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## Views and Opinions.

### The Empty Churches.

A Lancashire man of God has discovered that it is the parson's own fault if people do not attend church in satisfying numbers. He says that the clergy have not made their services attractive enough, and they have not always preached on subjects which interested the people most. The discovery does not strike us as profound, and the value of the cure, advised by implication, is self-evident. If the clergy preach on things that people are anxious to hear, those who are anxious to hear will go. And if the services are made attractive enough those who are attracted will go. It is as clear as a sum in simple arithmetic. Only it does not seem to lead us anywhere. After all, it is not the clergy who have changed, but the congregations. The parson still has the old gospel, the old hymns, the old prayers, the old catchwords. It is not the parson who has lost interest in the congregation, it is the congregation which has lost interest in the parson. The religion is the same, it is the people who have changed. And, therefore, the real question to be discussed is the cause of this loss of interest in the religion of the Churches. Why is it that the clergy are called upon, as a condition of getting a congregation, to decide, not how to preach the historic doctrines of Christianity, but how to get up a programme that will attract an audience? I prefer "audience" to "congregation," because it would seem that the problem facing the parson, and which he is most interested in, is the one that troubles the music hall manager—the building up of a programme that will "draw."

### Soul Doctors.

What causes people to attend church does not, I think, trouble the clergy much. The great thing is that they attend. And in this question it is the clergy only who are interested. The layman does not seem to care very much about it. He doesn't feel any the worse himself for staying away, and therefore he does not think others will suffer either. But it is a vital matter to the parson. Someone has called the clergy "doctors of the soul." The analogy is not very apt. The medical man builds up a reputation on the basis of his cures, his fame is proclaimed loudest by those who are able to dispense with his services. The parson lives not by the people he cures, but by those he is

able to keep constantly under treatment. They are made chronic invalids by following his prescription. A parson never wishes to hear that his patient is well enough to do without him; and never does the patient hear from his spiritual doctor: "Well, I do not think you will need me any more." The rule of the soul-doctor is, when a man is spiritually sick, keep him so; the worse he is, the more protracted the illness, the better. In this way religion comes to resemble a moral malady, an affection which reverses the ordinary principles of reasoning and treats sickness as health, weakness as strength, and dependence upon a physician as the most desirable of conditions.

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### Religion and Business.

The Churches, we are told, must adapt themselves to the new conditions or perish. That, I admit, is the ordinary rule in business. A commercial concern must see to it that it meets current tastes and current needs or face bankruptcy. But Christianity is not—so, at least, its defenders say—upon the same level as an ordinary business. It was not built up gradually, it was created all at once. It came into the world with the imprimatur of divinity; it was for all time; its teachings were not to be questioned, and you cannot openly remodel a divinely-given religion without losing credit in the process. It is telling God-Almighty, publicly, that he was mistaken in thinking his message to be for all time. Of course, it might be explained to him that while his message suited well enough the ignorant people to whom it was given, it is no longer suitable to us with our wider and more exact knowledge. It was all very well telling the peasantry of ancient Judea that epilepsy was caused by demons, or that they could drink poison without harm so long as it was done in "my name"; but such things really will not do to-day. But even if this were explained to God-Almighty we are not sure that it would help the situation much. For it openly places the Christian religion upon the same level as other primitive beliefs, and that would never do. A religion that has to be publicly remodelled every now and again in order to make it harmonize with what we know to be true, admits its purely human origin, and admits also that the talk of divine origin is so much verbiage used by knaves to impose upon fools.

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### The Priest as Go-Between.

Probably the best way of dealing with the question of why people are ceasing to attend church is to ask why it was they ever went there? Why did people ever pay special deference to a parson or a priest or a medicine-man? There is only one reason for this, and that is that ignorance has credited the priest either with supernatural powers or with being on terms of intimacy with the Gods, and believing also that it was by his agency these supernatural powers could be placated. Take any religion and this will be found to be true. With primitive religions there is no attempt to disguise the fact. With modern religions it is there in the shape of a "call" from the Lord



to service, or the power to lay on hands, or to some special personal sanctity attaching to the service of the priest. The priest enjoys the power he has because he is believed to be able to guide men in their relations to and their dealing with the tribal or national gods. And once more we see the survival of this primitive function in the pose of counsellors to the nation taken by the clergy. It is a function which time and civilization cannot but destroy. Indeed, one may say with sober truth that the measure of a people's dependence upon a priesthood is the measure of their ignorance and lack of development. When disease drives men and women to the doctor and not to the priest, when bad agricultural conditions send men to the chemist and not to the priest, the priesthood is entering on its final phase. Nothing is left then but for the parson to take his place as an ordinary citizen; to be judged by the same canons as ordinary men and women. And in that direction the outlook is, indeed, black—for the parson.

#### Blind Guides.

Let us assume that parsons in general take the advice given them, and, leaving religion alone, commence to talk on social and other subjects which they think will interest the people. What effect is that going to produce? Admittedly the best teachers on social and ethical subjects are outside the Churches, and there are very few preachers who can compete with the best laymen in these directions. At most, the parson can only re-echo their teachings, and must speak as one *not* having authority, striving to tack on to his subject as much religion as the ignorance or good nature of his hearers will stand. Certainly no one can imagine educated men and women going to church to-day for instruction or guidance. They may go to listen to a little music, or to a good speaker—careless of what the speaking is about—or for some other reason of a similar character, but they certainly will not go there for guidance on any of the important affairs of life. All know that the truth about science, art, or literature is not to be found there. Even the truth about religion is not to be got in the churches. There is no denying the statement that all our knowledge concerning the nature, the history, and the evolution of religion has been elaborated outside the Churches and in the face of the bitterest opposition. If possible, the clergy have shown more ignorance on the subject they claim to have made peculiarly their own than they have on any other.

#### The Final Issue.

There is only one genuine reason why people do not attend church, and that the clergy are not straight forward enough to admit. People originally went to church, whatever the character of the church was, because they believed in the religious doctrines taught. And they stay away because they have ceased to believe. Anything added to that statement—save by way of elaboration—is quite superfluous. Men and women find that whether they believe in God or not, whether they go to church or not, whether they pray or not, does not affect the course of events so far as natural operations are concerned. They find that their real interests are outside the Churches, that the best work of the world is done outside the Churches. And in one way or another the question is asked whether we are getting from the Churches value for the money and the time expended? And the more the evolution of social forms is studied the more the clergy are seen to be to the body politic what the rudimentary ear muscles are to the individual human organism. They are reminiscent of a lower order of social life, and sooner or later these rudiments will be recognized for what they are. There is only one way in which

church going—intellectually honest church going—can be revived, and that is by the restoration of belief. Belief must be re-established, unbelief must be eradicated. Can the clergy accomplish that? Short of a terrific social upheaval, it is quite impossible. Disbelief in religion is now implied in our best literature, in our current scientific teaching, in our very attempts at social improvement. People may still be attracted to church for various ulterior reasons, but the doctrines of Christianity no longer attract the educated mind. And where the educated ones are to-day, the mass of the people will be to-morrow. CHAPMAN COHEN.

### A Reasonable God.

THE Rev. George A. Gordon, D.D., minister of New Old South Congregational Church, Boston, U.S.A., is one of the best known and most highly esteemed clergymen in America, and his ministrations in Boston have been regarded as possessing the greatest possible merit as an unanswerable defence of the Christian faith. His central aim is to present Christianity as a thoroughly reasonable religion. Before us lies a recently delivered sermon, entitled "The Reasonable God," based on the words: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord" (Isaiah i, 18). Of reasonableness he speaks thus:—

Nothing is more delightful than a reasonable person. In comparison with the fine frenzy of the poet, the exquisite sensibilities of the artist, the mirth-provoking genius of the humorist, the inspiring gift of the orator, and the imperial power of the great commander or ruler, reasonableness may seem to be a cold virtue. Yet it is a virtue full of comfort in the business of living. Unless it is transformed through discipline, the artistic temperament is far from being an unmixed blessing. We crave emotional responses from one another, and we begin life by judging excellences by emotional standards. Yet it must be said of all emotional people who are not under the strictest self-discipline, as Carlyle's mother said of her gifted son, they are "gey ill to live wi."

There is surely much truth in that description. Reasonableness is a most essential virtue, in the absence of which true social happiness is impossible. Dr. Gordon has two significant sentences, around which all others in his discourse revolve, namely, "the best thing in the world is a reasonable man," and "the best thing in the universe is the reasonable God." Our only comment, at this stage, is this: a reasonable man is rarely ever seen, and a reasonable God, never. Among ordinary men Dr. Gordon finds very few who are reasonable. He says:—

It is true that reasoners are not always reasonable. John C. Calhoun was always reasoning, and for a pure public servant he was one of the least reasonable of men. John Henry Newman had a wonderful gift for argument, and yet his reasonableness is sadly open to question.

It should be borne in mind, however, that to Newman the reasonableness of God, as far as Nature was concerned, was so doubtful a quality that he was in danger of becoming an Atheist. In the hope of overcoming that danger he resolved to join the Church of Rome.

Dr. Gordon asserts that "the faith that we live in a reasonable universe is an unspeakable comfort." Dr. Newman was equally convinced that the universe was the very opposite of reasonable, and that an unbiased study of its facts inevitably led to Atheism. That much in Nature is a source of unspeakable comfort is delightfully true; such as the regularity of its seasons, on which we can absolutely rely. "We go to sleep at night sure of the coming sunrise. We go to work in the morning certain of the coming sunset."



We calculate the times of the tide months in advance with no misgiving. We never doubt of the coming of seed-time and harvest. We are sure that the withheld sunshine or rain will arrive at last. The general security of human life in the presence of Nature over a large part of the globe is an immense comfort." This is true enough from our point of view; but to Nature man is of no greater value or significance than a butterfly, and consequently she cares no more for the one than she does for the other.

At this point Dr. Gordon enters the moral world, and here also, on Nature's side, everything is as it ought to be. For instance, we are assured that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." That is not true. Multitudes of people sow the wind, but never reap the whirlwind. Many sow to the flesh, but do not of the flesh reap corruption. Crowds of people win riches through fraud, but the majority of them go down to peaceful and honoured graves. Nature neither forgives nor punishes, is neither kind nor unkind, neither loving nor hateful. Of course, certain consequences follow certain lines of conduct. In other words, certain actions injure the system, and that injury brings degradation and suffering in its train; but it would be a radical mistake to regard such consequences as punitive; they are the natural and inevitable result of a specific course of behaviour. According to the Boston divine, however, it is not with Nature, but with a personal God that we have to deal. And he is a wonderfully reasonable being—

We know what is required, we know what is forbidden. What more doth he require of thee, O man, than to deal justly, to love kindness, and walk humbly with thy God. What more doth he warn thee against, O man, than against injustice, inhumanity, and an Atheistic heart! These are the immemorial, the everlasting things, the same for Micah and his generation, the same for the first man and his contemporaries, the same for us and our time, the same for all men to the end of the world. The face of God in natural law and in moral does not change. I think of this as often as I look at the great stone face in the Franconia Notch.

The great stone face in the Franconia Notch in the White Mountains is indeed an extraordinary natural phenomenon, exactly the same throughout all ages, and Dr. Gordon sees in it a symbol of the unchangeability of God, who requires so wonderfully little of his children.

Bringing the first part of his sermon to an end, Dr. Gordon summarizes it thus: "This, then, is the first comfort from faith in the reasonable God. His world is reasonable; his universe is reasonable; he is himself reasonable. And in this constant comfort we can live." In our estimation this comfort is derived from faith which is itself founded on a myth, believers in which are steadily diminishing in number.

Let us follow the popular preacher a little further. Here he frankly admits that the reasonableness of God is often called in question. Here is a specimen of the preacher's reasoning:—

There are experiences of injustice at the hands of others, and the victim wonders how the reasonable God can allow the wicked to triumph. It is strange that when a man gets the worst of a sharp bargain he usually thinks of the winner as wicked. It does not occur to him until he has consulted God that his own defeat is the defeat of wickedness. The defeat of the other rascal will come later. There are great temptations which seem to carry men away like a flood; and again the reasonableness of God is in question.

There are many other experiences which throw doubt on the reasonableness of God, such as terrible sufferings, heart-breaking bereavement; life submitted to such vicissitudes as make it look the quintessence

of all unreasonableness. Where does comfort come from under such unutterably lamentable conditions? Dr. Gordon's advice is to go and tell God how bitterly unreasonable the whole thing is; and if we do that we are assured that God will take our point of view. "The first comfort is in telling God how awful his world seems to us, in calling upon him to look at it as we do, and in feeling the depth and tenderness of his fatherly sympathy." We must speak to him; he is willing to hear us, and we must listen to him. He will take our point of view, and before we know where we are our point of view will be the same as his.

We cannot believe in a God who takes delight in playing hide and seek with his people, who pretends to be anxious to reason, though, according to Isaiah, he does all the talking himself. Isaiah imagined that he desired to reason with his own people, and Isaiah, having never seen him or heard his voice, made a complete mess of the reasoning match. It was his own creation. So, likewise, Dr. Gordon pretends to live on terms of closest intimacy with the Supreme God, and without a moment's hesitation undertakes to inform us what he is prepared to say and do when he has heard our tale of wondrous woe. As a matter of fact, the venerable Boston divine is self-deceived, and lacks the veriest shred of knowledge of God; and yet he talks about him as if he knew him better even than his dearest earthly friend, saying: "The reasonable God is open to your freest utterance, your deepest arraignment of his ways. He will look at your world as you do, and he will carry you away in the spirit and enable you to look at it as he does." No wonder people everywhere are ceasing to believe in such a God.

J. T. LLOYD.

## A Sceptical Singer.

The same gentle spirit from whose pen  
Large streams of honey and sweet nectar flow.

—Spenser.

The appearance in a cheap edition of Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyám* makes one regret the days when mischievous books were publicly burned by the common hangman.—*Daily Mail*.

EDWARD FITZGERALD, a great English writer, died in 1883, almost unknown. Only a few people had even heard his name. The public had little chance of hearing it, for he took more pains to avoid fame than others do to seek it. He wrote about remote subjects, which appealed only to highly educated persons. When his friend, Tennyson, dedicated *Tiresias* to Fitzgerald, the tribute seemed merely the outcome of friendship. The ordinary reader discounted the praise of that—

Golden Eastern lay,  
Than which I know no version done  
In English more divinely well.

To-day, Fitzgerald's version of Omar Khayyám is probably read as much as any verse except that of Shakespeare. It is quoted in leading articles; few modern novels are complete from its quatrains; and its haunting verses have been set to music.

If a man is known by his friends, the world needs little introduction to Fitzgerald, for he was a man of notable friendships. At school he made acquaintance with Spedding, the Baconian critic; and at Cambridge University with Thackeray. The years which followed united him to Tennyson, Carlyle, Barton (the Quaker poet), Lawrence (the painter), and others.

Fitzgerald's biographer, like the immortal knife-grinder, has no story to tell. He was born at Bredfield in 1809, the same year as Tennyson and Darwin. He was educated at Bury St. Edmunds, and afterwards at



Cambridge. Of independent means, he followed no profession. He lived for years in a thatched cottage at Boulge, near Woodbridge, close to his brother's residence, Boulge Hall. For fourteen years he was in lodgings in Woodbridge; then he settled in a small house of his own, named "Little Grange." And "Laird of Little Grange," as he humorously signed himself, he remained till he died, aged seventy-four, in June, 1883. He is buried in Boulge Churchyard; and a rose, transplanted from the tomb of old Omar Khayyám, is fitly planted on the grave.

Fitzgerald lived the life of a recluse. His friend, Carlyle, saw in it all an "ultra-modest man," and an innocent *far niente* life. Like Swinburne, Fitzgerald had a great fondness for the sea, and a deep affection for seafarers. One old Viking, the hero-fisherman of Lowestoft, whom we know as "Posh," he numbered among his personal friends. Fitzgerald characteristically thought "Posh" a greater man than Tennyson or Thackeray, because he was not self-conscious. The Viking succumbed to an undue devotion to Bacchus, but that did not trouble Fitzgerald, who was no harsh judge of human frailty. Curiously, Fitzgerald himself was abstemious. He was a vegetarian, and he nearly killed his friend Tennyson by persuading him, too, to turn vegetarian for six weeks.

Fitzgerald's books were all published without his name on the title-page, except his translation of Calderon's dramas. He wrote a memoir of his friend, Bernard Barton. Later he printed his remarkable dialogue, *Euphranor*. A rendering of the *Agamemnon*; and *Polonius* followed. Four editions of his masterpiece, *Omar Khayyám*, came out before his death.

Owing to his living in the country, Fitzgerald devoted much time to his correspondence, and he was a delightful letter writer. His friends, be it remembered, were men of genius, and the companion of such talented men must have been no ordinary character. When a man is loved by other men of his own intellectual stature, and of a wholly different type, there is something genuine about him. Indeed, Fitzgerald's letters are among the best in the language; more than Byron's, but quite as interesting. They make piquant reading on account of their literary heresies and heterodoxy. His taste was all for ancient books, old friends, familiar jests, and well-known places. He loved Cervantes and Scott, Montaigne and Madame de Sevigne. He often quotes that old-world Free-thinker, Lucretius.

London had no attraction to him, chiefly because it hid Nature. Like Thoreau, Fitzgerald knew the life that suited him, and refused to be turned aside from it.

If any justification were needed, his version of Omar's "Rose of the hundred-and-one petals" would be enough. What a translation! "A planet larger than the sun which cast it," said Tennyson, with pardonable exaggeration. In truth, the translation is finer than the original, and, in this, resembles the Authorized Version of the New Testament, which, as Swinburne reminds us, is translated from "canine Greek" to "divine English."

In his version of the *Rubáiyát*, Fitzgerald is as far ahead of Omar as he himself is ahead of other translators. The magnificent opening is pure, unadulterated Fitzgerald; and, again and again throughout the poem, the master hand is revealed. In one of the later verses, by the addition of two words, Fitzgerald has turned a commonplace into the most fearful indictment ever uttered by man against the idea of Deity:—

O Thou, who man of baser earth didst make,  
And even with Paradise devised the snake,  
For all the sin wherewith the face of man  
Is blackened, man's forgiveness give—and take.

In particular, Fitzgerald voices modern scepticism:—

Oh threats of Hell and hopes of Paradise!  
One thing, at least, is certain, this life flies.  
One thing is certain, and the rest is lies;  
The flower that once has blown for ever dies.

Prayer is derided in verse of passionate bitterness:—

And that inverted bowl they call the sky,  
Whereunder crawling, cooped, we live and die,  
Lift not your hands to it for help, for it  
As impotently rolls as you and I.

"A sense of tears in human things" breaks out in the following:—

Ah, Love, could you and I with Him conspire  
To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire;  
Would we not shatter it to bits, and then  
Remould it nearer to the heart's desire.

In the "linked sweetness" of this poem, Fitzgerald dreamed one dream more lasting than we ourselves, or the very Suffolk coast he lived on. Far off, the murmur of the busy and noisy world sounded but dimly in his ears, but the shy poet wrote his verses, and at the same time wrote himself one of the most notable poets of his time. By his rare genius he has added a wondrous chamber to the house beautiful of art.

MIMNERMUS.

## The Makings of the Christian Creed.

THIS is an attempt to discover where and why the original compilers of the creed known as Christian obtained the several details, namely, the members of the Trinity, the Virgin Mother and the Twelve Disciples. The facts are incontestable; the conclusions are matter for each of us to accept or reject, but appear to me right ones.

We were told by Professor D. F. Strauss, in his examination of the Gospel narratives, that "The whole matter is in a state of great confusion, and if we would attempt to arrange it, it cannot be done, it seems, otherwise than negatively and without any historic result." During the ages which have passed, and the general ignorance of the people of those ages, the records which have come down to us are hopelessly involved in errors, contradictions, interpolations and omissions. Our knowledge of the time prior to the Christian era, however, has vastly increased of late years, and I hope that a scholar will arise who will settle for all time the question of the origin of the whole tale of the declared founder and the disciples.

The word disciple is taken from the Latin verb *disco*: to learn; and properly describes all who accept the teaching of a particular teacher. It is used at least 94 times in the New Testament, either in the singular or plural, but never in the Old Testament. It sometimes means the first twelve, sometimes the seventy (or 72) who were sent out preaching, as recorded in chap. 10 of Luke, sometimes it refers to any follower of Jesus, or any of the preachers of the Gospel of the coming of the "Kingdom of Heaven." At the present day it is usually understood to mean the twelve only, and that is as I shall use it in this article.

At this point let me say that I cannot accept the Gospel accounts as true historically, that is to say, it appears to me that the statements are largely fiction and legendary. I treat the persons mentioned as *dramatis personæ*. In my opinion there was no Jesus as portrayed in the New Testament, and therefore there were no disciples; any more than there ever was a King Arthur, a William Tell, or a Hamlet or Shylock;



but owing to paucity of our language we speak of their reputed existence and actions as though they actually lived.

It is evident that when the story of Jesus was produced it was considered necessary for Leaders and Reformers to have some disciples, and therefore Jesus could not be without them. We are told that John the Baptist had a group; and some of the Jews claimed to be Moses' disciples. So it would be nothing new for Jesus to call together a band to support his teachings. But why the particular number of twelve? As we go along we shall see the reason.

It is necessary to go back to far, distant times to unfathom the mystery of the Christian creed, and it is so involved and extensive an enquiry, that a lifetime could be spent in the examination without revealing nearly all the ramifications of its gradual evolution. However, there have been discovered sufficient data for the average man who desires the truth to settle in his own mind where and how the germ of the teaching arose and how it developed.

In the dim and distant past, when mankind were mere savages, living among the wide-spreading forests which covered the land, and hiding during the night-time in caves or rough shelters formed of fallen branches of trees; when hunting and searching for food formed the daily occupation of the men and adults, and whose other actions chiefly consisted in fighting one another for the possession of the females; when clothing was only an encumbrance, and decorating the limbs and body with bones, shells and metallic rings was considered sufficient covering; at that time there were no fears of gods or demons. Fear was limited to material things. The primitive man was necessarily on the alert to destroy anything that was strange or unknown. The young males would form small bands to make expeditions, just as monkeys and the lads of towns do now. In later times, as Mr. Wrench informs us, in *The Grammar of Life*: "A family occupied a hut, and a cluster of huts formed a village. Being dependent upon each other, the men of a village were bound by mutual desire for self-protection, and built a palisade round the village, or protected the camp. But for the rest, there was little distinction between man and man, scarcely more than there is between wolf and wolf in a pack."

At a still later time villages grew in size or were joined with others and tribes were formed. Headmen appeared, with a body of supporters, and some, more cunning or with higher abilities than the rest, found leisure for concentration of thought and desired to pursue meditations. A class of priest arose taking charge of the dead, and making their homes in the places where the bodies were deposited. To retain their power with the people they took advantage of the fears of the rest of the tribe, had secret understandings and signs among themselves, and led the people to believe that, in return for food, they could protect the tribe from natural evils, such as earthquake, storm, drought, eclipse, and enemies of all kinds. The modern priest claims as much by means of prayer. In those times the chief priest, who was frequently the head of the tribe, even claimed that he had come from the sky to rule over them, and when he died his companions said he had returned to it.

Having made such sweeping claims, it would not have been consistent for such persons to be ignorant of such a seemingly small matter as to how the world came into existence, and so tales were invented to account for all origins. Unfortunately for the creditability of such tales, however, the details are so contradictory that they all fail through lack of agreement. The progenitors of the Indian races put together an account which has been translated by Professor Max

Muller. In the 19th Khanda of the Upanishads we read: "Aditya (the sun) is Braman. In the beginning this was non-existent, it grew, it turned into an egg. The egg lay for the space of a year. The egg broke open. The halves were one of silver, the other of gold. The silver one became the earth, the golden one the sky, the thick membrane (of the white) the mountains, the thin one (of the yolk) the mist with the clouds, the small veins the rivers, the fluid the sea."

This rigmarole is laughable to us, but it was probably a serious attempt to convey, in common language, a mystery which has puzzled mankind from time immemorial. The mystery of the universe is still as deep as ever. The galaxy of the heavens has raised awe and wonder in every age, and especially among tropical tribes, where the sky is full of suns, blazing with a splendour unimagined by those who have never left the temperate zones.

E. ANDERSON.

(To be Continued.)

## The Blood of Saint Januarius.

SOME twenty or more years ago I was in Salisbury market-place, where a travelling quack was selling a wonderful "blood purifier." He was a big, powerful man, and looked very impressive in a college cap and gown; his ready tongue and smattering of scientific terms held the gaping mob. He proved to them that boils, swelling, eruptions, etc., were due to sluggish and thick blood, from which also followed fits, paralysis and the Lord knows what. To prove how his mixture thinned the blood and thus allowed its nourishing free flow to all the organs of the body, he held in his hand a bottle which he said contained thick, impure blood (a mixture possibly of ether gelatine and some colouring matter), into this phial he dropped a few drops of his magic mixture (really, I expect, a drop or two of additional ether), almost immediately the "blood" thinned and bubbled up in the sight of all, and he sold his fraudulent nostrum like hot cakes—

'Tis a far cry from Salisbury to Naples, but in ignorance and credulity the whole world is kin.

Wright, in his *Narratives of Sorcery*, tells us that during the middle ages the legend was generally current that Naples was founded on eggs, and upon an egg its fate depended. I have recently visited that city, and from its slums the faint odour of those ancient eggs still clings to me; possibly in those far-off days, when faith and filth, piety and plague, rubbed shoulders, the then smells of that city of saints lent some colour to the legend; modern sanitation has purged the city, and to-day there remains only "the odour of Sanctity." Its celebrated cathedral, that of Saint Januarius, commemorates the martyrdom of the saint, who was beheaded in 309, and whose head was given to the Church by the Duke of Anjou some seven hundred years later; the order of St. Januarius was not constituted till 1738. On the anniversary of the saint's death, September 19, the cathedral is crowded; a priest approaches the head, which is placed upon the altar, holding in his hand a small phial containing some of the congealed blood of the martyr, when the bottle is brought close to the relic the blood should melt or liquefy; each year the miracle occurred on the saint's day until the year 1582, when the calendar was altered, but the alteration appeared to be unnoticed by the saint, for, with the indifference of the dead, he permitted his blood to liquefy eleven days earlier than before.



The "blood" can be so manipulated by the priest that it remains congealed or liquefies at his pleasure; if held tightly in a warm hand it liquefies, if lightly it remains congealed. The liquefaction is held by the worshippers as of happy omen, its remaining congealed portends trouble and disaster. At rare intervals the Bishop, for political purposes, decrees that the miracle shall not happen; and this occurred about 1809. The French were at Naples. Murat had been made king by Napoleon on July 15, 1808; the priests wanted to get rid of an alien monarch, and by the non-liquefaction, saw a means of stirring up ill-will among the people. Murat, however, was equal to the occasion. He placed cannon opposite the cathedral and threatened to blow it to pieces unless the miracle occurred within a given time. The Bishop held out as long as he dared, protesting it could not be done, but Murat meant what he said, and the Bishop knew it—the miracle consequently took place—to order.

Addison, in an old book of travels, tells us he twice saw the miracle performed, but "he thought it one of the most bungling tricks that he had ever seen." Mabillon's account tells us—

That during the time a Mass or two are celebrated in the church, the other priests are tampering with the "phial of blood"; that as soon as any part of it begins to melt by the heat of their hands, or other management, it drops into the lower side of the glass, which is empty, upon the first discovery of which the miracle is proclaimed aloud, to the great joy and edification of the people.

Seats near the altar used to be reserved for a family that claimed descent from the saint, and should the liquefaction be delayed they were especially unfortunate; following the example of the savage, who beats his non-complying god,—

They beg, they scold, they even threaten; they have been known to abuse the saint roundly, and to tell him that if he did not care to show his favour to the city by liquefying his blood, St. Cosmo and St. Damian were just as good saints as he, and would no doubt be very glad to have the city devote itself to them. At last, on the occasion above referred to, the priest, suddenly turning the phial, announced that the saint had performed the miracle, and instantly priests, people, choir, and organ burst forth into a great *te deum*; bells rang and cannon roared, a procession was formed, and the shrine containing the saint's relics was carried through the streets, the people prostrating themselves on both sides of the way and throwing showers of rose-leaves upon the shrine and upon the path before it.

The city's Royal Gallery of Paintings contains some curious pictures, one enormous canvas preserves to us the measure adopted to save the city from the recurrent plagues; the worst visitation appears to have been in 1656. This picture depicts the circuitous methods by which the worshippers supplicated for relief. White says:—

In the background is the plague-stricken city; in the foreground the people are praying to the city authorities to avert the plague; the city authorities are praying to the Carthusian monks; the monks are praying to St. Martin, St. Bruno and St. Januarius; these three saints in their turn are praying to the Virgin; the Virgin prays to Christ; and Christ prays to the Almighty.

Profanely suggestive of the black man, on a black night, in a black cellar, seeking a black cat that wasn't there. Credulity never dies—the priest sees to that, for it is their life-blood—I was reminded of this when I saw hundreds and hundreds of native offerings in this same cathedral. I remembered that the temples of Aesculapius, ages before, were hung with such offerings, which, Livy says, "were the priests' pay

for the cures that he had wrought for the sick." These offerings—at least, those that have come down to us—were of a far better nature than the horribly crude drawings and paintings now in the church, for they were "in tables of brass or marble," some being found in a ruined Easculapian temple on the Isle of the Tiber at Rome, a site now occupied by the church of St. Bartolomeo.

Middleton tells us that the old heathen temples were so crowded with offerings that "the priests were obliged sometimes to take them down, for the obstruction which they gave to the beauty of a fine pillar or altar." This is true of the cathedral in Naples to-day, great columns being plastered over from floor to roof with the crudest possible drawings and paintings—many being pathetic in their poverty, drawn or painted on cardboard, the lids or bottoms of boxes—one I noticed, of a soldier who fell into a shell-hole or trench just as three very lurid shells burst; another, of a man crushed (or preserved from being crushed) between a motor and tram-car—all with due reverence dedicated to the particular patron-saint of the saved one.

Now, goddess help, for thou canst help bestow,  
As all these pictures round my altar show.

Cicero tells us a story:—

A friend of Diagoras—the philosopher, called "the Atheist"—having found him once in a temple: "You," says he, "who think the gods take no notice of human affairs, do not you see here by this number of pictures how many people, for the sake of their vows, have been saved in storms at sea and got safe into harbour?" "Yes," says Diagoras, "I see how it is, for those are never painted who happen to be drowned."

Salisbury—Naples—the cheating quack—the fraudulent Bishop! One is reminded of Kipling's lines:—

They're like as a row of pins—  
For the Colonel's Lady and Judy O'Grady  
Are sisters under their skins.

J. W. W.

## The King and the Countess: Is It Shakespeare?

ONLY those who are interested in the engrossing but difficult subject, the minor drama of the Shakespearean age are likely to be acquainted with the anonymous play, *The Raigne of King Edward III*, first printed as far as we know in 1596. Some attention is certain to be given to it now that Mr. William Poel has decided to put on the stage immediately not the whole of it, but a small remarkable portion. This is an episode so easily detachable from the body of the play that it may well have been an addition made when the alarum and excursion business of the old and dull chronicle drama had ceased to attract. It is this portion only that contains really fine verse. The pretty episode, which Mr. Poel calls *The King and the Countess* is an altered version of the forty-sixth novel in Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*. It tells the story of the King's adulterous love for the Countess, her virtuous rejection of his suit; his final victory over self.

The Countess of Salisbury, whose husband is away fighting battles for the King, is besieged in her Castle of Roxborough by the insulting and barbarian Scots. They are just on the point of taking the castle when Edward and a part of his army come to the rescue. The moment he sets eyes on the Countess he feels the "nascent motions of base love," and the fair and witty lady unconsciously heaps fuel on his ardour by the loyal warmth of her welcome. A lively picture of the love-sick monarch is sketched for us by his secretary



and pimp. There is a pretty scene in the garden of the castle. The pimp, who is also a poet, is trying to write, at the King's suggestion, a love-letter to the Countess. They cannot agree, and the Countess appearing, the King dismisses his poet and makes a dexterous and delicate attack upon the lady. She pretends not to understand him. When at last he speaks plainly she answers with a dialectical skill that is amusing, if not very true to nature. One of the fine passages of the play is this :—

But that your lips were sacred, my lord,  
You would profane the holy name of love.  
That love you offer me you cannot give,  
For Cæsar owes that tribute to his queen :  
That love, you beg of me, I cannot give,  
For Sara owes that duty to her lord.  
He that doth clip and counterfeit your stamp  
Shall die, my lord : and will your sacred self  
Council high treason against the King of Heaven,  
To stamp his image in forbidden metal,  
Forgetting your allegiance and your oath ?  
To be a king is of a younger house  
Than to be married.

Her refusal serves only to increase his passion. By appealing to the loyalty of the Earl of Warwick, the lady's father, he gets him to swear that he is willing to sacrifice his life, even his honour, to cure the King's melancholy. He is horrified to find that he has sworn to act as pander between the King and his own daughter. In a speech of many metaphors and amazingly undramatic, he pleads the King's cause. His suit is indignantly rejected, the Countess preferring an honourable grave to the "polluted closet of a King." The Prince of Wales now comes to get his father's directions in some warlike matters, and the military ardour of his son almost creates a virtuous diversion, but the Countess at that moment desiring an audience of the King, his flame of love is rekindled. After she has made him promise to remove his queen and her husband, she suddenly puts before him two daggers :—

Take thou the one, and with it kill thy queen,  
And with the other I'll despatch my love  
Which now lies fast asleep within my heart.  
When they are gone, then I'll consent to love.

The dauntless action awakens the King from his idle dream of love, and sends him to a nobler field of conquest.

This pretty little episode is effective if one is not disposed to be exacting. But the treatment is not dramatic. It is witty, rhetorical, idyllic, elegiac in the conventional, charming Elizabethan way. The dialogue is not struck from the action. It is this part that suggested to Edward Capell (1760) the possibility of Shakespeare's having a large hand in the play. There is no external evidence, of course, but what they deemed internal evidence led Tennyson and Mr. Wm. Archer to attribute to him at least the better parts. Against the weighty testimony of Tennyson, we are able to set the equal authority of Swinburne, who had the advantage of an intimate acquaintance with Shakespeare's predecessors; and against that of Mr. Archer, the well-nourished judgment and delicate ear of Mr. J. M. Robertson. Some while ago he told me that he was inclined to give the whole play to Robert Greene, and that he thought the episode was added at a later date (before 1593); the vibrant quality of the verse being due to Greene's writing at high pressure.

But whether the author was Greene, Shakespeare, or some one unknown, it is a playlet worth staging and worth seeing. Mr. Poel is to be thanked and congratulated.

H. W.

Goethe, in his old age, foresaw the time when Christianity might become a "subject" for Poetry, a subject that is to say to be treated without reference of any kind to existing dogma or superstition.—Robert Buchanan.

## Acid Drops.

The Bishop of Willesden says there is no place in Britain to compare with Piccadilly and Leicester Square for vice. We do not think we can boast of a sufficiently detailed knowledge of the different centres of vice in Britain to be able to challenge the truth of the bishop's statement, although one is never quite sure how much vice these clerics on the prowl actually see and how much they bring with them and project on the scene of their labours. But we venture to point out to the bishop that Piccadilly and Leicester Square are part of London, London is part of Britain, Britain has been Christian for many, many centuries, and the presence of so much vice does not reflect much credit upon his creed. And, further, we venture to say that these places could not be the centres of vice they are accused of being if Christians did nothing to encourage it. Nor will the bishop by his denunciation do much to diminish the vice that exists. He is more likely to send a lot of Christians round these places to see how much that is wicked they can see. And the more they see—or fancy they see—the greater will be their sense of obligation to the pure-minded bishop.

The London *Daily Herald*, probably to justify the pious tone of the paper, said recently that Christ "mixed religion with politics all the time." The *Herald* ought to have added that, according to the story, he was executed, and never lived to form a Cabinet.

Titles granted by the Pope since 1870 are no longer to be recognized by the Italian Government. This sad blow should make "marquises" and "counts" a minority instead of a majority of the population of Italy. At present they are as numerous as "colonels" in America.

"I gave her an apple in the police station to keep her quiet," remarked a police constable at Marylebone when giving evidence against a woman charged with being drunk and disorderly. According to popular belief, it was an "apple" that caused all the row in the Garden of Eden; so it is a useful fruit.

"The Little Children's Bible" and "The Children's Bible" will be published on May 23 by the Cambridge University Press. One of the editors is Mr. T. R. Glover, President of the Baptists' Union. We do not know what little children have done to deserve this; and the charming agreement engendered by the Bible among the grown-ups might have touched the hearts of the editors before they launched a version of the book that made a thousands slips—or more. If the editors wish to straighten out the world—and it needs it—let them leave children alone and tackle the problems of economics. In this field a few shillings, with effective spending power in the pockets of most people, would settle one of the horrors of society, but this would be dealing with facts, this moment, and of more importance than the historical accuracy of theology. Our editors are on safer ground where the fight takes place with pillows.

Nothing showed the effect of the pressure of modern thought upon the Churches more than the fact of the recent "Copec" meeting at Birmingham discussing the question of birth control. Not so long ago such a topic was taboo at a Christian gathering, and had it not been for the work of Freethinkers it would still be so. But the discussion took place; and the other day, at a meeting of Convocation, a resolution was moved commending the discussion. In putting the resolution, the Archbishop of Canterbury said that he had been asked to appoint a committee, and the best course would be to strengthen that committee by appointing a number of prominent churchmen to sit on it. The same old game! First the bitterest opposition and slander for the pioneers, then, when the work has been done sufficiently well to make it unprofitable to take up the attitude of ignorant opposition and religious slander, to discover that it is a Christian



movement, and, to prove it is, point to the number of opportunist Christians who have taken part in it when it could no longer be denied. Christianity never alters very much in essence, however much its form may change.

From the *Observer* of a hundred years ago :—

New Project.—A capital of twenty millions for converting the Jews. It having been discovered that by the regular and tedious process of teaching and preaching, the conversion of every Jew costs, upon an average, a thousand pounds, it is therefore proposed to effect the object by purchase in future. An eminent Israelite has agreed to contract for the conversion of two thousand at £430 per head, including women and children, but threatens to raise his price unless immediately treated with.

We fancy the current market quotation would be about the same to-day. Still these missions provide sustenance for those of the Lord's servants who would be hard put to it in their absence.

Atherley Church, near Atherstone, was struck by lightning during the week, and the damage is estimated at £15,000. The subscription list for re-building ought to remind the pious supporters that they should receive better treatment from the hands of their particular God; but, if we were cynical, or in the profession, we should make the best of it by explaining that it was a celestial attempt at the solution of the unemployment problem—Tokio on the small scale of one inch to a mile.

A very clever example of turning the other cheek to the smiter will be found in the address by a Muslim on "Christianity and War." "To Christian friends I say," he said, "come to an equitable proposition with us Muslims and be as broadminded as we are. To Muslims, I say, trust in God, but tie your camel." This sentiment in the last sentence is a faint echo of the old Puritans, who preferred their religion without trimmings, and carried out the work of the Lord with dry powder.

A Southampton correspondent informs us that he recently found several of his Jewish friends reading the *Freethinker* during the holiday of the "Passover." We imagine they might easily have put their spare time to a worse use.

Dean Inge declares that "the Gospel is fundamentally on the side of Liberty." If the Dean had been imprisoned for blasphemy he would see the point of the joke.

By nineteen votes to sixteen the Blackburn Town Council has decided to have bands in the parks on Sundays. All the usual objections to so revolutionary a proposed were brought forward, and among them the plea that we must not hurt the susceptibilities of those who did not like bands playing on Sunday. It probably never dawned on those who used this argument to question the right of certain people to prevent others enjoying themselves in a quite decent and healthy manner because they did not like their way of doing so. Suppose the Free-thinker were to propose closing all the churches because he did not like to see people spending their spare time in that way? And yet if one body of men have the right to make that objection the ground of legislation, another body ought to have an equal right. And the curious thing is that these same people see nothing wrong in Salvation Army bands playing in the streets, or organs and other musical instruments blaring away in churches and chapels. Religious susceptibilities are wonderful things, and the more one studies them, the more one marvels at their manifestations.

At Wigton, also, the Rev. J. Courtney is concerned about the growth of Sunday amusements and recreations. He complains that the number of omnibuses run on Sunday in his district have increased by 150 per cent. in three years. We are very pleased to hear it, and we venture to assert that the excursions which people make on these vehicles are far healthier, from either a physical

or moral point of view than the sermons which they might hear if they went to church.

Apropos of the centenary of Kant, the *Church Times* airily remarks that "consciousness cannot be a product of matter, for matter itself is a mental construction." So materialism is out of court. But "matter is no more and no less of a mental construction than is "mind." Kant properly studied, and Kant's predecessor, Hume, might have taught the *Church Times* that much. What we know, strictly in terms of the Kantian critique, is one series of experiences which we label "matter," and another series which we label "mind"; but of mind as a substance, or of matter as a substance, we know absolutely nothing. Or, if one may be permitted to state the position in terms of Spinoza, we assume existence, and we know only its "modes." We classify one mode as matter and the other as mind, and there our knowledge ends.

What the *Church Times* must establish to make its position good is that it knows something of "mind" apart from the phenomena classified as mental. And that it certainly cannot do. There is, so far as we know, no such thing as mind apart from mental phenomena. Mind is no more than a general term used to sum an infinite number of particular experiences. There is the usual mistake here of taking an abstraction for a concrete reality.

The other blunder of the *Church Times* is the one we have often noted. This is the assumption that Materialism is bound up with some particular theory of the nature of "matter." This is not the case. The essence of materialism is, positively, the assertion of determinism throughout the whole of nature; and, negatively, the denial of the supernatural in nature. How we are to regard "matter" or "mind" or anything else is a question for current science—that is, for contemporary knowledge to determine. If the theory of matter held at one time is shown to be false, that will no more upset materialism than the substitution of one theory of planetary origins for another can upset the science of astronomy.

Canon Barnes thinks that English people are as yet barbarians. So far as their religion is concerned, we hold that deliverance to be beyond question. And one of the men employed in seeing that the English people do not lose their barbarian habits of thought is Canon Barnes himself. After all, the test of whether a man is a barbarian or not is essentially a question of mental outlook; and the outlook implied in the belief that there is an almighty man, magnified almost beyond conception, governing the universe, and that this heavenly monster listens to the prayers of certain people in particular buildings, and arranges things in accordance with their requests, and that once upon a time this same heavenly creature came down to earth and got himself crucified, and then rose again from the dead, is about as barbarous as one would wish. If the English people shake off their barbarism it will certainly not be because of the influence of their religion.

In a paternity case at Hyde, the explanation of the mother of the child why she stayed in the house with the man, was that it was "the will of God." And if there is a God it is clear that he did not interfere in order to induce the girl not to stay with the man. On the whole, the will of God seems rather a dangerous sort of thing on which to rely.

Nora Hollis is an American lady whose efforts in literature run in the direction of a very strong religion. She recently wrote a work entitled *The Living God and the Bible*. But the book did not sell, so Miss Hollis adopted the drastic method of killing her aged landlady in order to gain publicity for her work. It is quite evident that if religion in this case did not restrain, it certainly failed to rob Miss Hollis of her resourcefulness.



## 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.

L. MASON.—Thanks for your efforts to secure new readers for the *Freethinker*. If each one did something to secure new subscribers, our circulation might easily be doubled. We wish the Finsbury Park Branch all success.

J. FRASER.—Copies have been sent to the addresses given. We have readers in Inverness, but we can do with more, and trust you will succeed in getting them. Both Inverness and the *Freethinker* will be the better for a closer acquaintance.

S. CONWAY.—The discovery of the inscription about Moses is on all fours with the American Professor's discovery of the identical pillar of salt into which Lot's wife was metamorphosed. Thanks for translation. You are aware, we presume, that there already exists one in English?

W. MERCHANT.—We have an article in hand by Mr. Pell, and it would be best to leave comments on his position until it appears, which will be in the course of the next month. Glad to know the *Freethinker* is on sale in the streets of New York. Long may it flourish.

R. T. BRANKHERD.—We, like yourself, cannot make much of the Archbishop of Canterbury's verbiage about spiritual healing. We take it that there are too many fashionable Christians interested in it for his Grace to condemn it altogether, and, besides, it is part of the miracle working hocus-pocus of the Christian Church. What he is obviously anxious about is to keep the trade within the limits of his own trade union. Glad you find the tract on "Peculiar Christians" so useful.

C. HARPUR.—We are as suspicious as you are about the law taking action in defence of what it calls "decency." It very often means giving the prurient mind full play, and making "indecent" things that would otherwise not be so. But you have mistaken our point with regard to the so-called blasphemy laws and prosecutions for indecency. We meant only that indecency is still an indictable offence under the ordinary law, even though the blasphemy laws were repealed, and there was therefore no reason for continuing them on that ground. Moreover, we do not protest, as members of a special body, against a law which affects all citizens alike. Our protest in that case is upon the common ground of injustice to all, or of the unwisdom of the law which is called into question.

H. BAYFORD.—We hope that the "rambles" of the Manchester Branch will prove as successful as usual. But, from the look of things, it might be as well to take bathing costumes with you. Will insert notice when we get particulars.

H. LATIMER-VOIGHT.—We are not surprised that the editor of *Pearson's Magazine*, after publishing Mr. Sidney Dark's article on "Why I Cling to the Old Faith," found that he could not spare space for a reply. The only way that writers of religious nonsense can be protected from criticism is by the editors making some such excuse as the one made to you.

GREEVE FYSHER.—Thanks for four subscriptions received. Your cheque has been handed to our shop-manager, who will forward receipt in due course.

H. D.—There is an abridged edition of the *Golden Bough* at 18s. Our shop-manager will be pleased to get it for you. Postage will be about 6d. *The Evolution of the Idea of God* is out of print.

J. COLLIER.—The Secular Society, Limited, will send a copy of Draper's work to the Birmingham Free Library.

N. WOOD.—Very pleased to hear of the successful meeting you had with Mr. Andrew Millar. We spoke to him when he was in London, and we know that he was looking forward to his visit. Optimism is the right spirit in which to take up work in a movement such as ours. Shall hope to see you at the Conference.

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

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

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

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communi-

cations 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.

Our readers will be interested to learn that Mr. Charles Smith, who has been selling the *Truthseeker* in, or "on," the streets of New York, is now getting a parcel of the *Freethinker* weekly and adding these to his sales. Mr. Smith's work is purely a labour of love, and we are glad to hear that he is making headway. In between sales he gets into conversation with purchasers or with those interested, and does much good in that direction. There is a chance for some enthusiastic Freethinkers doing the same in London. A few well-dressed men and women at that work, say once a week, would be a magnificent advertisement for the paper and for the movement which it represents.

Mr. G. Whitehead lectures to-day in Brockwell Park in the afternoon, and in Victoria Park in the evening. He will also conduct a lecturing "mission" in South London during the week. Particulars will be found in the guide notices.

Mr. Whitehead will remain in London till May 31, when he will commence a lecturing tour of the provinces. He will commence at Preston, and from there travel through Lancashire and Yorkshire. He has still some vacant dates, and Freethinkers in Lancashire and Yorkshire who would like to see some lecturing done in their locality should write without delay to the General Secretary, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Those who say so often they would like to see work done in their district have now an opportunity of seeing what they desire.

We are within a very few weeks of the Annual Conference, and Branch Secretaries are reminded that the names of their representatives at the Conference should be sent in, on the forms already supplied, not later than May 26. We should like to see every Branch represented directly, but a representative of a Branch need not necessarily be one of its own members. But a direct representation is best, and, as Preston is very central, we hope to be able to report a record attendance. It is the one occasion during the year when Freethinkers may meet each other in friendly converse, and it should not be missed.

Those who are visiting Preston for the Conference and desire accommodation over the week-end, should write without delay to Mr. Arthur Rogerson, Leyland Road, Penwortham, Preston, who has the local arrangements in hand. If they will let him know their exact requirements, he will do his best to satisfy them.

Mr. E. E. Stafford writes us dissenting from our statement that the result of the deputation to the Home Secretary on the blasphemy laws will be received with satisfaction. He says that Mr. Henderson said nothing that could not have been said by any astute parliamentarian; as it was indefinite, merely the promise to do something, some time, somewhere, somehow. Mr. Hen-



derson, he says, is a religionist, is in high office, and that should cause a Freethinker to pause and think. We quite agree with the last sentence. On the other hand, Mr. Henderson might have met the deputation with the remark that the Government could not in the present state of public business find facilities for the introduction of the repeal of the blasphemy laws, and so let the matter end, by answering the request which the deputation put to him. But he did express his agreement with the repeal of the blasphemy laws, he promised to vote for the repeal if the measure comes before the House, and he promised to bring the matter before the Cabinet. Whether he lives up to his promises remains to be seen. But the deputation secured an expression of support from a Home Secretary, and that will surely count for something, and one may assume that in this respect Mr. Henderson knows that he will have some members of the Cabinet with him. And that we know to be the case. The propagandist value of the deputation we regard as considerable.

## Freethought on Sex Problems.

### I.

THE only persons who have a right to claim themselves "free thinkers" are those who apply the principle of thinking freely in every department of mental activity—in every department of life itself. If a man is broadminded in matters of religion, and narrowminded in matters of politics or economics or ethics, he must necessarily be regarded intellectually as partially disabled. The Agnostic Puritan and the Freethought Conservative are contradictions in terms: both have bowed low in the Shadows of Authority rather than stood upright in the Light of Knowledge. Both have looked behind rather than before; have relied on tradition rather than vision; have drawn inspiration from the past rather than the future—at best, have preserved an insecure balance with one foot in Mediævalism and the other in thoroughly respectable Broadmindedness. Nothing has held back the advance and spread of real freedom of thought more than the widely held belief that freethought is something which relates only to religious superstitions—that to be a Freethinker a man needs only to be godless. This belief, unfortunately, some Freethinkers have gone far to justify.

Nevertheless, it is a fact that Agnostics, Rationalists, and Freethinkers as a whole have been responsible, above all, for the advances made in public opinion here in regard to Birth Control, the medical prevention of Venereal Disease, Eugenics, and other sex problems. The belated efforts of the Churches to catch up to and overtake public opinion, and then claim to have led it, are as amusing as they are unsuccessful.

How can the Church concede freedom of thought—much less freedom of action—in regard to sex? If the Church cannot come in and claim power and emoluments at the emotional crises of life—Birth, Marriage, Death—where would be its authority and wealth? If marriage becomes a purely personal and social matter—a matter for the individual and State—and if marriage contracts are to be made and recorded the same as any other contract, instead of being "celebrated"; if they are to be personally honoured rather than ecclesiastically blessed—the priest is obviously a superfluity. Just as the hospital and the school have grown away from his control, so now the home threatens to slip out of his clutches. And that is his last entrenchment! No wonder that word has gone round among the high priests that unqualified opposition to family limitation and prophylaxis must be reconsidered; that some compromise must be found. *For the people will have knowledge.*

Of course, it is not suggested by the Church that women should be scientifically taught how to control

the fertility of their own bodies—rather that their faith in contraceptive methods should be undermined; for this purpose elderly Christian doctors should be incited to sow doubt and fear in the minds of uninformed women. So with venereal disease. It should be insidiously suggested that microbes are not something to be destroyed, but rather something to be discussed. And as to self-disinfection, sinners should be induced to think that skill (which they lacked) was more important than chemical action (which any fool could be taught to apply). The main object in both cases was to weaken personal confidence and thus strengthen ecclesiastical authority. And so it is that the people are fooled.

It is always possible to fool some of the people some of the time, but it is not possible to fool all of the people all of the time. Knowledge has grown from more to more, and in time every intelligent adult will realize that contraception and sexual cleanliness are not unreal visions, but solid facts, within the reach of all of us; things which are in themselves essentially desirable in the name of freedom itself.

Let us cast our mind back a thousand years in England. Then we had the feudal system—in other words, there was slavery of body. A man was not free to transport himself from one field to another; a woman had to yield to the baron the right of the first night. Fancy any modern employer claiming the "right" to spend the wedding night with the bride of one of his employees! To us that is unthinkable. The fact that it is unthinkable shows how far we have advanced on the road to personal freedom. So the ability of the modern workman to choose his employer; to leave the service of one and go to another; to withdraw his labour altogether from the market if he so desire; all this does certainly indicate an advance along the path of freedom—a release from slavery of body.

Cast our mind back now five hundred years in England. Then we had the spread of knowledge among the common people just beginning. The Caxton Press had been set up; books were being printed. The names of Newton, Galileo, Bruno, Tycho Brahe flit across our memory, with countless others on whom the Church loaded its curses or inflicted its tortures. Nevertheless, science grew stronger and stronger; and gradually, slowly, painfully, humanity staggered and struggled away from slavery of mind.

To-day the struggle with us against the Church is not so much for physical freedom or intellectual freedom, but rather for freedom of conduct. Men and women everywhere are claiming their bodies as their own; claiming to be in control of themselves; claiming the right of freedom of action as well as freedom of thought, so long only as they do not inflict any harm on society. Husbands and wives in these modern days in England believe that they, not the priest, should regulate their own marital life; and they themselves should have the knowledge and ability to control their own fertility, to exercise family limitation or not. Fathers and mothers are naturally disturbed when their sons become young men—and act at times as young men have always acted; but they are not simply disturbed, but furiously angry when they find their sons afflicted with hideous diseases easily avoidable if the Church had contented itself with trying to prevent sin rather than trying to secure the poisoning of the sinner.

In all this thousand years over which we have cast our mind, the methods of the Church have been the same—for a thousand years are as one day. The method has been the suppression of knowledge and the destruction (wherever possible) of freedom of thought, still more of freedom of action. A few cantankerous and crusty ancients pronounce unequivocal con-



demnations; but the majority are smooth and suave moderns, "with a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart." The result is the same—reaction wins, unless victory can be wrenched from the jaws of defeat. Ultimately, always and all ways, *the woman pays*. And so long as woman can be made to pay, the Church is safe. Give every adult the knowledge which will remove once and for all the fear of unwanted impregnation, and what need is there then for the Church to publish the banns, to celebrate the marriage, to christen the child, and to baptize the family in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost? And so, sometimes quietly and insidiously, sometimes loudly and fiercely, the Church works steadily on the side of—the Censors. All my books<sup>1</sup> are banned—some in one country, some in another—and always in the name of Freethought? Well, hardly! In the name of the Church, in the name of so-called Morality, in the name of that Decency which is too indecent to permit even the naming of the reproductive organs, on which the very life of the race necessarily depends.

ERTIE A. ROUT.

(To be Continued.)

## The Baptist Who Blighted My Life.

A (SHATTERED) ROMANCE.

I pray you, give me leave to go from hence :  
I am not well.

—Shakespeare.

CYNTHIA was one of the nicest girls to whom I have ever been engaged. Her personal appearance, it is true, was not of the type that would have appealed to the æsthetic tastes of the connoisseur. The cast in her left eye for instance— . Somehow, however, I could not help liking Cynthia. She had a kind heart, and she *understood* me—at least, I thought she did. The announcement of our betrothal was not received by the family circle with that degree of enthusiasm usually aroused by "glad tidings of great joy." My sister declared that I was throwing myself away on a "frowsy frump"; whilst my brother prophesied, in a true brotherly spirit, that I should soon be filling the house with "bunk-eyed brats." My mother kissed me affectionately, and said she hoped her dear boy would be very, very happy—and then went to her room to have a good cry. And so, that night, Cynthia and I wandered out in the moonlight: "the same moon that looked down on Anthony and Cleopatra," I whispered sentimentally. Cynthia giggled (she had a habit of giggling. I often reproached her for it), looked at me out of her right eye, and borrowed five pounds for "something for the bottom drawer." "No one," I declared passionately, "No one shall come between us now." Alas! I had reckoned without Cynthia's father.

Cynthia's father was a Particular Baptist. What is the precise difference between a particular Baptist and one who is not quite so particular, I have never been able to discover; but Cynthia's father was the most particular of all Particular Baptists. He out-Heroded Herod, and out-fundamentalled the fundamentalists. He made William Jennings Byran look like a red revolutionary. The roaring breakers of modern scepticism, and the gently lapping waves of the Higher Criticism left him as imperturbed and oblivious to their existence as the rock of Gibraltar. In these days when believers scarcely know what they believe—apart from the fact that they *do* believe—it

is delightful to meet a man who knows not only where he stands, but why he stands there—delightful, that is to say, to anyone who is not engaged to Cynthia. There was only one tenet in my prospective father-in-law's creed: Be *damped*, or be *damned*. Nothing could be simpler. He would have echoed the advice of the old clergyman to the young one in one of Mark Rutherford's novels:—

Simply tell them we are all sinners, and deserve damnation. God sent His Son into the world. If we believe in Him we shall be saved; if not, we shall be lost. There is no mystery in that; everybody can understand it; and people are never weary of hearing the old, old gospel.

This, and the necessity of a soaking, was, he declared, the one clear message delivered to the saints. And by this he would stand or fall.

To the majority of people the year nineteen hundred and twenty-three will always be memorable, for two things: firstly, there was a lamentable shortage in the supply of bananas (Yes! we have none); and secondly, summer fell on a Wednesday. To me, however, it will always be remembered as the year in which Cynthia's father conceived the perfectly diabolical idea of turning me into a particular Baptist. My views on religion were well known to Cynthia; but for her sake, and the sake of peace and quietness, I had been very careful not to air my views in the presence of her august father. I was considerably startled, therefore, when, one Sunday evening shortly after our engagement, Cynthia's father suddenly turned to me and asked, in a voice full of a strange foreboding: "Henry, are you saved?" Cynthia gazed at me apprehensively, the while a ruddy blush suffused my cheeks. My thinking faculties were in a state of suspended animation; I had not felt at such a loss since the night some years before, when, on the advice of a sergeant who called himself my friend, I had groped my way blindly into a twenty-foot ring to contest the divisional featherweight championship. Cynthia's father repeated the question impatiently. I felt that I *must* say something. "Er—what do you mean exactly," I queried, sparring for wind.

"What do I mean? *What do I mean?* Why, I mean what I say. Are you saved? Have you been baptized? Have you accepted our Lord and Saviour?"

I forget now exactly what I said; but I know that, as I made reply, I felt that it was the beginning of the end.

I could never understand Cynthia. Like all her sex she was most unreasonable. She wanted to know why on earth I didn't pretend to be saved. Women have no sense of honour. "Why," she asked tearfully, "didn't you say you had been baptized? After all, what does it matter? Besides, you know what father is." I felt that this was the last stage in my disillusionment. To think that she whom I loved; she whom I hoped one day to make the queen of my household and mother of my children, should ask me to lay perjury upon my soul. I picked up my hat and staggered to the door.

Of course, it is quite impossible and unthinkable that I should ever have married anyone named Cynthia. The last time I saw her she was in the chorus of a cheap revue—earning a *bare* existence, so to speak. Her father, I understand, is still a Particular Baptist!

Comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

[Lonely Scotsman writes asking me (1) if I got my five pounds back; (2) if not, will I give him the lady's name and address?

The answer is in the sedative.]

<sup>1</sup> *Safe Marriage* (Heinemann), 3s. 6d.; subject, Birth Control. *Two Years in Paris* (3s. 6d.) and *La Belle Discretion* (1s.); Roberts & Co., 19 Villiers Street, Strand, London.



## The Ass of Zion.

### PALM SUNDAY, AND ITS TRUE, SPIRITUAL MEANING.

THE equestrian, Sanger's-circus feat of Christ riding simultaneously upon an ass and a colt (*vide* Matthew xxi, 7), or a young ass (*vide* John xii, 14), into Jerusalem is one of those hardy annuals to which full rhetorical justice has once again been done in every tin chapel or stone cathedral from Timbuktu to the Thames. However, despite the great intellectual or spiritual exertions of the cultured Oxford dean or the evangelical gospel shark to bring home to his audience the mystic meaning of Palm Sunday in the life and time of the God-Man, who, as we know, is the projection of every man's ideal; at once a High Anglican Tory and a Low-Church Liberal; a Communist wrecker of constitutions and a good Moderate Man who likes to bask in the shade of the Union Jack waving over a stack of Bibles on an island of palm or pine; the Inner Light of a Quaker's conscience or a stern Syrian prophet; Sam Slick distributing soft sawder to languishing ladies, or Father Christmas handing out spiritual lollipops to suffering babes; the Gentleman who told the bachelor Bishop he must not kiss a female, but who was nevertheless present on an historic occasion when the episcopal conscience was found in a compromising position with a Great Gun to turn Germans into nightshirted harpers in Zion—despite all these efforts, we dare say our good church-goer has probably missed the true spiritual significance of the Feast of Palms.

Let us, therefore, lighten his darkness by an illuminating translation from Gustave Flaubert's *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine*. This puissant allegory is "a beautiful, philosophical poem," vividly telling the vision of an old anchorite of the Nile who met very many of the progenitors and phallic ancestors of the cultus-Christus in the course of a very long dream. The reader will remember that the cult of Cybele, together with those of Mithra and Isis, were the most "obstinate antagonists of Christianity, and that the worship of Cybele disappeared only after the long struggle between the two religions culminating in the victory of Theodosius over Eugenius in A.D. 394."<sup>1</sup>

#### ANTONY:

How good is the perfume of the palm trees, the light trembling of the green leaves, the limpidity of the springs! I should like to lie prone on the earth and feel it against my heart; my life would be renewed in its eternal youth.

He hears a sound of castanets and cymbals, and, in the midst of a rustic throng, men clad in white tunics striped with red bands, lead an ass, richly harnessed, its tail ornamented with ribbons and its hoofs painted.

A box, covered with a yellow horse-cloth, wallows on its back between two baskets, one of which receives such offerings as eggs, grapes, pears, cheeses, poultry and small coins; the other is full of roses, which the drivers strew before him as he walks.

The men wear ear-drops, capacious cloaks, their hair is braided, and cheeks painted; a wreath (*une couronne*) of olives binds their foreheads and is clasped by a medallion shaped like a very small statuette, daggers are thrust into their girdles, and they shake ebony-handled whips with three thongs studded with knuckle-bones.

Those in the rear of the procession set up on the ground, a tall pine, straight as a candlestick, which is on fire at its top, whilst its lowest branches shelter a little sheep.

<sup>1</sup> Grant Showerman, in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* (editor: Dr. James Hastings, 1911).

The ass is stopped. The saddle-cloth is lifted. Beneath it is a second one of black felt. Then one of the men in the white tunic begins to dance, clashing his castanets; another, on his knees before the box, beats a drum, and—

#### THE OLDEST OF THE BAND begins:

Here is the Bona-Dea, the Great Idaean of the Mountains, the Syrian Grandmother! Come nearer, good people! She bestows joy, heals the sick, satisfies lovers.

We take her about in the country in good or bad weather. Often we sleep in the open air, and not every day is our table well furnished. Thieves dwell in the woods; wild beasts leap from their dens; slippery roads wind round precipices. Behold!

(They lift the covering, and a box encrusted with flinty pebbles is seen.)

Higher than the cedars, she floats in the blue ether. More all-embracing than the wind, she girdles the world. She breathes out of the nostrils of tigers; her voice rumbles in the volcanoes; her anger is the tempest; the whiteness of her face has blanched the moon. She ripens the harvests, she makes the ripe fruit drop from its pod; she causes the beard to grow. Give her something, for she loathes the miserly!

The box half opens, and you see under a blue silk canopy a little image of Cybele, sparkling in gold spangles; above her are towers, and she sits in a red-stone chariot, drawn by two lions whose paws are uplifted.

The crowd rushes to look—

#### THE CHIEF-GALLOS.<sup>2</sup>

She loves the banging of drums, the stamping of feet, the howling of wolves, the sonorous voice of the mountains and the deep gorges, the almond-tree blossom, the pomegranate and the green fig, the mazy dance, the piping flutes, the sugary sap, the salt tear—*blood!* Hail, hail, mother of the mountains!

They flagellate themselves with their whips, and the blows re-echo from their chests; the skins of the tambourines drum to bursting point. Then they take their knives and gash their arms.

She is sad; let us be sad. To please her, one must suffer; and thereby are your sins forgiven you. Blood cleanses from all sin; throw it forth in drops like flowers! She requires that of another—of a pure one!

The arch-gallos holds his knife above the sheep.

#### ANTONY (horror stricken):

Don't cut the lamb's throat!

A purple flood gushes forth. The priest sprinkles the crowd; and all, including Antony and Hilarion, stand round the burning tree, silently watching the last throes of the victim. From the midst of the priests arises a woman, like unto the image contained in the box.

Then follows the customary Cybelean rites of frenzied dancing, flagellation, and self-emasculation.

HAROLD T. WILKINS.

## Obituary.

We sincerely regret the sad bereavement suffered by Mr. and Mrs. S. Deane, of Dunmow Road, Bishop's Stortford, Herts, by the death of their daughter Phyllis at the age of sixteen. Our heartfelt sympathies are extended to them in the tragic loss of one so young, and whose life was full of promise. The interment was at the City of London Cemetery, Ilford, on May 5, when a Secular Burial Service was conducted.—F. P. C.

<sup>2</sup> A priest-eunuch, clad in female's clothing; first appearing in Alexandrian literature in the third century B.C.



## The World of Science.

### Is The Adriatic Doomed?

It is fairly well known that for hundreds of years the Adriatic Sea has been steadily silting up at its northern end. But now M. Jacques Boucart, a French geologist, who has been studying the Albanian and Dalmatian coasts, asserts that the process is going forward even on the eastern shores of the Adriatic with some geological rapidity. He calculates that the sea floor in these regions has risen 36 feet since the days of the Roman Empire, and that "in a mere shake of a lamb's tail, geologically speaking, the legendary lost land of Adriatide, which lies off the coast of Dalmatia, and is supposed to have been engulfed in the Quaternary period, may come again to the surface."

### Growth of British Museum.

Sir Ernest Budge, who has recently retired from the post of Keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities at the British Museum, gives some interesting figures in the *Times* of the growth of the collections that were under his charge. "In 1883 the number of objects in the Egyptian collection was about 18,000, and it is now nearly 58,000; and the number of Babylonian and Assyrian objects has risen from about 35,000 to nearly 120,000."

Sir Ernest held his position for 41 years.

### The Aluminium Age.

Dr. Walter Rosenhain, F.R.S., the Superintendent of the Metallurgy Department in the National Physical Laboratory, has prepared, at the request of the British Science Guild, a forecast of the advances that he is confident will be made in the near future in the use of the metal aluminium and its alloys.

According to the *Morning Post*, he looks forward to an "aluminium age"—

It may be that, for several reasons, the lighter metal will never become a serious rival to iron and steel. None the less, the applications of aluminium alloys are rapidly increasing in number and importance, so that in the near future we may reach a stage to which the name of an era of aluminium may perhaps be given.....From the engineering point of view it is its lightness which is most directly attractive. In many kinds of structures it is the weight of the structure itself which constitutes the principal load. In a great bridge like that over the Firth of Forth, for instance, the useful weight to be carried consists of one or two railway trains, but their weight is really insignificant compared with the weight of the girders of the bridge itself, so that the greater part of the steel in that huge structure is used mainly to support its own weight. If we could reduce the weight of the metal employed the whole problem of constructing these great bridges would be enormously simplified, or, to look at it in another way, it would become possible to construct bridges of very much wider spans than any which can be built of steel.

The use of a lighter metal would have far-reaching effects in many other directions—notably, in locomotion. To stop and restart a rapidly moving object requires the expenditure of force, or energy, and, of course, the heavier the body concerned, the greater the necessary expenditure becomes. The greater, too, is the rate of deterioration of the materials of which the objects are constructed. It can be seen that this matter is an exceedingly important one for the engineer, when one considers how frequently such public vehicles as buses and underground trains have to be stopped and re-started. Aluminium and its alloys are, as most of us know, considerably lighter than iron and steel—

Suppose, for instance, that an object of given size and shape, made in steel, weighs 10lb.; the same object made in aluminium, or one of its alloys, would weigh from  $\frac{3}{4}$  to  $\frac{2}{3}$  lb., according to the alloy used, or just a little more than one-third as much. The lighter weight would be of little use were it not accompanied by at least equivalent strength. Pure aluminium, for instance, is decidedly lighter than most of its alloys, but it is not used for parts of machines or structures because it is too weak. It can stand at best a tensile pull of not much more than 7 or 8 tons per square inch; while mild steel will not break until

a pull of nearly 30 tons per square inch is applied..... Great progress has been made in recent years. It has been found that aluminium can be rendered enormously stronger and tougher by incorporating or "alloying" with it certain other substances—copper and zinc have been widely used for this purpose.

### Help for Japan.

According to *Nature*, 700,000 volumes, of which 200,000 were English books, were destroyed by the earthquake of last September at the Imperial University, Japan. Progress is being made with the movement to present the university with the nucleus of a new library.

### How Desert Insects Keep Cool.

The current issue of *Conquest* contains an interesting account of some research work carried out by P. A. Buxton, M.A., and described in a paper read to the Royal Society. Mr. Buxton found that the temperature of living insects in the Palestine desert was a few degrees lower than the temperature of the surface soil in day-time during summer. Insects have no power of regulating the temperature of their bodies (as we have), and being often of the same colour as their surroundings absorb radiant heat at about the same rate. Thus one would naturally expect that their body temperature would be the same as that of the soil over which they crawl. Mr. Buxton was led by his discovery to measure the temperature of dead and living insects under identical conditions, as a result of which he found that the dead specimens were always hotter than the living ones. He concluded that this could only be explained by the assumption that the temperature of the living creatures is lowered by the exaporation of water from their bodies during breathing. Hitherto it has always been taken for granted that desert insects require only a relatively small amount of water, such as can be derived from dew; but if they are losing water at such a rate as to produce this quite considerable reduction in temperature, they must have other sources of water supply than those of dew and occasional showers. The problem, therefore, was to discover this source of water. Now the annual plants, and particularly the grasses that grow in the Palestine desert, wither in the spring, and their dried remains blow about during the summer. These remains are very hygroscopic, and when, with the rapid fall in temperature which follows the setting of the sun, the air tends to be saturated with water vapour, they absorb considerable quantities of moisture; this moisture they retain well into the day. For example, an experiment showed that at 2 p.m. such material contained 60 per cent. of water. Here, apparently, is a plentiful supply of water, which probably supports not only the insects, but, indirectly, a large number of animals who prey upon them.

### The Genius of Da Vinci.

In the course of a lecture on Leonardo da Vinci (born 1452), delivered by Dr. Charles Singer, at the Royal Institution, a reference was made to a number of inventions described and discussed by this amazingly versatile Italian. Among the mechanical inventions which he suggested, was a taxi-cab (the idea for which he probably got from the Roman writer Vitruvius), a pendulum clock (the invention of which is usually attributed to Huygens in 1657), a piston worked by steam, breach-loading cannons and quick-firing guns; wire-rope machines, and engines for rock boring. The most astounding of Da Vinci's mechanical investigations were directed to the problem of flight, and some of the flying machines which he described are surprisingly like modern aeroplanes. The one essential which he lacked was the internal combustion engine. If he had had adequate motor power at his disposal he would probably have solved the problem of flying.

### Death-Ray.

Astounding claims, that recall the early romances of Mr. H. G. Wells, are made on behalf of a ray which an English scientist, Mr. H. Grindell-Matthews claims to have discovered. This ray, it is said, can create a zone



in which nothing can live, and in which everything explosive and combustible is instantly ignited, and even metal is melted. The ray, it is stated, is a "kind of path or area through which is transmitted an electrical power that can only be likened to lightning. But it is constant and controllable." At a distance of 64 feet the ray has exploded gunpowder and cartridges, set fire to various materials, killed a mouse, shrivelled up plants, and rendered motor and aero engines useless. So completely controllable is the ray that it can be directed to a given square inch, or expanded over a zone miles in area. It can be made to kill a man outright, or to render him useless for a few hours or a few days.

However much truth there may be in these claims, there certainly seems to be nothing intrinsically absurd about them. Our control of electricity is advancing so rapidly that some such use of "artificial lightning" seems almost certain in the future. Actually wireless, which most of us accept to-day as something a trifle commonplace, is a more remarkable example of our control of electrical forces.

Such a discovery would make warfare so hideously destructive that one cannot help but believe that mankind would be compelled to find some other final arbiter in disputes than the appeal to physical force. If they did not we should probably see the vision conjured up by Anatole France in the concluding chapters of *Penguin Island* realized, and civilization destroyed. W. H. M.

### A North London "Mission."

It is with great pleasure that I find myself able to report the complete success of Mr. George Whitehead's "mission" at Highbury Corner, Islington. Originally it was only intended to hold three meetings, but the interest shown was great enough to induce the lecturer to undertake five meetings—from the Monday till the Friday evening. The subjects discussed were: "The Economics of Superstition," "Is there a God?" "Was Jesus a Socialist?" "Is there a Future Life?" etc. The interest shown in all the subjects was gratifying, and the number of listeners increased each evening.

There were a good many questions, some during the course of the lectures, others at the end, but the opposition offered was not very striking in quality. Much of it belonged to the old Christian Evidence variety, and was interesting chiefly so far as it showed the amount of work that is yet to be done. In this direction Mr. Whitehead's week's work will have done good, and it is to be hoped that it will lead to more regular work at this centre. There is plenty to be done, the people are there; what is required is speakers and workers.

Another aspect of the week's work worth noting was the quantity of literature distributed and sold. Some of this is certain to bear good results; when a person gets interested in Freethought literature there is only one ending—and that is in our ranks.

Altogether we had a capital week's work, and we all feel invigorated by the effort. Miss M. Mostaert and Messrs. Judge and Brown rendered good service during the week, and to them the Branch gives its thanks.

I. MASON (Secretary, Finsbury Park Branch).

### Correspondence.

#### THRIFT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In reply to Mr. Haughton's letter I think my idea was to hint at an argument and some of its possible implications. There is some kind of an analogy between heavenly and earthly thrift, but I should hesitate before recommending gambling of any sort as an antidote to the monotonous and routine kind of life which thriftiness (in excess) necessitates. The main point I wished to emphasize was that all the arguments in support of a negative point in ethics led to a negative sort of life. There must be a positive, and in dealing with one nega-

tive idea, it was necessary to use its antithesis as a positive. All the implications of a word are difficult to avoid, but I certainly do not admire any kind of excess, although its practice is as interesting to the observer as any other human endeavour to find some satisfaction in life.

As Mr. Haughton says, all ethic is bound up with social organization, and it is a difficult matter to disentangle.

I must thank him for raising a point which had occurred to me, and which I hoped someone would raise.

G. E. FUSSELL.

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

#### LONDON.

##### INDOOR.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE (19 Buckingham Street, Charing Cross—First Floor): 3.30, Lecture in French by Monsieur de Smet de Naeyer, on "Le Dogme de la Trinité, son Origine, son Développement." All invited.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY.—The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday, at 8, at the "Lawrie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. Harry Snell, "The Problem of Indian Home Rule."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Dr. Bernard Hollander, "How to Attain to Mental and Moral Efficiency."

##### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 6.15, Mr. G. Whitehead, a Lecture.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY.—Freethought lectures and debates every evening in Hyde Park. Speakers: Messrs. Baker, Beale, Hyatt, Harris, Hart, Keeling, Knubley, Saphin, Shaller, Dr. Stuart, M.A., M.D., and Mr. Vincent, B.A., B.Sc.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (Brockwell Park): 3.30, Mr. G. Whitehead, a Lecture; 6.30, Mr. F. Baker, a Lecture. Mr. Whitehead also lectures on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday evenings at Rushcroft Road, Brixton, at 8 p.m.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. R. C. Saphin, a Lecture.

#### COUNTRY.

##### OUTDOOR.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—The Branch will start its rambling season on Sunday, May 25. Altrincham, Dunham Park, Millington and Rosthene Mere. Full particulars will be announced in the next issue.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor, near North Road entrance): 7, Mr. Hogan, "Why I Reject Christianity."

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