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## Views and Opinions.

### The Burden of Immortality.

It is not often that I read an article by a priest and find myself in complete agreement with it. But this is the case with an article by Father R. A. Knox which appeared in the *Evening News* of a recent date. The subject of Father Knox's article is a good-humoured "chaffing" of science on its attempts to make man live for a couple of hundred years or so, in the course of which he says many true things, and also implies other things with which I expect he will not agree when they are pointed out to him. I cannot well see how he can agree with these implications, since agreement would mean that he might just as well retire from his business as a priest and enter a more intellectually respectable profession. Father Knox, very wisely, doubts the advantages of a too-long life. Life runs itself out in periods, and a period to be interesting must not be over long. We do not retain our zest for anything beyond a certain time, there is a limit to our capacity for enjoyment and also to the pleasure derived from expectation. The games that a boy plays, the hazzards he runs in breaking the regulations of his elders, are all interesting enough for a time. But, as Father Knox says, youth will not tolerate smoking behind haystacks for twenty-five years; and if the office becomes a groove and a weariness in thirty-five years, what will it be in seventy? Make us live twice as long as we do now, which will mean the doubling of the length of childhood, youth, etc., and interests that are delightful at present become a weariness to the flesh under altered conditions.

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### Getting at the Facts.

Now as I have said all this myself, and more to the same effect, in my *Other Side of Death*, I can find no fault with Father Knox saying it after me. And had I sent the article to the *Evening News*, making it a plain criticism of the belief in a future life, there is not the slightest doubt but that the editor, with his eye on the "pudd'n headed" religious reader, would have returned the MSS. But as it is written by a priest, and as it attempts to take away some of the kudos which science has acquired, that same "pudd'n headed" public will read it with approval—unless its implications are brought home to them. Not many of

the religious readers of the *Evening News* will realize that almost every one of Father Knox's statements will apply with about equal force to the belief in the benefits of immortality. There is, for instance, the familiar plea that men desire immortality; that Nature would not have implanted the desire without the possibility of its gratification. Of course, that is not the case. Men do not desire to live for ever, particularly they do not desire to live in some other state of existence. "But," says Father Knox, "to shrink from death (as I do, and most people) is not to desire long life. You might as well say that to shrink from the dentist's chair is to desire toothache." Quite so, the shrinking from death is at most an expression of unexhausted vitality, but the fact that at a certain stage one's vitality is unexhausted, no more proves or implies a vitality that is inexhaustible than the fact of my being able to draw a cheque for more than five pounds implies the ability to draw one for a million. The desire to live on here has not the remotest connection with the existence of a desire to live for ever in some imagined heaven, although I should not be surprised to find Father Knox using this very argument if he were stating his case as a Christian theologian.

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### The Game of Life.

"To live longer than what may be called a reasonable period would," says Father Knox, "result in an intolerable weariness." At present we have a cycle of life, childhood, youth, maturity, and old age, each of which brings its characteristic pleasures and compensations. And it requires little imagination to realize that as there is a time limit to all pleasures, the enjoyments of any one of these periods prolonged beyond a certain time would fade and be replaced by at least weariness. Here is the cycle as sketched by Father Knox:—

The child, the boy, can show a reason for wanting to live; he wants to be a grown-up and to get his his own back—to spank others in his turn, to say, "hush" when his juniors are noisy, to tell the other boys and girls not to meddle with his toys.

The youth has ambitions, and these cannot be gratified till he reaches middle age. The middle-aged man fancies he has a mission or a message, or is important for some purpose; when his colleagues persuade him to the contrary, he retires, but he is not done with life yet; he must tell faded stories, and inform the young men what young men were like in his day. That after-glow may reasonably last till eighty; but eighty is bogey, and after that the competition takes on a new aspect. The man of eighty lives now only for the sake of living; it is a game, the only game left to him, to defy the centuries. He is like a billiard player who has won his match and is intent merely on "finishing his break"; there is no end to be served except that of beating a record.

Now I do not think that any thoughtful person will question the substantial truth of this description—so far as this life is concerned. What one would like to know is in what respect this description would not hold good of any imagined other life beyond the

grave? Why should living for ever be more tolerable the other side of the grave than it is on this side? Clearly, when we enter the assumed next world we take with us the natures we have now. Things will satisfy and satiate, attract and repulse then as they do now. And if, on a reasonable estimate of the qualities and capacities of our natures, an indefinite extension of life here is something to be dreaded rather than hoped for, we cannot anticipate any different result in any other state of existence. I quite agree with Father Knox's description of the use and value of life here; what I am curious to know is in what way he would show that it does not apply to the Christian teaching of the blessing and comfort of immortality?

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#### Death as Eternal Rest.

The truth that Father Knox implies—I do not know whether he sees it or not—is that man does not long for eternal life at all. The expression of mere words which indicate otherwise only implies the fact that men normally shrink from death so long as they are physiologically healthy or unexhausted. How it would be if our lives ran on smoothly to a given end, and found us after a term of years in a state of complete physiological exhaustion—which might well happen in the absence of disease—is quite another question. In these circumstances one can picture man approaching death as he now approaches the time for retiring to rest after an exhausting day's toil. Death would then be painless (mentally) and the promise of another life would carry with it no attractions. But in the rough and tumble of a struggle for existence, success has come to the animal with the strongest will to persist. The presence of disease has carried most off before their physiological resources were completely exhausted, and it is the product of these circumstances that has given the religious teacher the power to misinterpret biological and sociological facts in the interests of his own superstitions. But when science comes along and says to man: "There is a possibility of our being able to make you live for a greatly extended period, perhaps instead of three score and ten, five, seven or even ten score of years, a priest, who does not realize how his arguments cut the ground from under his own professed religious beliefs, is able to point out that indefinite existence may not be a blessing, it may even be a curse. In that conclusion most sensible people will agree. And they will also conclude that if living for two or three centuries in this life would be intolerable, living for ever in some imagined heaven is something to shrink from with multiplied horror.

\* \* \*

#### The Lesson of Evolution.

One can have too much of anything, and one could no more go on living for ever with pleasure than one could go on eating for ever, or drinking for ever, or dancing for ever, or singing for ever. A better understanding of the nature of the evolutionary process would make it plain that it is with man's emotional and mental qualities as it is with his physical structure. The whole man has been developed in relation to a particular environment, and in that environment mortality is a settled and indestructible factor. Instead of an examination of human nature supplying "intimations of immortality" it provides the exact opposite. Like many of the earlier beliefs, this particular one rests upon no stronger foundation than the guesses of ignorant mankind as to the nature of the experiences to which it was daily subjected. Later knowledge has not alone shown us how fallacious these conclusions were; it has also made the whole idea of eternal personal existence ridiculous. Father Knox

is absolutely correct in showing that indefinite prolongation of life here would make for anything but happiness and contentment. And as man is man, whether we take him here or anywhere else, I have merely carried his conclusions a step further and applied them to his own Church's doctrine of immortality.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### Whitsuntide.

It is a most remarkable and significant fact that all the great festivals of the Christian Church are but cunningly devised adaptations of more primitive ones in the Pagan world. Christmas is an adjusted perpetuation of the Roman winter-solstice festival held on December 25 in celebration of the "Birthday of the Unconquered Sun." With this fact in mind we realize the appropriateness of the following lines:—

Heigh ho! sing, heigh ho! unto the green holly;  
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly.  
Then heigh ho, the holly,  
This life is most jolly.

Lent is a period of fasting in order to see ghosts and enjoy ecstatic communion with them. But the rite of fasting was exercised by different nations long before Christianity made its appearance. Tylor, in his *Primitive Culture*, supplies us with several instances of its prevalence among the ancients. The oracle of Apollo at Delphi fasted for inspiration. Even savages, like the Zulus, are in the habit of saying that "the continually stuffed body cannot see secret things." Among the North American Indians fasting was insisted upon as an essential condition of enjoying visions. Easter, also, is a festival which closely resembles the rites of Adonis, and is assimilated to the spring festival of Attis. So, likewise, Whitsuntide is founded on the drama of Summer and Winter. We are informed in the *Golden Bough* (p. 317) that—

At Drömling, in Brunswick, down to the present time, the contest between Summer and Winter is acted every year at Whitsuntide by a troop of boys and a troop of girls. The boys rush singing, shouting, and ringing bells from house to house to drive Winter away; after them come the girls singing softly and led by a May Bride, all in bright dresses and decked with flowers and garlands to represent the genial advent of spring.

Such is Whitsuntide as a Nature festival, absolutely free from any supernatural element. Whitsun-ale was a festival formerly celebrated at Whitsuntide, at which the people of several parishes met near a church and gave themselves to feasting and merrymaking. Whitsunday is the seventh Sunday after Easter; and here we part with the natural altogether and become submerged in the supernatural. In the estimation of the Church, Whit-Sunday is a festival in commemoration of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. In reality it is no longer Whitsunday, but Whit or White Sunday, so called, it is surmised, because in the early Church those who had been recently baptized appeared at church between Easter and Pentecost in white garments.

Let us now examine this curious transformation of the Nature festival of Whitsunday, in order to discover whether it commends itself to our reason or not. The story of it is told in Acts ii, 1-13, and, to say the least, a most wonderful tale it is. Nothing could be more unnatural, nor, in consequence, more incredible. It was the day of Pentecost, and Jerusalem was full of visiting Jews from various parts of the world. The disciples of Jesus were cast into deep mourning, for ten days before their Lord and Master had completely disappeared, and they knew not what had become of him. They gave them-

selves to prayer. They numbered one hundred and twenty, but how many of them continued steadfastly in prayer we have no means of finding out. Neither can we tell in what building they did their praying. On the day of Pentecost we read that "they were all in one place," and we infer that the place was a house. In an ordinary house at Jerusalem a hundred and twenty could not comfortably assemble and be seated. But listen:—

And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting among them, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound was heard, the multitude came together and were confounded, because that every man heard them speaking in his own language. And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying: "Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own language wherein we were born?.....We do hear them speaking in our tongues the mighty works of God."

On the very face of it the narrative is not only improbable, but wholly impossible, and absolutely incredible. What is described is a supernatural interference with and reversal of the course of Nature; a startling, revolutionary miracle. For argument's sake, let us assume the truth of the strange story, and the more we think about it the stranger it becomes. The thousands of Jews from every nation under heaven, whose lodgings were in different sections of the city, are represented as all hearing the supernatural sound and coming together, and then as hearing the disciples speaking each in his own language. Then they are said to publicly acknowledge that the topic talked about was "the mighty works of God." Immediately after that confession they are described as being amazed and perplexed, "saying one to another, what meaneth this?" Worst of all, some of these "devout men" are called mockers who asserted that the speakers were under the influence of drink. After stating these inexplicable and inexcusable inconsistencies, it will repay us to glance at the speaking disciples once more. As the fiery tongues parted among them, and one sat upon each one of them they became filled with the Holy Ghost, and as a result began to speak with other tongues. On this point we agree with Dean Alford when he says:—

There can be no question in any unprejudiced mind that the fact which this narrative sets before us is that the disciples began to *speak in various languages, viz., the languages of the nations below enumerated; and perhaps others.* All attempts to evade this are connected with some forcing of the text, or some far-fetched and indefensible explanation.

Yes, without a doubt, what the narrative sets before us is the fiction that the multitudes of strangers at Jerusalem during Pentecost, who did not know the language of Palestine, heard the conversations in their own languages, because the disciples were enabled by the Holy Ghost to actually speak in those languages at one and the same time. After all, it is quite impossible even to assume the truth of such an absurd story. And yet here it is calmly written down, and millions of people in all ages have not even doubted its truth. To-day, doubtless, in numerous Sunday schools and pulpits in Christendom it will be crammed down the throats of little children and adults as the very truth of God, to reject which would be an un-

forgivable sin. Our only consolation lies in the indisputable fact that a much larger number of people disbelieve it to-day than at any previous time.

It must be frankly admitted that without its belief in the Holy Ghost, the Church would have ceased to be centuries ago. This belief has always been by far its most valuable asset. What does the Holy Ghost stand for, or what does the belief in him, when at its strongest, produce? The answer is: passion, fire, ecstasy, rapture, and these words signify a state of mind which is extraordinary and, consequently, unwholesome; to some extent maddening. Exceedingly fervent and enthusiastic believers often refer with great pride to their ecstatic experience, or their enrapturing joy in the Holy Ghost. Now, strangely enough, ecstasy is formed out of a Greek verb which means to put out of place, derange; and is in reality an abnormal, morbid mental condition; or, in other words, a disease which "usually presents itself as a kind of temporary religious insanity, and has frequently appeared as an epidemic." According to a well-known medical Professor, this disease—

Is well illustrated in the celebrated examples of the dancing epidemics of Germany and Italy in the Middle Ages, the *convulsionnaires* of St. Medard at the Abbé Paris in the early part of the eighteenth century, and in more recent times has been witnessed during periods of religious excitement in this country. This disorder is highly contagious, and readily spreads by imitation.

It is from this disease that the disciples are shown to suffer in that Acts narrative, and it is from this disease that the Church has suffered, more or less, throughout the ages, which involves the inevitable conclusion that religion itself in any of its supernatural forms, is a disease to be got rid of.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Eighty, Not Out!

Let us keep a zealous heart.

—Anatole France.

The right to sincerity is Freedom's dearest gift.

—H. W. Nevins.

ANATOLE FRANCE, the most eminent living writer, has celebrated his eightieth birthday. There could be no more fitting way of commemorating this occasion than by recalling what he has done for the literature of Europe.

Not only is Anatole France the most outstanding figure in contemporary literature, but he is also the foremost representative of the Freethought tradition in French literature. His forerunners are Rabelais, Molière, and Voltaire, three names which shine like gold on the page on which they are printed. His immediate predecessor is Ernest Renan, the smiling satirist who sapped a solemn creed with stealthy sneer. And, like Renan, M. France's books are full of a splendid irony, which is never overdone. "Do not forget to put some vinegar on your salad," said Count Mouravieff, when cautioning a writer against excessive eulogy. "Never forget to put some sugar in your vinegar" is a maxim of which Anatole France stands in no need of a reminder. If he be the Voltaire of our day, it is a Voltaire into whom has passed the urbanity and geniality of a Renan. It is a mellowed and transformed Voltaire, with the physique of a Falstaff, looking upon a sadder and sterner world with the same laughing eyes that we know so well. As M. France so wittily expressed himself at the banquet given in his honour in London some time ago, he is a symbol, as the Citizen Momemo represented the Goddess of Reason at the festivals of the French Revolution.

Over eighty years of age, Anatole France has built up a truly magnificent reputation not only as a writer, but as a humanist. Like his illustrious predecessor, Voltaire, who used the bright sword of his genius on behalf of the unfortunate Jean Calas, La Barre, and so many others, Anatole France took his place by the side of the Atheist, Emile Zola, in the terrible days of the Dreyfus struggle, when the heroic Zola championed the cause of the poor, hunted Jew against the embattled ranks of priestcraft. It was an example of real courage. Honest to their own injury, brave against the enmity of tens of thousands, these Freethinkers exalted their own cause, and raised the world's opinion of human nature.

M. France is a whole-hearted Freethinker. Nowhere is he so happy as when he describes in carefully calculated language how religion grew out of the hotbeds of credulity and ignorance, fraud and mystification. Yet he is never venomous, although a master of the lash, he uses his whip caressingly. He does not cut his subject to ribbons, like Swift, nor, like Voltaire, sting like a hundred wasps. Rather, he is like old François Rabelais, who pities while he smiles.

Rabelais was so much more tolerant than Swift. To Swift, writing under the dark shadow of the Christian superstition, all the world seemed a dusty, weary desert, and man the most loathsome thing that squatted upon it. But Rabelais, out in the open air, with all the winds of the Renaissance blowing upon him, was so much freer. Under the motley of the buffoon was as generous and kindly a heart as ever beat in the service of Humanity. M. France possesses no small share of the broad, tolerant humour of Rabelais, and, at a distance of several centuries, carries on the same splendid intellectual tradition.

Like all really great writers, M. France's sympathies are wide and deep. Who but this most tolerant of Freethinkers could have drawn such a character as the lovable old monk in *The Gods Athirst*, whose only outbreak of passion is caused by his being mistaken for a Capuchin? Or, of the old Epicurean, Brolleaux, who makes puppets for a living, and carries his well-worn copy of Lucretius with him to the guillotine? With what sympathy does not M. France depict the revolutionary Gamelin going without food in order that a starving mother may be fed, or apologizing to a child for his fanaticism:—

Child, you will grow up free and happy, and you will owe it to the infamous Gamelin. I am ferocious that you may be happy, I am cruel that you may be kind, I am pitiless that to-morrow the whole French people may embrace each other with tears of joy.

So, also, with the aristocrat sheltering the outcast of the streets. It is such unforgettable vignettes as these that show Anatole France's art at its best, when irony and humanity, tempering one another, lend his works their inimitable charm. No one but a Frenchman could have written his incomparable books, for they are aglow with the Gallic spirit:—

Rayishing as red wine in woman's form,  
A splendid Moenad, she of the delirious laugh,  
Her body twisted flame with the smoke-cap crowned.

Whatever M. France does he does with the ease of a master. His *Vie Littéraire*, in which he sent his soul adventuring among masterpieces, founded a new school of criticism; his *Joan of Arc*, and *The Gods Athirst*, brought the human note uppermost in history; whilst his gifts as a story-teller have placed him in the forefront of contemporary writers. As an example of his method of rescuing antiquity, and giving it the modern note, consider his short story of the old age of Pontius Pilate. An old comrade-in-arms has been recounting a half-forgotten amour with Mary Magdalen, and he sighs as he mentions that she joined a

religious body led by a Galilean named Jesus. He asks Pilate if he remembers the man:—

Pontius Pilate frowned in thought, and his hand rose to his forehead as if probing the depths of memory. Then, after a few seconds' silence, he murmured, "Jesus—Jesus of Nazareth? I cannot recall him to mind."

Is it not a dramatic finale?

Now listen to M. France's delightful description of the childish passion of Pierre Noziere towards a saintly life:—

My sole idea was to live the life of an ascetic. In order to lose no time in putting my ideas in operation, I refused to eat my breakfast. My mother, who knew nothing of my new vocation, thought I was ill, and looked at me with an anxiety that it pained me to behold. Nevertheless, I persevered with my fasting, and then, remembering the example of Saint Simeon Stylites, who spent his life on a pillar, I climbed up on to the kitchen cistern, but it was impossible to live there, for Julie, our cook, promptly dislodged me. I next decided to imitate Saint Nicholas, of Patros, who gave all his riches to the poor. My father's study window looked out on the quay, and from it I proceeded to fling down a dozen coppers or so, which had been presented to me because they were new and bright. These I followed up with marbles, humming-tops, whip-tops, and eelskin whip.

"The child's crazy," exclaimed my father, as he shut the window.

I felt angry and mortified at hearing this judgment passed upon me, but I remembered that my father, not being a saint like myself, would not share with me the glories of the blessed; a reflection from which I derived great consolation.

To us Freethinkers, M. France does not appeal solely as the most brilliant and wittiest of contemporary writers. He has a further claim on our attention in his noble efforts towards the destruction of false ideals and illusions that beset the minds of men.

MIMNERMUS.

## Pagan Morals.

### II.

(Concluded from page 342.)

The old masters of history resembled.....the old masters of painting. Both thought little of what we call "local colour," of close conformity to the scene or object delineated, provided they produced striking compositions with grand outlines and rich tints which were attractive and beautiful for their own sake.—Cotter Morrison: *article, History; "Encyclopædia Britannica.*

It is the neglect to take into consideration this use of invective by the old Roman historians that has been responsible for the impression of tyranny, cruelty and vice of many of the Roman emperors, and the general wickedness, dissoluteness and depravity of the Romans in general. The Roman who read these histories would discount these stories at their true value. He knew that similar things would be said of himself during a quarrel; and if his relative or neighbour offended him, he in his turn would accuse him of theft, cruelty, adultery, and any other crime he could think of, and everybody would understand that the accusations were not seriously meant, but just a mode of letting off steam; and did not stand in the way of the parties making up their quarrel, becoming the best of friends, and forgetting all about it. It was a usage recognized and provided for in the schools of rhetoric; the teachers of which sometimes warned their pupils against the dangers of overdoing it and creating sympathy for the victim. Indeed, the Romans regarded history, says Mr. Jerome, as a branch of rhetoric:—

So well was all this understood that none of the ancient historians, although they often asserted their

own veracity, seem to have had much confidence in the historical writings of others. Thucydides, whose critical standards approach most nearly the modern, begins his work by pointing out the weakness of his predecessors. Similarly Polybius speaks of the inextricable maze of falsehood into which his predecessors had fallen. Sallust is sceptical about many of the stories of Catiline; Josephus asserts that the histories of Nero and those before him are full of falsehoods; Tacitus declares that after the battle of Actium true history ceased to be written, and comments most severely on the worthless character of what passes for the history of the early Empire—a judgment in which Cassius Dio fully concurs, adding that much that has been written is false and almost every incident has been distorted. (T. S. Jerome, *Aspects of the Study of Roman History*, pp. 364-365.)

Mr. Jerome also cites the testimony of Vopiscus and Lucian to the same effect, and continues:—

When we take into consideration the foregoing elements of Roman life—the exclusively rhetorical education and the craze for it which pervaded Roman society, the generally loose ideas as to veracity and the blindness to contradictions, the lax views as to the duties and obligations of the historian, the hypothesis suggests itself that the *Annals* of Tacitus, who was a skilled orator devoted to rhetoric from his youth, may be an example of historical writing done according to the method of the rhetoricians, and that this is the true explanation of those disharmonies between fact and generalization which we have noted. (pp. 365-366.)

“But why,” it will be asked, “did Tacitus traduce the character of Tiberius with such savage vindictiveness; and in the face of all the evidence to the contrary?” The answer is that Tacitus was the mouthpiece of the old aristocracy, who had been displaced and deprived of their power by the advent of the Cæsars and the overthrow of the Republic. In the eyes of this small but influential class, who practically controlled the literary sources from which our historical information is derived, the emperors were tyrants, whether they governed well or badly; therefore, their good actions must be represented as inspired by bad or selfish motives. If there were no bad actions recorded, then they must be invented, and this is exactly the policy that Tacitus has pursued.

All the vileness Tacitus has attributed to Tiberius he has placed towards the end of his life; after he had retired to the little island of Capri to live in privacy after the toil and cares of a well-spent life, and where his actions could not have been known, still less his private conversations and inmost thoughts, as Tacitus pretends to give them.

Is it likely that an old man of sixty, who had hitherto led an austere and virtuous life, would suddenly give way to a life of hideous debauchery such as Tacitus pictures? It is incredible. Tacitus seized upon the period of the emperor's seclusion, when his actions were no longer visible to the public eye, to put forth his poisonous narrative, and this after the emperor was dead and unable to reply.

The late Mr. Jerome—who died before his book was published—was one of a school of American students who are doing good work in investigating the authenticity and trustworthiness of the historical records of these early ages. Another work of this school, just published, deals with the same period from another standpoint, that of ecclesiastical history. It is entitled *Essays in Early Christian History*, by Professor E. T. Merrill, Professor of Latin in Chicago University, who arrives at precisely the same conclusion regarding the character of Tacitus as does Mr. Jerome. He says:—

Tacitus was the last man in the world to consider it the proper function of a historian to preserve strict neutrality, though he should deal honestly. History

was to him an instrument of moral purpose. He was the passionate partisan of an idea. The animus of the *Annals* is plain and unconcealed. To the mind of the author the inauguration of the principate was the deliberate strangling of popular liberty. The successive Cæsars from Augustus to Nero were the assassins of the old commonwealth. And with the manner of a Roman counsel for the prosecution he virulently assailed not merely their public acts, but their private morals, and grasped at every item that could increase the burden of obloquy that he heaped upon their tombs. For the sake of the effect upon his basic proposition, about the truth of which he was most sincerely convinced, the characters of the tyrants must be painted as black as possible. His manifest exaggerations are not peculiar to himself; they are rather characteristic of Roman forensic rhetoric in general, and of the understood function of a Roman advocate. (E. T. Merrill, *Essays in Early Christian History*, pp. 94-95.)

It is now generally recognized that, as regards the characters of the Roman emperors, Tacitus is not to be trusted, and that his statements are malignant and poisonous libels. Over thirty years ago, in his “Introduction” to an edition of the *Annals* of Tacitus, published in 1890, Arthur Galton observes that in dealing with Tiberius, Tacitus “leans with all his weight upon the bad; and either explains away what is favourable, or passes over it with too light a stroke.” He is at first puzzled by the inconsistencies of the character of Tiberius as depicted by Tacitus, and speaks of it as a “mystery,” but he goes on to say that when he became familiar with the work there grew a vision of something different: “a new Tiberius is created within our minds”; a new portrait emerges:—

Then it dawns upon us, that, after all, Tacitus was not really an intimate at Capri; that he never received the secret confidences of Tiberius, nor attended upon his diversions. And at last it is borne in upon us, as we read, that, if we put aside rumours and uncertain gossip, whatever Tiberius does and says is unusually fine; but that Tacitus is not satisfied with recording words and actions; that he supplies motives to them, and then passes judgment upon his own assumptions.

He goes on to describe how really fine a character Tiberius was; equal in virtue and wisdom to the best of the Roman emperors.

With his conviction of this glaring distortion of facts, disappears all the credit of Tacitus as a trustworthy historian. Probably his equally black picture of Nero is quite as unjust and dishonest. We should also remember that these old historians liked to paint a good picture: to make the dark very black, and the light very white. To produce, as Cotter Morrison says, “grand outlines and rich tints.” Moreover, they knew that human nature is more interested in scandal and the proceedings of the wicked—even as it is to-day—than in the doings of the righteous, and they provided accordingly. The supposed depravity of Pagan times is a myth which Christians have exploited to the service of their religion; human nature was the same then as it is now, neither better nor worse. Certainly the times were more civilized; the people happier and better provided for than at any period of the Middle Ages—the ages of Christian Faith which followed the collapse of the Roman Empire.

W. MANN.

It is always puzzling to the outsider that fear of almost every new idea seems to dominate the minds of those who preach that “Perfect Love casteth out Fear.”—*Scott Curfew, “New Age.”*

## Letter to Aunt Muriel.

### VI.

"WOULD you do away with the Christian religion?"

Do away with the Christian religion, Aunt?—with the biggest fund of laughter on earth? The Lord prevent!—if he's anywhere about. Think! All those institutions and functions of solemn stupidity, all those rogues and noodles, gone! "It's past the size of dreaming."

A year or two before the war, Professor Hope Moulton was speaking here on unbelief. He was courtesy itself to Agnostics; commended "a reverent Agnosticism." "Why 'reverent'?" I muttered. "I suppose he means we shall be tolerated if we don't laugh." But what if we cannot look reverent, Aunt? Who can repress a titter when that blessed pigeon comes waddling out? "Let me laugh, or I shall die!" cries the servant-girl in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, when M. Jourdain appears in that impressive costume. Confronted by the Church, with her mysteries—the pigeon, and other impressive things—your heretic cries, like Molière's servant-girl: "Let me laugh, or I shall die!"

It is not the only justification for laughter that it gives relief. It spreads the light. One may reason with a bigot till one is weary, while a profane joke may be his salvation.

One recalls that Professor Moulton was on the Committee of Revision of the Bible, and that in the version which this Committee has given us, a certain passage is altered. In the thirty-third chapter of Exodus it is recorded that Moses asks to see the Lord's face, and the Lord, in lieu of his face, promises that Moses shall see his back parts. (The word in the Hebrew is more gross, but as the "authorized" version formerly stood, one got an inkling of the original.) What has this Committee of Revision done?—these honest Protestants! Thinking to cloak certain parts that are not now exhibited in company, either by gods or mortals, they have substituted for those same "parts" the Lord's "back." First, they tell us the Bible is inspired; then, garbling the text, they attempt to curtain this inspired, this unmatchable piece of humour: the Lord laughing the broadest hee-haw in the face of the faithful, and the faithful held in reverence and wonder!

Not long ago, Aunt, in one of the Catholic churches here, I was witness of the officiating priest laughing thus in the face of the congregation. "You come here," he said, "to save your souls; and you do what we tell you"—and the right corner of his mouth came down to keep back the mirth that nearly boiled over—"and you put a penny in the plate." A second time, the same evening, while reproving the congregation for their parsimony, he patted them on the cheek for their obedience, and again that corner of his mouth came down to repress his amusement. The following day I said to one of the faithful: "Did you notice last night that Father Duffy's mouth came down at one corner when he said: 'You come here, and you do what we tell you'?" "Yes!" he said. "It occurred twice?" "Yes!" "Don't you think he was laughing at you?" "Well, it looked like it," he answered.

If the priests, from Moses' time on, can laugh thus in the faces of the faithful, and yet lead them by the nose, what wonder that burning the heretic at the stake was the commonest amusement while the Church was in her hey-day? That heretic cleric of Oxford, in his book, *Christian Freedom*,<sup>1</sup> says: "One cannot

say if Rome would still burn if she had the power. She might not." A grave innuendo that it is more than likely that she would!

I was reading a few days since, Aunt, Voltaire's *Histoire de Jenni*. ("The laughing Sage of France," as Wordsworth calls him, was 81 when he wrote it.) Johnny was a volunteer in the English army at the siege of Barcelona in 1705. At the assault on Mont Joui, prior to the capture of the town, he is wounded and taken prisoner by the Spaniards. The events hereabout are narrated by one of the Catalan women, Doña Las Nalgas.

When they told us (she says) that the same savages who had come through the air from an unknown island to take Gibraltar were coming to besiege our beautiful town of Barcelona, we began making some novenas to the Holy Virgin of Manresa; which is assuredly the best way of defending ourselves.

The people who came to attack us are called by a name which it is difficult to pronounce: it is *English*. Our Reverend Father Inquisitor, Don Caracucarador, preached in the cathedral against these brigands. He assured us that the English had tails like monkeys, paws like bears, and heads like parrots; that it was true they sometimes talked like men, but that nearly always they whistled; that, moreover, they were notorious heretics; that the Holy Virgin, who is very gracious to other sinners, of both sexes, never pardoned heretics, and that consequently they would be all infallibly exterminated, especially if they presented themselves before Mont Joui. Scarcely had he finished his sermon before we learned that Mont Joui was captured.

That evening it is reported that a young Englishman has been taken prisoner; and Doña Boca Vermeja, the mistress of the Reverend Father Inquisitor, and intimate friend of Doña Las Nalgas, is seized with the desire to see how an animal, both English and heretic, is made. Johnny, later, recovered from his wounds, is taking the baths at the establishment of a surgeon, a relation of Doña Las Nalgas, and matters are soon arranged. The ladies, hidden in a wardrobe, see the young Englishman as he leaves the water; the face of Adonis, the frame of a young Hercules, and the symmetry of Apollo. The softer flame lights up the ladies' eyes. "Holy Virgin!" cries Doña Boca Vermeja, "is it thus heretics are made? Ha! how they have deceived us!" The ladies stay as late as they dare. Doña Las Nalgas proceeds in her narration:—

Boca Vermeja was soon smitten with the most violent love for the heretic monster. She is more beautiful than me, I confess; and I confess, too, that I felt doubly jealous. I put it to her that she was damning herself in playing false to the Reverend Father Inquisitor for an English. "Ah! my dear Las Nalgas," said she, "I would play false to Melchizedek for this delightful young man." She was as good as her word; and, since one must tell all, I gave secretly more than the title of the offerings.

One of the familiars of the Inquisition was told of our acts of devotion. The Reverend Father Don Caracucarador gave us both a whipping. He had our dear English seized and confined in a cold vault. He was destined to be burned the following Sunday in ceremony, ornamented with a big san-benito and a sugar-loaf bonnet, in honour of the Saviour and of the Virgin Mary, his mother. Don Caracucarador prepared a beautiful sermon; but he was prevented delivering it, for the same Sunday the town was taken at four o'clock in the morning.

To-day, Aunt, your parson wears a face of apprehension and apology. In Spain, in the eighteenth century, his antitype played the despot. But one policy throughout: to hoodwink the simple; to impress them with the ecclesiastical importance. It avails nothing, Aunt, to say that a few honest men get into the profession by mistake. Give the silly dogmatist

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Freedom*, by F. E. Hutchinson, M.A., Oxford; Hulsean Lecturer in Theology, Cambridge.

in that pulpit the power, he would do after the manner of the Reverend Father Caracucarador, who, for the greater glory of God and the greater amusement of the faithful, dressed up the heretic like a clown before burning him; and in private put the insubordinate ladies across the whipping-stool. How droll! How it tickled Voltaire! Do away with religion, Aunt? Why, except royalty, there would be left nothing seriously worth laughing at. *Il faut qu'on change le menu.*

H. BARBER.

## Acid Drops.

A meeting of members of Parliament was recently held to consider the best means of supporting the demand for the Sunday opening of Wembley. Mr. Gavan Duffy said:—

If it were possible to cater for 100,000 people at Wembley last Sunday, it should be possible to do that every Sunday. To make this possible, a Bill amending the Lord's Day Observance Act would be necessary. I am sure that such a measure would receive considerable Labour support.....I am convinced that if the Wembley Exhibition were open on Sundays there would be a great increase in the number of working-class visitors from the provinces. They could travel to London on Saturday, see the Exhibition on Sunday, and be back at work on Monday, thus losing no wages—a material consideration in these hard times.

We think Mr. Gavan Duffy is right when he declares that there would be considerable Labour support for the opening of Wembley on Sundays. The vast majority of working-class people are certainly not Sabbatarians—indeed, the majority are not even Christian. Having, therefore, no sectarian axe to grind in keeping the exhibition closed on Sundays, they are naturally inclined to go to Wembley on a Sunday, the one day of the week which they have entirely free. Viewed merely from the standpoint of immediate political advantage for the Labour Party, it would, we believe, be advisable for that party to advance the interests of the majority of that class to which they look for their chief support, rather than seek to humour small and bigoted sections, who will, on any fundamental question, always place sectarian interests before the interests of the Labour Party. Judging by the correspondence columns of the official Labour daily, there is a good deal of discontent among the rank and file of the party because of the sacrifices that the leaders are making on the altar of convention. Mr. MacDonald and his colleagues may gain the half-hearted approval of sections of the Free Churches by talking about the glories of the old Scotch Sabbath, and the need for religion in politics, but they will lose prestige immensely with the intelligent and honest rank and file of their party if they not merely talk this kind of Christianity, but put it into action as well. The Churches want the exhibition closed on Sundays; the people want it to open. The choice is perfectly clear. The Labour Government must either give effect to the desires of the electorate upon which they depend for support in the next general election, or bow to the will of organized bigotry.

By 600 votes to 16 the congregation of St. Cuthbert's Church, Pitsmoor, Sheffield, have decided to accept the ministrations of a coloured priest for two years. The priest is Father Basil, one of the Cowley Fathers. He is going out to work in Colombo, but it was thought advisable that first he should have experience in an English parish. Father Paul Bull, head of Cowley Fathers, offered him to St. Cuthbert's, and the vicar, the Rev. A. E. Farrow, thought that as Father Basil is coloured (he is a native of Ceylon), the congregation should be allowed to ballot before his assistance was accepted. It will also be necessary for the Bishop of Sheffield to give his consent. The fact that such an incident as this is considered worthy of considerable space in the daily press, is a scathing indictment of Christian-

ity. If, as in sentimental periods, its supporters claim, Christianity makes for real brotherhood and internationalism, a coloured curate would not be a subject of lengthy consideration and comment.

Bishop Bury, Anglican Bishop for North and Central Europe, which, by the way, is a somewhat large diocese, says: "The idea that Russia was ruled by a tyranny in the days of the Tsar, was untrue." The Bishop knows as little of Russian history as he knows of the New Jerusalem he preaches of so eloquently.

The Men's Brotherhood of the Heberon Free Methodist Church, Bristol, has been deprived of the services of its founder, Arthur Cornish Hain. He has been sentenced to nine months imprisonment for forging banknotes. He will attend religious services regularly while enjoying the hospitality of the State.

We are glad to see that a critic of Mr. Eden Phillpotts' book, *Thoughts in Prose and Verse*, emphasizes the author's wholehearted rationalism and disbelief in the supernatural. What Mr. Phillpotts rejects, has brought knighthoods to novelists who regard the human race as a collection of Peter Pans.

An interesting study on a wet afternoon is the use of a preacher's vocabulary. It is one long glorious stream of empty assertions. Mounting the pulpit in the *Daily News*, Dr. T. R. Glover states: "God gives you children with stomachs and heads, both for you to fill." This, from a Cambridge precisian who boasts of his strict attention to logic. In any other walk of life this kind of reasoning would lead a man to a home for the feeble-minded.

A business man writing in the *Daily Mail* expresses a doubt that the Church is failing in its mission. A study of the lists of wills in that paper should convince anyone that this is not the case. There are plums for the lucky servants of the Lord, and there are husks for the unlucky ones—in just the same way as these things fall out in business life. When what the Church says and what the Church does is separated, anyone would be silly in treating the subject seriously.

Thus writes "Ezra" in the *Methodist Recorder*:—

Scores of times—I am not exaggerating—has it been reported to me that doctors have spoken in this way to patients: "Now you must be careful, very careful, of the atmosphere into which you go. Never go out in the night air. Avoid crowds and don't go to church." "But, doctor," the patients have said, "must I never go out at nights? May I not go to the theatre occasionally?" "By all means. It will do you a power of good and lift you out of yourself." Is there, I wonder, a something about night air breathed going to church and in church that makes it more harmful than night air breathed going theatrewards and in a crowded theatre? Why is a crowd in a church certain to have malign effects upon delicate people who join it, whilst it is nothing but beneficial to join a crowd in a place of entertainment. I have asked my own medical man for answers to these questions, and only been rewarded by a prodigious wink.

There seem to be only two possible answers. Either doctors are aware that the average church-goer is not sorry to have an excuse for staying away from divine service, and seek popularity by providing their patients with that excuse; or else they consider that the psychological effects of a Christian service are detrimental. Whichever be the right answer, it is scarcely complimentary to Christianity. But doctors, because of the nature of their profession, are in the habit of facing facts.

Miss Emily Bishop, of Chatham, who is only nineteen years of age, is a minister in the Primitive Methodist Church. In a photograph she is seen writing her first sermon. This stirs up many questions. Is the preaching

profession so easy that women can manage it? Or is it so difficult that only a few women can hand out the saving medicine? Or, again, is the profession heading for dilution. These and many more searching questions almost bring the subject up to the level of Florrie Forde's latest song. Does spearmint lose its flavour on the bedpost overnight?

Mr. James Brown, M.P., the Lord High Commissioner of the Church of Scotland, and Mrs. Brown recently entertained 400 Ayrshire miners and their wives to an "at home" in Holyrood Palace. Mr. and Mrs. Brown were each presented with a Bible from the Ayrshire Miners' Union. People might wonder, said the Lord High Commissioner, at the miners presenting him with a Bible; but he wanted it known that the country had nothing to fear from Labour. We fancy that a great many of the supporters of the Labour Party will scarcely consider this a tactful remark. When one contemplates the actions of the various Christian sects in the past, and realizes that organized religion is the historic foe of progress and liberty, one is surely more inclined to seek a guarantee that the country has nothing to fear from Christianity, than from a political organization which professes democratic principles. It is, we repeat, scarcely tactful.

The Commission appointed by the Church Assembly to enquire into the property and revenue of the Church, has issued its report. The total income of the Church, including the funds of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners of the capitular bodies of the cathedrals, and Queen Anne's bounty, is £7,221,000. To that sum must be added varying amounts contributed by such bodies as the Additional Curates Society, the Curates Augmentation Fund, the Queen Victoria Clergy Fund, and the Church Pastoral Aid Society, totalling something over £100,000. The religion of the humble carpenter, who subsisted upon charity, has become a decidedly expensive item in national expenditure in these latter days. Over seven million pounds spent on the teaching of a supernatural system which nobody believes in with any great conviction! Spent on education or scientific research, what might not be the beneficial results that would accrue to the whole of society?

We see that "Woodbine Willie" (Rev. Studdart Kennedy), with that charming vulgarity which only a priest of God may indulge in, has announced once again that Atheism is not a creed, but a nervous complaint. Furthermore, "loving you neighbour as yourself was a lot of cant." "The 'boozer,' for instance, showed his love by asking his friends to have a drink." As an afterthought, perhaps, Willie declared that "humanity at present was a rotten dirty show. There were too many 'blinking' mix-ups in it." One scarcely knows which to admire most, the man's delightful diction, or his ethical teaching.

A pilgrimage to Lourdes, promoted by the Society of Our Lady of Lourdes, has left London. Some 200 sick, including 67 carrying cases, are being taken to the shrine, and the other pilgrims will daily pray for the cure of these. One's pity for the unfortunates who are naturally ready to snatch eagerly at any chance of recovery, is mixed with a hearty contempt for organized religion which thrives by exploiting such sentiments.

Apparently it is not only the Church of England which is deciding that it must take a lively interest in political and social movements if it is to retain any vitality. According to the Rosta Agency, the Patriarch Tikhon has addressed to the clergy and faithful a message concerning reconciliation with the head of the "living Church." The Patriarch recommends the election "not only of priests adhering to the canonical principles of 1917 Assembly, but of those belonging to the revolutionary group of the 'living Church.'" This group is a section

of the Greek Orthodox Church which supports Bolshevism.

An American bishop, Bishop Birney, is home from China and is very wroth with Bertrand Russell. He says the youth movement in China includes a group which is assailing the Bible, and Bertrand Russell has lent his aid to this anti-Christian group by appearing and speaking at their meetings." We are glad to have this confession that the educated youth of China are against the Bible and Christianity. Usually at missionary meetings those present are told of the hunger of the Chinese for the Bible. Residents in China know it is all a lie, but it does for missionary supporters. After all, the Chinese have far too much genuine civilization to be taken in by the barbarities of the Christian's Bible.

The Bishop of Exeter has made a discovery! It is true that most thoughtful people made that same discovery a long time ago. He finds, concerning the majority of sermons, that "everything said is perfectly safe. It has been said before a thousand times—the preacher is preaching, not because he has anything to say, but because he must preach." As a result, "the boys play games in the corner, the girls have giggled confidences with one another, the farmer considers how he will sell his stock in the market, the squire thinks of his next shooting party, the choirboys turn over their chants, and the preacher is glued to a manuscript which means nothing to those who are listening to him." But we do not believe this state of things is new. So far as one can form an opinion it has always been the case to a greater or smaller degree. People do not go to church because they are interested in what is being said, but because it is a formality and they do not care to be different from their neighbours.

Mr. Leach pointed out in Parliament that an invading force of aeroplanes could appear over this country at the actual moment of the declaration of war. We add that an English force could do the same thing; and in the face of this mighty last word on war, we can still see Bishops fooling round the unveiling of war memorials, and General French reiterating the Kipling slogan of "be prepared" to school children. Prepared for what? The civilian population can only run down holes like rabbits—if they are not gassed before they get there—and it is in vain to expect Bishops or Generals to point the way out.

Mr. Basil Matthews, in his book *The Clash of Colours*, gives us a picture of a football match in which the following nationalities took part: a negro from Egypt, a Turk, an Armenian, a Syrian Christian, a Greek, a Persian and a Copt. The trainer was an Irishman, and the Principal came from America. The game took place at Reirut on the sports field of a Syrian college. Dean Inge when not joining the most vulgar of journalists, can only stammer about "our children," meaning the children of the classes—and his paymasters.

In *John Bull*, which appears to be the trade union organ of curates, the Bishop of Canterbury is put in the dock by a writer, Mr. Harrison Owen. His Lordship is made to plead "not guilty" of being managing-director of an organization employing sweated labour; and in the summing-up it is suggested that instead of the letters D.D. after their names, many Doctors of Divinity might more appropriately place the letters L.S.D. At this rate of progress *John Bull* may overtake the *Freethinker* in another hundred years, when it may ask if what the Bishop of Canterbury stands for is really necessary for the bodily health of any nation. The Bishop of Canterbury and all his tribe are the Will Wimbles of history.

Mr. Marconi does not share Mr. Deins Bradley's views on Spiritualism. Perhaps this is an example of the head and heart conflict in another form.



## To Correspondents.

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

J. BRYCE.—Received, and shall appear as early as possible.  
SINE CERE.—Mr. Cohen lectured several times in Blackburn much later than the dates named on the card you send. A file of the *Freethinker* would show the exact dates.

J. CHAPPLE.—We have not yet had time to read the pamphlets you are good enough to send, but will do so as soon as possible. You must do some good in raising the correct issue at public discussions; and the fact that there is some one in the audience "taking notes," and with the intention of using them, will teach some of these people to be more cautious in their language. Such expressions as "the Divine Will" are quite out of place in a scientific address; and if the address were delivered before a critical scientific audience, we question whether they would be used. They are mainly intended for popular consumption, and provide an example of trading on the presumed ignorance of the audience.

MR. H. ORGAN writes that he is willing to send a copy of the reprint of Grant Allen's *Idea of God* to the reader who was enquiring about it several weeks ago. If he still requires it, he will perhaps forward his name and address to this office.

A. W. COLEMAN.—MSS. received, and shall appear as soon as possible. We are pleased to have your appreciation of Miss Rout's articles. She will be bringing the present series to a close next week, but may write again later.

D. EAGLE.—Pleased to welcome a newcomer into the movement, and also to learn that you appreciated Mr. Whitehead's lectures.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference meets to-day (June 8) at Preston. There will be business meetings at 10.30 and 2.30, to which members only are admitted. Between the morning and afternoon sessions a luncheon will be served to delegates and friends at the Victoria and Station Hotel, price 3s. 6d. In the evening a public meeting will be held in the Star Cinema Theatre, Corporation Street. The President will take the chair at 7 o'clock prompt, and the speakers will include Messrs. J. T. Lloyd, A. B. Moss, R. H. Rosetti, E. P. Corrigan, E. Clifford Williams, and G. Whitehead. This will be a capital opportunity for Freethinkers to bring their Christian friends; and in such a stronghold of

Roman Catholicism as Preston, there should be a good attendance. We are also hoping to have a record number of Freethinkers at the Business Meetings. Liverpool, Leeds, Manchester, etc., are not at so great distances as to prevent many coming who would care to be there. The Preston Branch is a new one, and the members are, we believe, working hard to make the Conference a thorough success. We hope their work will meet with its due reward.

The Pioneer Press has just secured a limited number of remainder copies of two books which most Freethinkers will wish to have in their possession. The first is *Body and Will*, by Dr. Henry Maudsley. Dr. Maudsley was a practising physician and a careful philosophic thinker. The sub-title of his work is, "An essay concerning Will in its metaphysical, physiological, and Pathological aspects. We remember the delight with which we read the book many years ago, and have no hesitation in commending it to our readers. *Body and Will* was published at 12s. 6d. It is now offered at 4s. 6d., postage 6d. extra.

The second book is also one we can recommend with confidence to those interested in the new psychology and in psycho-analysis. This is *Abnormal Psychology*, by Dr. Isador Coriat. It is a plain and easy outline of a very great subject, and written by one who has had a very extensive experience in the class of cases about which he writes and uses to illustrate his subject. The work was published at 10s. 6d., and is being sold at 4s. 6d., postage 5d. extra. As we have said, there are only a limited number of each work available, and those who wish to have them should write at once.

From a few lines in the *Times* of May 31, we see that Bishop William Montgomery Brown has been solemnly tried by the Church of which he was a member and adjudged a heretic, and so will be formally deprived of his office. As Bishop Brown has not officiated for some years, and as his conviction as a heretic is no more than the recorded opinion of a number of intellectual "mug-wumps," we do not suppose that the verdict will rob Bishop Brown of a single night's sleep. We fancy that the main difference between Mr. Brown and many of those who continue to officiate in the Church is that he has said openly what very many of them believe. But the Christian Church in the whole of its history never punished anyone for being a hypocrite or for not using his brains to examine the veracity of Christian doctrines. The offences were always the other way round. No man has ever been expelled from the Church for not thinking enough; very many have been cast out for thinking too much. Bishop Brown thus joins a very distinguished and very honourable company.

A reviewer of A. E. J. Rawlinson's book, *Authority and Freedom*, with that liberality of a man who when alighting gives his seat in a 'bus to another, is very frank. "For, when all is said and done," he writes, "the whole fabric of Protestantism rested upon a belief in the infallibility of a collection of ancient writings." He uses the past tense, and we agree. It now rests on the journalism of Dean Inge, mystery plays in Church, and the scramble to be first in exhibitions like that at Wembley. The impregnable rock of Holy Scripture is a floating island.

"Religion," says a writer in the *Detroit Free Press*, "sometimes reminds one of the shell of a seven-year-old locust, which looks very much like a locust although the locust isn't in it any more." The comparison is apt and to the point.

"Whatever the countryside may be in need of, it is not churches," says a writer in *The Nation*. In the City of London itself, according to an ecclesiastical report, there are no less than nineteen derelict churches. These two things point to a slump in the Government religion.

## Freethought on Sex Problems.

### IV.

(Continued from page 343.)

THE cultivation of venereal disease is the most nefarious of the Church's sexual activities. Long ago a pious mother wrote thus to a schoolmistress who attempted to teach the physiology of the digestive functions: "Don't teach my Mary nothing about her inside; it ain't necessary; and, besides, it's rude." Precisely the same attitude of mind is adopted to-day by many of the natives of the religious world in regard to instruction in the management and care of the reproductive functions.

Unfortunately this attitude is silently acquiesced in by many of those whose minds are actually free from religious perversions. Freethinkers should shake off such inertia and refuse to allow their own mental processes to be retarded by cowardly nonsense founded on the worship of dirt as an aid to virtue. Sex hygiene and even self-disinfection, after all, amount to nothing more than sexual cleanliness. Such cleanliness is naturally abhorrent to the Christian mind, which despises the vile body as mere food for worms. He-Christians, and more especially She-Christians, genuinely believe that venereal disease prevents sin, and that cleanliness prevents godliness. Were it not for the fear of venereal disease in the mind of the young man and the fear of impregnation in the mind of the young woman, morality, they think, would vanish; there would be nothing but promiscuity. Hence, young people must never be taught to cleanse and disinfect themselves no matter what foolish risks they may have run, but rather disease and impregnation must be retained as a material Hell into which to drop offenders against the social code. And this argument is supported by a surmise—quite inaccurate—that the more adults know about prophylaxis, the more likely they will be to seek opportunities of risking the health they have been taught the importance and difficulty of preserving!

Of course, it is admitted frankly by every thoughtful person that casual sex relationship, undertaken lightly and irresponsibly with strangers, is a bad thing for the individual and a bad thing for society. Whenever a man or a woman indulge in loveless relationship, humanity loses something very, very precious—romantic honour. It is a wilful waste of love and happiness. But give healthy humanity a fair chance, and neither man nor woman would be silly and stupid enough to bother about a relationship that was without ardour, desire, mutual joy, reciprocity, sex attraction—without any of the things that go to make a contented mind in a satisfied body. The trouble is that now there is a disharmony between the sexual needs of mankind and the economic conditions of society; and every day Love is being sacrificed on the altar of Poverty. These lovers cannot "afford" to marry, we say. Really what we should say is, society cannot "afford" to let them not marry.

None knows this better than the Church—particularly the Church which is now neither Holy nor Roman, but still calls itself both. At the confessional boxes the priests all over the world are made the repositories of a unique knowledge of the private and personal feelings and actions of millions of modern men and women. Instead of using all this knowledge for the benefit of humanity, for the improvement of the present state of affairs, the priests almost invariably misuse it for the purpose of tormenting humanity, misleading them, inflicting mental and moral blindness on young minds, cultivating disease by the denial of what is really life-saving information, knowing full well that not only those who err, but those who are

innocent, are hourly being devastated by these horrible scourges.

What is the most pitiful object in the world? Surely a wee new-born baby blinded from birth. But it is not natural for babies to be born blind. Actually in many, many cases their little eyes are perfectly formed, but in coming down the mother's passage—just that few inches from the womb to the world—the baby's eyes became smeared with the inflammatory poison of gonorrhœa, contracted by the mother from the child's father, and contracted needlessly by the father, perhaps long years before his marriage, just because he had been refused the knowledge of how to be clean.

Oh, yes, maybe he was immoral. But because a man is immoral that is no reason why he and his wife and his baby should all be poisoned. The punishment doesn't fit the crime; and, anyhow, it hits innocent and guilty alike. The fact is that there is no necessary connection at all between immorality and disease. The disease is an accident comparatively easily avoidable. Adults should be definitely taught, first of all, not to be mad enough to risk their health; and second, having risked it, to take instant precautions. These are really quite simple. The microbes of venereal disease grow almost exclusively in the genital passages of men and women and are transferred from one sex to the other in an endless chain—but the chain can be broken at any time by the application of suitable disinfectants. Self-disinfection for men, indeed, is so very simple and easy that any fool can be taught to keep himself clean. The fact that the young adult male is not so taught is the fault of—Freethinkers? No; of Christians, who insist on relying upon moral measures for the prevention of a material disease.

For the moment, let that go, and come back to the blind baby. Its eyes have been perfectly formed to behold all the wonder and beauty of nature. In transit they become smeared with poison germs. If, as a matter of routine, every baby's eyes were disinfected instantly by the doctor or nurse, thousands of so-called blind babies would have had their eyesight saved for life. Why is this not done? Speaking at a Health Conference at Wembley on May 24, in regard to amendments to the public health laws, Miss Margaret Bondfield, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, said that a large percentage of blindness cases could be prevented by special precaution at childbirth and in early infancy. Quite so. In Chicago in the year 1922 not one single baby was blinded as a result of gonorrhœal infection at birth. The baby's eyes are simply washed with a solution of silver-nitrate, and the microbes, if there, are instantly killed.

But if such "special precaution" kills the germs in the eye, naturally it will kill the germs on other and less tender parts of the body. Are the "good" people afraid of proving that disinfectants do really disinfect? And if this "special precaution" does prevent infantile blindness, shall we content ourselves with appealing for more Sunshine Homes for Blind Babies, or shall we try to have fewer blind babies? If Miss Margaret Bondfield and this semi-Christian, demi-semi-Labour Government is really in earnest in trying to secure the welfare of The People, why not begin by making it compulsory for doctors and nurses to disinfect every baby's eyes at birth, and imprisoning every doctor and every nurse who wilfully or negligently inflicts so cruel a deprivation as blindness on so helpless and innocent a creature as a new-born babe?

Let us be done with all this drivel about the sins of the fathers descending upon the children to the third and fourth generation. Science tells us definitely there is no necessity for this at all. Certain forms of disease are hereditary or congenital certainly. But adults

suffering from such diseases should be rendered infertile; or the children should, where possible, be protected. But so long as humanity is refused the knowledge of preventing disease and preventing fertility, the problem is insoluble.

And ordinary humanity should be taught the essential difference between the specific sexual diseases of syphilis and gonorrhœa as regards offspring. With gonorrhœa, ultimately the mother in most cases becomes sterile; so that if her babies are protected at birth the disease in her body dies with herself. Taken in time, the disease *may* be cured in women, but the cure is much less certain and the treatment much more prolonged than the advocates of preaching and treating will tell the public. With syphilis, the mother may give birth to idiots, imbeciles, cripples, and deformed children; and she is almost bound to have stillborn babies and miscarriages over a long period of years; and as a result of parental syphilis, we have mental and moral deficiency in the offspring. Hence, there are necessarily many prostitutes among the offspring of syphilitic parents. The prostitutes in turn contract fresh infections and spread them broadcast, and so the vicious circle continues. In breaking it, contraception, prophylaxis, and sterilization are obviously essential—these three things at least; and, if possible, segregation of incorrigibly promiscuous persons as well.

Further, humanity should be taught that the syphilitic woman is doubly dangerous to society. If a woman marries a syphilitic man and he infects her, his offspring may be syphilitic. Naturally one would expect that. But, in spite of the fact that the woman herself has had treatment and has apparently been "cured," if her first husband dies, and she marries a second perfectly healthy man, nevertheless his offspring by herself may also be syphilitic. Apparently the poison lies latent in the woman's body, not affecting her health, not making her contagious to her second husband, but striking at and maiming the innocent offspring of an innocent man.

The doctors know this; the clergy know this; the Health Departments know this. And yet the Ministry of Health refuses to teach self-disinfection at the Venereal Clinics; refuses to aid in giving women advice on contraception at Welfare Centres; threatens to withdraw Government grants from any hospital or other institution which in the name of humanity would share with humanity the Knowledge of Sexual Cleanliness and Control which a few of us are lucky enough to have scraped up for ourselves; and whenever we try to pass on this knowledge, we are accused of corrupting the youth of the nation, encouraging immorality among men, making vice safe, and filling the people's heads with "ideas"! Fearful things, ideas—as if anybody didn't know they were explosive! Why, they might suddenly go off and put an end to the Twin Gods—Joss and Tabu. They might even lead us to think more about the Age of Reason and worry less about the Age of Consent.

Writing in the *London Observer*, on April 6, 1924, on the "Use and Abuse of Science—Influences for Good and Evil," Sir Oliver Lodge said:—

The microbes of disease may be fought and conquered; but, on the other hand, they may be cultivated and planted; just as gardeners, instead of eradicating weeds, might cultivate them and sow them broadcast, either in disputes with their employers or to avenge themselves on their neighbours. The wickedness of this is so obvious that, as far as I know, it has not been done; but the far greater wickedness of trying to sow disease microbes in other human beings with whom we have a quarrel has, strange to say, not been regarded as too utterly repugnant for attempts to be made in that direction, possibly with more success than we fully realize.

Those who are more concerned with poisoning one

sinner with syphilis than in protecting ninety-and-nine innocent women and children, naturally will not stick at this "far greater wickedness."

ETTIE A. ROUT.

(To be Continued.)

## A Kindly Act.

### I.

It was a windy day in September. Windy as only dwellers on the West Coast and on hills and mountains know it. The gale blew with tremendous force from the south-west. The inhabitants of the higher parts of Wilvham, well up on the slopes of the Wilvham Hills, had plentiful experience of great winds, and treated their occurrence with the indifference born of familiarity, but this particular September storm caused even them surprise and some consternation.

The clouds raced across the sky with astonishing speed, the larger masses continually changing shape and breaking up as the wind tore furiously at them, the smaller fragments sailing across at even greater velocity as if they felt painfully the buffeting of the blast and were seeking escape from it. The air was filled with the pressure of the moving atmosphere; a pressure resembling at times solid matter, taking away the breath of the person whom it met, causing him to stand still and gasp, or lean against the nearest wall for support.

The wind made itself heard as well as felt. It roared over the hilltops and through the valleys, whistled in the grass and bushes, set the trees moving till their combined rustle had a thunderous noise akin to the monstrous rattle of thousands of pebbles on the shore moved by a high tide. Round the houses it howled and moaned, setting every loose door and window jolting and banging. Horses' manes and tails were tossed impudently about, dogs ran for shelter with their tails between their legs, and the wool of the mountain sheep was combed and strained till long streaks of white skin appeared down their flanks as the wind pressed the fleece into patches and masses. Showers of leaves, mostly torn off while yet green, went whirling and eddying along the road, and under every tree was a spread of twigs, boughs, and sometimes big limbs.

Few people ventured outdoors except of necessity. All who could stayed indoors. Walking was not only hard work, tiring, bewildering, and exhausting, but it was positively dangerous. In addition to a constant shower of leaves and brash, large branches and occasionally huge limbs of trees came hurtling and crashing to the ground. During one particularly furious gust a lofty elm tree was uprooted in a field. In a garden a large fowlhouse collapsed, many roofs of sheds and stables were badly damaged, and in some cases entirely stripped off. Boards and sheets of iron were carried long distances. Grit and straws and bits of wood and pieces of paper flew wildly with the snatched-off leaves. Numerous tiles and slates and many chimney-pots came flying off roofs, crashing and splintering into gardens and yards and roadways.

It was the worst storm of wind experienced for many years, the most destructive, yet was in some ways beneficial. It was cleansing and revivifying to the atmosphere, and it thoroughly if ruthlessly pruned the trees and revealed the defects in buildings.

### II.

Twice each day a postman from Wilvham Central Post Office shouldered a great bag of letters and trudged the long, winding two miles of road to Upper Wilvham, where the full force of the gale was most

severely felt. Though much buffeted and wearied, bleared of eyes and tender of skin from the boisterous treatment he had received, the morning postman, Timothy Jones, got back safely, and remarked with great emphasis, "It's the roughest lot I've ever been through delivering!"

He set out again in the afternoon, and found that the fury of the storm had increased. He got his letters delivered, and with an empty bag and feeling lighter of heart now that he had finished, started out on his return journey down the Upper Wilvham Road.

Staggering before the force of the wind Timothy reached West Corner, a great curve in the road overhung by trees on the inside, commanding from the outer side a magnificent view of the landscape. It was the most exposed bit of thoroughfare in the whole of Wilvham, notable alike for its expansive vista and its exposure to the inclemency of the weather. The trees that bordered it, though lofty and massive, were badly shaped and had bowed heads from the continual attacks of the variable climate.

All the roadway of West Corner was well strewn with debris from the trees. As he came round the bend the postman could see approaching him up the road, holding on his hat and with his coat blown round his legs, James Pewkerne, a local builder. At the moment, Timothy Jones could feel but a slight breeze, and was rejoicing that he should get on beyond this tempestuous point comfortably, when with a howl and a "Whoosh!" a mighty gust struck the treetops. There was a loud, cracking, rending noise. Timothy Jones, quickening his pace, instinctively ducked his head and humped his shoulders. Next instant an enormous branch fell on him, bearing him to the ground.

Seeing the catastrophe James Pewkerne ran forward, and after great exertion dragged the postman out from his unfortunate position and across the road. Timothy was unconscious, and bleeding from a cut on the head and numerous scratches about his face and hands. The builder loosened the sufferer's collar, placed him in a comfortable position against the wall, wiped away some of the blood, and examining the man hastily found that apparently no bones were broken, and that he was breathing and the heart beating fairly steadily.

In a few minutes the postman opened his eyes, and tried to smile when the saw his rescuer.

"Hello, Timmy, old lad," shouted Pewkerne cheerfully. "Near shave that! Can you move?"

With the older man's help Jones struggled to his feet, and, supported by the wall and Mr. Pewkerne, stood up. The latter looked up and down the road. No one was in sight. "Do you think you can get to the 'Ewe' with my help?" he asked.

The postman nodded. With painful effort, Tim, leaning heavily on his supporter, and impeded by the violent wind, they reached the "Ewe," a public-house about three hundred yards down the road. Here, willing hands doctored up the postman, and James Pewkerne sent him home in the hostelry's cab, and paid for it.

"Poor fellow," said the builder sympathetically, as he and the landlord watched the cab drive away. "He had a nasty blow. Nearly knocked him silly. But I must get on."

"You be careful, Mr. Pewkerne," said the landlord warningly; "it isn't safe to be out at all."

"I'll take care, never fear," returned Pewkerne quietly; "but I must go up to Wilvham End."

He set off, battling his way stoutly against the gale. Again he reached West Corner, walked on the outside edge of the road, casting one swift glance on the big branch, and murmured pityingly, "poor Timothy."

He passed the tempestuous corner with comparative ease, got clear of the trees and debris, and began to step out briskly to make up for lost time.

Beyond West Corner a steep bank bounded the inside edge of the highway. On top of the bank stood a solitary Scots fir, that had swayed in the wind for generations, whose roots projected from the bank and twisted like convulsed serpents.

Here James Pewkerne was caught by another of the terrific blasts. For the moment he could neither see nor hear, but could only stagger sideways to the wall to rest his breathless and exhausted body. Before he could recover himself sufficiently to move, there was a grinding, tearing noise in the bank, and the great fir tree hurtled down on to the road, its massive spreading head bearing down the wall, and with it the hapless builder. Crushed and twisted amongst branches and masonry the victim lay motionless.

### III.

An hour later some of James Pewkerne's own men, returning from work early because they could make little progress in such weather, found their employer, and carried him down to the "Ewe." He was dead.

Whilst waiting for the doctor to arrive the landlord of the "Ewe" briefly recounted what had happened to the postman.

"Well, I'm blest!" exclaimed Pewkerne's foreman. "Is that so? And Jimmy got killed after doing that kindness! He might still be alive if he hadn't helped Tim Jones." Addressing his mates: "What do you think of it you chaps? It's funny. It don't seem right that a man should lose his life after doing a good turn to another, does it? It beats me!"

The others could only echo his opinions with varying emphasis.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

### THE COMFORT OF SINNING.

Every Saturday we were taken to confession. If someone will tell me why, he would do me a great favour. This practice inspired me with much respect and boredom. I do not believe that the chaplain took a genuine interest in listening to my sins, but having to tell them was disagreeable to me. The first difficulty was finding them. You will, perhaps, believe me if I tell you that at ten years of age I did not possess the psychic qualities and methods of analysis that would permit me rationally to explore my conscience.

However, sins were necessary—no sins, no confession. I possessed, it is true, a little book which contained them all, I had only to choose, but choice was difficult. The sins were so many and so obscure—larceny, simony, prevarication, fornication and concupiscence! I found in this little book: "I am guilty of having dispaired; I am guilty of having listened to bad conversations." This again left me sorely troubled.

This is why, ordinarily, I kept to the chapter of distractions. Distractions in church, distractions during meals, distractions in "les assemblées." I avowed them all, and the deplorable emptiness of my conscience filled me with great shame. Not having sins, I was humiliated.

One day, at last, I thought of Fontanet's cap; I possessed my sin; I was saved! Henceforth, each Saturday I unburdened myself of the weight of Fontanet's cap at the chaplain's feet.

The damage which I did to this cap in the preceding week inspired me during a period of several minutes each Saturday with a lively fear for the safety of my soul. I filled the cap with sand; I threw it into the trees and brought it down as one brings down ripe fruit—by throwing stones; I made a duster of it to wipe chalk off the blackboard; I flung it through a vent-hole into some inaccessible cellars, from where, after school, the ingenious Fontanet retrieved it, a mere sordid rag.—*Anatole France, "Le Livre de Mon Ami."*

In the absence of further evidence one cannot believe that Britain could ever be Christian.—*T. R. Glover, "Daily News."*

## The Way of the World.

### A FALLEN IDOL.

Let us hope that with the publication of this book (*The Truth about my Father*, by his son Leo) the memory of Tolstoy may be allowed to rest, and the world allowed to forget that whatever the attractions his teaching had for the Western world, in his own country it was almost wholly evil in its results. It had no effect upon the peasantry, and it had no effect upon the aristocracy as a body, but it crushed the few remains of independence in the educated classes—the only thing approaching a middle class Russia ever possessed.—*The Saturday Review*, April 26, 1924.

[Tolstoy's teaching was that we were to follow the example of Jesus Christ in everything.]

### PLACE AUX DAMES.

It is notorious that though ladies greatly improve the appearance of a feast, they invariably detract from the quality of the talk. Few men are ever absolutely natural when there are women in the room.—*Sir Conan Doyle*, "Strand Magazine."

### MR. BOJANUS ON LIBERTY.

And sexual freedom, what's that? Mr. Bojanus dramatically enquired. "You and I, Mr. Gumbriel," he answered confidentially, "we know. It's an 'orrible, 'idcous slavery. That's what it is. Or am I wrong, Mr. Gumbriel?"

"Quite right, quite right, Mr. Bojanus," Gumbriel hastened to reply.

"From all of which," continued Mr. Bojanus, it follows that except for a few, a very few people like you and me, Mr. Gumbriel, there's no such thing as liberty. It's an 'oak's, Mr. Gumbriel. An 'orrible plant. And if I may be allowed to say so"—Mr. Bojanus lowered his voice, but still spoke with emphasis—"a bloody swindle."—*Aldous Huxley*, "Antic Hay."

### GOD IN THE GARDEN.

In those days people believed with a simple downright-ness which I do not observe among educated men and women now. It had never so much as crossed Theobald's mind to doubt the literal accuracy of any syllable in the Bible. He had never seen any book in which this was disputed, nor met with anyone who doubted it. True, there was just a little scare about geology, but there was nothing in it. If it was said that God made the world in six days, why He did make it in six days, neither in more nor less; if it was said that He put Adam to sleep, took out one of his ribs and made a woman of it, why, it was so, as a matter of course. He (Adam) went to sleep as it might be himself (Theobald Pontifex), in a garden, as it might be the garden at Crampsford Rectory during the summer months when it was so pretty, only that it was larger, and had some tame wild animals in it. Then God came up to him, as it might be Mr. Allaby or his father, dexterously took out one of his ribs without waking him, and miraculously healed the wound so that no trace of the operation remained. Finally, God had taken the rib perhaps into the greenhouse and had turned it into just such another woman as Christina. That was how it was done; there was neither difficulty nor shadow of difficulty about the matter. Could not God do anything He liked, and had He not in his own inspired Book told us that He had done this? This was the average attitude of fairly educated young men and women towards the Mosaic cosmogony fifty, forty, or even twenty years ago.—*Samuel Butler*, "The Way of all Flesh."

My heart is fixed firm and stable in the belief that ultimately the sunshine and the summer, the flowers and the azure sky, shall become, at it were, interwoven into man's existence.—*Richard Jefferies*, "The Pageant of Summer."

## Correspondence.

### THE BENEFITS OF BROADCASTING.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It has been a regret with the "faithful" that funds have not been sufficient to advertise our movement on a large scale. I believe that the Editor's thoughts still run on similar lines. I was of the same opinion until recently. Funds, of course, we would all like to see roll in without ceasing; but when an organization gets a world-wide advertisement without the aid of funds, that organization will in time become the envy of every advertising manager in existence. The Freethought movement is getting it. Oh! Yes, we're getting it. And the philanthropic society so kindly helping us is the B.B.C.! I have had an idea of this for some time past, when on Sunday evenings I have listened to some of the star turns of the pulpit holding forth from "2I.O." At first, like ninety per cent. of radio "fans," I simply laid aside my 'phones until the storm had blown over. Later, hearing some of the discourse, I learned what a splendid achievement it is to broadcast this "balderdash." I knew how silly the Bishop of London could be; I guessed, from what I've read, that "Woodbine Willie" ran him a close second. I also had a faint idea that the rest of the fraternity were on a par. But just how silly they could succeed in making themselves. I did not realize until I overcame my prejudice and listened to many of them over the wireless.

I became finally convinced whilst listening to the Thanksgiving Service at the Stadium, where the Archbishop of Canterbury spoke of our glorious empire! His £15,000-a-year voice chanting a prayer for the royal family, the sing-song tone, pausing for thousands of voices to come in at the right moment with "Amen," like the chorus of a dull music-hall song; and the *tout ensemble* of the Lord's Prayer, just as it is gabbed over in Council schools, all this made me positive that it could not be taken seriously by right-minded men and women. The atmosphere of church or chapel is one thing; the same idiotic mouthings coming to you in your own surroundings is another.

There are many who are luke-warm in religious matters. "I don't go to church myself, you know; but, of course, it would not do for us all to be alike; and—well, they do good." To this type there is something mysterious in religion, they don't quite know what it is, but it's there. And it is to this type that the "2I.O." comic opera will grant its benefits. If they listen attentively they must find out what a lot of tomfoolery it all is. So I find I must return thanks to the B.B.C. for the fine efforts they are making to help our cause, because no one normal person who listens to the reverend gentleman and his "simple service" can help becoming a Free-thinker.

E. J. DRISCOLL.

### A QUERY.

SIR,—The thrill of pleasure that I experienced on first seeing my name bracketed with the more or less distinguished names of the Bishop of London, Sir O. Lodge, Jos. McCabe and George Bernard Shaw, rapidly gave place to a feeling of uneasy doubt. Was it a compliment or an insult? Was Mr. Reynolds patting my back or pulling my leg? Am I to make him a profound bow, or should I send my seconds to arrange pistols for two and breakfast for one? Mr. Reynolds ought surely to explain.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

"No man ought to make a living by religion. It is dishonest to do so. Religion is not an act that can be performed by proxy. One person cannot act religion for another. Every person must perform it for himself, and all a priest can do is to take it from him.....One good schoolmaster is of more use than a hundred priests."—*Thomas Paine* (written in 1797, after his release from prison with honour and the respect of the French nation).

## Another North London "Mission."

ONCE again it gives me great pleasure to report a very successful week's campaign at Highbury Corner, Islington. In consequence of the success of his recent meetings at this centre, Mr. George Whitehead gave a further series of five lectures from the Monday till the Friday evening to large and appreciative audiences. Although other "orators" were propounding their several views in close proximity to us, the interest shown in our meetings was very gratifying, and the number of listeners increased every evening. This was due to Mr. Whitehead keeping up his lectures to what may be called "concert pitch" all the way through, for an open-air audience is apt to be migratory, and as soon as they see a speaker's "steam pressure" going down, the fickle listener will walk away. A good many questions were asked, but no serious opposition offered. A considerable amount of literature was distributed and sold, and several new members were enrolled. Altogether we had a splendid week's work, and the Branch feels invigorated by the effort. Mr. and Mrs. Lovie, Miss Mostaert, Messrs. Judge, Rolf, Doughty, and Brown rendered good service during the week, and to them the Branch gives its thanks.—LEONARD MASON (*Secretary, Finsbury Park Branch*).

## National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON MAY 29, 1924.

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

Minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed. The Annual Balance Sheet was presented and ordered to be sent out to the Branches. The Executive's Annual Report was discussed and approved.

New members were received from Hull, Manchester, South London, West Ham and the Parent Society.

An application for the formation of a new Branch at Hull was received, and all requirements having been complied with, permission was granted.

It was reported on behalf of the Benevolent Fund Committee that their finances were now exhausted.

Correspondence was received and dealt with from Birmingham and Plymouth Branches; and a contribution of two guineas was made towards the fund being raised for one of the nurses who had so loyally devoted herself to the care of the late F. W. Walsh.

Favourable reports were received of the meetings held in London during May by Mr. G. Whitehead, who is commencing his Provincial tour in Preston on June 1.

It was reported that a cheque for £50 had been received from the Directors of the Secular Society, Ltd.

This being the last meeting of the present Executive, good wishes were expressed for a successful Conference; and the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

## BOOK BARGAINS

- ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY, by ISADOR H. CORIAT. Published at 10s. 6d. Price 4s. 6d., postage 6d.  
 BODY AND WILL, by HENRY MAUDSLEY, M.D. Published at 12s. Price 4s. 6d., postage 6d.  
 THE NON-RELIGION OF THE FUTURE, by MARIA JEAN GUYAU. Price 6s., postage 9d.  
 THE ETHIC OF FREETHOUGHT, by KARL PEARSON, F.R.S. Price 5s. 6d., postage 6d.  
 A CANDID EXAMINATION OF THEISM, by "PHYSICUS" (G. J. ROMANES). Price 3s. 6d., postage 4d.  
 LIFE AND EVOLUTION, by F. W. HEUDLEY. Price 4s. 6d., postage 6d.  
 KAFIR SOCIALISM AND THE DAWN OF INDIVIDUALISM, by DUDLEY KIDD. Price 3s., postage 6d.

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## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON. INDOOR.

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. Joseph McCabe, "H. G. Wells as Prophet."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—No meeting.

### OUTDOOR.

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

FINSBURY PARK.—11.15, Mr. E. Burke, a Lecture.

HIGHBURY CORNER.—A Debate between the Rev. John Pitts and Mr. F. P. Corrigan will take place at Highbury Corner, Islington, N., on Friday evening, June 6, at 8 p.m., on "Is There a God?"

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.—No meeting.

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

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

### COUNTRY.

#### OUTDOOR.

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

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

YOU KNOW that only ardent Freethinkers respond to these advertisements. So do we, and we would count it a crime to give them cause to regret having done so. A moment's reflection along these lines will convince you of the wisdom of asking us to send you one or other of the following: *Gents' AA to H Book, suits from 54s.; Gents' I to N Book, suits from 99s.; or our Ladies' Costume and Fashion Book, costumes from 44s., frocks from 36s.* Address your postcard to-day to: MACCONNELL & MABB, New Street, Bakewell, Derbyshire.

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