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Christian Pessimism.

As a consequence of a belief in a wise and good creator Christianity is compelled to find a meaning and a benefit in the existence of pain and suffering. As we have seen, it does this by dwelling upon the purificatory nature of pain. Further, the worship of Jesus the crucified, suffering saviour, has served to idealize misery and create a veritable worship of the weak. When we add to this the orthodox teaching that man is by himself incurably vile, and that only by supernatural aid can he be saved, there seems ample justification for Schopenhauer placing Christianity among systems of pessimism. From a psychological point of view there is no doubt that it is to this pessimistic and ascetic note Christianity chiefly owes the influence it has wielded. Eliminate this, encourage the joy of life, develop a belief in the self-sufficiency of human nature, and insensibly people glide into Freethought and deliverance. This is the underlying reason why all forms of Christianity have warred more or less vigorously against what they called "worldly pleasures." From the Christian point of view if this world is enough the next loses its attractiveness. If human nature can of itself supply the necessary incentives to right action, and all the conditions of legitimate satisfaction, there is no need for any form of supernaturalism. These conclusions have been implicit in all forms of Christian belief. God can only be great so long as man is a beggar. It is the littleness of man to which God owes his greatness.

* * *

Debasing the Currency.

If Christian theories were held as people might hold a belief concerning the condition of things on the surface of Mars it would matter but little whether they were true or false. But it should never be forgotten that the aim of the Christian religion is to control life, and to a considerable extent it has done so. And even when its open control has ceased it still continues to exert a strong influence. Frames of mind, habits of thinking, points of view, will persist long after the circumstances which gave rise to them have died away. They persist much as rudimentary organs persist. We gave some instances of this the other week when point-

ing out how questions and problems that have a meaning only so long as the Theistic point of view is maintained persist and influence the thinking of those who believe they have outgrown theology altogether. A very prominent illustration of this carrying over into ordinary thinking a conception that belongs to theology is the desire to find some moral end in Nature. Thus we have Matthew Arnold discoursing on the movement of things towards righteousness, not as the expression of a change in Nature which we measure as such, but as the consequence of some power outside man which deliberately forces things to that end for his special benefit. But this is not science, it is theology—in other words, foolishness. It is a conception born in theology and illegitimately transferred to a region in which it has no logical application. It is not merely precisely formulated theological beliefs that we have to discard, it is even more important to shake our minds free from the theological method.

* * *

Pathological Piety.

The Christian did not bring into the world an ideal of a strong, healthy humanity, but that of a race morally sick, and it taught the ideal of a necessarily suffering mankind. A consequence of this is that the sinner has always assumed a very prominent place in Christian teaching and Christian ethics, not with an increase of health and a decrease of vice, but with the reverse results. A curious illustration of this unhealthy development is given by Mr. F. M. Davenport in his *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*. He vouches for the truth of the story. A converted American negro had been entrusted by an old lady with a cart and horse for the purpose of collecting goods that had been given to a church bazaar. He collected the goods, then sold both them and the cart and horse and cleared out. Some time after he came back to play the part of the repentant sinner. He was given a Church trial, and after all had been said against him, the culprit rose and said:—

I'se a po' misable sinner. But, Bredren, so is we all mis'ble sinners. An' de good book says we must fergib. How many times Bredren? Till seven times? No; till seventy times seven. An' I ain't sinned no seventy times seven, and I'm jas go to sugges' dat we turn dis inter a fergibness meetin', and ebrybody in dis great comp'ny dat is willing to fergib me, come up now, while we sing one of our deah ole hymns, and shake me hand.

Then he started an old revival tune and the congregation came up one by one and shook hands with him—all but one. This was the old lady who had lost the cart and horse. So the negro tackled her. He said, "Dar's one po' mis'ble sinner left and she won't fergib. Now I suggest dat we hab a season ob prayer, and gib dat po' ole sinner one mo' chance." And finally the poor old lady gave up and came up to the platform—and received forgiveness.

* * *

Blessed are the Sick!

This picture of the repentant thief calmly praying for the forgiveness of the person he had robbed is

delicious. But the smugness of the converted thief is quite Christian, and the whole scene opens up an aspect of the Christian life too often overlooked. Poverty, humility, submission to injustice, contempt of healthy enjoyment, have all been emphasized as of value in themselves to the neglect of the more valuable qualities. Self-sacrifice was preached when genuine self-development would have done away with the necessity for the sacrifice of self. For whatever may be the value of any of the qualities which Christian preaching has emphasized, their value is due to exceptional circumstances and is at any rate a symptom of social ill-health. The Churches have, consciously, set themselves out for the saving of the "sinner." Unconsciously they have given an impetus to the very vices they professed to remove, while encouraging as virtues qualities that were not virtues at all. Some time ago we were reading in a religious weekly an article in which the writer pointed out that so much was said about the weak, the vicious, the helpless, that other people were lost sight of. A glance through any of the religious papers will endorse this. There are societies for saving fallen women, for criminals, for thieves, for would-be-suicides, and the rest. Let a man show any likelihood of belonging to any one of these groups and there are numerous religious agencies clamouring for his patronage. He is the material on which they live. The man who is neither a thief nor a loafer attracts little attention from these professional soul savers. As raw material he is not picturesque enough for the ordinary mission meeting. As a platform asset he would be a dead failure. But to be shown a man who has years of crime to his credit, and who, when old age is robbing his limbs of their agility, turns to Jesus is a mission gem of the first water. The audience gaze at him with devout admiration. The younger folk may probably wonder if such a career is open to them, while the ex-burglar or wife-beater stands in the full glare of conscious holiness, fully alive to the fact that he is extending the power of the Gospel, and, like the negro in Mr. Davenport's story, ready to extend his spiritual patronage to the less fortunate and less distinguished ones around him.

Pious Parasites.

* * *

Meanwhile there is with none of these activities of the Christian world the smallest indication of the need for doing away with the conditions and causes which bring these undesirable types to the fore. All the rescue homes in the kingdom have never prevented a woman from going astray, although they may have provided material for sermons for men with minds such as is possessed by our celibate Bishop of London. All the homes for waifs and strays have never diminished by a single unit cases of destitution. What they have done on the one side is to deaden the public conscience as to the existence of these and other evils. And on the other side it has developed another class, quite as parasitic as those who openly prey upon society. There are no figures available of the number of people who live—usually live very well—by running missions for this or that purpose, but the number must be very large indeed, and to those who have studied the subject it is evident that many take to this work in exactly the same spirit as they take to other occupations. When, some years ago, I was compiling particulars as to the working of that gigantic imposture the Foreign Missionary movement, I came across more than one instance of a failure in the pulpit who was getting a handsome living in running a mission for one of the purposes alluded to. And an examination of the various agencies for the protection of public morals and the like would disclose the fact that very often men were exploiting the public in the same way. They do nothing to remove the evil

on which they live. They would deeply regret its disappearance, particularly when it is a question of sexual vice, for its disappearance would at once rob them of a living and the gratification of their hardly suppressed unclean tendencies. In all these ways Christianity has inflicted grave evils on society by its holding up the pictures of weakness, suffering, and pain as helping to the development of mankind. Heine said that one day the world would recognize the Christian era as the sickness period of humanity. Certainly the Pagan world would have failed to appreciate the Christian glorification of saints who proved their saintliness by licking festering wounds, or the later rush of missions for the patronage of drunkards and blackguards. And they would have stared not because they had less humanity than the Christian world, but because theirs was a saner and a healthier type. CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be Concluded.)

"The Savage Reality of Sin."

It has often been the contention of these columns that the Christian Church could not possibly have continued to exist throughout the ages had it not been for its doctrines of sin and salvation from it through faith in the crucified and risen Christ. These two doctrines are inseparably bound together, with the result that if the one loses its hold upon the popular mind the other must inevitably share the same fate. Both must live or die together. Whatever happens to the one must happen also to the other. This is a law from which there is absolutely no escape. Consequently, one of the divisions in *Nevertheless We Believe*, by the Rev. A. Boyd-Scott, M.C., B.D., of Glasgow, is naturally entitled, "The Savage Reality of Sin." Mr. Scott understands his business thoroughly, and fully realizes the gravity of the present situation. No one knows better than he what the disappearance of the sense of sin would irresistibly bring in its train. In the following passage he reads very accurately the signs of the times:—

A sermon on Sin! Some people would as soon hear a sermon on the Moon: the one subject is as little alive as the other. Why worry about that extinct volcano, the doctrine of sin? Hearken, rather, to Sir Oliver Lodge: 'The higher man of to-day is not worrying about his sins at all.' And to this other voice, "Contentment can only be gained by gaiety of heart." And to Whitman saying enviously of the beasts of the field: "They never lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins!" To many people to-day there is only one sin; it is the sin of worrying about sin. Live naturally, they counsel us, sin is an artificial bugbear. Get back to Nature, to the joyous, simple, unsophisticated life of natural man, the child of Nature; escape away from your crumbling theological prison; cut away clear from the bonds that priests have woven of sin, remorse, and monkish unrealities (pp. 146-7).

That is a fairly true statement of the case as regards the popular attitude to the theological doctrine of sin; but at the close of the description the reverend gentleman falls into serious error. He calls primitive man the unreflecting companion of Nature's other children; but, according to Frazer's *Golden Bough* and other works of that sort, primitive man was anything but "unreflecting." What he lacked was not reflection, but knowledge; not the speculative faculty, but the information upon which to base his theories and speculations. Continuing his false estimate of him, Mr. Scott says: "His only law is liberty, his natural impulses are his decalogue, he is splendidly ignorant of Sin." The fact is that primitive man was subject to fear all his life, most of the lower animals

being his enemies, not his companions, and the sense of liberty was hidden from his experience. Of course, for a civilized man to-day to repeat the life and experience of a primitive, uncivilized man is an utter impossibility except in imagination. We know from the researches of anthropologists that primitive man made very few if any real discoveries, but he set up a big pile of assumptions not one of which was susceptible of proof. He assumed that the forces of Nature were living beings, and because of certain events which frequently occurred he assumed that they were mostly hostile. This was the time of "primal stupidity," and ignorant assumptions followed each other in quick succession, forming the stuff, "the normal raw material," out of which religion was made. Ignorance begat fear, and fear prompted primitive man to devise all sorts of attempts at appeasing and gaining the favour of the ruling powers, whatever they were. No real discovery whatever was made; and yet out of the assumption that for some unknown reason the higher powers were hostile to mankind, arose all the sacrificial systems of the world, all alike resting on an ignorant and wholly mistaken assumption. Mr. Scott is radically wrong when he says that primitive man wended his way from things to powers, from powers to Gods, and from Gods to God. Is not Mr. Scott aware that Monotheism is one of the latest theological inventions, and that even to-day it is to be found in its purity only in Judaism and Mohammedanism? The reverend gentleman informs us that God has his own way of working the world; but if he has, we are bound to pronounce it a shockingly bad and horribly cruel way. History furnishes us with abundant samples of its frightful wickedness. Take the latest sample to hand, the terrific earthquake in Japan, resulting in the loss of at least half a million lives in a few hours. Does Mr. Scott regard that unspeakably tragic catastrophe as an instance of "God's own way of working the world"? We think we do the Christian God far greater honour by refusing to believe that he exists at all.

Mr. Scott dwells much too long on the imaginary discoveries of primitive man. As a matter of fact primitive man discovered nothing; he learned certain things by bitter experience, such as that certain actions brought happiness, and certain others caused pain; but as to anything beyond and above Nature he lived on sheer surmises and naked assumptions, as multitudes of people have continued to do down to our own day. It is perfectly true that we are living under a marvellous system of natural laws. Now hearken to Mr. Scott:—

All these laws operate everywhere in all instances, in all men. Let any man break them, and he pays the penalty. Even if you are not aware of them, you suffer if you break them. If you are aware of them, and yet break them, you suffer (p. 149).

Why does a minister of the Word use the at once unscriptural and unscientific term "break"? Natural laws cannot be broken, they can only be obeyed or disobeyed, observed or disregarded. We cannot break them, but they can break us, if we neglect to obey them. Mr. Scott continues thus:—

If you are aware of them, and yet break them, you suffer. But you do more: you sin. That is what Sin is. Sin is the breaking of those laws of God, either in your body or your soul, which you know you must obey, and live by, if you would be what you, more or less plainly, perceive you are meant to be in the universe of God. It brings suffering; it does more, it stains you! That constant rebellion on your part against God and God's hope of you, stains you. It is this staining of you that men call Guilt (p. 149).

It is purely as a theologian that Mr. Scott looks at every subject. For example, he jumbles all laws

together and calls them God's laws. Does he imagine that he glorifies the God of love by doing that? Does he think that it is creditable to the Deity he worships to have the law of the jungle thrust at him as his very own? And yet it is a law of Nature. He seems to believe in the theory of evolution, for he speaks of primitive man as he is supposed to have been sixty thousand years ago; but does he regard the blood-curdling horrors and abominations that characterized nearly all stages in the evolutionary process as worthy of the Supreme Being under whose infallible guidance he believes the whole process to have been conducted? At the summit of the process stands man, savage, semi-savage, and semi-civilized; is he at any stage in his career a credit to the Heavenly Father under whose loving care he is believed to have been all along? Many divines assure us that evolution was set going unnumbered millions of years ago, when the solar system was evolved, with the express purpose of producing man in God's own image to be his friend and companion for ever. Evidently the holy scheme has completely miscarried, for this is what the poet Tennyson says:—

Where is one that, born of woman, altogether can escape,
From the lower world within him, moods of tiger, or of ape?

Tennyson was never a whole-hearted Christian. Most of his life he occupied the borderland between belief and unbelief. Now comes Freud, whom, we are glad to learn, Mr. Scott studies and admires, while sharing Tennyson's conviction, goes further still. As our author puts it:—

Not so long ago we were telling ourselves that man has outgrown the savage in his breast. We know now that we never outgrow him; we seldom do more than repress him. Freud told us this; the most awful war in history has written it on the skies in letters of blood (p. 149).

Now, where do sin and the forgiveness of sin come in?

J. T. LLOYD.

(To be Concluded.)

A Tragic Comedian.

Poor splendid wings so frayed and soiled and torn!
Poor kind wild eyes so dashed with light quick tears!
Poor perfect voice, most blithe when most forlorn,
That rings athwart the sea whence man steers,
Like joy bells crossed with death bells in our ears.

—Swinburne.

THERE has been a revival of interest in Oscar Wilde since some literary Spiritualists have printed alleged messages from that ill-fated author, said to have been received since his death. Believers and disbelievers in Spiritism will probably dispute as to the authenticity of these messages more than on any recent so-called manifestation of Spiritism. For Wilde was not only a curled, perfumed darling of Society, but he was also a writer of European reputation, and the tragedy of his life gave a touch of melodrama to his career which is lacking in the cases of most writers. It was, curiously, the tragedy of Wilde's own life that gave permanence to his works. It is true that his plays received a warm welcome in Paris, Berlin, and Vienna, and that his poems achieved the glory of a fifth edition during his life. His earlier work was, however, but the outcome of a brilliant intellect, and it was personal suffering that added the very necessary human note. In his exuberant, youthful writing he wore the cap and bells bravely and banged the bladder of comedy with light-hearted zest; but in *De Profundis* and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, he wrote straight from the heart, and often with eyes full of tears. The *Ballad* indeed is a masterpiece. Not only is it full of a haunt-

ing beauty of expression, but it is also a fearful exposure of our penal system which is so unworthy of a nation pretending to be in the van of civilization. Listen to these lines upon a prisoner condemned to death :—

I never saw a man who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
Which prisoners call the sky,
And at every drifting cloud that went
With sails of silver by.

Then read this uncanny passage :—

It is good to dance to violins
When love and life are fair;
To dance to flutes, to dance to lutes
So delicate and rare;
But it is not sweet with nimble feet
To dance upon the air.

Stanza after stanza has its haunting refrain :—

Yet each man kills the thing he loves,
By each let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword.

The same perfect mastery of language is apparent in *The Harlot's House* :—

Then suddenly the tune went false,
The dancers wearied of the waltz,
The shadows ceased to wheel and whirl,
And down the long and silent street
The dawn with silver-sandalled feet,
Crept like a frightened girl.

De Profundis was actually written behind prison walls. The book is pathetic throughout, but some passages are unforgettable :—

On November 13, 1895, I was brought down here from London. From two o'clock till half-past two on that day I had to stand on the centre platform of Clapham Junction in convict dress, and handcuffed, for the world to look at. I had been out of the hospital ward without a moment's notice being given to me. Of all possible objects I was the most grotesque. When people saw me they laughed. Each train as it came up swelled the audience. Nothing could exceed their amusement. That was, of course, before they knew who I was. As soon as they had been informed they laughed still more. For half an hour I stood there in the grey November rain surrounded by a jeering mob.....To those who are in prison tears are a part of every day's experience. A day in prison on which one does not weep is a day on which one's heart is hard, not a day on which one's heart is happy.

This pathos is almost unexpected from a writer whose earlier language was a craft as much as an art, and related to carpets and wall-papers, and not to life itself with its terrible burdens of sorrow, sickness, and death. Wilde had been a spoilt child of society, and he was the idol of many drawing-rooms. His early books were printed on hand-made paper, and bound in vellum with gold decorations. In the days of his vanity he was a law unto himself. He wore his hair long, and flaunted a necktie like a child's sash, and when he aped Sir Oracle all listened. The great river of life had flowed for years quietly past the poet while he languidly watched its ripples, and repeated : "Experience, the name we give to our mistakes," or, "Sleep, like all wholesome things, is a habit," or, "Merely to look at the world will always be lovely." How little did he then realize that one day he would be struggling for bare existence in the same river. The day came when men and women averted their eyes when he passed, when all doors were shut against him, and he was an outcast eating the bitter bread of banishment. But in that evil day he learned that art and æsthetics are but sorry substitutes for human love and sympathy. He was like poor Heinrich Heine, who

dragged his palsied limbs to the cool shades of the Louvre to see once more his beloved Venus de Milo, before sinking helpless on his mattress grave, and, falling at her feet, seemed to hear her say that she could not lift him up because she had no arms.

MIMNERMUS.

Christian Conceptions of Hell.

No man, in whose nature the warmer and more genial feelings have a place, can consider the doctrine of future punishment, as taught by the early Fathers of the Church, without a great loathing for those misguided, vengeful fanatics, whose dreadful conceptions must have embittered life and invested death with new terrors for thousands of millions of their fellow-creatures. Endless damnation, involving the experience of the most excruciating torments, was the lot reserved for the vast majority of mankind, they taught. Nothing, to my mind, at least, shows more plainly the hideous warping of mind in these monomaniacs than their doctrine that unbaptized infants passed at once, and for ever, into a condition of endless torture. "Hold most firmly, and by no means doubt," wrote St. Fulgentius, "that little children, whether they die before or after birth, pass, without the holy sacrament of baptism, from this world, to be punished with the everlasting punishment of eternal fire."¹ How far removed we are from the spirit that breathes in the words, "Suffer little children to come unto me."

Nor did they speak in parables; for them Hell was a place of real, eternal fire, wherein sensitive bodies suffered the agonies of perpetual burning. When the Pagans pointed out that no body could burn for ever, since it must be consumed by the flames, their Christian opponents pointed them to the salamander, and to asbestos; "and by appeals to the Divine Omnipotence, which was supposed to be continually exerted to prolong the tortures of the dead." (Lecky, *Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*.)

Tertullian (A.D. 150 to A.D. 230 circa), exhorts his fellow Christians to avoid idolatrous spectacles promising them that in the hereafter they shall be compensated for their abstinence by beholding monarchs groaning in the outer darkness, wrestlers tossing in fiery billows, and charioteers driving in burning chariots, and those governors who persecuted the Christians suffering in fiercer fires than those with which they destroyed the martyrs.

Augustine, a couple of centuries later in his "City of God"—

Argued from the nature of the salamander and the supposed antiseptic nature of the peacock in favour of the possibility of human bodies lasting for ever in burning flames, contending that a God who could perform such a miracle as to create the world, with all its countless miracles of earth and sky, could easily cause the bodies of the dead not only to rise, but to be susceptible of torment in everlasting fire, maintaining that the same material fire of Hell will be equally adapted to prey upon the solid bodies of men and women and the aerial bodies of devils, and suggesting that in that eternal fire the due proportion may be observed between punishment and desert by the graduation of the temperature of the fire to individual cases, or by different degrees of sensibility to the intensity of the torment. (*Paganism and Christianity*, J. A. Farrer.)

As the Dark Ages went by, more and more detailed accounts of the horrors of Hell were presented to the

¹ St. Augustine denied that a separate place was assigned to children that died unbaptized, and in one of his sermons against the Pelagians he declared that they descended into everlasting fire.

world. Lecky says in his *History of European Morals* :—

A long series of monastic visions, of which that of Sr. Fursey, in the seventh century, was one of the first, and which followed in rapid succession till that of Tundale, in the twelfth century, professed to describe with the most detailed accuracy the condition of the lost. It is impossible to conceive more ghastly, grotesque, and material conceptions of the future world than they evince, or more hideous calumnies against that Being who was supposed to inflict upon His creatures such unspeakable misery. The Devil was represented bound by red-hot chains on a burning gridiron in the centre of Hell. The screams of his never-ending agony made the rafters to resound; but his hands were free, and with these he seized the lost souls, crushed them like grapes against his teeth, and then drew them by his breath down the fiery cavern of his throat. Demons with hooks of red-hot iron plunged soul and soul alternately into fire and ice. Some of the lost were hung up by their tongues, others were sawn asunder, others gnawed by serpents, others beaten on an anvil and welded into a single mass, others boiled and then strained through a cloth, others twined in the embraces of demons whose limbs were of fire. The fire of earth, it was said, was but a picture of that Hell. The latter was so immeasurably more intense that it alone could be called real. Sulphur was mixed with it, partly to increase its heat and partly, too, in order that an insufferable stench might be added to the misery of the lost; while, unlike other flames, it emitted, according to some visions, no light, that the horror of darkness might be added to the horror of pain. A narrow bridge spanned the abyss, and from it the souls of sinners were plunged into the darkness that was below.

Here is one such account, verbatim. It is taken from Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of England*, and is supposed to be the account given of his adventures by a certain Northumbrian called Cunningham. This man died, and visited Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, and was then permitted to return to the earth. His account runs thus :—

He that led me had a shining countenance and a bright garment, and we went on silently, as I thought, towards the north-east. Walking on, we came to a vale of great breadth and depth, but of infinite length; on the left it appeared full of dreadful flames; the other side was no less horrid for violent hail and cold snow were flying in all directions; both places were full of men's souls, which seemed by turns to be tossed from one side to the other, as it were by a violent storm; for when the wretches could no longer endure the excess of heat, they leaped into the middle of the cutting cold; and finding no rest there, they leaped back again into the middle of the unquenchable flames.

Now whereas an innumerable multitude of deformed spirits were thus alternately tormented far and near, as far as could be seen, without any intermission, I began to think that this perhaps might be hell, of whose intolerable flames I had often heard talk. My guide who went before me, answered to my thought, saying, "Do not believe so, for this is not Hell, as you imagine." (It transpired, later, that the place was Purgatory.)

Presently they came to Hell.

When he had conducted me, much frightened with that horrid spectacle, by degrees to the farther end, on a sudden I saw the place begin to grow dusk and filled with darkness. When I came into it, the darkness, by degrees, grew so thick that I could see nothing beside it and the shape and garment of him that led me. As we went on through the shades of night, on a sudden there appeared before us frequent globes of black flames, rising as it were, out of a great pit, and falling back again into the same.

When I had been conducted thither, my leader suddenly vanished, and left me alone in the midst of darkness and this horrid vision, whilst those same

globes of fire, without intermission, at one time flew up and at another fell back into the bottom of the abyss; and I observed that all the flames, as they ascended, were full of human souls, which, like sparks flying up with smoke, were sometimes thrown on high, and again, when the vapour of the fire ceased, dropped down into the depth below. Moreover, an insufferable stench came forth with the vapours, and filled all those dark places.

Having stood there a long time in much dread, not knowing what to do, which way to turn, or what end I might expect, on a sudden I heard behind me the noise of a most hideous and wretched lamentation, and at the same time a loud laughing, as of a rude multitude insulting captured enemies. When that noise, growing plainer, came up to me, I observed a gang of evil spirits dragging the howling and lamenting souls of men into the midst of the darkness, whilst they themselves laughed and rejoiced.

Among those men, as I could discern, there was one shorn like a clergyman, also a layman, and a woman. The evil spirits that dragged them went down into the midst of the burning pit, and as they went down deeper I could no longer distinguish between the lamentations of the men and the laughter of the devils, yet I still had a confused noise sound in my ears.

W. H. MORRIS.

(To be Concluded.)

Philosophers of the Market-Place.

As my article on "Philosophies of Life" brought me several kind and appreciative messages, I determined—with all the recklessness of youth—to exploit the subject further. The object of the present writing is to explain why I abandoned the idea.

I had been reading how the old Greek philosophers were wont to discourse to their disciples in the market-place at Athens, and the idea occurred to me that maybe if I visited a similar spot I might find some modern Socrates who could impart to me the secret of life. I would go forth and wrest from the philosophers of the market-place the key to the mystery of life. No longer should the perplexed spirit of man cry *Cui Bono?* No longer—. But enough! I went. Alas! Alas!!

On my arrival a wild looking youth with a Scotch accent and a collar that had evidently been too late for the previous week's wash was expounding the principles of Communism. From him I gathered that the great need of the world was for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the economic subjection of the bourgeoisie. I shuddered! I am afraid I have little sympathy with the Communists. They always give me a creepy feeling down the spine. Perhaps it is that I should be made of sterner stuff; but I cannot help feeling what a ghastly sensation it would be to lose one's false teeth in the crowd when the attack on Buckingham Palace begins. *Das Kapital* is pretty comprehensive, I know, but I doubt if it covers facts like those. And yet it is upon such incidents as that that the fate of a revolution oftentimes depends. A gruesome thought!

In another corner of the square a gentleman in a shiny black coat was urging a group of unkempt urchins to be true to their liberalism. Before I could gain a point of vantage I was accosted by a seedy looking man who gave me a horrible leer (an awful thing to give anyone) and confided to me in an undertone that for the small sum of "tuppence" I could revel in the delights of a little book bearing the somewhat thought-provoking title *The Bride's First Night*. I produced my two-pence and gave him a curt dismissal.

By this time the Salvation Army band was at work. I edged quickly away while an hysterical maiden invited me to "Come to Jesus." I hastened my pace, still she urged me to "Come to Jesus." I wonder whether the Army held its al frescoes at Athens? That would account for Socrates drinking hemlock. I could soon develop a liking for the beverage myself in an environment of that kind. There are really worse ways of going to Jesus.

My attention was next attracted by a little man with a red bushy beard. His face fungus would have sent George Bernard Shaw green with envy. His eloquence was even more fiery than his beard. I gathered from a banner borne by one of his supporters (II Tim. ii, 15) that his particular line of business was Holiness. I could tell it. He exuded it from every pore. The crowd were so impressed by his fervour that they stood silently and wonderingly surveying him. "My friends," he urged, "If Jesus came here to-night what would you say?" "BEAVER!" shouted a small boy. The spell was broken.

After that I visited several orators and knelt awhile at each shrine. Then I visited a fish and chip stall to vary the monotony (fish I am told is good for the brain), after which I lent a gentleman a shilling to hold, and held a gold watch for him till he got a crowd round. Then he had the watch back and I got a six-penny fountain pen for my trouble. He forgot to give me my shilling back, but I didn't like to bother him. He had been so kind to me considering he had never seen me before—he kept telling the crowd this and calling on me to confirm it. I did so vigorously. I'd hate them to think we were together. Finally, I endeavoured to get a moral looking gentleman with a Nonconformist conscience type of face to give me an interview. But when I told him I was the racing correspondent of the *Christian Herald* he looked so moral that I changed my tone and begged of him as a personal favour to let us have hymn 69 in the red book. "Nothing," I pleaded, "would delight me so much as No. 69 in the red book." This seemed to pacify him, and I made my escape during the first verse.

I am persuaded that there is nothing so calculated to cure one of a love of philosophy as to make the acquaintance of philosophers. Lord Macaulay, in his *Essay on Bacon* (the philosopher-statesman, not the edible commodity), says of the old Greek philosophers: "They filled the world with long words and long beards; and they left it as wicked and as ignorant as they found it." How like our philosophers of the market-place! They, too, like their ancient Greek prototypes, have "all the vices of their neighbours, with the additional vice of hypocrisy."

On my way home I counted my spoil: A Communist weekly, two Socialist publications, seven tracts, the War Cry, Gospel According to St. John, a Herbal Handbook, and the Bride's First Night. If I live long enough I hope to read them all. So far I have only read *The Bride's First Night*. A mad world, my masters!

VINCENT J. HANDS.

INDUSTRY.

Let us work on!

Truly and wisely; ever persevere;

Nor faint, nor fear:

True, prudent industry hath ever won.

Let us work on!

Work bravely; prove our faithfulness by deeds.

Sow wide the seeds

Of toil, if we would reap! Let us work on!

Let us work on!

Work through all barrenness, nor count the cost;

Work prophesieth triumph: On! aye, on!

—W. J. Linton.

Thoughts on Fear.

WILL Fear ever be a non-existent quantity in life? This is a question which naturally leaps to the mind when one looks around and sees how largely the world is ruled by fear at the present day. It is certainly the root evil in life. It retards progress in science, in religion, in philosophy; it cramps our relations with our fellow men; it sows the seeds of craftiness in human nature; it is responsible for bad international relations.

A savage instinct this fear, yet we of the twentieth century, priding ourselves on our advanced civilization, are just as shackled by it as the savage. Only our fears have changed in character. He feared the spirit of wood and stream, the voice in the wind, the ghost of his dead ancestor, the lightning and thunder. We—or the majority of us—have surmounted these elemental fears but only to replace them by others which, no doubt, to our descendants will appear equally foolish as those of the savage do to us to-day.

All through history Fear has stalked with its deadly power, retarding progress and development on all sides. And it is the Church which has mainly been responsible for fostering this puny spirit of fear within us. From the cradle the child is imbibed with fear. God is presented to him one moment as an all-loving Father, but at the next as a terrible o'ershadowing tyrant watching his smallest action and ready to strike if that action were not approved. I recall some of the tales I was told when a child. One was of a little boy who having forgotten one night to say his prayers, and suddenly remembering, jumped out of bed. God chose this moment to allow the ceiling to fall on the very spot where he would have been lying! Such tales as these merely make cowards of us all. Would our children be any the worse I wonder were we to banish fear from their minds, simply appealing to them to act up to the best and highest in their natures?

And this instilling of fear by the Church does not stop with childhood. Though the doctrine of hell fire has to a large extent been abandoned, still the atmosphere of fear is fostered in various ways. The demand that one should communicate three times a year—the repetition of the Creed of St. Athanasius with its fearful anathemas against those who cannot accept the dogmas of Christianity—the promise of a reward after life to those who can—all tend to create the spirit of fear which has such a deadening effect on body and mind.

With such an upbringing is it a wonder that most of us surround ourselves with a hedge of reserve, which shuts out many of the joys of life, narrows our circle and fetters our best impulses. Even to our close friends we are often afraid to exercise the love and generosity we feel for fear our actions shall be misconstrued. And to how many people do we really tell our inmost thoughts? As Dennis Bradley says in his wonderful book, *The Eternal Masquerade*, "The effects of fear are devastating, and that is the reason why speech with the majority of people is merely a muscular exercise of the throat, the audible form of which is a tissue of platitudes, inanities, and lies."

In every walk of life Fear is displayed. It is fear that the patient may know how to treat his body that makes the medical man give scantily of his knowledge; the teacher rules and disciplines his class by fear; the whole organization of army and navy is run by the intimidation of one grade by another; employer and employé fear each other; class fears class; the Roman Catholic is afraid to read the Bible; the Christian has not the courage to analyse his religion; the average person will not examine the facts of life and is certainly afraid to teach them to his children. It is

as though we were imprisoned in a castle with the monster Fear guarding our exit. Now and again, a brave spirit scales the walls, kills the monster, and escapes. To such a one comes true happiness, for he is master of himself, his mental vision is cleared, and he can fully enjoy what life has to offer, leading from experience to experience, from truth to truth.

What progress, both individual and collective, might be made were all able to exercise this courage!

E. N. THORNTON.

Petitioning Peter.

*Music Masters of Happy Land Have a Serious Grievance.
Special Dispatch by Skyograph.*

ELYSIUM, Aug. 15, 1923.—There is much excitement, just now, over the action of the Society of Music Masters, who demand a right to peace in Heaven as a just compensation for their services on earth. A committee, consisting of Bach, Mendelssohn, Verdi, Donizetti, Mozart, and Beethoven, with Beethoven as spokesman, called on Saint Peter, recently, with the following statement of the case.

"It's this way," said he, "Most Honourable Keeper of the Gates. We feel that, having given the world the best that is to be had in music, and having suffered much while on the earth, it is but just that we be guaranteed that peace which was promised us after death. Yet what do we get? If we seek a restful stroll, at eventide beside the Waters of Life, our ears are assailed by the most hideous caterwaulings and howls, and, when we object, we are calmly informed that we ought to enjoy them because they are the devotional music of the Negro Camp Meetings. We move on and seek the Peaceful Meadows, when suddenly our nerves are shocked by howlings and yells, and, upon asking what these horrible screechings mean, we are told it is the Holy Rollers singing their praises to God, and that we ought to enjoy their music. Again we try for a place of rest, when a din of ear-splitting yells and the blare of drums with tooting horns assails us, and in reply to our agonized protest, we are told it is the Salvation Army practising devotional hymns, and that we ought to like it. Driven to desperation, we move on again, when 'Hark from the tombs a doleful sound' strikes our ears in dismal chorus, and we are asked if we do not think the singing of the old Scotch Covenanters is lovely. I tell you, Peter, we simply cannot endure this torture to our sensitive musical nerves. Such dreadful music may be Heaven to those who make it, but it's just Hell for us. So tell us, what are we to do?"

Peter bowed his head in silence a few minutes, and then he said: "I understand. It is rather hard on you. I'll think it over. In the meantime, I will assign you a place outside the Gates of Heaven, where you will not be disturbed."

And thus the matter stands, until further action can be taken regulating music in Elysium. Meanwhile Peter has forbidden the use of any phonographs, piano-players or radio machines. So it is possible that the Society of Music Masters may yet win a way to peace.

FREDERIC W. PANGBORN, Scribe.

The Truthseeker (New York).

JUSTICE

(Uncivilized and Civilized).

Ling-Tso Ah Sin, on Murderer's Flat,
One morning caught an old grey rat;
"Ah, white man, I have got you now!
But no—dust be upon thy brow
If needless blood I cause to fall—
So go, there's world-room for us all.

That night Ah Sin was somewhat shot—
By accident! for he had got
From earth a little gold—black sin
For thee, though not for us, Ah Sin.

—William Sharp (1856—1905).

Acid Drops.

We have been lately dealing with the mental confusion arising from not being on our guard against the misleading connotations of words. Here is another illustration which we note in a review of an essay of Mr. Julian Huxley's by Dean Inge. Mr. Huxley is enamoured of the word "religion" and is anxious to provide something of that kind for the future; and with the apparent desire to show Christians that though he does not believe all they believe, yet he does uphold some of their fundamental ideas, he writes this passage: "Man is yet near the beginning of his evolutionary career, and has before him vast tracts of time to set against the vastness of his tasks." Quite naturally Dean Inge is pleased with this passage because it provides a Theist of his kind with just that apology for and justification of God that he requires. If man will make good, and if God is the guide and teacher of man in the act of making good, and if the evolutionary process is the machinery by which man makes good, then God is, in a measure, justified. So Dean Inge is satisfied, and Mr. Julian Huxley still maintains that comfortable and respectable word "religion."

The fallacy lies in the use of the word "man." Both Dean Inge and Mr. Huxley, when they speak of man as at the beginning of his career and having millenniums of time in which to make good, speak as though it were a single individual who is passing through all this travail, and whatever be the trials in the process he is repaid at the end by what he achieves. But that is quite misleading, although it is the customary way in which the Theist tries to justify the character of his God. God is educating man, and the trials through which he passes are parts of the educational process. That would be all right if the man who suffers was the man who emerged at the end of these millenniums of progress. But that is not the case. It is the individual man who suffers and dies. His progress is over. It ends with death, and there is no joyful overcoming of his trials. They may, in fact, have caused him to die earlier than he might have done. And it is idle to tell the man who is dying, or who is certain to die at an early date, that he will benefit because the race will one day be perfect. The confusion is obviously due to using the word "man" in two senses—first in that of man as an individual, second as a species. It is the race that develops, not the individual. The individual suffers, and the race benefits. But that clearly cannot justify God in so arranging things that myriads of human beings must suffer in order that in the distant future some other human beings, who have not and who will not suffer, reap the reward of work they have not done and of pains they have not experienced. It cannot be called education because the individual who passed through what is called the educational process is no longer with us. And those who use the language Mr. Huxley uses, without at the same time using the most careful qualifications, are simply playing the game of the Theist. That is why we continually warn the thoughtful reader against carrying into Freethought conceptions which originate with and properly belong to religion. Let us try to be one thing or the other.

At Cowes a woman was fined £5 and costs for fortune-telling. The clergy tell people what will happen to them after death, but magistrates and police take no notice.

A Middlesborough man who died recently directed that he was to be buried in his nightshirt, to which a gold crucifix was to be pinned. He ought to make a sensation when he enters heaven.

A newspaper correspondent says that the Irish Blarney Stone is being worn away by the continual kissing of pilgrims. If this be true, the Pope should have his toe insured.

In an article in a London newspaper it is stated that there are "too many sad songs" in England. The writer must have been reading some of the popular hymn-books.

Some of our readers will remember, no doubt, the dressing down administered by G. W. Foote to Mr. E. Gosse in connection with the centenary celebrations of Shelley's birth held at Horsham in 1892. Mr. Gosse managed to say some things that were untrue, and some that were foolish. Foote ironically excused him on account of his pretty style and his youth—he was then an elderly youth of forty-three. He is now over seventy and the more fatuous of his admirers tell him that he is our English Sainte-Beuve, if they have not already given that title to Mr. J. C. Squire. Now Sainte-Beuve has his faults, no doubt, but he is never absurdly stupid or flagrantly careless, faults which the late Churton Collins delighted to discover in a literary critic which the reading public took seriously.

Mr. Gosse recently gave us an excellent example of his stupidity in the *Sunday Times* where, of course, he is not afraid of being challenged. He was telling us what he thought of a story written around the life of Shelley by an intelligent Frenchman, M. André Maurois (*Ariel ou la vie de Shelley*), and had occasion to mention the Godwin household. What struck us as particularly stupid was his reference to William Godwin. He described him in five words as "mentor, debtor, and fatuous enthusiast."

There is, of course, an implied sneer in this *mentor*. Godwin was not a Polonius. If he had been Hazlitt would not have esteemed him so highly. Debtor he certainly was, but so also were Coleridge, De Quincy and many others whom Mr. Gosse delights to honour. If Godwin is to be rightly described as a "fatuous enthusiast" because he held that human nature was not incapable of reaching perfection, the same censure may be applied to Shelley with even greater validity. But it is foolish to expect the average literary critic to measure his words, or even to take the trouble to read the work of a writer he elects to judge. A lively prejudice is all that is needed. Where the writer is an Atheist and an anarchist the critic has no need to measure his criticism. The orthodox will always applaud.

Political Justice is a work which a critic can safely abuse, for very few people have read it. There is no modern edition. This is a pity because it has considerable historical importance; while for those who regard literarian anarchism as a not impossible social philosophy Godwin is at least suggestive and at some points even corrective. It is too much to expect a writer of Mr. Gosse's respectability and orthodoxy to do anything like justice to Godwin, but at any rate he might refrain from censuring a writer whom he has evidently not read, and certainly could not understand. There is one good quality which Godwin possessed, a quality he shares with Ruskin and a few other men of genius—the frank recognition of telling objection against his intellectual positions. If he saw that he was wrong he was ready to admit it, which is as much as to say that he had nothing in common with the journalist and university lecturer.

Discussing the relations of theology to religion, Dr. Glover, in the *Daily News* for September 8, says:—

You cannot hold any idea in isolation. The whole world of experience is one, and your football and your religion go together. If you are a good Christian you will be clean in your sport, you will play the game; if you don't honestly hold by the standards of sport, your Christianity will suffer.

We have pointed out more than once the fallacy of assuming that the mind works in water-tight compartments. A sound psychology would have prevented that cheap generalization becoming current. So far we quite agree with Dr. Glover. And yet the fact remains that a

man will be a good Christian and yet do some very mean, dirty, and discreditable things. In science, for instance, the right to form different opinions is freely admitted, and no one would dream of imprisoning, or boycotting, or slandering another for a mere difference of opinion on a scientific topic. Yet these things take place daily in connection with religion. They are accounted unto a man for righteousness; the man who does these things may be quite clean in other directions, and we do not know that Dr. Glover has ever been very active in helping to redress things in this direction. He may have done so, but we are not aware of the fact.

Now I suggest to Dr. Glover that the reason why this is so is not that the mind works in water-tight compartments, but that different standards of value and different rules of conduct are laid down for each department. The Christian may be "playing the game" whether it be cricket or theology. One may be quite admirable and the other quite detestable because different rules are applied. In commercial life if a man went round telling his fellow dealers that A. or B. were dishonourable men and ought to be shunned, he would soon find himself in the courts, and decent business men would treat him as a cowardly liar. But in the Christian Church it has always been considered quite moral and justifiable for parsons and others to say that unbelievers are dishonourable men and should be shunned by right minded men and women. In science it has always been the rule that the truth is the great thing to be aimed at, that truth can only be reached by discussion and experiment, and that the expression of difference of opinion is a good thing all round. In religion men are not brought up to search for truth, they are taught that they already have all the truth there is on that matter, that any man who comes forward with a different view is a danger to the community, and the convinced Christian will have nothing to do with him or with his opinions. And that is really all there is in the matter. The rules of the game are healthy in the one case and unhealthy in the other, and it is useless Dr. Glover grumbling at the consequences of these rules unless he can summon up courage enough to tell the religious world what is really wrong.

Instead of that what he does is to write columns of verbiage about true and pure religion, when all the time it is the influence of religious belief that is at fault, whether it be of the pure or the impure variety. Arsenic is not a good thing to dine on whether it be pure or adulterated, and the same is true of religion. He tells his readers, "A religion about which you do not think—why that is savagery and animism." But what is a religion about which you do think? Does Dr. Glover imagine that animism and savagery came without thinking? And what is there left of any religion if all the savagery and animism is taken out of it? What is the root of the belief in God, and a soul, and virgin-births, and miracles, and angels and devils, and vicarious atonement, and all the other elements of Christianity, but savagery and animism? Men like Dr. Glover are only in advance of their fellow believers inasmuch as they are ashamed of religion, pure and undefiled, and so strive to give us a watered down article for consumption. But they are not in advance of them in possessing the courage and the mental clarity to see through the imposture of the whole thing—or at least they do not do so.

It may be taken as a sign of the times that the religious papers have been unusually quiet over the earthquake in Japan. Time was when we would have had columns of articles and sermons justifying the ways of God to man. Probably it is felt that these arguments are now worn very thin, and it is safer to say nothing at all. At any rate nothing very special has been said. A stray reference in the *Daily Chronicle* that "no act of God in history has produced carnage and destruction on this vast scale" is all we have noticed, which seems to indicate that Mr. Lloyd George's organ is the only one left with a clinging to the old way of looking at God and his work.

A "Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

AFTER a lapse of three years circumstances again compel a reopening of this fund. Three years ago I was in hopes that things might so shape that by now the paper would, for the first time in its history, pay its way. Events did not justify this optimism. The cost of production, instead of rapidly decreasing, went down but slightly, and the unprecedented slump in trade seriously affected the spending power of the public. The effect of the latter factor will be plain to all. As to the former I need only say that paper is still at twice the pre-war price (and is again rising), wages are about two and a half times above the pre-war level, and other costs are increased in proportion. The consequence of this has been to put a number of established papers out of existence, and several more are threatened with an early demise. Readers of the *Freethinker* know that I never appeal for help of this kind hastily. What could be done to avoid it has been done. For over eight years—eight of the hardest years that any Freethought paper in this country has ever had to face—I have done the whole work of the paper single-handed, so that expenses might be kept at a minimum. Those who understand what the drudgery of a weekly paper is carried on under such conditions, and will bear in mind that I have had enough of other work to fully occupy most men, will appreciate the situation. But so long as appeals of this kind are necessary I am loth to increase expenses, although there are times when I feel the burden to be rather heavy for one person to carry. It should be added that I have not attended to my own needs first. The small sum I am supposed to draw for my work as editor, contributor, and manager, has remained unpaid for more than a year, and this has involved the incurring of a personal debt which I find far from pleasant.

The position to-day, briefly, is this. The figures furnished by our accountant show that in maintaining the *Freethinker* (without which I may venture to say the militant Freethought movement in this country would be helpless) there is at present incurred a loss of between £300 and £400 per year. This is not a gigantic sum for the whole of the party to bear, it is far less than other papers which represent advanced movements are losing, nor do I think that readers will be surprised at the information. But the paper must be maintained, there is this recurring loss to face, and there is only one way—short of the paper being endowed—for this to be done. This is the way I am now taking. It is probably much harder for me to ask than it is for others to give, and I have every confidence that there will be a quick and generous response. A modest contribution from each of those interested in the welfare of the paper would easily raise the whole of the required sum in a single week. For my own part I can only say that I contribute to the paper and to the movement all I have—myself. I have nothing else to give.

One other thing should be said here to avoid misapprehension. There seems to be an impression in certain quarters that the *Freethinker* shares in some way in the legacies which have been left from time to time to the Secular Society, Limited, and to the National Secular Society. This is not the case. The *Freethinker* is an independent concern, and it shares in no way whatsoever in these benefactions to the two Societies. Moreover it makes no charge for advertisements or services rendered to the Societies. That it has always taken to be part of its work. But the only way in which the *Freethinker* has or can benefit is by direct gift, and these are acknowledged in these

columns. Every reader of the paper thus knows the nature and the extent of the financial help given. I find it necessary to say this much because of the contrary impression which exists in some quarters.

For the rest it may be said that our troubles are financial ones only. Our ideas are making headway in all directions, and in the breaking down of super-naturalism and in weakening the power of the Christian Churches the *Freethinker* during its more than forty years of existence has played a great part. It has kept the militant Freethought movement alive and active during some of the darkest years, and it has been behind many of the agitations which have resulted in a weakening of the influence of the Christian Churches in social life. The importance of the *Freethinker* to those who value the work of mental emancipation is best evidenced by the feeling of the Churches towards it, and the careful and persistent manner in which the boycott against it is carried on. Were it less important and less trenchant it would excite less antagonism, but it would not do so effectively the work for which it is maintained. I am proud of the paper and its history, as I think we all are, and it may safely be said that no other journal has played so great a part in so great a work and with such limited means.

All subscriptions should be addressed direct to me at the *Freethinker* Office, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A full list of all subscriptions will be published as they are received. And as usual I hope to be able to announce the closing of the Fund at an early date.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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.

T. M. MOSLEY.—Ernest Newman is a Freethinker. He commenced his career as a writer in the pages of the *National Reformer*. It is much easier to say do not work too hard than to carry it out in present circumstances. Somehow or the other the work must be done, and we must keep on as we can and for as long as we can. Shall be in Nottingham and hope to see you there. Glad to hear the news in your letter.

F. T. DENT.—Pleased to hear from you. We are not surprised at the difficulties experienced by Continental Freethinkers. Reaction is enthroned, and with militarism dominating Europe one must look forward to some rough times. We fancy that the near future is likely to test the stamina of Freethinkers all over the world. We trust they will show themselves worthy of their traditions.

D. STICKELLS.—We do not see that any reasonable use of "auto-suggestion" alters the fundamental aspect of Determinism—unless it is argued that suggestion arises spontaneously and without any connection with what has gone before. The operative forces in conduct may be either within or without man or a compound of the two. The attempt to read indeterminism into hypnotism and allied phenomena is quite unwarranted.

E. SMEDLEY.—We haven't seen the local paper with the discussion about Socialism and Atheism, but we can quite believe that some "nasty things" have been said about Atheism. Many Socialists by their fear of the Churches, and the manner in which they play to any parson who happens to come along, invite all they get. A little moral courage would do away with much of this.

E. EMERY.—Pleased to know you enjoyed the notes on the Italian business. We may write more about a real League of Nations so soon as we can get the chance.

A. L. SUMMERS.—There is a world of difference between the League of Nations as at present constituted and a League of Nations that is properly constituted. A League which acts only on the orders of the governing political groups at home will always be useless. But that is not quite the League of Nations which we picture as existing. There are means of bringing a real League into existence if people would only set about it.

A. H. HARDEN.—We are delighted to learn that you have had a hand in the matter of giving the Christians in your district a jolt. All of us can do something, and if we only did what we could what a change there would be? It is the many leaving it to the few that makes reform so hard to accomplish.

J. DAVIDSON.—Your teacher friend's knowledge of English terminology is very limited, and her knowledge of English in general might be improved. A little attention to a reference book of technical terms would also prove beneficial.

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 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 15s.; half year, 7. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen commences his winter lectures in the Birmingham Town Hall next Sunday (September 23). His subject will be "Are We Civilized?" The state of the world at present adds point to the question. We hope that local friends will make the meeting as widely known as possible.

The Executive of the N.S.S. are issuing invitations to a social and musical evening at the rooms of the Food Reform Co., 2 and 3 Furnival Street, E.C.4, on Thursday, October 4, from 6.30 to 9.30. The hour is early in consequence of the fact that the Food Reform Society's rooms are situated in the City, but the compensations are that the position is most accessible and the rooms very comfortable. The accommodation is limited, therefore early application must be made for tickets. It is with great difficulty that a suitable meeting place has been found, but if adequate interest is shown the experiment will be repeated. Each member can bring one friend, there is no charge for admission, and light refreshments can be procured on the premises.

We were pleased to see in the Kent *Advertiser* and *Echo* a letter from Mr. H. E. Latimer Voight asking that either all kinds of meetings be prohibited on the beach at Broadstairs or all meetings be permitted. The protest is needed. The way in which these local governing bodies prohibit meetings being held while giving every facility for religious hands to air their ignorant opinions is a public scandal. It evidences an almost complete absence of a sense of justice. But that is not unusual where religion is concerned.

The New York *Truthseeker* says that an unexpected market exists in America for it, but it took an energetic Freethinker to discover it. One of its friends, Mr. Charles Smith, took 412 copies of the paper out on the streets and sold them. We congratulate Mr. Macdonald on having found so practical and helpful a friend. We are quite sure that a similar market exists in this country if someone went the same way to work, but it needs someone with

their heart in the work. Merely to hire someone will not do. We have tried that and found the game not worth the candle. But if two or three people in each district made it their business to see that all who were likely to be interested in the *Freethinker* knew of its existence, and then saw to it that they got copies, till taking the paper became a habit, we feel sure that we might build up a circulation that would do away with the necessity of appeals for help such as we are making in this issue. With the number of Freethinkers that exist it is surprising that a Freethought paper, run as economically as this one is run cannot be made to pay its way.

At the last meeting of the N.S.S. Executive fifty new members were admitted. There is a steady influx of new members all the year round, and this must count for a steadily growing Freethought influence in the affairs of the nation. Permission to form new Branches at Bolton, Preston, and Nelson, was also given. We believe that other new Branches are on the way. The propaganda of the Society is always making itself felt, and the open-air work of Mr. Whitehead in the provinces has borne excellent results. We should like to see the Society in a position to send a score of lecturers up and down the country, and to keep them busy.

The Birmingham Branch will take an outing to-day to Henley-in-Arden. Freethinkers and their friends are invited to meet at Snow Hill Station at 10.15. Tea will be provided at the Black Swan Inn at 4.30 at a charge of 1s. 3d. per head. The return fare from Snow Hill is 2s. 2d. There are other trains to Arden at 2.50 and 3.55.

The following from the *Peacchaven Post* will interest the majority of our readers:—

Amid the chalk lies Lewes, the hill-hearted,
The ever-holy shrine of Thomas Paine,
Who sold tobacco once in old Bull Lane.
Lewes I love, though Lewes' light's departed.

O Lewes! Lewes! Though I come in vain
For my set purpose, yet I love you still,
There where you sleep, with a great swelling hill
On every side of you, fulfilled of grain.

I love your Castle, churches, pells and alleys,
That all wind to my Hills. Your light may wane,
But still my heart will thrill, while still you deign
To call me, My Lady of the Valleys!

But chiefly do I revel in Bull Lane,
And when I come again to lazy Ouse,
Lewes, my Sussex Love, I know I'll choose
To wander first to that queer store of Paine.

P. I. B.

One of these days, when Christian bigotry is weaker than it is, and religious zeal gives way to historic truth, Paine will come to his own and the world will see in him one of the world's greatest humanitarians.

Mr. Whitehead's meetings in Swansea have been a very gratifying success. New members have been made, and the speaker has at each meeting been bombarded with questions. It is pleasing to learn that the answers to these satisfied the majority of those present. In consequence of the meetings a handbill has been issued on the Christian side announcing that the propaganda is being carefully watched and that "concerted action will be taken by the responsible Church leaders at the earliest opportunity." The handbill bears no name of printer or author, but it is enough to show that local Christians are getting alarmed. Mr. Whitehead opens in Plymouth on Monday, September 17, and we sincerely trust that local friends will work to make his meetings there as great a success as elsewhere.

With reference to the paragraph which appeared in this column last week concerning Mr. T. Shaw, we are asked to announce that his only address is now c/o Clement Store Yard, 1 Bell Street, Wolverhampton. Those interested will please note.

The Value of Snobbery.

WHAT is snobbery but a means of protection for the ego? It has been scornfully attributed to vanity, the pleasing assumption being that vanity is a vice, but that is truly a Puritanic conception, and has found its natural home in the hearts of the English, the supremely vain race.

If there were no vanity it is impossible to believe that the world would be worth living in. The human being who has no "gude conceit" of himself is negligible. He walks the earth humbly, so humbly that he never moves out of the place in life in which he has been placed by a munificent providence. Achievement is not for such as he, except the pseudo achievement of self-contempt, a species of advertisement, and a passably contented contentment with his lot.

The true snob on the other hand is not contented. Perhaps he is a little uncertain of himself, is afraid that after all he is but commonly human, and so finds it necessary to distinguish himself to himself by the cult of snobbery. He has many a pleasant feeling; often enough he believes himself to be the superior of those with whom he is thrown into contact, by virtue of his birth (that unfortunate and accidental affliction under which we all suffer), his money, or more usually his achievements. It is true that on less frequent occasions, he is obliged to confine himself to the satisfaction, and it is a very real one, of shining in the reflected glory of meeting those he is obliged to admit are his superiors, even in the snob's scale; but imagine the pleasure of recounting these rencontres.

It is a satisfaction to find that snobbery is no longer limited to the peerage or to those of ancient family, but that its healthy influence has slowly but surely percolated to the very lowest levels of society. To-day its traces can be distinguished in the ranks of the working classes—not the middle-classes, they always felt its beneficent influence to the full—but the really, truly common people. And nowhere is its salutary effect to be observed in more self-evident fashion. The modern son and daughter of the manual worker does not want to dress as its class has been accustomed to dress. Fustian and corduroy, unless it is velvet corduroy, a very different matter, are of no service to these young people. They realize the value of good clothes, clothes that emancipate from the thralldom of the serf, and they must have their serge suits, shoes, and imitation silk stockings.

Of course all this is very ludicrous. Why should they waste their money on these unaccustomed absurdities? Everybody can tell the difference between imitation and real silk. It does not even look the same. It is not like the newer and fashionable imitation pearls. But it is obvious that these things appeal to their wearers, and it is easy to believe that they would wear real silk stockings if they possibly could, whereupon it would be impossible to tell the difference between the upper, middle, and lower classes.

It really is sometimes very difficult nowadays. It is very necessary to be very careful to whom one is friendly; it is quite possible to make the most appalling mistakes, and what could be worse for he who realizes the value of his snobbery than to be discovered in a false valuation.

But it is really very disturbing to find the snobbish aspiration in the lower classes. They no longer wish to be identified as members of the working classes. They have a healthy shame of their origin—how many of them would admit that their father was a bricklayer—and they have conceived the desire to belong to the class that toils not neither does it spin.

The young men want to be clerks—it is respectable to be a clerk; it is not an occupation which tires the

muscles and involves dirt—and the young women want to be stenographers, so that they also shall obtain a phantasmagoric chance of rising in the world. Worst of all they want to be paid enough to satisfy these incongruous whimsies. They want to share in the amusements which have been reserved for the higher ranks of snobbery; they want to speak like them (correctly is not the word), and they want to eat the same kind of food.

Possibly all this is the result of the general elementary education which has been forced upon them. They can now read and write, and they think that they should no longer be condemned to the productive work which is so largely a dead end. It is a satisfaction to possess the hope of the prospect of the possibility of one day achieving the ideal of snobbery, to live without working on the best kind of food, clothed in the best material, and housed in a commodious residence placed in a pleasant situation. From this altitude only can the true function of snobbery be fully exercised.

It is so difficult when placed in circumstances where the graduations of society are so numerous that it is easy to be mistaken for what one is not, and in the lower ranks the grades are many and the differences slight. They really afford very little occasion for the exercise of snobbery, and that is one of the greatest afflictions under which the human being can labour.

In such circumstances only the most profound and ingrained snobbery can be of any service. If it is not cultivated there is a very great liability to dwindle from the size of an individual to that of a unit amongst the unidentifiable mass. This is the most serious tragedy that can happen to a human being. But every slight advance, every new pair of silk stockings, the first common-place evening suit, each meal at an expensive restaurant, however ill it can be afforded, marks one stage in the advance, and the snob's "gude conceit" increases. It is perhaps a little blatant to emphasize the hotel snobbery, which is so conspicuous a feature of the time, but it is all a part of the same emotion, and it marks the development of our civilization.

Of course it was undoubtedly a good thing to cultivate snobbery when it was confined to a few classes, but now that it has spread to the great amorphous mass, it has become a little less valuable. Aspiration is all very well, but what will the world do when its only inhabitants are all "ladies and gentlemen." There will be less work done that is very certain, but some by everybody of necessity, and perhaps snobbery will be developed so strongly that everybody will have real silk stockings, and everybody will be able to indulge their little fancies. If that happens snobbery will have proved the true benefit to humanity that it ought because everybody cultivates it to-day, and what everybody cultivates is bound to be good.

G. E. FUSSELL.

There seems to be some connection between piety and poor rhymes.

"*Andiatoroctè*" is the title of a volume of poems by the Rev. Clarence Walworth, of Albany, N.Y. It is a word borrowed from the Indians, and should, we think, be returned to them as soon as possible. The most curious poem of the book is called *Scenes at the Holy Home* :—

Jesus and Joseph at work! Hurra!
Sight never to see again;
A prentice Deity plies the saw,
While the Master ploughs with the plane.

Poems of this kind were popular in the Middle Ages when the cathedrals of every Christian country served as its theatres. They are anachronisms now, and it is odd that they should come to us from the United States. In matters of this kind we should have some protection.—*Oscar Wilde, A Critic in Pall Mall.*

Hell.

I DO not apologize for the title, because it is not mine, and because the word itself to-day has lost or changed the meaning and the menace it used to have and is no longer shocking to the normal ear. It is still a fine-sounding word, abrupt, clamant, yet musical, perhaps the best description of what it used to mean in any language. Compare even the wicked *sacré* of the Frenchman, or his harmless *enfer*. Our good old English hell is as good as any here or hereafter. How handy it is, too, when a man kicks his shins on a stool in a dark lobby! or when he would express surprise, fear, pity, or indignation; or when the religious man would relegate the irreligious as in Byron's line:—

And damned him to the zealot's ready hell,
That answers to all doubts so eloquently well.

The word is still in great vogue with, for instance, the Socialist and the Salvationist—the first using it to describe certain conditions here on earth; the second using it to terrify the sinner with other conditions, no less certain—to him—in another world. With the stage of culture the Salvationist has arrived at—or gone back to—it is the fitting word to use. Conceivably in a higher stage of culture, it is with the Socialist a handy expletive for describing certain damnable things on earth he would like to see damned; a forcible, feeble, picturesque, perhaps often exaggerated epithet applied to social conditions.

Mr. Upton Sinclair, in a play he has just written (published by the author, Pasadena, California, 25 cents), gives us a lurid view of both the infernal and the earthly hells. As crude, perhaps—but I am no judge of these things—as Milton was sublime, Mr. Sinclair lifts the curtain in the infernal regions, and in a few somewhat forced but humorous strokes reveals some lesser imps polishing up Satan's golden throne and grumbling at the task. Says one:—

Sometimes I think I'd like to see the fires
Go out and the God-damned souls go free!

So say all of us! The other imp says:—

Hush! that's sedition!

There follow some more impish pleasantries, and then the great ones appear—Satan, Belial, Beelzebub, Moloch, Astarte, Mammon, etc., but the greatest of these is Mammon, the chief executive of hell and earth. They order the imps about, talk majestically, and yawn at the happiness of earth (shown on a screen). There is lacking here, of course, the courtly language of Milton: "Oh prince, oh chief of many thronéd powers." One should maintain the dignity even of infernal kings! To comfort his masters, the Devil's Jester flies up to heaven's gate and beguiles St. Peter of his keys. Heaven is locked in, and hell rejoices, Mammon is let loose on the earth, the great war results, and the talk of the Tommies in the trenches might put mercy in the heart of God! It is all very simple, obvious, and commonplace, but reading, as he will, between the lines, the Freethinker will find fruitful suggestion, and may wonder indeed how an able writer like Mr. Sinclair can miss truths that are more palpable still. Heaven is seen from the battlefield with "the Father" fallen face forward from his throne, dead, despairing, or defeated. The inevitable Jesus appears, "just come off his cross." The son is as helpless as the father. He shakes hands with Satan, however, and refers to the "father" as a little excusably antiquated in his ideas. Jesus, one supposes, makes one more effort to reconcile the hatreds of the three kingdoms, heaven, hell, and earth; the result, whether the playwright is aware of it or not, is utter and complete failure. The Christian ethic is certainly not the cure, rather the curse of the world in muddling the minds of men. Not the wicked-

ness of the world needs seeing to first, but the imbecility thereof. The play proceeds to its unedifying end—Mr. Sinclair seems the peculiar victim of anticlimax, much like the legendary Jesus of his novel and his play—the imp who stole the key of the heavenly gate restores it, and, liberated, the celestial host, "with folded wings," just like the Angels of Mons, drops down to earth. The sky is flooded with music:—

Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the new-born king.

The same old dope, the same old despair, the immortal absurdity. Says a character:—

That's very pretty, regular church effect,
And quite the proper thing for Christmas morn.

The most likely and diverting talk and incident are indulged in when, at the end of each act, the actors, pietists and patriots all, revolt against "this Bolshevik stuff," and at the finish mob the author who, perched on the muzzle of a cannon, warns them against the "bloated capitalist," crying in frenzy, "He's the real Devil! He's stupidity!"

To conclude, if there is no moral in the play, it is fairly good hotch-potch; if there is a moral, then it is so much confused as to be useless. The moral suggested to the Freethinker may be that Christianity, which is as much beloved by the "capitalist" as by the worker, is a blind alley towards human improvement; the hunted animal's *cul de sac*, where it becomes the more facile prey of its enemies. In justice to the author, however, like so many more, he has no doubt abundant reason for his recriminations, and justification for his noble rage. But his Socialism is merely secularized Christianity, which has been popular for two thousand years, and still is, with the results we know. Surely this moral is obvious.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Correspondence.

WHAT IS MATERIALISM?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In a recent issue (in a criticism of a book by Mr. W. S. Godfrey) you stated that:

The essence of Materialism is Determinism... 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.

Your book *Determinism or Free-Will?* contains the following statement of the Deterministic position: "It is essentially a thorough-going application of the principle of causation to human nature."

I take it therefore that you mean that Materialists are those who believe in causation throughout the whole of Nature; as indeed you explicitly say in the article referred to. From which I gather that the only people opposed to Materialism are those who believe in miracles, i.e., those who do not apply the principle of causation throughout the fields of physical, chemical, geological, astronomical, "and kindred sciences." I should like you to attempt to justify this, to me, remarkable generalization. In passing may I point out that Hume and Huxley (for example) were opposed both to miracles and materialism; while Calvin, Zwingli, Luther, and Jonathan Edwards, as you point out in your book, were Determinists but in no ordinary sense could they be described as Materialists.

Just another point in your brush with Mr. Godfrey. You say:

The search for a meaning in Nature, of goodness and badness, of high and low, and even of progress, apart

from standards which we create ourselves, and which have no validity whatever apart from ourselves, are examples of what we mean. We need to deanthropomorphize our thinking if we are to be completely scientific.

Is the "de" at the beginning of that long word a misprint? If we impose standards created by ourselves upon Nature is not that anthropomorphic? What is *anthropomorphic* goodness or badness "which have no validity apart from ourselves?"

And lastly may I ask if you mean that when all conscious beings cease to exist highness and lowness will also cease?

PERCY S. WILDE.

[Mr. Wilde's letter appears to me to justify and to illustrate what was said about the confusion existing in many minds as to the nature of Materialism. I can only reply here in the briefest possible manner, leaving a further exposition to some future occasion.

(1) My description of Materialism is based upon an examination of the function of Materialism throughout history, which is the only sound way of finding out the meaning of a term such as this one. And in this matter I must decline to be led away or hypnotised by such a word as "matter." Philosophically "matter" is no more than a methodological device used to describe a category of experience, and the accidental association of historic Materialism with a long prevailing conception of matter ought not to lead to confusion. Huxley's repudiation of Materialism was due to this confusion of the essence of a thing with its accidentals, and partly, I fancy to the same causes that led him to coin the word "Agnostic" by which to describe his own Atheism.

(2) Mr. Wilde's third paragraph is inconclusive, for the conclusion by no means follows the premises. It does not follow that because all blind men are human beings, therefore all human beings are blind men. Nor does it follow that because certain theologians held that—given a personal God—all else proceeded necessarily from his will, they ought to be called Materialists. That is clearly not a complete and thorough-going application of Determinism. It may be noted in passing that theologians who took up the position mentioned by Mr. Wilde were frequently accused of Materialism by their fellow-religionists.

(3) I am sorry Mr. Wilde does not find my meaning clear as to the relative nature of goodness and badness, and is puzzled as to the meaning of deanthropomorphization. I meant by this word exactly what I said. Our language is bound to be more or less anthropomorphic, but it does not follow that we ought not to be on our guard against the possibility of the misleading connotations of words. It is because we do not so guard ourselves that many, while explicitly repudiating Christian teachings, re-embody them in what they imagine is sound scientific thinking. Deanthropomorphize is used as deodorize is used in other connections. I agree that the word is a lengthy one, but it is quite a simple one. The joints may be many, but the articulation is quite evident.

(4) It seems to me almost axiomatic that Nature, apart from ourselves, knows nothing of high or low, of goodness or badness. What is progress to a human being, may be quite otherwise to other forms of life, and what is good to us may be the reverse to other living organisms. Getting rid of the notion that these values exist apart from our standards of measurement is just what I mean when I say that we must deanthropomorphize our thinking, they illustrate the taking over from theology of conceptions with which a scientific Freethought has nothing to do. I do not know what will happen when conscious beings cease to exist. But I find myself unable to picture the world in terms of sentience with no sentient being present.—EDITOR.]

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

SIR,—Even if Major Murray's arguments were convincing—and they are not—his opinion is discounted because he is an *interested party* (an official of the League, I understand). Whereas he contributes nothing to the League's upkeep, I, as a taxpayer, put my hand in my pocket, and have a right to object to contributing to what I consider dangerous folly.

My contentions that the League, instead of ensuring universal peace, as it boasts, is, by its interfering and impotence, more likely to create serious friction and war, are amply confirmed by the recent Italian incident. Like Italy, there will always be nations questioning the arbitration of the League in disputes; and whilst a squabble between two nations might be confined to the disputants, if left to settle their own "honour" and affairs, intervention by the League must necessarily

magnify the matter by involving numerous nations in the conflict—primarily Britain, whom the fanatical Lord Robert Cecil wishes to pose as "policeman of the world" (even against her own allies and interests!).

This highbrow body displays the petty side of ordinary human nature on occasions—dangers in itself to "peace." In the League's committee on legal questions the Italian chairman was displaced by a Swiss chairman, hence Italy could not trust to impartiality to obtain a fair judgment.

The great talk about helping Austria with British aid, including loans, only exasperates business men who know what it means. The *Board of Trade Journal* opens their eyes to this folly. Putting Austria "on her feet" has already resulted in *British imports into Egypt falling 50 per cent, while Austrian imports have increased sixfold!*

The *Daily Mail* rightly declares that Lord Cecil "is attempting to use the occasion, not to promote peace, but to 'boost' the League. There is no more dangerous man, no more mischievous fomentor of war, than a dreamy fanatic at white heat in the supposed interests of peace." And the *Daily Express* adds: "The League has ceased to be a pretty toy, and become an *active menace*.....must be put a stop to, or we shall have Britain involved in some wholesale blaze."

I advise everyone to read *A League of Nonsense*, by H. C. Batchelor. A. LEONARD SUMMERS.

THE PASSING OF THE SOUL.

SIR,—There is not much that calls for a reply in "O. D.'s" letter of September 9. The argument as to when a man is entitled to the title of a Freethinker is rather an academic one. You cannot draw any hard and fast line in the matter. It is like the imaginary line dividing the living from the not living, or that between animals and plants, or between religion and superstition; the more you seek for them the farther they recede. I have no wish to prevent, if I had the power, "O. D." or anyone else from using the label "Freethinker." In fact I wish they would use it more, then people would be less frightened of it.

To my request for information as to Sir Conan Doyle's (it seems rather strange, by the way, that it should fall to his Atheistic opponent to give the gentleman his title) satisfaction with Materialism, before his conversion to Spiritualism, "O. D." fully confirms what I said as to Sir Conan Doyle's never having reached Atheism, for he quotes him as saying: "I started from Theistic Materialism with absolute incredulity as to any life beyond this one." He has never relinquished his belief in God. Now the step from the recognition of a Creator to the belief in a future life is very much easier than from downright Atheism. For the Creator, according to popular belief, has only to will a future life, or anything else, for mankind, and "Hey presto," it is done. And in fact, man does not exist for the sake of, or pleasure of God, but God was created by man to explain those things which he could not explain himself, and to supply those things which poor weak man is unable to provide for himself, such as a divine providence in this world and a renewed lease of life in the future after the expiry of the earthly one. When man realizes that God does not provide these things, then he has no further use for God.

There are a few Atheists who believe in a future life, but although I have specialized, so to speak, in the peculiarities and vagaries of religious belief, I have never yet met among Europeans a sect, or even any individuals, who profess belief in a God along with disbelief in a future life, as Sir Conan Doyle says he did. Not that I wish to cast any doubt upon Sir Conan Doyle's veracity. Not at all, but such a belief must be very rare, and I imagine that few could hold it permanently; they would either gravitate to Atheism, or, like Sir Conan Doyle, add the belief in a future life.

"O. D." also cites Sir Conan as saying that he had great difficulty in overcoming his "materialistic prejudices" before he could accept Spiritualism. This is not quite the same thing as being satisfied with it. For instance many have been convinced, on the authority of the Bible, of eternal punishment, but were very far from being satisfied with it.

I still maintain that Sir Conan Doyle's early training as a Roman Catholic gave him a bias in favour of a future

life long before he could have had any bias against, or any knowledge of Spiritualism. Roman Catholic children are very carefully shielded from the knowledge that such beliefs exist; and "O. D." should bear in mind, when using the simile of the boomerang, that it does not return to the thrower to strike or injure him, but to be ready for use again. In conclusion I may add that it is a pleasure to meet with a critic of "O. D.'s" candour and courtesy.

W. MANN.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON
SEPTEMBER 6, 1923.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Corrigan, Lloyd, Neate and Samuels; Mrs. Quinton, Miss Kough, and the Secretary.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed. New members were received for Bolton, Nelson, Preston, Plymouth, South Shields, West Ham, and the Parent Society.

Applications were received and permission given for the formation of new branches—the result of Mr. Whitehead's Freethought Mission—at Bolton and Preston.

The Propagandist Committee's report was received, discussed and their recommendations adopted.

The Executive learned with regret of the decease of Mr. S. H. Swinny, President of the Positivist Society, whose relations with the National Secular Society had always been of the most friendly and cordial nature. A vote of condolence was passed and directed to be sent to the Committee of the Positivist Society.

The Secretary reported on possible places in which to hold a Social Meeting, and instructions were given to arrange for a social gathering on Thursday, October 4, at the rooms of the Food Reform Society, 2 and 3 Furnival Street, E.C.4. Further details to be published in the *Freethinker*.

It was further reported that Stratford Town Hall had been booked for November 4.

The Affiliation fee to the International Freethought Bureau was ordered to be paid. Various items of correspondence were dealt with and the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

More Truth Than Poetry.

THEY who profess to know assure me I
May some day enter into endless bliss;
A better world, they tell me, will supply
The pleasures that I am denied in this.
I hope that all they promise may be true;
I'll love to have a crown upon my brow,
But I don't mind confessing this to you:
I'm strong for having glory here and now.

"There is a brighter world than this," they say,
Where you will have no aches nor ills to bear;
Enclosed, please find the rules you must obey,
In order to have endless glory there.
Note, kindly, that you must not deviate
A jotlet from the course that we have drawn;
Pursue no worldly joys, become sedate;
Bid all your lively sentiments be-gone!

"Love only in accordance with the laws
That we in our great wisdom have set down;
Don't dare to be engaged in any cause
On which we have agreed that we should frown;
Turn from all things that tend to make you glad,
And where you can, check others who are gay;
Forget the inclinations you have had
To find enjoyment on the Sabbath Day."

Oh, it will be a triumph to possess
The glory that they tell me I may gain,
To be the heir to endless happiness,
And free from every reason to complain.
I hope the crown I am to win will fit,
And gloriously ornament my brow,
But this, in confidence, I will admit:
I'd like a little glory here and now.

S. E. KISER in the *Detroit Times*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

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

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park): Near the Fountain): 6, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

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

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY.—Freethought lectures every evening at Marble Arch, Hyde Park, 7 to 10. Lecturers, Mr. Beale, Mr. G. Baker, Mr. C. H. Keeling, Mr. J. L. Knubley, Mr. L. W. J. Miller, Mr. Mowbray, Mr. F. Shallor, and Mr. C. E. Saphin. The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 p.m. at the "Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1. Watch these columns for Sunday indoor notices.

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

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Charles Bradlaugh—Iconoclast."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—A "Freethought Tea," given by Mrs. Ballard, will take place on Saturday, September 15, at 49 Norway Street, Stretford. Time 5 to 8 p.m. All welcome.

OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Outing to Henley-in-Arden. You are invited to attend and bring friends along. Meet Snow Hill Station at 10.15 a.m. Lunch should be provided by members. Tea will be provided at the Black Swan Hotel at 4.30 (1s. 3d.). Return fare 2s. 2d. Other trains leave Snow Hill at 1.10 p.m., 2.50 p.m., and 3.35 p.m.

BRISTOL.—Mr. Whitehead's Freethought Mission: 7.30, The Downs.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor, near North Road entrance): 6.45, Mr. F. Carlton, "Secularism."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. Whitehead's Fortnight Mission commencing Monday, September 17.

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