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Views and Opinions.

The Comforts of Religion.

The comforting consequence of a belief in Christianity is one of the things believers are always impressing upon Freethinkers. Comfort is not the sort of thing an impartial observer would associate with a creed such as orthodox Christianity, but that might be because he would not be looking at it from the point of view of one who believed in it. There does not seem anything joyful in believing that millions of one's fellows will be damned eternally; although there may be a certain comfort to peculiar natures in feeling that one is not to be numbered among the damned. Or, again, if one is convinced that Christianity is true there may well be needed some sort of comforting compensation. The orthodox Christian heaven, for example, may appear a good place to get in, because there is a hell out of which to keep. It may be pleasant to realize that one can believe in the Christian God if one already believes that one will pay heavily hereafter if one does not. All these things are a matter of relation; and, indeed, there is nothing under the sun that someone at some time or another, and under some sort of condition will not find comforting. If one is suffering from toothache, it is comforting to believe that a friend will be able to cure it. The comforting influence of the remedy depends upon the presence of the disease. And that has always seemed to me to be the case with Christianity. Given the belief in Christianity—the disease—it will seem very uncomfortable not to believe in it. But you must have the complaint first. That is why the Christian finds his religion so comforting. It also accounts for his inability to understand why the Freethinker is quite happy without it.

Piety and Crime.

Early in March last, Mr. Nelson Leech, a member of a Belfast firm, drew from the bank a sum of money to pay the men's wages. He returned to his office, where he was attacked by two men, one of whom shot and killed him. For this crime Michael Pratley was arrested, found guilty, and duly hung on May 8. Pratley was not a Freethinker; had he been, we should have had scores of sermons on the fact, and the papers would have headed their report with: "An Atheist Murderer." Presumably, one never sees such reports

headed: "A Christian Murderer," from the fact of that being nothing unusual. And it is the unusual that calls for attention. Michael Pratley was a sincere Christian, a staunch Roman Catholic. His faith in God never altered, and one can quite believe that had a Freethinker attempted to hold a street corner meeting in Belfast, Pratley would have been one of the first to have done what he could to prevent the wicked Atheist demoralizing the people. Being a sound believer, he availed himself of the religious ministrations with which the law provided him. A priest was in more or less constant attendance. On the morning of the execution he was removed to a separate cell, where mass was celebrated. Pratley "devoutly made the responses," and was then given the last rites of the Roman Catholic Church. Then Pratley walked calmly to the scaffold, and the end came. "Pratley, said one of the clergymen present, "was quite resigned to his fate. *He died like a saint.*" The italics are mine, but such words are worth emphasizing.

* * *

Getting Right With God.

Now there was indeed comfort! What religion other than Christianity could have so comforted a murderer that he would have been able to die like a saint? Had he not been a Christian, had he been a Freethinker, for example, he might have been weighed down by remorse for the crime he had committed. He might have worried over the anguish he had caused the murdered man's family. He might have felt disgusted with himself for having sunk so low as to murder for the sake of stealing. He might have felt himself an outcast from society by the very fact that he had committed one of those offences which strike at the root of collective life. He might have had all these thoughts, but he would have been denied the separate cell, fitted up with an altar for his own private use, a priest to pay special attention to his soul's welfare, and the comforting thought that by his confession he had purged his soul and would go straight away to the arms of Jesus. It was Christianity which comforted Pratley; it was Christianity which enabled the man, walking to his death, to do so with the consciousness that he had purged his soul, he had made his peace with God, and was dying so nobly, so calmly, that the attendant minister had to confess that he met his death like a saint. What a pity we cannot all be murderers; for in that case we might all die "like saints." The judge's court would become an ante-chamber to heaven, and the black cap of the judge pronouncing sentence of death would, to the eye of faith, rest like a halo round the head of the condemned.

* * *

The Converts of the Cross.

Michael Pratley is a representative of a class. The man following a criminal bent and then going joyfully to Jesus is no new figure in Christian history. It is, indeed, the boast of the evangelist that Christianity acts in this way. To the ordinary "Mission" the converted burglar or wife-beater is a coveted asset,

and will receive a thousand times the attention given to a quiet, well-behaved person. The Christian preacher has a keen eye to business, and there is no money in the well-behaved citizen. How many Christians would go to a mission meeting to listen to a sermon by a man who had never beaten his wife, never robbed his employer, never starved his children, or never got drunk? He would not be worth sixpence a week to any evangelist in the country. But the case-hardened sinner, who can relate more or less truthful accounts of his villainy, is worth all that can be spent on him. He becomes a jewel in the crown of Jesus, a shining light to those around him. He is an example, not because of the good he is, but because of the bad he has been. The worse he has been the more he is liked. And it must be noted that the power of Jesus does not stop a man stealing, starving his children, or beating his wife. Our newspapers prove this quite conclusively. It is quite probable that if the antecedents of those brought before the courts for sexual offences and mean crimes were examined it would be found that a larger proportion of these came from people connected with some form of religious activity than with any other profession. No, the power of Jesus does not prevent people committing offences, all it can do in a few cases is to make them sorry for it afterwards—generally after they are found out, and even then a kindly providence rewards them by enabling them to make capital out of their misdemeanours. The Church and the Chapel are the only concerns in which a man may sin and then find it to his profit to trumpet a record of his sinning.

* * *

A Question for Psychologists and Christians.

One of these days someone in authority with a taste for psychological analysis may set himself to answer the question: Why is it that Christianity has this attraction for so many characters that are vicious, undeveloped or criminal? I say someone in authority, because for one like myself to do it attracts very little attention from the Christian world. My conclusions would be put down to Atheistic prejudice. But if someone who already occupied a position of authority among the general public were to take his courage in both hands and say quite plainly what so many psychologists know, there would be rare fluttering in the hen-roost. For characters, we know, do not change in the twinkling of an eye, or at the "Come to Jesus" of the so-much-per-soul professional evangelist. Modification of character can only come, at the best, gradually, and in most cases all that is done is to give a new direction to the old qualities, without any modification or change of character whatever. Now there is no question that Christianity has an attraction to certain low types of character. There are the boasted records of the Churches to prove it, and there is the type of man who figures at Salvation Army testimony meetings in support. It will be recalled that in such a notorious character as Charles Peace, burglar and murderer, there was a very genuine belief in Christianity and a real delight in a religious service. It will not do to pass these cases as samples of hypocrisy. The belief is genuine enough. There was no reason whatever why Michael Pratley, for example, should pretend to believe in Christianity. He could gain nothing by it here. It would bring him neither a reprieve nor remove the censures of his fellows. On the contrary, a whining story of being misled by "infidel" teaching, with a confession of a return to the faith, might have brought him considerable professional sympathy. His confession of faith was sincere enough, as is that of ninety-nine per cent. of the inmates of prisons. What then is the psychological quality about Christianity which appears to

offer attraction to the criminal type, without reforming, and what is the psychological quality which serves as compensation to the criminal who confesses his crimes and stands as a "convert"? These are questions well worth asking and answering, but I cannot give the answer at the tail end of my week's notes. Some opportunity will present itself in the future for dealing with this point. For the moment I suggest that Michael Pratley's character when he committed the robbery and murder was exactly what it was when he went forth to be executed. He was just as much a saint then as the moment before he died. And if orthodox Christianity be true, he may now be sitting with the saints in heaven, while the man he murdered is roasting in hell. It will be seen I do not deny that Christianity has the power to attract to itself the criminal and the wrong-doer. I concede that it often does that. Only if I were a Christian, and had a passable knowledge of a scientific psychology, with a fair acquaintance with the play and quality of human motive, I do not think I should boast about it. When sincere belief in a set of doctrines is found to be so often associated with anti-social actions, there is surely enough in the fact to give a scientific sociologist some food for reflection.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Our Citizenship."

THE above is the title of a sermon recently delivered by Dean Inge in St. Paul's Cathedral, and published in the *Guardian* for the 9th inst. It is founded on St. Paul's well-known words, "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. iii, 20). The Dean tells us that in older times his text was doubtless regarded as a pulpit commonplace, but that to-day "it sounds almost like a challenge. The preacher who wishes to win the sympathy of the younger generation of churchmen tells his congregation that our citizenship is on earth—here in England." This, he informs us is a specific example of the general process of secularizing the Christian religion now going on everywhere. This is how he puts it:—

Of all the changes which have come over religious and theological teachings within living memory, none seems to me so momentous as the acute secularizing of Christianity, as shown by the practical disappearance of the other world from the sermons and writings of those who are most in touch with the thoughts and aspirations of our contemporaries. You may look through a whole book of modern sermons and find hardly a reference to what used to be called the Four Last Things, except perhaps in rhetorical flourish at the end of a discourse. The modern clergyman need not be afraid of being nicknamed a "sky pilot." The New Jerusalem which fills his thoughts is a revolutionized London. As for the old appeals to hopes and fears beyond the grave—the "scheme of government by rewards and punishments," of which Bishop Butler dilates—they are gone. Our generation will not listen to them.

Dean Inge is probably right in asserting that the drift of thought in the Anglican Church at present is distinctly away from the supernatural generally, and especially from the belief in an after life. Sir George Adam Smith, in his well-known work *Modern Criticism and the Old Testament* (pp. 209-214), expresses the same opinion of Christendom as a whole, saying that: "In the thinking of civilized men there has been for years a steady ebb from the shores of another life." Sir George goes further still, and pronounces such an ebb is on the whole beneficial, saying that: "It is well for us all sometimes to pitch our religious life in terms which do not include the hope of a future." Dean Inge hesitates to declare that the

loss of the hope of immortality is in any sense a disaster to humanity. Indeed, in this sermon he positively declines to raise philosophical questions on the point.

Instead of doing that, Dean Inge proceeds to avow his own belief in immortality; and here even his truthfulness is a most doubtful quality. For example, he tells us how deeply convinced he is "that if there is not substantial and eternal reality corresponding to the heaven of Christianity, we poor human kind are of all creatures most miserable." That statement is wholly false. Within a few miles of the Dean's own cathedral there are many thousands of men and women who are supremely happy, because they have been delivered from the frightful dominion of supernatural hopes and fears, and because, in consequence, they are free to concentrate all their attention and energy upon the puzzling problems of the present life. The very reverend gentleman, if unaware of this fact, has no right whatever categorically to deny it. It is easy enough to affirm that "the essence of Christianity is a transvaluation of all values in the light of our divine sonship and heavenly citizenship," but it is an affirmation which is incapable of even a plausible verification. Heaven is an undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller has ever returned, and to treat it as real is the very height of absurdity. And yet Canon Elliott, preaching at St. Paul's, had the audacity to assert "that if we are to have any real hope and any real motive for trying to make this world into a better place, we have to recover in a very real way what has been called the other-worldliness of Christianity. Dean Inge closed his famous paper on *The Christian Doctrine of the Future Life*, read before the Church Congress of the year 1919, in the following words:—

Secularized Christianity, my friends, the religion of the platform, has neither savour nor salt. It is other-worldliness that can alone transform the world.

Both Dean and Canon are radically mistaken, the truth being that other-worldliness has more than once almost ruined this world. Are not these men of God aware that in the early Church and during certain periods in the Middle Ages, other-worldliness loomed stupendously large, but that so far was it from transforming this world into a happier place to live in, that it undoubtedly contributed, on an alarming scale, towards making it worse. Such a result was logically and morally inevitable, because other-worldliness of necessity involves the concentration of time, affection, and energy upon the alleged realities of a hypothetical heaven, which concentration is bound to weaken attachment to and concern for this world and its affairs; and it was on that score alone that the apostles justified and recommended it. Take two New Testament instances. In the first, St. John lays down the rule thus: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the Father is not in him." In the second, St. Paul speaks to the same effect: "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." That is the apostolic conception of the Christian life, but no one has ever lived up to it, and no one ever will or can do so. Other-worldliness, whether as defined in the New Testament, or in such a sermon as this by Dean Inge, is a religion that cannot be put into practice. The Dean entirely fails to tell us what it really means or what exactly it requires us to be and to do. He does not even try to make intelligible to us what is meant by the statement that our citizenship is in heaven.

In consequence of such vagueness and nebulosity of teaching, we venture to reject both Paul's and Dean Inge's teaching, and say bluntly that our citizenship

is on the earth. We are neither strangers nor pilgrims on the earth, but natives, born and bred and destined to die here. Yes, we are children of the earth, which, being our mother, is everything to us. As Meredith puts it:—

Earth your haven, earth your helm.
You command a double realm;
Labouring here to pay your debt
Till your little sun shall set.

We treat the world as an object highly worthy of our affection, and endeavour to regard our fellow-beings as brothers and sisters, to whose service we dedicate our lives. Love of the earth is the highest, noblest, and holiest emotion of which we are capable. Here Meredith comes to our help in these beautiful lines:—

I say but that this love of earth reveals
A soul beside our own to quicken, quell,
Irradiate, and through ruinous floods uplift.

To look at earth in the imaginary light of heaven is to misunderstand and misrepresent it. Wilberforce, the illustrious advocate of the abolition of slavery, was a firm and enthusiastic believer in God and his Providence; but few realize that it was purely because he held such a belief that he defended and opposed the repeal of the abominable Combination Laws. It was because he believed that the conditions of life on earth were Divinely appointed that he urged "the poor to be diligent, humble, and patient in the lowly path allotted them by the hand of God, the duties of which they should discharge faithfully, and contentedly bear its inconveniences." The only comfort he could offer such miserable people was his belief that "all human distinctions will soon be done away with," and that "the true followers of Christ will, as children of the same Father, be alike admitted to the possession of the same heavenly inheritance." Had Wilberforce not believed in Providence and a future life, where earthly conditions would be almost entirely reversed, he would probably have made it his one aim to set things right in this world. His other-worldliness completely spoilt him as a social reformer.

Browning's *Grammarians* was in many respects an ideal Christian because of his other-worldliness. He devoted his whole time on earth to the endless task of learning the art of living in eternity—

Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
(Hearten our chorus)
That before living he'd learn how to live—
No end to learning.

Some of his friends were disgusted with his insane behaviour, and urged him to reform, saying:—

But time escapes:
Live now or never.

Looking down upon them with withering contempt, regarding them as unmitigated fools, he said:—

What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes.
Man has Forever.

And so through his other-worldliness the Grammarian died before beginning to live. Other-worldliness has been a mortal enemy to countless multitudes of people.

J. T. LLOYD.

A bishop was staying at a country house where there was a small girl who took a great interest in his quaint garments—his gaiters, etc. Being anxious to turn the child's mind to higher things, he said, "My dear, do you know the Lord's Prayer?" "Yes!" she said. "Do you know the Creed?" "Yes!" was the reply. "And do you know the Ten Commandments?" "Yes!" she said. "All of them?" "Yes!" "And do you know your Catechism?" "Damn it!" answered the little girl, "I'm only seven!"—*The Magazine Programme.*

The Byron Centenary.

As if day had cloven the skies
At dreaming midnight o'er the western wave,
Men started, staggering with a glad surprise,
Under the lightning of thine unfamiliar eyes.

—Shelley.

Thou tarriest and I have not said thou art not,
Nor all thy night long have denied thy day.

—Swinburne.

THE celebration of the centenary of Byron had one beneficial result. It revealed, once more, the interesting information that literary criticism is entrusted by gigantic newspaper enterprises to boys who have just left school, or to the football reporter, temporarily out of work. According to these so-called critics, Byron, one of the very few English poets with a European reputation, is dethroned and done for. Sentence has been passed upon him by boys who ought to be reporting parish council meetings, and all that remains between now and the morning of execution is mere business detail.

One Sunday paper, which makes a feature of putting halos on murderers' heads, declared bluntly that Byron "cannot be canonised." According to this captious critic, the great poet was "a beaten cad," a "withered poseur," a "jaded rake," and so forth, in the true spirit of Christian charity, which thinketh all evil of opponents. It would be waste of time to quote more of this delectable stuff, but there is an epidemic of articles, expressly written to belittle a really great writer. Critics, who profess to know literature, mournfully measure Byron's morals, instead of his verse. Others, even more innocent, prate of his claims on the county families, instead of his claims on lovers of literature.

Let us be just to the man, if we cannot be generous. His career, in which his enormous reputation rests, lasted for a dozen years, and his life was finished at thirty-six years of age. Few writers have achieved a name and an influence, so great and so abiding, as his, at an age so early and in so brief a span. Byron is a European poet, and his verse has a breadth in it which is very rare in English poetry.

There was nothing narrow or insular in Byron. His genius crossed many frontiers, and his audience was vast and amazing. He moved the aged Goethe and the youthful Victor Hugo. "What," asked Castelar, "does Spain not owe to Byron?" The austere Mazzini sounds the same note for Italy. Sainte-Beuve, Stendhal and Faine speak of his power in France. He was the intellectual parent of Pushkin and other Russian writers; and the revival of Polish literature dates from Byron. Eckermann, and others in Germany, help to complete Europe's verdict. Even in modern Greece, which regards profiteering as being of more consequence than poetry, people still remember that the English Byron was a soldier of liberty.

It is not difficult to understand Byron's enormous reputation. His verse is easy to read, and he made his readers feel as well as think. He deals rhetorically with elemental emotions, and his work has been translated into many languages without losing its appeal. It is like the best kind of oratory, for it is full of sonorous and impassioned phrases. Verse upon verse of *Childe Harold* reads like Ingersoll, grandiose and sweeping:—

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll!

You can almost see the outstretched arm, hear the resonant voice. The effect is enormous. *The Isles of Greece, Ode to Napoleon, Lines on Completing My*

Thirty-Sixth Year, and many other poems, have this oratorical note:—

The sword, the banner, and the field,
Glory and Greece, around me see,
The Spartan, borne upon his shield,
Was not more free.

There is music in it: the trumpets sing to battle. Nor is this all, for Byron had a Voltairean gift of wit and satire, a command of mocking phrase and rhyme. There he was no poseur, but all that was sincere in him became triumphant, and the writer of *Don Juan*, *Beppo* and *A Vision of Judgment*, is a deathless delight. Man of the world, Byron may have been, but he was at least a man. Listen to his caustic lines on the pirate in *Don Juan*:—

The mildest mannered man,
Who ever scuttled ship, or cut a throat,

Or, to this:—

Some women use their tongues—she looked a lecture,
Each eye a sermon, and her brow a homily.

The Vision of Judgment is startling in its audacity. From its saucy opening, with the angels all singing out of tune, to its close, with the old king, George the Third, practising a hymn, it is full of vitriolic satire:—

Saint Peter sat by the celestial gate
His eyes were rusty, and his look was dull.

Every epithet hits, every line that does not make you smile, stings. As, for example, the saint's simple question, "What George? What third?"

This mocking gaiety, so typical of the man, overflows into his private letters, which are among the best in the language. Jests on mother-in-laws are as old as the everlasting hills, but Byron could infuse fresh fun into that well-worn topic. He mentions that his mother-in-law "has been dangerously ill, and is now dangerously well again." His love of Shakespeare was so great that he could transpose a quotation with the most delightful result. Writing of a crush at a theatre in Venice, he says: "It was so great, I almost beat a Venetian, and traduced the State."

The centenary has sent me back to Byron, and it will send many other lovers of literature. Byron is not in any danger of being forgotten. Few men so impressed themselves upon their generation. Tennyson has told us that, when Byron died, it was as though the firmament had lost some mighty star, in whose vanishing the world was left to darkness and night. When Byron went flashing and glowing down the troubled skies, trailing clouds of glory, his sudden quenching afflicted men as with the sense of a calamity. He was a great poet of Liberty; that is why his importance does not fade with the years. His short life was one long rebellion, and he voiced that revolt with no uncertain sound. He is not the bad man and worse poet that some so-called critics pretend. He is one of the glories of his country's literature.

MIMNERMUS.

WRITTEN ON A SUMMER EVENING.

The church bells toll'd a melancholy round,
Calling the people to some other prayers,
Some other gloominess, more dreadful cares,
More hearkening to the sermon's horrid sound.
Surely the mind of man is closely bound
To some blind spell: seeing that each one tears
Himself from fireside joys and Lydian airs,
Fond converse high of those with glory crown'd
Still, still they toll, and I should feel a damp,
A chill as from a tomb, did I not know
That they are dying like an outburst lamp,—
That 'tis their sighing, wailing as they go
Into Oblivion—that fresh flowers will grow,
And many glories of immortal stamp.

—Keats.

Religious Intolerance.

LECKY, the historian, in his *Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, says:—

That the Church of Rome has shed more innocent blood than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind, will be questioned by no Protestant who has a competent knowledge of history. The memorials, indeed, of many of her persecutions are now so scanty that it is impossible to form a complete conception of the multitude of her victims, and it is quite certain that no powers of imagination can adequately realize their sufferings. Florente, who had free access to the archives of the Spanish Inquisition, assures us that by that tribunal alone more than 31,000 persons were burnt, and more than 200,000 condemned to punishments less severe than death. The number of those who were put to death for their religion in the Netherlands alone, in the reign of Charles V, has been estimated by a very high authority (Sarpi) at 50,000, and at least half as many perished under his son.

Another historian, Motley, in his *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, also draws a dreadful picture of the religious persecution which took place in the Netherlands. As an example of the ruthless spirit which animated the religious fanatics who were responsible, he mentions a decree of the Inquisition, confirmed by the king, in which "three millions of people—men, women and children—were sentenced to the scaffold in three lines."

In the majority of cases these victims of religious intolerance suffered the most hideous death imaginable—they were burnt alive, many by a slow fire.

To this physical suffering of the victims, must be added the mental suffering of those to whom they were dear. In many cases the family was divided in opinions. When a heretic was burnt those who survived him, if they clung to the old faith, believed that the excruciating tortures which he had just suffered were but the prelude to infinitely more horrible suffering to which there would be no end. This appalling doctrine of eternal torture was emphasized in every conceivable way. It rang from every pulpit. It was painted over every altar. The Spanish heretic was led to the flames in a dress covered with representations of devils and of frightful tortures, to remind the spectators to the very last of the doom that awaited him. Add to all this suffering the wholesale massacres, such as that of the Albigenses—instigated by the Pope—or that of St. Bartholomew's Day—for which the Pope returned solemn thanks to heaven—and the misery caused by the protracted religious wars that followed the Reformation, and the Church of Rome has a grim bill of human suffering to its account.

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye love one another.

Protestants were just as intolerant and every bit as imbued with the spirit of persecution as were Catholics. That their persecutions were less sanguinary than those of their rivals is due merely to the fact that clerical influence in Protestant countries has generally been weaker than in Papist countries. The religious spirit has been less able to stifle the natural humane feelings of men.

In theory—and often in practice—Protestantism was as intolerant of heterodox opinions as Catholicism. In Germany the Lutheran princes absolutely prohibited the celebration of mass. In England, in the reign of Edward VI, a similar measure was passed. On Elizabeth's accession to the throne a law was passed prohibiting any religious service other than the Prayer Book; any one who had the courage to break this

law the third time was liable to imprisonment for life. Through a long succession of reigns Presbyterians were imprisoned, branded, mutilated, flogged, and exposed in the pillory; Catholics were tortured and hung; Anabaptists and Arians burnt alive. In Ireland the religion to which the majority of the people gave their adherence was banned; and when in 1626 the Government manifested some slight wish to grant partial toleration, nearly all the Irish Protestant bishops assembled to protest against the indulgence.

In Scotland, during the greater part of the time the Stuarts occupied the English throne—

A persecution rivalling in atrocity almost any on record was directed by the English Government, at the instigation of the Scotch bishops, and with the approbation of the English Church, against all who repudiated episcopacy. If a conventicle was held in a house, the preacher was liable to be put to death. If it was held in the open air, both minister and people incurred the same fate. The Presbyterians were hunted like criminals over the mountains. Their ears were torn from the roots. They were branded with hot irons. Their fingers were wrenched asunder by the thumbkins. The bones of their legs were shattered in the boots. Women were scourged publicly through the streets. Multitudes were transported to Barbadoes; infuriated soldiers were let loose upon them, and encouraged to exercise all their ingenuity in torturing them.—*Lecky, "Rationalism."*

In France, when the government of certain towns was given to the Protestants, they suppressed absolutely Catholic worship, and persecuted all who held the Catholic faith. In Sweden all who dissented from the Confession of Augsburg were banished. In Switzerland hosts of Anabaptists perished by drowning. In America Protestant exiles not only proscribed the Catholics, but persecuted the inoffensive Quakers with atrocious severity; women were publicly flogged, often with such severity that they died as a result of the punishment. In Holland the doctrine was tenaciously held that the civil authorities had the right to crush out heresy.

The right of the magistrate to crush out heresy was asserted by the Helvetic, Scottish, Belgic, and Saxon Confessions. Luther, Calvin, Beza and others wrote books defending the lawfulness of religious persecution. Knox appealed to the bible to justify it. And until the middle of the seventeenth century (at least) there was no advocacy of religious toleration, or partial toleration, that was not violently denounced by priests.

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye love one another.

W. H. MORRIS.

Freethought on Sex Problems.

II.

(Continued from page 315.)

It cannot be denied by any well-informed, intelligent person that freethought on birth control would rid our minds of many delusions. For example, there is the delusion that birth control is necessary in civilized communities because of food shortage. Actually there is abundance and superabundance of food in the world. Why should the world be more likely to run out of food than to run out of water? With Africa, South America, and all Australasia practically empty, and actually or potentially fertile beyond our wildest dreams, the very notion of food shortage is absurd. We have obviously touched only the fringe of the earth's possible productivity, and not even the fringe of new bio-chemical food supplies.

What is wrong is not actual or immediately possible food shortage, but simply uneven and inequitable distribution of food due to wars and to the selfish and unbrotherly system of society which we call Christian civilization.

As to the suggestion that birth control will abolish poverty, the light of freethought needs only to be turned on that for a few seconds to expose its obvious fallacies. No doubt, whilst some wage-earners have three children and some have thirteen, the small-family man benefits if he draws the same wages as the large-family man; but let all families be reduced to three, and under our present economic system wages will fall to the lowest amount which the wage earner can be induced to accept without "striking" or "revolting." What the worker gets under our present economic system is "maintenance"; and until he is under some other economic system he never can get anything more than maintenance. Birth control will benefit him and his family only in so far as it enables him, by freethought, to rid himself of the worship of Private Property as a God: as something too sacred to be questioned and too perfect to be improved.

Similarly, freethought is needed in regard to the claim that birth control will "improve" the race. Neither herds of cattle nor nations of men can be improved merely by lessening the number of offspring, whilst allowing every individual pair to reproduce whether "fit" or "unfit." Even the elimination of the "unfit" (assuming we could decide upon this) would not "improve" the race, though it might do much to prevent deterioration. Eugenics is a fine word, but it is positive—not negative. We must effect the improvement of mankind by the natural processes—or not at all. Any race of animals can be improved by sexual selection—by breeding from the finest males, and from those only. But there is no other way of doing it. If we have not the mental and moral courage to think freely and clearly, and face the position to which freethought leads us, then let us cease chattering about race improvement. At any rate, let us cease pretending that the matter is as simple as applying family limitation, so that instead of an average of eight we reduce the family to an average of four. Human Evolution is a much more complex and wonderful problem than that!

What, then, is the object of Birth Control? Simply bringing under the control of reason the functions which hitherto have been left to chance: establishing this control by the light of knowledge. No Freethinker can possibly be afraid of the results on humanity. Knowledge and reason we all wish to rely upon—not ignorance and unreason.

To suggest, as some do, that such knowledge should not be given to all adults, that it should be suppressed from the general community in the interests of morality, is to assume that ignorance rather than knowledge leads to the greater good. That cannot be true. And if it is not true, how can it be argued that a knowledge of birth-preventive methods would spread "immorality" among women? Morality necessarily depends upon the acceptance of it as a principle of life and conduct: it does not depend on fear and ignorance. Virtue is not founded on the ruin of women.

Boys and girls, youths and maidens, can be taught how to order and regulate their appetite for food, or drink; and so they can be taught how to order and regulate their sex life. The great fundamental satisfactions and restraints on which ordered society is founded can be explained properly only in the light of knowledge; and sex knowledge quietly and gravely given cannot fail to bestow broader and nobler conceptions of life on all of us. How much of this latent

nobility lies dormant in the human race none can yet tell. But certainly the child born through the conscious wish and effort of its parents can have a growing pride and self-respect unattainable by the child knowing itself to be the offspring of a chance mating—or mismating: its mother perhaps unloved, unhonoured, and unsung.

And if this claim to freedom of thought and freedom of action be denied on the ground that none should be free till they are fit to be free, let us remember that this has always been the patten of the slaver. It means no less and no more than the proverbial method of learning to swim: "hang your clothes on a gooseberry bush and don't go near the water." Did anybody ever learn to swim that way? Of course not! And similarly no people can learn to use freedom well and wisely till they are first made free. The great unalterable guiding principle of morality is romantic love. Women who are really free in thought and economics will not abuse their freedom; they will naturally give themselves only to the men they love and remain faithful to their lovers. Immorality and prostitution are not "natural": they are entirely unnatural—due to economics, not to sinfulness; and women who have complete economic freedom and are sound in mind and body have no temptation whatsoever to be "promiscuous" in the most intimate relationship of life.

Still less is it true that birth control destroys the maternal instinct. How can an instinct many, many millions of years old—an instinct on which existence itself depends—be extinguished or paralysed by the use of, say, quinine or by the desire to have no more children than can be nurtured in comfort and educated in intelligence? To hurl accusations of indelicacy and wickedness and selfishness at such women as strive by family limitation to secure the comfort and well-being of the whole family is surely the most pernicious nonsense, and an utter perversion of ethics.

Freethinkers should be the very first to admit that our whole system of sexual ethics stands badly in need of revision. The Church has, unfortunately, succeeded in substituting legality for morality to such an extent that some women would rather murder an innocent husband whom they have ceased to love than live outside wedlock with the man to whom they have transferred their affections. In such cases the Church can be relied upon to come down invariably on the side of legal unchastity. And the very idea that sex matters are purely personal, excepting as to progeny and disease, is anathema to the Church. Yet, how can one love at the dictate of the Church or by order of the law? And what is more disgusting than sex intercourse without love? One brief, little span of life is ours. Naturally we want it to be happy. Assuming proper provision for children, why should not a loveless union be ended? Why should not divorce be as simple and straightforward as marriage? Are Freethinkers content to attack only "sacred" books, but not "sacred" institutions? Human dignity, human health, human happiness—evolution itself—can be advanced by any improvement in the romantic association of men and women as lovers and parents. Why do we stand shivering on the brink, knowing that angels would rush in where fools would fear to tread. Nobody is prescribing contraception or prophylaxis, or divorce for those who do not need these things. But why should those who do not need such help and protection be allowed in the name of religion to deprive those who do? Let us rid our minds of these inherited pieties in regard to sex, and cast out all fear that science will so misguide us as to decrease rather than increase the sum total of human health and happiness.

ETHEL A. ROY.

(To be Continued.)

Acid Drops.

Mr. George Bernard Shaw is not exactly in politics, but neither is he out of politics, and in any case he, as a Socialist, gives the present Government his support. And one may charitably suppose that it is the desire to capture the religious vote—easily the narrowest and the worst informed vote in the country—which is responsible for the following, delivered during the course of an address in Norwich:—

We wanted principles, and principles in the largest sense of a religion. Without a religion nothing could be done. Give him a man who had no religion, and it would be found in the last resort that the man was a coward, even if he were brave enough to fight Dempsey. If we wanted to get a man who would keep going the whole time, and would not be torn aside by the speeches of this politician or that, but hold a steady path ahead, he must have some steady principles. If we wanted to combine we must have some point on which we could combine.

Now that is quite the kind of language which a politician would use who is anxious to please all and offend none, careless of what impression those who heard it formed of the speaker's real opinions, so long as they could be induced to give their support. Mr. Shaw must be quite aware of the fact that his hearers would take the word "religion" in a very different sense from that in which he uses it. To the bulk it would mean belief in the Christian Deity, a being in whom Mr. Shaw believes no more than we do. And when a man uses words in one sense knowing that they who hear will take them in another, it is about as near deception as one can get.

Mr. Shaw does not make his case better by identifying religion with high principles; while the statement that a man who has no religion is in the last resort a coward, is simply puerile. Such a statement can only be defended by defining religion in terms of principle, thus making religion identical with devotion to any principle a man happens to hold, and so robbing both terms of logical force or practical value. For it follows that a man such as Charles Bradlaugh, who rejected all forms of religion, is brought in against his will because he held principle high, and is placed cheek by jowel with Torquemada, who murdered scores in defence of religious conviction. We should dearly like to know who Mr. Shaw would exclude, and on what grounds? It would be found that so many would be included in his definition that very few would be left out, and the value of that kind of reasoning as an aid to conduct may be imagined. After all, Mr. Shaw comes down to the somewhat banal conclusion that the uniting principle which will bind people together is that of "personal honesty." That would bring together Conservatives, Liberals, Socialists, and Anarchists in politics; Atheists, Christians, and all sorts of religionists in the field of religion; and would end in leaving us just where we were. Really, this kind of talk is not even clever, the simplest analysis shows it to be pure nonsense, and we should be greatly surprised if Mr. Shaw himself does not know it to be so. One may have a contempt for one's audience, but it is as well not to make it quite so evident.

At this time of the year, when the religious world threatens to attack the public from soap boxes at street corners, it will not please these ecclesiastical orators to read the article in the *Times Literary Supplement*, entitled "Art and Religion." It states:—

Preaching has fallen under a ban only because we have learned to connect it with an authoritative manner masking a dubious and unsatisfactory message.

Other reasons why it fails to make progress are: because it is not true, it is not new, and also because it does not fit the facts of life. And, as these knights of the fiery cross and soap box will find, the latter object is not the pulpit. Preaching from the pulpit is as easy as slaying pheasants with a shot gun; if these beautiful birds could shoot back, our sportsmen, from Royalty downwards, might take a little credit to themselves for the size of their bag.

This "Acid Drop" should be taken with "Sugar Plums." In his will, the Rev. F. J. Hazledine, former vicar of St. Luke's, Ramsgate, has these two clauses: "I give nothing to charity, as I hold that a man should give during his lifetime." "If I have wronged anyone, I crave their pardon." He left £6,300; also good advice to those with crooks, who are often wolves in sheep's clothing.

The literary editor of the *Spectator*, in attempting to say something smart about Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*, might have tried to look at the matter with both eyes, instead of one. "This dictionary," he writes, "should set a rationalist up in table-talk for a lifetime." The obvious rejoinder to this is that Voltaire is for the world of common sense, and the *Spectator* is for the Unionist Party.

The Church of England Zenana Missionary Society makes an announcement of silent reproach in what was once the intellectual mansion of Addison and Steele:—

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EMPIRE.

We boast of an Empire upon which the sun never sets—greater than any Empire the world has hitherto known. For what purpose has God placed such power in a little Island Kingdom?

The only answer which satisfies is that along its highways may pass the Messengers of His love.

Every member of this Island Kingdom has a responsibility in this matter.

What are you doing to extend the Kingdom of Christ?

The humility of this hits one between the eyes. Financial help is needed to extend the kingdom of Christ. These matters of high import may explain the twinkle in the eye of the heathen who is not a "nice Christian."

Writing in the *Spectator*, Mr. R. B. McCallum, of Graduate College, Princeton, N.J., makes the statement that man is descended from the ape, and concludes his letter with the following remark: "Through the terrors of war and the errors of peace these men had learned all the virtues, save only humility." Who these men are in the public life of England it is unnecessary to name, but when we see organized religion on its knees before a winkle, or not speaking of inhabitants of the world in terms of colour, there may be hope. In the meantime, our giants of religion are struggling with the Bolshevik complex, or, like the story of Apuleius in the *Golden Asse*, mangling the bodies of three bladders. They have been spectators of the Tragedy of the Great War, and their lips cannot be shaped to say "Peace," in spite of the fact that *war medals can be bought at a shilling each*.

At a triple execution at Eddyville, Kentucky, three murderers were electrocuted. The doomed trio walked to the death-house from their cells singing, "Onward, Christian Soldiers." To comment upon this touching incident would be "to gild refined gold, to paint the lily."

"There was a time when the Church was the only educative force in the country," says the Rev. H. R. L. Sheppard, of St. Martin's Church, Charing Cross. Just so! And the clergy then addressed congregations who could neither read nor write.

Some Nonconformist ministers are quite alarmed at the the exclusion of definite theological instruction from Socialist Sunday schools. They would much prefer that the scholars were taught that Jesus was a Labour leader, and the twelve disciples all staunch Trade Unionists.

"A letter from a goddess!" This is the burden of a slot-machine figure of a deity at Wembley Exhibition. As is to be expected, the epistle is only forthcoming on a strictly cash basis.

Some of the godly at Blackburn are very much upset over the decision of the Town Council to have bands in the parks on Sunday. What these people will do in heaven, where they are said to have bands every day in the week, goodness only knows. But at a meeting of the Ruri-Decanal chapter the Vicar of Holy Trinity moved that a deputation should wait on the Council to protest against its decision. The Vicar explained that he was not a Sabbatarian, but he was opposed to Sunday labour, and he loved the Christian Sunday. We do not question the latter part of the statement, but the Vicar would have stood a better chance of impressing the public with his sincerity if he had left the former part unsaid. The solemn pretence of being disinterested was too much for some of the Vicar's clerical brethren. The Vicar of Witton said they had no right to force their ideas of how to spend Sunday on others; the Vicar of St. Michael's said they had already lost the war in regard to Sunday observance, and must admit their defeat. And with regard to Sunday labour, what about the incumbents who used the tram-cars on Sunday? The Vicar of Balderstone also reminded them that the clergy were large employers of Sunday labour. Altogether a remarkable discussion, in spite of the resolution of protest being carried. But when Freethinkers can hear their arguments against Sabbatarianism used in a clerical assembly, it is evidence of the extent to which our ideas make themselves felt. We are winning the war.

In the distressful country of Ireland, a farmer of Cork is complaining of the treatment received by Protestants in the Free State. If the inhabitants of Ireland will continue to write and speak in terms of labels given to them by their respective Churches, what can they expect? Ireland is a monument for all time of that brotherly love slobbered about from the pulpits of all churches; it is the priest's cockpit of Europe.

"Why should not Great Britain be placarded with warnings so that every man, woman and child shall know that it is impossible to bet without losing heavily in the long run," was the suggestion made by the Rev. Hugh Jenkins in an address at the City Temple to the Congregational Union of England and Wales, in which he urged the Government to undertake a publicity campaign against gambling. Judging by the lurid posters which one often notices nowadays as one passes churches and chapels, Christian priests should make expert publicity agents and boosters.

The Rev. R. Burnett, at St. Giles, Edinburgh, told his audience that "The Christian Church stood for righteousness, truth, love, and brotherhood, and must ever war against those that hindered these." This is a comforting confession of faith, for the same gentleman had just deplored "the artificial Acts of Parliament, decreeing higher wages and more leisure before the people had learned to make wise use of what they had got." Like most of his profession, this follower of the lowly Nazarene believes in love and justice and brotherhood in the abstract, but intends to take good care that the charge, "he stirreth up the people," shall never be made against him.

"There are densely populated areas in Scottish cities where housing conditions are deplorable, and where the whole environment makes decent—not to say Christian—life well nigh impossible. Men, women and children are crowded together in fetid dens.....under circumstances which make observance of the sanctities of life incredibly hard." These quotations are from the report of the Social Problems Committee of the United Free Church of Scotland, which will come before the general assembly next week. Perhaps if the Churches did not teach that conditions in this life are of little consequence, and that charity consists in giving away what one does not particularly want in the hopes of ensuring a comfortable position in the next world, such hideous conditions would never have been tolerated.

"I have never heard of a proposal to sell intoxicants at a church," said the presiding magistrate at Highgate, with reference to an application on behalf of a local Roman Catholic Church. Communion port, however, is scarcely a novelty in these holy places.

The late Rev. T. C. Bonney, of Cambridge, left estate of the value of £21,000. He will never sing in the heavenly choir.

Speaking in the House of Commons, Mr. Sidney Webb said: "People used to think it proper that they should get religion served out to them according to the money they paid for their places in church." The phenomenon is not unknown at the present day.

At a meeting of the International Council of Women at Wembley, Lady Astor stated that "Over 7,000,000 gallons of liquor were imported into parts of the British West African colonies during 1911." The process, we believe, is described by missionaries as "civilizing the natives."

Joseph Henry Bright was charged at Newcastle with receiving stolen goods. When arrested he said, "I am an honest man, moreover, I am a Sunday school teacher." We do not say that Mr. Bright is not an honest man, the police may have made a mistake, although the magistrate refused bail. But the fact of being a Sunday school teacher evidently no more impressed the magistrate than it does us. When it comes to a question of fact, magistrates—whether Christian or not—are apt to face facts, and they know that being a Christian is absolutely no guarantee whatever of honesty or straightforwardness.

Mr. Wheatley, the Minister of Health, has declined to permit doctors at Maternity and Welfare Centres to give Birth Control information. It must be borne in mind that Mr. Wheatley is a Roman Catholic; and all the Roman Catholic priest cares for is more children. It means more customers. And Roman Catholics, whether in Parliament or out are apt to obey orders.

The Bishop of Durham, Dr. Henson, is disturbed at the shortage of clergy, but he is still more disturbed at their quality. He was startled by "the physical inferiority of so many of the clergy, but the intellectual penury of many of the clergy was too terrible to contemplate." Well, but one cannot have it both ways. If we uphold a creed that is intellectually contemptible, there must come a point at which only the intellectually penurious will be attracted by it. The remedy is to get a better creed. As it is, anyone who takes haphazard a score of clergymen and compares them with a score of men from other professions, cannot but be struck by the mental inferiority of the parsons.

The Salvation Army is advertising on the tram tickets in East London. Besides an injunction to read the *War Cry*, the advertisement says that "Jesus Christ is able to save from Sin, Appetite, and Fear of Death." It seems somewhat strange that the message of "Omnipotence" should have to be advertised like Blue Pills for Green People.

"The founder of Christianity," says the Rev. Kennedy-Bell, "never advertised." Perhaps not, but neither does the man who is cured by swallowing someone's pills. It is the man who is anxious to push his business who does all the advertising. And if it were not for the constant advertising of Christianity by its business representatives, it would soon be a negligible quantity. Mr. Kennedy-Bell may have overlooked the fact, but there are books written instructing parsons how they may best advertise their wares, and the clergy are not slow to avail themselves of their advice.

To Correspondents.

H. J. STANTON.—The "Acts of Pilate" is sheer invention. Early Christian annals are full of such manufactured documents. There is probably a greater list of forgeries connected with the history of Christianity than with any other movement the world has ever seen.

C. B. WARWICK.—Sorry if we mistook your point, but it did not strike us that we had. Articles shall appear as soon as possible, but we are terribly overcrowded at present.

C. J. KNOX.—We are very pleased to have your high appreciation of the *Freethinker*. If all our readers would take the same trouble as yourself to introduce this paper in likely quarters, we should soon have a large increase in our circulation. The postal order is being allocated as desired.

M. BEESLEY.—Letter received and forwarded.

A. THOUMINE.—Obviously clever, but one needs to be fully familiar with local circumstances to properly appreciate the effort.

W. COLLINS and L. MASON.—Thanks for trying to push sales of paper. Will deal with the whole matter next week.

DANIEL MARR.—Certainly we will send the free copy. We are not surprised at your experience with alleged "reformers" where the *Freethinker* is concerned. These people do not keep religion out of their meetings. What they are anxious to do is to keep anti-Christianity out. Anyone may talk yards of sentimental gush about Jesus without the slightest protest being raised.

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

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

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

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

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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.

We print elsewhere in this issue the Agenda of the National Secular Society's Annual Conference, which meets this year in Preston. Geographically Preston is very central, and as it is a strong centre of Roman Catholicism, we are hoping to see a goodly crowd at the evening meeting, which is a public one. The morning and afternoon meetings will be for members only, and we should like to see every Branch represented, with as many private members present as can make it convenient to attend. We shall be able to make the final announcements next week, but in the meantime we would urge upon those who are visiting Preston and intend staying over the week-end, to write the local Secretary, whose address will be found at the foot of the agenda, stating their requirements. This should be done with as little delay as possible.

Secularists and sympathisers in Hull will be interested to know that a Branch of the N.S.S. is in process of formation, and the Secretary, Mr. J. S. Bell, of 1 Mafeking Grove, Seymour Street, Hull, will be glad to give full particulars and to see friends at the meetings already arranged as per the Guide Notice. Hull is seething with

Freethinkers, who only require organizing, and to that end Mr. G. Whitehead is being sent by the Executive for a week's open-air mission on August 10.

We are glad to learn that Mr. Whitehead had a very successful week's campaign in West Ham. His lectures created a very good impression, there were many questions asked, and, unintentionally, the Freethought case was helped by the opposition of uniformed Salvationists and a Church of England clergyman, who managed to impress the crowd with the weakness of their case. Several new members were made, and a desire expressed for a return visit. That may come later.

Mr. Whitehead will be lecturing to-day (May 25) in Finsbury Park. In consequence of the success of his recent meetings at Highbury Corner, he will continue his lectures there on Monday evening and during the week. The meetings commence at 8 o'clock.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti had two good meetings at Failsworth on Sunday last. The Failsworth friends work together well, and with considerable success, and Freethought lecturers are always sure of a warm welcome and a sympathetic hearing. From what we know of Failsworth, we can quite realize how well the audience and Mr. Rosetti would get on together.

The Manchester Branch has its first Summer Ramble to-day (May 25). Members and friends will meet at the Victoria Monument, Piccadilly. We are not sure of the time of meeting, but the letter of advice says leave Altrincham tram terminus at 1 p.m. The leader of the expedition is Mr. Greenall.

"The Lord made man to walk upright before him." That is the message of the religious world, and it is simply not true. Every biologist knows it is not true. If man owes his origin to "the Lord," then it is quite clear that the Lord made him to go on four legs. The shape of the principal organs of the body prove it. But man took it into his head to walk upright. The upright stature gave him tremendous advantages in the struggle for existence. Mr. Wood Jones, for example, in his fascinating book, *Arboreal Man*, has shown us how much man owes to the upright position. But along with these advantages there went certain disadvantages—there was the liability to hernia and other disorders. Man sought out his own devices, and the Lord made him pay the price for choosing his own paths. Neither the Lord nor his followers like independence.

How to overcome many of the ailments man is subjected to, largely because of his upright position, is the object of *The Culture of the Abdomen: the Cure of Obesity and Constipation*, by R. A. Hornibrook (Heinemann, 6s.). Mr. Hornibrook, who has devoted his life to the subject, does not prescribe lists of drugs, or expensive courses of treatment by fashionable and expensive doctors. He is an advocate of some very simple forms of physical culture, which can all be performed in a very little time by anyone who gives a little time to them daily. Mr. Hornibrook's system of physical exercises is, we believe, mainly of his own devising, and are elaborated to produce particular results. Their great value is testified to by no less a personage than Sir William Arbuthnot Lane, who says that "to my own certain knowledge he [Mr. Hornibrook] has treated quite a large number of people most successfully." But one need not be treated by Mr. Hornibrook personally. The book is so clearly and so simply written, and is so well illustrated that anyone may treat himself or herself. Which is the main reason why we commend the book here. It is not the kind of work that we usually notice in these columns, but health is of importance to all, and a sound and healthy mind is impossible in the absence of a sound and healthy body. And as man will not remain as the Lord left him, it is well that he should, so far as is possible, take his destiny in his own hands; and this is a book which will help him to that end.

The Makings of the Christian Creed.

II.

(Concluded from page 309.)

IN his Introductory to *Jesus of Nazareth*, Edward Clodd says:—

We owe to the Akkadians (highlanders) both the signs of the Zodiac and the days of the week, which last were named after the sun, moon, and five planets; while following the phases of the moon, whom they called the "lord of rest," every seventh and some intervening days were sabbaths, on which certain works were forbidden, mainly so, as bringing ill-luck to the doer.

In Sayce's *Babylonian Literature* we are told: "Every day of the year was under the protection of some deity or saint; the months were all named from the signs of the Zodiac." This was long before Moses or Abraham; a race from which such people as the Mongols and Finns sprang. They invented the cuneiform or wedge-shaped characters which they stamped on clay tablets and cylinders. He goes on—

And among the precious relics of their vast libraries, entombed for centuries, is a poem in twelve books, answering to the months of the year, the eleventh (February) or "rainy" having for its subject the legend of a deluge, from which a like legend in the book of Genesis is derived.

The reason why I am stressing the matter of the months and the signs of the Zodiac will be seen presently. In distinction to these cults of the stars, we have the religious ideas of Egypt. These developed into beliefs in ghosts of the dead and imagination of a future life after death. And here I should like to mention that Grant Allen, in his *Evolution of the Idea of God*, has entirely ignored the astronomical origins, which appear to have preceded the worship of ancestors and belief in spirits. It does not appear that the sun, moon and stars were originally prayed to, but, in the development of religion, in the course of time, dead kings were identified with the heavenly bodies, and certain characteristics of the stars were fathered upon them. Neither can we find that morality, as we understand the term, was incorporated in the astronomical teaching, that branch of religion was added ages afterwards, and was brought to perfection in Egypt. Nor was the belief of a future life, or of the soul, believed in by the earliest races. Many have no such belief at the present time. Omar Khayyám puts the Persian disbelief in immortality thus:—

One thing is certain, and the rest is lies;
The flower that once has blown, for ever dies.

although Professor Dr. Haeckel says, in *The Riddle of the Universe*:—

Comparative psychology has recently brought to our knowledge a great variety of myths and legends of that character (i.e., of the soul); they are for the most part closely associated with the oldest forms of religious belief.

So much for the general development of religion; and by the word religion I mean the worship of relics of the dead and memories of his works, and a belief in life after dying. Let us now resume our enquiry into the question of Christian personages and see how the idea of man-god and disciples came into a concrete form of belief, and the connection between them and the constellations forming the Zodiac. Was there any reason why the stars should be associated with certain doings upon the earth. As I have shown, the Akkadians invented the measure of time and gave names to the months. They were a people keeping large flocks and herds of cattle. The most important

time of the year was the lambing season. This they made the first of the year, and the position of the sun in the sky was therefore called Aries, and the constellation received that designation. They also noticed that the moon changed—grew, became full, and waned—twelve times between one lambing season and the next, thus Nature divided the year into twelve parts, or months. The second period was the calving season and the month we call May, covering the period the sun was in the constellation of Taurus—the Bull—and so it went on throughout the seasons. This, then, is the foundation from which was started all the organized creeds of the world and the edifice, into which was built guesses of supernatural influences in untold numbers. It cannot be an accident or a coincidence that in various parts of Europe and Asia and Africa should be found similar ideas in the religious teachings. For instance: twelve signs of the Zodiac; twelve Reapers in Egyptian mythology; twelve sons of Jacob, with twelve tribes under Moses; and twelve disciples of Jesus; all with similar characteristics. Still further, is it likely that the chiefs of all these bands should have similar attributes, unless the tales had a common origin and that it is merely a repetition told in different places and to different races?

Here in tabulated form are the chief Gods of the Nations:—

Kalendar	...	...	The Year	Summer	Winter
Akkadian Zodiac	...	...	Time	Light	Darkness
Personification:—					
Persian	...	...	Ormudz	Mithra	Ahriman
Egyptian	...	...	Osiris	Horus	Typhon
Hindu	...	...	Vasudeva	Krishna	Mahadeva
Greek	...	...	Zeus	Apollo	Python
Latin	...	...	Saturn	Bacchus	Pluto
Jewish	...	...	Jahweh	Moses	Serpent
Christian	...	...	Jehovah	Christ	Satan

To find the equivalent of the months of the Zodiac is not so easy, but I have endeavoured to do it, and believe I have been fairly successful. In one case at least there is no doubt, namely, that of September, when the sun enters Virgo. This month is in all cases represented by a woman. It will be seen that as this arrangement makes only eleven months vacant, it was necessary to put two persons into another month, and therefore in May we find a constellation of the twins, Gemini, represented by two brothers:—

Kalendar...	...April	May	June	July
Akkadian Zodiac	Ram or Lamb	Bull	Twins	Crab
Meaning ...	...Peace	Strength	Fraternity	Fire and Heat
Personification:—				
Greek ...	...Ammon			
Latin ...	...Mercury	Hercules	Castor and Pollux	Vulcan
Jewish ...	...Issachar	Reuben	Simeon and Levi	Gad
Christian	...Simon the Canaanite	Lebbeus Thaddeus	James and John	Bartholomew

Kalendar...	...August	September	October	November
Akkadian Zodiac	Lion	Virgin	The Scales	Scorpion
Meaning ...	...Anger	The Moon	Judgment	War
Personification:—				
Latin ...	...Orion	Minerva	Janus	Mars
Egyptian	...	Isis		
Hindu ...	...	Devaki		
Greek ...	...	Semele		
Jewish ...	...Judah	Sarah	Dan	Benjamin
Christian	...Matthew	Mary	Thomas	Phillip

Kalendar...	...December	January	February	March
Akkadian Zodiac	Archer	Goat	Waterer	Fishes
Meaning ...	...Death	Freedom	Rainy	Ocean
Personification:—				
Persian	...Diabolos			Petra
Latin ...	...Achilles	Pan	Jupiter Pluvius	Neptune
Jewish ...	...Joseph	Naphtali	Asher	Zebulun
Christian	...Judas	James	Andrew	Simon Peter

It may, perhaps, be of interest to my readers to know my reasons why and how I have arrived at the conclusions stated. There is nothing which cannot be easily checked with a little careful investigation, with the aid of a few books on mythology, and any standard work on astronomy and the constellations, together with the description of the sons of Jacob in Genesis (chap. 49). In the revised version of the Old Testament, it will be seen that this description is in the form of a poem or saga. That indicates that it is more ancient than the connecting writing. The attributes of the various individuals agree so well with those accompanying the periods allotted to the various constellations, that I have no doubt that originally they were personifications of the star groups. The same may be said of the gods of the Romans, and the names of the disciples mean the same in most cases.

We must remember that, in the long ago, there was no scientific knowledge such as is wide-spread to-day, and those who were acquainted with the facts of astronomy did not wish the people generally to be acquainted with it. So we must not look for exactitude in these matters. The best way to get at the condition of mind of the people of those times is to study the ideas of children of, say, five or six years of age. They do not analyse, but take everything they experience as matters of course.

The following are some of the books which have been helpful to me, and well worth reading for information on the past: *Origin of Civilization*, Sir John Lubbock; *Footsteps of the Past*, J. M. Wheeler; *The Historical Jesus, and Short History of Christianity*, John M. Robertson; *Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ*, Gerald Massey; *God and My Neighbour*, R. Blatchford; *Tooke's Pantheon*, Andrew Tooke; *The Grammar of Life*, G. T. Wrench; *A Classical Dictionary*, Thos. Browne

I need not use much space over the chief gods. Most will agree with my list, for the Head one has in every country always been a Creator and Protector, covering all time, and the Universal Father. The second one is also well known as the Conqueror of death, the Saviour of the people, the Christ or Anointed. And the third is representative of darkness and destruction; like winter, he is the destroyer of good. That is the Trinity of Nature; there is no mystery here, it is mere allegory. In the Jewish history there appears to be several editions, one with the persons I give, and another being the legend of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and part of a third with Samson as the sun-god, who killed himself after his strength had been cut off.

When we come to the lesser gods, the sons, and the disciples, as representing the months of the year, we find nothing certain or exact. Even the months did not always fall at the same time. Yet the confusion is only superficial; the essential matter is always constant, plain and discoverable. Take the names I have placed under April, the beginning of the year, which comes from a word meaning "opening." The sun has entered the constellation Aries, the young ram or lamb. The attributes are peacefulness and service, and these are common to each of the persons mentioned. The Greek god Ammon was represented with a ram's head, and served Jupiter by saving him from thirst; the Latin god Mercury was the messenger of the gods; the Jewish Issacher "became a servant under tribute"; Simon means "one who hears and obeys," i.e., servant. So on throughout the lists which I have given; my readers can check them all for himself if he so desires.

The Christian Church has dedicated certain days to the various disciples, but I cannot find that any rule has been followed in settling the dates, with the exception of St. Thomas, which is December 21; this,

of course, is astronomical, being the lowest position of the sun in the year, the darkest day. The sacred day for the Virgin Mary is also naturally March 25, Lady Day, and the "Annunciation." Probably, further study will give a reason for the other fixtures.

In the growth of a religion, innumerable forces sway the minds of the people and the teachers. It is much like the growth of a tree which does not throw out its branches symmetrically, but irregularly, yet, if it be not subject to unsuitable environment, the whole growth will be a figure of symmetry. Therefore, we must rather take the system of each religion generally than rely upon any particular detail, and if we find certain features which are not scientifically exact, that will not prevent us seeing in the constitution—if I may call it so—the effects of natural causes.

E. ANDERSON.

Freethought and Happiness.

Give me love, love, love!—*Leopardi*.

LIKE Omar, I have always been hard to please with doctors, doctrines, and philosophies of life; not, I modestly believe, through any special excellence or default in my make-up, but from a simple, natural logic of the mind. For me, religion is beyond recall; for Christian charity, I am a lost soul; but the purely human, wistful, tristful melancholy, so often associated with religion, I have often found very soothing, even ennobling—such as may be found by the family-man, say, after "ranting round in pleasure's ring," who, returning late, with conscientious but belated haste, finds the hearth deserted, the happy youngsters asleep, the tired mother also wrapt in all too well-earned repose: "Love is the parent of conscience!" The rich poignancy of the moment is enhanced by thoughts of other children in the street, and sympathy for a world more wide—this goodness—it is greatness—is perhaps rooted primarily in the personal, domestic circle. The idiot preacher thinks, and says, these finer feelings are impossible without religion—a venerable fallacy! On the other hand, without these primal, earth-born instincts, which we may call love at its highest and best, religion would appear what it really is, a savage's dread, or a ghost illusion.

I, myself, was nurtured in the Christian faith, which seemed to sit quite easily upon me till I began to think and feel about it a little. I could never quite reconcile myself to the idea of hell. The golden streets of heaven failed to attract. The green fields, blue skies, waters, woods and wilds of native earth was where I was fain to spend eternity (if it could be spent!); and, I tell thee churlish priest, I was not "wicked" in my wishes at that tender age! I could never get up any sympathy for the death of Christ on the cross; the sacrifice seemed so needless, so avoidable in the wisdom and power of God; besides, it had not "saved" the world; the "Saviour" was not killed, but alive for ever; also he was God, not man. I pitied most the poor dumb, but happy, brute creatures, that when killed were really dead—and for ever. My first stumbling-block was the Atonement. I never could get over that. Time, and the courage given me by the example of a beloved and elder Freethinker, did the rest. Even so, it took some fifteen years to shake the mind clear of early engrained religion—fifteen fateful, impressionable, poignant, ignorant, wasted years; even yet I may not be wholly redeemed; it is a common paradox, I do not now believe in ghosts, above or below, but in certain super-sensitive moments they haunt me still! They are not baseless, either, those instinctive terrors of the mind: heredity has a long and sensitive, if subconscious, memory; the many

terrors, real and imaginary, of the remote past have left their indelible mark; the similar, psychological moment arrives, and modern man quakes again with the terrors of ten or twenty thousand years ago. The savage dies out slowly. So religion survives, even in the age of reason.

Having rid himself of religion, or religion having left him, or however we care to put it, we have still to ask: can the resultant Freethought make a man happy? For, analysed, it is in all cases happiness he seeks. The adequate answer to this question would require a volume, and perhaps thereby be no answer—just another book on the market. Whether the Freethinker was happy or not might be a matter of taste or temperament. I, for instance, have become a Freethinker—I am rather proud of the fact—but it has not made me perfectly happy, for the reason that such a condition cannot exist on earth—or in heaven either. Leopardi calls happiness: "That impossible felicity which is alike unknown and alien to the nature of the universe." Elsewhere the same sane and sweet, and fundamental thinker addresses the student thus: "But man's fate, wherever it may lead him, should be followed with a great and undaunted soul; that is a duty which is demanded from you, and from all who resemble you in virtue and in genius." Brave and noble and true, even inspiring words! Only the Christian promises you, with other impossibilities, perfect felicity here or hence. In his fine philosophic allegory, *The Story of the Human Race*, the same writer refers to certain "Phantasms" sent by the gods to make man happy. They were called Justice, Virtue, Glory, Patriotism, and the like. These pleased awhile, then Truth was sent, which opened for mortals "the arcana of the universe." All was revealed. The other phantasms were recalled. The fate of man was going to be more cruel and terrible than ever before. But Jove, in his compassion, saw fit to leave them one called Love, from which they would derive some comfort.

Love the son of the Celestial Venus, like in name to the phantasm so called, but in nature, virtue, and actions most unlike.....offered to descend from heavenso ineffably dear to the gods that they had never before allowed him to depart.....

And now—

When he [Love] does visit the earth he takes up his abode in the amiable and tender hearts of generous and magnanimous persons, and diffuses therein, for the short period he remains, a strange and wonderful serenity, and fills them with affections so noble, and of such virtue and force, that they experience a sensation hitherto unknown to them, namely, a feeling of real beatitude, and not a mere illusive semblance of it.....merely to experience in one's self the presence of this divinity is a happiness which transcends all others that have ever been known to mankind.....

And now, not to spoil so charming a conclusion, I would just record the ultimate happy thought that I, even I, may have been visited by this sweet ministrant of love; not sky-descended, but of earth, uprisen with man himself; whether expressed in wistful melancholy, or in ardour, courage and inspiration in the service of the human race. ANDREW MILLAR.

THE GREAT UNKNOWN.

Wounded and worn with sorrow,
Our hope to the afterward saith:—
"What of the unknown morrow?—
What of the unknown death?"
But a dumb thing makes no murmur—
And forever the echoes fall,
Back through the stony silence
Which covers the unknown all!

—Albert Palin.

What You Will.

Inquire not who spoke this or that, but attend to what is spoken.—*Thos. à Kempis.*

It would take a genius to divine what was at the back of Shakespeare's mind when he created Caliban. To those free and rare thinkers who have a disinterested interest in universal knowledge, the moral purpose of Shakespeare's plays does not rise to the level of argument. Talented writers may imagine that they serve the cause of truth by moralizing, but genius transcends this point of view; it soars above the plane of considering whether alcohol is good for the body, or defining the difference between "low heels and high heels." We believe that genius of all ages recognized that truth was powerful enough to defend itself; therefore we are satisfied that we cannot find a moral purpose in works of art, whether they be the Venus de Milo or Shakespeare's abstraction, Caliban, of the earth, earthy.

In the sphere of comparison, Caliban is a major figure. Compared with Prospero, he is the nadir of creation. From Ferdinand this monster is far removed, but when we come to the figures of Trinculo and Stephano, we can see traces of affinity possessed by these two civilized brutes with the beast-man Caliban. As we are without the key to this creation, we can only look upon it, and realize that the more we do so, the more it changes.

For our own part, we look on Caliban as a character governed by his perceptions alone—the fate, shall we say, of primitive man? But do not let us forget that some thousands of years hence what we now have may be regarded as a primitive civilization. Looking back on history, life seems to have been a purgatory—and purposeless. How many generations of Calibans must of necessity have to live before fire could be properly made the servant of man? His natural enemies driving him below the ground to sleep—the evolutions of his bed of leaves, straw, skins—then, miracle of discovery, raising it from the ground! What hard and thorny lessons to learn to pay for the privilege of drawing breath!

.....and teach me how

To name the bigger light and how the less
That burn by day and night.

Can we imagine Caliban's conception of the sun and the moon? Have we not here the making of a religion? The sun would appear to rise in the morning (obedient to Rostand's Chanticleer), Caliban's eyes would look on it as something alive—with gratitude; at mid-day its fierce heat might convey to him the impression that it was angry with him. In the evening the air would become cooler, the sun would disappear, and this creature, hovering between the borderland of perception and conception, would retire, feeling that the mighty living fire in the sky had decided to spare him.

Hazlitt inclines to think that Caliban is grossness without vulgarity; Schlegel will have him as a poetical character; Stopford Brooke holds out hope for him. Consciously or unconsciously, this latter critic expounds reincarnation by saying that through the education received from Prospero, Caliban may be fitted for a higher life in the future. Compassion within us for the basest in humanity should not close the door of hope for ultimate salvation through suffering and service.

Through meditation on this strange type of creature, we arrive at one or two helpful conclusions in our outlook on the drama of life. In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare has depicted virtue and vice. Unlike our modern novelists, he has made virtue attractive, and its opposite repulsive—memo, let our novelists

study him for elementary rules in their craft. Miranda has nothing to gain by going down to Caliban—in cleaning out Augean stables our realists may suffer more by contact than the good they think they achieve.

Again—Caliban as our primitive self who runs loose when our waking thoughts are “off guard” during sleep—Caliban when we are in a passion (and not as Blake rightly has it, have a passion within us); Caliban, as our body, for *service* to our senses, our mind, our intellect, our reason; the more we look on this figure the more it changes. This quality, we think, distinguishes the eternal from the ephemeral.

As we write, there is on the highest branch of a pear tree, delicious white blossom swaying gently in the spring air; we know that down in the damp and dirty ground Caliban is carrying wood at the bidding of that greatest magician, Nature; the roots are nourishing the Miranda-like blossom on the topmost bough. Caliban, the lowest caste—the Shudra caste, the caste for service—he is irrevocably bound to the topmost blossom—are you listening Dean Inge?—and the topmost blossom is irrevocably bound to the roots, and Shakespeare, realizing what all men and women are, with the touch of genius that leaps lightly over the mountains of Original Sin, leaves us in a study of Caliban, still hoping for good.

WILLIAM REPTON.

National Secular Society.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

THE STAR CINEMA THEATRE, CORPORATION STREET,
PRESTON.

WHIT-SUNDAY, JUNE 8, 1924.

Agenda.

1. Minutes of last Conference.
- 2.—Executive's Annual Report.
3. Financial Report.
4. Election of President.
Motion by Bethnal Green, Manchester, West Ham, and North London Branches :—
“That Mr. C. Cohen be re-elected President of the N.S.S.”
5. Election of Secretary.
Motion by the Executive, West Ham, and North London Branches :—
“That Miss E. M. Vance be re-elected General Secretary.”
6. Election of Treasurer.
Motion by the Bethnal Green and West Ham Branches :—
“That Mr. C. G. Quinton be elected Treasurer.”
7. Election of Auditor.
Motion by the Executive :—
“That Messrs. H. Theobald and Co. (Incorporated Accountants), be appointed Auditors.”
8. Nominations for Executive.
SCOTLAND.—Mr. James Neate, nominated by Glasgow Branch.
WALES.—Mr. J. T. Lloyd, nominated by Swansea Branch.
N.E. GROUP.—Miss K. B. Kough, nominated by Newcastle Branch.
Mr. A. B. Moss, nominated by South Shields Branch.
N.W. GROUP.—Mr. H. R. Clifton and Mr. R. H. Rosetti, nominated by Liverpool and Manchester Branches.
MIDLAND GROUP.—Mrs. C. Quinton (Jnr.) and Mr. J. G. Dobson, nominated by Birmingham Branch.

SOUTH LONDON.—Mr. F. R. Corrigan, nominated by South London Branch.

NORTH LONDON.—Mr. S. Samuels, nominated by North London Branch.

EAST LONDON.—Mr. H. Silverstein, nominated by Bethnal Green and West Ham Branches.

9. Motion by Birmingham Branch :—
“That in order to ensure full representation at the Annual Conference, the expenses of delegates be paid by the parent Society.”
10. Motion by West Ham Branch :—
“That in view of the history of the Christian Church and its relation to social progress, this Conference deplores the manner in which political leaders coquette with the various Churches, and insists that any party advantage so gained must be at the expense of the more permanent interests of the people; it is also of opinion that a check would be given to this practice if Freethinkers connected with political movements were to give freer expression to their own convictions on religious subjects.”
11. Motion by Bethnal Green Branch :—
“That the Annual Branch Collection on behalf of the Benevolent Fund be abolished.”
12. Motion by Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch :—
“That a directory of Branch Secretaries be published each year for the use of members wishing to correspond, or when visiting strange towns.”
13. Motion by Mr. R. H. Rosetti :—
“That in order to provide the public and the Government with an object lesson in the reality and extent of the objection to religious instruction in State-aided schools, this Conference urges upon Freethinkers, and all those who support the principle of secular education, to avail themselves of their rights under the Education Acts and withdraw their children from all forms of religious instruction.”
14. Motion by North London Branch :—
“That the Executive shall arrange with the Branches for the compilation of a weekly report of meetings held, and to be held, for insertion in the *Freethinker*.”
15. Motion by Mr. F. P. Corrigan :—
“That in view of the plans being put forward by various religious bodies for the strengthening of religious instruction in State-supported schools; and of the conferences held between leaders of the various Churches with the object of arriving at some agreed plan of religious instruction in the schools; and in view also of the danger of such agreement being made the basis of a Government measure, this Conference reaffirms its opinion that the only just and wise policy is for the State to confine the education given to purely secular subjects, leaving all religious instruction to be provided by those who consider it necessary; and urges upon Freethinkers and believers in religious equality to do their utmost to end a system which is unjust to the children and which serves to prevent a thoroughly efficient system of national education.”
16. Motion by Mr. C. Cohen :—
“That while expressing its satisfaction with the reply of the Home Secretary to the deputation which recently waited on him in connection with the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, this Conference reminds Freethinkers all over the country that the laws still exist, and that prosecutions for blasphemy under either statute or common law will only be abolished as a result of unremitting agitation; it therefore calls upon Freethinkers all over the country to make this a test question to candidates at all elections, and to decline to vote for anyone who will not promise his or her support in securing the removal of a religious and social injustice.”

17. Motion by Finsbury Park Branch:—

"That the present rule authorizing the sitting Conference to appoint the place of meeting for the following year be rescinded, it having been found impossible in practice."

18. Motion by Finsbury Park Branch:—

"That in order to increase the Society's membership, this Conference is of opinion that a special person should be appointed at each public meeting whose business it should be to distribute Forms of Membership and otherwise see to the enrolment of new members."

19. Motion by Miss K. B. Kough:—

"That this Conference strongly urges upon the Government to take steps which shall surround the ceremony of civil marriage with a greater degree of dignity and solemnity than at present exists."

20. Motion by Mr. A. B. Moss:—

"That this Conference, bearing in mind the importance of the political education of a democracy, is of opinion that the time has arrived when the whole of our civic and municipal institutions should be completely secularized."

21. Motion by Executive:—

"That this Conference, recognizing the need for some central building in London in which meetings may be regularly held and which would also form a centre for Freethinkers, authorizes the Executive to take whatever steps may be practicable to acquire a suitable building for these purposes."

22. Motion by Executive:—

"That in view of the importance of the International Freethought Conference to be held in Rome in September, 1925, this Conference is of opinion that the National Secular Society should be officially represented on that occasion, and instructs the Executive to arrange for as large and as important a delegation as is possible."

During the afternoon session papers will be read on the following subjects: "Methods of Propaganda," by Councillor F. E. Monks (Manchester), and "Freethought and Adolescence," by Mr. Ona Melton (Birmingham). Followed by discussion.

The Conference will sit at the Star Cinema Theatre: Morning Session, 10.30 to 12.30; Afternoon Session, 2.30 to 4.30. Delegates will be required to produce their credentials at the doors; Members, the current card of membership. Only members of the Society are entitled to be present. A public demonstration will be held at 7 p.m. in the Star Cinema Theatre. Luncheon for delegates and visitors at the Victoria and Station Hotel at 1 p.m., price 3s. 6d.

The Victoria and Station Hotel will be the headquarters of the N.S.S. officials during the Conference, and they will be pleased to meet members there on the evening of Saturday, June 7. The Secretary of the local Branch is Mr. Arthur Rogerson, Leyland Road, Penwortham, Preston.

By order of the Executive,

E. M. VANCE, *Secretary.*

C. COHEN, *President.*

Obituary.

We sincerely regret having to record the death of John William Hartgill, of Whistler Street, Drayton Park. The deceased was for many years an active worker for the Kingsland Branch. Although he had reached the age of 76, he still maintained an active interest in the N.S.S. He attended Mr. Cohen's lecture at South Place on May 4, and left the meeting apparently in good health. On his way home he was overcome with cerebral hæmorrhage, and did not recover consciousness. In accordance with his desire, the body was cremated at Golder's Green, on May 17, and a Secular Service was conducted.—F. P. C.

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.

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. William Platt, "Moliere."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "Our Immortality."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 6.15, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK.—11.15, Mr. G. Whitehead, a Lecture. On Monday, May 26, and following evenings, Mr. Whitehead will lecture at Highbury Crescent at 8.

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. A. D. McLaren, a Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3.30 and 6.30, Mr. E. Burke will lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Demonstration. Speakers: Mrs. Venton, Messrs. F. C. Warner, F. G. Warner, A. C. High, H. C. White, and others.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BOLTON SECULAR SOCIETY (Socialist Club, 16 Wood Street): 2.15, Mr. W. Addison, "Saints and Sinners."

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (The Bookstall, 3 Carmarthen Road): 6.30, A Meeting.

OUTDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.—Ramble to Allander Bank. Meet at Hillfoot at 12.30.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—Rambles meet to-day at Victoria Monument, Piccadilly. Leave Altrincham tram terminus 1 p.m. Bring lunch; tea and hot water provided. Total expense 1s. The leader of the party is Mr. Greenall.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor, near North Road entrance): 7, Mr. R. Atkinson, a Lecture.

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