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Views and Opinions.

Sunday and the Exhibition.

We have several times referred to the dispute over the opening of the Wembley Exhibition, but the question is significant enough to warrant our returning again to the subject. On the face of it, if there was ever a clear case for the opening of an Exhibition on Sunday, it is this one. The Government has spent about £12,000,000 on the place; it is intended to awaken in the minds of the people here, as well as those abroad, some idea of the resources of the British Empire. And the expenditure is broadly justified on the grounds that it is intended to serve as an educational force in the country. It is also quite clear that for the majority of English people the one day on which it is possible for them to go with moderate comfort is Sunday. No one who is employed during week-days can go. It is not a place where one can drop in for an hour as one might wander through an exhibition of pictures or visit a museum. And even Saturday afternoon will afford but scant time for those who have to travel a distance. Sunday is the one day for the masses of the people who are engaged in commercial and industrial pursuits to visit the exhibition with profit and pleasure. But our Sabbatarianism cares little or nothing for the education or the comfort of the people. To the vast majority of parsons it means that people will stay away from church; and to those Sabbatarians who are not parsons, it is disgusting to see or hear of others who are spending their day of rest in a way different from themselves. So in this country, which we are so often assured is not priest-ridden, the priest and his followers are strong enough to compel the Government to think twice before it opens an exhibition on which millions of public money have been spent and to which many hundreds of thousands of the public would be glad to go. We may not be priest-ridden, but all the same the priests appear to get very much their own way.

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Playing to the Sabbatarians.

The question is not a pleasant one for the Government. On the one hand, there is the Freethinking element in the Socialist ranks, who would like to see Sunday rationalized. On the other, there is the obvious desire of the leaders who wish to stand well with the chapel element, and so make sure of the

chapel vote, which makes them very unwilling to do anything that would offend the party which believes in making the day of rest as melancholy as possible. That may have been the reason underlying the answer given by the Attorney-General, Mr. Patrick Hastings, when the question was raised in the House of Commons. He evaded further enquiry by saying that to charge for admission on Sunday was illegal, and it could not be done. Strictly speaking, the answer was correct. It is illegal to charge for admission to any place of amusement, or where discussions are held. But Mr. Hastings knows quite well that all over the country this Act is set on one side. The magistrates have assumed the power to grant what they are pleased to call a seven days' licence to cinemas, a thing which is expressly forbidden by Act of Parliament. If the magistrates are permitted to give owners of places of amusement a licence to open on Sunday, why could not the same thing be done for the exhibition? If their action is illegal—and Mr. Hastings knows it is as well as I do—why do not the law officers of the Crown step in and prevent this wholesale violation of an Act which the Attorney-General says will not permit the Government to do what any cinema proprietor in the country may do? Rear-Admiral Sir Guy Gaunt, who is conducting an agitation in favour of the Sunday opening of the exhibition, says there will be no difficulty in securing facilities for a short Bill legalizing the opening. In that case, the Government will have to face the question and decide whether it intends to make itself the laughing-stock of Europe by standing by such an Act as that of 1781, or whether it will risk offending its chapel friends by repealing or suspending the operation of the Act. And, assuming it passes a short Act legalizing the opening of the exhibition, can it, during the time the Act is suspended for the purpose of opening, insist that all other places shall be closed? It really looks as though there might be, at last, a chance of having this Act set on one side altogether.

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Our Taboo Day.

A committee of clergymen has been formed in order to watch proceedings on behalf of the Sabbatarians. And one of their pleas is the usual one—the opening of the exhibition will lead to an increase of Sunday labour. But the opening of churches also leads to Sunday labour; and certainly the labours of attendants walking about the exhibition grounds will not be more arduous than the labours of those who attend to the churches and chapels during the time they are open. And what on earth has the Government to do with whether there is labour on Sunday or not? If Sunday is to be a day of rest, and not one of mind deadening, someone is bound to labour. The utmost that a modern Government need trouble itself about is to make a seven-day working week illegal. But to say that none shall work on Sunday, or no one shall work on that day save in cases of necessity, is to perpetuate the "taboo" that the semi-civilized past has bequeathed us. The pretence of the chapels that they wish to save the working man from a seven-day

working week is a piece of blatant humbug, and it is only a parson who could argue with a straight face that his agitation is required to prevent working men labouring seven days a week. Anxiety to do more work is certainly not an outstanding feature of the present-day working man. And there is the record of the Churches behind them. When men worked fourteen hours a day for a starvation wage the Churches were silent. They did little or nothing to bring about the twelve- and ten-hour working day, or to secure the Saturday half-holiday. They have only been concerned with one thing, and that is to fill their places of business on the day when they are open. Get the people to come to church. That is the beginning and the end of their solicitude.

Pious Bumbledom. * * *

An interesting sidelight on this question of the right use of Sunday has just been given by the Wycombe Board of Guardians. It was discovered that some of the children who have the misfortune to be in their care were found playing games on Sunday. This horrible example of juvenile depravity was too much for the pious guardians, and the matter was quite solemnly discussed and steps taken to prevent a recurrence of such enormities in the future. Several lady members, and the late Mayor, said they saw no harm in the children playing games on Sunday; and if it had been needed, or if it would have been of avail, some of the leading educationalists of the country might have informed the guardians that no healthier and no better educational training could be found for children than healthy play. It is not alone physically, but also mentally and morally beneficial to the young. And to this there is the testimony of police officials all over the country that providing opportunities for healthy play leads to a marked improvement in the outdoor behaviour of the young of both sexes. But none of these things would have affected the majority of the Wycombe Guardians, and they decided that the Sunday ought to be wholly given over to worship and rest; and for the future the children are to have no recreation on Sundays. There was here no question of employing extra labour. It was Sabbatarianism pure and simple. The children were helpless, and the good guardians did with them as the parsons would like to do with adults if they had the power.

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A Chance for the Government.

In fairness to the parsons it should be said that they do not object to the exhibition being open for some purposes on Sunday. Their veto is not absolute. They will raise no objection to it being opened for religious services on a large scale, and they will then tolerate the labour involved in its opening. A very "slim" man is the preacher. He does not mind using the exhibition to advertise his own wares and so reap the advantages from the expenditure of millions of public money—spent for purposes quite apart from religion. We hope that Sir Guy Gaunt is right when he says that a Bill will be brought into the House of Commons. We shall then be able to see exactly where the present Government stands on this matter. If they are concerned for the health and education of the people, they will not alone legalize the opening of the exhibition, they will do so in the simplest possible way, by repealing the Act which shuts that and other places of education and recreation. Sabbatarians need be under no fears as to their own liberties. No one desires to *compel* them to spend their day of rest in a rational and healthy manner, however much one would like to see them doing so. If they prefer church and chapel, there is no one to prevent their going there. But the force of example will count for much. It is only a

minority to-day that really desires the old-fashioned Sunday. The majority submit to it because they are imposed upon by a noisy minority, urged to action by an army of parsons who know that if once there is a fair chance of people spending the day of rest as it should be spent there will be fewer than ever who will go to church. And in this direction the Government will have a fine chance of setting the people a splendid example. Let them open the exhibition, and they will have put a big nail into an institution that has been responsible for more cant, humbug and general demoralization than any other we possess.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Christian Uncertainty.

NOTHING in Christianity is certain except its untruth. From the beginning until now thoughtful people have unhesitatingly pronounced it false. Mr. Percy Austin, B.A., in a sermon preached in Grange-over-Sands Congregational Church, and published in the *Christian World Pulpit* for April 3, fully admits that "the great forces of unbelief and scepticism are in many ways actively opposed to it, and between them and it constant warfare is being waged." Mr. Austin says, further:—

The fight, of course, assumes different aspects in different ages, but it never altogether ceases. In our own day it is not the vulgar jibes of militant Atheism that have much influence. The opposition speaks in the language of culture and refinement rather than in that of vulgarity and scorn. But even a casual acquaintance with modern literature is sufficient to make clear that the tendency, if not the openly avowed object, of much of it is anti-Christian, subversive of Christian standards and ideals, if not openly deriding them. In varied ways, many subtle and insidious, the spirit of antagonism is making itself felt, and the effect is manifold. In many minds it creates an uncertainty and baffled perplexity. Many devout souls are troubled and are "trembling for the ark of the Lord....." In a word, it is abundantly clear that the spirit of antagonism is sufficiently strong to prevent vast numbers from becoming Christians, from accepting the full implications of Christian discipleship, and giving themselves wholeheartedly to Christian service.

The facts stated as to the influence of Freethought, though supplied by an enemy, are perfectly true. Mr. Austin declares that "it is folly to shut one's eyes to the reality and seriousness of what is one of the great problems facing the Church to-day"; but what comforts the reverend gentleman is "that there is another side to the picture," and that the other side may be expressed thus: There is a "Christian certainty amid the modern perplexity." This is a statement which is worthless unless proved by facts. It is no good saying "Christianity still stands and it is still a power." That is nothing but a dogmatic assertion. We want to know where does Christianity still stand, and where and in what respect it is still a power. Nothing is more natural than for those who live on the Church to sing its praises and exaggerate its virtues; and nothing more natural than to cast a suspicion upon the reality of the virtues attributed to it unless they openly stand on the solid foundation of completely attested facts. Mr. Austin is not one of those. He approaches their position when he says: "Few attitudes are more foolish and more out of touch with the deeper realities of the world's life than is that of the shallow cynicism of the unbelieving doctor in Tennyson's poem, *The Children's Hospital*—'I reckon the good Lord Jesus has had his day.' Had it! It is only beginning to dawn."

There is another observation made by the reverend gentleman which demonstrates the essential inadequacy of his defence of the Christian faith. While admitting that the opponents of Christianity succeed in preventing many from becoming Christians, he asserts that very seldom do they perform the miracle of turning a real Christian into an unbeliever. In making such a claim the preacher only betrays his gross ignorance of the facts. The present writer was for over twenty years a Freethought lecturer, and during that period came into contact with multitudes of men and women who were converts from the Christian faith. Among them were four ex-clergymen, who spent many years holding and preaching with great zeal and enjoyment the doctrines of the Cross, and then abandoned them at the bidding of Reason and became convinced and eloquent advocates of Secularism. In fact, the overwhelming majority of present-day active unbelievers are genuine converts from Christianity. Mr. Austin goes so far in his ignorance as to aver that "the faith of a Christian is able to stand firm and secure, amid all the stress of controversy and attack, because it is firmly founded on the rock of knowledge and experience." A more utterly foolish and undefendable remark could not possibly be made. There is no such thing as Christian knowledge. Mr. Austin's point here he puts thus:—

It is not simply a matter of belief. Beliefs are important, but in the Christian experience they are by no means everything. We commence by believing, but we do not stay there. We immediately go on to something more certain, more sure, more final. We go on to knowing. Now, it is comparatively easy to influence a man's beliefs, but when a man knows something—knows it in the intimate sense of its having so entered into his personal experience as to become veritably part of himself, inseparable from his very existence—it is a far more difficult thing then to convince him that it is all a delusion and that he is quite mistaken.

"Christians go on to knowing." They possess no knowledge of God and the unseen world whatever, and never will or can acquire it, because they are both unknown and unknowable. The new pastor of Westminster Chapel, Dr. John A. Hutton, is much sounder on this point than Mr. Austin. According to a *Christian World* reporter for March 27, a wonderfully striking sentence in a recent Sunday evening sermon was this: "My dear sirs, there is no proof of anything we believe"; which is equivalent to saying that spiritual knowledge does not exist.

Mr. Austin believes that Jesus performed the miracles recorded in the Four Gospels, and that he continues to perform them to-day. "In the realm of moral and spiritual things miracles are being performed every day." "What happens when a human soul in reverent and repentant humility makes the great venture of faith in Jesus Christ? The Master performs a miracle." Now such a thing does happen, though ever so rarely, as for a genuine Christian to be converted to Atheism. According to our preacher's description of it, that conversion would be a greater miracle than the conversion to faith in Christ. *Who performs this miracle?* Surely not Jesus Christ; but who?

Mr. Austin confesses that we are hopelessly ignorant on many points concerning the spiritual world. Of this ignorance he gives illustrations:—

None of us is able to solve all the problems of religion, or to answer all the questions that may be asked concerning it. Involved in our religion are the deepest problems that have ever challenged the thought of man. There is much that the wisest intellect cannot fathom.

And yet we are assured that a Christian positively knows things of which the non-Christian is intensely

ignorant; for example, he knows "the fact of redemption, of pardon and peace with God." The New Testament assures us that the man who believes in Jesus Christ has his sins forgiven and enters thereby into a new experience of reconciliation and peace with God. It is perfectly true that there are people who have such an experience; but nobody can help seeing that the experience results from a series of beliefs concerning Jesus, and that apart from such beliefs the experience is conspicuous only by its absence. If a man believes that he is a sinner, with a heavy burden of guilt and sin upon his back, nothing is more certain than that when he accepts Christ as his saviour, his burden will fall. Now Mr. Austin holds that he will not say, "I believe I have lost my burden," but, most certainly, "I know I have lost my burden." Mr. Austin evades the point at issue, which is that the poor man's experience springs from the facts that he believes himself to be a sinner, that Christ died to save him, and that salvation comes alone by applying those beliefs to himself. The unbeliever has none of that experience. He is not a sinner doomed to die, he carries no sham burden on his back, and to him the sense of the forgiveness of sins and of peace and fellowship with God never comes and fills his heart with joy. Furthermore, he is profoundly convinced that the Christian's pretence to spiritual knowledge is absolutely unjustifiable, and that his beliefs are houses built upon the sands. Mr. Austin's opinions are not shared by many enlightened clergymen; and we close by repeating Dr. Hutton's undoubtedly true saying: "My dear sirs, there is no proof of anything we believe."

J. T. LLOYD.

Some Sceptical Schoolmasters.

Spirits are not finely touched
But to fine issues.

—Shakespeare.

What good is like to this,
To do worthy the writing, and to write
Worthy the reading and the world's delight?

—S. Daniel.

SCHOOLMASTERS are generally supposed to be as reactionary as the clergy; yet there have been some notable exceptions, and it is well to recall some shining examples. The most popular English edition of *The Meditations of Aurelius* is by George Long, who was for many years a master at Brighton College; and who was himself a most interesting personality. A brilliant Cambridge student, he was bracketed Craven scholar with Macaulay, the historian, and gained a fellowship over his powerful rival. For four years Long was a professor at Charlottesville, Virginia, U.S.A., and afterwards teacher of Greek at University College, London, where he numbered Robert Browning, the poet, among his pupils. He was also one of the founders of the Royal Geographical Society. His translation of *Marcus Aurelius* is his best-known work, but his *Cicero's Orations* and *Epictetus* are fine examples of exact scholarship.

Of far greater interest to the ordinary reader is Long's last book, *An Old Man's Thoughts*, which is as full of good things as an egg is full of meat. He says: "I wish Euclid could have secured a perpetual copyright. It might have helped the finances of the Greeks." Elsewhere he has a sly hit at the clergy: "There is no occasion to print any more sermons, when we have done it long ago in a few books." The old scholar had a quarrel with an American publisher, who had issued an edition of his *Marcus Aurelius* without permission. Long wrote caustically:—

I do not grudge him his profit, if he has made any.
There may be many men and women in the United

States who will be glad to read the thoughts of the Roman Emperor. If the American politicians, as they are called, would read them also, I should be much pleased, but I do not think the Emperor's morality would suit their taste.

This is fine writing, and shows something of the man. In the lengthy preface to his *Marcus Aurelius* he corrects the clergy for their partisan views on the persecutions of the early Christians. Long was so much more than a rare scholar; not only did he know the world of books, but he also knew the book of the world.

Another schoolmaster deserving mention is William Johnson Cory. For some years one of the masters of Eton College, his fame is not what it should be. Yet the author of that beautiful book of verse, *Ionica*, deserves a better literary fate, and it is pleasant to find him mentioned in Anger's *Memories of Eton*. Cory was eccentric, but he managed to write verse of outstanding value, such as *Heracitus*:—

They told me, Heracitus, they told me you were dead;
They brought me bitter news to hear, and bitter tears
to shed;

I wept as I remembered how often you and I
Had tired the sun with talking and sent him down
the sky.

Cory was unconventional. Anger says: "If the sound of drums and fifes was heard in the street outside he would exclaim, 'Brats, the British Army!' and would join a general stampede to see the soldiers go by." Just imagine anyone addressing the curled, perfumed darlings of Eton as "brats"! Cory married late in life, and had a son whom he named Andrew, Truly, a striking personality. I have a genuine liking for the old schoolmaster, for did he not write an excellent poem, *Mimnermus at Church*?

A greater man, and a more potent force for progress, is Mr. Henry Stephens Salt, who was one of the house-masters at Eton College; indeed, he is an Etonian amongst Etonians, for he was educated at that famous place of learning. Cambridge University also had a share in his education, although it is difficult to believe that he could ever have acquiesced in that "home of lost causes." For the young scholar was early fascinated by Shelley's lyrics of liberty, and was absorbed with the intellectual audacities of Thoreau and Whitman. In such company, young Mr. Salt was bound to look beyond the walls of Eton, and to scan far horizons and the unalterable stars. Indeed, he soon saw through the educational limitations of Eton, for has he not described it wittily as "the nursery of Toryism."

Mr. Salt's life work is associated with the Humanitarian League, which G. W. Foote described as "one of the noblest and most useful organizations in England." "No friend of humanity," he added, "need despair if he will only look at what the League has done for the real higher life of England in the face of tremendous odds." The wide scope of the League's activities may be estimated by recalling that it dealt with such measures as Prison Reform, Cruel Sports, Humane Diet and Dress, Education of Children, Flogging in the Army and Navy, the Humanizing of the Poor Law, and many other needful reforms. In brief, the distinctive purpose of the League was to consolidate the principle of humanness, which it considered should be an essential part of any intelligible system of society.

Although Mr. Salt has chosen the work of a reformer, and his life has been a ceaseless whirl of activities in pursuit of progress, he might have made a great name for himself in literature. His sympathetic studies of Shelley, Richard Jefferies, De Quincey, Thoreau, and James Thomson, prove his devotion to letters. His quiet humour is displayed in his delightful volume of verse, *Consolations of a*

Faddist; whilst his scholarship is apparent in his spirited rendering of *The Treasures of Lucretius*. In another vein he has emulated George Borrow, and his *On Cambrian and Cumbrian Hills* is not without a touch of genius. Mr. Salt's career is a discourse on the indispensability of reformers, who, more even than the poets, are "the unacknowledged legislators of mankind."

MIMNERMUS.

Self-Reliance.

EMERSON wrote one of his finest essays on self-reliance. Bradlaugh taught it and lived it strenuously all his life. G. W. Foote insisted on it; and his successor in Secular leadership implies it in all his teachings. Christian ethics—if ethics may be qualified—on the other hand, teach the very opposite of self-reliance. The Christian is taught to believe on the Lord, on luck, and charity, but seldom acts upon the injunction. There are, of course, limits to self-reliance: piteous cases where it is out of the question, objects of mutual, merely human aid. In a secularized State the human wreckage so appallingly obvious in Christian society would not be tolerated. Steps would be taken to help those unable to help themselves. A secular regime would at least be ill-content with Christianity's fatalistic maxim: "The poor ye have always with you"; and would not relegate them to the Lord and luck and charity, but extend them the help of man, without blather about "blessed be ye poor," the veriest mockery of misfortune. With less or no talk about the poor and suffering Christ and his sweet by and by, the virtue of self-reliance in thought and action might be much more common than it is.

With the wisest, most benevolent extension of mutual aid, to be self-reliant, self-sufficing, self-contained, is still a necessity as it is the most useful and honourable attribute of the social unit as of society itself. To be dependent on no one, to stand on your own feet, as the saying goes, or in the intellectual sense, on your own head, which is even more important; but even on the lower plane it is the distinguishing feature of one in any way heroic if—

But for the glorious privilege of being independent.

I had some such reflections on my way to hear Mr. Cohen in Glasgow the other Sunday. It was February, an unsettled season in these latitudes, but the day was quite "providentially" fine—it might well have been as providentially frightful—you know the fickle ways of Providence, in weather and other things. What with the day, the exercise, and the lecture in between, I was mentally and physically recuperated—I might say, and quite sincerely, regenerated. But to our theme: The way was long (30 miles), the wind was cold—but, no, I was not yet infirm and old, at least, I did not feel so. I had friends who would have "put me up"; but there is discomfort in dependence—in obligation, rather—an agony sometimes compared to which the toils, discomforts, and dangers of being "on one's own" are as nothing. I hope Mr. V. J. Hands will note this admirable Scottish trait!

Trains are few, especially on Sundays; good hotels expensive; and there is always the lure of the "sporting chance," the splendid isolation and charm of the solitary way. There are many reasons. So the double journey on the old push bike must be accomplished in one day. I am not boasting, it is not heroic, only the heart's desire. There must be great economy of time, effort, etc., concentration on the single purpose and its attainment; care, watchfulness, anticipation and so on. I thought on my way to and from the city—

There was not in the wide world a valley so sweet.

The hills stood out vividly limned in the deep, serene azure of the skies, with stilly clouds above; and the morning and evening shadows filling the hollows, softening the scene to inexpressible charm. At one end of the way a bridal veil of mist united azure hill and sea; at the other, far glimpses of the Gateway to the Highlands, and the austere tops of some lofty Ben's.

I had called for my "private secretary" in the morning, but he thought the weather was too forbidding; so did I, as I "swithered" a moment in the lea of a hedge. A choir of larks arose singing a brief choral, it was an omen, I knew I should see Jamaica Street that day. The lecture, like the outing, was much to my taste; the refreshment of both is with me still.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Lincoln: The Freethinker.

Address delivered at Banquet of the Freethinkers' Society of New York, at Hotel Belleclaire, 77th Street at Broadway, on the evening of February 12, 1924.

I REMEMBER once reading a statement in the public press that no one could be elected president of the United States unless that person was a believer in the Christian religion. At the time I saw this statement I took it as being true, because there came to my mind a story, often told about Robert G. Ingersoll.

The story was something like this:—

A number of prominent men and women came to pay a visit to the celebrated orator, and during the course of a conversation one of them remarked that the Colonel had a magnificent library, which was no doubt extremely expensive. To this Ingersoll replied, that his library was exceedingly expensive and possibly the most expensive library of any individual in the world. The questioner looked a bit dubious at the reply, and ventured that he thought he had seen libraries which cost a great deal more than the Colonel's. In reply to this, Ingersoll said that his library cost him the presidency of the United States.

But it is not true that a person must be a believer in the Christian religion as a qualification to hold that high and distinguished office. More than one president of this great country was a disbeliever in the Christian plan of salvation, and, peculiarly so, the very men who were not Christians are acknowledged as the greatest in that long list of illustrious men who have received the highest gift within the power of this nation. Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln, all unbelievers, are the great triumvirate of the United States of America.

My effort, and it is a "labour of love," is to tell you to-night that Lincoln, that sad-eyed martyr of this Republic, was a Freethinker, even as you and I. But in proving to you that Lincoln was a Freethinker, it becomes necessary to disprove the frequent assertion that he was a Christian. Under ordinary circumstances it would not be necessary to prove a man was not something else in order to establish what he was. But in the case of Abraham Lincoln such a procedure is absolutely essential, because the Christian world claims an absolute monopoly of great men.

Strange it is that very little effort is being made by the Christian world to prove the religious belief of other presidents than those three who stand so pre-eminently as America's greatest statesmen; I think I can safely say that there are more volumes written to prove Lincoln a Christian than of any other statesman of this country. And, like the man that "doth protest too much," there is a reason for this. Perhaps they are believers in the motto that if you tell a lie often enough you will begin to believe it yourself, and so hardly a year passes that a book by some clergyman proclaiming Lincoln a Christian is not issued from the press.

Last year, in response to a public announcement that a prominent senator was to deliver an address on Lincoln, I attended this gathering. Through an unfortunate circumstance the senator was unable to attend, and the minister in charge of the ceremonies announced that in

the evening, at his church, he would deliver an address upon "Lincoln, the Christian." But in making this announcement he seemed to apologize for his liberty in calling Lincoln a Christian without the proper evidence to support his contention, and quoted Emerson, by saying: "What you are speaks louder than what you say." Under those conditions you can prove anything to be anything you want to prove it to be. But we will measure Lincoln for not only what he said, but also for what he did not say. We will follow the motto that although "actions speak louder than words," only hypocrites say what they do not believe.

In order to be a Christian it is necessary to believe in the divinity of the Bible. To be a Freethinker it is essential that you reject the Bible as a divine book. To determine then whether a person is a Christian or a Freethinker should indeed be very simple. A person may believe in God and yet reject the Bible as a divine book. Such a person cannot be a Christian believer, but may be a Freethinker.

A person may believe in the Bible, and according to their particular interpretation be any one of the following divisional sects of Christianity: Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Seventh Day Adventists, Holy Rollers or Holy Jumpers.

A Freethinker may be any one of the following: a Deist, a Rationalist, a Pantheist, an Agnostic, or an Atheist.

It is not my intention to dispute with any particular branch of Christianity that may claim Lincoln as its follower, nor classify him in any one of the sub-divisions by which a Freethinker may declare himself. It is my purpose to disprove that Lincoln was a Christian, and with the produced evidence, show, unequivocally, that he was an avowed Freethinker.

Evidence may be true or false. Proof of evidence is the only test of its reliability. The proof of a statement, without evidence, depends a great deal upon the person who makes it. What ministers say, particularly in religious controversies, requires corroboration.

For a great many years it was impossible to secure the *Life of Lincoln*, as written by his intimate friend and law partner, William H. Herndon. It was to this man that Lincoln said, on becoming president, that he wished his name associated with his own until death. It seems that the religious world took exception to this *Life of Lincoln*. It was found to contain too many truths that were not in harmony with the contention of a number of clergymen.

The story goes that every available copy of Herndon's *Life of Lincoln* was purchased by the clergy, some paying as high as one hundred dollars for a copy. They did not spend this money because of the value of the book; they did not want its facts known to the public. For nearly twenty-five years this work on Lincoln was held at a premium, and I believe it was only last year, in response to an overwhelming demand, that the descendants of Herndon decided upon republication of the volumes, and they are fortunately once more available to the general public.

Herndon's *Life of Lincoln* is conceded by all fair-minded persons to be the most accurate picture of the life of the sixteenth president of this country that has ever been written. Some maintain that Herndon was to Lincoln what Boswell was to Johnson. Men prominent in the higher walks of life, members of Congress, senators, judges, members of the president's cabinet, intimate friends and relatives, and even his bosom companion, his wife, testify that Lincoln was an unbeliever, an infidel, a Freethinker. Strangers, a few casual acquaintances, and a number of clergymen, known and unknown, maintain that he was a Christian. And yet the two ministers most intimately acquainted with Lincoln do not support the contention of their more zealous but less truthful "divines."

The weight of the evidence is so preponderant in favour of Lincoln's religious emancipation that it seems almost impossible that anyone could be so audacious as to assert that he believed in any dogma of any religious denomination. But we cannot prevent anyone from saying what they will, particularly in religious matters, where the emotion is stronger than the reason, and which sometimes prompts the religious fanatics even to murder a person in an endeavour to save his "soul." It may seem a

paradox, and yet in religious matters the things most difficult of performance are the things most easily believed. And for Christianity not to possess Lincoln as an adherent is truly a tragedy for them. It is a mortal thrust too painful to bear. It is no small wonder then that some clergymen have stooped to questionable means and methods in their endeavours to show Lincoln to have been a member of their sect. They did not seek the truth. They strained every fact to the breaking point in their endeavours to find some shred upon which they might base their claim. But, alas, unable to secure any truthful evidence, some, as proof of their contention, have said that Lincoln possessed the virtues of Patience, Tenderness and Charity.

For ages the virtues of Christianity were exemplified in the heartlessness that murders a Hypatia; the cruelty that accompanied the Crusaders; that schemes and inflicts the punishment of an Inquisition and burns a Bruno and imprisons a Galelic; that madly and joyously takes part in a massacre of a St. Bartholomew's Eve, and that with due solemnity judicially tries and convicts, sentences and executes a rooster for laying eggs on Sunday.

It requires but little effort on the part of the unscrupulous to find witnesses to testify falsely. I remember distinctly when I first read the claim that Thomas Paine recanted, I was simply overwhelmed. I was not only convinced that this brave and good man recanted before he died, but I felt certain, from the charges brought against him, that he led a most profligate and dissolute life. No doubt the defamers of Paine believed in the motto that if you throw enough mud a little of it will stick. I was stunned and bewildered. I was sore at heart to feel that so great and unselfish a man, the author of the *Age of Reason* and the *Rights of Man*, could have fallen to such miserable depths. But when I read Ingersoll's answer to them, when I saw how he disposed of each and every accusation; how he discredited the witnesses; how he exposed the character of the defamers and culminators of Paine, I realized then that the reputation of any man, with courage enough to speak the truth as he sees it, may be besmirched if what he says is contrary to what the great mass of people are led to believe to be the truth.

I also realized then that the statement of a minister, especially in a bitter religious controversy, must be substantiated before accepted as a verity. But "truth crushed to earth will rise again," and as it was with Paine so it is with Lincoln.

Were the Civil War a failure, had the Union perished, the Church would not be straining every muscle to claim Lincoln a believer in Christianity. Rather they would shout from the "housetops" the destruction brought upon this nation by the insane idealism of this arrogant infidel. All the horrors of that war would be vividly pictured before you. They would relate with glee how in early manhood he had written a pamphlet against the Bible and Christianity, and how, seated among others discussing its points, it was snatched from his hands and thrown into the fire. How they would dwell upon this act of "Providence"; and with a sanctimoniousness only becoming a Christian they would pray God to save them from another Lincoln. Slavery would still be the topic of the Christian pulpit, and the "divine institution" would be supported by the Biblical edict: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling."

But the fact of the matter is that the manuscript that Lincoln wrote against the Bible and Christianity was taken from him and destroyed by a friend and fellow-Freethinker, Samuel Hill, his employer, who feared the effects of such a book upon his public career. His friend knew the liberality of the religious-minded; and fortunately for the Republic his manuscript perished, and the nation was saved!

When Lincoln ran for Congress against the Reverend Peter Cartwright, charges were brought against him by clergymen that he was an infidel, and for having said that Christ was an illegitimate child. And not once did Lincoln deny the truth of these charges. When asked why he did not deny them, Lincoln said he did not do so for two reasons: first, he knew the charges to be true; and, second, they could be easily proved;

Galelio became a heretic when he questioned the truth of Joshua's influence on the sun. Were Charles Darwin a Christian, the *Origin of Species* would never have seen the light of day, and William Jennings Bryan would have been denied the great opportunity of making a monkey of himself. And if Abraham Lincoln was a Christian, the emancipation of the negro slaves would never have entered his mind.

Slavery is just as much a fundamental part of Christianity as is the Virgin Birth. To contradict one is just as serious as to deny the other. Leviticus, chapter 25, verses 44 to 46 is just as much a part of the Bible as is the Ten Commandments. If one is "inspired," so is the other; and I quote the former:—

Both thy bondmen and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen round about you; of them ye shall buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover, of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, which they begat in your land, and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever.

The following quotations from the New Testament require the same belief and acceptance from Christians as does the death and resurrection of Christ. I quote Timothy, chapter 1, verse 1: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their masters worthy of all honour." And Titus, chapter 2, verse 9: "Exhort servants to be obedient to their masters."

As proof that the emancipation of the negro slaves was opposed by the Christian Church, I need but quote the testimony of the celebrated divines of that time. The Rev. Alexander Campbell said: "There is not one verse in the Bible inhibiting slavery, but many regulating it. It is not, then, we conclude, immoral."

The Rev. E. D. Simms, professor Randolph-Macon College, wrote: "The extracts from Holy Writ unequivocally assert the right of property in slaves."

The Rev. R. Furman, D.D., Baptist of South Carolina, says: "The right of holding slaves is clearly established in the Holy Scriptures, both by precept and example."

The Rev. Thomas Witherspoon, Presbyterian of Alabama, said: "I draw my warrant from the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to hold the slave in bondage."

The Rev. Nathan Lord (what an authoritative name!), President of Dartmouth College, said: "Slavery was incorporated into the civil institutions of Moses; it was recognized accordingly by Christ and his apostles. *They condemned all intermeddlers with it.*"

The Rev. Taylor, Principal of the Theological Department of Yale College (and he certainly ought to know), said: "I have no doubt that if Jesus Christ were on earth he would, under certain circumstances, become a slaveholder."

And I want to say here and now that I agree absolutely with the Rev. Taylor.

And Lincoln himself said: "All the powers of the earth seem rapidly combining against the slaves, Mammon is after him—and the theology of the day is fast joining in the cry."

But the most striking illustration of history showing the close connection between the Bible and slavery, is the fact that when the Revolutionists of France—Freethinkers all—rejected the Bible as a State book of authority, they also abolished slavery throughout the French possessions.

To show the close connection between the belief in the Bible and the institution of slavery, I need but mention the fact that when a Bill was introduced in Parliament to abolish slavery in the British Empire Lord Chancellor Thurlow characterized the move as "miserable and contemptible" and as being "contrary to the word of God."

And I repeat and re-emphasize that it was utterly impossible for Abraham Lincoln to be a believer in the Bible, and be the author of the *Emancipation Proclamation*.

A Christian believes the Bible to be the infallible word of God. He believes that all the knowledge necessary to his well-being, happiness and immortality, is contained therein. To question its precepts is heresy to him. It is because of this belief that Christianity has to its credit the Dark Ages. To doubt, to investigate, to improve, to advance, is a principle contrary to the doctrines of religion. "Prove all things, hold fast to that which

is true," means to the religious-minded only what the Bible says is true. "Whatever is, is best," is the brake upon the wheel of progress. "God's will" is the stereotyped answer to all that is. If Lincoln were a Christian, he would have accepted the Negro's plight in life as in accordance with the "divine plan" as enunciated by the "Holy Bible."

It was because Lincoln was not bound by any creed, not hampered by any religious belief, that he felt that the marks of the vicious lash upon the tender skin were not and could not be right by divine sanction, and for that reason he waged the most just war in humanity's heroic struggle for freedom. "In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free," is the statement that no believer in the Bible could utter.

JOSEPH LEWIS.

(To be Continued.)

Acid Drops.

An attempt was made by Mr. Ernest Brown, M.P., during the discussion of the Army Annual Bill, to get the War Minister, Mr. Walsh, to accept an amendment which would abolish compulsory Church Parades in the Army. The Government would have none of it, and the amendment was rejected with "merriment." We are not surprised. The present Government is not likely to do anything that would offend the Chapels and the Churches, and one would expect the average member of Parliament to bubble over with "merriment" at the idea that a man in uniform should be influenced by anything so old-fashioned as a principle. So soldiers must still be refused what is a privilege of every other citizen—that of choosing whether they shall go to church or stay away. They will be marched there, told when to kneel, when to say "Amen"; treated like so many children unable to decide for themselves whether they shall go to Sunday school or not. There is a lot of educational work to be done yet.

We are indebted to a friend who heard Canon Dorrity, Vicar of St. Ann's, Manchester, that he was speaking on "The Folly of Unbelief," and that he said, among other things, that a little time ago, whilst on a railway journey, he picked up a copy of the *Freethinker*, "and," he proceeded, "I was astounded at the kind of—one can only call it—'stuff' that is still retailed, and still is bought, and still apparently helps to keep such publications upon their feet." He dropped it at that; but among the things he said about the subject of his address were these: "That without religious belief we should have to give up the best literature in life"; "our memories and tenderest recollections"; "the hope that one day the trials and troubles and inequalities of this life would be vindicated and atoned for"; and we should have to give up "reason and conscience." And that's the "sort of stuff" that apparently keeps persons like Canon Dorrity "on their feet."

All else we feel inclined to add upon this deliverance of Canon Dorrity's is that the *Freethinker* has behind it far more genuine conviction and unselfish labour than has any religious publication in the country. Association with it cannot be made the stepping-stone of advancement—social, political or financial. With all those associated with it, it is fundamentally a labour of love. It is written without fear, and with no hope of material profit. We wonder of how many religious papers and of how many Christian movements in this country that could be truthfully said. Canon Dorrity might reflect that for over forty years the *Freethinker* has been appearing week after week, never earning enough to pay expenses, but always appearing, and is likely to continue to appear. These are facts that a man who had the desire to understand human nature might well ponder. And any other than a Christian preacher might realize that a movement which can do this, and continue to do it, in the face of

all that a powerful Church can do to prevent it, must have something in it which appeals to human nature at its best. But, perhaps, if Canon Dorrity could appreciate this he would not continue for long to be a dignitary of the Church. He would do as so many better than he has done—leave it, and get a living in a more creditable manner.

Having said that much, we may be excused for giving a sample of Canon Dorrity's "stuff" as reported in a Manchester paper. "There are," he said, "not many theoretical Atheists, but there are millions of practical Atheists." We do not know the distinction between a theoretical and practical Atheist, but the Canon's intention is quite clear. He wishes his hearers and readers to think of the practical Atheist as a very evil-living creature, and so keep his followers from thinking of theoretical Atheism. That is a very old Christian game, which has always treasured slander and vilification as its principal weapons. We would remind the Canon of Coleridge's famous statement that there was not one man in ten thousand with either strength of mind or enough goodness of heart to be an Atheist. But Coleridge was a man of genius, and knew what he was talking about. It is always possible for the Atheist to be quite wrong in his opinions. But only a fool or a rogue would take Atheism, in a world dominated by Christians, to be a synonym for wickedness. If one wishes to play the rogue safely and profitably the Christian Church is the place for him.

All good Christians in Scotland, to whatever station of life they are called—particularly on the higher slopes—will have an opportunity of showing that equality in practice which they believe. The élite of Edinburgh are inclined to boycott a function in connection with the Assembly of the Church of Scotland as a protest against the appointment of Mr. James Brown, M.P., as High Commissioner. Mr. Brown appears to have nothing against him except that he has been a miner. Now if Mr. Brown or his ancestors had exterminated a few thousand of natives, black or yellow, instead of only hewing coal, *Quality* would have opened her arms to him. It seems difficult to believe that Robert Burns was born in Scotland.

It is refreshing to note that one correspondent in *The Grocer*, March 22, in a letter entitled "Churches and Co-operation," boldly states his position as an Atheist. Mr. Geo. B. Mason, the writer, administers some hard knocks against Christianity, which has now descended to the level of pills, purgatives and rubber heels. It has had to call in the advertisement expert—which is the beginning of the end.

Official figures of leprosy cases in Northern Nigeria reach the startling figure of 66,000. These figures relate to one disease only, and humanity is afflicted with many. No wonder Ingersoll said that if he were God he would make health catching, instead of disease.

The Rev. C. R. Tyrwhitt, rector of Whichford, Warwickshire, strangled himself with a silk handkerchief. Yet Christian Evidence lecturers will have it that only wicked Atheists take their own lives.

Mr. Bernard Shaw's success with his new play, *Saint Joan*, has prompted Christians to try and claim the most brilliant of living dramatists as one of themselves. The *British Weekly* says Shaw is "one of the most religious souls alive." Such nauseous nonsense prompts one to quote from Shakespeare: "An ounce of civet, good apothecary."

The *Daily News* Radio Critic has made the alarming discovery that broadcasters can't join in the singing at religious services. And they can't join in the collection either, which is a much more important item. Anyhow, in this age of science, it is a godsend to have a man like

the Radio Critic about the house; he no sooner sees the obvious than he makes a song about it.

We observe that a certain Peckham pastor, the Rev. A. Johnson, is announced to deliver two sermons on Sunday next; that in the morning, on "Christ's Arithmetic," which ought to be interesting. He will perhaps be able to explain the arithmetic of the passage, "I and my Father are one," which has puzzled the minds of many earnest Christians. In the evening his sermon is on "God's Favourite." Old Jahveh, however, had a good many favourites among the Jews. Jacob was one; he was a consummate liar and a thief, and he cruelly robbed his brother Esau of this birthright and his father's blessing by a most audacious trick. David was another of God's favourites; he committed nearly all the crimes of the Decalogue—theft, adultery and murder, to name only a few; but according to the Bible he was "a man after God's own heart," and that excused everything. The reverend gentleman should follow these sermons with others on the crimes of the early Christians against poor unfortunate sceptics, who certainly were not favourites of God—and found very few real friends among their fellow-men.

Some time ago Mr. G. K. Chesterton was interested in the revival of chivalry, with the Mass as the centre of this idea. The *Westminster Gazette* has seized on the "Knight" business to advertise a scheme of insurance. It would appear that newspapers will give their readers anything rather than something to think about; and from all appearances the time is not far distant when daily newspapers will have to be given away in order to be read.

Our daily newspapers—seldom known to be guilty of an idea that would lift mankind out of the mud—are in a bad way. That great organ of piety, the *Daily News*, informs a gaping world that "Uno," its tipster, is the only sporting prophet whose forecasts show a profit with a level stake. Even the language of the racecourse has a theological flavour.

Miss Lilian Baylis has been presented with the honorary degree of Master of Arts by Oxford University. We believe that General Booth has been similarly honoured. Perhaps it is too late to suggest that the industrious lady might return what is a doubtful compliment, after so much unrecognized hard work in a district not on the map of the classes. The fourpenny seats are mighty hard at the "Old Vic," but there is no mistaking the enthusiasm and support from an audience not made by any press nor encouraged by any university, and it would be a tragedy to allow the House of Shakespeare to be patronized by either.

The Mystic's Goal, a book by Julia Seton, appears to be "getting warm," as the children say in their games. The lady states that "Christ is a consciousness in the race." This simple statement may have far-reaching consequences; port-wine necked parsons will be out of employment, all the Christian cargo of mummery goes overboard, Salvation Army bands will have to pack up, and the black army that has been dealing out slave morality in the name of Christianity will not be wanted. Miss Julia Seton is to be congratulated for bringing the question of Christ up to date; it is the present and future that matter to the human race. But if Christ is a consciousness in the human race, the rack and thumbscrew used by fanatics were realities—and so are the Blasphemy Laws.

Mr. George Bernard Shaw had a leading article all to himself in the *Daily News* of Friday, March 28, which dealt chiefly with airy generalities, and did not make any mention of his views on religion. A novelist, Mr. H. L. Adam, was allowed to muddle on the same page about Cain being the first murderer; and this writer of fiction—as one in the know—gravely wrote of his banishment: "It was God's manner of indication in what sanctity He held human life." We wonder if the writer of this rub-

bish has heard of the earthquake in Tokio; or that brawl a few years ago in the pothouse called Europe.

Billy Yindley, of Norwich, is a light-weight boxer. He is also a good Roman Catholic, and never enters the ring without a rosary and cross, which have been blessed by a priest. And Billy says that he wins most of his fights because of this cross and rosary. We do not dispute Billy's statement, it would not perhaps be safe, but it seems rather unfair to the men he fights with. We wonder what particular saint it is that paralyses the punches of the other fellow? But, after all, Billy's proofs of the divine assistance are as good as any we have ever heard of.

What sounds like a prize distribution function is to be found in the information that Cardinal Bourne will present to the Pope the British pilgrims whom he escorted to the Holy Land. Well, some go on a pilgrimage to pass the time away, and others trapse to work and back again because there are no trams or 'buses; at the risk of being original, we might say it is a mad world, but we believe the climatic conditions at this time of the year in Italy and Palestine are slightly better than those in England. Now if the Holy Land were at the North Pole!

"Atheism," says the Rev. G. Studdert-Kennedy, "is not a creed; it is a disease, a form of neurasthenia." We are reminded by a correspondent that Mr. Studdert-Kennedy is the author of a book entitled *Lies*. We have not read the book, but with that statement before one, none would be inclined to question his right to speak with authority on the matter.

But we would seriously invite Mr. Studdert-Kennedy to settle down for a while and pay some attention to the part that disease has played in the perpetuation of the religion he preaches. Part of the divine authority of Jesus consisted in casting devils out of epileptics and lunatics—that is the presence of disease, and popular ignorance concerning it was made the ground of belief in divine activity. The basis of "divine" visions, the hearing of angelic voices, the feeling of the presence of God, with some of the greatest of figures in Christian history was no more than the mistaking of pathologic conditions for divine illumination. The conversion of St. Paul was due to a misunderstanding of the nature of a sunstroke. And so one might continue the list. If this preacher would only spend a few hours with Mr. Cohen's *Religion and Sex* he would find there all the facts collated which demonstrate the truth of what has been said. One might truthfully call Christianity the religion of disease. It has been built largely upon the disorders of the individual body, and it has been perpetuated by the disorders of the body social.

"God knows," says the Master of the Temple "the clergy need heartening." We are inclined to agree with him. There is little to-day to encourage the sincere and honest clergyman. It must be disheartening to see how steadily the world grows away from religion, to see the ideas to which one has given one's life reduced to the primitive elements of ignorance and savagery. But there is a way out. Why not give up the profession altogether? There are surely ways in which good men can live without bolstering up a scarcely veiled lie.

The *Evening News* is responsible for the story that a man who some years ago fired a haystack near Horn-castle, Lincolnshire, was discovered through reading Exodus xxii. 6, which runs: "If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed therewith; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution." We have no means of testing the truth of the story, nor are we quite clear as to the moral, unless it is, "don't read the Bible, it is dangerous." But we could have seen some sense in the tale if the man had been prevented firing the haystack through reading the Bible. But the Lord never appears to work in a common-sense manner.

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.

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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.

T. PICKERING.—Sorry we are unable to use your communication.

H.L.W.—Do not doubt your story, but you will realize that we should require confirmatory evidence before giving it publicity. That is an essential precaution.

T. MOSLEY.—We have not seen the article. It is a paper we see only casually. Thanks; we are getting all right again.

A. B. MOSS.—Pleased to hear you are better. We heard from Mr. Lloyd on the 7th, and were glad to hear that he is steadily getting better. Probably the disappearance of the wintry conditions will put him right again.

HOWELL, ENGLAND.—The definition is strictly in accord with the facts.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

The Reporter (Salford) contains a very fair report of Mr. Cohen's recent lecture in the Pendleton Town Hall on "Why Not Secularize the State?" It also pays due attention to Councillor Monks' very sensible comments on the intrusion of religion into civic life. There seems a very determined effort to make some local councils as

religious as possible, and Freethinkers should be on their guard against this new move on the part of the Churches and Chapels.

The *Chatham News* prints an interesting account of a Spiritualistic meeting held in Chatham and addressed by Mr. Horace. The account is interesting because of the manner in which the writer—evidently much above the ordinary newspaper reporter—deals with the conditions prevailing in the meeting as being highly favourable to all kinds of suggestion. That is undoubtedly a very important consideration with people—many of whom are highly strung, painfully anxious to get into touch with dead friends or relatives, and ready to fill in the general outline of departed friends given by the speaker. What credulity and suggestibility will do was seen in the famous case of the "Angels of Mons." Here a story deliberately invented by a journalist—who made no secret of his invention—was seized upon by numbers of people, and witnesses were found who had managed to persuade themselves that they had actually seen the angels. And in spite of all the journalist could do the lie gained on the truth. We are not sure that it is quite dead even now.

The *Chatham News* says that Mr. Horace Leaf is well known in Spiritualistic circles, but "is better known, perhaps, by the famous argument he had with Mr. Chapman Cohen, in St. Andrews Hall, Glasgow, in 1920, on "Does Man Survive Death?" For the benefit of those interested and who would wish to read the arguments of the two disputants, we may state that a verbatim report may be obtained from the *Freethinker* Office, price sixpence.

The new Secretary of the Glasgow Branch of the N.S.S. is Mr. A. Stewart, 114 Blackburn Street, Plantation. He will be pleased to hear from old members, and also those who are likely to become new ones. The Glasgow Branch, having concluded its winter season, is now keeping in touch with its members by organizing a series of summer "Rambles," the first of which will be to Cathkin Loch, on Sunday, April 27. Particulars in due course will be found among our lecture notices.

The Manchester Branch is holding its annual meeting of members at the Engineer's Hall, Rusholme Road, on Saturday, April 12, at 3 o'clock. The Branch is very desirous of expanding its work, and some important questions are to be brought forward in relation to this. It is hoped, therefore, that all members will make an effort to be present.

A new Freethought paper, the *Rationalist*, has made its appearance in Melbourne. It is a monthly, and will be sold at threepence. The *Rationalist* is brightly written and varied in contents. We do not know whether it will supply a long-felt want in Melbourne, but we are certain that it is very greatly needed. In some respects Christianity meets the Freethinkers in the Colonies in a narrower form than it meets him at home, and the fight therefore is certain to be a stiff one. Those responsible for the issue of the paper are asking for trouble, but the end is worth the trouble involved, and we wish the newcomer every success.

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay;
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade,
A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.
If to the City sped—What waits him there?
To see profusion that he must not share;
To see the thousand baneful arts combined
To pamper luxury, and then mankind;
To see each joy the sons of pleasure know
Exhorted from his fellow-creature's woe.

—Goldsmith.

Tacitus and Tiberius.

To Tacitus more than any other Roman writer is due the long-standing belief that the early Roman Empire was a mass of iniquity and corruption, both public and private. The researches of modern historical investigators, who have found abundant evidence of good government and contented people existing in Rome, make this belief no longer tenable.—“*Universal Encyclopædia*.” Article, “Tacitus.”

THE lurid description of the luxury, the licentiousness, the cruelty, and general rottenness of Pagan society, before its conversion to Christianity, has long formed one of the most venerable and popular stock arguments of apologists for Christianity, and it will not be abandoned while the general public remain entirely ignorant of the truth about Roman history. However, the truth is beginning to percolate down, as the quotation at the head of this article, from the latest popular Encyclopædia, shows. Professor Tucker says:—

There exist denunciations of the morals of the Roman world of this date (the first century of our era) which would lead one to believe that every man was a Nero and every woman a Messalina; denunciations so lurid that, if they were a third part true, the continuance of the Roman Empire, or even of the Roman race, for a single century would be simply incomprehensible.¹

Even so cultured a writer as Matthew Arnold was capable of declaring:—

On that hard Pagan world disgust
And secret loathing fell.
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell.

In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,
The Roman noble lay;
He drove abroad in furious guise
Along the Appian way.

He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,
And crown'd his hair with flowers—
No easier nor no quicker pass'd
The impracticable hours.²

Arnold bowed down in homage before the Greek intellect and culture, but had no love for the later Roman civilization, which he gazed upon through the distorting spectacles of Christian prejudice, for further on in the same poem he begins to rant about the—

Love which set so deep and strong
From Christ's then open grave.

Although Arnold discarded supernatural Christianity, and even a personal God, which he dethroned for a “something not ourselves which makes for righteousness,” yet he never wholly emancipated himself from the warping effect of the Christian faith; hence his antipathy to Pagan Rome.

In 1911 Mr. Stuart Hay published, under the title of *The Amazing Emperor Heliogabalus*, a vindication of the character of that unfortunate boy emperor, of which we gave an account in these columns. Now an American scholar has made a critical study of the character of the Emperor Tiberius as portrayed in such dark and sombre colours by the Roman historian Tacitus.

The author of the study in question, Mr. F. S. Jerome, graduated at the University of Michigan with the degree of “A.B.,” took up the study of law, and engaged in practice in Detroit. Although he was successful in his profession, his real interest lay in the field of historical study. He acted as consular agent at Sorrento in 1900, and afterwards in the same capacity at Capri—the place of retirement of Tiberius, of whom

he made the study we are now concerned with. Mr. Jerome remained at Capri until his death from gastric hæmorrhage in 1914, at the age of fifty.

The work we are dealing with is entitled *Aspects of the Study of Roman History* (Putnam's, 1923). Although the work was published some time last year, we have not seen a single notice or review of this, to the student of history, most interesting and valuable work. A work that should be read by every one before reading a single book on the history of Rome; especially before reading the old historians such as Tacitus and Suetonius. It was quite accidentally we became acquainted with it.

The book consists mainly of lectures delivered before the American Academy in Rome, and was intended to form the prolegomena to a larger work on Roman morals, which had engaged the author's attention for many years. This book reveals the writer to have been a man of keen intellect; his legal training, also, was of the utmost advantage in the sifting and valuation of evidence. It is deeply to be regretted that Mr. Jerome did not live to use the material he had collected for the work on Roman morals.

The present work consists of nineteen chapters, but our principal concern here is with only three of them, namely, those dealing with “Tacitus on Tiberius.” We hasten to add, however, that the other chapters are equally valuable, and will be dealt with later.

The character of Tiberius as portrayed by Tacitus has been, until recent times, accepted almost without question, and has aroused an almost universal chorus of contempt and horror. The article on “Tiberius” in Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* (which is the standard classical dictionary in English, and has been compiled from a thoroughly Christian standpoint) is admittedly based on Tacitus. He is there depicted as cruel, suspicious, vindictive, of an implacable temper; gratifying his long-nourished schemes of vengeance by frightful murders. He is further described as a man drunken, obscene and debauched, indulging his monstrous and revolting lust in every way that a depraved imagination could suggest; and as the prince of hypocrites. Mr. Jerome says:—

This represents the general reputation which Tiberius bears among all but a few. This minority, however, includes practically every competent modern scholar, since the penetration of Voltaire and the quick intuition of Napoleon were supported by the learned labours of Sievers, Freytag, Stahr and others in the middle of the last century.¹

The narrative of Tacitus covers twenty years out of the twenty-three years during which Tiberius reigned; and Mr. Jerome, after making a critical analysis of all the criminal proceedings under Tiberius recorded by Tacitus, finds—

A startling discrepancy between the facts as he narrates them and the generalizations. The gloomy phrases about despotism, glut of blood, ruin of the innocent and the like, upon which the historian dwells with morbid delight, are so impressive that an uncritical reader accepts the picture without question. In only a very small number of cases does Tacitus even suggest that the accused were innocent. The average of about one execution in two years seems not very bloody; and but a very small number of cases can be charged to Tiberius at all.

(i) Of revolutionary attempts, insubordination, slander of the prince and the like, there were fifty-eight cases, resulting in twenty-two condemnations (thirteen of them capital), twenty-six acquittals or quashing of proceedings, and ten suicides before trial. In the case of some of the suicides the emperor declared that he would have pardoned or acquitted had the offender lived.

¹ T. G. Tucker. *Life in the Roman World of Nero and St. Paul*, pp. 3-4.

² Arnold. *Obermann once more*.

¹ *Aspects of the Study of Roman History*, p. 322.

(ii) Of plunder, extortion, or illegal acts by provincial governors, there were nine cases, of which seven were convicted and sentenced to exile, and two committed suicide.

(iii) Of false accusations, there were ten cases, resulting in ten sentences of exile.

(iv) Of unspecified and miscellaneous cases, of which adultery was the most frequent, there were twenty-eight cases resulting in fifteen convictions, three of them capital; seven committed suicide, and six were acquitted. That is to say, in the cases where the tyranny of Tiberius is especially denounced (class i), convictions ensued in about thirty-eight per cent. of the cases, whereas in the other cases of the second, third and fourth classes the percentage of convictions was sixty-eight. (pp. 336-337.)

It should be born in mind that Tiberius had been dead eighteen years before Tacitus was born, and that Tacitus wrote his *Annals* during the years 115-117, eighty years after Tiberius was dead, and yet he professes to give private conversations, and even the inner thoughts, desires, intentions and motives, which could only have been known to Tiberius himself! Then again, in spite of the life of drunkenness, debauchery and lust which Tacitus would have us believe that Tiberius led, he describes him—

At the end of his life as still energetic in looks and speech, strong in intellect; and but a few days before his death, at the age of seventy-eight, exhibiting clearness of mind and strength of will. (p. 376.)

The thing contradicts itself.

Then again, upon nearly every act of Tiberius, Tacitus makes some comment or interpretation suggesting that the act, however fair it seemed, was in reality base or contemptible. As Mr. Jerome says:—

By skilful application of the rules of rhetoric, the author produces a powerful picture of a bloody tyranny. The picture fades away when analysed critically, but it did its work to the confusion of historical knowledge, and in popular opinion it has probably damned Tiberius beyond rescue. (p. 377.)

And no doubt he will still continue to be held up by Christian apologists as an awful example of Pagan civilization.

W. MANN.

Religion and Magic.

MAGIC and religion are constantly associated, both historically and at the present day, and seem to have had a common origin in primitive man's ignorance and fear of natural phenomena. The chief differential feature is social in character. Religion in its earliest and most virile form was essentially a communal thing—an attempt by the community as a whole to propitiate or control the personal powers that manifested themselves through elemental forces. It reached its fullest and most logical development in the case of such peoples as the Israelites, where the relation between the Deity and the community took the form of a definite covenant. Such covenants, however, bound the god merely to defend the community: they offered no protection against calamity for the individual *per se*. Here it is that magical practices come in.

Even as the more sublime and awe-inspiring calamities that befall mankind—great storms, droughts, and pestilences—were attributed to personal agencies, so too the less spectacular disasters—illness and death of individuals—were considered, logically enough, to be the work of individuals. Plainly, too, such malign persons, possessed of such abnormal powers, would be marked by a strangeness of appearance and ways. So the common beliefs in the "evil eye" arose; at a later date old and doting women were looked at askance as witches. Probably, too, such suspects, from feelings of vanity and other causes, were

not unwilling to be regarded as super-normal persons. Little by little grew up an elaborate theory and practice of magic, which took on strange forms peculiar to various cultures. But there is a likeness between them all. Magic tends to be anti-social, in the sense that it is used by individuals for personal and unsocial ends; whereas religion is something in which all the community participate for common ends.

The most common use of magic is to bring about the death of an enemy. Incantations may be used; generally, however, some more grossly physical instruments are employed to assure that the magic shall work. One of the commonest is the use of an image or likeness of the person to be injured. Such images were made by the Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. The North American Indian would draw a figure of his enemy in sand or in ashes, and prick it with a sharp stick. Another would make a wooden image and stick a needle into its heart. Clay figures were used by the African Matabele, wax in Arabia, and the guelder rose in Japan. In Scotland the *corp chre*, as it was called, was a clay effigy which was stuck full of pins, nails and broken glass, and set in a stream, with its head in the running water. The Australian will use a pointing stick. This is carried away to a lonely place in the bush, where the magician plants it in the ground, and crouching over it mutters a curse against his enemy. "May your heart be rent asunder, may your backbone be split open!" Then, one evening, he creeps stealthily up to the object of his aversion, in the dark, stoops down with his back to the camp, points the stick over his shoulder at the enemy, and repeats the curse.

Naturally this black magic is countered by white magic. Out of this develops another elaborate superstition. In ancient Egypt, for example, magical means were employed to provide the dead man with all that he might require for his life after death. For his happiness then there were magical pictures on the walls of his tomb, which ensured that in the next world he should not lack those occupations which had been agreeable in this life. In the case of the Egyptians magic does not seem to have been particularly in conflict with religion. Indeed, it is only where magic is employed for definitely anti-social ends that it is conceived to be in opposition to the communal magic—religion.

In Babylon religion and magic arrived at a queer compromise. The magician was defeated by the exorcist. The chief means of exorcism were water, which cleanses the sufferer and washes away the effects of black magic; and fire, which purges all things and consumes all impurities. A brazier was placed by the bedside of the sick person, whilst the exorcist practised his white magic, murmuring magical words, and flinging certain substances into the flames that they might be consumed thereby, and with them the evil charms. The sufferer was girt with a girdle, and as it was unloosed the sickness was expected to pass away from him. Images made of clay, meal, wax, or wood, representing the magician, were laid on the head or feet of the sufferer, and then burnt, cast into the river, or buried. Most of these magical practices of the Babylonians have their parallels in other civilizations. But these exorcisms, which form the larger part of the sacred literature of Babylon, are distinguished from the ordinary spells of world-wide use by the fact that their efficacy is due to the gods. Counter-magic being used extensively for social ends received a half-patronizing and half-suspicious blessing from religion, and was lifted to a higher level than ordinary magic. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the gods were degraded into mere magicians. The chief function of the great Babylon god Marduk came to be the frustration of black magic. Marduk derived his power of

counter-magic from his father, Ea, the knower of all things, who became a kind of supreme counter-magician.

But it was not merely against human magicians that the Babylonian had to defend himself. There were the Seven Evil Spirits as well—storms fiends, such as are to be found in almost all old religions (in the Teutonic mythology, and in the Shintoism of Japan, to mention only two). They personified sickness and calamity, and the forces of destruction which afflict mankind. They were neither male nor female; their abode was in the waste places of the earth, and they brought in their train eclipses, floods and sickness.

The curious thing is that such beings are usually accorded a place in the pantheon of the race. In China they are the Thien-Schen; in the Vedas they are a troop of wild gods; they are the Boreas of the Greeks; and the wild Valkyries of the Teutons. The state religion of Babylon excluded the storm spirits from its pantheon—why, it is not quite clear. Hence, magic was used as protection against their malignity, just as it was in the case of human magicians.

Later, as the many deities merge into a more vague and unsubstantial single deity, so too do such evil spirits as The Seven Evil Spirits tend to merge into one evil being—the Ahriman of the Persians, or the Devil of the Christians. Religion is then an elaborate system of counter-magic, a means whereby the individual avoids misfortune, both here and in some future state, rather than a means whereby the community as a community obtains supernatural aid in its struggles with other communities.

Many sociologists have referred to the cyclic processes which characterize human institutions. Here we have an example of this. Religion and magic emerge from the same womb, diverge awhile, and later reunite. For not even the most enthusiastic Christians would claim that religion is to-day a social thing: that it is undertaken by the whole community in the hope of obtaining communal blessings. It is essentially a private, selfish affair, concerned with the mundane and post-mortem welfare of the individual. In short, it is an egregious magic.

W. H. MORRIS.

Chats With Children.

ABOUT JOAN OF ARC.

THE story of Joan of Arc is very fascinating. One cannot wonder that Mr. Bernard Shaw has made a play of it. It will be a long time before the world gets tired of the wonderful girl whose history has been told so often.

I advise you to read Mark Twain's book before or after you see Bernard Shaw's play. I wish I could cut down Anatole France's story (on the same subject) into a form which would make you eager to read the whole thing. Anatole France presents all the "documents" in the case, and it is like a well-written newspaper account of something that has happened in our own day.

There have been in all ages legends of heroes and heroines rescuing their country; delivering it from the clutches of invaders.

In our own day many of us used to think there was precious little difference between a foreign invader enslaving us all, and the home capitalist who makes us work for him. I have a good deal of sympathy with those who still think thus. At any rate, the cry of "my country, 'tis of thee, thou land of liberty," and the appeal to our patriotic hate of the foreigner have been exposed for the hollow sham and mockery that they are.

On the other hand, Belgian employers in Belgium

and German capitalists in the Ruhr cannot for a moment be compared with the reign of hate and tyranny of Prussian soldiery during the German invasion of Belgium, and of the black, white and brown troops of France since the war wherever the French occupation has extended.

It would seem then that King Albert (or Foch or Haig, or whoever it was) deserved credit and praise as the deliverer of Belgium, as one day somebody will be acclaimed for saving Germany from foreign tyrants. As long as France honours Joan of Arc the French people ought to be prepared to welcome some German hero who will defeat the French hosts till not a Frenchman is left on German soil.

The worst of patriotism is that it begins and ends at home, like the worst of charities.

Joan of Arc is an historical character. That is to say, we can accept as true most of the principal details of her wonderful story; although the Catholic Church has added quite a needless lot of "miracle" to what is after all a very uncommon history.

One must remember that nobody can be called a saint, however good or clever they may be, unless they also perform miracles. The miracles need not be performed until the "saint" is dead. But no amount of genius or kindness can avail unless either a corpse is made alive or at the very least a cripple becomes able to walk, by touching one of the bones of the dead saint.

We can understand how "miracles" can be "arranged." No miracle happened when Joan of Arc was being burnt alive. Why? Because those who wanted miracles to happen just then were not powerful enough to prevent Joan's execution. Her cruel murderers did not want a miraculous escape for their victim. Had they wished it, a miracle of that kind would have been easy. It must have been equally easy later on for other priests to make Joan's bones "cure" diseases.

At Lourdes and other places to-day "miracles" continue, quite as successfully and truthfully as ever. Every known disease, except bald heads and ordinary colds, can be cured at these shrines. If you have lost a limb, if one humble tooth is missing from your jaw, if even a tooth is decayed, you will never see the least shade of a cure if you pray to every shrine and worship every bone in Christendom.

Saint Januarius has a shrine at Naples, where a bottle of his own blood is to be seen (but not to be opened or analysed or even handled). It is dried blood, shrunk to a mere corner of its sacred bottle. But on the feast of that saint (who was beheaded in the year 305) the blood liquefies and fills the bottle. This annual miracle played the game on the right date every year until the year 1582, when the calendar was altered. Obedient to the new calendar the blood has always since then liquefied on the new date, eleven days earlier than before.

To return to Joan of Arc. We need not object to the "voices" Joan is said to have heard. It is never quite easy to say exactly *why* we do the things we do.

Religious people to-day tell us that God speaks to us through "conscience." This merely gives us a new word without in any way explaining anything. It is just the same as saying we have an "impulse" to do something. But why does God, or conscience, or impulse lead one person to fight for or against Germany, let us say, and another to preach peace?

In the case of Joan, she must have known—human voices could and probably did tell her—that France was miserable, and that if a brave army, devoted to their country, could be raised there was a chance that France could make itself free and happy.

But this is reason, this is sense, this is what happens to all of us. Everybody to-day can read newspapers,

and some can think, and some can act and do the deeds which help the world.

The questions to be answered by those who believe in voices from God, are simple ones. Why did no "voices" come to somebody to rescue Joan from murder? Why did no voices speak to her destroyers? And, above all, why did no voices speak with success to those who invaded France and destroyed with fire and sword thousands of peasant lives, each one more valuable than that of the ungrateful evil king who owed his throne to Joan and the "voices."

These "voices" begin always after the evil is done, and they seem very careless about letting evils repeat themselves over and over again.

If you begin to think of Joan of Arc as divinely inspired, protected by an unconquerable God, and burnt alive because God had some funny motive of his own which we cannot understand, you make Joan a poor waxwork figure of no more importance than the doll you pull to pieces in play.

Try to think of Joan as a good and clever girl, whose ear was so ready, her brain so alert and her heart so sound that the story of her country's sufferings made her restless to do all that was in her power to help redress the wrong.

When opportunity (sometimes called "chance") came to her, she let neither cowardice nor modesty prevent her doing the best thing she could do for the cause she believed to be right.

I think her cause was right, but that is not at all the chief thing to consider. What we want to ask ourselves is why are we not doing all we can do for what we believe to be the right and the best cause.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Correspondence.

THE TEACHING OF EVOLUTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—When I bemoaned the fact that the proletariat had gotten into power in Great Britain, Mr. Mann replies with much gusto: "Sounds more like the sentiments of some old German Junker, than those of a democratic citizen of the free and independent States of America." My reply is that if democracy in the British Isles is above criticism, it is worthy of a modicum of respect in the U.S.A. If he condemns the democratic institutions in America, and yet refers to me as bearing a striking resemblance to that of "some old German Junker," would it be out of place for me to regard him as an Anglo-Germanian? In his sneering at American institutions, perhaps I, as a stupid American, should look up to him as one belonging to the peerage, and humbly address him as His Lordship!

Withal, I see no need for evolution being taught in the public schools of America. Mr. Mann refuses to advise me as to which theory of evolution is true, and so long as I am in doubt as to which one of these theories is correct, for fear of teaching an untruth, I prefer not to shoulder the responsibility—in view of the fact that children are taught a great deal of indigestible knowledge already. My second reason is that those who are educated at the public expense should be trained that they may the better serve the State. Aside from that, everybody should go out and get his own education.

Those who want to study evolution should do so. Perhaps Mr. Mann could lend a helping hand by advising them which one of the evolutionary theories is the correct one; thereby saving them many fruitless hours of reading the wrong theory. The great men of the world taught themselves, and did not have to have their ideas driven into their heads by didactic schoolmasters. The great mass of the people, however, need to be drilled, and the drilling should be of a practical nature—that they may become good slaves and soldiers; an asset to the State, instead of a burden.

After all, it is not so bad to live in darkest America, where the State sometimes refuses to teach the subject of evolution to its citizenship. There is a land across the sea whose Premier has exhorted his people to go back to the "old Scotch Sabbath"—and that is taking on more of the sacrosanct than I care to assume just now.

WALTER MERCHANT (New York City, U.S.A.) .

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE AND MATERIALISM.

SIR,—In reply to my charge, that many of our leading men do not state publicly their acceptance of materialism until they have given it up—or until the fact is revealed after their death—and citing Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle as examples of the former, Sir Conan replies that he did define his early position in *The Stark Munro Letters*, and several letters to the press. I have not seen the letters to the press, but I have a copy of *The Stark Munro Letters*—not one of the best of Sir Conan's novels. It is difficult to realize that it came from the same hand as the mysterious and exciting *Hound of the Baskervilles*; but novels written in the form of letters are rarely a success. However, the hero of the work in question, Dr. Stark Munro, although unorthodox, is certainly not a materialist, as the following extracts will show:—

No faith is needed to attain the certainty of a most watchful Providence. And with this certainty surely we have all that is necessary for an elemental religion. (p. 22.)

From annihilation to beatification: I am ready to adopt myself to whatever the great Designer's secret plan may be. (p. 136.)

Far from saying that they (the orthodox creeds) are all false, it would express my position better to say that they are all true. Providence would not have used them were they not the best available tools, and in that sense divine. (p. 156.)

The belief expounded by Dr. Stark Munro is really Unitarianism, and is that held to-day by most intelligent Christians with an adequate knowledge of science and history, but it is not materialism, which is defined by the latest and most up-to-date dictionary, namely, *The New Standard Dictionary*, as follows:—

Materialism: The doctrine that the facts of experience are all to be explained by reference to the reality, activities, and laws of physical or material substance.

In psychology, this doctrine denies the reality of the soul as psychical being; in cosmology, it denies the need of assuming the being of God as Absolute Spirit; or of any other spiritual ground or first principle.

I unreservedly withdraw my assertion that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle concealed his materialistic beliefs until he had abandoned them, because it is clear that he could not abandon beliefs he never held. I hope that Spiritualists will now cease from claiming Sir Arthur Conan Doyle as a convert from materialism.

I seem to recollect an article detailing his conversion to Spiritualism, contributed to a popular magazine some years ago, in which Sir Conan made some such claim himself; but I am open to correction upon this point.

W. MANN.

(P.S.—The edition of *The Stark Munro Letters* I quote from is one published by "The Amalgamated Press," it bears no date of publication, but a written inscription shows that it was published some time before 1901, and a printed advertisement that it was after 1895.)

"THE MARTYRDOM OF MAN."

SIR,—May I be allowed to say that I have just seen a copy of *The Martyrdom of Man*. It is handy in size, amazingly cheap in price, handsomely bound, and beautifully printed; there are introduction, biographical note, and index, altogether an ideal pocket or reference volume, and would make a delightful present for a friend. The re-circulation of books like this—by the million we hope—is ideal Freethought propaganda, adding lustre, solidity, dignity and strength to the slow but inevitable advance of the movement. People must be informed before they can be useful Freethinkers; and in this new edition of Winwood Reade's masterpiece is found perhaps the finest epitome of human history yet compiled, beginning, as it does, at the very cradle of the human race. A. MILLAR.

A Quarrel in the Protestant Episcopal Church.

The Bishops and Priests of the Protestant Episcopal Church

Are going at each other hammer and tongs :—
This time the quarrel centres about the "virgin birth."

Where have these fellows been all this time?
Where do they get that stuff?

The world of knowledge has moved on
And left them standing amidst the superstitions of the
Middle Ages.

The "Modernist" says that Jesus the Christ was a man,
And like all other men had a perfectly natural father.

Natural Science answers: "On one point you are right,
Man, like all other animals, is only produced
When the ovum in the mother is fertilized by the semen
of the father.

It is true that certain plant lice and mosquitoes
Produce five generations in a summer,
In only two of which, the earliest and the latest,
Are there any males.

And thus away down there, in that low plane of life,
There are hundreds of millions of virgin births every
year.

But even the most imaginative supernaturalist never
claimed

That Jesus was an insect."

The Fundamentalist says that Jesus the Christ is God,
And at the same time "the only begotten Son of God"
(however that can be),
"Born of the Virgin Mary."

Natural Science answers: "Your statement
takes your Jesus out of the human class, body and
breeches,
Human beings are mammalian vertebrates,
And mammalian vertebrates have no virgin births.
According to you Jesus the Christ is a supernatural per-
sonality.

Supernatural personalities I only know as myths,
And I am free to admit that a 'virgin birth' is just as
good as any other kind for a myth."

HOWELL S. ENGLAND.

Ye stars! which are the poetry of heaven!
If in your bright leaves we would read the fate
Of men and empires—'tis to be forgiven,
That in our aspirations to be great,
Our destinies o'erleap their mortal state,
And claim a kindred with you; for ye are
A beauty and a mystery, and create
In us such love and reverence from afar, [star.
That fortune, fame, power, life, have named themselves a

All heaven and earth are still—though not in sleep,
But breathless, as we grow when feeling most;
And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep :—
All heaven and earth are still: From the high host
Of stars, to the lull'd lake and mountain-coast,
All is concentr'd in a life intense,
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
But hath a part of being, and a sense
Of that which is of all Creator and defence.

Then stirs the feeling infinite, so felt
In solitude, when we are least alone;
A truth, which through our being then doth melt,
And purifies from self: it is a tone,
The soul and source of music, which makes known
Eternal harmony, and sheds a charm,
Like to the fabled Cytherea's zone,
Binding all things with beauty;—'t would disarm
The spectre Death, had he substantial power to harm.
—Lord Byron.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE (Emerson Club, 19
Buckingham Street, Charing Cross, First Floor): 3.30.
Lecture in French by M. Dribbel on "Comment Se
Nourrir." All invited.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (160 Great Portland Street,
W.1): 8, Mr. Dick Gifford, "There is Joy where Wealth
Abounds." The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday, at
8, at the "Lawrie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club,
15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Debate—"That Sanitation is
a Complete Failure." Opened by Mr. James McGhee.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Trade Union Hall, 30
Brixton Road, S.W.9): 7, Mr. A. Hyatt, "What Christianity
Owes to Ancient Religions."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School,
Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, C. R. Cooke-Taylor, "Oliver
Goldsmith—150th Anniversary."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate,
E.C.2): 11, Right Hon. John M. Robertson, "Modern
Humanists Reconsidered: (I) Carlyle."

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

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the
Fountain): 3.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone
Gate): 6.30, Operetta—"Hawthorn Glen." Performed by the
Children of the Secular Sunday School. (Silver Collection.)

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Amalgamated Engineering
Union Hall, Rusholme Road, All Saints): Saturday, April 12,
at 3, Annual General Meeting. Light Refreshments will be
provided.

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

HAVE you read the humorous description of the
meeting of the poetasters at a Cheshire Cheese supper,
followed by a true description of Heaven, and what may
happen therein? You will get it in *THE EVERLASTING
GEMS*, which THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street,
E.C.4, will send you, post free, for 3s. 6d.

SPRING Cleaning, Vacuum Cleaning, Carpet
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Houses, Offices, etc. Efficiently and Economically. Send
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CLEANING CO., LTD., 75 Kinnerton Street, Knightsbridge,
S.W.1. Phone: Victoria 4447. And he will call and estimate
for your requirements. Agencies arranged. Freethinkers
help each other.

THE SUIT THE PRINCE WORE when he
wakened the Sleeping Beauty was not made by us.
None of our clothes or styles is "loud" enough to disturb
the gentlest of sleepers; as you may readily prove by sending
a postcard to-day for any of the following: Gents' AA to H
Book, suits from 48s.; Gents' I to N Book, suits 93s.; or our
Ladies' Costume and Fashion Book, costumes from 49s. 6d.
Complete satisfaction guaranteed to you by—MACCONNELL AND
MADE, New Street, Bakewell, Derbyshire.

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prices for your next printing order. Letterheads or
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100. Liberal discount given on all N.S.S. Branch printing.—
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