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Views and Opinions.

Sunday Piety.

One of my readers has been good enough to send me a copy of the *Birmingham Sunday Times and Sunday News*, containing a very brief article on "Is there a God?" by someone who signs himself "The Padre." I do not know whether "The Padre" is really a clergyman, or whether it is the office boy who fills up a vacant space once a week in the paper with contributions that would go some distance towards making good a lawyers contention in a recent case, that when a man shows strong religious conviction it may be taken as prima facie evidence of insanity. I do not like to say it is by a parson, for the reason that one does not care to libel even a preacher if one can help it. But if articles which appear in weekly papers such as the one before us are not evidence that the writer really believes all he says, they are at least evidence that in the opinion of the editor there are many of his readers who like to see them. And as it is a Sunday paper it must, one supposes, provide suitable reading for Sunday—something ostensibly pious and very silly. I can see no other reason why the effusion of "The Padre" is permitted to appear. For, after all, Atheists and Atheism are not such unheard of things to-day that one can hope to repeat all the old nonsense concerning them without running the chance of contradiction. And as even the Christian reader of a paper may know one of these Atheists, there is always the risk of being found out. And that is the most serious thing that can befall either religion or the orthodox religious advocate.

* * *

Believers and Atheists.

According to "The Padre" there are three things that Atheism involves; that is, there are three things this week. Next week he threatens to give us some more. Here is one of them:—

An Atheist must believe that all Christian men are either simpletons or impostors; either fools or liars. They state and teach that they know God, that they have fellowship with Him, that He is as real to them as their dearest friends. Many have died rather than renounce this conviction.

Now although "The Padre" does in this passage go some distance towards proving that an Atheist would be justified in assuming that believers were very

simple, it is really not strictly correct to say that an Atheist necessarily regards Christians as either liars, simpletons, or fools. I do know Christians that are one or the other, and I do not find that their belief saves them from being foolish or makes them truthful. The Atheist understands the Christian, but unfortunately the Christian does not understand the Atheist. And that is where all the trouble begins. "Padre" says that Christians say they know God, and the Atheist must assume they are either simpletons or liars if their statement is not accepted at its face value. But that only shows that "Padre" knows as little of the nature of religion as he does about Atheism. When a Christian says he knows God he is only calling a certain state of mind, a certain feeling, God. But, as I have often had occasion to point out, there is a world of difference between description and diagnosis. When a Christian comes along and says that he has a certain feeling, or a particular emotion, he must remain an absolute authority on that point. But he is not an authority as to what the real nature of that feeling is. And when he insists in describing that feeling in terms of some savage superstition, then I do not see that I am compelled to accept whatever theory a man cares to give as to the cause of his feelings, any more than I am compelled to accept his theory of the origin of Stonehenge.

* * *

Atheists and the Bible.

Next charge:—

Atheists believe the Bible to be a book of lies, for that book records God's dealing with mankind. But if there be no God, then the whole volume is false, and ought to be thrown on the fire.

There are some people that defy verbal assault, and some statements that defy disproof, because of their incurable silliness. And this is certainly one of them. Taken in the proper way, and with the proper perspective, there is no greater need to call the Bible a book of lies than there is to use that expression of any collection of primitive legends and primitive beliefs. If the Bible is taken for what it really is, a record of primitive customs and primitive beliefs, if its talk about God's dealings with man is taken as we take similar talk from other primitive peoples when dealing with their Gods, then there is no need whatever to speak of the Bible as full of lies. The expression is as out of place as it would be when used of a collection of fairy tales. The Bible stories become lies only when they are put forward as sober statements of fact. But the fault here lies with the Christian, not with the Atheist. He will not understand his sacred book as he understands the sacred books of other people. He will persist in regarding his Mumbo-Jumbo as being generically different from the Mumbo-Jumbos of other people. To the Atheist the Bible is a record of beliefs; whether those beliefs correspond with facts or not is quite another question. This is a question which the Christian seldom faces. He is content to take up the stupid attitude that they are his beliefs, and it is wrong for them to be questioned. And then "Padre" complains that the Atheist believes

all Christians to be fools or liars. One is compelled to say that "The Padre" almost makes the first charge little more than a statement of cold fact.

* * *

Religion and Insanity.

Still one more charge:—

An Atheist must be prepared to rob millions of their greatest comfort in sorrow, and their hope in life. Religion is their joy and their sun. But "no God" would mean darkness, despair, lunacy and suicide.

Now I fancy I have known, and still know, many more Atheists than has the "Padre," but I have never known them to be more gloomy, or more inclined to commit suicide, or to show a greater tendency to insanity than do other people. Perhaps the "Padre" may reflect on what any medical man will tell him, namely, that while Atheism is not recognized among the medical profession as a cause—even a contributory one—of insanity, religion is known to be a fairly prolific cause. And of all forms of insanity there are none more hopeless than that caused by religion. There is hardly an asylum in the country in which cannot be found inmates who fancy themselves to be an incarnation of the Deity, or to be Jesus Christ, or to be obsessed with some form of religious delusion. And outside asylums almost everyone will know those whose obsessions on religious matters place them—in the estimation of their nearest friends—on the border-line between insanity and sanity. While I write there lies before me an account from America which the *Sunday News* might print as a commentary on the religious rubbish they serve up. It is an account of a young man who shot both his parents, and when arrested confessed that a year ago he was responsible for the burning of his two sisters aged 16 and 18. According to the police report young McDowell explained that when he was 12 he committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. Then one day he had a revelation which showed him how he might be forgiven. He killed his sisters as a sacrifice to God, and then a year later he killed his parents as a "sacrificial penance" for murdering his sisters. We wonder whether the *Sunday News* could find a parallel to this case in the annals of Atheism?

* * *

Crying for Comfort.

What a poor whining creature the professional apologist of Christianity is! When he is driven into a corner he whines out: "But you are robbing me of my comfort." He must be permitted to believe anything, no matter how absurd, to say anything, no matter how ridiculous, so long as he finds it comforting. It is the most pitiable spectacle I know of, this whining to be relieved of criticism for fear it may rob one of something which one finds comforting. And all the time these people are asking for funds to send out missionaries who will try and rob other people of religious beliefs no more absurd than their own, and which they, too, find comforting, or they would not hold them. I do not know that they use this plea of comfort quite so much as does the Christian, but that may be because there are not many forms of religious belief that develop mental cowardice to the extent that Christianity does. A man who really believed his religion to be true would not be afraid of anything that another might say against it. A man with a decently developed sense of self-respect would not whine out that his belief should not be attacked because he finds it comforting and does not want to be deprived of it. A man would hold a belief because he thought it to be true, he would hold it no longer than it could be shown to be true, and he would take as a friend one who could show him that what

he had been cherishing as a truth was really a lie. But Christianity does not create *men*, it uses them when it can, and so exploits the better side of human nature here as it *does* in so many other directions.

Wanted—Courage.

* * *

"My belief gives me comfort!" It is the cry of a child for a sugar-stick, a drunkard for his tippie, a baby for its teething pad, a coward for the delusion that prevents him facing realities. Of course, a belief gives comfort to those who hold it, but that is true of Christianity in no greater degree than it is true of the drunkard's resource to whisky as a solace in times of trouble. What a man turns to for consolation is an indication of past habits—of the education he has received—it is not of the slightest value so far as the truth of a belief is concerned. And a very casual observation is enough to show that a Christian faces the facts of life and death in no better and no braver spirit than do other people. The truth here is that our emotions and our beliefs accompany each other and fit each other. When a man believes there is another world, and that his belief about it and about God will determine whether he is to spend the next life in misery or happiness, he may well shrink from having his belief about God and a future life disturbed—particularly if he has been brought up a Christian and brings to the position the mental cowardice which Christianity breeds. But the value of a teaching is to be found not by those who accept it, but by those who are without it. If a man can be as good without Christianity as with it, if he can be as loyal to his friends, as devoted to his family, as good a citizen without Christianity as he can be with it, is it not the height of absurdity to pretend that the removal of Christian belief will affect life for the worse? What the Christian really needs here is courage—courage and mental independence. Given a development of these he will face life in a different spirit from that which the "Padre" illustrates, and will be the better man for it.

* * *

The Importance of the "Padre."

I need hardly say that I have not spent time and space on "Padre" because of the intrinsic value of his article. It is not in itself worth five minutes of anyone's time. But it is symptomatic, and so is worth noting. Whether it is written by a genuine parson—and so may be taken as an exhibition of the mentality of the pulpit—or whether it is written by the ordinary catch-penny journalist, who writes what he thinks will "take," the article is still symptomatic. It indicates the existence of a fairly large public so little emancipated as to be impressed by the childish deliverance of an anonymous and self-styled "Padre." He writes because he knows he is re-echoing their sentiments. They read appreciatively because they are seeing their own unreasoning sentiments in print. And it is a reminder of how much work there still lies before us. We have cleared a little of the ground, weakened the power of superstition in a certain number, but there is still much of the ground covered with weeds, and still masses of people who have only learned to express their superstitions in slightly different language. It is with these that our danger and our work lies. Our danger, because a turn of the political wheel may at any moment make it desirable to some unscrupulous leader to exploit this class to its fullest. And our work, because the rationalization of life can never be complete until the knowledge that now rests with a few has become part of the daily life and thought of the people as a whole. The democratization of social life is going on with increasing rapidity. But it will always be a danger unless it is accompanied with the democratization of thought. CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Bishop's Move.

O! take the cash, and let the credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant drum.

—Omar Khayyam.

We shall never enfranchise the world without touching people's superstitions.—G. W. Foote.

THE disestablishment of the Church of England was once part of the programme of the Liberal Party, but, of late years, little has been heard of the matter. The more vigorous Labour Party has been so busy in fighting for a position in the political world that it has had neither time, nor even inclination, to worry over a question outside the practical politics of the moment. Hence it is a matter of some surprise that Bishop Gore, one of the most advanced of present-day ecclesiastics, should have published a book advocating the disestablishment of the Anglican Church, of which he is so distinguished a representative. It is true that the bishop appears to regard the divorce of State and Church as a good thing from a purely religious point of view, but priests have always realized the importance of self-preservation. It is, therefore, not inconceivable that something far more tangible than merely "spiritual" benefits lies behind the fervent piety and rhetoric of the bishop. An entirely new party has risen to political power, and bids fair to be the future arbiter of our national destinies. It may even happen that Disestablishment becomes a burning political question, and, if it should be a real and not a sham measure, it would be coupled with disendowment. Bishop Gore's suggestion is that the Church of England should be cut free from State control, and her vast resources be left untouched, a state of affairs which would prove good for the Church but bad for a Democratic Government.

It is well to remember that the Church of England is not exactly the beautiful "Bride of Christ," so eloquently extolled by generations of her well-paid servants. The Church of England had a much simpler, if less romantic, beginning, and was actually manufactured by Parliament. It has from time to time been in the hands of its creator for repairs and alterations. The creator is a cynical and worldly association known as the House of Commons, having no religion in particular, and looking upon the superstition which it patronizes as a special constable, whose duty it is to divert folk from attending too much to the affairs of life by promising them huge rewards, and even punishments, when they are no longer alive. Bishop Gore himself pretends that the Church of England represents a pure and unadulterated religion independent of Parliament. Most priests are notoriously ignorant of the culture of their own profession, but the ignorance is unpardonable when they see from time to time the ritual, government, and doctrines of their Church being declared by Acts of Parliament; framed by Freethinkers, Roman Catholics, Nonconformists, Jews, Unitarians, and the other religions or non-religions professed by the six hundred Members of Parliament.

The present trouble is not that the Church of England is contaminated by her alliance with the State, but that so astute an ecclesiastic as Bishop Gore may foresee a coming conflict between the forces of Democracy and the priesthood of a two-thousand-years-old superstition. The Church Authorities have already begun to trim their sails to meet a coming storm. They are discarding some of the barbarities of the Christian Fetish Book, and are introducing hymns with a democratic flavouring into their services.

No reforms will save the Anglican Church as a State religion for long. It is sure, sooner or later, to

be disestablished and disendowed, and left to conduct itself like any other society. It cannot be otherwise, for it is an anachronism, a relic of the bad, old days. The Established Church simply absorbs a vast deal of money and so many offices and dignities, and, under present conditions, is simply a petticoated branch of the Civil Service, with greater resources and less work than any other department.

The Anglican Church also perpetuates antiquated ideas which are in direct conflict with democratic ideals and aspirations. It is really a trifle foolish to act and talk as if an Established Church were of real and unmistakable importance in the twentieth century. More by good luck than good management, these petticoated priests have been allowed in the centre of the stage, and the false position has given them an appearance of power rather than its reality. For a time these priests may be able to obstruct Labour, but they are quite helpless to restore the old order, which, did they but know it, has already given place to the new. The priest must be driven out of political life, and, unless we are much mistaken, the day of battle is not so far distant as many suppose.

MIMNERMUS.

A Broad-minded Cleric.

WE have often had occasion to severely criticize the conduct and opinions of the clergy; so when we find a clergyman liberal-minded, charitable and humane, it is only justice to record the fact. We refer to the Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould, rector of Lew Trenchard—his ancestral estate—in Devonshire, who recently died at the advanced age of ninety years.

The Rev. Baring-Gould was an amazingly prolific writer, upon a great variety of subjects. He was a biographer, historian, folklorist, archaeologist, antiquary, novelist, hymn-writer—the best known being "Onward Christian Soldiers"—besides writing many guide-books to different districts of England and Wales, the Rhine, the Pyrenees, Brittany, the Cevennes, and the Riviera. His novels comprise a long list, of which the most popular are *Mehalah*, *Red Spider*, *The Broom Squire*, *The Crock of Gold*. He has written lives of Napoleon, Nero, and Hawker of Morwenstow. A History of Germany. Curious Survivals. Cave Castles of Europe. His Curious Myths of the Middle Ages contains a valuable chapter on the Christian Cross, showing that it was known and revered as a sacred symbol by many nations thousands of years before the advent of Christianity.

One of my most treasured possessions is *The Lost and Hostile Gospels*, by the Rev. Baring-Gould, published in 1874, just fifty years ago, once the property of Myles MacSweeney, the Freethought lecturer; and afterwards the property of Robert Forder, the late secretary of the N.S.S., from whom I received it. Other works comprise: *The Origin and Development of Religious Belief*, *Legendary Lives of the Old Testament Characters*. His, *The Evangelical Revival*, a stout book of 360 pages, published as lately as 1920, contains some remarkably hard hitting at Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and Whitefield, and the Reformation and Evangelical Revival generally.

His last published work is autobiographical, entitled *Early Reminiscences, 1834-1864*, was only published a few months ago, and displays all the candour and devotion to truth of its predecessors. He quaintly records his father's disapproval of an action of Providence. While they were staying at Salzburg, in Austria, the little daughter of their host suffered from inflammation of the eyes; says Baring-Gould:—

To my father's indignation, the parents took the child on pilgrimage to Maria Zell, and he felt quite

resentful against Providence, because when they returned her eyes were distinctly on the mend. He thought Providence behaved very badly in encouraging the superstitions of the people, and ought to have known better. (p. 48.)

From Salzburg they went to Vienna, where he records that the public library was forbidden to circulate the *Esprit des Lois*, "philosophical works, and those in favour of liberal ideas, were kept under lock and key." But the romances of Crebillon, and the vilest and most licentious works of France and Germany circulated freely and were in everybody's hands. However, he comforts himself with the reflection that the attempt to stamp out liberal ideas always fails: "Any attempt at repression only stimulates the desire for what is forbidden. Humanity is healthy at the core" (p. 55). A very unclerical sentiment, but one with which every Freethinker will agree.

Regarding our modern mediums, and spiritual manifestations, he remarks:—

I cannot doubt that the professors of belief in the spiritual dialogues, communications and miraculous manifestations deceive themselves, and in order to force conviction on others have recourse to equivocal measures. They are.....unconsciously dishonest. (p. 69.)

He goes on to show how easy it is to be self-deceived in these matters. When he was a youth he read in a book on Natural Magic that if a sovereign is suspended by a silk thread passing over the ball of the thumb, and swung in a glass, it would sway from right to left and strike the correct number of hours recorded by the clock. Then it would cease its vibrations and, after rotating once or twice, recommence its swing at right angles to its previous course and strike on the glass the number of minutes that had elapsed since the hour had struck. He says:—

I tried the experiment a dozen times, and always with success. This puzzled me, as no connection in Nature could occur between such an arbitrary division of time as that of the clock and the pulsation of the vein of the thumb. So I bade my brother blindfold me, and thus, unseeing, I was planted as before. Not once now did the throbbing of the vein and the swing of the coin correspond with the striking of the clock. No one can be conscious how liable he is to self-deception till he proves it by experiment.....It must be borne in mind that there are thousands and tens of thousands of individuals with undeveloped wills, who cry out for being taken in hand and managed by such as have determination of character. (pp. 69-70.)

In 1845 the young Baring-Gould was sent as a boarder to King's College; on Sundays he attended "a hideous little church," to hear mediocre and characterless sermons which ran in the usual groove. He says:—

How well I came to know that groove. We began Trinity season with an Apologia for Jael the wife of Heber. "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be: Blessed shall she be above women in the tent." That was the inevitable text. I turned to the boy sitting next to me and whispered: That woman was a sneaking murderess. I would give all my pocket-money to be in a room with her for a quarter of an hour; I'd kick her round it till I had kicked the toes out of my boots, and then throw her out of the window."

His experience of sermons coincides with that of the present writer when he was a boy, except that my experience was of Chapel and his of Church:—

Oh the tediousness of those dull sermons on topics the very refuge of commonplace minds, vulgarizing what is beautiful in its original simplicity! How I did get in time to dread those Sunday chapters, and shudder as I entered the church doors, knowing so well that I would encounter the same stuff, droned

out in dispassionate tones, relative to Gehazi, Jehoiakim, and that impudent Felix. (pp. 92-93.)

His opinion of the "Pilgrim Fathers," the great heroes of the Nonconformist churches, is as vigorously expressed as it is true; he declares:—

They were a parcel of ill-conditioned cantankerous rascals of whom England was well rid, and considering the hideous murders of unfortunate witches they committed, and the barbarities of which they were guilty perpetrated on the Quakers, my regret was that the old slaver *Mayflower* had not sunk on the voyage and taken the whole set to the bottom of the Atlantic to feed the fishes. (p. 179.)

In a footnote, he adds, they found:—

A home in a New Land, where they might bully and imprison and put to death such as did not agree with them.

Not the least among his many other achievements, was the taming, and making a pet of, a Bat. A task we should have regarded as quite hopeless, from the timidity of the creature and the fact that it sleeps all day. We have never heard, or read, of its being done before. Baring-Gould tells us:—

One day whilst I was sitting before my fire down the chimney came tumbling a bat. It fell on the hearth-mat. I picked it up and put it in a worsted stocking, which I nailed up beside the fireplace, and there it lived quite happily. Every day at one o'clock it descended and took its place under my chair, where it waited till I came from dinner in the hall, whereupon it would crook itself on to my trouser, crawl up on to my knee, and sit there whilst I fed it with milk. It became tame, and loved to be caressed and talked to. Sometimes it would mount to my shoulder and sit there; and when I went to my class, would remain there immovable, to the great amusement of the boys and distraction from their lesson. On my return I put the little creature back into the stocking, where it slept till hungry. The boys called it my Familiar; and thought it whispered strange secrets into my ear.

But, like most pets, it came to a bad end, falling a victim to the broad foot of a maidservant; and he arrived to find:—

Only the flattened body of my dear little flitter-mouse. That bat understood me, and I understood it.....I mourned that bat, as I did for a friend.

We should be sorry if we have conveyed the impression that the Rev. Baring-Gould was an unbeliever masquerading as a clergyman, such an impression would be quite untrue, he was a convinced Christian and lover of the Established Church, although he had discarded many of its grosser superstitions. But above all he was a good man, a humanitarian, and did what he could to leave the world better than he found it.

W. MANN.

Were the Jews Savages?

IV.

(Concluded from page 133.)

ACCORDING to the Rev. R. Taylor, the New Zealanders formerly used the word *karakia* (now employed for "prayer") to signify a "spell, charm, or incantation," and the utterance of these *karakias* constituted the chief part of their cult. In the south, the officiating priest had a small image, "about eighteen inches long, resembling a peg with a carved head," which reminds one of the form commonly attributed to the teraphim:—

The priest first bandaged a fillet of red parrot feathers under the god's chin, which was called his *pahau* or beard; this bandage was made of a certain kind of sennet, which was tied on in a peculiar way. When this was done it was taken possession of by

the Atua, whose spirit entered it. The priest then either held it in the hand and vibrated it in the air, whilst the powerful karakia was repeated, or he tied a piece of string (formed of the centre of a flax leaf) round the neck of the image and stuck it in the ground. He sat at a little distance from it, leaning against a tuahu, a short stone pillar stuck in the ground in a slanting position, and holding the string in his hand, he gave the god a jerk to arrest his attention, lest he should be otherwise engaged, like Baal of old either hunting, fishing, or sleeping, and therefore must be awaked.....The god is supposed to make use of the priest's tongue in giving a reply. Image-worship appears to have been confined to one part of the island. The Atua was supposed only to enter the image for the occasion. The natives declare they did not worship the image itself, but only the Atua it represented, and that the image was merely used as a way of approaching him (*Te Ika a Maui: New Zealand and its Inhabitants*, p. 72).

This is the excuse (says Prof. Huxley) for image-worship which the more intelligent idolators make all the world over; but it is more interesting to observe that, in the present case, we seem to have the equivalents of divination by teraphim, with the aid of something like an ephod (which, however, is used to sanctify the image and not the priest), mixed up together. Many Hebrew archæologists have supposed that the term "ephod" is sometimes used for an image (particularly in the case of Gideon's ephod), and the story of Micah, in the book of Judges, shows that images were, at any rate, employed in close association with the ephod. If the pulling of the string to call the attention of the god seems as absurd to us as it appears to have done to the worthy missionary, it should be recollected that the high priest of Jahveh was ordered to wear a garment fringed with golden bells.

"And it shall be upon Aaron to minister; and the sound thereof shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before Jahveh, and when he cometh out, that he die not" (Exod. xxviii, 35).

An escape from the obvious conclusion suggested by this passage has been sought in the supposition that these bells rang for the sake of the worshippers, as at the elevation of the host in the Roman Catholic ritual; but then why should the priest be threatened with the well-known penalty for unadvisedly beholding the divinity?

In truth, the intermediate step between the Maori practice and that of the old Israelites is furnished by the ami temples in Japan. These are provided with bells which the worshippers who present themselves ring in order to call the attention of the ancestor-god to their presence. Grant the fundamental assumption of the essentially human character of the spirit, whether Atua, Kami, or Elohim, and all these practices are equally rational.

In such superstitions as a belief in dreams, in witches, wizards and sorcery, we may see further evidence that the Jews were once in a savage state. Even in the worship of Jahveh the Urim and Thummim were used in divination (Num. xxvii, 21; 1 Sam. xxiii, 9-12; xxviii, 6; and xxx, 7-8). Hosea (iv, 12) tells us "My people asketh counsel at their stock, and their staff declareth unto them." Casting lots was another method, and one of the Proverbs tells us "the whole disposing thereof is with Jahveh" (xvi, 33).

It is significant that in Arabic the word *cohen*, which is the Hebrew word for priest, signifies diviner. The story of Balaam shows that curses and enchantment were generally believed in.

Sir Samuel Baker, in his *Nile Tributaries* (p. 130), says:—

If in a dream a particular course of action is suggested, the Arab believes that God has spoken and directed him. The Arab scribe or historian would

describe the event as the voice of the Lord (*Kallam el Allah*) having spoken unto him, or that God appeared to him in a dream and said.....

With this key we can understand how much of alleged revelation is nothing better than oriental dreams.

The Lord is said to have declared through Moses, "If there be a prophet among you I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream" (Num. xii, 6). Dreams are from Jove, says Homer (Il. i, 63). This method of divine revelation is alluded to in Job xxxiii, 14-16, "For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men and sealeth his instruction." "God came to Abimelech in a dream by night" and threatened him for taking Abraham's wife (Gen. xx, 3). So he revealed himself and his angels to his favourite Jacob (Gen. xxviii, 12). "God came to Laban, the Syrian, in a dream by night" (Gen. xxxi, 24) to warn him against touching juggling Jacob. Joseph dreams of his own future advancement and of famine in Egypt. Jerubbaal was visited by Jahveh in the night, and encouraged by some other man's dream (Judges vii). (This story is an evident myth to account for the old ritual symbols of trumpets, pitchers and torches, as in the Adonis cult.) Jahveh appeared also to his servant, Sultan Solomon, "in a dream by night" (1 Kings iii, 5), though he refused to answer Saul (1 Sam. xxviii, 6). Daniel, too, was a dreamer and a dream interpreter (Dan. ii, 19; vii, 1). Theophrastus says (Charact. xxx), "The superstitious man whenever he has a dream runs to the interpreter, the sooth-sayer or the augur to inquire what god or goddess he ought to propitiate."

Prophets and dreamers are frequently classed together in the Bible, as in Deut. xiii, 1: "If there arise among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams." Jer. xxvii, 9: "Therefore harken ye not to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers." Zech. x, 2: "The diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams." When religion is organized, the dreamers and interpreters of dreams who are an irresponsible class, fall into the background before the priests. The laws against witchcraft and sorcery probably arose from the attempt to extirpate an earlier cult, on which Mosaism was doubtless a considerable advance. But the continually falling of the Jews into idolatry is not to be explained by the influence of aboriginal or surrounding natives, but by their own past.

As with all savages, law was enforced by a system of taboos. Even the Decalogue is not Ten Commandments but ten Prohibitions. The ark was taboo. It was death to touch it (Num. iv, 15; 11 Sam. vi, 67). It was death for approaching the holy candlestick (Num. xviii, 3), death for the stranger that cometh nigh the tabernacle (Num. i, 51; iii, 38; xvii, 13), or approaching the priest (Num. ii, 10; xviii, 7), or for compounding anything like holy ointment, or making a perfume like that of the priests (Ex. xxx, 22-38).

The public cultus consisted mainly in the celebration of two agricultural festivals, probably taken from the earlier inhabitants, that of the Passover and the In-gathering.

That sacred prostitution went on in Jewish temples, as we know from Herodotus, Strabo and Lucian was the custom both in Babylon and Syria, we have evidence in the word *kadesh*, signifying at once harlot and holy one, a consecrated person and a sodomite. References to them are found in Gen. xxxviii, 21; 1 Kings xiv, 23, 24; xv, 12; xxii, 46; 11 Kings xxii, 7; Hos. iv, 10-19; v, 14. Deut. xxiii, 17, 18, does not entirely prohibit them, but insists on their not

being of the House of Israel. In declaring "Thou shalt not bring the hiring of a whore or the wages of a dog [that is, of a sodomite] into the House of the Lord thy God for any vow," it only stipulates that the money employed for impure purposes shall not be dedicated to Jahveh. The first verse tolerates the practice, but declares the slaves of desire must be of another tribe. Hence we find in the Bible that a strange woman is synonymous with a strumpet, and the religion of other nations is continually spoken of as whoredom. That unnatural offences existed among Jews as well as among Canaanites we have evidence in the frequent references in their laws and the case recorded in Judges xix, 22. The Nethinim whose names are given in Ezra ii, and Neh. vii, are held by Mr. Joseph Jacobs, a competent authority, to have been the children of the sacred prostitutes, and themselves a class of apariahs attached to the temples for the same degrading purposes as that of other nations.

Jahveh, the national, originally the family God, evidently created by Jews in their own image, is throughout depicted as a savage deity, a passionate, and cruel partisan, "a man of war," a jealous god visiting the sins of the fathers on the children. At the outset he was the tutelary deity of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was the God of the Jews, just as Chemosh was the God of the Amorites (see Judges xi, 24). Not until the time of the prophets was prominence given to Jahveh's regard for ethics.

His orders and sanction were adduced for wars of plunder and slave-capturing expeditions (Deut. xx). Women might be captured, violated, and then turned out helpless and friendless (Deut. xxi, 10-14). Jahveh divided the "prey" between the warriors of the tribe, and took a share of the girls. On conquering the Midianites, the Levites had three hundred and twenty virgins as their share of the booty (Num. xxxi, 25-40). A slave might be almost beaten to death (Ex. xxi, 21).

Men of God vaunt the superiority of Mosaic morals, but it is evident from Exodus xxxiv, that the original Decalogue was devoid of the ethical provisions now found. And these prohibitions are strictly tribal. The law, "Thou shalt not steal," was no protection to Egyptians; the command, "Thou shalt not kill," certainly did not apply to Midianites. Mr. Spencer reminds us that "Ferocious as were the Mexicans, and bloody as were their religious rites, they nevertheless had, as given by Zuria, a moral code which did not suffer by comparison with that of Christians, the one like the other claiming divine authority" (*Ecclesiastical Institutions*, p. 814).

A custom carrying us back to savage times was that of not only slaying a criminal, but also destroying his sons, daughters and cattle, as in the case of Achan (Joshua vii). Mr. Wake, in his work on *The Evolution of Morality*, declares that the general character of the Hebrews compares, on the whole, very unfavourably with that of their Egyptian oppressors. The same author remarks:—

But, although the wilful homicide of a Hebrew was punished with death, the beating to death of a slave is to be punished only if the slave die under the master's hand (Ex. xxi), a circumstance in which the law compares very unfavourably with the Egyptian regulation. The barbarous *lex talionis* is fully enforced, and the regulations as to compensation for the injuries sustained by the "pushing" of oxen remind us more of the ingenuity of a Kafir chief than of a divine law-giver. The killing of the thief caught in the act is an ordinary regulation of primitive societies, and the making of restitution shows that the immorality of the act was not considered, but only the loss which it occasioned. Death was, as we should expect, inflicted for adultery, but the lying with a woman who was not the property of another,

either as wife or betrothed, has the same want of immorality as among the peoples of antiquity in general" (vol. ii, p. 60).

The instances given are strongly corroborative of the belief that the Jews bear marks of having emerged from a condition now only found among savages. This conclusion is confirmed by the existence of the barbarous law of jealousy given in the fifth chapter of the book of Numbers, under the heading "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying." It provides that any man who was jealous of his wife may, simply to satisfy his own suspicions, and without evidence against her, bring her before the priest, who will administer "waters of jealousy" mingled with dust from the floor of the tabernacle and with ink washed from newly written curses. If she has been faithless the water will produce frightful consequences, causing her body to rot away, but if faithful it will prove innocuous. There is no similar provision for a woman who has reason to suspect her husband. A law like this, with the accompanying superstition, offering such opportunities for crime under the mask of justice, can only be paralleled among low tribes of Central Africa.

The real power of the Bible lies in its expressing the religious development of an entire nation. Here may be traced the evolution of a tribal fetish to the guardian spirit of clans claiming common descent; and that again, under the influence of vast monarchies, like the Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian and Roman, broadening into claim of universal monarchy for the god. So with the evolution of society. Its prominent stages of pastoral life, agriculture and commerce, of war, slavery and polygamy, are there, with indications of nobler ideals; and thus its elasticity, like a nose of wax, as Erasmus called it, makes it suitable to so many. To the anthropologist, its records, critically sifted, are of value, but it can no longer be deemed the pivot of the world's thought any more than Jerusalem can be placed, as in the old maps, as the centre of the world, the hub of the universe.

J. M. WHEELER.

More Truth Than Poetry.

"It's hard," said Griggs, "to keep believing
That God is always kind and good;
I've had a lot of cause for grieving
And often been misunderstood;
I've tried to do my Christian duty,
The path I've travelled has been straight;
I've never turned aside for beauty,
Nor followed pleasure, tempting fate.

I've tried to earn the future glory
That true believers are to win;
I take no stock in Darwin's story,
I think all men are born in sin,
And yet God doesn't seem to show me
The kindness due a favoured one;
He acts as if He didn't owe me
A single thing for what I've done.

I hate all people who are trying
To find what's called the missing link,
Or drag in science for supplying
The facts to prove the stuff they think:
I've prayed that sceptics might be stricken,
I've kept false doctrines from my mind,
And yet my troubles seem to thicken—
I fear God is not always kind.

My son, in spite of all my teaching,
Has inclinations to be wild;
My daughter doesn't heed my preaching,
I fear that she's a sinful child;
The dividends that I'm receiving
Have nearly dwindled out of sight;
It's mighty hard to keep believing
That God is treating me just right."

Detroit Times.

S. E. KISER.

Acid Drops.

The Rev. Thomas Phillips, of Bloomsbury, raises the familiar lament concerning the non-attendance of people at church. He says that in London not one in fifteen attend either church or chapel. The trouble also is that a new generation is growing up which has no use for the Churches. So Mr. Phillips sees himself, like Othello, with his occupation gone. More than that, Mr. Phillips says:—

In the present Government there are three or four Baptists and four or five Methodists, but one wonders whether a Labour Government after thirty years will have a single member belonging to any Church at all.

We should not be surprised. The professed attachment of many of the Labour politicians is, we fancy, more a method of vote-catching than anything else. And in proportion as the education of the people proceeds and theology loses its hold on them, politicians will be able to practice a greater degree of intellectual honesty. It is there that our work as propagandists come in. We are creating the conditions that will enable politicians and others to say what they really believe and to act with greater honesty than they dare to do at present.

Mr. Phillips adds:—

It is not Atheism or immorality that frightens me; it is the spirit that was awakened during the war and which still prevails. Everything was shaken—the family, the Church, the Sunday, and the home.

We note the usual conjunction of Atheism with immorality. Mr. Phillips is not frightened at either; what he is really alarmed at is the elimination of the parson and the church. There may be less use for them in the future, and what to him is a state of society in which the parson has no place? And the notion that the family and the home will not be safe unless the parson has his appointed place is an indication of the extent to which Mr. Phillips and his kind are fitted to play the part of leaders—either mental or moral. A man who imagines that the family and the home is dependent upon acceptance of Christian doctrines is fit for the pulpit and for nothing else. And Mr. Phillips should also bear in mind that so far as the war developed and left behind undesirable feelings the clergy of this country must take a full responsibility for their creation. More than any other body of men they set themselves to preach the gospel of war and of international hatred. It kept them in the public eye for a time, and they lacked even the intelligence to enable them to realize that when the war-fever had abated they would have to pay the price of their exploitation of the passion and credulity of mankind.

In a debate on air defence in the House of Commons, Admiral Sueter said: "If we are going to be defended in this Empire by Sermons on the Mount, God help us"! Yet the gallant Admiral is generally regarded as a very good Christian.

A London newspaper states that a Metropolitan tram conductor "composes hymns whilst collecting fares." It is to be hoped that he does not try his compositions on the passengers.

Last year there were no less than 69,813 road accidents in London caused by motors and other vehicles. If Cockneys were only sparrows Providence might be less frolicsome.

"There is less crime in this country than in any other country in the world," said Mr. Justice Greer at Manchester Assizes. Yet church and chapel attendance has never been so slack as of late.

We have often pointed out how fallacious—not to say dangerous—it is for Freethinkers to presume that because a certain number of clergymen are wise enough to assume

a liberal air, therefore Christianity of the kind with which all were familiar years ago is quite dead. Those who are inclined to neglect this advice would do well to notice a religious storm that has broken out in Cardiff. A minister there, Mr. Williamson, said that no thoughtful person would maintain that the story of creation was literally true that the Tower of Babel was an explanation of the origin of languages, or that a whale swallowed Jonah. As a consequence, and by way of protest, three clergymen, belonging to the Cardiff Ministers Auxiliary, have resigned, and the Bishop of Llandaff is trying to make peace. But it is well to bear the incident in mind, to remember that those parsons who are shrewd enough to express liberal opinions in the present circumstances would as readily return to the Jonah and the whale stage of preaching if conditions were favourable.

It is necessary to preface the following observations with the statement that we are a Christian country. The Mid-Kent Staghounds and the mounted yahoos, male and female, that follow them hunted a stag that was eventually forced to enter the sea. The poor animal was picked up by a French fishing-boat. We suggest that when Dean Inge has finished killing opponents with his mouth and pen he might make a start on the classes responsible for this kind of sport—not supported by common people.

Mr. Winston Churchill has had enough of war. And we think this confession would have come sooner if this eminent gentleman had had the experience of any ranker on active service; what time the Bishop of London, in khaki, was posing for his photograph and in his spare time assuring us that the Lord was on our side. Our public idols, with press-made reputations and feet of clay, are beginning to dimly see the light. "There is," states Mr. Churchill, "considerable reaction against the employment in organized forms of lethal weapons." In other words, poison gas and bombs will be as effective in Belgravia as in Seven Dials; and any impartial thinker can see that this war deadlock has been brought about without any effort from Christianity.

The sum total of the "five cruisers" episode is that the privilege of living must be paid for by the creation of weapons of destruction—which are not built for show. What has professional Christianity to say to this fundamental misdirection of mankind? We do not pose this question in any political sense; what is true of England is true of other Christian countries, and we have no doubt that the christening of battleships will go on as merrily as ever by those who preach and follow Him crucified; and by their words and deeds crucify humanity. A new table of values must be written, and the finger of the priest must never again be allowed to interfere with the earthly destiny of mankind.

Preaching in Lincoln Cathedral, the Archdeacon said he hoped the people there would not sing the hymn beginning "O Paradise, O Paradise, 'tis weary waiting here." We do not know that singing that hymn would imply greater hypocrisy than singing others that are common. The whole attitude of the orthodox Christian, with his pretence of caring little for the things of this world, his joy at looking forward to residence in heaven, etc., is part of an elaborate hypocrisy which passes without comment from the majority, only because it has been so long established and so widely practised.

Bishop Gore says: "It is pitiful to contrast the enthusiasm of the Church for the Great War with the feeble support it has given to the cause of international peace." But there is nothing new in this. The Church has always given a whole-hearted support to war and a very weak encouragement to peace. That is because passions run strongly in war time, and the Church sees a chance of gaining a little temporary popularity by shouting with the crowd, while the cause of peace is only to be served by calmness and reason.

The Bishop of London told a Tower Hill meeting the other day that he liked being unpopular. His reason was that it showed he was in the right. Now what we should like to know is when and where in the course of his whole career the Bishop has ever stood up for a really unpopular cause or championed an unpopular truth? So far as we are aware, and we have known the Bishop for more than thirty years, he has always been on the popular side. He would hardly have become Bishop of London had it been otherwise. All the same, we should like an answer to our question.

According to Crockford's about 700 parsons retire from the Church annually from death or other causes. But the average number ordained during the past six years is 287. This leaves a shortage, although the general public does not seem to be worrying about it. The general cause of this shortage is said to be the fact that salaries are not large enough. This may be the case, but it somehow does not square with the very lofty profession of principle made by the clergy, nor with the pretence that it is God who calls them to their work. It appears that they will only hear the call of the Lord when it is accompanied with a salary of a certain size. We are far from saying that even a clergyman should be expected to live on air, but when we see it thus plainly stated it is about time that the talk of the sanctity of the calling was dropped. It is a mere trade.

One can hardly expect clergymen to note another cause of the difficulty in getting supplies for the pulpit. That the Church no longer attracts men of genuine ability is patent. One has only to compare the mental calibre of the clergy generation by generation to see ample evidence of this. Nor could it well be otherwise. So long as a dominant religion is not in flagrant contradiction with what men know to be true, so long as men of ability can enter its service with their sense of self-respect undiminished, and feeling that their profession gives them a status which will command the respect of their fellows. But when this is no longer the case, when it is realized that to profess belief in certain doctrines a man must avow himself ignorant of, or at issue with, the ascertained facts of life, and when this carries with it the hardly disguised contempt of whole masses of their fellows, the profession of clergymen falls into the hands of either the mentally incapable or the mentally dishonest. One may summarize the position by saying that life is getting too strong for the Church. Civilization will not be denied, and the pulpit is left to those who are either incapable or careless of anything better.

Mr. H. Prosser Chanter writes to the *Star* saying that as so many tablets are being erected on houses where distinguished men have lived in London, he is hopeful that one day there may be a tablet on 20 Circus Road, St. John's Wood, which was the residence of "that great Londoner Charles Bradlaugh." We may see that done yet, but we venture the prediction that if it is done by the Society which looks after these things it will be a tablet to Charles Bradlaugh the political reformer, and not to Charles Bradlaugh the apostle of Atheism. And yet it is that which marked him off from so many others. Political reformers are not scarce. But the men who give their life to the championship of militant Freethought are very scarce indeed.

Friends write us from South Africa that Freethought is making headway there, as it is elsewhere, but there is evidently a great deal more work to be done. Thus the *Cape Times* for January 29 publishes in its Parliamentary reports an account of a discussion in the Senate which makes one wonder whether one is really living in the twentieth century. The country has been suffering from drought, locusts, the dying off of cattle, etc. Therefore Senator Wolmarans, believing that these things were "visitations," moved that the Government and the people should "humiliate themselves before God by confessing their guilt and praying that their sins might be par-

done." Senator Wolmarans said that God was the same to-day as he always was, and as the evils at present afflicting the country were a consequence of the sins of the people God could remove them, as he had removed them before if the people humiliated themselves before him. The Senator did not want the day of humiliation to be a Sunday, it should be a weekday, so that "unbelievers would be compelled to observe the day as a special occasion." After considerable discussion, during which some of the Senators doubted whether the locusts and the drought were really consequences of sin, it was resolved that the Government call upon the Churches and the people to observe a day of prayer for the removal of the evils complained of.

Now one wonders in what respect the Senators who voted for this motion are mentally superior to the "savages" to whom the Churches send missionaries. With a mere change of name of the Mumbo-Jumbo to whom the prayers are addressed there is exactly the same mental outlook, exactly the same degree of culture evinced. Both agree that the locusts and the drought are sent because someone is offended with the people, they differ only in his name. And both agree that if man will only grovel enough and debase himself sufficiently this Mumbo-Jumbo will take the plagues away. Senator Wolmarans and the "uncivilized" Africans are quite on the same level. The fact of their wearing different dress and speaking a different language and calling their fetish by different names is a matter of detail. They are savages both. And they are not without their representatives in this country. The savage is very near the surface in most aspects of our lives, but he is hardly covered at all when we come to deal with religion.

Mr. J. H. Clynes, Junr., son of the famous politician, says that the Government "deserved the prayers of all Christian people." Oratorical gems like this should be subject to the Entertainment Tax.

T. R. Glover, in the *Daily News*, is somewhat proud of the tradition of Cambridge precision. As an example of Irish Stew we commend to our readers his article entitled, "Why men do go to Church." The gifted theologian quotes in support of his theory the famous quatrain of Omar Khayâm's:—

Myself, when young, did eagerly frequent
Doctor and sage, and heard great argument
About it and about; and evermore
Came out by that same door where in I went.

This is not a happy choice; the jangling of many bells, the brawling and bellowing of Salvation Army bands, the disputes between plain and fancy religions all ratify the Tentmaker's opinion expressed in so few words. Men go to church to please their wives, and, in many cases, to get jobs to paint the church railings or repair the organ, that is always in a state of decay. The learned precisian writes:—

Death and sin, the things that bring men to church—
and, above all, the demand for certainty.

There appears to be something missing in the sentence, but if this is the best that the church can give, it is a miracle that humanity persists in face of such squint-eyed values. Cambridge has degenerated since the days of Christopher Marlowe, who was educated at Corpus Christi College. In his play, *Doctor Faustus*, we find that the dramatist speaks freely of trade of the Divinity:—

Philosophy is odious and obscure;
Both law and physic are for petty wits;
Divinity is basest of the three,
Unpleasant, harsh, contemptible, and vile.....

We thank Mr. T. R. Glover for his honesty in stating the position, and students of sociology may now see clearly the splendid, positive, uplifting, joy-giving, invigorating values that the church brings to a society, three-parts of which has never had a chance to live decently, thanks to the interference of the mystery-mongers.

The National Secular Society.

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

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

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

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

To Correspondents.

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

H. BAYFORD.—Glad to know that Mr. Rosetti's lectures were so greatly appreciated. We shall be heartily pleased when the winter comes to an end. Snow and trouble seems the two things most in evidence at present.

A. MILLAR.—Thanks for enquiry. We are better, but still carrying a cold around. However, we have not much on the score of health of which to complain, and we expect to be quite all right very soon.

G. F. DIXON (Accra).—We like your criticism, but you will realize that if we tried to work on the plan of pleasing each reader with the whole of the contents of the paper it would soon become too colourless to interest anyone. And no one knows better than yourself that an independent paper is not without opinions, and possibly prejudices, but a paper in which a strong opinion is firmly stated. However, criticism is healthy, whether it comes from readers to the editor, or in the reverse direction. The only man who cannot receive criticism is the one who is too foolish to benefit by it.

H. IRVING.—Pleased to hear from you and to know that you are still active. Hope to meet you soon. Trust you are keeping well.

J. G. DOBSON.—Sorry to hear of the death of Mr. Skett. Please let us have the obituary notice as early as possible.

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.

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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.

Sunday last was the forty-third anniversary of the opening of the Leicester Secular Hall, and in place of the customary set lecture there were brief addresses by Mr. Sydney Gimson (president), Mr. Hassell (vice-president), and Mr. Cohen, with some excellent vocal and instrumental music. The hall was well filled, and the outlook for the future of the Leicester Secular Society is of the brightest. For forty-three years the Secular Hall has been a rallying point for the advanced thought of the city, and under its present control, and with the spirit it has evoked among its members, it will continue.

Mr. Gimson, who has been President of the Society for thirty-five years, gave a brief history of the Secular movement in Leicester, which goes back to the time of Robert Owen. But of special importance was the announcement he made as to the future of the hall. Up to last year the hall was owned by a company, which leased it to the Secular Society. Circumstances had arisen which made the company desire to sell the hall, and it was offered to the Society at what was a little more than a fourth of its real value. The Society was quick enough to seize the opportunity, and a Trust was formed for the acquisition of the property. The sale has been completed, although there remains a mortgage on the property of about £1,500. It was good to hear from the President that a determined effort was to be made to clear off the whole of this sum, and also that the young men of the society had expressed the determination to see that it was done. But the important thing is that the Trust Deed secures the hall for the purposes of Secular propaganda in the future as in the past. As in the case of the National Secular Society, the Trust Deed makes certain the right expenditure of whatever money may come into the possession of the trustees.

We regret, as will all our readers, that there is no article from the pen of Mr. Lloyd in this issue of the *Freethinker*. He has been confined to his bed with an attack of influenza, followed by bronchitis. Happily he is now on the road to recovery, and will, we expect, write for the next issue, or, if not for that, for the one following. But we advised him neither to hurry nor worry over the matter.

The writer in the *Star* of the obituary notice of Mrs. Charles Watts was evidently not so well acquainted with the late Charles Watts as he might have been. He refers to Mr. Watts as a "Rationalist," publisher and lecturer. Charles Watts spent practically the whole of his public life in connection with the Secularist movement; and in our experience of him always proclaimed himself to be an Atheist. He at one time acted as Secretary of the N.S.S., and was one of the parties proceeded against for the publication of the famous Knowlton pamphlet. He was associated with Bradlaugh in this prosecution, the full story of which is told by Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner in her life of her father. Older associates of the Freethought movement in Great Britain will be in a position to know the facts. We are making the correction for the information of newcomers.

From the *Manchester City News*:—

Good service has been rendered by the *Pioneer Press*, 61 Farringdon Street, London, in issuing at 3s. 6d. Dr. J. W. Draper's *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science*. Whatever may be thought of its conclusions, and more especially of the indictment of Roman Catholicism, there can be nothing but agreement as to the wonderful amount of literary, historical, scientific, and theological information compressed into the chapters; while there must be admiration for the skill and even beauty of the author's style in setting forth his facts and pursuing his contentions. His knowledge seems to be encyclopædic, and all is marshalled in orderly fashion, and arrayed with the ease which can come only by complete mastery of every section of a compendious theme. The volume, of course, is heterodox; but, whatever our judgment upon it, it is wonderfully enlightening on history and science. A cheap and well-printed edition like this is a decided boon.

The Dimensions of the New Jerusalem.

THE Revelation bears manifold traces of having been altered previously to the known history of its text. The dimensions ascribed to the New Jerusalem afford an interesting example. The account is imitated from one of the visions of Ezekiel (40), where the prophet beholds a city, which is Jerusalem, either as it was before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it or as he himself thought it would be when restored. Ezekiel declares that he saw

a man, whose appearance was as the appearance of brass, with a line of flax and a measuring reed..... of six cubits long, and of a cubit and a handbreadth each.

And he affirms that the city was to be four thousand five hundred reeds on each of its four sides, adding: "It shall be eighteen thousand reeds round about." The Jewish cubit being roughly twenty-one inches, and three inches being allowable for the handbreadth, the length of the reed must have been four yards; so that the city would measure over ten miles on each side, and more than forty miles all round. The New Jerusalem of The Revelation is of nobler size. We read (21):—

And he that spake with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth four square, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs, the length, and the breadth and the height thereof are equal. And he measured the wall thereof a hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.

The angel measured the city with the reed "twelve thousand furlongs." This measure may be either that of each side separately, or that of all the four sides collectively. The latter is the more probable. The word rendered "furlong" is *stadia*, the Latin *stadium*, a measure containing in the Grecian feet the equivalent of 201½ yards. Hence, twelve thousand *stadia* would exceed one thousand three hundred and seventy-three miles; and each side of the city would be above three hundred and forty-three miles long. The immensity of the city in the matter of length and breadth is not surprising, as it is to contain a vast population, and to be the metropolis of a new earth undiminished by any sea. But although the length and the breadth are unobjectionable, it is not so with the height; for the three dimensions being equal, this one seems indeed appalling. Cubical houses are not rare in some parts of the world; but a cubical city is just as impossible as hideous. A wall like that in question would rise far above the clouds—a good stretch on towards the moon. Now, the sixteenth verse says "the city is four square the length thereof is as great as the breadth"; yet it adds, "the length, and the breadth, and the height thereof are equal"; although the clause declaring "the length is as great as the breadth," renders superfluous in every reasonable detail the clause declaring, "the length, and the breadth, and the height thereof are equal." Moreover, it is very strange indeed that the measurement of the city "is distinguished from the measurement of "the wall." The former measures "twelve thousand furlongs," the latter "an hundred and forty and four cubits." In this case, as in the other, the measurement given may be either that of the four sides collectively, or that of each side individually. On the common reckoning of eighteen inches per cubit, the distances in yards would be either 72 divided by 4, equals 18; or else 72 multi-

plied by 4, equals 288; whilst at the Jewish rate of twenty-one inches per cubit they would be either 84 divided by 4, equals 21; or else 84 multiplied by 4, equals 336. Even supposing that the words "according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel," should mean a special cubit, say of six feet, still these would only be either 288 divided by 4, equals 72; or else 288 multiplied by 4, equals 1,152; so that in any case the total length of the four sides must have been far short of a mile. Thus the length of "the wall" was infinitesimal in comparison with the length of "the city." The four sides in each case being equal, "the city" would form a huge square, with "the wall" as a tiny square inside of it; yet the whole tenor of the account implies that the city is completely immured. Hence we suggest that the words "the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal," should be omitted as an interpolation; and that instead of "he measured the wall thereof," should be read: "he measured the height thereof"—"wall" having been substituted for "height" to suit the interpolated clause. In this case the city would probably be eighty-four yards high, after the Jewish cubit; and "the measure of a man, that is, of an angel," would mean the ordinary measure from the elbow to the top of the middle finger. The height specified is certainly great, but it is well in harmony with the other proportions of the city; and residents of New England would not think it unattainable even by human hands.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

The Gospel Message and the New Times.

It is the dinner-hour on a dull, damp, February day in what was once a busy, thriving city. The few fortunate artizans who have work to perform take a desultory walk through the main streets after their midday meal. Groups of men are discussing the prospects of trade revival; apprentices in their aprons, and sporting the inevitable cigarette, are exchanging banter and bandiage with a passing bevy of buffer girls, not too daintily devouring fruit.

Anything to vary the monotony is welcome, and a diversion presently appears near a large shop, where nine or ten burly men are unpacking and lifting into position a huge pane of plate-glass ten feet long. There is bustle and not a little confusion, but the directing mind of the foreman is behind it all, and he has his own way of carrying out the ticklish operation of upending the huge fragile mass, and getting it into its right situation.

Harry and Bill, up you get on the top of those trestles. Tom and Dick, you go into the shop to steady it from the inside. George, when I give the word to lift, you slip those packings underneath, smart. Fred, lend a hand with that pad to save the corner when we lift.

A crowd quickly gathers, interested to see how the delicate job is handled.

On the other side of the street, half a dozen youngish men, in their late twenties, take up their positions, as if to watch the operation. One, baring his head, steps forward, the others instinctively arranging themselves around him.

God so loved the World, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The interruption is startling. The eyes of the workmen and spectators turn for a brief moment to see who this is who breaks upon the hustle of a work-a-day world with this time-old message,

But the men who manipulate the heavy glass simply carry on.

You people seem very interested in watching the lifting of a shop-window into position, but have you given a thought to your own souls? Have you realized that a Day of Judgment is surely approaching, when the hearts of all men shall be opened and the righteous Judge shall reward every man according to his works? Have you ever given a thought as to where you will spend Eternity?

Still the work goes on, the toilers lift and move and adjust the heavy burden until it rests securely in its appointed place. The bystanders are evidently more concerned in this than in the gospel message which is being proclaimed; and it is to be feared that the exhortations of the preacher fell on deaf ears.

Once I was dead in trespasses and sin, but, thank God, I found a Way, my friends, through the power of the Gospel Christ. Who draws all men unto Him. Will you hear the true Gospel message preached to-day at — Chapel, at the hours of three, four, and seven-thirty o'clock?

The men, carry on unmindfully, and the efforts of the preacher provoke no more than a superior smile or a bold laugh from the onlookers, while the undercurrent of remarks which fall from the lips of one or two determined-looking men with stiff upper lips, seem to indicate that they have had a surfeit of religion.

The preacher gives way to a younger colleague, with no better result, and the whole half dozen religious enthusiasts—raw, local preachers recruited from the villages and hamlets, probably theological students from a neighbouring training establishment—pass on to deliver their message to more attentive ears, to scatter the seed on less stony ground.

Alas, it was not ever thus. Time was when this message was a real living force; when those who refused to hear and respond were regarded as miscreants, in the original meaning of the word; when these one-time Truths were sufficient for this world and the problematical world to come.

To-day, men are not so simple and credulous as their fathers were, and they have tired of the unvarnished gospel story. It is generally agreed that no matter how pious a life men may lead, the existing system has them in its merciless grip. The first demands men make to-day are for an improvement in their material welfare, the raising of the standard of life for their wives and children as well as for themselves, and this in itself is a hopeful sign.

We are passing through a bitter experience, and the question of why skilled and virile men, capable of creating such wealth (wealth, which has been defined as consisting of a good stock of useful articles) in time of war for destructive purposes, should have to exist on short commons in these piping days of peace, forces itself to the forefront of every argument. When we have to make up for the years which the locust hath devoured; when the workers have produced their utmost, until there is a glut of goods of all kinds, and the warehouses are full to bursting, why is it that they who wrought so effectively should now be unable to buy back the product of their skill?

These and other kindred questions are incessantly raised where men congregate to discuss the ills of Darkest England and the Way Out. Occasionally the argument gives way to ugly sentiments, and it behoves those in whom reposes the confidence and trust of their fellows—whether as civic or national representatives, leaders of trades unions and the like, press and pulpit—to explore every avenue that seems to lead to a better and a healthier state of things. No plan should be airily dismissed merely because it is new and untried,

and no hoary tradition should be revered and retained only because it has stood the test of Time.

New Times demand new measures and new men,
The world advances and in time outgrows
The laws that in our fathers' day were best,
And, doubtless, after us, some purer scheme
Will be shaped out by wiser men than we,
Made wiser by the steady growth of Truth.

The gospel message to the unconverted has lost its efficacy and power of appeal, because the present generation have outgrown its simple teachings. It leaves untouched the vital forces which govern the material—and consequently the moral—welfare of us all. When that is once on a proper basis; when a man can be assured of work or of full maintenance—and, after all, comparatively few men would wish to evade their duties and responsibilities to the common weal—when the tragedies of despair which teem in our daily press, of men broken in mind and spirit by the grinding of the present system, seeking the quickest way out of the world, when these are things of the past; when a man's life and work are indeed a pleasure to him, then he may well be invited to devote a little thought to the eternal verities.

But he who has looked death in the face on behalf of his country, who has worked and is willing to make the best use of his brain and sinew, need have no fear if and when he is asked to produce his Book of Count before his Judge.

HOWELL FRANCIS.

Some Aspects of Hell.

All hope abandon ye who enter here.—Dante.
The saints shall rejoice that we are damned,
And God is glorified in our destruction.

—Bunyan.

LET it be quite understood that hell is not intended to be a nice place; nor is it pleasant reading for purposes of study. Hell is just what the word now connotes and that is the place of everything nauseatingly repulsive and vile—a place that is sickening to think about, to read about, or to talk about. And yet the religion of meekness and gentleness has the most sickening hell of all. It is with the various aspects of this hell that we propose to deal in what follows. And it is hoped that the exposition will not fail to make the reader wonder how human ingenuity could be applied to the purpose of creating such harrowing and horrible ideas.

Before dealing with the hell of Christians in more or less detail, we will take a glance at the idea of hell in general.

Hell is sometimes confused with Hades; this is a mistake. In the correct sense Hades contained the Elysian fields as well as the place of the damned. In Greek it meant the grave; or, in other words, the place of the departed; and did not apply to any particular condition of eternity or immortality. It is partly owing to the incorrect translation in the Authorized Version of the New Testament that Hades and Hell are regarded as synonymous.

In the Odyssey, however, Hades is represented as the region in the far west—a region that always symbolized death and darkness to the ancient Greek. It is also represented as being a place where rain and snow do not fall—a place of happiness at the end of earth. It is quite apparent that there was some confusion in the meaning of the term, and probably the term merely meant the uncertain future condition, for which we use our modern term immortality. And in the oldest Greek mythology it was simply the future place of the dead whose condition was of a very indefinite nature.

Pluto, however, was not similar to the Christian Satan. He was not adorned with cloven feet and horns and similar physical anomalies. He was merely the ruler of the dead. Tempting and seducing mankind was not his duty. In fact these evils are quite foreign to Greek mythology. They are appanages of Judaic and Christian growth. It is true that Pluto was stern and devoid of pity; but this was the natural condition to be expected from his guardianship, and as custodian of the dead. Of one thing we are certain—he cannot be duplicated with Satan for repulsiveness and horror.

The belief of the ancient Italians was almost similar. Father Dis corresponded to Pluto. He was the guardian of the dead whose souls dwelt underground in a shadowy state of indefiniteness. He is sometimes directly identified with Pluto; so in the circumstances it is not unreasonable to suppose that the two mythologies were a little intertwined, or that either the one or the other had deliberately plagiarized. It should also be remembered that ancient Egypt had its effect on the idea of hell; and it is quite probable that ancient Greece was partially indebted to Egypt for the beginnings of her Hades. However, these are speculative matters and are beyond the scope of the present exposition.

The conceptions of hell are practically as numerous as are religious systems. The term "eschatology," or "the doctrine of first and last things," applies to concepts with regard to our future state. Hell is "Tophet"; it is "Hades"; it is "Sheol"; and it is "Gehenna." Whatever term we wish to favour most is unimportant; the general idea is that it is the future place of the damned. It may be the lowest depths of the lower deeps; it may be the place of burning marl; or it may be Dante's grotesque conception, which ranges from the unhappy mortals being frozen up to their necks in ice, to each being placed in single furnaces, head downwards, with his or her feet projecting above the surrounding ground; or it may be being changed into trees, or any of the ridiculous conditions in which we poor mortals are represented as comporting ourselves in Dante's hell. We have complete freedom of choice (until we get there). If we would rather be where it is cool we may hope for the icy hell; and for those who prefer warmth, well, they can hope for the generally accepted idea, which is the place of everlasting burning and consuming. Calm reflection compels some of us to wonder and ponder how such notions can still hold such prominence in the twentieth century.

The hell that is the source of such fear on the part of Christians is immediately of Jewish origin. Throughout the books of the Old Testament it is mentioned at intervals and is viewed from various standpoints. From the numerous references and ideas we may, with a fair amount of safety, draw the following general conclusion in regard to its origin and its constitution. This place of everlasting torment, peopled with the spirits of the dead, probably arose from the apocalyptic visions of the Old Testament as exemplified in the prophecies of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. The Messianic expectations of the Jews, and the oppression that they suffered from the heathen doubtless gave rise to Jewish eschatology, in which the Jews would enjoy everlasting bliss and the heathen everlasting damnation. The further consequence was the adoption by the succeeding Christian cult of the previous eschatological ideas duly modified in accordance with its particular tenets and requirements. In the books of Daniel the Jewish national outlook was partly changed from purely national aspects, in which national hopes and fears were likely to be realized, into one of universal application. Instead of the Jews realizing Messianic expectations, universal elements

became embodied in their ideas. The restoration of the empire of the Jews became replaced by the idea of resurrection; the idea of judgment included the judgment of the departed; and the consummation was one of finality in which heathen and Jew alike would participate in the universal catastrophe. The prophetic manner of depicting this great event was still retained: it was merely the application that was extended to one of universality. The damned would be placed in Sheol, or Hell, and the chosen would be placed in Paradise. Both were places of indefiniteness and vagueness; but the Jew was, nevertheless, satisfied that they existed, and were respectively places of future torment and bliss. The justification for the existence of these places need not detain us; nor would analysis and exposition prove of much value.

The Old Testament Jew had not the least doubt about the existence of Sheol, or Hell. According to the Psalms the bodies of the departed lie about motionless, thoughtless, silent, and in perpetual gloom. Ecclesiastes tell us that the wicked spend their time unpunished, and the good unrewarded. So indefinite were the ideas of the Jews on Sheol that they doubted whether Jehovah's omnipotence extended there. It was thought by some that it enjoyed special guardianship under the direction of the proprietorship of the "King of Terrors," who was doubtless the forerunner of that very unprepossessing distortion of human intelligence, commonly denominated Satan. However, later developments gave rise to the belief that Jehovah did control hell as well as heaven. The conception of the beneficence of Jehovah advanced so far that his mercy and compassion were supposed to extend to the unfortunate souls in hell. The development of the idea of the resurrection provided the means for another change to escape from the prison of eternal torment and horror. The Deity would manifest his divine love and justice by giving all the possibility of eternal bliss by having a day of judgment, on which we would be all judged and sentenced according to his divine pleasure. Such was the change that came over Jewish eschatology. The most superficial student will not fail to see the correspondence between Jewish and Christian eschatology.

Later writings show the development of further extravagance and absurdities. Limboes and purgatories became accretions to the general idea of hell; and these were very similar to the ideas subsequently developed and fostered by the Church of Rome. It may not be unreasonable to suppose that Rome adopted and elaborated them. The Church has never refrained from adopting and elaborating anything that favoured its characteristic reactionary position. Nor has it ever hesitated to dangle the weapons of fear, torment and horror before the eyes of its deluded, priest-ridden and oppressed adherents, in whom individuality and independence of thought and action are subordinated to priestly influence. One redeeming feature about the flames of hell was that they were purifying—they had peculiar immaterial and cleansing properties. They burned away the sins from the heart and left the calcined sinner in a state of purity and virtue. Let it be so. Some of us prefer a less combustible means of cleansing, and wish to take a less drastic method of passing into eternal silence and everlasting peace.

But just as Jesus found the idea of hell prepared for him; and just as he enlarged upon it by preaching about hell and heaven, so did he leave it for the early Christian fathers to elaborate its most repulsive features.

A. MITCHELL.

(To be Continued.)

All happy families resemble one another; every unhappy family is unhappy after its own fashion.—*Tolstoy.*

Correspondence.

"A GENIAL PRELATE."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I was much interested in the article under above heading in your issue of February 24, for though I have seen copies of the play, "Gammer Gurton's Needle," in the original Black Letter, in the British Museum library, I had never read the book. I have, however, studied its history, and find that in 1782 Isaac Reed attributed the play to Dr. John Still, who was Bishop of Bath and Wells in 1563. Another attributed author was Dr. John Bridge, Dean of Salisbury and Bishop of Oxford; but Dr. Bradley, one of the editors of the Oxford English Dictionary, favours the identity of "Mr. S." with a William Stevenson, who was born at Hunwick, in Durham, matriculated as a sizar in November, 1546, became B.A. in 1549-50, M.A. in 1553, and B.D. in 1560, being subsequently ordained Deacon in London in 1552, appointed prebendary of Durham in January, 1560, and died in 1575, the year in which the play was printed. It would appear, therefore, that the real author of "Gammer Gurton's Needle" is unknown, and the identity of "Mr. S., Master of Art," is a matter of conjecture. The play was probably written before the death of Edward VI, and acted at Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1553-4.

My object in looking up the book in the British Museum was to obtain the words of the quaint old drinking song with which the second act opens, thus:—

The ii Acte. Fyrste a Songe.
 Backe and syde go bare, go bare,
 booth foote and hande go colde :
 But Bellye god sende thee good ale ynoughe,
 whether it be newe or olde.

I can not eate, but lytle meate,
 my stomacke is not good :
 But sure I thinke, that I can drynke
 with him that weares a hood.
 Thoughte I go bare, take ye no care,
 I am nothinge a colde :
 I stufte my skyn, so full within,
 of ioly good Ale and olde.
 Backe and syde, etc

There are three more verses, but they would take up too much space to insert here.

I should very much like to know if the original air to which this song was sung is known, and, if so, where it can be found. Perhaps Mr. Clayton Dove can enlighten me?

A. W. MALCOLMSON.

BROWNING AND BISHOP BLOUGRAM.

SIR,—With regard to the article in your current issue, may I draw attention to the following extract from *The Biographical Dictionary or Modern Rationalists*, compiled by Joseph McCabe, 1920, under the heading "Robert Browning":—

The strict orthodoxy of his early years began to waver during his association with W. J. Fox, in 1830-35, and his *Christmas Eve and Easter Day* (1850) reflects the growing trouble of his faith. After the death of his wife in 1861 the last relics of his Christian orthodoxy disappeared. Mr. Benn, in his *History*, finely traces the development through his successive poems (especially "A Death in the Desert," 1864; "The Ring and the Book," 1868; "The Inn Album," 1875; and "La Saisiaz," 1875). In the latter poem he professes a pure Theism: "Soul and God stand sure." He plainly intimated that all else has gone.

This view of Browning's religion is fully confirmed in Benn's *History of Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century*. Referring to the poems, one finds cheery optimism, sentimental Theism, and an acceptance of immortality, no definite Christian doctrine, but an occasional use of Christian phraseology. The poems are not easy to understand, and it has been well observed that "to read Browning, so rugged and obscure, is like trying to solve chess problems." Another critic said "Browning could read men, but men can't read Browning."

On the whole, Mr. Benn and Mr. McCabe seem justified in placing the poet among the Victorian rationalists.

Your contributor has been too generous in handing him over to that body-snatching harpy, the Christian Church.

J. STEPHENS.

WHAT IS RELIGION?

SIR,—Early man developed fear—fear such as we moderns can have no conception of, but of which a glimpse is caught now and again in our most horrible dreams. Fear in the primitive brain was inherited and became instinctive, and this root instinct prepared the way for later magic designed to ward off evil. Yet man carried this fear into the very thing he had created to allay it, and the magic worker was not slow to use the terror that magic created to enhance his position and authority. But early man had gained just one step, for he had put something between himself and his first brute emotion—that something was the germinal idea of religion. Thus magic resting on fear, and religion on magic, have a common basis, and it is this old and bad emotion that is slowly dying, to which the priest appeals and ignorantly claims as a religious instinct, while a close study of origins shows only fear. Religion is organized fear.

J.W.W.

SIR,—Is it not surprising that while so many people are homeless religious buildings have not been utilized for the destitute and derelict? Surely the Christian spirit should prevail upon them to make really good use of them during this inclement weather. An Atheist would not need prompting in such a matter. ROBSON PAIGE.

"MYSTERY—BOGUS AND REAL."

SIR,—On reading "Keridon's" article in last week's *Freethinker* it struck me that there is another cause for our inability to fathom some of the mysteries of Nature, and, that is, the limitation of our five senses. I believe thoroughly that there are forces and phenomena in the Universe that it is impossible to grasp because of these limitations. Scientists tell us that our senses are nicely adapted to our requirements. Fortunately, in the case of eyesight, we can supplement our vision by using the telescope and microscope with remarkable results.

ANDREW CLARKE.

Obituary.

We sincerely regret having to report the death of Constance Florence Baker, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Baker, of 4 Selborne Road, Peckham, in her twenty-first year. The many messages of condolence received by her parents bear testimony to the great affection held for her by her numerous friends. Connie gave every promise of going far in the educational world, and was about to sit for the Bachelor Degree in Science when her illness intervened. She was buried on February 13 in Forest Hill Cemetery, when a Secular Burial Service was conducted.—F.P.C.

Older members of the Secular movement in this country will learn with regret of the death of Mrs. Kate Eunice Watts, widow of the late Charles Watts. She was the daughter of a Nottingham Freethinker, at whose house her husband made her acquaintance on one of his lecturing visits to the town. She was connected with the theatrical profession, and played leading parts with J. L. Toole, Sir Martin Harvey and Sir J. Forbes-Robertson. One of her most recent appearances on the stage was in Forbes-Robertson's well-known *Passing of the Third Floor Back*. About three years ago her memory began to fail her, and she retired from the stage. Her remains were cremated at Golder's Green, Mr. F. J. Gould conducting the service. Her ashes will rest beside those of her husband in Highgate Cemetery.

Just as we are going to press (March 4) we hear of the death of Mr. George Standring, who was closely associated with the National Secular Society and its work for many years. A fuller notice of his life will appear next week.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON
FEBRUARY 28, 1924.

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

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

New members were received for the Glasgow, Newcastle and Preston branches and for the Parent Society.

The Financial Statement was received and the Pass Book produced. The Secretary reported that the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Ltd., had forwarded a cheque for £200 to the Trustees of the National Secular Society as a donation towards general propaganda. It was moved that the Board be thanked for its donation, of which the Society stood in great need.

Correspondence was dealt with from the Glasgow, Stockport and Plymouth branches. The somewhat ineffective printing and advertising of special lectures was discussed, and it was agreed that the branches be informed that in all cases where the Executive had any responsibility for lecturers the printing should be done under their direction, through the General Secretary, and that no financial responsibility should be undertaken on behalf of the Executive without their previous authority having been given. Instructions were also given for the printing of a standard poster announcing lectures.

Energetic work from the Preston Branch was reported; and the possibility of a new branch being formed in Hull.

Suggestions were made also for an increased London propaganda on week nights.

A successful Social gathering on Friday, February 22, was reported; and also that South Place had been booked for two lectures from Mr. Cohen on April 27 and May 4.

The desirability of obtaining other premises which should combine offices for the Society's headquarters and a large room, or moderate-sized hall, where more frequent meetings for social purposes could be held, was discussed, and the Executive desired to ask the assistance of friends and members to obtain information as to suitable premises in a central position.

(N.B.—Branch Secretaries are requested to reply as promptly as possible to the various circulars that have been forwarded to them.)

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

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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.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE (19 Buckingham Street, Charing Cross): 3.30, Lecture in French by M. Deshumbert on “Une Page d’Histoire.” All invited.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (160 Great Portland Street, W.): 7.30, Mr. J. C. Greengrass, “Henry Dubb, M.D.” The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 at the “Laurie Arms,” Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Open Discussion.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W.9): 7, Mr. E. Baker, “Secular Education.”

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. Harry Snell, “The Ethical Movement and Spiritual Healing.”

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Laurence Housman, “Material Outlook and Spiritual Insight.”

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Upton Labour Party Hall, 84 Plashet Road, Upton Park, E.13): 7, Musical Evening.

OUTDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Marble Arch): 3, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Derricourt’s Restaurant): 7, a Concert.

BOLTON SECULAR SOCIETY (Socialist Club, 16 Wood Street): 2.15, Mr. William Edgerly, “Life.”

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Shop Assistants’ Hall, 297 Argyle Street): 6.30, Mr. Durward, “Sociology and Socialism.” (Silver Collection.) Committee meets after Lecture.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Youngman’s Restaurant, Lowerhead Row): 7, Mr. Simpson, “Agricultural Problems from the Labour Standpoint.”

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Grand Concert.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus): Mr. George Whitehead, 3, “Religion of G. B. Shaw”; 7, “What’s Wrong with the World?”

MAYER—GAVIRATI.—On February 29, at the Milan Municipality, Charles Shelley, second son of Mr. and Mrs. Mayer, of “Broad Oak,” Urmiston (Lancashire), to Hebe, elder daughter of Anita Barone-Gavirati, of Alassio.

WANTED for Office Use: *Freethinkers’ Text-book*, part 2; *Prisoner for Blasphemy; Heroes and Martyrs of Freethought* and *Crimes of Christianity* (G. W. Foote); *The Devil’s Pulpit*. Any volumes of the *National Reformer*, prior to 1870. Cash or exchange to value of any Pioneer Press publication.—E. M. VANCE, N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

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