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## Views and Opinions.

### Politics and Piety.

The Free Church Council has been meeting at Brighton, and among the outside speakers on its platform have been Sir Oliver Lodge, Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. Not so many years ago the members of the Churches who formed the nucleus of the Congress would have wondered for what reason these men were there to address them. For Sir Oliver Lodge is not a Christian, although he does profess a more or less nebulous theism. Mr. Lloyd George may be a Christian of a sort, but it is probable that he does not himself know of what sort. And the religious convictions of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald were always understood by those who knew him most intimately to be of a very doubtful quantity, although as he has advanced politically there has been much more of the sugared nonsense about the spirit of Christianity, etc. Probably if each of these men were subjected to a close examination they would confess they were at the Congress because they hoped to influence a body of men—with votes—on behalf of their views, and that the religious opinions of those present concerned them but little. It was a propaganda of their own they were conducting, and they would have been as ready to go before any large assembly for the same purpose and with the same end in view. And the promoters of the Council, if they were quite straightforward, would be equally ready to admit that they were not very much concerned with the opinions or the counsel of these prominent men, but they were good platform assets at the moment. They drew the attention of the public to the Council, and they helped to persuade the people outside that the Free Church Council was a very go-ahead body. It is quite certain that only a few years ago, when Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was opposed to public opinion on the question of the war, there was not a Church or Chapel gathering in the country that would have invited him to address them. So it stands. The Churches think they are using the politicians; the politicians think they are using the Churches. Craft imagines it can utilize superstition; superstition believes it can hoodwink craft. And in this instance I believe craft has the greater justification for its belief.

### A Counsel of Cowardice.

Sir Oliver Lodge in his address to the Council only said what all know to be true concerning war and the evil effects of militarism. The energies of men are being given to perfecting the art of universal massacre. But addressing a Church Congress Sir Oliver might have asked his audience what they were going to do about it. For it is no less than the truth to say that if Christians could only make up their mind to put an end to the era of war they could do so. The numerical strength of professing Christians makes it absolutely certain that whenever and wherever in Europe war occurs, and whether the war be justifiable or not, it can only occur with the concurrence of the Christian Churches. If the Christian clergy were merely to hold themselves aloof from war, if they were to say that it was not their place to express an opinion on the rights or wrongs of particular wars, but it was their place to preach in season and out of season the brutality and the futility of war as such, and that it was always their place, whether the country was at war or not, to hold before the world ideals of universal truth, justice and humanity, and if they declined to identify themselves with war ceremonials, with war processions, and with the glorification of the soldier's career, they could not help but breed a spirit and a temper that would be fatal to all war. It is useless, as Mr. Lloyd George and Sir Oliver Lodge did, to dwell upon the wholesale massacres that must attend war waged with bacteria and chemicals. That is an argument which appeals to cowards. It is saying that war would not be so objectionable if so many civilians—particularly the older civilians—were not likely to be killed by it. That, I repeat, is an argument of cowardice. It is saying that so long as war can be waged by professional soldiers alone, so long as those killed are only soldiers who are sent out to face being killed, and so long as the cost of their killing is not too expensive, war may continue as a breeding school of the virtues with which stupid writers have dowered it. Whereas the only way to kill war is to make the idea of armed conflict as ridiculous as it is, as brutal and as brutalizing as it is, and as wholly ineffective as it is. It is the idea of war that has to be killed, if we are ever to achieve an era of peace. And the Christian Church would have to be false to its entire history and traditions to help in that work.

### Materialism.

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Both Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Lloyd George indulged in a deal of talk about "materialism," which in the circumstances can only be regarded as so much cant. There is, of course, a sense in which we can all join in denouncing an ethical materialism which places highest value upon the lower things of life, and the lowest value upon the higher ones. But when such language is used before a Christian assembly by a couple of astute politicians it is inevitable that it should be interpreted as a bolstering up of Christianity and a repudiation of non-Christian forms of thought. Nor can one escape the suspicion that it is used with that purpose. Otherwise Mr. MacDonald might well

have pointed out that so far as an ethical materialism is concerned the indictment lies here at the doors of Christianity rather than at the doors of its opponents. For many centuries it held before the people a material heaven filled with the most vulgar of pleasures, and a material hell filled with the most frightful pains. It taught the sacredness of revenge as illustrated in the torture of wrong-doers under conditions that could neither reform the sinner nor benefit those who had been wronged, save so far as it ministered to their love of revenge. It ignored the benefits of purely intellectual pleasures, and taught that if there was no other life in which the religious would be rewarded and the irreligious punished, then "let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." It held that human nature was so poor a thing that of itself it could sustain no lasting impulse for goodness, and that bribes and threats were the only satisfactory moral rulers. A religion of this kind cannot with decency upbraid any other system with "materialism," and if Mr. MacDonald is not aware of this he is manifestly unfitted to talk about the nature of Christianity, even before a Christian assembly.

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#### Our Christian Heritage.

It may perhaps be as well to remind both Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Lloyd George that the society which they condemn because of its "materialism," its frenzied search for money, its war-mania, its neglect to organize itself in the interests of human betterment, is a society which has been under Christian tuition for fully fifty generations. And one can imagine either of these gentlemen, or any of the ministers who formed part of their hearers, dealing with a similar position had it been a religion other than their own that had been in question. After all, had the aim of the Christian Church been *social* regeneration, the world would hardly to-day be in the state it is. And if one compares the zeal of the Churches when it is some question of sectarian advantage with the interest shown when it is a matter of social betterment only, the real moral of the situation is not difficult to discern. On a question of Sunday closing, or keeping the Bible in the schools, the Churches can offer a fairly united front and threaten warfare on the Government of the day. But is there a subject of purely social importance which finds the Churches united to an equal extent? A visitor from another world listening to these two political leaders might well imagine that ours is a society in which anti-Christian opinion had been established for centuries, and in which Christianity was vainly trying to effect a lodgement. It would never appear that ours is a society in which the greatest and most powerfully organized force for centuries was the Christian Church, that the Christian Church has derived wealth and power from the evils that Mr. MacDonald denounced, and that even to-day it draws wealth and influence from the same sources.

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#### A Shortsighted Policy.

What can Mr. MacDonald hope to gain from the Christian Churches—except votes? Mr. MacDonald avows that his aim is the creation of a better social State, based upon entirely different principles from those which govern to-day. Does he hope to get these from Christianity—either that of the Churches or that of the New Testament? The State is much in the mouth of Mr. MacDonald and his followers. But there is no working conception of the State at all in the New Testament, save that of obeying the established powers because they are ordained of God. Mr. MacDonald places a high value upon a better family life. Where will he find this in the New Testament? It is almost

completely ignored therein, and no institution ever came nearer destroying family life than did the Christian Church. Mr. MacDonald says the essence of Christianity is that it teaches that "human quality" along matters. If Mr. MacDonald attaches the ordinary meaning to his words he is quite wrong. The main and governing principle of Christianity is that man is by himself and in himself a lost soul, that his main concern is the salvation of his soul in the next world, that this salvation is alone to be gained by an act of belief in a crucified saviour. Of course, Mr. MacDonald does not believe this, and if he avowed that to be his belief, and acted upon it, he would not be where he is for a week. And if he does not believe it, is his mouthing of Christian phrases any more than the usual politician's attempt to enlist on his side the organized voting power of the Churches and Chapels? If that is his aim, then it is a very short-sighted policy. If history teaches one lesson clearly it is that the dominance of the priest in politics is fatal to genuine reform; whether the priest be of one variety or another it ultimately spells disaster. For these men are in politics for a sectarian purpose, and measure all things by their tendency to promote sectarian interests. Mr. MacDonald may think he may use the Churches to his own ends; others have thought that before him, and have been rudely disillusioned, as he will be if he leans upon that reed. The policy of the Christian Church has been, in the main, always the same. This is to attack proposed reforms while the opinion in their favour is weak; to kill them from within when they become really threatening. The Church is following the same plan to-day. People were half-starved and sweated for many generations; they lived like cattle and died like vermin, and the Church grew rich and powerful and remained unmoved by their sufferings and by their wrongs. But as the secularization of life proceeded new values were set up; these grew in strength and power, and the Church found it to its interest to pretend amiability to a movement it felt itself no longer powerful enough to threaten. But any reform that has shown itself strong enough to withstand the opposition of the Churches should show itself strong enough to withstand their flattery and their professed friendship. And real leaders of the people should show themselves strong enough and wise enough to take their stand upon the essential strength of human nature and the inspiration of human tradition, rather than upon the imagined sayings of a mythical God.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

#### THE FEAR OF TRUTH.

Into the Silent Land  
 Ah! Who shall lead us thither?  
 Clouds in the evening sky move darkly patches,  
 And shattered wrecks lie thicker in the Strand.  
 Who leads us with a gentle hand  
 Thither, O thither,  
 Into the Silent Land?

Into the Silent Land!  
 To you ye boundless regions  
 Of all perfection! Tender morning-visions  
 Of beauteous souls! The future's pledge and band!  
 Who in Life's battle firm doth stand,  
 Shall bear Hope's tender blossoms  
 Into the Silent Land.

O Land! O Land!  
 For all the broken-hearted,  
 The mildest herald by our fate allotted,  
 Beckons, and with inverted torch doth stand,  
 To lead us with a gentle hand  
 To the land of the great Departed,  
 Into the Silent Land!

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

## The Pomp of Yesteryear.

Genius hovers with his sunshine and music close by the darkest and deafest eras.—Emerson.

TIME works wonders with reputations. Gladstone's statute "in London's central roar" exhibited but one solitary wreath on the anniversary of his birth a few years after he had passed away. A predominant figure in British political life for over half a century, Gladstone was scarcely cold in his grave before his life's record was being revised. Generations after Beaconsfield's death his statute is loaded with flowers and his name acclaimed by the descendants of the people who regarded him as a pariah. Byron, who woke one morning to find himself famous, and whose poetry crossed all frontiers, is now but little read. Shelley, who woke many mornings to find himself called infamous, is now recognized as one of the glories of a thousand years of his country's literature. Wellington, dying at an extreme age, had long outlived his popularity; whilst his great rival, Napoleon, our life-long enemy, upon whom had been exhausted the vocabulary of vituperation, is acclaimed as one of the world's representative men.

A similar reversal of verdict has been applied to the Victorian era. Our parents and grandparents were somewhat dazzled by the discoveries of the nineteenth century, and, self-complacently, regarded themselves as the heirs of all the ages. And now their era, seen in a truer perspective, is perceived to be the last phase in a truer perspective, is perceived to be the last phase in a truer perspective, is perceived to be the last phase in a truer perspective. Truly, the whirligig of time brings in its revenges.

A searchlight on this period is supplied by Mr. Lytton Strachey in his *Eminent Victorians*, an acidulated and witty study of some of the most outstanding personalities of that period. His survey is comprehensive and entertaining, and includes, among others, Dr. Arnold, the famous headmaster of Rugby School; Florence Nightingale, the heroine of the Crimean War; Cardinal Manning, the Roman Catholic statesman; and General Gordon, of Khartoum fame, all of whom Mr. Strachey criticizes with a playful freedom and cool detachment which will irritate some readers and amuse others. Under Mr. Strachey's microscope some of the heroes and heroines of Victorian England are dissected, and the result is more entertaining than the pages of most modern novels.

Mr. Strachey's manner is shown in his caustic account of Cardinal Newman's visit to Rome, where he says the Italian ecclesiastics looked at the English Cardinal "with their shrewd eyes and hard faces, while he poured into their ears—which, as he had already noted with distress, were large and none too clean—his careful disquisitions; but it was all in vain." The Roman Catholic authorities always looked askance at Newman, for he was a scholar, and lacked the gifts of a commercial-traveller; which form so necessary an asset in the making of modern priests. Eloquence and learning were his; but he was too proud to cringe, crawl, and cadge like so many bagmen of Orthodoxy. Gladstone does not escape the knife, for Mr. Strachey points out that, "in spite of the involutions of his intellect and the contortions of his spirit, it is impossible not to perceive a strain of simplicity in Mr. Gladstone." Possible, or not, the general public did not perceive this Gladstonian trait until the pious statesman had crossed swords with Huxley and Ingersoll, two of the keenest debaters of their time.

How biting, too, is the writer's denunciation of the Taeping leader in the Chinese rebellion, who is described as being "surrounded by thirty wives and one hundred concubines," and devoting himself to the "spiritual side of his mission." Perhaps the most

amusing example of Mr. Strachey's quality will be found in the account of General Gordon's departure from Victoria Station on his last adventure into the Soudan:—

Gordon tripped on the platform. Lord Granville bought the necessary tickets; the Duke of Cambridge opened the railway-carriage door. The General jumped into the train; and then Lord Wolseley appeared, carrying a leather bag, in which were two hundred pounds in gold, collected from friends at the last moment, for the contingencies of the journey. The bag was handed through the window. The train started. As it did so, Gordon leant out and addressed a last whispered question to Lord Wolseley. Yes, it had been done. Lord Wolseley had seen to it himself; next morning every member of the Cabinet would receive a copy of Dr. Samuel Clarke's *Scripture Promises*. That was all. The train rolled out of the station.

We fear the Cabinet was so engrossed with Dr. Clarke's account of the Divine blessings that it forgot the highly probable results of the Soudan excursion. Gordon was killed by the unbelieving Soudanese, and some Conservative papers even accused Gladstone of being the murderer of Gordon; the letters M.O.G. being supposed to be a playful alliteration of G.O.M. (Grand Old Man) used by the Liberals. Gordon's exploit was duly chronicled by the artists of Madame Tussaud, and to-day the faded waxwork tableau fittingly adjoins the Chamber of Horrors.

Few things, it will be observed, escape Mr. Strachey's critical eyes. After the priggish biographies of that period, it is only human to be pleased with this. Apart, however, from the foibles of individuals, some good things may be said on behalf of this maligned period. So far as literature is concerned, there must have been a high level of taste, which made it possible for Carlyle, Meredith, Swinburne and Tennyson to be acclaimed so loudly. These writers, of such varying degrees of genius, all required more constant and active intelligence on the part of their many readers than any authors who are popular to-day. Science, too, made its appeal, and never lacked enthusiastic support. So far-reaching, indeed, were the changes wrought by Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and their brilliant colleagues, that at the present time we have the rare and refreshing spectacle of eminent ecclesiastics adopting a breadth of interpretation which would have seemed the absolute limit of scepticism to an earlier and more pious generation, and have entitled the holders of such opinions to the fires of Smithfield. The intellectual energy of the really great Victorians precipitated a silent revolution, and we owe our present wider outlook to these men.

MIMNERMUS.

### A POISON TREE.

I was angry with my friend  
Hold my wrath, my wrath did end.  
I was angry with my foe:  
Hold it not, my wrath did grow.

And I watered it in fears,  
Night and morning with my tears;  
And I sunned it with my smiles,  
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,  
Till it bore an apple bright;  
And my foe beheld it shine  
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden stole  
When the night had veiled the pole;  
In the morning glad I see  
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

—William Blake.

## "The Dance of Life."

MR. HAVELOCK ELLIS'S latest work, *The Dance of Life*, displays all those characteristics we expect from this great and seminal thinker. Mr. Ellis has written many works, but not one which does not throw new light upon the subject dealt with, and give food for deep and illuminating thought. He is the most subtle and profound scientific thinker in England to-day, and the most fearless and out-spoken. Indeed, one of his works, dealing with sex, was prosecuted by the Government a few years ago, although we believe it is freely published in America. Doubtless the Government were instigated to prosecute by some sex-bedeveled pictists, who are generally the instigators in the prosecutions. It is time the embargo on this work was lifted, especially when we consider what has since then been allowed publication by the psychoanalysts.

If Havelock Ellis had not been a great scientist he would still have been a great writer, he has a beautiful style, running like a crystal clear stream; no muddy depths, no confused periods, when you reach the end you close the book with a sigh that there is no more to read.

Christianity from the very commencement put a ban on the sexual instinct, it was stigmatized as the "lusts of the flesh"; and monasteries and nunneries were provided for monks and nuns, where they might live a bachelor and spinster existence "unspotted from the world." The sexual impulse itself was regarded as due to the promptings of Satan himself, and as his most effective weapon to lure the soul to destruction. At the very commencement of human history Satan appears in the Garden of Eden and offers the forbidden fruit, after eating which Adam and Eve first became aware of the sexual impulse. All through the Middle Ages Christianity waged a relentless war against the sexual instinct. If the Church had succeeded, the human race, or at any rate the Christian portion of it, would have perished. But they were fighting a law of Nature. Fortunately human nature proved stronger than the fulminations of the Church, and instead of suppressing this fundamental instinct it only drove it to excesses, the results of which may be read in such works as Lea's *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy*.

Now, as Havelock Ellis points out, the sexual impulse not only provides for the continuation of the race, it also provides the spur to intellectual emotions, and is one of the most efficient agents in urging mankind along the path of science and progress. As he puts the matter himself: "What we consider our highest activities arise out of what we are accustomed to regard as the lowest." As the rose and the lily have their roots in and derive their nourishment from the soil, so do the higher intellectual faculties originate in those functions we have been taught to regard as animal and sensual. All science arises in the first instance in curiosity—the desire to know.

The child, unconsciously driven by natural instincts—regarded by the pious as promptings of the Devil—is curious and has the desire to know many things for which he can get no satisfactory explanation from his teachers and parents. He is in exactly the same position as the scientist faced by complex and unsolved problems, but the child is baffled by obstacles, due, not to the intractability of nature, but to the silence of its guardians, or their deliberate efforts to lead it astray. Havelock Ellis says:—

He is left to such slight imperfect observations as he can himself make; on such clues his searching intellect works and, with the aid of imagination, weaves a theory—more or less remote from the truth—which may possibly explain the phenomena. It is a

genuine scientific process—the play of intellect and imagination around a few fragments of observed fact—and it is undoubtedly a valuable discipline for the childish mind.

If it is not too prolonged, and false theories formed, leading to unfortunate results. Later, at the age of puberty, the question of sex becomes still more accentuated and urgent. In the solution of this tantalizing enigma—

It is necessary for the boy to concentrate all the scientific apparatus at his command. For there may be no ways of solving it directly, least of all for a well-behaved, self-respecting boy, or shy, modest girl. The youthful intellect is thus held in full tension, and its developing energy directed into all sorts of new channels in order to form an imaginative picture of the unknown reality; fascinating because incompletely known. All the chief recognized mental processes of dogma, hypothesis, and fiction developed in the history of the race, are to this end instinctively created afresh in the youthful individual mind, endlessly formed and re-formed and tested in order to fill in the picture. The young investigator becomes a diligent student of literature, and laboriously examines the relevant passages he finds in the Bible or other ancient, primitive, naked books.....the creative and critical habit of thought, the scientific mind generated by this search, is destined to be of immense value, and long outlives the time when the eagerly-sought triangular spot, having fulfilled its intellectual function, has become a homely tenderness. (pp. 97-98.)

But the satisfaction of this curiosity does not end the matter, the new stream of psychic energy, emotional and intellectual, generated by the sexual instinct, does not cease to flow. Says Havelock Ellis:—

It streams over into another larger and more impersonal channel. It is, indeed, lifted on to a higher plane and transformed, to exercise a fresh function by initiating new objects of ideal desire. The radiant images of religion and of art, as well as of science—however true it may be that they have also other adjuvant sources—thus begin to emerge from the depths beneath consciousness. They tend to absorb and to embody the new energy, while its primary personal object may sink into the background, or, at this age, even fail to be conscious at all. (p. 99.)

So it turns out that this primal force, which Christianity has cursed, anathematized, declared to be the work of the Devil, and endeavoured to stamp out, is really the Cinderella to whom we owe in large measure our progress in science and art.

Havelock Ellis is not a man of one subject, he throws a wide net and brings many subjects under discussion, illuminating them all. He is interested in many things, and can make them interesting to others, because he has read widely and deeply, and brings an acute and unfettered intelligence to bear upon the subjects he deals with. For instance, in the present work he points out that if you examine any large standard history of Greece you are fairly sure to find a long chapter on the life of Socrates. It is inserted without apology or explanation, as a matter of course, in a so-called "history," and nearly every one seems to take it as a matter of course, but if the readers approached the subject in a critical spirit—

They might perhaps discover that it was not until about half a century after the time of the real Socrates that any "historical" evidence for the existence of our legendary Socrates begins to appear. Few people seem to realize that even of Plato himself we know nothing certain that could not be held in a single sentence. The "biographies" of Plato began to be written four hundred years after his death. It should be easy to estimate their value. (p. 70.)

Plato, of course, is our main source for the history of Socrates; and there are excellent reasons for regarding

the dialogues of Socrates, as recorded by Plato, not as history, but as drama, as much drama as the plays of Shakespeare. Mr. Havelock Ellis gives some very interesting details as to the evolution of his ideas upon religion, which we will deal with next week.

(To be Continued.) W. MANN.

## The Story of a Famous Old Jewish Firm.

MANY thousand years ago, when the Jews first started in business, the chief of their merchants was a venerable and irascible old gentleman named Jah. The Jews have always been excellent traders, keen to scent wealth, subtle to track it, unwearied to pursue it, strong to seize it, tenacious to hold it; and the most keen, subtle, untiring, strong, tenacious of them all, was this Jah. The patriarchs of his people paid him full measure of the homage which Jews have always eagerly paid to wealth and power, and all their most important transactions were carried out through him. In those antique times people lived to a very great age, and Jah is supposed to have lived so many thousands of years that one may as well not try to count them. Perhaps it was not one Jah that existed all this while, but the house of Jah: the family, both for pride and profit, preserving through successive generations the name of its founder. Certain books have been treasured by the Jews as containing exact records of the dealings of this lordly merchant (or house) both with the Jews themselves and with strangers. Many people in our times, however, have ventured to doubt the accuracy of these records, arguing that some of the transactions therein recorded it would have been impossible to transact, that others must have totally ruined the richest of merchants, that the accounts often contradict each other, and that the system of book-keeping generally is quite unworthy of a dealer so truthful and clear-headed as Jah is affirmed to have been. The records are so ancient in themselves, and they treat of matters so much more ancient still, that it is not easy to find other records of any sort with which to check their accounts. Strangely enough the most recent researches have impugned the accuracy of the most ancient of these records; certain leaves of a volume called the *Great Stone Book*, having been brought forward to contradict the very first folio of the ledger in which the dealings of Jah have been posted up according to the Jews. It may be that the first few folios, like the early pages of most annals, are somewhat mythical; and the present humble compiler (who is not deep in the affair of the primæval world, and who, like the late lamented Captain Cuttle with his large volume, is utterly knocked up at any time with four or five lines of the *Great Stone Book*) will prudently not begin at the beginning, but will skip it with great comfort and pleasure, especially as many and learned men are now earnest students of this beginning. We will, therefore, if you please, take for granted the facts that at some time, in some manner, Jah created his wonderful business, and that early in his career he met with a great misfortune, being compelled, by the villainy of all those with whom he had dealings to resort to a wholesale liquidation, which left him so poor, that for some time he had not a house in the world, and his establishment was reduced to four male and as many female servants.

He must have pretty well recovered from this severe shock when he entered into the famous covenant or contract with Abraham and his heirs, by which he bound himself to deliver over to them at a certain, then distant, period, the whole of the valuable landed

property called Canaan, on condition that they should appoint him the sole agent for the management of their affairs. In pursuance of this contract, he conducted that little business of the flocks and herds for Jacob against one Laban; and afterwards, when the children of Abraham were grown very numerous, he managed for them that other little affair, by which they spoiled the Egyptians of jewels of silver and jewels of gold; and it is even asserted that he fed and clothed the family for no less than forty years in a country where the commissariat was a service of extreme difficulty.

At length the time came when he was to make over to them the Land of Canaan, for this purpose evicting the several families then in possession thereof. The whole of the covenanted estate he never did make over to them, but the Jews freely admit that this was through their own fault. They held this land as mortgaged to him, he pledging himself not to foreclose while they dealt with him faithfully and fulfilled all the conditions of the covenant. They were to pay him ten per cent. per annum interest, with sundry other charges, to put all their affairs into his hands, to have no dealings whatsoever with any rival merchants, etc. Under this covenant the Jews continued in possession of the fine little property of Canaan for several hundred years, and they assert that this same Jah lived and conducted his business throughout the whole period. But, as I have ventured to suggest, the long existence of the house of Jah may have been the sum total of the lives of a series of individual Jahs. The Jews could not have distinguished the one from the other; for it is a strange fact that Jah himself, they admit, was never seen. Perhaps he did not affect close contact with Jews. Perhaps he calculated that his power over them would be increased by mystery; this is certain, that he kept himself wholly apart from them in his private office, so that no one was admitted even on business. It is indeed related that one Moses (the witness to the execution of the covenant) caught a glimpse of him from behind, but this glimpse could scarcely have sufficed for identification; and it is said, also, that at certain periods the chief of the priesthood was admitted to consultation with him; but although his voice was then heard he did not appear in person, only the shadow of him was seen, and every one will allow that a shadow is not the best means of identification. And in further support of my humble suggestion it may be noted that in many and important respects the later proceedings attributed to Jah differ extremely in character from the earlier; and this difference cannot be explained as the common difference between the youth and maturity and senility of one and the same man, for we are expressly assured that Jah was without change—by which we are not to understand that either through thoughtlessness or parsimony he never had small cash in his pocket for the minor occasions of life; but that he was stubborn in his will, unalterable in his ideas, persistent in his projects and plans.

The records of his dealings at home with the Jews, and abroad with the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Philistines, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Edomites, and other nations, as kept by the Jews themselves, are among the strangest accounts of a large general business which have ever been put down in black on white. And in nothing are they more strange than in the unsullied candour with which the Jews always admit and proclaim that it was their fault, and by no means the fault of Jah, whenever the joint business went badly, and narrate against themselves the most astonishing series of frauds and falsehoods, showing how they broke the covenant, and attempted to cheat the other party in every imaginable way, and, in order to ruin his credit, conspired with foreign adventurers of the worst character—such as MM. Baal,

Ashtaroth and Moloch. Jah, who gave many proofs of a violent and jealous temper, and who was wont to sell up other debtors in the most heartless way, appears to have been very lenient with these flagitious Jews. Yet with all his kindness and long-suffering he was again and again forced to put executions into their houses, and throw themselves into prison; and at length, before our year One, having as it would seem given up all hope of making them deal honestly with him, he had put certain strict Romans in possession of the property to enforce his mortgage and other rights.

And now comes a sudden and wonderful change in the history of this mysterious Jah. Whether it was the original Jah, who felt himself too old to conduct the immense business alone, or whether it was some successor of his, who had not the same self-reliance and imperious will, one cannot venture to decide; but we all know that it was publicly announced, and soon came to be extensively believed, that Jah had taken unto himself two partners, and that the business was thenceforth to be carried on by a firm, under the style of Father, Son & Co. It is commonly thought that history has more of certainty as it becomes more recent; but unfortunately in the life of Jah, uncertainty grows ten times more uncertain when we attain the period of this alleged partnership, for the Jews deny it altogether; and of those who believe in it not one is able to define its character, or even to state its possibility in intelligible language. The Jews assert roundly that the alleged partners are a couple of vile impostors, that Jah still conducts his world-wide business alone, that he has good reasons (known only to himself) for delaying the exposure of these pretenders; and that, however sternly he has been dealing with the Jews for a long time past, and however little they may seem to have improved so as to deserve better treatment, he will not be reconciled to them, and restore them to possession of their old land, and exalt them above all their rivals and enemies, and of his own free will and absolute pleasure burn and destroy every bond of their indebtedness now in his hands. And in support of these modest expectations they can produce a bundle of documents which they assert to be his promissory notes, undoubtedly for very large amounts; but which, being carefully examined, turn out to be all framed on this model: "I, the above-mentioned (an obscure or utterly unknown Jew, supposed to have lived about three thousand years ago), hereby promise in the name of Jah, that the said Jah shall in some future year, unknown, pay unto the house of Israel the following amount, that is to say, etc." If we ask, Where is the power of attorney authorizing this dubious A.B. to promise this amount in the name of Jah? the Jews retort: "If you believe in the partnership, you must believe in such power, for you have accepted all the obligations of the old house, and have never refused to discount its paper: if you believe neither in Jah nor in the partnership, you are a wretch without faith, a commercial outlaw." In addition, however, to these remarkable promissory notes the Jews rely upon the fact that Jah, in the midst of his terrible anger, has still preserved some kindness for them. He threatened many pains and penalties upon them for breach of the covenant, and many of these threats he has carried out, but the most cruel and horrific of all he has not had the heart to fulfil: they have been oppressed and crushed, strangers have come into their landed property, they have been scattered among all people, a proverb and a by-word of scorn among the nations, their religion has been accursed, their holy places are defiled, but the crowning woe has been spared them [Deut. xxviii. 44]; never yet has it come to pass that the stranger should lend to them, and they should not lend to the stranger; there

is yet balm in Gilead, a rose of beauty in Sharon, and a cedar of majesty on Lebanon; the Jew still lends to the stranger, and does not borrow from him, except as he "borrowed" from the Egyptian—and the interest on money lent is still capable, with judicious treatment, of surpassing the noble standard of "shent per shent."

JAMES THOMSON (B.V.).

Author of *City of Dreadful Night*, etc.

(To be Continued.)

## Acid Drops.

Mr. MacDonald, to the Free Church Council:—

There is over-indulgence in recreation to-day. There is an incapacity to spend a quiet Sunday. I am amazed at so many of my friends saying the old Scottish Sabbath was a burden. I would like to see a state of society in which every man and woman preferred the old Scotch Sunday to the modern French one.

Now that is quite unworthy of Mr. MacDonald, or of anyone else with a sense of fairness and justice. The only possible excuse for it is that Mr. MacDonald was speaking to a Church assembly where he was expected to say something of the sort. To begin with, there is no greater incapacity to spend a quiet Sunday than there is to spend quietly any other day in the week. If Mr. MacDonald had in his mind the restlessness of many, the rushing from one excitement to the other, and the value of being able to—as Paschal put it—sit still in a room, he would have had all thoughtful men and women with him. But when he tacks on to this a theological issue, when speaking before a majority of Sabbatarians, he champions the old Scottish Sabbath as an ideal way of spending a day of rest, well, one can only remember that he is the leader of a political party, and that those before him might influence his return to power, or otherwise, at the next election.

What, we wonder, had Mr. MacDonald in his mind when he contrasted the old Scotch Sunday with the modern French one? Did he wish his audience to believe that he accepted the view of the French way of spending Sunday as old-fashioned Sabbatarians in this country pictured it. He must know how far that is from the truth. If he does not, some of his colleagues might soon "put him wise" to the fact that the French Sunday, with its opportunities to enjoy all that can be enjoyed in music, art, and healthy recreation, is far healthier than our own way of spending it, and infinitely better than the old Scotch plan, which did actually develop drunkenness, surreptitious immorality, and which Scotland has been all the better for outgrowing. We should like to see Mr. MacDonald expressing his preference for the Scottish Sunday to an audience on the Clyde, where they know what the old Scotch Sunday was like. If Mr. MacDonald's analysis of social conditions goes no deeper than thinking that the old-fashioned Sunday was responsible for the steadiness and independence of the Scotch character, and that steadiness of character is to be gained by a good stiff dose of old-fashioned Sabbatarianism, the sooner he leaves politics and takes to the nonconformist pulpit the better.

"E.A.B." of the *Daily News*, describes the film *Sodom and Gomorrah* as "dull, crude, with many weaknesses and absurdities." Not one of the fifty clergy invited to see it spoke against it. One clerical *quidnunc* said: "It will do no more good than harm"; and another, striking a more hopeful note, like the cobbler and his opinion of leather, stated: "It will put the fear of God into people's hearts." It may be noted that these apostles of terror never talk about putting anything into the heads or bellies of the people; and their contribution to life is—fear. Perhaps this was present in the manly chests of 50,000 of them who received exemption during the war!

Pastor Johnson, of Mansfield, Ohio, was entrusted with \$90 to attend a Church Congress at Buffalo. Instead of

which he eloped with one of his choir-girls, and now has to stand charges of abduction and theft. In this case the thorny way to heaven seems very like the primrose path of dalliance.

The Hon. E. Cadogan, brother of Earl Cadogan, says that the Labour Party is composed of "wolves in sheep's clothing," and that they are "Atheists, and opposed to any kind of religion." If the *Daily Herald* staff read this terrible indictment, we tremble for the fate of the honourable gentleman.

Frederick North, clerk in holy orders, was fined 5s. for being drunk and incapable in York Road, Lambeth. He said to the constable who found him, "Am I dying? I cannot meet my maker like this." But there is really no proof that we know of to lead one to believe that a man must be sober to go before his Maker. And there seems good reason why someone should go before him drunk. After all, if North had been made differently he would have acted differently, and it is as well for the one who made him to see what kind of work he turns out. It is folly to show him only the good articles and hide the bad ones.

The Bishop of Litchfield has been complaining of "parimony with regard to education." He ought to be an authority on the subject. The Anglican Church possesses the worst equipped schools in the country, and the teachers in these schools are the most badly paid.

"Supporters of militarism have a profound mistrust of human nature," declares Canon Alexander. The Canon may be right in his suggestion. The Church to which he belongs has supported all the wars in which this country has been engaged, and has ever included the Union Jack among the holy symbols of religion.

We are indebted to Mr. Charles W. Armstrong, in the *Daily News*, who writes from Madrid, for much interesting information from Spain, where the natives kill bulls with as much ceremony as our aristocracy kill stags or foxes in England. He assures us that the directorate cannot make a great nation out of a people that has undoubtedly sunk, both physically and morally. Continuing, he writes, that the people are intensely ignorant of modern ideas with regard to healthy living.....and that no Western nation is so illiterate. Spain is notoriously religious, and we commend this report to Mr. G. K. Chesterton and his company of knights who recently met in a place lent by Sir Oswald Stoll to institute the Mass as the central figure of chivalry, and incidentally to get England to kiss the toe of the Pope.

A collecting card, issued from 59 Eccleston Square, S.W.1, is a curious object in this year of grace. Entitled, "Society of Holy Childhood," it solicits the pennies of children. The subscriber is asked to buy a yellow or black baby and give it to Jesus. It states: "Every year in the far East *Multitudes* of Babies are abandoned by their parents, or thrown out to be eaten by dogs and pigs." There are seven reasons given to the child for sending pennies; here is one: "Pope after Pope has urged children to join the Holy Childhood." All this is a specimen of religion without money and without price. Whilst people are having self-denial boxes rattled under their noses, it should become apparent to the meanest intelligence that in England at least there is a close connection between the welfare of the immortal soul (never seen by anyone) and money (occasionally seen by everybody). What time an old lady in St. Martin's Lane may be seen on wintry mornings foraging in dust-bins, Cardinal Bourne is making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. We trust that he boiled the peas before putting them in his boots, and that he will bring back convincing evidence that multitudes of babies are thrown out to be eaten by dogs and pigs. And, as everything in the garden is lovely at home, infant mortality for 1923 only being 69 per thousand, the inferior races of the East may eventually be redeemed by the pennies of children.

*God's Call to the Priesthood*, price twopence, S.P.C.K., is the name of one of the "Little Books on Religion." It should be read in conjunction with the lists of wills printed by our public benefactors—the daily newspapers.

It appears that Bishop Montgomery Brown is to be made the subject of a prosecution for heresy before the Protestant Episcopal Church of America. The prosecution is based upon the contents of his book *Christianism and Communism*. Bishop Brown, although he has completely given up all belief in Christian doctrines, including the belief in God and a Soul, has refused to resign from the Church; and the trial being an ecclesiastical one can have no other result than expulsion from the Church. It should be said that the Bishop does not draw a salary from the Church, and does not officiate in any church. He has simply, for his own reasons, refused to resign. If the trial actually comes on it cannot but result in giving his heretical opinions a much wider publicity than they have at present, and will therefore be so much to the good. And judging from the prevalence of the very crudest religious ideas in the United States, the more publicity given to heretical opinions the better.

The *Church Times*, after asserting that the policy of the Russian Government will after a few years leave the mass of the Russian people without religion, declares that "such a nation might well contrive the destruction of European civilization." On which we may remind the *Church Times* that the Governments which have made it their first business to see that the people were well dosed with religion have brought things to such a pass that it is openly debated by some of the leading Europeans whether civilization can recover from the holy mess into which it has fallen. It is the people who have always had plenty of religion who are now talking quite freely about the next war, which shall involve wholesale chemical and bacterial massacre. A people without religion could hardly have made a sorrier mess of things than these have done.

Four Shinley schoolboys were convicted at Bradford of breaking into offices and stealing therefrom money and other articles. Police Superintendent Oliver said the boys had all attended Sunday school and had received their prizes. The magistrate said it was a big fall from Sunday school prizes to the Police Court. We are not so sure. It is if anything a commentary on the ineffectiveness of Sunday school teaching. We do not, of course, expect Christians to draw this moral, although had it been shown that the boys had been without religious teaching they would not have been slow to draw a similar conclusion.

"Man, Enjoy Thyself" is the title of a contribution to *Health and Efficiency*, by the Rev. Richard H. Wills. Evidently this writer has cut adrift from the Man of Sorrows and his teachings; the life of Tolstoy is a good example of the inevitable smash caused by treating barbaric nonsense in a serious manner. Man no doubt will be graciously pleased to receive permission from the reverend gentleman to do that which he has always done, it might be a question of biological importance to consider what effect organized religion has had on the lengthening on the human face. Forward! Professors—but let the work be in not less than ten volumes.

Dr. A. Dakin, speaking at Brighton about the particular trade in which he and many more are interested, made the statement that what was wanted to put everything right was to bring God himself back into industry as the chief partner. This simply means that the interests represented by Dr. A. Dakin and Company should be recognized in industry; and for the happy state brought about by God in industry we recommend a reading of *Christianity and Slavery*. What is all this activity on the part of religious bodies but the cry for Protection against Free Trade in ideas?

Sir Charles Higham, in a penny daily, is asking to advertise a good Cocoa, a good Motor-Car, a good Jam,

a good Cigarette, or a good Ink. We suggest that there is ample scope to go "all out" in advertising religion; flashlight advertisements only appear to us to be half doing the job. Pictures of the patient before and after treatment by the modern medicine men, together with stories of how incomes were doubled, should make a considerable difference to receipts and add to the gaiety of the nation.

The peep-show press has a photograph of a 'bus conductor punching a ticket. This gentleman has been in a monastery in South Wales for four years, and has now taken up this form of public service; he is to be congratulated, and doubtless he will help people on their journey in a more practical manner than it was possible in his former vocation.

There are 9,100 owners of mining royalties in Great Britain, and the royalties for this year are estimated at £7,084,000, said Mr. Graham, Financial Secretary to the Treasury. He might have added that one body of owners was the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, representing the Church of England, the wealthiest Church in the world.

Oh, those journalists! Mr. Robert Lynd, writing in *Cassell's Weekly*, which is supposed to be a literary paper, says that the "first authors" who influenced him were "Moses, King David, and the author of the Fourth Gospel." This sentence, but for the Grace of God, might have been written by a black pastor of a Negro Church in Carolina. And what sort of a boy prefers the "Fourth Gospel" to *Robinson Crusoe*?

The *Daily Herald* has been giving publicity to the statement that the Carthusian monks at Crowfield, Sussex, owed their immunity from the influenza epidemic to their vegetarian dietary and strict life. A correspondent replied that the more obvious explanation was that the monastery was completely isolated, and about a mile from the village. But why should the *Herald* fill its pages with such pious propaganda? Is it because of the religious quality of the staff, or because it has its eyes on the religious opinions of many of its readers?

Mr. A. M. Lewis, in his interesting little book *Evolution: Social and Organic*, says:—

Outside the dilution of Aristotle, the only thing in Greek thought which appealed to the mediæval mind was the Pythagorean mystical use of numbers. The conclusions reached by that method were truly remarkable, especially when we remember that they engaged such notable people as Augustine, the celebrated Bishop of Hippo. These are examples; because there are three persons in the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; three orders in the Church—bishops, priests, and deacons; three degrees of attainment—light, purity, and knowledge; three virtues—faith, hope, and charity; and three eyes in the honeybee; therefore there can only be three colours—red, yellow, and blue. Because there are seven churches in the apocalypse, seven golden candlesticks, seven cardinal virtues, seven deadly sins, and seven sacraments; therefore, there could only be seven planets and seven metals. Because there were seventy-two disciples, and seventy-two interpreters of the Old Testament, and seventy-two mystical names of God; therefore there must be no more and no less than seventy-two joints in the human body.

And yet there are Christians who have the impudence to claim that science owes a vast debt to Christianity.

Speaking on the proposed betting tax at the Annual Assembly of the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches at Brighton this week, Mr. Isaac Foot, M.P., said he thought that the proposal was not likely to succeed. Its effect would be to uplift the bookmaker's profession to the level of that of the clergyman, the lawyer, and the doctor. It is rumoured that the Bookmakers' Federation has approached the British Medical Association with the proposal that a joint protest should be made against this classification.

It would be interesting to learn what is the attitude of organized Christianity towards the new Bill recently introduced to the House of Commons granting the franchise to women on an equal footing with men. Probably a number of ecstatic Christians have not yet progressed beyond the point reached by some of their mediæval fellows. There is a story in Grimm's *Household Tales* which is illustrative of the low esteem in which the Church held women in the Middle Ages. St. Bernard entered a cathedral to pay his devotions to the image of the Virgin, and fell twice on his knees before it, saying in fervent tones: "Oh, gracious, mild, and highly-favoured mother of God!" Hereupon the image began to speak, and said: "Welcome my Bernard!" But the Saint, outraged by this, reprimanded the queen of heaven for speaking, in these words: "Silence! No woman is to speak in the congregation!"

In the King's Library at the British Museum is a copy of what is known as *The Vinegar Bible*, printed at Oxford in 1716-1717 by one John Baskett. It earned its nickname owing to the misprint "Parable of the Vinegar" for "Parable of the Vineyard" in the heading to Luke xx. We have read quite a considerable amount of Christian literature to which the adjective "vinegar" might appropriately be applied.

There is to be a national campaign, initiated by the Fellowship of Freedom and Reform, in favour of the Sunday opening of the Empire Exhibition. The President of the Fellowship is Admiral Guy Gaunt, and he points out that Sunday is the one day when multitudes will be able to visit the exhibition, and, in addition, there are large numbers of people hanging about the London streets all day on Sunday who would be much better engaged in visiting the exhibition. Of course, the opposition to the opening of the exhibition comes from the clergy, who are afraid it will tempt some people away from church. Their concern is not whether people are profitably engaged on Sunday, but that they shall come to church and chapel. And nothing must stand in the way of that.

But the question of whether the exhibition shall be open on Sunday is really only part of the larger question of the right use of the day of rest. Admiral Gaunt is fighting for the use of the exhibition on Sunday, but it is far more important to have plenty of opportunities to enjoy healthy pleasures and recreations on Sunday, in spite of Mr. MacDonald's regret that we are not living under the old Scotch sabbath. What Admiral Gaunt and his fellowship should realize is that he is fighting a trade combination on the part of the clergy, and that their only concern is to see that every possible counter attraction to the church shall be closed. It is a piece of shameless impudence, and we doubt whether the Fellowship will really have the nerve to fight it.

Other times may often mean other manners, but other beliefs do not always mean other ideas. Often it means no more than the same beliefs expressed in different terms. Thus Mr. P. Amaury Talbot, in his *Life in Southern Nigeria*, tells of a Christian native chief who said, in order to illustrate his faith in Christianity, that with the Bible in his hand he would not hesitate to enter the house of any witch-doctor, knowing that such had no longer any power to harm him. That may be quite true, but it is quite evident that the convert was only pitting one form of magic against another, and was merely saying that the missionary Ju-ju was more powerful than the Ju-ju of the native witch-doctor. And so long as things go well with converts of that class they stick to the fetish of the missionary; if they go awry they are as likely as not to go back to the other one. Uncivilized people are in this matter much more practical and sensible than are civilized ones. They want Gods that do things; and are not inclined to praise God for lack of attention, or thank him for what he has not done. It is the modern civilized Christian who holds a harvest thanksgiving to express gratitude to the Lord for a harvest that has been ruined.



## 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.—Thanks. Posters will be sent as soon as addresses are forwarded.

J. W. DAWSON.—We should very much like to see a Branch of the N.S.S. at Sheffield. There are plenty of Freethinkers there if they would only bestir themselves. Why not see what can be done, as you are on the spot?

L. SIDNEY.—The only sure way of getting justice done to Freethinkers. Our main work should be to fight the Christian Church and other forms of supernaturalism every time and all the time.

S.S.—You are legally entitled to affirm on any occasion where an oath is customarily required. If you have any difficulty let us know.

F. RAWLINSON.—We quite agree with you that if there is a God he must be aware of all we are doing. But as he doesn't interfere with us doing, may we not take it that he doesn't mind? And if he doesn't, why should you? We can understand your needing a God to look after you, but we gave our opinion of a God who needs you to look after him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The wise man never accepts the colour of either Religion or Truth from the accounts of myopic disciples or colour-blind priests.—D. P. Stickells.

## Sugar Plums.

From a letter which appears in another part of this issue it will be seen that Mr. Edward Clodd is of opinion that we are living in a fool's paradise in thinking there will ever come a time when the Bible will be banished from the schools. We are sorry to note that Mr. Clodd has so poor an opinion of English civilization. Seeing that this has actually occurred elsewhere, we see no reason why it should not occur here, and we confess to but little respect for the "Rationalism" which can see no better future than the Bible permanently in the schools under such conditions that it can only be used to bolster up a superstition which it should be the main object of Freethinkers to destroy. And we may venture the opinion that it is one thing to destroy a dogma by explaining it, and quite another thing to explain and then leave it where it was because a number of people are not enlightened enough to accept the explanation. For our part we prefer a fight against great odds to get the *Christian Bible* out of the schools, even though we may not succeed, to giving way to the enemy because he happens at present to have the majority on his side. In making this choice we fancy we are in the line of all that has made British Freethought something of which to be proud. And in this matter we are really not inclined to take even Viscount Morley as our "spiritual" guide. We prefer the example set by those who braved prison and social ostracism to win Freethinkers the limited freedom they now possess. A fight on these lines may not be so easy, but it is much more enjoyable, and, to the race, much more profitable. There is such a thing as gaining through failure, and losing through success—of a kind.

We again impress upon all our friends the necessity of insisting on getting their copies of the *Freethinker* delivered promptly when ordered from newsagents. We know that some wholesale agents are doing what they can to obstruct sales, and to dishearten those who order it by delivering copies very late or by reporting "out of print." It is a cowardly policy, and the only way to defeat it is by friends insisting on the paper being delivered properly. If they do this the retail agent will insist on the wholesaler doing his share. We suffer more from this underhand method of attack than many imagine.

We have to thank one friend who has paid for the insertion of several week's advertisement of this paper in the *Pudsey News*. Perhaps some readers in that district will be good enough to let us have the names of newsagents who supply the *Freethinker*, to order or otherwise.

Mr. F. E. Willis, J.P., will lecture this evening (March 16) in the Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street, Birmingham, on "Pioneers of Freethought." The subject in Mr. Willis's hands should prove interesting, and we hope that friends will make the lecture know as widely as possible.

Next Sunday (March 23) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Birmingham Town Hall on "Why Not Secularize the State?" At the present time the subject should prove interesting to many to whom an ordinary Freethought subject does not appeal very strongly.

Mr. V. J. Hands will lecture to-day for the Manchester Branch in the Engineering Union Hall, Rusholme Road, at 3 and 6.30. His subjects are "The Case for Atheism" and the "Philosophy of Secularism." Local saints will please note, and do what they can to bring Christian friends along to both lectures.

A candidate for the priesthood (at Nemi) could only succeed to office by slaying the priest, and, having slain him, he retained office till he was himself slain by a stronger or a craftier.—Sir James Frazer.

## Prayer.

WHENEVER the doctrines and the practices of religion are vigorously called in question there is a vehement desire on the part of many to retain or to recover their religious faith. These people have "the will to believe," just as the drunkard in a prohibitionist State has "the will to drink"; but, like him, they are restrained from gratifying their predelection; the only difference being in the degree of restraint and in its nature. For whilst the drunkard is effectually protected from his inclinations by material means, the would-be believer is only retarded in his tendency by moral influence. As respects "the will to believe," if anyone questions its potency, let him consider the scandal-mongers, and the fortune-tellers—how they toil not, neither do they spin, yet Solomon with all his wisdom never got the credence they obtain. Hence it is quite natural that in times of religious doubt, bigots, seekers of celebrity, and even simple mystifiers, should find a golden opportunity for the display of apologetic invention. The trick of giving old tenets a new sense, is very popular, and proves eminently successful with the young, whom it seduces by offering a pleasant surprise, and a generous expansion of view. Another device is to pretend that the objections alleged have long ago been answered; or that the latest discoveries of science reduce them to vanity. An amusing instance of the way these methods may be combined was provided three or four years since by an article entitled "Pray and Be Well," which appeared in one of the daily papers under the name of a physician. The writer said with a knowing air that many of his readers were doubtless in the habit of taking prayer for what the Victorians termed "a figment of superstition"; whereas Science, which had so often refuted inferences against Religion prematurely drawn from its own findings, was doing the same thing again in the case of prayer. This might have led anyone to think that the point established must be nothing less than the ability of the Pope to pray Monte Blanc into the middle of the Atlantic. Alas, however, for such expectations. The writer, in the style of one revealing a great secret, proceeded to say that much of our thinking is at first unconscious, that conscious thought determines unconscious thought, particularly if the suggestion be given in the state called reverie, or just before going off to sleep for the night; and that because of this it is advisable to make good resolutions in prayer. The writer enumerated some very respectable virtues to be thus acquired or augmented. He was very clear about it. On retiring to rest after the labours of the day we must wish for, and will to have, more and more of this or that estimable quality; we must desire to become more and more like this or that excellent person; yea, verily, like unto one of flesh and blood, unto one with plenty of flesh and plenty of blood, for "more like Mr. Bottomley" was the example given of what we should aspire to by prayerful volition before closing our eyes in nightly slumber! Now it cannot be doubted that when the article in question was written many a man would have been delighted to have resembled Mr. Bottomley, in more than one respect. But how did the case stand as regards prayer for this resemblance. Suppose, for instance, that our old friend Bottom, once more incarnate, had taken it into his head to acquire Bottomley's character, and that after thinking upon and striving for the necessary qualities with earnest prayer to Mumbo Jumbo for help in their acquisition, he had come at last to resemble Bottomley in the point desired, how should we have had to account for the transformation? Surely in either of two ways: (1) That Mumbo Jumbo

had changed Bottom's character into Bottomley's character; at any rate, as far as Bottom was unable to do it for himself. But as this would have implied the exercise of miraculous influence upon the brain and nerves of Bottom, there would have been no reason at all why some such interference might not have taken place to make him resemble Bottomley in other respects, should he have wished for further resemblance; say, as regards looks or wits. This possibility of improvement, though obviously advantageous to many besides poor Bottom, was not envisaged by the writer of the article, who apparently considered moral qualities as Mr. Bottomley's distinguishing excellence. (2) That Bottom, possessing in germ, or being able to acquire, the elements of Bottomley's character, proposed these qualities for his cultivation or his imitation, and that in so doing he had encouraged himself by praying with confidence for the help of Mumbo Jumbo. Such are the alternatives.

In the first case Bottom would have become like Bottomley, because his sincere endeavour to attain Bottomley's character had been crowned with success by Mumbo Jumbo in answer to his prayer; but in the second case Bottom would have got the aforesaid likeness solely through his own proper effort, strengthened by a mistaken thrust in Mumbo Jumbo; and the result would have been exactly the same had he invoked Humpty Dumpty, or any other denizen of Olympus.

It seems to be in the latter of these two ways that the above writer thought there was hope of our getting "well," if we took the trouble to "pray." But searchers of novelty are apt to be deceived by false appearances, as the weary sage of *Ecclesiastes* found to his disgust. It is forty years or so since I was deeply impressed by reading in *Good Words* or *The Leisure Hour*, or some such repository of wisdom, a sermon of Schliermacher, which taught that the only advantage of prayer is the increase of moral strength derived from the confidence imparted by the fuller trust in God which the suppliant attains through his own exertion in the act of praying. This, of course, makes the benefit received wholly subjective, and refers its origin to man, and not to God. Such prayers, however, are in reality no prayers at all. For prayer is a request from one conscious being to another conscious being; and the efficacy of prayer is the irresistibility of such a request when properly made to a being capable of granting it. But in order that a thing prayed for and coming to pass may reasonably be presumed to have come to pass because prayed for, it is necessary that the occurrence be contrary to general experience, and prohibited by the operation of known laws, e.g., the resuscitation of a corpse. Every answered prayer involves a miracle, because what happened in consequence of the prayer would not have happened without it, i.e., the natural sequence of events has been disturbed, which signifies miraculous intervention. In conclusion, it is worth noting that those despicable Victorians gave the name "unconscious cerebration" to what is now called "unconscious thought." The former term is much better, for it avoids ambiguity, and shows a process to be in question. The truth is that the brain, like other organs, does much of its work without attracting attention, as anyone may know who has suddenly remembered a name, or a date, that he vainly sought to recollect some hours or even days previously. Here the Idealist is not affected; but the Materialist receives a formidable weapon to use against the Dualist. As regards auto-suggestion, its practical importance is much exaggerated; but it often works powerfully and hideously in cases of madness. C. CLAYTON DOVE.

Religion is the expansive lie of temporary warmth.  
—T. E. Hulme.

## Sunday by the Sea.

If I, Edward Francis, the last of the Fay's, do, of my own free will, ever spend another Sunday in Skegness, may I be fillipped with a three-man beetle, and more also.

WHEN, many years ago, the Bounder of the *Clarion* wrote the above solemn objurgation, he expressed a sentiment that will assuredly ring true for all time. It is inconceivable that anyone who has once endured the misery of a Skegness sabbath (in winter) should return for further treatment.

Standing on the foreshore, lost in miserable contemplation of the sullen heaving waters, the words of Edward Francis Fay recurred vividly to my mind. Oh, Edward, thy prophetic soul spoke better than it knew. Could you but see me now; could you but return awhile and stand with me—but no, wherever your restless spirit be wandering, down the aisles of the seventh sphere, or searching for "Karkawber" oysters in the backwaters of the Milky Way; I am open to bet that it is *not* meandering along the "vast edges drear and naked shingles" of Skegness—at least, on the sabbath. I have, during my earthly peregrinations, been in many uncomfortable positions. I have had that "alone in London" feeling, when—with "just up from the country" stamped all over me—I have clung pathetically to a policeman at Charing Cross whilst the traffic seemed, at any moment, to be about to submerge me; I have been accidentally and innocently entangled in a cosmopolitan *mélée* in a dockside eating-house; and I have been embraced in an *auberge* at Le Tréport by a French mademoiselle who had evident designs upon my celibacy. But I doubt if I ever felt more thoroughly miserable than I did when I stood on the promenade at Skegness in a bitter north-east wind and listened to the "melancholy, long withdrawing roar" of the sad sea waves. Another such Sunday as that and I should be tempted to go into the garden and eat worms, or join the Young Men's Kruschen Association.

To add to my misery, I had been led to understand that Skegness was such a gay place. It was, I had been assured, just the place for a young man to spend a week-end in; a place where one could retire after a long week's work and obtain refreshment and renewed vigour, and regain "that school-girl complexion." It was, moreover, a resort of distinct refinement, where everyone talked "well off"; the sort of place where one has to have references; and two have to have luggage! But, alas, the blight of the British sabbath was upon the place. Everyone had hurried off to worship at the shrine of the great British God, Respectability; and I was left to muse—alone. And so, alone, I mused.

The young boy in *Dombey and Son* who enquired so persistently and so pathetically of his sister: "What are the wild waves saying?" always aroused in me a feeling of helpless rage. Had I been his sister I fear that I should have replied savagely: "Oh! eat your damn bun"—with an inward prayer that it might choke him. I wished most heartily that he had been with me at Skegness; there would have been yet one more seaside tragedy.

The promenade was deserted. The sands were littered with paper, and orange peel that must have been there for months. The only pathetic reminder of the summer season was a sand-choked machine which invited me to have a peep at *What The Butler Saw*. In endeavouring to satisfy my curiosity ("why should base menials of the kitchen see more than I, forsooth," said he, taking a Kensitas from the deferential Jenkyn) I lost my coin. The deserted shore became a blasted heath! Then the inevitable Salva-

tion Army band appeared on the scene. We are assured on high authority that the sabbath was made for man. I have for a long time been of the opinion that it was made for the Salvation Army.

(I feel here that I ought to acknowledge my indebtedness to the S.A. On a recent visit to London I was suddenly arrested by the sight of an electric screen whereon was portrayed a S.A. officer pointing a warning finger and asking, "Are You Good?"—after that I hadn't the heart to catch the Piccadilly tube.)

Having nothing better to do I listened with as much grace as I could muster whilst a red-faced man—evidently a furnishing ironmonger—although I haven't the faintest idea what a furnishing ironmonger is—gave his testimony. I had intended missing the collection, but I left it too late. A demure-looking maiden in spectacles begged of me to make it up to three shillings. "And what sum do you require to make it up?" I queried. "Only a penny, sir." "Then, my dear girl, you will find one stuck in that machine," I answered soothingly, and left her to it.

After a short walk I returned to the hotel, where I lost two shillings at solo to some blatant materialist who had just returned from divine service. "And so," as Pepys hath it, "to bed."

If I, Vincent Joseph, the last but not least of the Hands, do, of my own free will, ever spend another Sunday in Skegness, may I be fillipped with a three-man beetle, and more also. And then some!

VINCENT J. HANDS.

## Some Aspects of Hell.

### II.

(Continued from page 156.)

It was these who developed the idea of purgatory from the supposed purifying flames of hell; they assumed that an intermediate place existed in which we were placed on approbation before we were finally dismissed to hell or to heaven. Of course, the varying ideas provided much matter for almost endless theological and eschatological polemics. But with all the protracted and nauseating controversies all parties were agreed that hell existed; and no doubt found pleasure in the identity of their conclusions, and much satisfaction in being so full of assurance as to the nature of our future state after death.

It is not necessary to discuss in detail all the weird and grotesque ideas that were advanced during the early days of Christianity. All we propose to do is to lay before the reader what are regarded as some of the most interesting ideas of the Christian hell.

The literature dealing with the Christian hell is very extensive. It is repulsive and extensive; and it is as useless as it is both. The dominant note throughout it all is the reiteration of the horrors of hell. Stenches, fumes, flames, and all sorts of nerve-racking torments and punishments. Some hells have intense cold combined with intense heat; this peculiar combination would best be explained by those who created it. The motive behind all the ideas of Christian hell is to produce the most horrible feelings of fear of the ultimate consequences of the hereafter; fear of the Devil and God; and fear of the clergy and their representative power. Then endless repetition of loathsomeness and horror; of the idle and foolish imaginings of unhealthy minds as they lay before us the prospect that awaits us in the future, makes some of the most repulsive and objectionable reading in the annals of literature—if it is not desecrating literature by giving such unwholesome matter a place within its realms.

In regard to the literature of Christian eschatology, the two classical examples are Dante's *Divina Comedia*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. But apart from these there are innumerable minor examples, ranging from mediæval times to such exponents as Newman and Spurgeon; two men who should have had more sense than to express themselves on the subject as they did. Besides literature we have a vast iconography on the subject. The iconography ranges from simple representations to mural paintings, and stained glass windows. In the fourteenth century we find Christ's descent into hell depicted pictorially according to requirements. Some of the illuminated MSS. contain examples of similar things. There is a woodcut extant representing a sinner bound to Satan's tail, and is regarded as depicting an unique form of punishment. It is still possible to find mural paintings of the day of judgment on some of our church walls; but common sense and decency have encouraged their obliteration by various colouring and other forms of disguise.

Window representations can be seen in Chaldon Church, Surrey; and Fairford Church, Gloucestershire, the latter is rather an elaborate one. In the Bodleian Library we find St. Dunstan holding Satan by the nose with a pair of pincers that he had previously made red-hot, and calmly upbraiding the helpless Satan for his wickedness. Hell's mouth can be found in friezes of cathedrals; and seat and font carvings represent various grotesque ideas of the harrowing Christian conceptions of hell. It can be seen clearly from this that the idea of hell must have been extremely deep-rooted, and must have been an important fundamental when recourse was made to such conspicuous representations. Hell must have had some attractive features to entitle it to such painstaking representations and preferential treatment.

As has been said previously, Christianity is not the only religion that possesses a hell. Hell is a common possession of all religions; but what distinguishes the hell of the Christian religion from other hells is the ferocity and interminableness of punishment. There is not any known religion that can bear the slightest comparison to the Christian mediæval hell for ferocity, viciousness, loathsomeness, and utter horror. The Christian hell has not a single redeeming feature. It is endless. It is of the coarsest possible conception, and is horrific and repulsive in the extreme. Other hells have stages of insensibility and apathy. Virgil's hell lasts for a thousand years, and is without the horror of the Christian hell. The hell of the northern nations was one intense coldness. The Christian hell, however, has no respite; but on the contrary adds horror to horror and increases pain and torment to the uttermost.

An analysis of the Christian hell demonstrates to us three important differences from the conceptions of previous hells. It is upon these three important elements that all Christians enlarge; and emphasize their value in regard to their beneficial moral effect. The points are: the damnation of infants; the eternity of the punishments; and the exultation of those who gain paradise when they view the sufferings of the damned in hell.

The belief in the damnation of infants arises from the idea that the unbaptized are sure to be damned. This doctrine is borne out by the apostles and by the early fathers and later divines. In the twelfth century one Alberico, when a boy of ten years of age, paid a visit to purgatory. St. Peter personally conducted him, and showed him one-year-old babies boiling in fiery vapours! So horrified was the boy that St. Peter had to explain to him that even babies one day old were not sinless. Gradually the idea of infantile damnation expanded; and finally we find the Church of Rome discovering a *limbus infantium*—a place that

enjoys a permanent position in its multitude of exaggerations and absurdities; and ending with such nonsense as this: "Reprobate infants are vipers of vengeance which Jehovah will hold over hell with the tongs of wrath till they writhe up and cast their venom in his face."

Proof of the enjoyment experienced by the blessed on seeing the damned in their damnation is very easily found. This proof ranges from the time of the Psalms to the present day; and the horrible joyfulness that was sung by the writers of the Psalms continues to be sung by the writers of hymns at the present time. The early fathers dilated very much on this doctrine; and judging by what has been said by them, they must have enjoyed a great deal of pleasure in so doing. Later Christians, however, such as Bunyan, Edwards, and Hopkins did not fail to express themselves very forcibly in more modern language. The following extract is a good example of the general diabolical opinions on this matter:—

The smoke of their torments shall ascend up in the sight of the blessed for ever and for ever, and serve as a most clear glass always before their eyes, to give them a bright and most affecting view. This display of the Divine character will be most entertaining to all who love God; will give them the highest and most ineffable pleasure. Should the fire of this eternal punishment cease, it would in great measure obscure the light of heaven, and put an end to the greater part of the happiness and glory of the blessed.

So much for Christian charity and love. It is a gross waste of time to pass any comments on such horrible and repulsive beliefs. We are driven to believe that asylums have not always contained as many unfortunate persons as they ought.

Some of the more favoured Christians have had visions of hell; they have been conducted through its caverns and recesses; they have experienced its heat, its stench, its fumes, and have seen Satan and his hosts of fiends and orgies, and his diabolical machinery of punishment and horror. All these visions agree in general detail, but some are a little more horrible than others. The following may be taken as a fair example:—

He saw the people of every age and of both sexes nailed to the ground with red-hot nails, and being whipped by devils; men, women and children boiled in cauldrons; people lying on their backs with fiery dragons, flaming serpents, and toads dining upon their bowels; people hung on iron hooks driven through their feet, hands, eyes, nostrils, ears or navels over flames of burning sulphur.

And so on.

From each of these torments Owen himself escaped, by calling Jesus to his aid. On leaving hell he passed through Paradise, where he much desired to remain, but this being forbidden he found his way back to the entrance of the cave, where he was met by priests and canons, to whom he told his story.

Another visionary named Paris had a similar story to tell, but he was a little more exact, for he recognized many of his acquaintances among the damned. Besides, he saw St. Michael, who had charge of the white souls; St. Peter, who had charge of the souls spotted white and black; while St. Paul and the Devil occupied places at each end of purgatory, where the souls were duly weighed in large scales and disposed of as their conduct deserved.

If we pass by such men as Calvin, Luther, Arminius, Milton, Bunyan, and Edwards, we do not find the least improvement on the previous conceptions. In fact, in some instances they are more horrible. The Puritans were quite as keen on defending the idea of hell as was ever the Church of Rome. There was an

important difference, too. The Puritans damned the sinner for ever. On the other hand, the Church of Rome had indulgences for sale; and we know that to-day masses are said for the souls of the departed. No, it must be admitted that the Reformation, whatever else it did, did not modify the awful conception of hell; rather did it intensify its horrors. In fact, the general effect of the Reformation on contemporaries seems to have made them more morose and intolerant than they previously had been. Hence we cannot expect that the idea of hell was likely to be softened. Nor was it, for Calvin tells us plainly that the wicked will sink into everlasting fire, where they will:—

Forever be harassed with a dreadful tempest, they shall feel themselves torn asunder by an angry God, and transfixed and penetrated by mortal stings, terrified by the thunderbolt of God and broken by the weight of his hand, so that to sink into any gulf would be more tolerable than to stand for a moment in these terrors.

So much for the enlightened Calvin. Whatever may have been the ultimate sociological effect of his influence, his contribution to the conception of hell was not an improvement.

Quotations taken for the purposes of illustration are more or less similar; but probably the height of intellectual depravity is reached in the following, which is from Edwards:—

The world will be converted into a great lake or liquid globe of fire, a vast ocean of fire, in which the wicked shall be overwhelmed, in which they will be tossed to and fro, having no rest day or night, vast waves or billows of fire continually rolling over their heads, of which they shall for ever be full of a quick sense within and without; their heads, their eyes, their tongues, their hands, their feet, their loins, and their vitals shall be for ever full of a glowing, melting fire, fierce enough to melt the very rocks and elements; etc.....

God holds sinners in his hands over the mouth of hell, as so many spiders.....he will trample them beneath his feet with inexpressible fierceness; he will crush their blood out; etc.....

It would be a comparatively easy matter to provide a large number of similar expressions, but in doing so needless repetition would be incurred. Even in passing to more recent expressions we find the same aimless and useless repetition of ideas; the difference is that the ideas are a little modernized, but the fundamental implication is the same. All pronouncements have similar harrowing details in regard to vileness, coarseness, and absurdity. If we take up any modern hymn-book we can still find abundant evidence of the horrors of hell.

A. MITCHELL.

(To be Concluded.)

## Correspondence.

A GENIAL PRELATE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. R. Farquharson Sharp (of the British Museum), in his valuable *Dictionary of English Authors Biographical and Bibliographical*, credits Mr. John Still with "Gammer Gurton's Needle," and supplies the dates which I quoted. *Chambers's Cyclopædia of English Literature* (1844), discussing early plays, says: "The next in point of time is 'Gammer Gurton's Needle,' supposed to have been written about 1565 (or still earlier) by John Still, Master of Arts, and afterwards Bishop of Bath and Wells" (I. 164). Thomas Warton, in his learned and elegant *History of English Poetry*, says: "In the year 1544 a Latin comedy, called 'Rammachus,' was

acted at Christ's College in Cambridge.....The comedy of 'Gammer Gurton's Needle' was acted in the same society about the year 1552" (sect. 33). Again: "The first *Chanson a Boire*, or *Drinking-Ballad*, of any merit in our language, appeared in the year 1551. It has a vein of ease and humour which we should not expect to have been inspired by the simple beverage of those times.....His song opens the second act of 'Gammer Gurton's Needle,' a comedy, written and printed in 1551,<sup>1</sup> and soon afterwards acted at Christ's College in Cambridge.....This is held to be the first comedy in our language" (sect 48). I make my synopsis of the play from an edition published by Messrs. Ginn & Co., U.S.A. (Athenæum Press). This occurs in the second volume of their *Specimens of the Pre-Shakespearean Drama*. There, after the reproduction of the original title page of "Gammer Gurton's Needle," occurs the words: "Printed from the earliest extant edition (Thomas Colwell, London, 1575), which, however, was probably not the first edition, for 'a playe intituled "Dycon of Bedlam, etc.,"' was licensed to Colwell in 1562.....For discussion of date and authorship, see Vol. III." Alas, the second volume is the only one of the three in my possession.

It appears that Warton took the early date, 1551, from a manuscript note seen by Oldys, the antiquary. The title page to the edition of 1575 claims that the play had been acted "not long ago in Christes Colledge in Cambridge," and that it was "made by Mr. S. Mr of Art." *Sharp's Dictionary* has "1543(?)—1608" as the dates of Mr. John Still's birth and death. If the play "Dycon of Bedlam," licensed to Colwell in 1562, was the same as "Gammer Gurton's Nedle," published by Colwell in 1575, it must have existed some years before it was acted at Christ's College. Perhaps Mr. John Still wrote it in his youth and revised it in his maturity.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

## THE BIBLE IN THE SCHOOLS.

SIR,—I am well enough to re-read the correspondence and comments in your issues of January and February which were evoked by my second letter to the *Times*, which appeared on December 24 last. I restrict myself to dealing with your charge—see "Views and Opinions" in the *Freethinker* of January 27—that in my answer to your comments I "left the more important part, that which dealt with teaching of religion and the place of the Bible in State-supported schools, alone." That you should proffer such a charge shows that you read my letter carelessly, and with eagerness to question my right to call myself a Rationalist. In my very brief outline of the curriculum in schools which my letter gave, I accorded special prominence to comparative theology, whereby "the Bible is shown to fall into due place among the sacred writings of great religions, differing from other Scriptures in degree and not in kind." Surely the only inference to be drawn from this is that I am as wholly opposed as you are to any teaching which gives the Bible a special place, making it the vehicle of superstition and obscurantism, with their "bag o' tricks" of disproved dogmas. If you think that a time will come when the Bible will be banished from our schools, you are among the dwellers in that fools' paradise which harbours the visionaries who nurture belief in a future when the majority of mankind will have become Rationalists. The fulfilment of that dream will not be helped by acerbity of tone in attacks upon current beliefs. As Viscount Morley said, we no longer attack, we explain. "As history explains your dogma, so science will dry it up."

One of your correspondents, Mr. Macconnell, hints, in polite language, that my "attitude" may furnish another example of senile decay. That I am not conscious of that terrible calamity may supply my critics with proof of its existence. But perhaps Mr. Macconnell may be reassured if I quote, as applicable to myself, what Viscount Morley said of himself to Mr. Chas. A. Watts in a letter which appeared in the *Literary Guide* of June, 1919: "I am more and more in sympathy with Rationalistic doctrines as my span of time grows narrower."

EDWARD CLODD.

<sup>1</sup>On the authority of MSS. Oldys.

## Obituary.

In the person of George Standring, who died on March 4, probably the last of those who was justly entitled to be called one of "The Old Guard," has passed away in the 69th year of his age. George, the younger brother of Sam Standring, who in the 'nineties was well known as an outdoor propagandist, was born in 1855, joined the National Secular Society before he was twenty, and became an active worker in its ranks. In 1873 he was speaking at both in- and outdoor meetings in London and the provinces, became special lecturer to and Vice-President of the N.S.S.; holding the Secretaryship for a short period preceding Robert Forder. A devoted follower of Charles Bradlaugh, he took an active part in both his political and Freethought trials and triumphs. Never absent from the Hall of Science, except in his working hours, down to the time it closed, he contributed much to the *National Reformer*, also to the *Freethinker*. By trade, a printer and publisher, he wrote many pamphlets, and his *People's Aristocracy* had a large circulation and will be well remembered. He also edited for some time two monthly journals, reviving the old titles of the *Republican* and the *Reasoner*. He was the founder of and secretary to the London Secular Federation; and during its existence Secretary and Treasurer to the Bradlaugh Fellowship. With the true spirit of a worker in the cause of humanity, his energies were not confined to the Freethought party. He was at one time Secretary of the Malthusian League and printer and publisher of its journal; also of *The Wife's Handbook*. He was Chairman of the old Metropolitan Radical Federation, and a prominent member of the Fabian Society.

George Standring was a many-sided man. A pianist of no mean order, and invaluable as an organizer of all social functions. As a speaker, he was remarkable for his quaint humour and amiability, which never failed to put him on good terms with his audience. At the same time, he was a man of quiet but rigid determination, and his opinions once formed were never altered.

He was the first prominent Freethinker with whom I came into close intimacy, forty years ago, and from whom I learned much that was later on of great service to me in my official capacity. He was a devoted husband and father; and probably never quite recovered from the loss of his first wife, who was his helper in all his activities. He was a great admirer of Mr. Cohen, and kept in touch with his older colleagues, but differences of opinion on matters of policy with our late President, G. W. Foote, caused him to cease from active participation in the inside work of our movement in recent years, but to his last conscious hour he was steadfast to his Freethought principles. It was therefore fitting that the National Secular Society should be represented at the cremation of his remains at Golder's Green on March 7, when, at the request of his family, a Secular address was delivered in a most affecting and impressive manner by his old colleague, Mr. W. Heaford. A brief address was also delivered by Mr. F. W. Galton, Secretary of the Fabian Society. And amongst those present were noticed his old associates, the veteran Mr. T. W. Thurlow, Mr. Edward Snelling and Mr. G. Rolf. He leaves a widow, and a daughter and a son by his first wife, to whom his old colleagues tender their heartfelt sympathy, in grateful remembrance of his many years of untiring and loyal service to the Freethought cause.—EDITH M. VANCE.

A well known Birmingham reformer passed away recently in the person of William Henry Skett. Mr. Skett was for many years identified with Socialistic and unemployed propaganda, but was always a very ardent Freethinker. In the open air discussion which took place in the famous Bull Ring he was a quite familiar figure, and more than once came into active conflict with the authorities. In his fight for what he considered to be the rights of free speech, he succeeded in getting arrested no less than forty times, and was imprisoned for short periods on twelve occasions. In accordance with his own request, the funeral ceremony was a secular one, read by Mr. W. McDermott. There were a very large number of mourners present, many representing the various organizations with which Mr. Skett had been connected.

## 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.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Mr. H. G. Everett, "The Case for a Royal Commission on the Lunacy Laws."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W.9): 7, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, "An Evening with the Golden Bough."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. William Platt, "Jest and Earnest in Education."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Mr. Harry Snell, "The Ethical Movement and Spiritual Healing."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Upton Labour Party Hall, 84 Plashet Road, Upton Park, E.13): 7, Mr. E. Burke, a Lecture.

## OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 11.30, Mr. W. E. Hart, a Lecture.

## COUNTRY.—INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street): 7, Mr. F. E. Willis, "Pioneers of Freethought."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street): 6.30, Mr. T. MacArthur, "Christianity and War." (Silver Collection.)

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Youngman's Restaurant, Lowerhead Row): 7, Mr. Ray, "A Hindoo on Indian Philosophy."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Joseph McCabe, "Ancient Egypt—and Tut-ank-Amen."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Amalgamated Engineering Union Hall, 120 Rusholme Road, All Saints): Mr. Vincent J. Hands, 3, "The Case for Atheism"; 6.30, "The Philosophy of Secularism." Teas will be provided.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S.—Discussion Circle meets every Friday at 7.30 at the Labour Club, 6 Richmond Street.

CONWAY MEMORIAL LECTURE, 1924.—This Lecture will be delivered at South Place Institute, Finsbury (near Moorgate Street Station), on Thursday, March 20, by Professor GRAHAM WALLAS, his subject being "W. J. Fox: 1786-1864." Chair taken at 7 p.m. by William Archer. Admission free; reserved seats, 1s. (at the Chapel; or from R.P.A., Johnson's Court, E.C.4).

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.

YOU ARE MISSING, just as surely as any lost one ever searched for, if you persist in ignoring these persistent advertisements. You are missing the finest tailoring service yet offered to the Freethought Movement, and the chance of saving pounds on your clothes. There can be no better time for trying us than now, when our organization is perfect and all our cloths are new. *You will be found* amongst the wisest readers of this journal if you will send a postcard to-day for any of the following: *Gents' A.A. to H. Book, suits from 48/-; Gents' I. to N. Book, suits from 93/-; or our Ladies' Costume and Fashion Book, costumes from 49/6*. The address for it is—MACCONNELL & MABE, Tailors and Costumiers, New Street, Bakewell, Derbyshire.

THE author of "THE EVERLASTING GEMS" asserts that Belloc, Chesterton, Douglas, De la Mare, Kipling, Noyes, Masfield, Phillips, Shanks and Zangwill are poetasters. You have to read his witty attack to realize that there is truth in his assertion. Ask the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4, to send you a copy, 3s. 6d., post free.

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