies of Life."

In a recent issue of the *Literary Guide*, Mr. W. S. Godfrey subjects Mr. Joseph McCabe's outlook on life to a friendly criticism. Mr. McCabe had written an article lamenting the tendency of mankind to waste its time in inventing all sorts of chimerical 'isms in order to explain the "meaning of life," and deploring the uncritical eagerness with which people are wont to "rise and follow" every new prophet that imagines he (or she) has the key to the riddle of the universe. Says Mr. McCabe: "The essential facts of life are simple, and can be told simply. You could put all that anybody *need* know in a hundred sixpenny manuals."

Mr. Godfrey, while in cordial agreement with much that Mr. McCabe writes, is nevertheless profoundly disappointed with Mr. McCabe's treatment of the question, "What is the *aim* of life?" "What is the meaning of it all?" Granting that all the materials for a full and useful existence for everybody are at hand if wisely used, there is still something lacking. Even though we all lived out our lives to their fullest completion we should still be compelled to ask "*Cui bono*"—"what is the good of it all?"....."Does it really signify nothing, or are there, may there not be, significances, meanings, as yet beyond our ken?" Stricken with the recent loss of a loved one, Mr. Godfrey says touchingly: "We stand beside our dead—we see the human ruin—we feel the shock of loss, and in bitterness and bewilderment we say again, "*Cui bono*?"

To the present writer the difference between the two gentlemen quoted appears to be one of temperament rather than of actual mental outlook. Both are agreed that if there is any "meaning" in life none of the religions or philosophies satisfactorily explain it, and that all human efforts in that direction are abortive. But whereas Mr. McCabe is content to accept the limitations of this life—and, of course, actually we all *have* to accept them—Mr. Godfrey cannot still his desire to know what the meaning (presuming there is a meaning) of it all is. One's sympathy goes out to the latter while reason commends the wise restraint of the former. For my part I think the importance of the question is vastly over-rated. To begin with, the desire for a philosophy of life is by no means general. The existence of so many religious systems is usually cited as an illustration of man's craving for an explanation of life; but one can only explain their existence on the grounds that that craving is very superficial. When one examines them one is astounded at the paucity of the explanations that have satisfied really great men. The truth is that the mass of people are not interested in philosophies of life at all, they hate anything in the nature of strenuous thought, and are ready to accept the first "explanation" that comes along, or to hand their mental difficulties over to the priest. They want an easily grasped formula, a narcotic, and it is in this sense that religion has always been "the dope of the people."

Too much emphasis has always been laid on mere theory. Whatever one's attitude to life may be in theory, we all act pretty well the same in practice. Our actions are determined far more by our character and temperament than by our views on the meaning of life. As Mr. F. J. Gould well says:—

The mistake—a very grave mistake—of some moralists is to regard the preaching of maxims as a primary agent in evolving the better life. It is not at all so. Life attains a larger solidarity by the infinitely numerous moral experiments of each day, by the establishment and modification of institutions, by the actual and courageous administration of a world of

difficult temperaments. The maxims have an after-value, just as the material objects of Nature are the real treasure, and scientific labels on the objects have an after-value for guidance.

If we judge the world by human standards it is certainly unsatisfactory. We would not have voted for it! The laws of Nature do not always appeal to one's enlightened moral sense. But *we* are not responsible for this. Our responsibility ends when we have lived worthily and well. Mr. Godfrey himself says, "If the history of man and the world is a *means* planned and purposed by some great intelligence to some great *end*, that end can *never* justify the means." But the problem he raises is a theistic problem however much he may disown it. *It has no meaning apart from Theism.* And Theism, as Mr. Godfrey himself demonstrated in his *Theism Found Wanting*, is not only intellectually untenable, but is morally repugnant.

If we do not accept Mr. Godfrey's "dream" of "a whole of which we straying and bewildered fragments may find we are but parts, and in which we may discover the satisfaction and the fulfilment which are wanting here," are we doomed to a disheartening pessimism? By no means. Even though we discern no ultimate meaning in life we can do our duty. Our responsibility ends there. Besides if we have a definite aim in life—"some inspiration which puts a proper value on existence and gives an impetus to its activities"—life is not altogether devoid of meaning or value. Like Mr. Godfrey, I have known the bitterness of the last farewell to my loved one, and if I need an inspiration in life it comes to me—in the beautiful words of Mr. R. Mallett—"from a little grave, a tiny grass-clad mound, over which I have often stood with my grief stricken spirit striving for expression."

It may be that the temperamental needs of some will always cause them to cherish the larger hope, whilst others can find all the comfort they need in the present life. It is after all the practical affairs of life that are most important, and when theories and 'isms are no longer permitted to interfere with progress and human betterment, then—and then alone—can we afford to sit down and cultivate towards all men and all philosophies "a bounteous friendly feeling."

VINCENT J. HANDS.

The Origin of Sacred Numbers.

AMONG all nations, the number seven has been regarded as a sacred number, and in all the systems of antiquity this septenary influence extends itself in a hundred different ways. Now, these sacred numbers, like all supernatural beliefs, had a perfectly natural origin, and as they are still regarded as mystical in the twentieth century, it shows that in spite of our boasted civilization the average mentality is not far removed from that of our primitive savage ancestors. Although we clothe ourselves in the latest West End style, the mental outlook of a great many is still on a par with the paint and feathers of our savage forefathers.

Let us take the number seven and see to what extent it is regarded as sacred. Pythagoras called it a venerable number, because it was made up of two perfect figures, the triangle and the square, also because it referred to the Creation. Among the Hebrews the etymology of the word shows its sacred import, for, from the word "Shebang" (seven) is derived the verb "Shabang" (to swear), because oaths were testified by seven witnesses, or by seven victims offered in sacrifice. (See Abraham and Abimelech, Gen. xxi, 28.) Hence we find a frequent recurrence of this number in the Bible. For instance: The Sabbath was the seventh day; Noah had seven days' notice of the

flood; he was commanded to select clean beasts and fowls by sevens; he took seven persons with him in the Ark; on the seventh month the Ark rested on Mount Ararat; at intervals of seven days he despatched a dove; the walls of Jericho were encompassed seven days, by seven priests bearing seven rams' horns; Solomon was seven years building the Temple, which was dedicated in the seventh month, and the feast lasted seven days; the candlestick in the tabernacle consisted of seven branches; Abraham pleaded seven times for Sodom; Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and then served another seven; Joseph mourned seven days for Jacob. Then we find Laban pursuing Jacob seven days' journey; the seven years of plenty and the seven years of famine; the Israelites were to eat unleavened bread for seven days. By the old law man was commanded to forgive his offending brother seven times, but Jesus extended this to seventy times seven. Every seventh month an holy observance was commanded to the children of Israel; they had to fast seven days and remain seven days in tents. Every seventh year was to be a rest for all things, and at the end of seven times seven years was to be a jubilee; they were directed to have a feast of seven days. Every seventh year the land lay fallow; every seventh year there was to be a general release from all debts, and bondsmen were set free; every seventh year the law was to be read to the people; seven of Saul's sons were slain to stay a famine; the youngest of Jesse's seven sons ascended the throne of Israel; seven days were appointed for an atonement on the altar, and the priest's son was appointed to wear his father's garment seven days. Were it necessary this list could be considerably enlarged.

We find the same septenary influence extending to the New Testament, especially in Revelations (by St. John, the divine lunatic). To take a few instances there were seven churches; seven golden candlesticks, seven stars; seven lamps of fire; seven spirits of God; seven seals; a lamb with seven horns and seven eyes; seven angels with seven trumpets; seven thunders were heard; a beast with seven heads; seven plagues; seven golden vials, and many other instances which I will not weary the reader with. This number also occurs very frequently in the Roman Catholic Church, such as the seven sacraments; the seven virtues; the seven deadly sins; the seven stages of priesthood, etc.

Among the Pagans this number was also considered sacred, for we find in the mysteries of Mithras there are seven stages of initiation through which the candidate has to pass; seven altars burnt continually before the god Mithras. The Hindoos believed the world to be enclosed within the compass of seven peninsulas, and in their ancient rites there were seven stages of initiation, and the candidate was conducted through seven caverns before reaching the chief Brahmin. The ancient Goths had seven deities, *viz.*, the Sun, the Moon, Tuisco, Woden, Thor, Friga, and Seatur, from whose names are derived the days of the week, and in the ancient Gothic mysteries the candidate met with seven obstructions which were known as the "Road of Seven Stages." There were also seven ancient planets; seven Pleiades, and seven Hyades. Cicero, in his *Dream of Scipio*, calls the number seven the "binding knot of all things." Plato, in his *Timæus*, taught that the *anima mundana* (soul of the world) was generated out of the number seven, and even at the present day this number is looked upon by some people as mysterious. As supernatural origins do not exist, let us see if we can trace the natural reasons why this number is so prevalent in all parts of the world. In the first place we find that among savages the generative organs of the female were nearly always covered, but not so with the males. This covering was the beginning of the sense of decency,

and arose from the fact of menstruation. The menstrual periods throughout the animal world, and including the human race, run in seven days or the multiple of seven days, and this must have struck them as mysterious. Then again another occurrence excited man's curiosity. It was found that the form of the moon changed, and that the full lunation occupied twenty-eight days. This number could be halved, and the result was fourteen. Fourteen could be halved again with the result that seven was the remainder, but try as they would this last number was indivisible, therefore to them mysterious and sacred. Now if we connect these two occurrences, the indivisible quarter of the moon's total phases, and the sexual periodicities of the female, and also bear in mind that in Egypt, Babylon, and other places, the seven days of the week were taken from the seven planets, we have very cogent reasons for seeing why this number seven has attained such an importance and a mystery that could hardly attach itself to any other number. This, I believe, is the reason why it appears in all the religious systems of the world.

The great weakness of primitive humanity was the ignorance of the nature of causation. Natural happenings were explained in terms of the supernatural, and man to-day, surrounded by a host of superstitions and creeds, is little better than his painted and be-feathered savage ancestor.

LEONARD MASON.

Correspondence.

THE DOUGLAS SCHEME.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In the last year or so there have appeared in the *Freethinker* several articles touching the Douglas scheme of credit control coupled more or less with Kitson and Under Consumption. There has only been, I think, one protest up to the present, so this must be the second.

I believe that neither singly nor combined, would these two writers on economics, if given the opportunity, change the lot of the human race for the better. Why I doubt them is on account of the extraordinary nature of the premises from which they work out their conclusions.

According to Douglas there are two kinds of credit: financial, or the power to supply money; and real, or the power to supply goods. Kitson is the head of the under consumption brigade.

Money is of no fundamental importance to the human race. It is entirely secondary in importance and simply facilitates the exchange of commodities. For, with unlimited goods and no money, trade could still be done; if we had unlimited money and no goods the human race would starve.

Real credit, the power to create goods, is the only important one. But this "power to create goods" is nothing new. It is simply another name for what the old masters called capital. Capital is the result of saving, and industry is limited by capital. It was the unlimited issuing of credit in the form of pieces of paper with marks on them, which were accepted as purchasing-power, during and since the war, that has landed us into the present chaotic mess.

As regards giving the people more purchasing power by means of credit, so that they can buy more and so make trade improve, this is simply putting the cart before the horse. All purchasing-power came originally and still comes from services of value or products. The purchasing-power given through any form of paper money, if it is not backed by either of the above in the past, must be a call upon them for the future. So this credit is simply a new way of running into debt. There is a Douglas-Kitson movement in the Transvaal, and quite recently I challenged their representative when he proposed that the slogan should be: "Provide for consumption and production will look after itself." I objected that at any rate this was not true of one commodity, and that was food. I only wish it were true of food, for that

would be the death knell of the infernal Malthusian fallacy once and for all. The Douglas-Kitson man, however, stuck to his guns and maintained that the consumption of food is more important than its production. This is real modern economics. In certain parts of India there is famine every year, so we can safely say that in those spots "the under consumption" theory is not looked upon with any favour. During the war, too, when we were within three weeks of the limit of our food supply, under consumption ceased to operate against us.

Do Douglas and Kitson really believe that suddenly giving the people plenty of purchasing power through social credit or any other scheme, would not be followed immediately by a rise of prices? If so then either they or I am mad. I don't care a damn which, but insanity is involved in the proposition.

I hope that Freethinkers attracted by the glamour of the Social Credit and Under Consumption brigades will not be in too great a hurry to leave their old loves, Socialism, Communism, Malthusianism, and Anti-Capitalism, for something that may fall to pieces through having foundations built upon what are not the unalterable first principles of political economy. Y. C.

Africa, July 20, 1923.

ABOUT THAT LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

SIR,—Supporters of the League of Nations seem angry with me for exposing its impotence in recent articles, and one enthusiast, Major Gladstone Murray, in a "reply" in the Press, puts up a defence which quite fails to convert me.

Major Murray states that the League "stands for conference"—and, I submit, that is where it will remain standing whenever another war breaks out, in spite of all such conferences; and that there *will* be future wars, anyone with common-sense is aware, for are not the nations still discussing that possibility, and building up air-fleets, battleships, etc., to say nothing of Britain's own proposal to squander millions of taxpayers' money upon a naval base at Singapore, ignoring both the protests of gunnery experts and the Washington scheme of reducing armaments?

Will the League of Nations' conferences prevent this expenditure?

France and Britain are at variance over Reparations and the Ruhr, as we all know, and the *Paris Journal* says:—

Should we not also take umbrage at the fact that Great Britain is going to ask the Council of the League of Nations to open an enquiry into the Saar?.....*The League of Nations was not invented to aggravate disputes, but to kill them.*

There we see an instance of possible friction directly due to the League's interference, as I previously suggested might occur!

Much friction is being caused between Britain and America over the latter's absurd prohibition policy and seizures of liquor on foreign slips. There was recently a sensation in New York by the entry of Rear-Admiral Fiske into the political arena. "The United States," he declared, "is drifting towards war, which will certainly come unless she speedily changes her policy."

Could the League of Nations prevent that happening—and is it even trying now to tackle the matter?

Leading Germans openly talk of "the next war"—and smile at mention of the League of Nations! Even Major Murray himself injudiciously, in referring to the cost of war, anticipates what we shall have to pay "for wars old and new!"

In reply to Major Murray's statement that the League has "tackled successfully the traffic in opium," Mr. Porter, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the American House of Representatives, declared that the League, "instead of doing anything to suppress traffic in habit-forming drugs, has acted in a contrary manner, and has removed barriers to the traffic."

Of the £27,000,000 which the Allies put into Austria during the last three years, we are told that "£2,000,000 will be recovered." When? Even so, we could say goodbye to the other £25,000,000!

Regarding the "improved conditions" of Labour effected, the facts speak for themselves. There has never

been so much "unrest," discontent, strike agitation, and unemployment in Britain as exists to-day, where Labour (fostered by Socialistic pampering of the League, etc.) "bosses the show," to the detriment of trade and prosperity! We sadly need Mussolini's motto: "Concord, Discipline, and *Work*," in Britain these days, in place of the prevailing laziness and doles.

Those who fail to realize the utter impracticability of a League of Nations (and they are few, among thinking people) should try to remember that the countries are still peopled by folk incapable of logical reasoning, are quarrelsome, selfish, short-sighted, revengeful, thirsting for conquest, and *lacking in common-sense*. *No League can alter this!*

A. LEONARD SUMMERS.

"THE PASSING OF THE SOUL."

SIR,—In reply to the courteous criticism by "O. D.," of my article "The Passing of the Soul," I wish to point out that a great deal turns upon the meaning he attaches to the word "Freethinker." By Freethinker I mean one who is not bound by any creed, or biased by training, in the investigation of any system of religion or philosophy. "O. D.," on the contrary, claims that all those who reject Christianity for Spiritualism are Freethinkers! Very well, "O. D.," you go and call them Freethinkers and see how they like the label; the probability is that they will say something very rude to you.

"O. D." says that the converts to Spiritualism were not after the assurance of a future life. He says: "Conan Doyle, for instance, was not itching for anything other than Materialism, which quite satisfied him until the case for Spiritualism proved overwhelming." If it is not being too inquisitive I should like to know the source of "O. D.'s" information upon this point. Sir Conan Doyle, it is true, has told us that before becoming a Spiritualist he was a Materialist, but he does not give any detailed account of his belief at that time. Evidently he was not a very enthusiastic disciple, for we have no shred—so far as I am aware—of writing, or publication, of his expounding that philosophy, which is a very significant fact in such a voluminous writer. In fact no reader of his published works would ever have suspected him of this heresy if he had not revealed it himself, *after he had given it up*, and, strange to say, exactly the same criticism applies to Sir Oliver Lodge.

Sir Conan Doyle claims to have been a Materialist, but he has never claimed to have been an Atheist, and I do not think he ever has been one. Many Materialists are Agnostics, and others, while rejecting all religions, yet still believe in a Creative Power. Professor Tyndall did; and there is some evidence of this in the case of Sir Conan Doyle, for in his novel *The Stark Munro Letters*—written before he became a Spiritualist—the hero of the tale, Dr. Stark Munro, has rejected all dogmatic religion, but still remains a believer in a Creator, and declares: "Leaving this exaggerated scientific caution on the one side, and faith on the other, as being equally indefensible, there remains the clear line of reasoning that a universe implies the existence of a universe-maker." It seems to me that Sir Conan Doyle here makes Dr. Stark Munro—Sir Conan himself was a Doctor—the mouthpiece of his own views. I do not think for a moment that if Sir Conan Doyle had been an Atheist he would have put such sentiments in the mouth of his hero, for there is no reason, so far as the tale is concerned, for dealing with the subject at all. We should also bear in mind that Sir Conan Doyle was brought up in the Roman Catholic faith and was educated at Stonyhurst Roman Catholic College.

"O. D.," is fond of putting questions to me. I do not object in the least. Now I would like him to answer one of mine. "Why do men, like Sir Conan Doyle and Sir Oliver Lodge, only reveal their previous belief in Materialism *after* they have given up the belief? Why are they dumb all the while they are Materialists, when a public avowal would benefit that philosophy, and we only become aware of the fact when they begin kicking us? Does "O. D.," consider this cricket? I strongly suspect this brand of Materialism.

"O. D.," says that the only evidence I adduce against a future existence is the distaste that some people have for it. Perhaps "O. D." will point out the precise words in which I make such a claim as I cannot find them

myself. Whether we wish for a future existence, or dread it, has not the slightest bearing, as proof, either for or against immortality. As I have said before, the craving for a future life, where it exists, is due to early training, the belief being implanted during our most impressionable days often resists the reasoning powers of later life. That is why the missionaries find such enormous difficulty in converting the Buddhists and Confucians who have not had this belief in personal immortality implanted in them during early life. The missionaries have nothing to work upon, they have first to create the desire for a future life which has never been aroused by early teaching and about which they are profoundly indifferent. I am just reading that most interesting book of letters from the South Seas, entitled *Isles of Illusion*, the anonymous writer of which tells us that the Roman Catholic missionaries in the New Hebrides "don't even pretend to make adult converts; they baptize the children and educate them." Hard experience having taught them the uselessness of attempting to implant these alien ideas in the adults. An illuminating commentary upon the theological assertion that these ideas are implanted in our nature by the Creator.

I maintain that it is the artificial craving for a future life, created by early training, that constitutes the present attraction of Spiritualism. What else is there to attract in it? It has not the emotional appeal of a solemn and impressive ritual, the deliverances of its Mediums—the modern prototypes of the Pagan oracles—are beneath contempt. Christians, having lost faith in the Bible, the foundation for their belief in a future life, which constitutes the only vital point in their religion, fly to Spiritualism, just as spirit drinkers deprived of alcohol fly to ten times more harmful drugs.

I am sorry "O. D." found my exposition unconvincing—my fault no doubt—but I do not despair of seeing him alter his opinions upon this question. W. MANN.

Obituary.

I have to record with the deepest regret the death, on the 13th inst., of the oldest and most faithful friend of Freethought in South Shields. Mr. Thomas Lumley, who joined the National Secular Society in 1881, was for many years one of the most active and loyal supporters. In the various early conflicts of Mr. C. Bradlaugh, Mrs. A. Besant, and Mr. G. W. Foote, he was always ready and willing to take his part and in the memorable missionary campaigns of the President, Mr. C. Cohen, on Tyneside and at South Shields in particular, Mr. Lumley was ever ready with wise counsel or generous financial support, and in every way a tower of strength to the movement locally. Mr. Lumley spent two short periods of his industrial life in Russia, and was the first Labour representative on the Municipal Council. In accordance with the last wishes of deceased, the body was cremated at Darlington on Friday last, and the ashes interred near his wife's grave at Harlon Cemetery, where the undersigned read the impressive burial service of Mr. F. J. Gould.—R. C.

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

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INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—No meeting.

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 to 8, Mr. Miller, Mr. Baker; 8 to 9.15, Debate, "Is the Personality of Man Less Than the Personality of God?" A clergyman v. Mr. Saphin. Also every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 6 to 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, Mr. A. B. Moss; Subject, "Man and Evolution."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3.30 and 6.30, Mr. A. D. McLaren will lecture.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

HUCKNALL (Notts.) Adult School: 10, Mr. Vincent J. Hands, "Belief in God Critically Examined." Ladies invited. Discussion.

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (60 Alexandra Road): 6.30, Branch Meeting.

OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. Whitehead's Mission: Meetings up to and including Sunday, August 26, will be held in the Bull Ring and not as advertised in last week's issue. Every evening at 7.30. On Sundays, 11 a.m. and 7.30 p.m.

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

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. George Whitehead's Mission: Monday, August 27 and every evening at 7.30 at the Sands or outside Victoria Park Gates. Members and sympathisers invited to lend a hand to make the mission a success.

BOOKS FOR SALE.

	s. d.
Havelock Ellis, <i>Etudes de Psychologies Sexuelle</i> , 4 vols., 1906	25 0
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