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Views and Opinions.

The World and Christianity.

Speakers at the various religious conferences that have recently been held have been loud in their laments over the present state of Europe. One would have been a little more impressed by these had they not been accompanied with the warning that the one thing to save the world is more Christianity. The alleged cure has been put forward with all the pride of a discovery of a new and certain cure for cancer, and with a clear ignoring of the fact that Europe had, so far as Christianity is concerned, reached saturation point long ago. The Europe over which tears are being shed is Christian Europe, the collapse has occurred after a rule such as no other system and no other religion has ever enjoyed. And to anyone but a parson it would be clear that if Christianity had the power to save which its followers credit it with, the world to-day would be far different from what it is. Preachers would not be slow to draw that inference if they were dealing with a country in which the dominant religion was other than their own. They would point to the state of the people as an unanswerable indictment of the dominant creed, and although we are not at all inclined to put religion as more than one of the factors that operate in the life of a people, there would be substantial truth in the indictment. But in their own case these preachers inform us that what we need is more of the religion they preach. The amount we have had not having done good, or as some of us believe, having done positive harm, they tell us that what is needed is some more of the same medicine. The confirmed toper who believes in taking a hair of the dog that bit him is nothing compared with the Christian preacher who, with the centuries of Christian failure before him, calmly advises us to take another dose of the same poison.

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Christianity and Morals.

Most of the speeches to which we have referred deal with the alleged weakening of morality that has taken place, and some hint, some say explicitly, that this is due to the growth of scientific scepticism in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and of which we are now only beginning to see the results. Now there might be a plausible case stated on behalf of the thesis that certain intellectual convictions weaken a sense of moral conviction, but when there is implied in the statement the belief that morality must rest upon some sort of a supernaturalistic basis, it becomes wholly and hopelessly wrong. Morality, whatever its forms, takes its rise in the associated life of members of the same species, and in an immature form exists even before supernaturalism is clearly formulated. It is primarily a phenomenon of group life, since it is one of the conditions that make group life possible. Living together implies rules of living, just as being alive implies the performance of certain functions, and when the rules of associated life from being implicit become explicit we have the framing of moral laws and the performance of moral actions as the conscious end of action. There is nothing specially mysterious about morality, there is nothing particularly awe-inspiring. The ethical sentimentalist and the theologian, each in his own way, befog what is in essence a simple subject. It is in the art of morality, not in its science, that the difficulty lies. And the difficulties begin at this point because it is just here that we have to face the question of what are the conditions that make desirable conduct the most probable, and what are the lines on which existing conduct may be best modified in the interests of the social whole?

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What Has Christianity Done?

When the world learns to appreciate the real nature of morality, and when the majority of people are able to cut themselves completely adrift from inculcated notions about the ethical beauty of Christianity, it will, we imagine, be discovered that the influence of Christianity on morals has been as disastrous as it is possible for a system to have been that managed for centuries to control life. In the first place there is the clearly narrowing influence of the Christian religion on morality. When one turns to the pre-Christian moralists of Greece and Rome it is not difficult to discern their conception of the scope of morals. It was concerned with the whole man, and it covered the whole of life. The moral man was the straight man, the man who did his duty in all directions in what was thought to be the right way. From the first the influence of Christianity was to narrow and restrict this conception. Its contempt for the State and for this world could have no other effect than this. And with the development of the ascetic side of the Christian religion morality became narrowed until the word came, with the mass of people, to mean little more than sexual conduct. If one were to take a hundred Christians to-day and refer to some person as being immoral, with ninety per cent of them the expression would give rise to the thought of sexual morality only. This sexual obsession has been with Christian preachers almost complete. They have dwelt upon it with an insistence the significance of which is complete to a skilled psychologist. Their obsession was not proof of greater cleanliness, but rather the reverse. Had sex been less in their minds they would have dwelt upon it less, and it would have been left to take its normal and proper place in life. And not only that but the other virtues, honesty, truthfulness, and the sense of social duty would have been much stronger than they are.

A Selfish Creed.

One day I think it will clearly be recognized that in spite of many frothy exhortations to the contrary, and in spite of the citing of certain superficial texts, Christianity is essentially a creed of self, and its teachings while couched in the language of altruism are just as often appeals to an unbounded egotism. In the first place there is the gospel of individual salvation upon which the whole of genuine Christianity rests. It is the salvation of one's own soul—not in this world and with reference to the larger life that one may live in conjunction with one's fellows, but in another world where existing social conditions do not obtain—that is the all important consideration. The New Testament message is "What shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Of course it is possible to make that message carry a good social meaning; but the essential question, the really honest question, is not what we may make a message mean, like a tricky lawyer arguing as to the meaning that may be read into an Act of Parliament, but what did those who delivered the message mean, and what did those who received it take it to mean? Tried by this text the answer is quite clear. It was individual salvation in the next world that was implied. The New Testament knows nothing of what we moderns mean by social salvation. Social institutions were to be accepted whenever and wherever they did not conflict with religious obligations. They were otherwise of no consequence whatever. You were to give to Cæsar what was Cæsar's, so long as Cæsar did not demand what belonged to God. And what belonged to Cæsar was whatever the constituted authority cared to demand. The behaviour of the earliest generations of Christians proves this, and it has been the accepted rule of conduct of the principal Christian Churches through the ages. When Christians resisted the orders of the secular authority it was never in the name of human liberty nor in that of the larger social life, but solely because it stood in the way of their salvation. When men forsook their wives and families, or wives their husbands and children to lead the emasculated existence of monks or nuns, they were carrying to its logical conclusion the principle of making the salvation of their souls the guiding principle. And there will always be a world of difference between doing good to others for the sake of benefiting one's self and benefiting one's self as a consequence of doing good to others.

* * *

The Appeal to Self.

Now all this is an appeal to self in its most dangerous form. Whether the regard for self takes the form of amassing wealth here without regard to the well-being of one's fellows, or whether the appeal to self means laying up a store of benefits to be realized in some fancied heaven hereafter, matters not a bit. In either case the fact that real individual benefit can only be realized in and through the welfare of society as a whole is ignored. And just as history shows us men and nations in the pursuit of wealth trampling on the legitimate rights of other people, so experience shows us that the sincere and convinced Christian will allow nothing to stand in the way of his individual salvation. He will burn, he will torture, he will despoil, he will ostracise, he will rob of social and civil rights those who are opposed to him in religious belief, just as the commercial pirate will rob or kill those who stand in the way of his realizing his aims. And disguise it as we may the root fault is in both cases the same. It is the obsession with self that is at the root of both classes of actions, which only differ in the theatre of their realization. The apologies which the commercial exploiter has at his command the religious zealot has at his. Each will argue that his behaviour brings about a larger measure of general good. The commercial exploiter will mouth about the development of commerce and the spread of civilization. The Christian will point out that he is forwarding the growth of Christianity and saving men's immortal souls. Indeed, one of the striking features about Christian persecution is the character of the majority of the persecutors. With modern times there has been set up so much dislike to open persecution that we are apt to think of the mediæval persecutor as being a bad man. That is not the case. Had he been a bad man he would have cared less about the salvation of people in the next world. It was because the religious leaders of those days believed that the salvation of men's souls in the next world was the most important thing of all that they so energetically set to work to stamp out heresy. They were not bad men who corrupted a good creed: we are nearer the truth in saying that they were often good men with natures corrupted and deformed by a bad creed.

Chapman Cohen.

(To be Continued.)

The Deity and Presence of Christ.

The *Christian World Pulpit* of October 11 contains two remarkable sermons, the one by Canon Barnes on "The Deity of Christ," and the other by the Rev. J. E. Rattenbury on "The Real Presence of the Invisible Christ." For some years now Canon Barnes has been suspected of holding and occasionally of expressing heretical views on some fundamental subjects, such as those dealing with the Genesis story of the Creation and Fall of Man, and the Divinity and work of Christ. The Canon retains the phraseology of the Creeds in describing the Deity or Divinity of Jesus, but rejects wholeheartedly the orthodox deductions drawn therefrom. He believes in the Incarnation, but not that belief in the Virgin Birth is at all essential to it. He says:—

> The Incarnation: I am using a new word. What is its meaning? Simply this, that God revealed himself in human form in Jesus of Nazareth. Now, of course, such a sentence, "God revealed himself in human form in Jesus of Nazareth," is capable of many different shades of meaning. It is therefore often misunderstood. Some affirm that it means, "Jesus was God." But the Christian Church has never made this unguarded statement. It has always insisted that Jesus was really and truly man. He had a human mind with, consequently, human limitations. To say that Jesus was God is to imply that he was omnipotent. But we read (Mark vi, 5) that he could do no mighty works in Nazareth because of their unbelief. Plainly, therefore, he was not omnipotent. Again, to say that Jesus was God is to imply that he was omnipotent. But he said himself (Mark xiii, 32) that he did not know when the end of the age would come.

In our estimation such teaching is a shrewd method of denying or rejecting the orthodox doctrine of the Deity or Divinity of Jesus Christ. It is equivalent to stripping him of all the supernatural graces and powers ever attributed to him by the Church, and we regard it unworthy of a man who has sworn allegiance to the Thirty-Nine Articles to play fast and loose with the terms employed in the Bible and the Creeds. Mr. Rattenbury, Superintendent of the West London Mission, is a different stamp of a man altogether, who is at once orthodox and severely practical. He is of the Hugh Price Hughes type of a thinker, and means what he says. Canon Barnes' text is: "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii, 9), while Mr. Rattenbury based his discourse on the words: "Whom, not having seen, ye love" (1 Peter, i, 8). Naturally, the two sermons are as unlike as they can

be, and yet they are not wholly unrelated. The people to whom Peter wrote were being persecuted for the faith that was in them, but they remained heroically loyal to him whom they had never seen. Mr. Rattenbury says :—

> Their love was such that they were ready and willing to face death—and there is no greater test than that—and they had never seen him. Peter had seen him, had talked with him and heard him talk, had been his close and intimate companion; and yet when the hour of darkness and death came upon Jesus the man who knew him so intimately denied him with oaths and cursings. Yet these people who had never seen him, never touched him, knew nothing about such intimate companionship, were willing to be flung to the lions because they loved him so much.

Mr. Rattenbury's orthodox Christ was an object of profound attachment as eloquently delineated by such an emotionalist as the Apostle Peter ; and yet Peter's close association with him for several years did by no means reconstruct his character so as to make him stronger than the temptations to which his temperament rendered him specially liable.

Mr. Rattenbury goes on to tell us that Jesus made enemies as well as friends. There were those everywhere who did not believe in him, either as an ideal man, or as the begotten Son of God. To such people according to the reverend gentleman, he is an object either of love or of hate. He says :—

> There are people in all generations who have hated him as well as those who have loved him. They witness to his reality. They would not take the trouble to hate Jesus if he were really dead. Those who hate him cannot say, "Behold this dreamer cometh, let us slay him," because they know his words are spirit and life. That is why they hate him. I will give you two instances, one from an early century and one from our own time. In the fourth century you know there was a great Roman Emperor, Julian the Apostate. As emperors go he was not a bad sort of man.

But Mr. Rattenbury's treatment, of neither Julian nor Robert Buchanan, is either entertaining or educative. Neither the Emperor Julian nor the author of *The Wandering Jew* can be truthfully said to have been haters of Christ. Julian was not a Christian, but a Greek philosopher, and the religion he wanted to set up was Greek. His reign was phenomenally brief ; had it been as long as his uncle's no one can tell what might have happened. *The Wandering Jew* is Buchanan's poem of despair. It is the dismal failure of Christianity that darkens the pages of that long cry of despair ; but the last wish of the poet is thus expressed : "God help the Christ that Christ may help us all."

Mr. Rattenbury has certainly made the greatest possible blunder in characterizing Buchanan as a superenemy of Christ. It was the study of history alone, in conjunction with the brilliant promises of the early Church, that put the crown of unbelief upon his head.

Mr. Rattenbury refers to his own style of preaching. Being a great admirer of the late W. T. Stead, he used to preach sermons modelled on one of the famous journalist's books entitled *If Christ Came to Chicago?* So Mr. Rattenbury had sermons prepared on such topics as, "If Christ Came to Nottingham ?" Erelong he realized the blasphemy and silliness of the whole scheme, for it suggested and forced upon him the inquiry "When and why did God leave Nottingham ?" And here opens up to our view the all-important question : If God has never been out of Nottingham, what has he been doing there through all the ages of its history? If Christ has been at Leicester, Derby, Birmingham, and other centres since they first sprang up, has he spent his time in idleness, merriment, or sleepiness.

The failure of Christianity, from whatever cause, robs Christ of his title of the Saviour of the World, and loads him down with the infinite infamy of being the most impotent wretch in all the world. If Canon Barnes and Mr. Rattenbury only knew how infinitesimally little Christ means to the world they would immediately cease to bother about their Christological debates. It would quickly be brought home to them that they are wasting their breath and energy talking about the attributes of a being who has never given the least sign of his existence at all. The Canon prays : "Give to us, O Father, a fuller understanding of thy revelation of thyself to men, and help us to see the fulness of thy Godhead in thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." But the Canon cannot honestly offer that prayer because he attaches different meanings to the three words "revelation," "godhead," and "Son," from those attached to them by the majority of Christians.

Both men speak of "the world as transformed" by Christ, but neither of them informs us as to what the transformation consists in, or when it was brought about. They are silent on both terms because they have no genuine information to convey. The Canon says :—

> In much Christian thought there is a false pessimism, a belief that the world is hopelessly bad, and life here merely a bitter preparation for the future. Such a view has naturally become more common of late because of the experiences through which we have passed during the last ten years.....God's presence in Jesus meant that earthly life is in itself worth having; this life is the Father's gift. Our duty is not to decry it, but to use it, to fill it with love, joy, and peace.

The truth is that the conditions of national and international life are such that a peaceful and happy life is impossible. The supernatural is constantly hurled out at us, as by these two divines, that we have scarcely any chance of getting into vital touch with Nature and her laws.

J. T. Lloyd.

A Saint of Secularism.

> Spirits are not finely touched
> But to fine issues. —*Shakespeare.*
> To bear all naked truths
> And to envisage circumstance, all calm;
> That is the top of sovereignty. —*Keats.*

Towards the evening of his days Mr. Frederick J. Gould sits down and recalls an interesting life which has touched reality at so many points. Veteran that he is, as he looks back and compares the old with the new he is by no means an uncritical enthusiast for modern progress. He still watches events as keenly as ever, and comments on them with a genial criticism, which is as welcome as it is rare. A man who has seen so much of the world, has been mixed up for so many years with advanced thought, and has met most of the leading men and women in these movements, has enjoyed unusual scope for observation. Thus it is that his *Life Story of a Humanist* has a singular value and propriety. Besides being a record of things seen, and ideas urged over two generations, the volume contains a personal note which is very welcome. The pages command attention, for the author never fears the face of man, and he is the master of a graceful style which many popular and successful authors would give their ears to emulate.

To challenge the world with mailed fist has never been Mr. Gould's way ; he has preferred to woo the world with gentleness and persuasion. He has, however, always held strong opinions ; he holds them still. Born in a narrow Churchy and Orthodox circle, and in his earlier years closely associated with influences which might easily have made for Obscurant-

ism, Mr. Gould steadily moved towards liberty and light in politics and religion. What a world he was born in, to be sure! Then was the period of the universal pot-hat, and religious opinions were as rigid and unbeautiful as the head-gear. Sabbatarianism in its ugliest form was rampant, and in tens of thousands of homes Sunday was a day of horror and tedium. In Evangelical circles the theatre was held in utter abhorrence. Music-halls were supposed to lead straight to the Bottomless Pit; and Freethinkers were as welcome as mad-dogs. So impressed was young Mr. Gould that he has never sought since to minimise the effects of priestcraft. He has throughout his life pointed to better and higher ideals to the discomfiture of the clergy and their followers.

For forty long years Mr. Gould has been an exponent of Freethought. He gave his first lecture before the Leicester Secular Society in 1883. Since that date his graceful pen has been hard at work in most of the Freethought periodicals, and his persuasive voice has been heard throughout the length and breadth of the English speaking world. Few Freethinkers have had a wider and more lasting influence than Mr. Gould, in spite of the fact that he has done more to avoid publicity than most men do to ensure it. There have been men and women of extraordinary talent, and some of real genius, in the Freethought Movement, but no one has more consistently advocated a "wide-viewing Secularism" than this brave and genial veteran.

There is no phase of Freethought that has escaped his attention. He has re-written the evangel of Liberty for little children in his *Moral Lessons* and *Children's Plutarch*, whilst he has attracted serious-minded adults with his scholarly *Concise History of Religion*. He has embodied Rationalistic ideas in a novel, *The Agnostic Island*, and his biography of *Auguste Comte* is a model of what such a book should be. His exposition of the supreme value of ordered knowledge in his work, *History*, is a little masterpiece, and ought to be used in every college and school in the country.

Of all his books, however, I like most his own life-story, for, in this work, he has given us a pen-portrait of himself which is of real and enduring value. It is exquisitely written, and reveals, almost unconsciously, what has endeared him to so many people. What best sums him up is that he is a Humanist. He has a sincere esteem for his own race, and he possesses a rare nobility of character and serenity of disposition. He has great knowledge and is not puffed up; travelled and never grown tired; seen through things and never become cynical; spent himself in an unpopular cause, and disdained reward. There are few, reading this life-story of a tried and proved veteran, who will not admire so unselfish a career. Let us wish him at parting a long and hale old age, and more books from his delightful and illuminative pen. For, if I mistake not, all the learning he is ambitious of, is but to be wise, and all the wisdom but to be of service to his fellow-men.

Mimnermus.

WISDOM.

Let us be wise!
Nor sort with policies of present wrong,
Which serve none long;
We have no leisure for expediencies.

Let us be wise!
Nor mate with men unworthy of our cause;
Nor win applause
Of fools by being their accomplices!

Let us be wise!
Prudent as truthful; our determined course
Shall hold such force,
Nor Time nor Chance shall bar us from the prize.

—*W. J. Linton.*

The Homeopathy of Dogma.

The Soul.

When perchance you have burnt your finger you may have been advised to hold it close to the fire, and assured that the painful sensation would soon cease. I do not know what basis there is for that advice. To me the ordeal has always proved too agonising to be put to the test. If it be true that the painful sensation will cease to any extent, it would be an instance of homeopathy or the principle that "like cures like." Or, stated with more precision, that a malady is cured by means of a drug, which, if administered to a healthy person would give rise to symptoms closely similar to those of the disease to be treated. This fact was discovered by Dr. Hahnemann, a native of Meissen, in Germany, while experimenting with Peruvian bark, the source of quinine. From the result of his investigations he developed his system of therapeutics. There can be no shadow of a doubt that homeopathy enshrines a truth. It is the principle underlying the entire practice of serum treatment for the prevention and curing of contagious disease.

But nowhere is the principle more in evidence than in the realm of myth. The dogmas which make up a religious creed are individually, with rare if any exception, irrational tenets and often grotesquely absurd, but in their unity as a creed, they usually acquire a degree of plausibility to which they owe their power of engendering belief in them as expressions of truth. In combination they mutually tend to neutralise each other's foolishness and to acquire a veneer of sanity.

The fall of man, for instance, is in itself as silly an idea as the human mind can well conceive, but when allied, as in the Pauline scheme of salvation, with the counter dogma of redemption through the vicarious sufferings of a dying god (a tenet by itself not easily excelled for gruesome absurdity), it acquired sufficient plausible reasonableness to capture the imagination of the early Christians to form the basis of a religious creed for the whole of Christendom for two millenniums.

But no tenets illustrate this homeopathic cure of absurdity more typically than the dogma of the soul and that of human immortality. These two tenets, in one form or another, are universal beliefs; they are basic myths of religious creeds the world over. Either of them, singly, is as baseless and as contrary to reason as ever man could indulge in, even during his primitive ignorance and childish credulity; but in combination they acquire, as we shall see, a plausible rationality.

Now, the soul is one of the vast crowd of fantastic creations in which the human race revelled with obvious childish delight during the long period of its imaginative and credulous youth. For æons they were as evanescent as a dimple made on the surface of water; but when man had developed sufficient power of speech to give his fantasies distinctive names, they became solidified as permanent entities and objects of belief.

It would not be amiss to devote a few lines to reminding ourselves of the paramount rôle played by language in the creation of these entities. Speech was man's fixing solution for imparting permanency to the fluid, transient images or pictures which his vivid imagination limned in such profusion upon the sensitized plates of his mind. The possession of a name became the proof—often the sole proof—of existence as well as grounds of belief. Frequently names were credited with magic potency with which one could work beneficent or malevolent miracles. It is difficult for us in the twentieth century to realize the omnipotence with which the Gnostic visionaries and dreamers

of the first century endowed the elements of speech. There is abundant evidence of this fact in the N.T. if only read with knowledge and intelligence.

Now, according to Gnostic and early Christian lore, the human soul, during the individual's life, was a prisoner within the body chained to its senses, passions, and carnal appetites. At death it was released, and as a kind of Jack-in-the-box it flew upwards in the hope of reaching the seventh heaven where the sun shed its everlasting light and which was the abode of the Godhead. But alas! in crossing the lower heavens—the "thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers" of the N.T.—the soul ran great risks of being recaptured and made prisoner anew; for these lower regions were in the possession of inferior deities or demons which were hostile to the human soul.

The deities who ruled the intermediate regions or heavens which occupied the space between the sun and the earth were at first the five planets, all of them deities, of course, but in the N.T. they are all degraded to the status of evil spirits or demons.

To avoid the calamity of being captured by any of these "rulers of darkness" was the all-absorbing problem which Gnosticism, and subsequently Christianty, undertook to solve in the interest, not of man's earthly existence, but of his soul after death. Under the Gnostic-Christian scheme three things were essential to avert this disaster: (1) The first was the strict observance of certain rites during life such as baptism, the eucharist, and anointing of the body with holy oil. (2) The second was to possess a familiar acquaintance with the names of the demons or deities through whose dominions the soul had to pass on its way upwards to the realm of eternal light and bliss. (3) And lastly a knowledge of potent names and magic formulæ which could charm away all hostile opposition and reduce any demoniacal forces to abject impotence. Such, indeed, was the name of Jesus according to the teaching of the epistle writers: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven, earth, and under the earth." And the soul that was fortunate enough to evade recapture in its passage through these hostile regions was *saved* in the meaning of the New Testament.

May the reader note, in passing, the crude materialistic setting of this soul drama—a medley of the material and the immaterial—a recrudescence of which is now in full display in the vogue of our neo-spiritualism.

Next let us consider the rationality of the dogma of immortality. We daily witness instances of mind becoming defective or feeble as the brain and its sense organs, through injury, disease, or senile decay, lose their vigour and fail to function. This may occur sectionally, as when sight, hearing, or memory fails; or the mind, as a whole, may become feeble. This joint waning or descent of mind and its material organ takes place with the most perfect regularity, right down to the vanishing point. When, however, that limit is reached at death, then, *mirabile dictu*, the mind is said to regain at a bound all its pristine powers!

A discreet silence is uniformly maintained by the votaries of the survival dogma about the fate of lunatics and idiots. Now, the lunatic's aberration of mind is due not to a failing of the brain machine to function, but to its perverted functioning. It works well, but works wrongly. The imbecility of the idiot is the result of being born with an imperfect cerebrum. But, since both these are human beings, they must needs be immortal if the immortality dogma be true. It therefore follows that *either* the lunatic's mind at death suddenly regains its normality and the imbecile becomes for the first time sane, or the crowd of lunatics and idiots which have accumulated in heaven, hell, hades, *or* sheol, since man made his debut on earth, must by now be a pretty vast multitude. It would be interesting to learn which horn of the dilemma is preferred by the orthodox.

Though belief in such a hat-trick tenet in respect to any of the above cases is at the nadir point of the bathos, yet the soul dogma neutralized its fatuity and made it plausibly rational; for the soul was a prisoner tethered like a submerged buoy to the carnal instincts and cravings of the material body. When, therefore, the chains which imprisoned it were snapped by death, the soul, being released from its anchorage in the vile body, would shoot upwards and pause not in its flight till it had reached the surface of the heavens—the realm of eternal life and light. What could be more rational? And their plausibility in combination has made both dogmas easy of belief for twenty centuries.

* * * * * *

Since the tenet of the soul, if not wholly abandoned, is now virtually relegated to the limbo of oblivion, the votaries of the survival dogma have had to resort to another method of making it appear more rational, or at least, less absurd. The modern device is to pick out the Jonahs from among its crew of absurdities and drop them over board, in the hope of avoiding a rationalistic storm which threatened to swamp the ship. But there is reason to fear that they will turn up again and alive at some distant Nineveh. If the myth in its ancient form was packed full with absurd impossibilities it was at least consistent. The new device seeks to drape it in a garb of plausibility at the expense of consistent reason by cutting out the parts which mostly shock or outrage our sense of sanity.

In its original form the immortality dogma embraced the entire human mind—lusts, carnal appetites, feelings, passions as well as the senses of sight and hearing, and the more respectable emotions. Our primitive ancestors, as you may learn from the O.T., considered it nothing incongruous or amiss to credit their Elohims with capacity that could delight in the "savour of burnt offerings," *i.e.*, could enjoy the taste and smell of roast meat; or that could endure tortures as sentient creatures do during life. Even to-day the average person seems quite unaware of the fact that the fires of hell derived all their fiendish terror from the belief that the feelings were as immortal as the intellect.

For some considerable time, however, the conviction has been growing that it is too palpably absurd to credit the so-called disembodied spirit with such capacities in respect to either pleasure or pain, with the result that the essential basis of mind has been jettisoned as an incongruity too grotesque for belief. So what is now alleged to survive is not mind at all, but an emasculated caricature of it. The intellect by itself is no more mind than the head without a body is a human being.

Now, a moment's reflection is sufficient to convince any person of average intelligence that in point of probability, possibility, or sanity, there is not one iota of difference between the Jonahs sacrificed and the respectable crew retained on board. If to enjoy a square meal is grotesquely incongruous without a stomach and equally ludicrous without palate and its sense, so it is to peep and to listen without the senses of sight and hearing. The most carnal lust and its gratification is as mental in nature as the sight of a landscape or the melody of a symphony. The latter are equally as dependent upon, or, if the phrase be preferred, as concomitant with, the absorption or expenditure of the energy of the body. If the one set can function without this material basis, so can the other; there is not a shadow of difference in their physical alliance. Hence the immortality of the intellect is just as sane or ludicrous as that of the feel-

ings and desires. If the one is possible, probable or certain, so is the other. To contend that just one phase of mind is immortal while the totality of it is not, simply enhances the fatuity of the dogma instead of rationalizing it.

Again, think of the inconsistency of endowing man with immortality while denying it to the brute of the field. The human mind is simply the animal mind *plus self-consciousness*—an acquisition superimposed upon the psychic substratum which we have in common with the brute. This extra is only a capacity of intro-spection which can explore this common mental field and of becoming aware of the relationships existing among its basic contents. The phenomenal universe of the animal and human minds are virtually the same. Nevertheless the animal, so we are assured, is mortal, while the one who has acquired an extra capacity of detecting kinships among the essentials is immortal! But, be it noted, the immortality extends only to this extra power; and I should like to know what conceivable use is a capacity to detect relations when the related things themselves have vanished?

Let the reader just reflect: The capacity to *perceive* is mortal, while that to *conceive* is immortal, or expressed in terms of the text books, a perceptive mind vanishes at death, but an apperceptive one is a thing that lasts for ever! That is to say, the psychic plant iself—root, stem, and branch—exists only while life lasts in man and brute alike; but the bud of self-consciousness which the plant bears as a blossom is destined never to wither! Can banality ever reach a deeper depth?

Keridon.

Decaying Dragons.

A few weeks ago I was standing upon Berry Head, the great promontory of the South Devon coast. On one side lay Torbay, a brilliant blue in the sunshine, encircled with cliffs, red and grey: in front, the Channel, with hardly a vessel visible; whilst on the right, the coastline stretched away, jagged and cruel, towards the mouth of the Dart.

On the cliff itself are the ruins of an old fort, a relic of the Napoleonic wars. A hundred and twenty years ago, this decaying remnant was full of life and activity. Along the breastworks, sentries, in polished black helmets, bright red tunics and white breeches, paced slowly up and down, watching for the first signs of that French fleet that never came. We can imagine the commandant holding his petty court in the orderly room, day after day, week after week, year after year. The peasants in the neighbouring villages who had seen the first of the soldiers arrive, and had witnessed the erection of the fortifications with wondering eyes, watched also the years slip uneventfully away, until what had seemed so strange became a commonplace, and they wondered no more. The village maidens whose hearts had fluttered at the sight of the gay uniforms, found that even soldiers were human, and accepted their disillusionment with the stoicism born of a country existence.

The Colonel blustered, the soldiers swore, the "granfers" trembled, the maidens giggled—and Boney did not come.

Now Nature has triumphed once again. Grass grows on the parade ground and in the soldiers' quarters. Berry Head knows the lighthouse keeper, but if one were to ask, Where are the soldiers? Where the coastguards? Where the villagers? What has become of them all, with their joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, loves and heartburnings? Only the grass would answer, as it sways gently in the wind, "Ssh! Ssh! Nobody knows! Ssh! Nobody cares!"

To the lover of peace and of his fellowmen, it may appear a good augury that the lighthouse has superseded the fortress, but the rationalist will perceive in the alterations which a century has wrought, a symbol of a greater change in men's minds.

At the time when the fort was in its prime, Christianity, like it, stood erect in the land. Despite the ironical laughter of Voltaire and Rousseau, despite the work of Paine and Priestley, the Church was still supreme, Methodism was gaining adherents by the thousand, and dissenting tabernacles were arising throughout the length and breadth of the land. To an ordinary observer, the foundations of the great Establishment would appear to be well and firmly laid, rooted in the past; whilst the offshoots, instead of weakening the main structure, might be considered as signs of an exuberant vitality. A century has gone by. The Christian priest is no longer defiant, but apologetic. He asks us to give his religion the benefit of the doubt; he declares that many Agnostics are Christians, although they don't know it; he speaks of the reconciliation between religion and science. He produces a new prayer book for the use of his flock, with much of the old objectionable matter deleted. He kindly informs us that we need not sing the "cursing psalms" if we don't feel up to it; and if we express our abhorrence of the Athanasian Creed, well, he will say it once a year only. And the Commandments need not stand in the way! Play tennis and golf on Sundays? Certainly!—if you come to church first! Adultery? Money, and a title, can work wonders. The treasure-chest of the Church is as deep as its charity, sometimes deeper. "Push and go!"—that is the motto of the modern Church; and yet the art of the pulpiteer and the wiles of the advertising agent are no more effective in winning the masses to the Church than the doctrines of hell-fire and eternal torment. The walls of the structure are tottering; great breaches are visible, and in parts the fabric has been swept away, and the forces of reason and of light have forced an entrance.

The old fortress, then, is symbolical of much. But this is not all. So fierce has been the combined action of Time and Man, that the very foundations have been affected. We find grassy hollows in the ground, where solid masonry once stood. Is not this, too, capable of a symbolical interpretation? When the sentries paced along the battlements yonder, Darwin and Huxley, Renan and Haeckel were unknown names. To-day their fame fills the universe. Their work has shaken the very foundations of the Christian creed; they have torn up its dogmas by the roots, and exhibited them to the public gaze, showing them to be what they are, miserably insufficient, palpably false.....And just as there is no desire amongst us to see the old fortress rebuilt and regarrisoned, so millions are viewing with equanimity a world in which the name of Jesus has lost its potency. Jesus is dead—

> Far hence he lies
> In the lorn Syrian town,
> And on his grave, with shining eyes,
> The Syrian stars look down.

Who cares? Ask the grass, the gentle handmaiden of time; enquire of the sea, engaged in its age-long struggle with the land; go to the rocks themselves. The answer each gives is the same.

> .....Men may come and men may go,
> But I go on for ever.

One further thought. Near the gateway stands, still intact, the old guardroom. It is now a teashop, and where suspects were interrogated and the village girls enquired after their sweethearts, minerals and postcards are retailed. How are the mighty fallen! The Churches have entered the catering business; they run billiard saloons, organize whist-drives and dances, hold garden parties and carnivals. Even the teashop is a symbol.....

E. Royston Pike.

Acid Drops.

One of our correspondents who is in a first-class position with regard to a knowledge of the conditions of life in East London, writes us concerning the Bishop of London's recent, and oft-repeated rigmarole about the way in which he and some others Christianized Bethnal Green. He says :—

> He and I went there together, and although he did better out of it than I did, I happen to know the real Bethnal Green, not the place he so often misrepresents. For upwards of thirty years I had a closer touch with the lives and habits of the inhabitants than all the priests who were made bishops for their supposed improvements, and like the rector who replied to the enquiry, I should say the statement was similar to so many others coming from the same quarter—like his felling Freethinkers in Victoria Park.

We have often pointed out the utter unreliability of the Bishop of London's stories about his East End experiences. He appears to have told these tales so often that at last he has, apparently, made himself believe they are true. We are glad to find our statements endorsed by one whose duties brought him into close touch with all classes of people in Bethnal Green.

The Bishop of London is not alone in his stories of the wonderful way in which Freethinkers are silenced when they come into contact with a Christian clergyman. To the host of stories of this kind the Rev. Rhondda Williams added another in his reminiscences of the late Dr. K. C. Anderson. Dr. Anderson, it appears, gave a course of lectures, and a "number of old Bradlaughites came there to the lectures to smash him." But when they were listened to they were utterly aghast and dumbfounded and did not know what to say." So one of them asked "in utter confusion" whether this was a new shop under the old sign. And the preacher was left, as usual, master of the situation. We have heard of this kind of preacher before, and also of the easily dumbfounded Freethinkers. Sometimes it is the lecturer himself who is completely confounded, sometimes the Freethinker runs away, sometimes he is converted. But with these variations the tale is always the same.

We have had over thirty years' experience of parsons and Freethinkers, and it is to our eternal regret that we have never come across this unanswerable parson in the flesh. We do not say that he does not exist, we merely state the fact that we have not met him, and we should very much like to meet him instead of the very, very poor specimens that do turn up. Mr. T. Rhondda Williams is a Christian clergyman, and it would not be right therefore to suggest that what he says is not strictly true. But we do wish he would produce one of these wonderful parsons in the flesh. We promise to provide the Freethinkers, and we would also be interested in seeing them dumbfounded. Mr. Williams says that Dr. Anderson during his ministry reclaimed a great many people from infidelity. That, too, is a common occurrence. And with the usual modesty of a parson, Mr. Williams refrains from holding these converted infidels up to the public gaze by giving their names. So we must take the tales on the strength of the parson's word, and most people know how much they may rely upon that.

East Ham Council has decided to allow Sunday opening of cinemas. The local clergy are busy blowing the dust off their old sermons on the "Divine Displeasure."

The clergy are still "starving." The wills of five priests admitted to probate in one day recently totalled £75,701. The Bishop of Truro has received a gift of £500 on the occasion of his elevation to the bishopric of Chelmsford.

The hairdressing modes of past centuries were a feature at a hairdressers' exhibition in London. We wonder if examples of the sausage-curls, alleged to be worn by the Twelve Disciples, were shown at the exhibition.

A Sunday paper contained an article on "Superstitions for Everyone," and on the same page there was another article : "A Nation in Blinkers." There is some truth in the association.

What muck is printed in the newspapers! Here is a gem. "The little son of Princess Mary has cut his first tooth." Editors who print such absurdities would not report a Freethought lecture, or permit the publication of the portrait of a leading Freethinker. "Oh, the sorry trade!"

There is something intensely human in the Earl of Kimberley. At the same time we see the man emerging from the title. Furthermore, it is all to the good that he could not contain himself. And moreover, to those people, poor in spirit and imagination, that forget we are all naked under our clothes and titles, it should be a revelation that the noble lord called an ordinary man "a damned liar" at the Norfolk County Council. In time, Norfolk men will begin to see that a lord is as much human animated clay as themselves; they might even inquire the origin of titles, and then we might begin again on an aristocracy of real values. Mankind awaits twenty such aristocrats to teach its inhabitants how to live in the house of the world without destroying each other, or condemning ninety-nine per cent to live in the garret.

The relations between the Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, West Hendred, Berks, and the parishioners are not exactly cordial. It appears that the majority of the choir work on farms and cannot attend the Good Friday service, and, apparently on the Mosaic law of an eye for an eye, the good vicar states that there will be no harvest festival this year. We think that the inhabitants might chance the consequences, and take it for granted that if the vicar closed the church, the sun would shine, the rain would fall, and corn would fill hungry bellies, with or without the incantations of this or any other priest.

Dr. Henderson, Principal of Paton College, Nottingham, is not afraid of admitting the truth, and incidentally upsetting the ideas of theologians. In the course of his address delivered at Northampton he asked his hearers to be frankly honest, and said that too often the Church, in its conflict with Science, had had to haul down its flag and go over to the side of truth. He startled his audience by his concrete example. Did not, he asked, the pleasing guise of sexual purity often disguise pettiness, meanness, cowardice? Sexual immorality was bad, but there were worse things. We would wish that the last two sentences might prove a knock-out blow and over the ropes for the Bishop of London, who appears to see everything but the obvious.

The late P. T. Barnum, who described himself as the "Prince of Humbugs," on leaving London, was extremely witty at the expense of the Bishop of London. Said the latter showman, "Well, good-bye, Mr. Barnum, I hope I shall see you in Heaven." "You will, if you are there," replied the other Prince.

For sixpence it is possible to buy *The Statesmanship of Benedict XV.* This book is described as a cautious estimate of the Pontificate of Benedict XV (1914-1922), and especially of the Pope's attitude during the war. If an egg is bad when broken, sensible people do not go on eating it in the hopes of coming to the good part. The title is illuminating, self-convicting, and a concrete instance of the "soul" business in actual operation.

We are told that the Archbishop of Canterbury has been tireless in his efforts to make Christian teaching universal in all grades of education. The recent report of the

Consultative Committee on Curricula in secondary schools entirely ignored religious education. In commenting on this report the *Times Educational Supplement* describes it as a deplorable fact. And our answer to it is that we shall require a little more information before we seriously take even the face value of this judgment. There is nothing like leather to the shoemaker, nothing like religion to those in the trade, and all the Atheistic teaching in schools that Freethinkers desire is precisely that embodied in the committee's report. Our modesty is appalling.

It is admitted in a leading article in the *Church Times* of October 12, that the Christian Faith is undoubtedly losing ground, in spite of all that is being done by Christian Science and other agencies to revive public interest in it. On one point, however, the *Church Times* is clearly mistaken. It is not true that "aggressive unbelief of the old Bradlaugh type is no longer found." It is not true that "passive unbelief" gains no prominent position in any open space or public hall. A report has been issued, entitled *Anti-Christian Influences and the Evidential Ministrations of the Church within the Diocese of Wakefield.* The facts that cannot be gainsaid are that unbelief is spreading all over the country, and that any system of opposing and breaking it down is not eminently successful, and never likely to become so as long as scientific knowledge keeps on spreading and showing the stupidity of all supernatural beliefs. The Bishop of Wakefield has not performed miracles, and they are certainly the least likely things to transpire.

Here is a cheery letter from our old friend Mr. H. Dawson :—

> Twelve years ago I sold a brass cornet to a Salvationist to play in their band. Nine years ago I sold him a silver cornet for the same purpose. The transactions gave opportunities for conversation. Six years ago I saw him leaving a Freethought meeting in Finsbury Park. I offered to walk home with him. We talked on till we almost had the road to ourselves. I gave him my *Freethinker* and asked him to accept a copy for four weeks. He did, and he has bought one ever since. Last week he said, "I would like you to send this half-crown to Mr. Cohen" (for the Sustentation Fund).

We congratulate Mr. Dawson on his persistency. There are thousands of men and women waiting to become readers of this paper if it were only brought under their notice. We ask all our friends to bear this in mind.

At the centenary of the Blacksnape (Lancashire) Sunday-school a little healthy plain speaking was attempted by the chairman, Mr. F. G. Hindle. Mr. Hindle, who is a well-known local man, reminded his hearers that the earlier generation of Nonconformists "while always claiming the right to exercise the utmost religious freedom, when they got power into their own hands they were not prepared to give that freedom to others." Mr. Hindle also said that "the older he grew, and therefore the nearer he was to death, the more he was convinced that no one knew very much about the future. They might guess and speculate, and inquire and hope, but he was afraid there was not very much more than that." We take it that these are rather unusual sentiments to be heard in a Nonconformist Sunday-school, and they should do the scholars more good than do the things usually heard.

With regard to Nonconformists and freedom of religious opinion, generally it may be said that this is a principle that lies right outside all the Christian Churches. When Christian sects have talked about freedom of worship, what they usually meant was freedom for themselves to differ from the Established Church. But this did not include freedom for others to differ from them. The consequence was that not only did they persecute in their turn when power came their way, but they were to be found joining in the dominating Church persecuting dissenters when the dissent expressed did not happen to be their own. Toleration is not a principle which the world owes to Christianity. Had that religion had its way it would have been completely stifled.

A delightful, if unconscious, criticism of swearing in Law Courts, occurred at Ealing Police Court. "Have you anything to say in answer to the officer's evidence?" a prisoner was asked. "Nothing, except to say that he is telling a solemn untruth," was the reply.

Statistics of the mortality from wild animals and snakes in India during 1922 show that 3,263 persons were killed by wild animals, and 20,090 from snakes. "He doeth all things well!"

In godly Leeds games are not permitted in the public parks on Sunday, but the kiosks are allowed to remain open and to sell their wares. As a consequence a deputation waited on the Council to protest against this desecration of the Sabbath. The deputation consisted of representatives of the Churches and of traders. The latter protested against this unfair arrangement which permitted trading in the parks but closed the shops. The Churchmen said that it was a desecration of the Sabbath, and some of them thought that it was worse to make money by trading on Sunday than to play games. We like that "some of them." The majority of good Christians we have come across do not mind when or how they make money so long as they make it. And most of them would regard playing games on Sunday as being a much graver offence than making money.

The *Sheffield Diocesan Gazette* says that the shortage of clergy in the Church of England is a very serious menace. That may be, but it is a menace which the population faces with seeming equanimity. We have not noticed any processions of the public demanding more parsons. The only ones who complain of the shortage are the parsons themselves. They would like to see more of themselves because the less there are the less the public see of them, and the fewer there are the sooner the public will discover what little use the clergy are.

Many years ago, the late Robert Buchanan in a novel called *Foxglove Manor,* twitted a parson, and suggested that smoking in Church would be a valuable asset. At Sutton, Surrey, we notice that a Sunday evening cinema service was held with smoking and conversations allowed. Hymns on the screen, anthems by the choir—and the Rev. E. P. Woolacombe who spoke, sitting on a table, was cheered—which brings Christianity dangerously near to the Charlie Chaplin stage.

The Rev. W. Houghton, of Exmouth, told a harvest festival congregation that his stipend as curate of St. John's Church, Boscombe, was "five shillings a year." Perhaps the pious ravens who fed the prophet Elijah bring sandwiches to this poor clergyman; or it may be that he holds other appointments in the Lord's Vineyard.

Sir Sidney Low, writing in the *Sunday Pictorial,* says that "the doctrine of the Trinity seems fantastic to the impatient inquirer." The patient inquirer, we fancy, would finish up as a patient in a lunatic asylum.

In a well-balanced and comprehensive article the *Times Literary Supplement* pays a splendid and truthful tribute to the late John Morley. If the Church can mumble over a dead body, it cannot claim the intellectual remains of a mind that was a type to be in the future. "Literature, in a word, was with John Morley," says the writer, "not so much an end in itself as a means to a farther end which was social, not individual." This sane criticism applied to some of our modern writers, *litteratcurs* of the Roman Catholic Church, or Nonconformity for example, is a test of universality. Mankind may be encouraged by literature from the head or the heart, or the stomach; a combination of the two latter may be the secret of Mr. G. K. Chesterton's appeal on the road that leads to Rome.

Our Sustentation Fund.

Previously acknowledged: £442 16s. 6d. In Memory of the late Sir Hiram S. Maxim, £50; J. H. English, 2s. 6d.; J. M. Hill, £1; T. O'Neill, 2s. 6d., J. Hincliffe, 5s.; Harriet Baker, 10s.; E. B., 5s.; F. B., 2s.; Victor Neuburg, 5s.; Bishop W. Brown (2nd contribution), £5 10s.; Mrs. R. Turnbull, 2s. 6d.; Scotch Laddie in Turtle Creek, 10s.; A. Rowley, 5s.; J. Bryce, £1; J. Brodie, 2s. 6d.; H. E. Derby, 5s., Victoria Park, 2s. 6d.; E. Truelove, 10s.; A. Mitchell (Ontario), 19s.; H. Silverstein, 10s.; J. Lazarnick, £1 1s.; In memory of F. W. Walsh (per J. Lazarnick), 2s. 6d.; J. Robinson (2nd subscription), 2s. 6d.; A. B., 10s. Total, £507 2s.

Correction. "Jersey" the counterfoil of a postal order for £1 intended for this Fund, but which has not been acknowledged. We cannot trace its receipt, but are making enquiries. We shall know from the Post Office if it has been received by us.

We shall be obliged if subscribers will point out any omissions or inaccuracies that appear.

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.

W. H.—We share your disgust at a religious service being held over the body of Lord Morley. We do not believe that Lord Morley would have consented to any such service being held. His anti-Christian opinions were well-known and are very plainly expressed in his writings. Those who gave permission for such a service showed little real respect for the dead man, and the minister who conducted the service would have better shown self-respect by declining to be a party to such an outrage on the dead man's memory.

H. Baker.—Very sorry to hear that you have been unwell. Thanks, we are in good health—and need be.

J. Hincliffe.—We have never had any other thought but that of carrying on. We, too, are proud of the ready help given by the friends of the paper, but we regret the necessity all the same. If every reader would make up his or her mind to get one new subscriber during the course of the next twelve months the paper would be paying its way. We fancy it could be done.

Yorkie.—Thanks for cuttings. They are always useful. See "Acid Drops."

A Bostleman (Chicago).—We quite agree with you as to the difference between Freethought lectures and addresses that are merely intended to attract an audience. For our part what we want to see is an audience that is willing to listen to Freethought, not merely one that will listen to a lecture on some topic that is innocuous to current religion. We are glad you think so highly of the *Freethinker*.

S. Butler.—It takes some moral courage to avow one's opinions on religion in face of the hostility of family and friends, and we are glad to see that you are able to do so without giving serious offence. Of course, it is monstrous that Christians should be offended when Freethinkers avow their opinions; they would much prefer hypocritical silence to plain honest speech. And there is the satisfaction of knowing that everyone who does speak out makes it easier for those who follow. Glad you think so highly of the *Freethinker*.

C. F. Rudge.—There are many books on Mrs. Eddy criticizing Christian Science, but these are mainly illustrations of pot calling kettle black. The one that will probably suit you best is Mangasarian's *What is Christian Science?* (Watts and Co.). It can be ordered through this office.

E. G. Bayford and Guy Aldred.—Letters held over till next week. Crowded out of this issue.

Will C. E. S. please write at once to Westcliffe. His people there are anxious to hear from him, and letters sent have been returned.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

The Glasgow Branch made a good start last Sunday with two fine meetings which were addressed by Mr. Cohen. The City Saloon was quite filled in the morning, and the large City Hall contained a good audience in the evening. One pleasing feature of the evening meeting was the large number of keen, intelligent looking young men who were present and the goodly sprinkling of ladies. Both are good omens for the future of the movement in Glasgow, and should mean a source of strength to the Branch and to the Cause. Mr. Hale occupied the chair on both occasions.

In between meetings Mr. Cohen paid a visit to one of the oldest and bravest Freethinkers in the City—Mrs. Robert Turnbull. Glasgow holds no stauncher supporters of the Cause than her, and all her family—of whom unfortunately only two are left her—were all strong in their Freethought. Mrs. Turnbull is now eighty-one and confined to her bed, but it did one good to see her, so bright, brave, and so mentally alert. To listen to her comments on the affairs of the world and of the progress of Freethought made one proud of her and of the Cause she has loved so long and so well. We remember her and her family for so long as we have been visiting Glasgow, and we have missed her presence from our last two or three meetings. She has had more than her fair share of trouble, but she faced life with an unconquerable spirit, and is now facing what awaits her with a serenity that we may all strive to equal, but none may excel.

Although Charles Bradlaugh was intimately connected with Northampton, politically, there has been very little organized Freethought propaganda carried on there. Mr. Cohen is paying the place a visit on rather short notice to-day (October 21). The lecture will be in the Labour Hall, 66 Abington Street, at 6.30. Subject, "The Battle of Unbelief."

Mr. H. Silverstein, sending subscription to Sustentation Fund, writes: "The *Freethinker* is more than a journal, it is really an institution and has always stood for that independence of thought which men like Rudyard Kipling are only just beginning to plead for. Most of Kipling's statements have been expressed in the *Freethinker* any time during the past forty years, and it is amusing to see this handed out as a new gospel. May it not be that the *Freethinker* has come into its own." In the sense of leading, the *Freethinker* has always been coming into its own. It is the fate of genuine reformers

to find their ideas taken up by others and expressed when the battle is almost won. But by that time the reformer will have moved on a step, and then we have a repetition of the eternal fight between what is and what ought to be.

With regard to the Sustentation Fund. As our readers are aware, we dislike keeping these appeals open longer than is necessary, although in deference to the desires of those who have already responded we do not wish to close it before all who intend to subscribe have had the chance of doing so. Many we know always put off sending till the last moment, and it is for them that the Fund is now being kept open. But it will soon close, and next week we shall give a definite date.

It is both curious and instructive to note with what care the purveyors of popular literary gossip avoid any reference to Freethought in connection with the world's great writers, even when it is an open secret that they were fundamentally irreligious. The other day the editor of *Cassell's Weekly* took it into his head to entertain his ingenuous readers with a sort of literary introduction to a great French Atheist, a brilliant precursor of Diderot and Dalembert, the dramatist, novelist and natural philosopher Cyrano de Bergerac. The title of the article, "Rostand's Great-nosed Hero," made it as clear as daylight that the gossiper simply got his knowledge of Cyrano from the libellous representation of the French Stephen Phillips. We are afraid that most people, here and in France, know him only through that tainted source. If, however, they take the trouble to read him, and the English reader is now given an opportunity through the enterprise of Messrs. Routledge and Son, who have just issued the *Voyages to the Moon and the Sun* in their excellent "Broadway Translation Series," they will share our admiration for Cyrano's vigorous imagination and the amazing profundity and scope of his ideas. Let me translate into English the appreciation of Cyrano's seminal ideas which was written by another emancipator of the human mind, Remy de Gourmont :—

> The boldness of Cyrano's philosophic conceptions are almost incredible. In 1650 he was precisely at the point which the most emancipated have reached to-day. I can summarize his ideas in a few words. He believed neither in God, nor in the immortality of the soul, nor in conventional morality. He is, I fancy, the only writer of his time who was completely detached from Christianity. Not even Voltaire has ridiculed more wittily the absurd biblical stories of the earthly paradise, the serpent and the apple. He takes these narratives which the poor in spirit still worry over, for just what they are, curious and amusing stories, stories which become monstrous absurdities when they are put forward as eternal truths. His interpretation of the serpent myth is certainly a little risky, but it has all the racy flavour of the old French spirit.
>
> Cyrano proves conclusively that, separated from the body, the soul (assuming its existence) is like a painter without his brushes, an orator without vocal organs, a workman without his tools. Since it thinks with the brain, and thinks badly if the brain is affected, how can it think at all when there is no brain? With regard to miracles, particularly miraculous cures, Cyrano puts forward clearly the quite modern theory of auto-suggestion. He adds this remark : If the sick man asks God to cure him, and he is cured, the priests will say that he is rewarded for his faith; if he is not cured, they will say that his prayers wanted fervour. His way of dealing with the question of a God is even more irreverent. If he exists, he says, let him reveal himself, and make us acknowledge his presence in such a way that there can be no disputing it. What sort of a God is one that reveals himself to one man and not to another, to the knaves of one religion and not to the good men of another creed, a God that amuses himself by playing hide-and-seek or handy-pandy with poor human nature?

We do not know if the new edition of Cyrano's philosophic romances is a reprint of the seventeenth century translation, or a new version. If it is a modern translation it will be curious to see whether the passages omitted in the original edition and, of course, in the early English versions are given from the manuscript in the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, or from Remy de Gourmont's excellent little volume of selections, *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Collection des plus belles pages) *Mercure de France*, 1908. A book which we heartily recommend to those of our readers who know French.

We reprint the following from *Ross's Monthly*, a lively and very outspoken Melbourne Journal. We omit several passages of a rather personal nature, but we fancy most of our friends will like to read it, and so will pardon the apparent egotism of its reappearance here :—

> As a weekly production the *Freethinker* is full of special ability—such papers cannot be run as easily as are many, for they call for the deep knowledge and wide experience of experts. An editor of a specialist organ must never be caught napping; he must be equal to any controversy, able to hold his own, and to uphold his position all the time. Chapman Cohen's regular writings are full of meat and unvaryingly strong. His *Freethinker* is a wonder. The *Freethinker* and its works are worthy of honour and acceptance. Your fight has been truly fine, friend Cohen, and hearts hereaway go out to you in admiration and fellowship.

Freethought has not much to offer a man—in the worldly sense, but it does offer the friendship of brave men and women all over the world, and that is something not easily gained nor lightly to be prized.

Next week we hope to have on sale the new issue of Draper's *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science*. This is among the finest books ever issued on the subject, the work of a scholar and a thinker. It covers the whole period of European history, and has been translated into most European languages. The book is an exact reprint, which is on sale by the publishers at 7s. 6d. As the work extends to 400 pages this is not a large price. But by arrangement with the holders of the copyright the Secular Society is issuing it at the low price of 3s. 6d.—less than half at which the book can be purchased elsewhere. Of course, at this price it is not a profit-making venture, but it is a fine propagandist work, and it is propaganda the Society has in view. We expect a rare rush of orders, and we advise all to send for a copy without delay. It may not be possible to reprint at this price. Sensible folk will take the hint. We do not praise lightly or advise without reason.

A debate was held on Wednesday, October 10, between Mr. Clifford Williams, President of the Birmingham Branch N.S.S. and the Rev. Kenneth Rawlinson, Vicar of St. Marks. There was a packed meeting and the discussion gave every satisfaction to those present. Mr. Williams acquitted himself with distinction, and in the end the Vicar suggested a further debate in a month's time. The suggestion was accepted and a further announcement will be made in due course.

Mr. A. B. Moss visits Birmingham to-day (October 21) and will lecture in the Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street, at 7 on "Darwin, the Shakespeare of Science." We hope that Birmingham will see the hall is packed.

The discussion between Mr. F. Shaller and the Rev. J. Merrin, Vicar of Stratford Parish Church, will take place on Sunday afternoon, October 21, at 3.15. The date announced in our previous issue, October 15, was an error. The discussion will be held in the Stratford Church Institute, 27 Romford Road, Stratford. Admission is free.

Will all Freethinkers in Halifax who are interested in the formation of a Branch of the National Secular Society please communicate with Mr. J. Corina, 51 Beacon Hill Road, Halifax.

A New Life of Carlyle.

After a long silence, one more life of Carlyle, a monumental work, said to be, in five volumes. The author, Mr. D. A. Wilson, has made Carlyle his special study for quite a generation. Robert Blatchford did well to make a vigorous protest against the extravagant tendency of our time, to write many biographies and swell them with the little things domestic and romantic that in honour should be held sacred in a great man's career. Genius is often allied with many weaknesses and human frailties. In this case, however, the indiscretion has long ago been committed, by biographers in haste, needless of the instructions of the departed, careless of facts, and writing history on fanciful theories, and one aim of this new work, evidently, is once for all to do justice to the man himself. There are many who think Carlyle a back number, and others who regard him to have been so lacking in the genial as to form unsuitable material for a popular biography, still both should find this first volume of a new life, *Carlyle Till Marriage*, in itself excellent reading. There is liveliness and matter to interest in every page. Surely there are many in our population now who know little about Carlyle and it is just possible that little may be prejudiced.

The *Scotsman*, in a column review, remarked that "among the qualities of the volume that one would least like to see removed are the revelations of the author's own personality." That is true of even greater biographies; in some temperaments it is difficult to suppress, but in this instance it gives a delightful seasoning in Carlylean pungency, to the history of a notable countryman. The *Glasgow Herald* review was evidently written by a cleric feeling miserable for the time being at the boldness of infidelity, and more evidence of the training prestige of the Church. The faulty phrases coined from the book, somewhat unfairly form their setting, were such as referred to religion, Church, or clergy. The author of this new work is certainly not painstakingly diplomatic, nor timid of hurting the feelings of the orthodox, but conspicuously honest, blunt and unconventional. A few things no doubt might have been said differently. In this quality of candidness this new publication carries us past another milestone in the progress of Freethought and open disregard for the long established dictatorial and dominating sway of the Church. It is plainly revealed to be written about a Freethinker by a Freethinker, and to point out this is the purpose of this article, leaving to others to judge of Carlyle's place in history, or the author's estimate of his greatness.

He has made it easier for every non-Christian struggling to live freely up to the highest he knows, and to live in the sunlight. What a crowd of us with the same opinions keep silence in fear of social ostracisation, or business reverses, or perhaps more excusably, in fear of our ability to defend, as we must, our new convictions. The author would not likely have favoured "this freedom" if he had a first concern for the popularity of the work. Not a few reading the early days of Carlyle but will see in certain aspects their own life copied. At fifteen he is found troubling his mother with awkward questions. "Did God Almighty come down and make wheel-barrows in a shop?" About the "Song of Solomon," he wished to know what can be the meaning of it, "how is it known it is symbolical?" The most severe and searching criticism as yet has come from the pen of Mr. J. M. Robertson, in the October *Literary Guide*. Perhaps no one living is better equipped for masterful criticism of anything pertaining to Carlyle, only he writes unsympathetically, having evidently formed a small estimate of Carlyle's genius and work. On the other hand Mr. Wilson almost worships his hero. Strange, Mr. Robertson and all other critics take no notice of one interesting point, conspicuous in this work, that is one of the author's main contentions to show Carlyle as a disciple of Confucius; he calls him the "European Confucius." Carlyle and his biographer are alike in being both educated for the ministry, but when the crucial period arrived, like many more, they refused to pass the turnstile. In those features emphasized, this work seemed worthy of mention to the readers of the *Freethinker*.

W. Allan.

Writers and Readers.

Montesquieu's Persian Letters.

For the majority of English readers nowadays Montesquieu, I am afraid, is hardly more than a name. They may be aware that he was a big figure in the intellectual movement of the first half of the eighteenth century, a period of vigorous and seminal thought that unconsciously and silently prepared the way for the French Revolution. They may also have learned from Buckle that he was one of the founders of the new science of sociological history, a thinker whose generalizations are suggestive even when they need to be corrected by a wider survey of the social and physical sciences. With his *Grandeur and Decadence of the Romans* (1734) it is possible that they may have a bowing acquaintance, for it is used, I believe, as a text-book in schools, while they may also have a vague notion that Montesquieu's great work is called *De l'Esprit des Lois* (1748), and that he was the first to study the influence of climate, soil and food on the civil and political legislation of a people.

I am careful to say that the English reader *may* be loyally recognisant of these common-places of literary history. But, I am afraid, that quite a large number of people who claim to be well educated do not possess even so elementary a knowledge. The other day an expensively educated lady of my acquaintance to whom I had occasion to mention Montesquieu, blithely asked me if he were not the well-known poet and dramatist. I assured her that, on the best authority, he was held to be absolutely innocent of all such æsthetic divagations, while for her edification I told her of a remark I had overheard when I had the misfortune to make one of the audience at a University Extension lecture. Behind me were seated two garrulous young women, evidently elementary school teachers. One of them was reading aloud a printed summary of the lecture, which was to deal with Edmund Spenser. "Spenser, did you say?" remarked her friend. "Why! he was the poet who used to be so fond of going to the opera with George Eliot." This is the sort of ignorance that is amusing or irritating according to one's mood at the time. It is the penalty we pay for a democratic system of education, the natural result of the unwisdom which would force knowledge on people who are unfitted for it.

Still, as a rule, it is foolish to get angry or sarcastic or malicious when your friends do not happen to take an intelligent interest in books you admire. I am glad to say I have got past that youthful stage. I am now tolerant, or, what I fancy is better, indulgent, for the notion of tolerance seems to me to imply a modicum of arrogant contempt. If I think that my friends would be better for reading a particular book I try by the pleasant art of persuasion to get them to see it from my point of view. When I happen to be unsuccessful, the fault, no doubt, is as much mine as theirs. I have not perhaps put enough warmth and unction into my commendation. On various occasions lately I have shown my indulgent and intelligent readers what they are likely to miss in the way of wit and wisdom if they neglect Voltaire's philosophical romances. Now I want to get them to read Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*. It is just issued by

Routledge and Sons, Ltd., in their excellent "Broadway Translations Series." The version is one made some thirty years ago by the Freethinking poet, John Davidson, who introduces his translature with a well-balanced appreciation of Montesquieu's genius.

The *Persian Letters* was one of the "best sellers" of 1721. Montesquieu was then thirty-two, and this his first published book had been some eight years in the making. In this respect he was noticeably unlike the modern scribe who imagines that he is neglecting his duty if he does not suffer the pangs of book-birth every six months. But your masterpiece needs a longer period of gestation. Although Montesquieu in later life deprecated his *Persian Letters* as the irresponsible effort of youthful and vivacious audacity it is the one work of his that we can read with as much pleasure as profit. The scheme of the book is, of course, not original. Other writers had shown the reaction of the supposed Oriental mind when brought into direct contact with Western civilization. The devise had piquant possibilities, and enabled the writer to hit as hard as he liked without losing his liberty or having his book seized and burnt. What Montesquieu does is to invent two Persian nobles, Usbek and his young friend Rica, and to bring them to France in order that his countrymen may benefit by a fresh and unsophisticated criticism of European customs, institutions, and ideals.

Usbek represents the more serious side of Montesquieu's nature. Rica is Montesquieu in a light and satirical mood. They correspond with each other and with their friends at home commenting on what strikes them as curious, suggestive and anomalous in the manners and thought of the day. They are interested in every phase of life, and criticize with equal gusto the gravest and the most trivial matters. Through his intelligent Orientals, Montesquieu attacks the despotism of Louis XIV, and the privileges of the aristocracy; he shows us how easily a monarchy degenerates into a republican or into a despotic government. He invents a little story of the Troglodytes or cave-men, who for a long time live happily as virtuous libertarian anarchists, and fall from grace only when habits of laziness and luxury prompt them to choose a king whose laws they imagine will be less exacting than the commands of individual virtue. It is a beautiful and profoundly moving allegory of a truth that must commend itself to every Freethinker, that "whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continueth therein shall be blessed in his deed."

Montesquieu's attitude to religion is that of a tolerant sceptic. Like most thinkers of the time he regards it as a sort of moral force, and in the political sense as a check on despotic power. He is far away from the dogmatism of Rousseau who would turn everyone into believers in a Supreme Being, under the penalty of exile or hanging. He is equally far from Voltaire who held that the reigning sovereign was the supreme master in religion and in everything else. But Montesquieu was not a Christian; he was fundamentally irreligious. Certain guarded expressions of respect did not deceive the Roman Church, and the *Persian Letters* was at once ear-marked as a prohibited book. It is not difficult to imagine the effect of the following passage (Letter xxiv), where Montesquieu, after describing the king as a great magician who, if he has only a million crowns in his exchequer, and has need of two millions, has only to persuade his subjects that one crown is worth two, and they believe it, passes to another and more wonderful and more powerful magician "who is master of the king's mind, as absolutely as the king is master of the minds of his subjects. This magician is called the Pope. Sometimes he makes the king believe that three are no more than one; that the bread which he eats is not bread; the wine which he drinks not wine; and a thousand things of like nature." In another letter he makes this comment on the ineradicable tendency of human nature to create gods in its own image:—

> I am not surprised that negroes paint the Devil with a complexion of dazzling whiteness, and their gods black as coal; that the Venus of certain races has breasts that hang down to the thighs; and finally, that all believers have represented their gods in the likeness of men, and have ascribed to them all their own passions. It has been well said that if triangles were to make to themselves gods, they would give them three sides.

The reader will be delighted with equally witty or caustic comments on casuists and casuistry, on sacerdotal celibacy, and on the stupid contradiction implied in holding that marriage is holy, and that celibacy, the opposite of marriage, is holier still. In praising Protestantism for granting to everyone the right to produce children, Montesquieu smilingly insinuates that "if the founders of that religion had not been constantly charged with incontinence they would have lightened the yoke still further, and would have ended by removing entirely the barrier which separates, in this particular, the Nazarene from Mohammed."

I have said enough to show that the *Persian Letters* is a book that every self-respecting Freethinker ought to read both for edification and for pleasure. I say pleasure because Montesquieu lightened his criticism of religion, morals and manners with some vivid pictures of the voluptuous life of the harem, of hideous black eunuchs and dazzlingly fair women, of passion and jealousy, and sudden death by the bow-string.

George Underwood.

Poems in Prose.

The Favours of the Moon.

The moon, who is caprice itself, looked in through the window when you lay asleep in your cradle, and murmured to herself: "Here is a child after my own heart."

Then, very softly, she descended her staircase of clouds and passed noiselessly through the window-pane. And she embraced you with the tender suppleness of a mother and touched your face with her colours. Therefore your eyes are green and your cheeks extraordinarily pale. Because you have gazed upon her your pupils have widened strangely and the tender clasping of her arms around your neck has left you with a yearning for tears.

Nevertheless in the overflowing of her joy, the moon filled the room like a phosphoric atmosphere, like a luminous poison; and all this living light thought and said:—

"The memory of my kiss shall be always with you. You shall be beautiful as I am beautiful. You shall love that which I love, and that which loves me—water and the clouds, silence and the night, the vast and green sea, the formless yet multiform waters, the place where you shall never be, the lover whom you shall never know, monstrous flowers, odours by which men become mad, cats that stretch themselves upon pianos and cry aloud with the hoarse sweet voices of women!

"And you shall be loved by my lovers, courted by my courtiers. You shall be the queen of men with green eyes whose necks I have clasped in my nocturnal caresses, of those who love the sea, the vast, green and tumultuous sea, the place where they are not, the woman they know not, the unnatural flowers which are like the censers of some unknown rite, the odours that trouble the will, and the savage and lascivious animals that are the emblems of their folly."

And that is why, O accursed, dear and spoilt child, that is why I am lying at this moment at your feet, seeking to find within your soul the image of the fearful goddess, the fairy godmother, the poisonous nurse of all who are moonstruck.

Intoxication.

To be always drunken; that is the question. We must intoxicate ourselves without ceasing to allay the anguish of Time whose hateful burden cuts into our shoulders and bends us to the earth.

What does it matter whether our cup is wine, or poetry, or virtue—or what you will? The thing is to drink, and if you should happen to slip from your dream on the steps of a palace, or in the green grass of a ditch, or in the gloomy solitude of your chamber, with your delirium already disappeared or disappearing, question the wind and the wave, the star and the bird, and the clock; ask

all that flies, all that laments and all that revolves, all that sings and all that speaks: What time it is? And the wind and the waves, the star, the bird, and the clock will answer you: "It is time to drink." Drink then without ceasing lest you become the martyred slaves of Time. Drink your fill of wine, or poetry, or virtue—or what you will!

ANYWHERE OUT OF THE WORLD.

This life is a hospital where every patient is possessed by a desire to change his bed. One prefers to suffer near the fire, and another is sure he will get well if his bed is placed by the window.

It seems to me that I should be always happy if I were somewhere else, and this question of removing is one I am continually discussing with my soul.

"Tell me, my soul, my poor chilly soul, what do you say to making your home in Lisbon? It must be very warm there, and you could bask in the sun like a lizard. It is by the sea; they say it is built of marble, and that the people hate vegetation so much that they root up all the trees. There is a country after your heart, a country made of light, minerals, and water to reflect them!"

My soul is silent.

"Since you love repose with the spectacle of moving things, will you come and live in Holland, that heavenly land? Perhaps you could be happy in a country whose image you have often admired in our picture galleries. What do you say to Rotterdam, you who love forests of masts and vessels anchored at the doors of the houses?"

My soul is silent.

"Perhaps Batavia has more attractions for you. There we should find the mind of Europe wedded to tropical beauty."

Not a word says my soul. Can she be dead?

"Have you sunk into a stupor so deep that you find pleasure only in your own pain? If that be so, let us fly to countries made in the image of death. I can suit your mood, my poor soul. We will pack up our belongings and go to Torneo. We will go still further, to the extreme limits of the Baltic; and still further away from life, if it be possible; we will make our dwelling-place at the pole. There the sun only grazes the earth with oblique rays, and the slow alternations of day and night destroy variety and bring forth monotony, that other half of nothingness. There we may take great baths of darkness while, from time to time, for our pleasure, the Aurora Borealis shall scatter their roseate flames before us like the reflection of fireworks in hell!"

At last my soul breaks into speech, and wisely cries to me:

"Anywhere, anywhere out of the world."

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE.

North London Branch N.S.S.

A lively debate was held at the St. Pancras Reform Club last Sunday, the opponents being Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe and Mr. R. H. Roberts of the Metropolitan Secular Society, on the subject as to whether Capitalism is or is not played out. To-day Mr. E. B. Turner, F.R.C.S., will deliver an address on the "Compulsory Notification of Venereal Diseases." This is such a burning question that the North London Branch is glad to be able to provide a platform for the very able and well-known lecturer who will address the meeting. Will North London friends kindly let these meetings be known as widely as possible as our funds do not run to extensive advertisement.—K. B. K.

The Weekly Joy.

I've listened to that Tempest's roar,
And the whisperings of the still small voice;
Heard all the pseudo-wisdom of the Sages,—
Consulted all the Guides, Philosophers, and Friends,
Who humbugged man with endless theories and faiths
And side-tracked thought in all its early stages.
To find, at last, that life's chief joy consists,
For me, in cutting with a knife, the old *Freethinker* pages.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

Correspondence.

RELIGION AND SCIENCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—While much appreciating the courtesy of Sir Oliver Lodge's letter, I think, nevertheless, that it has not met my difficulty. Perhaps I did not make the nature of that difficulty sufficiently clear.

I am not concerned with what constitutes the state of perfection in question—whether absolute impeccability or merely "the utter moral security of never utilizing.....the power of going wrong." What puzzles me is this: If man (as Sir Oliver states) is akin to his deity, why should he not, as an essential part of his nature, have been endowed at once with that power of abstention from going wrong or with that freedom from the slightest tendency to ill-doing, which Sir Oliver considers can be reasonably ascribed to the nature of that deity? If God loses nothing by having this power as part of his nature, without needing to undergo a probation of misery in order to attain to it, why should man be the worse for a similar immunity? But, according to "this sorry scheme of things," he has to suffer atrociously to win what, if he really were akin to God, he would, like God, possess at the start.

That is my problem and I do not find a solution of it in Sir Oliver Lodge's letter.

Then, as regards "the responsibility of denying the existence of any Designing or Guiding Mind" in the universe, surely to deny or assume is not a matter of volition. Freethinkers must abide by the conclusion at which their reason arrives after careful and patient study of the facts that confront them. But, in the face of these facts, it seems far more reverent to deny than to assume it. What sort of mind designed the rapine and massacre of the struggle for survival, the awful waste of life, the cruelty rampant everywhere in nature? What kind of guidance led to the hideous misery of the late war or to the horrors of the recent earthquake in Japan? It is surely more seemly to believe, if you can, that a universe working on such lines is the outcome of evolving matter, the result of the interaction of mighty, unconscious forces obeying inexorable laws, than that all these horrors have been deliberately planned by a designing and guiding mind.

I am writing in the country and have not a copy of *Man and the Universe* by me. It would therefore be futile to attempt to discuss the position taken up in it as to the fundamental tenets of Christianity.

But just one thought in conclusion. Sir Oliver Lodge is a very great scientist. In the face of what he knows (far, far better than I do) about the processes of Nature, does he believe that the guiding mind of which he speaks is a good and loving power? "By their fruits ye shall know them." Only the other day we read of a Japanese husband in New York who, having heard by a telegram of the death of his wife and children in the earthquake, went mad with grief and killed himself. But the news was false; his wife and children were not dead after all, and a second telegram corrected the error and brought his wife's love to the poor dead man. A guiding mind? Even the newspapers called it "a cruel mock of fate." Of fate, for they dared not say "of God." Yet, if there is a designing, guiding mind.....

Well, it seems infinitely better to be able to recognize no conscious, personal God at all than to have to conceive of the universe (including our own destinies) as lying at the mercy of an evil, malicious and cruel power.

Surely in this Sir Oliver Lodge agrees with

A SEEKER AFTER TRUTH.

[Arrived too late for insertion in last week's issue.—EDITOR.]

A CORRECTION.

SIR,—Will you be good enough to correct a mistake in a quotation from Dr. Smith for which I alone am guilty? It occurs at the very bottom of page 462, and as corrected reads thus: *Siquidem Deus, inquit, est, unde mala? bona vero unde, si non est?* "If God is, whence the evil things? but whence the good if he is not?"

J. T. LLOYD.

PERSONALITY.

Sir,—In putting the question "What is the 'I' that can survey my own limbs," "Elementary Student" is evidently under the impression that the "I" is something apart from the body—a separate entity. This is not the case. The "I" or "consciousness" is the state of an organized body in which the organs perform their individual or collective functions. When the body is in a state of health all the organs do this efficiently; when some of the organs fail to carry out their functions we call this disease; and when all the organs fail to do so we call this death. Consciousness is simply a condition confined to matter in a certain state of organization. Take the case of a newly born child from birth upwards. We can see its conscious personality gradually being built up, and the resulting "mind" is the sum of the remembered perceptions and its thinking upon such perceptions. The "I" begins with perceptions, and each individual differs in personality according to the mode of life he lives.

"Elementary Student's" difficulty is that he himself, as an organic unity, "can and does perceive his own limbs." Perception is a mental state, but mental states are functions of bodily states. When he perceives his limbs the organs of perception are necessary in order to perceive. When he touches them the organs of sensation are necessary to the act of sensation. Sensation is a mental state, and at the same time a bodily state. All the states in which you perceive are therefore bodily states. It is the living organism with its necessary nervous structure that perceives, and with the variation of bodily states the ability to perceive is greatly modified. For instance, under the influence of drink, "Elementary Student" would probably see four legs instead of two, and under the influence of a powerful narcotic he would become a mere breathing lump of matter. The personality of man, the "I" is simply the sum of a number of very complex factors built up from birth and gradually disintegrated by disease and the failure of the organs to perform their functions.

Leonard Mason.

POPULATION AND THE DOUGLAS SCHEME.

Sir,—I have read the speech of Sir William Beveridge and have it before me now. It appears to be not a refutation but an absurd confutation of the population question. "Why suppose," says your correspondent, M. Barnard, that population will increase indefinitely?" Where does Malthus or any of his followers say that it will? He says population treads closely on the heels of subsistence and must be restrained by moral restraint, vice, misery, or war. Does M. Barnard suppose that any government can house the people even if birth control does not go much farther than at present. It exists to-day to an ineffective extent.

As to the Douglas scheme, sound financial management and economy which the Douglas scheme in my opinion certainly is not, can make the best of what wealth there is. It cannot continue to create unlimited wealth to feed an unlimited increase of population. The question of increasing supplies of food is only part of the question. Owing to congestion of population in towns, life is becoming unhealthy. Without birth control that must become universal. No doubt the stupidity and inhumanity of man cause much of our misery. The stupidity is strongly exemplified by those who say they will not dogmatize whilst giving us a superlatively strong dose of dogmatism. The principles of population as laid down by Malthus are as rigidly true as the first four rules of arithmetic.

A. J. Marriott.

O thou fair Truth, for thee alone we seek,
Friend to the wise, supporter to the weak;
From thee we learn whate'er is right and just—
Creeds to reject, professions to distrust,
Forms to despise, pretensions to deride,
And, following thee, to follow nought beside.

—*George Crabbe (1754-1832).*

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.

Metropolitan Secular Society (160 Great Portland Street): 7.30, Mr. Hopkins, "Conflict Between Morality and Religion."

North London Branch N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Mr. E. B. Turner, F.R.C.S., "Conditional Notification and Compulsory Continuous Treatment of Venereal Diseases."

South London Branch N.S.S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W.9): 7, Mr. G. Whitehead, "The Religion of Bernard Shaw."

South London Ethical Society (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, R. Dimsdale Stocker, "The Play 'R.U.R.'"

South Place Ethical Society (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "The Mysteries of Religion."

West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Stratford Church Institute, 27 Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 3.15, Debate between Mr. F. Shaller and the Rev. J. Merrin, M.A., Vicar of Stratford Parish Church, "Is There a God?"

Outdoor.

Bethnal Green Branch N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 4, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

Finsbury Park.—11.15, Mr. G. Whitehead, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

Indoor.

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street): 7, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Darwin, the Shakespeare of Science."

Glasgow Branch N.S.S. (Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street): 6.30, Mr. Service, "The Control of Life."

Leeds Branch N.S.S. (Youngman's Restaurant, Lowerhead Row, Leeds): 7, Mr. Vincent J. Hands, "Does the World Want Religion?"

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Amalgamated Engineering Union Hall, 120 Rusholme Road, Oxford Road): Mr. J. T. Lloyd, 3, "Balder and the Mistletoe"; 6.30, "Did Jesus Ever Live?"

Northampton.—Mr. Chapman Cohen will lecture in the Labour Hall, 66 Abington Street, at 6.30 on "The Battle of Unbelief."

Swansea and District Branch N.S.S. (Dockers' Hall): 6, Branch Meeting.

The National Secular Society.

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

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

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

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

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

President:
CHAPMAN COHEN.
Secretary:
Miss E. M. Vance, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Principles and Objects.

Secularism teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

The Funds of the National Secular Society are legally secured by Trust Deed. The trustees are the President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Society, with two others appointed by the Executive. There is thus the fullest possible guarantee for the proper expenditure of whatever funds the Society has at its disposal.

The following is a quite sufficient form for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by legacy:—

> I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society.

Membership.

Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

> I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects.
>
> Name.....
>
> Address.....
>
> Occupation.....
>
> Dated this.....day of.....19.....

This declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription.

P.S.—Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year, every member is left to fix his own subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

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