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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
Christianity and Brotherhood.—The Editor	689
Rev. T. Rhondda Williams and the Knowledge of God— J. T. Lloyd	690
The Popularity of Paine.—Mimnermus	692
The Exodus From Egypt.—W. Mann	692
Thoughts on Human Survival.—Vincent J. Hands	694
Our Sustentation Fund.—Chapman Cohen	697
Totemism.—J. M. Wheeler	698
South African Jottings.—Searchlight	700
Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.	

Views and Opinions.

Christianity and Brotherhood.

When a Freethinker frames an indictment of the only Christianity the world has known he is invariably met with the reply that what the world has seen is not Christianity but "Churchianity." A variant of this is that Christianity has never yet been tried, but when it is—then we shall see what we shall see. Akin to these retorts is the talk about finding a "true" religion, or the desire to cling to the word itself as a label for some system of ideas that has no more connection with genuine religion than a horse-chestnut has with a chestnut-horse. I have never been able to see more in any of these things than a distorted expression of the herd spirit which makes most people unwilling to be radically different from their fellows in something which the majority declare to be indispensable. A fox with any sort of a tail may pass without notice; but a fox minus all traces of a tail is hopelessly out of it. So in a society which officially declares a religion to be imperative, and which has reached the stage of saying that any religion will do, there is the tendency of most to claim that even though they may have departed from strict orthodoxy they have not yet sunk into the outer darkness in which they live who are without religion. And much the same thing applies to the talk about genuine Christianity not yet having been tried. It is hard to completely break from Christianity, and to set oneself in opposition to the widely taught and heavily subsidized doctrine that the world's best exemplar is Jesus Christ. Or there are those who think that by appealing to people in the name of a hypothetically perfect Christ they are more likely to get their reforms accomplished. All the time they are blind to the fact that reform after reform has been spoiled precisely because it has been wrapped up with some form of Christian belief.

* * *

Playing With Words.

I have been led to the above remarks by a short article from the pen of Mr. Tom Sykes in the *Daily News* for October 25, in which he quotes the saying, "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting, it has been found difficult and not tried," and comments—"A religion which has had official sway for 1800 years and never got itself tried has either failed,

or its representatives are colossal hypocrites." That is only an echo of what we have often said, and we are pleased to find a professed Christian recognizing that if Christianity has never even got itself tried that is in itself, not merely a confession of failure, but it puts out of court any claim that might be made as to the beneficial influence of Christianity on European history. But having given us, if not a pail at least a wineglassful of good milk, Mr. Sykes immediately proceeds to knock it over by informing us that it was the aim of Jesus to create "a humane social order," in short, a Brotherhood movement such as the one of which Mr. Sykes is secretary. So that we are back again in the same old foolish circle, and the supernaturally born Messiah, the one who worked miracles, was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven, etc., had no other aim in view than the founding of a Brotherhood movement on earth. This seems an awful bother about so little. For, after all, the preachers of human brotherhood in ancient and modern times have been fairly numerous, and if these other preachers have not been successful in their aims it is part of Mr. Syke's case that neither has Jesus, and in that respect he has no superiority over the others. They have all failed, and if belief in the supernaturally born Jesus has not been successful it would seem wise to try some other plan, and not to bother about Christianity at all.

* * *

Christianity's Failure.

What are the grounds on which Mr. Sykes affirms it to be the sole object of the Jesus of the New Testament to found a human brotherhood on earth? Such evidence is not to be found in the New Testament. It is true that there is talk of men as brothers, but it is a brotherhood of believers that is aimed at, a fellowship of such as believe in the messiahship of Jesus Christ. And in that respect the Christian Church has always been right when it has insisted upon right belief about Jesus as the condition of membership of a Christian brotherhood here and of salvation hereafter. Christianity, says Mr. Sykes, in its "pure unadulterated form inevitably results in fraternity, good-will among men—in brotherhood." It does not seem out of place here to ask Mr. Sykes where in all its eighteen centuries these things have universally, or even generally, accompanied belief in Christianity? He cannot find it in the behaviour of the early Christians who were notorious, even among the Pagans, for the fierceness of their quarrels with each other. He cannot find it in the relations of the Roman Catholic Church to the Protestant sects, nor will he find it in the feeling existing to-day between the various Christian bodies. And if we take Christians in relation to the world at large, then it is quite clear that there are many hatreds in the world that are entirely due to difference of Christian belief, and other hatreds that are accentuated and made fiercer from the same cause. And if Mr. Sykes should reply that these things are only evidences that people have failed to grasp the true spirit of Christianity, we can only reply, in his own words, that a religion which has had official sway for 1800 years and cannot get properly understood

proclaims itself a gigantic failure. It is time we turned to some other instructor in the art of living.

The Real Jesus. * * *

But I do not agree that it was the aim of Jesus Christ to establish a reign of social brotherhood on earth. Omitting the purely mythological elements in the Gospel Jesus—the virgin birth, the crucified god, killed for the salvation of the world, the resurrection—what is the kind of character that is left? He is saturated with supernaturalism. He believes in angels and devils, in disease as the outcome of diabolic agency, to be cured with mere magical incantations. He believes himself to be surrounded with legions of angels and devils, and holds intercourse with them. We see him accepting all the grosser superstitions of his day and passing them on to his followers. He promises them that he will return again after he is dead, and puts before them a life in the next world where they will be rewarded or punished for their beliefs—and in a subordinate degree—their actions here; while his twelve selected followers are to sit on twelve thrones judging the people. Is it likely that this kind of a figure should be obsessed with a desire for social improvement? Did they who are said to have heard him so understand him? It lies on the face of early Christian history that his followers understood him in quite the opposite sense. Their reading of his message was that this life was of no value, that the only benefit of paying attention to any kind of study of it was its influence on life in the next world. Opposition to the world was not merely the essential note of primitive or "pure" Christianity, but it has been its note right through. Human pleasure, human happiness, absorption in the affairs of this life, have always been more or less suspect to every sect of Christians. And it remains so to-day. Surely it is a strange kind of teacher who gets himself so completely and so universally misunderstood, and whose true message is only properly realized some 1900 years after he is dead, and then by only a select one here and there! Surely no other teacher in the history of the world ever expressed himself so clumsily or managed to get himself so seriously misunderstood!

* * *

The Appeal to Facts.

Let us test the matter in another way. There have been Christians before Mr. Sykes, although on his thesis he ought to feel inclined to dispute the proposition. Still there have been men whom the world called Christian, who were extolled in their day as great Christians, and who really have cut some figure in the history of Christianity. There was Augustine, and Origen, and Ambrose, and Aquinas, and Luther, and Calvin, and Knox, and Wesley, and Pusey, and many others that might be named. Did these understand that the supreme message of Jesus was to build up a great and universal secular brotherhood? There is not one of them who would have failed to claim that the supreme aim of Jesus was to save men's souls in the next world. Nearly all of them would have said that all the brotherhood in the world would not save a man's soul if he did not believe properly. Some might suggest that in his great mercy God might forgive an outsider whose goodness was so clear as to be undeniable, but of that they were never quite sure. From the minds of most of them universal brotherhood was quite absent. Many of them would not have sat down to dinner with either an Atheist or a heretic. Some actually refused to live under the same roof with "erring" members of their own family. They did wish to convert the world to their beliefs, but this was because it would add to their own glory in the next world. The good Christian, to follow Gibbon, did not expect to be either happy or useful in this one.

Humanizing the Gods.

And then Mr. Sykes, after indulging his sentimentalism about the brotherhood of Christianity, stumbles upon a truth which, with true Christian obliquity, he utters without seeing how fatal it is to his major proposition. "The moral logic of history," he tells us, "is forcing our generation to face the question of brotherhood. Learn or perish, become more fierce or more fraternal, conflict or co-operate—these are the sharp alternatives." So, after all, it is not Christianity but the course of social evolution which is driving in upon men the lesson of co-operation and universal brotherhood. And if social evolution is doing this in the case of men in general, let me suggest to Mr. Sykes what may be to him a very startling truth. May it not be that it is this same process of social evolution, this same growth of intercommunication, and of general enlightenment, that is teaching Christians something better than their creed, and leading them to read into the vague and worthless generalities of the gospel Jesus something that is not there and which Christians have never, until recent times, suspected was there? Pure Christianity, the Christianity of the New Testament, of the early Christians, of the Christian Churches, the world found from bitter experience to be impossible and undesirable. And right through the ages it was left for social forces to "adulterate" Christianity to the point of making it tolerable to the educated and civilized intelligence. That is what is going on to-day. Mr. Sykes with his talk about brotherhood is an illustration of it. And we suggest it is time that he and others liberated their minds from the befogging belief in an ignorant Jewish peasant, plunged to the eyes in the grossest superstitions of his time, as the world's only possible saviour. Christian theology has taught that only by a god dying could the world be saved. I am of the same opinion, but in a more universal sense. The death of the gods is an indispensable condition for the better life of man.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Rev. T. Rhondda Williams and
the Knowledge of God.

(Concluded from page 675.)

In our estimation Baron Von Hügel's illustration throws no light whatever on the problem of knowing God. If the book is six inches long, four inches wide, one pound in weight, all those notions are perfectly clear; but if the book is called "A Real Existence," all sorts of questions and difficulties and debates rise up, and it turns out that nothing at all is clear. Von Hügel is quoted thus:—

There are philosophers who would tell me that the book has no real existence outside my own mind. I shall feel perfectly certain that it has, but I shall find it very difficult to counter their view that it has not. They will tell me that everything I can say about this book is a mental conception of my own, and when all these are deducted there is no book left, or if there is, I cannot say anything about it. And so of the whole external world, they say it is impossible for us to know any object outside us as it is in itself, we can know what they think about it. It only exists to us in the conceptions which we have formed of it, and there have been philosophers who have stoutly contended that it does not exist at all in any other way.

We carefully consider this idealistic interpretation of the universe and find in it no basis or confirmation whatsoever for the belief in God. The idealist is absolutely sure of nothing under the sun. Baron Von Hügel boldly affirms that to "assert the real existence

of a world outside us is an act of faith." According to his theory the existence of God is never above doubt, and certainly seldom, if ever, brightly clear. We do not know that there is a God, not even when the sense of God engendered by a vividly emotional outlook upon Nature is at its highest. Cardinal Newman had looked much deeper into the mystery of existence than either Von Hügel or Mr. Rhondda Williams, and was able to write much more wisely and instructively. In his *Grammar of Assent* he speaks of Atheism thus:—

It is a great question whether Atheism is not as philosophically consistent with the phenomena of the physical world as the doctrine of a creative and governing power.....In the *Apologia* it is admitted, not only that it is hard to state the argument for Theism with precise logical shape, but that a contemplation of the world would lead to Atheism, Pantheism, Polytheism, were it not for the Divine Voice which is uttered through the conscience. Either there is no God, or he is separated from his people.

Compare this with Mr. Williams' statement of Baron Von Hügel's theological position:—

But though our knowledge of external reality is not clear, it may be very vivid, and the Baron is constantly differentiating between clearness and vividness. If Berkeley began to argue with you as to whether a wall exists or not, you would soon find that you were very confused in your knowledge—not at all clear. But if you knocked your head against that wall your knowledge of it would be very vivid, and you would probably terminate the argument, for the time at least. It may not be quite clear as to how much of what I call my knowledge of my friend belongs to my own mind, and how much to him as a being outside me, but it may be very vivid, and it may be very rich, and there might be a very great benefit in our friendship to both of you. Now, Von Hügel asks us not to insist upon clearness in the deepest things of religion; such a clearness as we do not get even in regard to things much less deep, it is not reasonable. He asks us to take instruction from watching animals that are dear to us.

This is a most disappointing attempt at introducing a new apologetic for Theism. Even Mr. Rhondda Williams seems to realize that the constant differentiation between clearness and vividness is carried somewhat too far. In reality there is no apologetic force in it. In the overwhelming majority of instances there is no distinction between the two. And is it conceivable that religious topics are or can be clearer than scientific truths? One thing which is absolutely undeniable is that scientific discoveries are rapidly setting aside theological dogma and driving the people in their tens of thousands out of churches and chapels. In spite of Mr. Rhondda Williams' unselfish endeavours in pulpit and Press, to keep religion alive, the fact that faces him every day is that the Lord's people no longer hold the field. The men of science have gathered strength, they are so numerous, and the knowledge they disseminate throughout the country is so founded upon facts, that they can no more be persecuted out of existence as once they often were. They are now grandly winning all along the line, while the Church is now too weak to engage in a policy of cruel persecution.

Preachers often glory in what they call the early and triumphant transformation of the world by the Apostles and their followers; but the glory is not founded upon facts. Paul in particular was deeply ashamed of the character of many of his converts. Ere long heated theological controversies darkened the religious sky for long periods, and Christians came to be hated and despised as men and women whose motive in life was to denounce and punish in every way possible all who had the audacity to remain Pagan. The transformation of Europe, said to have been accomplished by the end of the fifth century, was an event

which later came to be regretted as the worst thing that could have happened. Even to-day there are thousands of divines, especially among the Nonconformists, who are firmly of that opinion, and would heartily welcome the disestablishment of all churches from all connection with the State.

There is no wonder whatever that Baron Von Hügel urges people not to be depressed by the fact that the deepest things of religion lack clearness, simply because clearness in such things as the knowledge of God is absolutely impossible. Our position is that God cannot be known simply because no God yet defined has offered the slightest proof of his existence. The Christian God, for example, has never done a single one of the mighty things his makers and promoters assured the world he would certainly and inevitably do. What the preachers describe as his past deeds are not written down in any free and true history, nor is there any present sign that they ever will be done and so written down. Many books have been composed and published in recent times in defence of the belief in God, but we do not think that Mr. Rhondda Williams can tell us that they have made many converts, or will ever do anything beyond strengthening the faith of professors of theology and preachers of the Gospel whose faith is often a burden to them. A few weeks ago a friend said: "I don't believe in anything like the Christian religion; the Churches are all frauds; but we all know there is something or someone who looks after things." "Do you believe that?" "Yes, we all do." Some recent events were brought back to his memory, such as the destruction of Japan by earthquake and fire, and the World-War and its horrors, and he was asked, "Did your Something or Someone do such things?" He was silent, as many others are when confronted by the facts of history as presented by such honest and truthful writers as Mosheim, Milman, and Schaff.

After referring to Von Hügel's theory of the similarity between a dog's relation to his master and a man's relation to God, Mr. Rhondda Williams proceeds thus:—

Now, if an animal like a dog can feel the need of a human being, and have a vivid sense of him, though a very unclear and dim idea of him, so we, too, may have a very vivid sense of God; and though our knowledge of God will be anything but clear, we may feel our need of him, and know our life is enriched by him, know him as our protector and our refuge. Because he is so much higher than we, so much richer and greater, he must be as obscure to us, Von Hügel thinks more obscure, than we are to our dogs. The want of clearness in our knowledge of God is no reason at all for not believing in him and not trusting in him.

The writing of such an article by a theologian like Mr. Rhondda Williams for a religious newspaper like the *Christian World* is a most important sign of the times, namely, that religious beliefs are on their deathbeds, dying of a disease for which there is but one remedy, namely, the art of thinking hastening the end of superstitious dreaming. J. T. LLOYD.

In the infancy of his reason, man spoke to the sun and the moon, he animated with his understanding and his passions the great forces of nature; he endeavoured, by vain sounds and useless practices to change their inflexible laws. He desired that the rivers should alter their courses and flow upwards, that the mountains should be removed, and the stone rise into the air; and substituting a world of fantasy for the real world, he made for himself creatures of the imagination to the terror of his mind and the torment of his race. Such was the first and necessary origin of every idea of God. We ask you, believers, if your conceptions have not been formed precisely in this manner?—*Volney*.

The Popularity of Paine.

The reward of a thing well done—is to have done it.

—Emerson.

I had rather have a plain russet-coloured captain that knows what he fights for, and loves what he knows, than that which you call a gentleman and is nothing else.

—Cromwell.

THE small but fierce tribe of Christian Evidence exponents have a new ally in the *London Evening Standard*, an otherwise respectable daily paper, which has had a temporary lapse of good manners with regard to Thomas Paine. This, it is to be hoped, is but a passing phase, for, like that placid dachshund which Mark Twain saw in the possession of a sportsman who was taking it out to hunt elephants, the *Evening Standard* usually lacks bitterness. The *Standard* staff also lack so many other things necessary to successful Christian advocacy. They have not the ability to murder the English language and the power of talking very loudly in the open air.

The *Standard* recently published a two-column article, "Bones Across the Sea," dealing with the question of the disinterment of the remains of General Oglethorpe, the founder of the State of Georgia, and the writer used the subject as a peg to hang a bitter diatribe directed against Thomas Paine, which was so offensive as to suggest that the editor was away on holiday, and that a junior reporter was in charge at the time. The writer actually referred to Paine as a "famous, or infamous, Englishman"; as a "Jacobin atheist"; "a ragamuffin deist," and a few other pleasantries. He tried further to belittle a great man by referring to him throughout as "Tom" Paine, a touch of unbearable patronage at this time of day. As a defender of the Faith delivered to the Saints, the writer may be a success, but as a journalist with the dignity of his profession at heart he is a conspicuous failure.

Even a junior reporter, fresh from the sixth form of a school, should know that a man cannot be famous and also infamous at the same time; and that "deism" and "atheism" are not exactly interchangeable terms. As for "Jacobin Atheists," they must be as rare as the Chinese Presbyterians so often introduced in Bible Society reports, and missionary sermons.

Thomas Paine, was a great man, and a great writer. Authors boast of the glories of a fifth edition, but very few authors achieve uninterrupted sales for over a century. Yet this amazing thing has happened to Thomas Paine, the Freethinker. Not only that, but his works are still used as text-books for reformers. Paine's fame is quite secure, for he has written his name too deep on history's page for it to be erased by all the journalists in Fleet Street.

Nor is this to be wondered at, for in a generation of brave men and women he was one of the boldest and noblest. A veritable Don Quixote, no wrong found him indifferent. He used his swift, live pen, not only for the democracy which might reward him, but for animals and slaves who could not. Poverty never left him; yet he made fortunes, and gave them to the cause he loved. *The Rights of Man* was a brave book for any man to write; but *The Age of Reason* was the bravest book ever written, for it challenged the entire organized priestcraft of Christendom to a fight to the death. Not only was its author threatened with imprisonment and death in this world, and damnation in the next, but large numbers of men and women were actually fined and imprisoned for selling the book. Paine himself was libelled and lied about to such an extent that his very name was once threatened with an immortality of infamy.

Paine's masterpieces are still an inspiration to lovers of Freedom. "Where liberty is, there is my country,"

said Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Paine's magnificent answer was, "Where is not liberty, there is mine." His was the hand that first wrote the glorious words, "The United States of America"; and the Great Republic of the West owed as much to the virile pen of Paine as to the sharp sword of Washington. A democrat among democrats, Paine was always thinking of the poor and the oppressed. In his superb reply to Edmund Burke's rhetorical tirade against the French Revolution, in which he reserved his compassion too exclusively for the sufferings of the curled, perfumed darlings of the aristocracy, Paine said: "Mr. Burke pities the plumage, but he forgets the dying bird." Even Burke, literary stylist that he was, might have envied the felicity and brilliance of the illustration. A young poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, no mean judge either, thought this so excellent that he used it as part of the title of one of his own pamphlets. Even the journalists who scribble for the *Evening Standard* cannot write better prose than this despised Freethinker. Fine writing as it is, the thought is far finer. It embodies the watchwords of Democracy, the marching music that drove Paine himself forth as a knight in shining armour, that sent Lafayette to America, and Byron to Greece, and inspired generations of sweet-souled singers from Shelley to Swinburne to hymn the praises of Liberty. Thomas Paine did not write in vain. After the long reign of superstition, the dawn has come:—

Not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light.
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly!
But westward, look, the land is bright!

MIMNERMUS.

The Exodus From Egypt.

II.

(Continued from page 677.)

The first thing to notice is that there is no mention whatever in the inscriptions of any person named in these narratives (in the Bible of the oppression and the Exodus), and only indirect and uncertain allusions to any event named in them....it is exclusively *customs, institutions, and places*, mentioned or alluded to in the biblical narratives, which receive elucidation from Egyptian sources. The fact that the illustrations furnished by the monuments relate not to historical events but to subjects such as these considerably diminishes their value as evidence of the historical character of the events narrated. Customs and institutions, especially in Egypt, and names of places generally in the ancient world, rarely varied from age to age; the allusions to the former are, moreover, mostly of a general kind, being seldom or never so precise and technical as to imply personal cognizance of the facts described, while the places mentioned are few in number, and all such as might be readily known to Israelites travelling from Palestine to Egypt. The indirect circumstantial evidence, in other words, is neither large enough nor minute enough to take the place of the direct historical corroboration which at present the inscriptions do not supply for these parts of the biblical narrative.—Canon R. S. Driver, "Authority and Archaeology," Edited by D. G. Hogarth, 1899, p. 66.

THERE have been endless disputes as to which of the Egyptian kings the Israelites suffered under. The early Christian fathers say it was Ahmes I, 1703 B.C. Canon Cooke, in *The Speakers' Commentary*, picked upon Thotmes II, 1610 B.C. There are many other identifications, but as Prof. Peet observes:—

The two main schools of thought are those which identify the Khabiru, or a part of them, with the Hebrews of the Exodus, thus obtaining a date of about 1400 B.C., for this event, and those who believe that the building by the Israelites of the "store city" of Rameses dates the oppression to Rameses II and the Exodus to his successor Merenptah, about 1220 B.C. Neither school has the evidence to prove its case, and both may well be wrong.¹

¹ Prof. T. E. Peet, *Egypt and the Old Testament*, p. 120.

The very fact that opinions vary to such a degree among experts, shows that there is no definite historical evidence forthcoming to settle the matter.

The Khabiru—school argue that their hypothesis fits in admirably with the biblical chronology, while the other does not. To which, says Prof. Peet, the Merenptah school reply that the Bible chronology is of very uncertain value:—

You, however, do worse. You ask us to believe that the period of the Judges covers the years between 1400 and 1000 B.C., and that although Israel was in Canaan all this time yet her records have not preserved a single hint of those numerous campaigns which the great Egyptian conquerors Seti I, Ramesses II, Merenptah and Ramesses III, carried out in Palestine and Syria during those four centuries.

The Professor concludes:—

Surely it is not pusillanimous to refuse to identify oneself with either of these two schools so long as neither can produce evidence which would be seriously listened to in a court of law, and so long as a dozen other solutions are equally possible *a priori*.²

Great enthusiasm was aroused in the year 1883 by the announcement that the Swiss Egyptologist, Naville, had discovered at the modern village of Tel el-Maskhutch, the site of the ancient city of Pithom, which we read in the Bible was built along with Raamses as a store city at the command of Pharaoh by the forced labour of the Israelites. Since then this has been regarded as the strongest piece of evidence of the Egyptian bondage of the Israelites. Of this identification, Prof. Peet observes:—

Naville's description of the ruins as those of a "store city," enthusiastically received and repeated by many biblical archaeologists, is incorrect. The "store chambers" which he unearthed, and which he assumed, on no evidence whatever, to extend "over the greater part of the space surrounded by the enclosure," are probably nothing more than the foundation walls of a fortress, precisely similar to those found at Naukratis and Daphnae. These late Egyptian fortresses were built upon massive brick platforms containing hollow compartments. No one who examines Naville's plan can remain in doubt as to the real nature of what he found. Observe, too, that he discovered no evidence of the Ramesside date of this structure.³

The proposed identification, says Prof. Peet, remained unquestioned until Gardiner, in 1918, gave reasons for showing that it was not the site of Pithom at all. For instance, the title Pithom in the Bible is in Egyptian Pi-Tum, meaning "House of the God Tum," and Gardiner pointed out that this name only occurs twice, while the name most frequently found there is Theku, which is probably the real name of the place, the massive walls of which suggest very strongly that it is the very "fortress of Merenptah of Theku" mentioned in a passage in the papyrus Anastasi VI. The ruins of a temple were found there, in which, probably, the God Tum was worshipped, and would account for the name occurring there. It was evidently Naville's eagerness to find corroboration of the Bible story that led him astray, as it has so many others.

A similar instance of this futile striving to find corroboration for the Bible story is the supposed discovery of the other store city, Raamses, mentioned along with Pithom in the Bible. It is claimed that Petrie has identified the site of Raamses at the modern village Tel er-Retabah. But Prof. Peet, after giving a list of the things Petrie found there, declares: "There is in all this not a particle of evidence for identifying this site with the Biblical Raamses, and the ancient

name of the place was not recovered." And he adds, in a foot-note:—

The excavator's claim that "this was a store city of Ramessu II" is without foundation. In an inscription found on the site is mentioned an official among whose titles is one which the excavator mistranslates "overseer of the granaries." In reality the title is common "overseer of the foreign lands." This kind of "reasoning," like that by which the discoverer of Pithom sought to show that the place was a "store city," is typical of the way in which the acts of archaeology are twisted and distorted in the service, so-called, of biblical study.⁴

According to the Bible, after Pharaoh had made Joseph "ruler over all the land of Egypt" (Gen. xli, 43), Joseph's family—numbering seventy, from whom the Jews trace their descent—arrived in Egypt and he placed them in "the land of Goschen," because it was not possible to place them in Egypt, living as they did by their flocks and herds, as "every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians" (Gen. xlvi, 34). "No name like that of Goshen, where the Israelites were settled by order of the Pharaoh, has as yet been discovered upon the monuments,"⁵ says Prof. Sayce. This is all the better, from the apologists' point of view, because they are at liberty to place it on the map where it will be most convenient for them, and save a lot of wangling and manipulation. Accordingly they have pitched on the Wadi Tumulat, a long shallow valley about thirty miles in length, bordered by desert on either hand, joining Egypt proper to the Suez Canal region, and consisting entirely of pasture land. When Naville announced that he had discovered Pithom in the Wadi Tumulat, the case was considered absolutely proved, but, as we have seen, the foundations uncovered by Naville were neither those of Pithom, nor of a store city. Says Prof. Peet:—

Unfortunately the whole question has been sadly obscured by an incorrect identification made many years ago by a prominent hieroglyphic scholar, Heinrich Brugsch. He originated the belief that Goshen was the same as *Gsm* (the vowels are unknown), which was supposed to be the name of a well-known ancient Egyptian town also called Pi-Sopd, the capital of the twentieth nome of the Delta, which stood on the site of the modern village of Saft el-Henneh. Despite the fact that Goshen is clearly a district and not a town, the equation seems to have been widely accepted almost without question, and it remained for Gardiner in 1918 to point out how utterly fallacious it really was.....We must follow Gardiner in giving up the identification of Goshen with the town site of Saft el-Henneh, and accepting the much more natural and simple view that Goshen is a region in the Eastern Delta which includes the Wadi Tumilat, with the understanding that we have now no Egyptian authority for the name, and that it rests solely on the scriptural evidence.⁶

Naville, who, on the strength of Brugsch's supposed identification of Saft el-Henneh with Goshen, excavated the place in 1885 for the Egypt Exploration Fund but found no evidence bearing on the subject at all. Naville has found more biblical mares-nests in Egypt than any other Egyptologist, in all of which he has the hearty support of Prof. Sayce, who seems to have devoted his great knowledge of the ancient languages to proving the historical accuracy of the Pentateuch, which year by year becomes more utterly hopeless. But then Prof. Sayce, besides being an expert in hieroglyphics and cuneiform, is also a clergyman in holy orders, and writes for "The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge."

(To be Continued.) W. MANN.

⁴ T. E. Peet, *Egypt and the Old Testament*, pp. 83-84.

⁵ Sayce, *Fresh Light From the Ancient Monuments*, p. 54.

⁶ *Egypt and the Old Testament*, pp. 81-82.

² *Ibid.*, p. 121.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

Thoughts on Human Survival.

To compare this immense retrospect of bloodshed and fear, all-pervading cruelty, and ever-present terror, with the religious claim that the belief in a future state is a great source of human comfort, is to realize anew how hollow a faith can be. For one hint of human comfort the story yields a hundred heart-oppressing visions of suffering, all turning on the primary intuition that men at death turn to spirits.—*Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson, M.P.*

THE conversion of Mr. Robert Blatchford to Spiritualism has again awakened public interest in the question of the possible survival of the human personality beyond death. It is not the purpose of the present writer to examine the "evidence" that Mr. Blatchford adduces in support of his belief in the continued existence of his "dead" wife. Evidence—as Mr. Blatchford frankly admits—is not evidence if acquired at second-hand, and it would be quite foolish of the "sceptic" to undertake to "explain" a series of anecdotes the strict accuracy of which he has no means of testing. In saying this, I am not, of course, suggesting that Mr. Blatchford's account of his experiences is not, to the best of his belief, a truthful one. But in all matters affecting the supernormal the accuracy of witnesses cannot be taken for granted; and it is indeed possible that if we were in a position to correct any errors of omission and commission the account might read considerably less convincing than is the case.

There is one admission of Mr. Blatchford's that interests me keenly as an ex-Spiritualist, *viz.*, where he refers to the *unreality* of the experience. Despite his conviction that his wife had actually returned and spoken to him he felt himself asking if he had not dreamed it all—if indeed it were actually true. This is, I believe, an experience common to most Spiritualists if they had Mr. Blatchford's courage and avowed the fact. One can scarcely conceive it being otherwise. The consolations (?) of spirit communion are, after all, but poor substitutes for the actual living presence of those we have loved and lost. The words of James Russell Lowell recur to one:—

Communion in spirit! Forgive me,
But I, who am earthy and weak,
Would give all my incomes from dreamland
For a touch of her hand on my cheek.

The logic of facts is always too strong for the logic of mere theory. The most ardent Spiritualist feels the loss of a loved one quite as keenly as the materialist—it is inconceivable that it should be otherwise. When we have done with words and come down to facts we have to admit that there is still a definite loss. The ache that we feel at the sight of an empty chair, the anguish we experience when some incident occurs that opens the flood-gates of memory and fills us with unutterable grief is not to be stilled by the thought that our loved one is with us in spirit and "nearer than hands and feet." It is indeed possible that *some* may so deceive themselves, but the majority of us are not to be consoled by "dreams out of the ivory gate, and visions before midnight." I was convinced, long before I abandoned the spirit cult and embraced the philosophy of Secularism, that much of the so-called consolation derived from spirit communication was illusory; and now that the bitterness of loss is upon me I am in no mood to pursue the paths taken by those bereaved ones who ceaselessly search for "tests," consult mediums, attend seances and meetings, and in a thousand and one ways continue to open up old wounds. With every desire to do justice to my Spiritualist friends I cannot but describe such persons as deluded. If we cannot attain to some degree of inward peace by the contemplation of the happiness of past days, the virtues of the deceased, and the

touching memories that thrill us and awaken a responsive echo in our souls, we are not likely to attain it by pursuing the path whence madness lies. The great obstacle to belief in a future life (and I am not urging this as a valid objection to the *truth* of the belief) is the difficulty of conceiving of it. To anyone who is acquainted with the natural sciences, with the theory of evolution, and with scientific modes of thought, the difficulty is, indeed, well nigh insuperable. *We can only conceive of a future life in terms of this.* And the whole meaning of the present life is derived from the material organization without which life is—to the scientific evolutionist—impossible and unthinkable. Mr. Blatchford, in the passage to which I referred, speaks of meeting his wife in the spirit world and marrying her again. How on earth (or in heaven) he is to marry her under conditions which render marriage quite meaningless and unintelligible, in a world in which there is "no marriage nor giving in marriage" is a mystery which I can only leave to the authority of Sir Oliver Lodge and the British College for Psychic Research. It is when I consider how large a part sex plays in human life that the idea of a future life seems to me so fantastic. I know that by making this admission I am leaving myself open to misrepresentation, and possibly to nasty insinuations by prurient transcendental moralists. But the really scientific student of life will appreciate the nature of the objection, even though he may not attach to it quite the same importance.

Finally, we are to-day in a position to appreciate the part that death plays in the evolutionary process. Death holds for us no terrors, and the associated feelings that gather around the fact of death are susceptible of a perfectly natural explanation. More, we realize that death has its blessings as well as its sorrows. Our very pleasures are heightened by the fact of death, and all the tender human relationships that mean so much to us; all the holy joys that beautify and sanctify life, are built on the sure knowledge of human mortality. It is not the quantity but the quality of life that matters; not "are we to live for ever?" but "are we living well?" that is important. Personally, I have no craving for a future life. To me, there is something sublime in the thought of going down bravely into the "tongueless silence of the dreamless dust" and saying with Walter Savage Landor:—

Nature I loved, and next to Nature Art.
I warmed both hands before the fire of life—
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

VOLTAIRE AND GIBBON.

The one was fire and fickleness, a child,
Most mutable in wishes, but in mind,
A wit as various—gay, grave, sage or wild—
Historian, bard, philosopher, combined;
He multiplied himself among mankind,
The Proteus of their talents; but his own
Breathed most in ridicule—which, as the wind,
Blew where it listed, laying all things prone—
Now to o'erthrow a fool, and now to shake a throne.

The other, deep and slow, exhausting thought,
And hiving wisdom with each studious year,
In meditation dwelt, with learning wrought,
And shaped his weapon with an edge severe,
Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer;
The lord of mercy—that master-spell,
Which stung his foes to wrath, which grew from fear,
And doomed him to the zealot's ready hell,
Which answer, to all doubts so eloquently well.

—Byron (1788-1824).

Acid Drops.

The following is taken from the Glasgow *Forward*, and will prove of interest to our readers:—

St. Enoch's Church is one of the Glasgow City Churches built by the Town Council. The site is public property. The Glasgow Presbytery has not paid a penny for the building or maintenance of the church. Yet they are to receive £36,500 from the Corporation as compensation for the demolition of the church to make way for a public improvement. That is the price demanded by the Presbytery. The Duke of Montrose could hardly have asked more. The church has practically no congregation. Last year the revenue from seat rents was £51 to meet an expenditure of £672. The Corporation had to make up the deficit of £621. The loss on the church for the past twenty years has been £9,781, which has been borne by the ratepayers. Here are some details:—

The minister of St. Enoch's Church died some months ago. A successor has not been appointed, for the reason that the Presbytery and the Corporation were contemplating a deal. Moreover, the congregation had almost vanished. At one service the minister preached to sixteen persons. The Presbytery's compensation includes £15,000 to invest to provide an annual income of £750 for minister, precentor and beadle; £1,000 for a new site; and £20,000 as the cost of building another church. But why build another church when there is no congregation and no minister? The Presbytery are only to build another church if "considered expedient." The few members of St. Enoch's Church are to be transferred to the Tron Church, also subsidized by the Corporation. The Moderates and the Presbytery think they have made a good bargain. What do the ratepayers think about it? The deal has yet to be sanctioned by Parliament.—P. J. D.

This is an aspect of Christianity in this country to which the average ratepayer is quite, or almost quite, blind. Apart from the direct support of churches from public funds, every church in the country is allowed to go free of rates and taxes. If anyone will take London as an instance and will reckon upon the value of the land upon which the churches stand, as well as the church buildings themselves, they will form some idea of the many millions of pounds worth of property that is going free of payment to the State, and which sum has to be made good by other ratepayers. This is, in effect, a direct grant of money by the State to the Churches, and all are compelled to contribute whether they care to do so or not. Every church and chapel in the country is thus placed upon the rates. It is high time that some of our ardent social reformers, in Parliament and out, took their courage in both hands and demanded that this scandal should cease. Of course, they might lose some votes, but they would be doing good educational work.

The Hon. Bertrand Russell says that the ruin of Europe has proceeded much further during the past year. We should not complain if the clergy displayed as much enthusiasm in reconstruction as they did in destruction when Europe went mad. It is rather to be feared that in important matters the general mind of the cleric does not rise above the level of a bazaar in aid of the funds for the repair of a church roof. The Bishop of London's rural walk is a fair specimen of clerical activity during the time when Europe is preparing to annihilate itself.

A *War Cry* advertisement for men wanted at Hadleigh Colony, mentions "fine chance for unselfish service." This does not suggest any generosity in the small matter of wages.

Sir Douglas Hogg, K.C., the Attorney-General, says that it is a danger that one man should control a large proportion of the newspaper press of this country. There is no compulsion, however, for anybody to take his opinions from *Comic Cuts*, or the *Yellow Press*.

Speaking at the tomb of Abraham Lincoln, Mr. Lloyd George said that Lincoln's statesmanship was the finest product of Christian civilization. He forgot to add that Lincoln was a Freethinker.

Huge posters, issued on behalf of a special religious revival, bear the touching appeal: "London needs Christ; and Christ wants you." Both statements are "terminological inexactitudes."

Before the speech of General Smuts has had time to be examined, that leader of the blind, Mr. Lovat Fraser, in a Sunday paper is advertised on Friday to tell the General where he is wrong. This Sunday writer advocates gliding for all, possibly as a solution to the traffic problem, and in the same issue there is a report of the death of a competitor for some gee-gaw or another for "Gliding." There is now no difference between the Press and the Pulpit; both presume their congregations to be composed of idiots.

We are afraid that the Bishop of Manchester has no case against machinery. He pointed out the obvious in his speech in opening an exhibition of Art Workers, but is not the Bishop and all his brothers engaged in turning out "Robots" for use, one day in seven?

In the *Times Trade and Engineering Supplement* of October 27, 1923, the reader may see on page 157 an interesting advertisement by a Sheffield firm which synchronizes with the Cenotaph discussion. The photograph depicts a group of high calibre armour-piercing shells nearing completion. We feel convinced that we are living in a Christian country, and that if we cannot live except by killing each other, it would not make any difference if all churches permanently closed down, having accomplished their task of creating a Christian Civilization. Mankind asks for bread and is given an armour-piercing shell.

Mr. George Davey, president of the London Billposters' Association, which censors the posters on the hoardings, says: "We object to the exhibition of any poster to which anybody could take exception." How delightful! No whiskey advertisements; no vegetarian notices; very little anything.

The cathedral of Pola, Italy, has been destroyed by fire. It was the most imposing building in that quarter of the town, but Providence so loves practical jokes.

A London daily paper asks "What is wrong with sermons?" The answer to this conundrum is unprintable.

Mr. Rudyard Kipling, in his rectorial address at St. Andrew's University, said that primitive man was a liar. The distinguished novelist must have been reading the early books of the Old Testament.

Bishop Welldon is a fair sample of Addison's Will. Wimble, whose busy hands were employed in trifles such as exchanging a pup between a couple of friends, or making a set of Shuttlecocks for a lady. Our Bishop is wasting his breath in denouncing professional race-goers. If this light of the church wants employment to justify his existence, let him explain to our generation, now and at this moment, how the human race may survive without having to indulge in mutual destruction. It will be too late if the question is shelved.

In Mr. J. M. Robertson's book, *Explorations*, he writes that the acceptance of Christianity "has in countless large instances visibly given cruel and treacherous men a pretext and a sanction for their cruelty and treachery." We are glad to note that a reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* agrees to the truth of this accusation, but his reservations are interesting, as he ascribes this to the fault with man's nature, "so slowly evolving upwards from the brute." This is having the argument both ways.

In effect it says, "man is a fallen and a risen animal," which is very pretty matter for dialectics. The fact remains that the history of a powerful Christianity is the most tragic and sombre page in the recorded life of mankind.

Henry Labouchere, member for Northampton, was as great a sceptic as his famous colleague, Bradlaugh, but this was not widely known among his constituents. "Labby" often had great fun in his dealings with pious people. He told one prominent supporter that he was "a great believer in silent prayer"; and he recalled with glee, that a woman once asked him if he were "the wicked member," and he answered, "Madam, I am the Christian member for Northampton." When he was dying, a spirit-lamp flared up, and "Labby" noticed it. "Flames!" he murmured, "not yet, I think."

Bishop Welldon says that "it is a mistake to create unreal sins." He forgot to add that it is a mistake that the Christian Churches have made consistently for twenty centuries.

Bunches of grapes, apples, and other fruits, used in a harvest festival celebration, have been stolen from a church at Worsop, Notts, and the thieves broke an expensive stained glass window to gain an entrance. Up to the time of going to press, the village has not met with the fate of Sodom and Gomorrhah.

There has been going on in Scotland an enquiry as to the pollution of certain portions of the Clyde, and in connection with this the *Glasgow Citizen* for October 20 recalls the successful fight made for a similar purpose by Charles Bradlaugh some thirty years ago. It takes the occasion to publish a portrait of Bradlaugh with a brief sketch of his career. There is only one passage to which a Freethinker may take exception and that is where the writer, noting that Bradlaugh died "with the echo of friendly voices from the ranks of his opponents in his ears," adds that he was then a very different person "from 'Iconoclast,' the aggressive, powerful, but shallow and self-assertive propagandist of Secularism and Republicanism." It is a pity that the sketch should be marred by this stupid and untrue comment. Bradlaugh at the end was the Bradlaugh the world had known in the days of his most strenuous fighting. It was not he who had changed but the better natured among his opponents. Closer acquaintance had taught them to respect the man whom they had formerly hated, and to see what a mistaken view they had held. It was only those who lacked the strength of character to acknowledge their error who tried to justify themselves by the added slander that the Bradlaugh they were being forced to respect had changed from the coarse and shallow and vituperative Bradlaugh of earlier years. These are terms which Christians have always at their tongues point for their opponents. It is a religion which first of all makes a man act dishonestly towards his fellows, and then leads him to add fresh slanders to the old ones by way of excuse when the old ones can no longer be safely uttered. One day the world will recognize what it owes to these despised Freethinkers of the past. They will be remembered when the flimsy figures that shine in the world of politics and religion to-day are forgotten.

What is the Bishop of London going to do about it? Here is one of these poet fellows who has evidently seen something in a park that his Austerity has overlooked:—

The froward moon kisses the amorous trees
Though naked—shameless. Suddenly she sees
A gaunt policewoman whip her note-book out,
Shrieks, finds a cloud, and wraps herself about.

The author, Mr. H. MacNeill-Turner in the *New Age*, must be very careful, or there will be a movement to give the moon in charge.

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings come different truths than those intended. The writer of the following two-edged statement in the *Daily Herald* has not seen the obvious, although he has written it:—

It is legitimate that certain buildings should, by their very vastness, have the effect of begetting a spirit of humility. Few can enter St. Paul's Cathedral without feeling aware of the insignificance of humanity.

If this writer is qualifying for the Church his credentials are excellent in every respect. Evidently the good old tune of Original Sin has "got home" with one scribe. St. Paul's was built by human hands, planned by a human architect, keeps out the rain—and men sleep on the embankment. The extract would make a book on the effect of size in relation to muddled thinking. As a title we suggest "The Bigger the Better."

E. H. writes:—

I am aware that the truth of the Massacre of the Innocents, as told in the New Testament, has been called into question, but in what I write now I am assuming the reality of the biblical record. The birth of the Saviour upon earth was signalized by a most barbarous and inauspicious event—an atrocity showing in the godhead an astounding indifference to the cruel slaughtering of a multitude of infant children. Seeing that this calamity arose on the Saviour's account, ought not divine Providence have intervened to prevent its occurrence? The divine infant alone escaped with his parents by a timely flight into Egypt, while alas! all the other infants were left in the lurch. Was not such an action the essence of selfishness?

We are afraid that E. H. does not properly appreciate the way in which Providence works. If all the infants had been killed or all saved there would have been nothing to place the infant Jesus above the others. By saving one and leaving the rest to be slaughtered God showed that Jesus was something above the ordinary. Besides that is the way in which Providence usually acts. If we are to be guided by some of his representatives during the earthquake in Japan he deliberately saved a few missionaries and left multitudes to be killed. God always acts in the same way. Killing a few hundred thousand is nothing to Providence if his power can be demonstrated by saving a missionary or two.

How to Help.

There are thousands of men and women who have left the Churches and who do not know of the existence of this journal. Most of them would become subscribers if only its existence were brought to their notice.

We are unable to reach them through the ordinary channels of commercial advertising, and so must rely upon the willingness of our friends to help. This may be given in many ways:

By taking an extra copy and sending it to a likely acquaintance.

By getting your newsagent to take an extra copy and display it.

By lending your own copy to a friend after you have read it.

By leaving a copy in a train, tram or 'bus.

It is monstrous that after forty years of existence, and in spite of the labour of love given it by those responsible for its existence, the *Freethinker* should not yet be in a sound financial position. It can be done if all will help. And the paper and the Cause is worthy of all that each can do for it.

Our Sustentation Fund.

Previously acknowledged: £523 13s. D. Roberts, 2s. 6d.; Mrs. T. Roberts, 6s.; E. Whitehorn, £2 2s.; G. F. Shoults, £5; E. H. Hassell, 2s. 6d.; J. Carmichael, 5s.; F. Hobday, 4s.; J. Newman, £2; Hill Brothers, 10s.; R. Woodward, 2s. 6d.; A. E. Stringer, £1 1s.; A. S. Jones, 2s. 6d.; Miss C. Johnson, £2; R. Lloyd, 2s. 6d.; E. Langridge, 8s. 6d.; J. Flinthof, 5s.; J. Devine, 2s. 6d.; Miss E. L. Ward, 2s. 6d. Total, £538 17s.

Correction.—Will "Jersey" who wrote us a fortnight ago respecting a postal order for £1 sent for the above Fund, please note that we have enquired at the Post Office and they report that the note has not been cashed. It was, therefore, not received at this office. A claim for the money should be put in by the sender.

This Fund will close on November 25. 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.

D. MARR.—We have written many articles pointing out that the great obstacle to fruitful social thinking—which must lead to genuine social reform—is the mentally paralysing influence of the Christian Church. We have also dealt with the basis of social reform in a couple of chapters in our *Grammar of Freethought*. All the same we shall doubtless return to the subject as occasion offers. We regret as much as you do the short-sightedness of those who imagine they can take a short cut to the millennium by ignoring the Christian Church. We fancy that a deal of this is due to the desire to capture mere votes. In that direction quantity is everything and quality nothing. That policy brings its nemesis in time.

Mrs. T. ROBERTS.—We hope we deserve a part of the good opinion you have of our work. We can only say that we do our best.

E. WHITEHORN.—Thanks for cheque. It would be easy to advertise the *Freethinker* in a variety of ways if the money was only there to foot the bill. It is entirely a question of expense, and while we are obliged to fall back upon our friends to meet deficits we do not care to expose them to further obligations by incurring extra expense. The advertisements might easily pay for themselves, but we have no guarantee that this would be the case—at least to begin with. For the present we must fall back upon the personal advertising that is done by our friends.

D. O'BRIEN.—We do not quite understand for what reason a witness is required. There is no risk run by one who attacks the Blasphemy Laws. That does not constitute blasphemy, nor does it expose one to legal attack. For the rest we quite agree with you that Freethinkers should attack these laws at every possible opportunity, and we cannot understand a Freethinker taking any other view. We also agree with you that advocates of Freethought should not mix their criticism up with the advocacy or the denunciation of subjects that have no real connection with it.

J. COLLINS.—The *Freethinker* is always ready to give what help it can without charge to the advocacy of Freethought in any part of the country.

F. HOBDAY.—Thanks. If all did what they could to advance the cause there would be no fault to find with anyone. The story is quite a good one—and quite natural.

Mrs. F. FOULKES.—We are very pleased to have your very interesting letter, and to know that your interest in the Cause is sustained. In your case this is only what we should expect, and are quite sure that you will never miss dropping a word in season. Thanks for portraits of the Kiddies. We were looking at some of them in your father's house two or three weeks ago, but are glad to have copies for ourselves. Whether you succeed in forming a society

or not time will show, but it is certain that whatever seed is sown is certain to fructify one day. We often make converts where we least expect them.

J. FLINTHOF.—See list of acknowledgments. Thanks.

HILL BROTHERS.—Pleased to know that you are "following in father's footsteps." You could not choose a more worthy example.

D. WRIGHT.—We are obliged for the information that the Thornton Heath Parliament passed a resolution in favour of the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. One day we hope to see the "Mother of Parliaments" rise to the same level. Meanwhile such resolutions as the one you send are helping to educate our political leaders. So soon as the politicians see that they will not lose much by acting justly we shall expect to see them do so.

F. LAKE.—It is a pity that something cannot be done to induce the Broadcasting Company to cut the parson out of their programme. What they serve up in this way is about the worst kind of rubbish that human ears could be troubled with. The only good thing about it is that it gives thoughtful people to think about the mental calibre of the present day clergy and of their supporters.

F. SMEDLEY.—It is not surprising to learn that you enjoyed the address of Mr. Vincent Hands. We should wish that he had more time to devote to the work. He *thinks* about what he says, and so makes sure of his ground. You will find a full discussion of the proper meaning of "will" in Mr. Cohen's *Determinism*. It is no more an entity than is the mind. It is the name given to the motive, or the cluster of motives, that are strong enough to emerge in action. In that sense Professor McDougall's definition of the will as character in action may pass.

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.

To-day (November 4) Mr. Cohen will lecture at 7 p.m. in the Town Hall, Stratford. His subject is "Are We Civilized?" and the hall should be well filled. Stratford Town Hall can be easily reached from any part of London. Omnibuses and trams stop outside the door, and it is five minutes' walk from Stratford Station (N.E.R.). This will be Mr. Cohen's only lecture in this part of London for some months at least.

A course of lectures has been arranged for Sunday evenings at the Friars Hall, Blackfriars Bridge Road. The first lecture will be delivered to-day (November 4) by Mr. Whitehead. Mr. Cohen will take the second meeting, and Messrs. Corrigan and Moss will conclude the course. Friars Hall is just a few minutes walk on the south side of Blackfriars Bridge, on the left hand side of the road. We should like all our friends to make these meetings as widely known as possible. The hall ought to be too small to accommodate those who come. We should like to see Freethinkers crowded out by the rush of Christians. Full particulars will be found on the back page of this issue.

Mr. Lloyd's many friends will be glad to learn that he will visit Birmingham to-day (November 4) and will lecture in the Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street, at 7, on "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?" That is a topic that should bring a number of enquiring Christians. Birmingham friends will please note.

At the Church Congress for 1921 a paper on "The Design Argument Reconsidered" was read by the Rev. C. J. Shebbeare. This paper was taken as the basis of a written discussion between Mr. Shebbeare and Mr. Joseph McCabe, and is now published in book form (price 6s.) by Messrs. Watts & Co. We can agree with Mr. Shebbeare that some form of the Design argument is indispensable to the Theist, but with the comment that every form suffers from the same irremovable and fatal weakness. You can never establish the fact of design in Nature because you must establish purpose to begin with, and that is clearly impossible. And as Mr. McCabe points out, it is disorder, not order, in Nature that would establish control. Mr. Shebbeare rests his case on the existence of a sense of beauty in man and what he calls a colour scheme in Nature. Against this Mr. McCabe argues well, although the kernel of the dispute would be the origin of the æsthetic sense and the conditions of its development. Mr. Shebbeare never touches this, and for that reason probably it is not dealt with by Mr. McCabe. (Some very useful hints in this connection might be found in Grant Allen's *Colour Sense* and in Spencer's dealings with the topic.) On the whole Mr. Shebbeare's paper strikes one as an etheralized presentation of the famous argument based on God's goodness in causing death to come at the end of life instead of in the middle of it. Mr. McCabe suggests this more than once. On this fallacy and on the argument from ignorance Mr. Shebbeare stands, as must all Theists. One must note, finally that the discussion is conducted with excellent temper on both sides. The best of Mr. McCabe's points are not really dealt with by his opponents.

Another book from the pen of Mr. McCabe, written apparently during his voyage to Australia, is *The Twilight of the Gods* (Watts & Co., 4s. 6d.). In this the author takes a broad survey of the present position of religion. The situation is examined in various directions, the influence of modern discoveries, scientific and otherwise noted, and their influence on religious beliefs pointed out. Religion is a phase of the human story which is steadily, if slowly approaching its end, and the time will come when it will sink into a mere speculative opinion. Then we shall learn that "in losing God we are discovering man." That is the key-note of the book, and it is one which we heartily endorse.

We note that Mr. F. E. Willis, J.P., is a candidate for Municipal Council elections in the Ladywood Ward, Birmingham. Mr. Willis is a very earnest and avowed Freethinker, he is a member of the Birmingham Branch of the N.S.S., and makes no secret of his opinions or his connection with the movement. We wish him every success in his campaign and advise Freethinkers in his ward to do what they can to secure his return.

Place of honour in this year's issue of the *R.P.A. Annual* is deservedly given to Sir Arthur Keith's article, "Does Man's Body Represent a Commonwealth?" During recent years it has become a fashion with many to treat Herbert Spencer as quite out of date. Real students of Spencer knew differently, but it suited the policy of a class to treat Spencer in the way noted, and with readers who could seriously take Bergson as a profound thinker there was not great difficulty in getting them to follow a lead with one of the most suggestive thinkers of the nineteenth century. Readers of Sir Arthur Keith's article will note that in one respect at least the famous analogy drawn by Spencer between the individual and the corporate structure is found to be more alive than ever. "The resemblance between the body physiological and

the body political," says Sir Arthur, "is more than an analogy; it is a reality." In the same number of the "Annual" Dr. MacLeod Yearsley writes well on "The Foundations of Belief," Mr. Gorham gives us his usual thoughtful article on "Christian Ethics," Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner contributes a sketch of the life of Richard Carlile, and we hope that Mr. McCabe is correct in his sketch of the position of religion in Australia in declaring that Roman Catholicism is losing ground there. On the whole he seems to have formed the impression that while there is a deal of freethought in that country, it is in rather a backward condition. Other articles by known writers make up a good and useful number. The price is, as usual, 1s.

Mr. F. P. Corrigan will lecture in the Amalgamated Engineering Union Hall, 120 Rusholme Road to-day (November 4). The meetings will be at 3 and 6.30. We hope that Manchester friends will see that the hall is well filled.

There was a good audience at the St. Pancras Reform Club on Sunday evening last to listen to the discussion between Messrs. Cutner and Mills on the Gospel stories of the Resurrection. Mr. Cutner argued his case well, but we are not surprised to learn that the debate was not as satisfactory as it might have been. We take it that a discussion on such a subject would not be undertaken—on the Christian side—by anyone well balanced enough to perceive the difficulties involved. And there is always a time when it is wise to decline a discussion. Mr. Gorham occupied the chair during the debate, and we expect that his opinion would agree with our own. Mr. Cutner should seek foemen more worthy of his steel.

Totemism.

III.

(Continued from page 683.)

THESE ceremonies of initiation, as we shall see, represent a new birth and reception within the tribe, caste, or sect. Mr. Frazer suggests connected with totemism is the Australian ceremony at initiation of pretending to recall a dead man to life by the utterance of his totem name. An old man lies down in a grave and is covered up lightly with earth; but at the mention of his totem name he starts up to life. This far-off rite survives in the resurrection of Hiram-ab-if, in the Masonic Lodge,³ in the rites of apprenticeship in certain trades, in the games of children, and in the expectation of Christians that they will be resurrected by the guardian arch-angel Gabriel calling their names.

One idea of totemic rites is that of a new birth from the family into the tribe. Hence passing through a hole is a common early rite;⁴ or covering with clay, where it is believed that men were originally made from clay. A new name—a name which must not be uttered lightly, since it is a name of power—is given at initiation, when the novice is baptised by the blood of the kin being poured upon him, or is circumcised, or has a tooth knocked out, or is tattooed with the totem mark, or is rubbed with earth, or clay and spittle, or anointed with oil. The women, who are not permitted to see these rites, are told that the God himself comes down to turn the boys into men, or it is said the boy is met by a supernatural being who kills

³ The candidate as the *Lovetan* of French Masonry still enters as a young wolf.

⁴ I have met a man who passed hours after hours seeking to concentrate his soul to pass through the eye of a needle (see Matt. xix, 24). In some ancient rites he would have had to pass through the knees of an idol (see Gaidoz, *Un Vieux Rite*, 1892; and Kelly, *Indo-European Tradition*, 153-157).

him and brings him to life (see Exod. iv, 24). Amongst Virginian Indians and the Quojas in Africa, the youths after initiation pretended to forget the whole of their former lives (parents, language, customs, etc.), and had to learn everything over again like new-born babes. A wolf clan in Texas used to dress in wolf-skins and run on all fours howling and mimicking wolves; at last they scratched up a living wolf from the ground. This birth from earth represented the origin of the clan, and the resurrection of the wolf from Hades. Mr. Frazer says:—

Connected with this mimic death and revival of a clansman appears to be the real death and supposed revival of the totem itself. We have seen that some Californian Indians killed the buzzard, and then buried and mourned over it like a clansman. But it was believed that, as often as the bird was killed, it was made alive again. Much the same idea appears in a Zuni ceremony described by an eye-witness, Mr. Cushing. He tells how a procession of fifty men set off for the spirit-land, or (as the Zunis call it) "the home of our others," and returned after four days, each man bearing a basket full of living, squirming turtles. One turtle was brought to the house where Mr. Cushing was staying, and it was welcomed with divine honours. It was addressed as, "Ah! my poor dear lost child or parent, my sister or brother to have been! Who knows which? May be my own great great grandfather or mother?" Nevertheless, next day it was killed and its flesh and bones deposited in the river, that it might "return once more to eternal life among its comrades in the dark waters of the lake of the dead." The idea that the turtle was dead was repudiated with passionate sorrow; it had only, they said, "changed houses and gone to live for ever in the home of 'our lost others.'" The meaning of such ceremonies is not clear. Perhaps, as has been suggested,⁶ they are peculiar sacrifices, in which the god dies for his people. This is borne out by the curses with which the Egyptians loaded the head of the slain bull. Such solemn sacrifices of the totem are not to be confused with the mere killing of the animal for food, even when the killing is accompanied by apologies and tokens of sorrow. Whatever their meaning, they appear not to be found among the rudest totem tribes, but only amongst peoples like the Zuni and Egyptians, who, retaining totemism, have yet reached a certain level of culture. The idea of the immortality of the individual totem, which is brought out in these ceremonies, appears to be an extension of the idea of the immortality of the species, which is, perhaps, of the essence of totemism, and is prominent, e.g., in Samoa. Hence it is not necessary to suppose that the similar festivals, which, with mingled lamentation and joy, celebrate the annual death and revival of vegetation,⁷ are directly borrowed from totemism; both may spring independently from the observation of the mortality of the individual and the immortality of the species.

In Africa to cut a coconut tree is equivalent to matricide: "The mother nourishes her infant; the coconut-tree men. Does an infant destroy its mother? Should a man kill the spirit of the tree that is the bread of the people." Throughout the East, whether Moslems, Hindus, or Buddhists, the common people universally believe that wild animals will not eat dervishes, yogis, hermits, or other holy men. So the lion and the ass guard the carcase of the old prophet (1 Kings xiii, 24). Daniel is safe in the den of lions and Jonah in the whale's belly. With many wild tribes there was a totemic ordeal to test if the child belongs to the tribe. It is placed among animals, even wild ones, as snakes, bears, wolves, and only is adopted if uninjured.

To feed the totem is an act of religious worship, "especially," says W. R. Smith—

where, as in Egypt, the gods themselves are totem-deities, i.e., personifications or individual representations of the sacred character and attributes which, in the purely totem stage of religion, were ascribed without distinction to all animals of the holy kind. Thus at Cynopolis in Egypt, where dogs were honoured and fed with sacred food, the local deity was the divine dog Anubis, and similarly in Greece, at the sanctuary of the Wolf-Apollo (Apollo Lycius) of Sicyon, an old tradition preserved—though in a distorted form—the memory of a time when flesh used to be set forth for the wolves."

Prayer to totems is prayer to the guardian spirit, as when the Ojibway, being in danger, appeals to his own private protecting Manitou, perhaps a wild duck, or when the Zuni cries to "Ye animal gods, my fathers!" (Bureau of Ethnol., 80-81, p. 42). But prayer ever tends to be personal and the protector, for the moment, all in all. This is not monotheism but its germ in temporary monolatry.

The wolf gens, among the Eskimo, says Dr. Boas, "will pray to the wolves, 'We are your relations: pray don't hurt us!'" But notwithstanding they will hunt wolves without hesitation and believe that men will be reborn as men and not as wolves. This earlier phase is represented by some North American Indian tribes. Mr. Frazer says:—

In death, too, the clansman seeks to become one with his totem. Amongst some totem clans it is an article of faith that as the clan sprang from the totem so each clansman at death reassumes the totem form. Thus the Moquis, believing that the ancestors of the clans were respectively rattlesnakes, deer, bears, sand, water, tobacco, etc., think that at death each man, according to his clan, is changed into a rattlesnake, a deer, etc. Amongst the Black Shoulder (Buffalo) clan of the Omahas a dying clansman was wrapped in a buffalo robe with the hair out, his face was painted with the clan mark, and his friends addressed him thus: "You are going to the animals (the buffaloes). You are going to rejoin your ancestors. You are going, or your four souls are going, to the four winds. Be strong." Amongst the Hanga clan, another Buffalo clan of the Omahas, the ceremony was similar, and the dying man was thus addressed: "You came hither from the animals, and you are going back thither. Do not face this way again. When you go, continue walking."

W. R. Smith says (article "Sacrifice," *Encyc. Brit.*, xxi, 135):—

Among the Egyptians the whole organization of the local populations ran on totem lines, the different villages or districts being kept permanently apart by the fact that each had its own sacred animal or herb, and that one group worshipped what another ate. And the sacrificial feast on the carcase of a hostile totem persisted down to a late date, as we know from Plutarch. Among the Semites there are many relics of totem religion, and as regards the Greeks, so acute an observer as Herodotus could hardly have imagined that a great part of Hellenic religion was borrowed from Egypt, if the visible parts of the popular worship in the two countries had really belonged to entirely different types. To suppose that the numerous associations between particular deities and corresponding sacred animals, which are found in Greece and other advanced countries, are merely symbolical, is a most unscientific assumption; especially as the symbolic interpretation could not fail to be introduced as a harmonizing expedient where, through the fusion of older deities under a common name (in connection with the political union of kindreds), one god came to have several sacred animals.

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be Concluded.)

⁶ Mr. Cushing in *Century Magazine*, May, 1883.

⁷ See *Encyclopædia Britannica*, article "Sacrifice," vol. xii, p. 137.

⁸ See *Encyclopædia Britannica*, ninth edition, article "Thesomophria."

South African Jottings.

In Queenstown, Cape Colony, there exists a body called the "Ministers' Fraternal," composed of Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, and Dutch Reformed Clergy. Recently, when the Anglican Synod was in Session the "Fraternal" asked to be allowed to send a deputation to convey their greetings. This was graciously conceded with the result that frothy and sentimental speeches, and fulsome compliments were exchanged, and hopes expressed for the reunion of the Churches. The "Fraternal" seems to be a kind of clerical free and easy, at which members of the black cloth of varying degrees of Protestant orthodoxy may foregather, and indulge in certain amenities and social observances, tintured by that brand of spiritualism labelled "Christian." Here they can let off their superfluous sentimental steam, debate sweet nothings, and maintain a certain semblance of brotherly love. That inimitable philosopher, Mr. Bindle, declared that there were two things with which he could safely be entrusted, namely, religion and lemonade, neither of which he touched. The members of the "Fraternal," being for the most part, if not entirely, "Pussyfoots," imbibe both. Needless to say, none of the "Fraternal" is of the Roman persuasion, and for a body whose objective is the reunion of Christendom this seems a serious drawback and grave defect. Nor do we notice any mutual co-operation in this direction. At all so-called re-union gatherings throughout the Sub-Continent, and in sympathetic articles from journalistic scribes, we notice the Church of Rome is strictly taboo. Why is this? Do the members of the "Fraternal" repudiate the Mother whose bastard offspring they are? Or, is it a case of the mother declining to recognize her illegitimate children? But yet the Church of Rome is the greatest of all Christian Churches. She vastly outnumbers all the rest put together, and we venture to think that it was a true instinct that led Macaulay to prophesy that she would see the end of them all.

In a long leading article the *Friend* grapples with the question of the shortage of clergy which has become so pronounced of late, and says "Evidently the problem is a serious one." It seems that it is the English-speaking Churches that are most affected, as the Dutch Reformed Church which caters for a population of only about half a million gets recruits for its ranks from its own South African born members. The English-speaking Churches on the other hand, get their clerical recruits from England, where there is also a shortage, and hence the reaction is severely felt in South Africa. The *Friend* quotes Dean Inge as saying that the clerical profession "has fallen on evil days." "In almost all other callings there are more applicants for admission than there is room for; some selection can be exercised; the fittest are chosen, the less fit are rejected. But for the ministry little or no sifting is possible; the bishops have to take what they can get, and the standard of admission is, in consequence, deplorably low." In the view of the *Friend* the general situation is serious, and in South Africa is the cause for anxious thought to the authorities concerned. "There are far too many medical and law students among us, apparently far too many young dentists in training; young men of intelligence are eager to enter the professions, but there is little desire manifest to enter the Christian ministry." Dealing with the causes, the editor declares: "It is the exception and not the rule to find an English-speaking Church with a South African born minister in charge. In a young country, such as ours, with a comparatively small English-speaking population, it is too much to expect the work of the Churches to be carried on without securing recruits from overseas from time to time, but the aim of the Churches should be to develop their own ministers from the sons of their own people. The young men are in the country at any rate. Why they do not find their way to the theological college and into the ministry is a question that would call for a variety of answers. Doubtless, causes operate here similar to those in other countries. These causes were set out the other day by a Church Commission as the prevalent attitude to organized re-

ligion, the intellectual restrictions associated in the general mind with the average ministerial lot, the opportunities for good service outside the avowedly religious circle, and the lack of proper presentation of the claims of the ministry as a vocation in church, school, and home." Money, we are told is not the reason, although the poor pay is often alleged as the cause. "The Church Commissioners and Committees which have looked carefully into the question report that while a few may hold back for monetary reasons, the real causes lie much deeper. Eight years ago young men did not haggle over pay when they volunteered for service in the firing line. They faced hardships and sufferings, and the possibility of painful death without any concern for what they were to be paid. And if to-day young men of the right type could be convinced that the Church offered them a sphere second to none for the exercise of their gifts for the good of mankind, we feel sure that more recruits would be forthcoming. But the Church does not seem able as things are to-day to create that impression. A real flaming forth of the inner spirit of Christianity in the Churches would do more than anything else to solve the problem." Says the editor: "The first duty of a Christian Church is to be Christian. A really live Church, genuinely Christian, really spiritual, whole souled and aggressive in the best sense of the word would inevitably attract a good type of young man to its standard. Life develops life. A dead Church can hardly be expected to produce live ministers." And he goes on to express his belief that "It would be a sad and distressful world that was robbed of the presence and influence of the various Christian bodies," and opines that "The spirit of the times may be having its effect on Christian institutions, as it has on many other institutions." In conclusion the *Friend* deems that there is "need for financial adjustments in order that men called to the 'cure of souls' should be paid a salary in accordance with their position, the necessity of wider theological liberty, the drawing together of the Churches in order to do away with the wasteful system of overlapping in order to restore confidence in the Church, and the removal of the causes which lead so many persons to feel that the Churches are too much occupied with things that do not really matter to the neglect of the immediate practical concerns of life," and finally considers that "There are aspects of the whole question of very real interest and importance to those who take the ordinary everyday view of things."

It would not, of course, be reasonable to expect a journalist with dominating religious complex, and having a theological axe to grind, to pen an article on such a subject guileless of all fallacies. As a matter of fact it is built on them. To begin with, the editor of the *Friend* is under the delusion that the Churches are socially necessary, while the exact contrary is the fact—a fact moreover, attested by his own article as far as its general tenor lies.

If the Churches were swept away to-morrow as by an avalanche there would be no vain regrets, pangs, or tears; we should carry on as usual, and the majority of people would accept the situation with the most absolute nonchalance. If our young men spurn the clerical profession the reason is clear. They prefer knowledge and freedom to humbug and slavery. Intellectually, the clergy are the lowest type of those who claim to belong to the professional element, and as time goes on they are steadily deteriorating. Their creed is outworn and universally discredited, and it is only the force of custom and convention that is keeping them in being. They are backworldsmen pure and simple, preaching a slave morality, which nobody wants nor dreams of preaching. Their strength lies in the haunts of ignorance and superstition; the cultured and educated regard them with good humoured contempt. Their pretensions are a hollow mockery. It is commonly the fool of the family who becomes a parson, and the reason for his becoming a parson at all is generally the economic one. In accounting for the shortage of clerical aspirants the editor of the *Friend* passes in review all reasons but the true ones, but as he is writing for a religious herd, to whom the truth is necessarily painful and obnoxious, camouflaging the issue must of course be resorted to. There are two reasons and two only which correctly touch the matter—advancing education, and declining religious belief. And if

the *Friend* is under any delusion as regards these points, the clergy are not, as their open confessions frequently avow. What the editor means by a "real flaming forth of the inner spirit of Christianity" is best known to himself; to us it seems a fatuous phrase. Possibly he means religious faith, and if so, why not say so? He gives no definition of what he really means by Christianity, and apparently his Christianity is the Christianity that really matters. In this connection it is well to remember that there are some two or three hundred varieties of Christianity, and each is the one and only one to him who professes it; the rest are spurious. If the *Friend* has produced a new variety we shall be happy to analyse it.

The editor tells us what a "really live Church" could do, and what a dead one cannot possibly accomplish, and the only inference we can draw from his remarks in this connection is that on his own showing the Church is dead already.

Harrismith, O.F.S.

SEARCHLIGHT.

Correspondence.

RELIGION AND SCIENCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your issue of October 14, "Javali" says, "there is not a tittle of scientific evidence" for telepathy. This statement is untrue. If it is not deliberately mendacious, it is the result of ignorance. There is evidence for telepathy in nearly every one of the forty volumes of "Proceedings" of the Society for Psychical Research. If "Javali" gets out by saying that it is not "scientific"—though the experimenters were in many cases leading men of science—he is asking us to believe that he is more competent to decide what is scientific than the scientists themselves. It may be so, but it seems unlikely unless "Javali's" pseudonym hides the name of some scientist of reputation. I am not arguing for telepathy—the evidence may be insufficient to convince, and everyone has a right to his opinion; but the evidence exists. There is much more than a "tittle" of it. And it seems to me that "Javali's" remarks about Sir Oliver Lodge's "absurd analogies and false conclusions drawn from the wildest assumptions" are a good example of the hysterics into which many Rationalist brethren throw themselves when they are desperately afraid that Spiritualism or something like it may turn out true. I am not a Spiritualist, but I rather think that there is some truth in Spiritualism. What I want to do is to find out what the truth is; and I do not think it does any good to use wild language about the investigators.

The letter in the same issue, from "Sine Cere," is less hysterical, but there is something rather insane about his more or less explicit accusation to the effect that the scientists who express views displeasing to the writer are dishonest and perhaps under the influence of a local bishop! If this is directed at Sir Oliver Lodge, I venture to say that no one who knows Sir Oliver will doubt his intellectual integrity or would regard him as under anyone's influence. He is much too strong a man for that. But no doubt "Sine Cere" will say that I am under Sir Oliver's influence.

J. ARTHUR HILL.

SIR,—The difficulties which are perturbing "A Seeker After Truth," and probably many others, are very ancient puzzles—"Nature red in tooth and claw" and the problem of suffering generally—in one form or another they are as old as the Book of Job, and older. No one has supposed that the universe is easy to understand and that the explanation of all difficulties lies on the surface. That calamities actually occur, is common experience. That impulsive action on a false telegram may lead to a hideous catastrophe, is manifestly true. But what then? Are we to be preserved from danger like household pets? It is not reasonable to suppose that those who have gradually come to a Theistic conviction about the universe have ignored all these things.

The facts are before us all. We must consider the universe as a whole and use our best and not our most hasty judgment. We are all seekers after truth, and we are none of us infallible. The universe is a bigger and, I

believe, more satisfying thing than any of our conceptions of it. Let us not be confounded or too readily disheartened by our moods, but face the facts, clear-eyed and hopeful, even if for the present we have lost or never found the clue. Remember that we are part of the universe, and that our grief at unmerited suffering is not something alien and independent, but an integral part of the whole.

OLIVER LODGE.

THE GREAT FIRST CAUSE.

SIR,—In his letter in your issue of September 9, Mr. G. E. Quirck lays himself open to the same criticism that you have made of Mr. Godfrey's article.

He says, "Can there be a first cause, if human philosophy be true—that every effect must have an antecedent cause?" Now this is not a scientific statement of the case. What is really true is that every effect has antecedent causes, and it is also true that when we really dig down to rock bottom these causes are infinite in number and go back indefinitely in time. A great First Cause is unthinkable because one existence continuing by itself, in vacuo, would remain unchanged. It could not become a cause of any new existence until affected by some second Great First Existence, when the interaction of the two virginal forces would produce change—in other words, an effect.

If then we are to stipulate self-existent entities, we must demand at least two—say, God and the Devil. This would solve the mystery of evil—our Christian friends may make what use they like of this solution of their difficulties.

J. LATHAM.

Johannesburg, S.A.

A PROTEST.

SIR,—In your issue of the 9th ult. you publish a rather rude and unpleasant and discourteous comment on an article by Miss Marjorie Bowen on William Godwin.

As far as I can see this very brilliant writer has only made one slip, and that is she has named the pamphlet wrongly—the dates are in every way correct. I do think it is rather ill of you to work one of our leading historical authorities so. I think the title of the pamphlet was "Cursory Strictures."

T. M. MASTON.

THE DOUGLAS SCHEME.

SIR,—I should like to thank Mr. Cutner for his letter in your issue of October 28 in so far as it bears upon that view of the population question associated with the name of Mr. C. E. Pell.

It appears to me that Malthus assumed that the only checks to increase of population were such factors as wars, famines, disease, etc. To-day Mr. Pell brings to our notice another factor tending to check increase. He holds that the standard of living and the birth-rate rise together until a certain point, which he designates the optimum point for fertility, is reached. Beyond this point, if the standard of living and education continues to rise, the birth-rate automatically falls, and may—under conditions which do actually obtain in some cases to-day—fall to the point of sterility.

Applying this to Mr. Cutner's hypothetical married couple, I should not expect to find their fertility diminished to any appreciable extent as a result of merely a few years of better living. But, given a continuous rise in the standard of living and education, I should expect to find a certain loss of fertility in their children, and a very marked loss in their grandchildren.

It seems to me that the argument turns upon the question of how far Mr. Pell is correct in his conclusions, and whether still further investigation and evidence will support or invalidate his position. In the former case the survival rate (i.e., birth-rate minus death-rate) under the Douglas scheme may ultimately become a minus quantity, unless countered by a sufficient increase in our knowledge of the positive aspects of birth control.

As regards Mr. Cutner's latter remarks, the watchword of the Credit Reformers generally may be expressed in the statement, "Take care of distribution, and production will take care of itself." That is to say, if producers can be assured of a continuous and rising demand, backed by money to buy, they will "deliver the goods."

Major Douglas dealt with this point at some length, particularly as regards agriculture, in his address to the

members of the Canadian Club at Ottawa on April 24 last.

I see no reason to doubt that agricultural produce will keep pace with population until the limit of productivity of all available land is reached. If and when that time arrives we shall of course be faced with an entirely new problem, but I doubt whether humanity will ever be called upon to solve it.

If, however, Mr. Pell should be wrong, and if the adoption of social credit principles should bring in its train a prodigious and spectacular increase in population, I would still vote with both hands for their immediate adoption. For if the problem of birth-rate control has to be solved by non-automatic means, then the sooner it is tackled the better. If the situation only worsens slowly the problem is likely to be tinkered with, whereas if the danger increases rapidly Dr. Stopes and her followers will come into their own.

A. W. COLEMAN.

SIR,—I thank Mr. Cutner for kind but misplaced advice. I read the *Essay on Population* ten years ago, and all I could relating to it since. The answer to his simple question is that as I do not expect the Douglas Scheme when it obtains to deprive people of their hands and brains, nor to make the land barren, the extra food required for a rapid rise in the population will be got by application of labour to the soil. As population is transformed, food, if it cannot thus be obtained, obviously there can be no rapid rise in population. Prof. Keynes is evidently a Malthusian. He contended that owing to the "pressure of population on subsistence," the price of bread had been steadily rising. Sir William Beveridge demonstrated that the price of bread had been steadily declining. With population higher now than possibly ever before, that to me is a complete refutation of the present and past incidence of the theory. Whether in the future population will increase to an extent that will tend to exhaust the fertility of the earth is problematical. H. George has advanced powerful facts and arguments against this possibility. "Malthusianism has a habit of bobbing up," so has Joanna's box.

M. BARNARD.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON
OCTOBER 25, 1923.

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

The Minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The financial statement was presented and adopted, but in consequence of the heavy expenditure on the summer out-door propaganda, the balance was somewhat slender.

Correspondence from Derwent, Plymouth and Leeds, was dealt with.

A suggestion was received as to a small hall available in North London, and the Executive, desirous of following up the successful six months' propaganda in that district, resolved to engage it for four consecutive Wednesday evening meetings as an experiment.

New members were received for Derwent, Glasgow, North London, Plymouth, South London, and the Parent Society.

The Propagandist Committee's report was presented and adopted.

A report was received from the President on his recent visit to Northampton.

It was further reported that two useful volumes of reference had been received from a friend in Manchester, who had presented them to the Society; also that a successful social evening had taken place at the Food Reform Society's rooms in Furnival Street, on October 4.

Questions were asked concerning the sale of the Society's literature at out-door meetings, and the Secretary instructed to write the L.C.C. *in re* their method of granting permits.

Instructions were also given to arrange for the Annual Dinner, early in January, at the Midland Grand Hotel, and the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE,
General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.—INDOOR.

FRIARS HALL (236 Blackfriars Road, S.E.1): 7, Mr. G. Whitehead, "How to Improve Mankind: A Straight Talk on a Forbidden Subject."

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (160 Great Portland Street, W.): 7.30, Mr. A. Hyatt, "Poets and Dramatists." The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 at the "Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, W. November 1, Debate—"That We Are Not Civilized." Affirmative, Mr. C. H. Keeling; negative, Mr. Hillard.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Miss Anna Monro, "Should Married Women Stay at Home?"

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W.9): 7, Mr. R. Baker, "The Intolerance of Religion."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, J. H. Humphreys, "Proportional Representation—An Illustrative Election."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Harry Snell, M.P., "The Mission and Future of the British Empire."

STRATFORD TOWN HALL.—7, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Are We Civilized?"

OUTDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY.—Freethought Lectures every evening at Marble Arch. Sundays at 3 o'clock.

COUNTRY.—INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street), 6.30. See *Sat. News or Citizen* for particulars.

HUCKNALL, NOTTS (Adult School): 10, Mr. Vincent J. Hands, "Religion and Morality." Discussion.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Youngman's Restaurant, Lowerhead Row, Leeds): 7, Mr. Youngman, "How People Die."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Amalgamated Engineering Union, 120 Rusholme Road, Oxford Road): Mr. F. P. Corrigan, 3.30, "The Preacher on the Mount, and the People in the Valley"; 6.30, From Roman Catholicism to Secularism."

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