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Views and Opinions.

The Question of Authority.

Authority has always played a large part in ordering the lives of men, and particularly in ordering their thinking. In matters of practice men have always moved, in the main, under orders, and those in a position to give orders have seen to it that disagreeable names have been given to such as were likely to disobey. In intellectual affairs the power and influence of authority has been reinforced from two sides. First, it is much easier to take one's opinions ready made than to form them for one's self. Most people are mentally lazy, and the tendency is to take an opinion that is presented and so end difficulties. On the other side, it has clearly been to the interest of established opinion to decry independence of mind, and our education is largely directed towards establishing a reverence for mere authority which few people ever completely outgrow. This is not alone true of the markedly religious mind, it is almost as true of many who fancy themselves liberated. It is amusing, and instructive, for instance, to find one who has thrown over every one of the established religious doctrines still bowing before the authority of men of science with the same reverence they once yielded to the Bible, to a priest, or to the Pope. If they can marshal a number of great names that agrees with what they say, they are happy. They overlook the fact that every teaching the world has ever had, every teaching that is now as dead as the Dodo, was once taught and accepted on authority. The essential question is never whether authority is with us, but whether authority is right in what it says? Is it speaking within its proper province? Does it know more about the subject than anyone else? Is it in a position to know that of which it speaks? These are the essential questions, but they are seldom asked.

* * *

Edison on Immortality.

I was reminded of these simple truths by an article in *Nash's Magazine* for May, which has been forwarded by a friend with a request that I might comment on it. The article is by Mr. Allan Benson, and claims to give to the public, as a result of five years personal intercourse with Thomas Edison, the famous inventor's opinions on immortality. I do not know how truly what is recorded represents Edison's

opinions; not because I question Mr. Benson's truthfulness, but because he is mainly putting into his own language what he believes to be Edison's beliefs. And in such circumstances the most careful and the most truthful man is likely to err. It is quite clear, however, that Edison does not believe in immortality—"the survival of the personality of the individual." And if a man does not believe in immortality in that sense, no other sense will serve the cause of Christianity. The teaching of that religion is that the personality of John Smith will survive; and if John Smith survives only as some form of force, then John Smith ceases to exist at death. And as Edison neither believes in a separate soul inhabiting the body, nor the survival of the personality of man, we may safely set him down as a disbeliever in that fundamental dogma of religious belief. He belongs to the ranks of the Freethinkers.

* * *

How Not To Do It.

Nevertheless, Edison—or Mr. Benson—uses language upon which religionists are sure to fasten, and which if it actually represents Edison's thoughts, prove that his mind is not by any means so clear on the matter as it might be. Such language as the following, for example: "Whatever life may be, whence came it?.....Life came. From Where?.....I believe the form of energy that we call life came to the earth from some other planet," etc. Now that is a very common form of expression, but it is hopelessly unscientific—that is, it does not express the facts as we know them, neither does it express clearly the issue that is to be settled. Why should we speak of life coming from anywhere, any more than we ask where does heat come from? Why assume that life is a form of energy differing from other forms of energy *in kind*? Why even assume that life is anything by itself, merely finding expression through the cells of the body, which is the idea Mr. Benson attributes to Edison? Let us keep to what we know as the basis of our speculations as the only way of knowing more. And we do not know life as a thing in itself, but only as the expression of a relation. When we speak of a thing as alive, we imply no more than that in relation to certain other things it behaves in a particular manner. If I want to find out whether an object before me is dead or alive I apply certain tests, and as it responds or does not respond to those tests I say it is the one or the other. That is all that I or anyone else means when we speak of the difference between a dead thing or a living thing. These relations may be of a very simple character, as in the case of the lowest organisms, or they may be varied and complex, as in the case of the higher animals. But the question of whether a thing is alive or dead means no more than that. Of course, if I assume that these relations are maintained because there is something special inside the organism responsible for them, I may then go on to enquire how that something got there. But the existence of this something is a pure assumption. It is not based upon a single thing we know. The real, the essential question before us all is how are the relations which we all take as an in-

dication of a thing being alive maintained? And surely the first step towards answering a question properly is to state it correctly. Edison has not done that, and beyond expressing his own personal belief he leaves the matter as confused as he found it.

What is Life ?

I do not agree with people when they say we do not know what life is. We do know what we mean when we speak of life, just as we know what we mean when we speak about heat or electricity, or a number of other things. We mean the existence of certain correspondences between an organism and its environment. But if I am asked in what way these correspondences have arisen, or in what way, given some primitive form of existence, have highly complex substances arisen which we distinguish as living, then to that question we may say with truth "I do not know," although we may speculate on the basis of what is already known concerning the history of the universe. And here certainly, so far as the very numerous experiments of scientific men can assist us, instead of being driven to the assumption that "life" must have come from some other planet to animate certain cells that must have been prepared to receive them—a quite ridiculous hypothesis—we are led to assume that "life" arose in substantially the same manner as other specialized forms of the primitive energy have arisen. The researches and experiments of men like Jacques Loeb have made it quite plain that many of the phenomena connected with some of the lower organisms, which were explained as either the workings of some nascent intelligence or some marvellous "instinct," are due entirely to the effects of light on sensitive substances. It has also been shown that fecundation is a purely chemical process; and even the determination of sex does not appear to be beyond the reach of science in the near future. All our knowledge leads in the one direction. It is not the simpler forms of life that, in theory, perplex the investigator so much as the more complex ones. And it is for this reason that supernaturalists and semi-supernaturalists try to silence their critics by presenting the more complex cases for consideration instead of the simpler ones.

Pricking a Bubble.

I dare say we shall find Edison quoted by religious speakers and writers as one of the great men who believe in immortality, in spite of his explicit disclaimer that he believes in neither the existence of a soul nor in personal immortality. He has some fanciful language about the body being composed of a multitude of little people who combine to produce the individual we know, but that may be taken as symbolical language alone. Underneath these expressions lies the solid fact that the human and animal body is composed of myriads of individual cells, each of which has its own unit of force, and that it is the combination of these which gives us either John Smith or a tadpole. And whatever else death may mean, it means the dissolution of the association of cell-life, which combined constitutes the individual. Here, once again, we are scientifically concerned with the determination of the conditions which produce a given phenomenon—in this case, the individual known to us as John Smith. But John Smith's individuality, being a product of this associated cell-life, cannot last longer than the association—the condition of its existence—persists. What the believer in immortality asks us to believe is that although all we know tends to prove that the life of the individual is the product of associated cell-life, it will persist in the absence of the conditions to which it owes its being. Reduced to plain language the proposition is pure nonsense,

and yet it is upon no better basis that nineteenth-twentieths of the reasoning in favour of the belief in a future life rests.

There are some remarks about personality in Mr. Benson's article, and as I have in hand a couple of letters from readers asking me to deal with this question, I will do so next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Triumph of Freethought.

THERE are here and there a few people who have the audacity to declare that Atheists of the stamp of Bradlaugh and his comrades no longer exist, and that present-day Secularists rather tend to admit than to deny the existence of God. Professor Richard Morris, M.A., makes the following statement in *Y Cymro (The Welshman)* of May 28:—

Our opponents no longer quarrel much with us on the point of the probability of the Divine existence. Doubters seem to become more and more ready to acknowledge that it is more probable that there is a God than that there is not, because it is much easier to interpret creation on the assumption that God exists than on the opposite assumption.

But Professor Morris, possibly through mere ignorance, is radically mistaken. The overwhelming majority of living Secularists not only profess entire ignorance of the existence of God, but also positively deny the existence of all gods who have been defined by different sects of believers. The facts of the universe are difficult enough to account for on any ground whatever, but they are wholly inexplicable on the assumption that they are directed and controlled by a wise, good, all-powerful Deity. Besides, we are to bear in mind that Professor Morris is writing a series of leading articles in the weekly *Cymro* in favour of the revision of the *Confession of Faith*, adopted by the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church in the year 1823. The movement for theological reform in the Presbyterian Church of Wales comes later than it did in similar communions in Scotland and England, but it is simultaneous with the attempt to revise the *Anglican Book of Common Prayer*. Of course, theologically, Wales has always been one of the most conservative countries in Christendom. In 1823 the Calvinistic Methodists, as Professor Morris informs us, accepted as positive proofs of the existence of God certain assertions which are no longer convincing. The first article in the Welsh Confession is as follows:—

There is one God, and only one true and living God. There is a natural light in man which shows God. The nations generally recognize some kind of God, or some things as deities. There is a natural conscience which, by condemning men for certain things and excusing them for some others, proves the existence of God, to whom man is responsible for his conduct. The creation proves that there is a God, as every effect proves that it has its cause; as creation could not have come into being of itself, there must be a cause of it. The being of man himself proves the being of God, since one man comes of another, there must be a being; and so there must be a Creator for that.

The order, beauty, adaptation, consistency, and unity of creation prove that it was brought into being by a wise God, who supports and governs all existing things. The creatures answer purposes which they themselves could not have ordered or designed, consequently it is evident that there is one great Sovereign over them all. The awful punishments that have befallen some of God's enemies in time, and the terrors that some have had in their con-

sciences at death, after denying the being of God during their lifetime, prove that he exists.

Each proof of the Divine existence adduced in that first article rests upon a text of Scripture. Now, Professor Morris assures us that "one of the changes which have taken place between 1823 and 1923 is that the things that of yore were regarded as proofs of the being of God have lost a great deal of their renown." The Professor solemnly declares that there is a positive proof of the being of God, but admits that it is to be found only in the experience of believers. Then he adds:—

If the authors of the Confession of Faith had been living to-day, I am inclined to infer that they would have taken the existence of God for granted, as a thing to believe without evidence, and to be experienced as the result of believing.

Formerly the arguments for the existence of God were wellnigh innumerable, and all metaphysical, moral, and practical in their character; but Professor Morris rejects them all save one, namely, the one derivable from experience, although this also on being critically examined is found to be as illogical and illusive as all the rest. All that religious experiences prove is not the existence of God, but only the honest belief in his existence, which is a fundamentally different thing. Many beliefs as ardently held once as the belief in God have now been abandoned as indisputably false.

The purpose of the present article is to call attention to and specially emphasize the undoubtable fact that all attempts to bring the old creeds up to date is one of the main fruits of ages of Freethought propaganda. Freethought is now in the air, and there is neither Church nor Chapel into which it has failed to penetrate. To adapt the words of De Quincey, Freethinkers have made so many holes in the tin kettle of theology that every little theologian feels himself in duty bound to try his hand at tinkering them. In reality, however, no amount of tinkering does the theological tin kettle any permanent good. For example, Professor Morris complains that the Confession of Faith, under which he lives, moves, and has his being, in dealing with the Divine attributes, over-emphasizes God's indignation and wrath in punishing guilty sinners, whilst allowing his love for mankind to fall almost into secondary position. That may be a defect in the Confession; but of what use is it to give greater prominence to the love of God? The world at the present moment bears testimony to the reality of neither. As Carlyle used to say, there is no evidence that God ever does anything at all, either in love or in wrath. So far as his relationship to the world is concerned, he might as well be non-existent. For the last twenty or twenty-five years he has delivered no authoritative message even to his own Church, nor to societies and governments; and during the Great War his alleged Church openly deserted him. If the facts of history are of any guidance whatever in the formation of an honest judgment on the subject, no one has the least right to take the existence of God for granted. The present writer was brought up from earliest childhood to treat the Confession of Faith as an infallible document, like the Bible, with the result that he never thought of God except with fear and trembling. In fact, God was always represented to him as an object to live in terror of all one's days. In consequence of Adam's sin we all lay under his wrath; and though one believed he had obtained mercy through the dying merits of God the Son, still God the Father remained a stern and severe Being, who was to be worshipped and even have his praises sung with unspeakable dread. And now, when his love is magnified and his wrath minimized, most children grow up without either the love or the fear of him in

their hearts; and a large number of them inevitably develop into Atheists through lack of any specific and convincing evidence that God exists. Mark Rutherford began life as a Congregational minister. Gradually his orthodoxy disappeared, and he drifted into Unitarianism. Ere long Unitarianism was found to be too narrow to hold him. Before he ceased to preach altogether, he had an enlightening conversation with a dear friend called Mardon, to whom he unbosomed himself completely. In the end Rutherford addressed him as follows:—

"What would you do if you were in my place?"

"Leave the whole business and prefer the meanest handicraft. You have no right to be preaching anything doubtful. You are aware what my creed is. I profess no belief in God, and no belief in what hangs upon it. Try and name now any earnest conviction you possess, and see whether you have a single one which I have not got."

"I do believe in God."

"There is nothing in that statement. What do you believe about him? That is the point. You will find that you believe nothing, in truth, which I do not believe of the laws which govern the universe and man." (*The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford*, pp. 164-5).

Rutherford ceased to preach, and subsequently earned an honest living by manual labour. He had to work extremely hard, but was happier than he had ever been before. His Christian faith was clean gone, and though he never became an open denier, he was a wholehearted doubter to the end of his life.

Wales, too, is slowly drifting away from orthodox religion. Occasional visits to different parts of the Principality has convinced the present writer that the love of theological discussion and the religious zeal which it gloried in sixty and fifty years ago are now to a large extent things of the past. Ordinary preaching no longer moves the people to tears and joyous shoutings as it once used to do. The Confession of Faith may be revised until it harmonizes with the theological views generally held to-day, but there will still remain the conflict between natural knowledge and supernatural beliefs; and nothing can be more certain that in the long run, and possibly in a much shorter run than we now imagine scientific knowledge will suppress and survive what is at present called spiritual knowledge and experience. Wisdom shall yet be justified of her children, and then our poor world will enter upon a new age of national and international peace, goodwill, and brotherly love.

J. T. LLOYD.

Clodd and His Circle.

We think our civilization near its meridian, but we are yet only at the cock-crowing and the morning star.—Emerson.

The infidels of one age have been the aureole saints of the next.—Ingersoll.

There is nothing on earth divine beside humanity.
—Londor.

EVEN the industrial turmoil cannot destroy the value of literature. Recently I happened upon a copy of Mr. Edward Clodd's *Memories*, and was transported to another generation, and to the company of some very notable persons. For the veteran Mr. Clodd was very fortunate in his friendships, and knew so many brilliant personalities. Few men, living or dead, have had such a genius for friendship, and in his book of memories one is privileged to meet in intimacy some of the leading "intellectuals" of the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Mr. Clodd played Boswell to so many Johnsons in his pretty Aldeburgh home, and, in the treasure-house of his memory, one encounters such famous figures as Herbert Spencer, Thomas Huxley, Professor Clifford, and other scientists. Among authors there are George Meredith, Andrew Lang, George Gissing, Samuel Butler, Mrs. Lynn Linton, and a perfect galaxy of genius. Somewhat apart from the others is the figure of Sir Richard Burton, the world-famous traveller and explorer, who knew the book of the world no less than the world of books. And it adds to the interest to find that all these various friends were Freethinkers, and united in a common bond to enlarge the bounds of human thought and knowledge.

Mind you, Edward Clodd is no novice in literature. Many years ago he wrote those charming books, *The Childhood of the World* and *The Childhood of Religions*, and united pleasure with instruction. In the evening of his days this "unsubduable old Roman" writes one of the best books of memories, which will interest and amuse a later generation, and inform twentieth century readers of the striking personalities who helped to make the Victorian era one of the most remarkable in our history.

George Meredith used to call Mr. Clodd "Sir Reynard," on account of his having, with fox-like cunning as Meredith professed to believe, beguiled him into making his first speech in public. As for his own works, Meredith told Mr. Clodd many things not generally known. Speaking of his masterpiece, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, he said: "Mudie's Library would not circulate it, and all the parsons banned it in the parish book clubs as immoral." This proceeding hindered the recognition of Meredith's rare genius for many years, and kept him poor when he might have been rich.

Some of the letters of George Gissing are very intimate. In one place he comments on the niggardly profits that came from his novels, and adds, pathetically: "The fact of the matter is that some men are born not to make money." Mr. Clodd is righteously indignant against the "ecclesiastical soul-snatchers," who pretend that George Gissing died in the Christian faith. He declares roundly that the story is untrue; but he might have added that the priests were only acting after their kind. They buried Richard Burton in the "sure and certain hope" of a religion he laughed at; and mumbled their mythological nonsense over the coffins of doubting Thomas Huxley, Swinburne, Robert Buchanan, and many other valiant soldiers of Liberty.

Of the great names, one hears less of Herbert Spencer, but, it must be remembered, that the great philosopher was a life-long invalid. Mr. Clodd speaks of his "fussiness," but he also mentions some of Spencer's acts of kindness and help. At one of his meetings Mr. Clodd had a fine object-lesson in the philosopher's foibles, for Spencer stopped his ears with wool in the middle of a meal, which was, Mr. Clodd thinks, caused by a frivolous remark of his own. There was, however, something uncanny in Spencer's foresight. When, for example, he refrained from active support of a League of Peace and Arbitration, he prophesied:—

There is a bad time coming, and civilized mankind will, morally, be uncivilized before civilization can again advance.

Remember, this was said some years before the Great War, and the subsequent triumph of brute force in such countries as Italy and Spain.

Mr. Clodd's book covers much fresh ground, besides adding to our knowledge of the outstanding figures of the Victorian era. Speaking of Sir George Airy, the Astronomer Royal, Mr. Clodd recalls that the distinguished scientist was pestered to cast nativities and

tell fortunes by servant girls, actresses, shopkeepers, and business men:—

Every letter was answered and every letter was pigeon-holed under the general heading, "Insanity"; with sub-divisions, "Astrology" and "Squaring the Circle," etc.

Bright and fresh also is the amusing story concerning Bates, the naturalist, to whom Mr. Clodd was executor, and who was describing to a lady how difficult he found it to keep a collection of beetles in first-class condition. "But how did you feed them?" she asked, with the simplicity of a seven-year-old child.

The book, indeed, is a golden treasury of anecdotes, but there are more weighty matters. The opening chapter is devoted to autobiography, and in it is described Mr. Clodd's own pilgrimage from orthodoxy to Freethought. These illuminating pages have a psychological value, for they show plainly that Mr. Clodd's friendship with so many really great men was due to a mutual understanding. His intellectual equipment was of the same order as their's, and he brought insight into his social relationship with them. His own books show this clearly, for, writing on abstruse subjects, plain men can read him with instruction, and literary folks can read him with delight.

There is propaganda, too, among the reminiscences. What vigour there is in Mr. Clodd's denunciation of the use of the Bible in the schools. Listen to his relentless questionings:—

Were they (the children) to be taught that God left his throne in heaven from time to time and came to this earth to do things of which man, at his lowest, would be ashamed? Were they to be taught that all that is set down in the Bible actually happened? Were they to be taught that he (God) walked and talked as man; that he was fond of the smell of roast meats; that he showed his "back parts" to the leader of a small tribe whom he had made his "chosen people"; that he became their War Lord, aiding them as best he could. As best, for is it not related in the Book of Judges that he could not help them to victory over their enemies in the valley because they had chariots of iron! He commanded that of his chosen people fifty thousand and seventy men should be put to death because they had been so curious and so wicked as to look into a sacred box called the ark, wherein he was believed to dwell! And so on; all through the repellent stories of meanness and massacres, of blessings on liars and tricksters.

This has been said a thousand times in *The Freethinker*, but it is refreshing to find it in a volume which has the entry of the circulating libraries. Mr. Clodd, indeed, shows clearly that the work of the Secularist leaders was known among his circle of friends, for he tells us that George Meredith admired George Foote's forthright methods of advocacy. And it is pleasant also to remember that the valiant leader of Secularism was constantly in receipt of encouragement from the foremost writers and publicists of his day.

At the present time there is a tendency to belittle the great figures of the preceding generation without attempting to understand them. Mr. Clodd is one of the privileged few who knew these great personalities intimately, and he knew also that their ideas were destined to alter the face of the civilized world. In recalling these high and important matters to present-day people, who are inclined to value their heritage far too lightly, Mr. Clodd has proved himself a true and devoted disciple of Liberty. So brilliantly and wisely, indeed, has he done his work, that he has added an indispensable book, which is worthy to be on every Freethinker's bookshelf. MIMNERMUS.

"The Enigma of Jesus."

Just before the war quite a number of works dealing with the historicity of Jesus appeared. For the first time, perhaps, in the history of Christianity came a systematic and scientific investigation of the question, aided by all the discoveries in comparative religion which modern research had made, as well as by a thorough criticism of the documents on which Christianity is founded. However much Christians professed to ignore the penny pamphlets of Charles Bradlaugh or Ingersoll or Foote, they found it quite impossible to do the same with such far-reaching and scholarly works as those of John M. Robertson, whose *Pagan Christs* and *Christianity and Mythology* did more to shatter the idea of Jesus as a real existence than any other work that preceded them.

Who were the first people to claim Jesus as a myth, apart from certain mystical sects, I do not know. Possibly a good many men during the past 1,700 years must have thought it, though while the Church had power, anyone foolish enough to give expression to such terrible blasphemy must have been promptly put to death in one of the many ways which distinguished Roman Catholicism from other religions. One of the first writers, however, to deal with the subject in something like a comprehensive manner was the famous C. F. Dupuis, whose great work, *L'Origine de tous les Cultes*, resolved all worships into one under different names—the Sun. I doubt whether this work in its unabridged form has ever been translated into English—or, indeed, whether there are many people who have ever read it. But whether one quite agrees with all Dupuis's conclusions or not, I can testify that in its abridged form it is extremely interesting. For him, the worship of Christ was simply the worship of the sun; and his pages are full of his supreme contempt for religion and, in particular, priests. He says:—

We shall not examine the Christian religion in order to see if it has been revealed: only idiots can believe in revelations and ghosts. Philosophy in our day (*the eighteenth century*) has progressed too far to expect us still to discuss whether the Divinity has spoken to man, except through his reason and through the contemplation of Nature. Nor shall we examine whether there ever existed either a philosopher or an imposter called Christ, who established the religion known under the name of Christianity. For, even if we admitted this, Christians would not be satisfied unless we recognized in Christ an inspired man, a son of God, a God himself, crucified for our sins. It is a God they want, a God who used to eat on the earth, and whom they eat themselves nowadays.....The important point is to get right at the heart of the nature of the Christian cult, whoever is the author of it. Now, it will not be difficult to prove that it is once again the worship of Nature and of the Sun, her first and most brilliant agent; that the hero of the legends known as the Gospels, is the same hero, as he who was sung about with much more genius in the poems on Bacchus, Osiris, Adonis and many others.

Dupuis goes most fully into the question, and it is a pity that his book seems so inaccessible for English readers. A translation of the chapter on Christianity as a Sun Myth was published by Thomas Scott, but his work as a whole is nearly forgotten.

Volney's famous *Ruins of Empires* also resolved Jesus into a sun myth; and in England these two great writers were followed by Robert Taylor. A full exposition of his astro-myth theory developed in an original way, will be found in the collection of lectures published under the title of *The Devil's Pulpit*; while his examination of the documentary evidence for

Christianity, is found in the *Diegesis*. In both these books Taylor claimed to prove that Jesus never existed; and if one wants to see how angry Christians got with him, the "reply," by Dr. John Pye Smith, should be studied. It is one of the most amusing works I have ever read; and I think if the worthy Christian had had his way, Taylor would have suffered the fate of poor Damians.

Somehow or other, in spite of the persistent efforts of a few Freethinkers, the idea of the non-historicity of Jesus was not accepted by the mass of even advanced Rationalists. They declared that this theory only made more difficult the explanation of the beginnings of Christianity. They agreed that the virgin birth must go, that the miracles were absurd, that the resurrection was impossible, that no one called Matthew, Mark, Luke or John could have written the Gospels, that there was not a scrap of contemporary evidence to show that anyone had ever heard of a Jew called Jesus of Nazareth, that Nazareth was not even in existence at the supposed date of Jesus—but, then, what did these things matter? There *must* have been a Jesus. And it is there you have the enigma. Slowly but surely Freethinkers have dissolved the Christian idea of a Saviour God in Jesus, till at last, with their backs to the wall, his worshippers wave a nebulous idea of a "Christ" defiantly in our faces, shrieking that we can never take that away from them any more than we can take away the nebulous idea of a God, which is all that is left the Theist.

Now where do they get this idea of Jesus? From the Gospels? So they say, till pressed to explain the "difficult" passages, and then the truth comes out. Jesus exists, of course; he is absolutely real, the Sun of Suns, the Holiest of Holiest; and he lives—in the *heart of mankind*. This is the solution of the enigma, and it explains the power of the Cross. Jesus is one's ideal—no matter what that ideal is. If you believe only Communism will save the world, then Jesus is the greatest Communist. If you believe poetry is man's salvation, then Jesus is the greatest poet. If you are an ardent believer in Spiritualism, then, naturally, Jesus is the greatest Spiritualist. The latest example I have come across of this remarkable phenomenon is in Mrs. Ward Campbell's *Shelley and the Unromantics*. She places Shelley definitely among the Romantics, of whom she is an ardent supporter, and therefore Jesus is not only the first of Romantics, but also the greatest of them all. Jesus, in short, means that which is the highest within us—that spiritual force which makes us hitch our wagon to a star and constantly strive to reach a higher one. Some people call this the Christ, but it means the same thing. Now, if this is true, the problem still exists: was there a real Jesus, who lived the human life depicted in the Gospels? For, naturally, it is impossible to discuss a Jesus who lives merely in the heart of man.

Before me lie two attempts to deal with the problem, both from eminent Frenchmen thoroughly equipped to discuss the question in all its bearings. *The Enigma of Jesus*, by Dr. P. L. Couchoud (Watts & Co.), has the additional advantage of a lengthy Introduction from Sir James Frazer, the distinguished author of that monumental work, *The Golden Bough*. This is particularly interesting, because Sir James has definitely decided that there was a real Jesus, in spite of the fact that his book has demolished the whole structure of supernatural religion, saviours, myths, and miracles included. Now, Dr. Couchoud just as definitely claims Jesus never lived at all; and his book is a brief attempt to show that the Christian Saviour is merely an emanation from the consciousness of Paul. He intends to go very fully into the question in a larger work, but the one published so far gives a very good idea of his main points and conclusions.

The Doctor fully recognizes the part that the worship of Jesus has played in the world—

In the empire of the world, Jesus succeeded CaesarFor his sake men have loved and hated one another, massacred and helped one another, known the extremes of passion and of sacrifice.....He was the mirage towards which rushed the mad squadrons of the Crusaders. He was the mystic lover inviting docile processions of virgins to take the veil—Even to-day Jesus is the inmost spring of Western societySouls are dedicated to him before birth.....In men's hearts Jesus is infinitely great.....He transcends all ordinary historical measure. A hundred volumes would not suffice to describe him. There never was so stupendous an event as that which introduced the representation of Jesus into the world.

And after that panegyric, Dr. Couchoud proceeds to prove that Jesus never lived, but was simply an idea. He first examines the evidence of those great witnesses of Christian apologists—Pliny, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Josephus—and he has very little difficulty in showing that whatever else they knew, they knew nothing at all of a Jesus of Nazareth. He dismisses the references to Jesus—or a Jesus—in the Talmud quite as brusquely, and this is where the conclusions of the second writer I referred to will prove interesting to English readers, as the book in which they are contained has not yet been translated from the French. It is called *Le Problème de Jésus*, and is by Professor Charles Guignebert. The author examines the conclusions of nearly all the modern writers who maintain that Jesus is a myth—Robertson, Drews and W. B. Smith, in particular—and gives a fair résumé of their arguments and conclusions. But he has one clear reply to them all. He says:—

We could continue to pursue still more the enumeration of the absurdities to which the myth theory drives us when we compare it with texts and facts. It would not be very interesting, however, to anybody, so I shall content myself with the two last questions: How comes it, then, that in their first controversies against Christians the Jews never denied the existence of Jesus? This one negation, well founded, encloses a radical argument, and is strong enough in itself to silence an opponent. That the Jews never used it, is proved not only by the Talmud, but also by the Dialogue of Justin with the Jew Tryphon, and the treatise of Celsus against the Christians, in which, as it happens, the author tries to oppose those whom he considers as heretic Jews, to pure Jews. Still more are we persuaded by the great mass of anti-Jewish literature in which the strongest protestations would have found place if the blasphemous assertion had been formulated by the Jews. The latter have, as occasion demanded it, insulted both Jesus and his mother, but have never denied his existence. And the second question: Why did the apostles, who felt they were bound to humanize the legend of their God, make him live in their own time? What kind of stupid lies and frauds forced them to declare that they had known Jesus, that they had shared his life in Galilee during his ministry, that he had just died in Jerusalem, and, at the risk of their lives, insist they were his witnesses, when the tendency of all religions is to put back in the far-off ages the adventures of their here, so as to mingle as far as possible the primitiveness of their beliefs with the age of the world?..... I confess that this fact alone would suffice to make me put aside the mythic hypothesis.

H. CUTNER.

(To be Concluded.)

When all is done, human life is, at the greatest and the best, but like a froward child, that must be played with, humoured a little to keep it quiet till it falls asleep, and then the care is over.—*Sir William Temple.*

Our Real Religion.

THE selfishness of Christianity has proved too much for the European peoples. It has been their official religion for nineteen hundred years, but it has never been given a trial, as a greater than I discovered and stated.

During these nineteen hundred years we have adapted the more primitive religions to our needs, but none of them has reached the prestige of becoming official, and they have nearly always been persecuted by the clergy of the Church. In the early days of the science of medicine, the majority of people preferred to visit the white witch to obtain a cure for slight ailments, rather than to consult a doctor. They sought out black witches and magicians for more serious requirements, such as the quiet extinction of an enemy, while science occupied itself in pursuing the phantoms of the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life.

All these futilities have been abandoned in this age of science. We are not actively Christian, and the official Church is not the Sunday haunt of many of us; but we do not seek out superstitiously, old women and misguided scholars when we need to cure a wart or desire a love-potion. We have passed beyond that stage; and we are undoubtedly the better for it (see Vital Statistics).

The spread of knowledge was slow, but sure, and the development of the daily press has enabled the whole world to read about and understand the latest scientific discoveries the morning after they are made. Such knowledge in the hands of the people cannot fail to be productive of good, and one of the results is to be seen in the publicity given in the press to the discoveries of medical science. The official Church was concerned with the care of the soul, but the people, although they were willing to do something as a security against a hellish eternity, have always cared more for the body. To some extent there is, or was, an opposition between the Church and science for this very reason, but that does not exist now. The Church is too reasonable.

The care of the body is what we are concerned about. When the essential needs have been provided, illness, or if not absolute illness, an imperfect state of physical fitness, due no doubt to the exhausting efforts necessary to obtain subsistence, often supervenes in the individual. More simply put: although we may not be ill-nourished, we often feel a little below par, and this accounts for our interest in the development of medical science.

The three fundamentals of life are the staple of conversation in a very large class of society, and this is a support to my belief. Birth, marriage, and death, with a dash of illness, accident and symptoms, are naturally the subjects which employ the majority of our people. It may be that these discussions take the form of scandal, but these subjects are those discussed.

Since disease and death are more tragic than birth and marriage, they naturally take the premier place; and the one being the precursor of the other, remedial measures are introduced at length, and the newest discoveries are gone over thoroughly. The medium of presentation of these new discoveries is the popular press, both daily and weekly, as it is the medium of presentation of almost all other information in these civilized times. Curiously enough, in general it is not the news items which are of supreme interest in these discussions. It is the relative merits of the advertised medicines. These range from the all-powerful antiseptic to the omnigrative purgative or kidney stimulant. They are not described in these terms, but that is what they are.

The chemists' shops are of more importance to civilization than the Churches. The latter demand faith in their exegesis, but the chemists make no such demands. They are the white witches of modern times, and they receive the measure of credulous faith, that was the portion of their predecessors in a more superstitious age. They are the inanimate priesthood of the modern religion. The chemists themselves are not more than neophytes. They dispense what is asked for—in a packet or bottle ready prepared—and are not even put to the trouble of making a mysterious mixture from a number of weird and dubious boxes and jars.

All this is only another sign of the materialism of the times. The worship of the patent medicine is an indirect worship of the body, and is a continuation of the Paganism which has always existed in the midst of European Christianity.

But it is more than this. It is a sign that faith is not extinct in the human heart. In old times it seems, if we may believe what is said of old times, people were content to accept miracles as signs of the being of God, of their souls, and of eternal life. They had so little in this life, and they lived so dangerously, that they were more immediately concerned with the possibility of a future and happy state. Now that we have acquired a little more wealth per head (speaking of the statistical average, and not of its distribution), we are more intimately concerned with material things, and our faith has been transferred.

There is naturally a more subtle reason for our change of heart than this obvious one. Human beings found the miracles satisfying, because they served to prove the priesthood powerful. The people always required a material sign to which they could pin their flag of faith. And from the white witches they desired a potion or unguent as well as an incantation. These things were the symbols of the reality of the profession of those who held the cure of souls and of the body. The bottle of cough mixture, the emulsion, the pill or the powder, purchased from the chemist to-day, is the symbol of the reality of the profession of the advertiser; and the halt, the lame and the blind faithfully purchase the symbols of their abiding belief in the true religion of the day.

And, as always, they are loyal to their priesthood (of the patent medicine). They sacrifice to their gods, but their sacrifices are made in currency, and the priesthood wax fat.

G. E. FUSSELL.

MIRACLES AS EVIDENCE.

Robert D. Towne says religion is handicapped by "lack of good news." There are no more firm assurances, such as the one given to Peter and Andrew: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." There are definite assertions about hell if you are wicked, and heaven if you behave. Clergymen split hairs, each one believes part and denies part. The simple mind wants to believe everything.

Perhaps a few miracles would help to revive faith and fill the churches. Suppose the Rev. Dr. Stratton would say: "I warn you dissenting clergymen that you are all bound for perdition, and, to prove it, I shall now change Dr. Jones into a stick of candy." Would not that convert all, if Dr. Jones did stiffen up and slowly turn into striped peppermint?

You'd think so, but the human heart is hard. You remember the Arabian philosopher who said to the holy man: "You may say to me, 'twice two are five, and to prove it, I'll turn this walking stick into a live serpent'; but even if you change your stick into a serpent, I'll still say, that is interesting, but twice two are not five."

—Arthur Brisbane, "Detroit Times."

Acid Drops.

Among the property owners who have been warned by the Glasgow authorities to put their houses into a reasonable state for habitation, are the St. James's Parish Church managers and the Rechabites' Society. These and other owners have been given twenty-one days' notice to put their properties into a habitable state. Let us be charitable and assume that the clerical and religious-minded gentlemen responsible for the property have been so engaged in ecstatic contemplation of visionary mansions in the skies that they have omitted to perform their duty here in this world. It would not be the first time that such other-worldliness has resulted from a stiff dose of religion. In the beginning the Christian ascetics were other-worldly chiefly at their own expense. In these days they seem to be other-worldly at other folk's expense.

The Orthodox press is chortling over the Empire Day Celebrations at Wembley, and refers to the open-air service as "the biggest religious festival on record." As hundreds of kettledrums were used in the affair, the coloured Christians of Carolina must be nearly green with envy at the Wembley "big noise."

The late Rev. J. Drake, of Long Melford, Suffolk, left £64,521. He will join Dives in the place so often mentioned in sermons.

The *Transatlantic Review* tells a good tale of Burne Jones—the artist—and a tattooed woman on exhibit in Westminster. He took all his friends to admire a tattooed drawing of the "Last Supper" on her back. Some years later she returned, but, unfortunately, had grown fat in the interval. When the artist rushed round to see her again, the figure of Christ and all the disciples wore broad grins on their faces.

The *Evening News* (London) declares that there is a real revival of religious feeling among all parties at the Houses of Parliament. Doubtless, this is due to the heat-wave. Hot weather often makes men swear.

Mr. T. R. Glover, in writing of Mr. W. J. Bryan's activities as a Fundamentalist, makes an attempt to dispose of this backwoodsman. Scenting another Rupert in the field, the *Daily News* purveyor of popular piety says that Mr. W. J. Bryan wanted to limit the Presbyterian Church to the range of his own intelligence. Mr. T. R. Glover has yet to learn that when religion tries to grow it dies. Striking out with both hands he also tries to dispose of Colonel Ingersoll by writing him down as an antiquated old gentleman. This is the Cambridge style; and perhaps low enough for the paper whose sporting prophet shows a profit on a level stake; and we suggest that Dr. Glover dare not quote any of Ingersoll's writings in the *Daily News*. This in order to get down to the ideas of Ingersoll; Dr. Glover is welcome to call the famous Freethinker anything he likes in his worst Cambridge manner if this is his best; or perhaps, after all, it is in the little children's bible style.

Dr. Glover, however, is not quite lost. Towards the end of his article he admits that he has made the discovery that he knows next to nothing of Christ. It is a pity that he did not exercise this same modesty in dealing with Ingersoll. If Ingersoll is out of date, Christianity has never been in fashion.

The *New Statesman* has some very plain words about the Death Ray "phenomenon." Pocket and patriotism are two balls for any journalist to juggle with, and this emanation from a Christian country synchronizes with the Archbishop of Canterbury's address to a vast audience. Come up a little higher, my Lord, and you will soon be on the lower slopes of comedy.

A paragraph, going the rounds of the press, states that a young man of clerical appearance was found at five o'clock in the morning preaching from a pulpit to an empty church at Swannington, Norfolk. Although so many professional clergymen preach to half-empty churches, very little notice is taken of that by the press.

The appearance of Labour leaders and their wives in full Court regalia has caused widespread astonishment in Democratic circles. In this connection it is well to recall the wise words of old Walter Savage Landor: "We may be so much in the habit of bowing as at last to be unable to stand upright."

Fourteen hundred and thirty Roman Catholic pilgrims left Victoria Station recently for an excursion to the shrine of "Our Lady of Lourdes," France. One archbishop, three bishops, and seventy-four priests also accompanied the pilgrims. Yet people will persist in saying that there is no superstition in Christian England.

Devon recently kept its Territorial Sunday, when in over a score of towns and villages special church parades were held. Cromwell's hard-headed piety of trusting in the Lord, but keeping one's powder dry, still recommends itself to the twentieth-century followers of the Nazarene pacifist.

The Rev. A. MacLulich, who recently resigned his curacy at St. Mary's Church, Sandbach, Cheshire, has now become a fishmonger! Daily he goes round Sandbach and district hawking fish, which he buys in Manchester in the early hours of the morning. We heartily commend his honesty and practical sense. But what must St. Peter be thinking?

In the past year 39,430 cases were dealt with by the N.S.P.C.C. This was the statement made by Mr. E. P. Whitbread at the annual council of the Society, recently held at the headquarters in Leicester Square. The need for such an organization, as proved by these figures, is a biting commentary upon Christianity, which has had something like fourteen hundred years in this country in which to persuade people to live according to the golden rule.

The Melbourne Presbyterian Assembly has passed a resolution regretting the Governor's action in inviting the Melba Opera Company to tea on Sunday as "a violation and desecration of the Sabbath." It is surprising how the most innocent of occupations, such as drinking tea, can be given the most unholy and degraded character by some of these stout survivors of Puritanism.

Slowly but surely it is becoming "safe" to print elementary freethought. A correspondent in the *Daily News* is surprised that followers of the Prince of Peace find it necessary to clothe the rising generation in khaki, give them rifles, and make use generally of military terms. He signs himself "1914 to 1919"; this period is the greatest question mark in a popular sense to organized popular humbug.

In a letter to the *Times*, Canon G. M. Livett declares that:—

A weekly day of cessation from regular work is necessary for both man and beast. The Christian Church has made Sunday the time-honoured day of rest and recreation, spiritual and physical—a holy day and a holiday. But modern conditions have introduced a conflict of claims, and Wembley is emphasizing it.....Surely if each side will take a sympathetic view of the other's needs a compromise can be reached and arranged. Why not delay the opening of the Exhibition on Sunday till 2 o'clock and close it throughout Monday?"

If all that the Sabbatarians were really concerned with was the assuring of a full day's rest each week to those employed at the Exhibition, that would be easy enough to arrange, either by closing the Exhibition one week-day, or, preferably, by working the employees in shifts: as,

for example, the London General Omnibus Company does. But this sudden deep concern for the physical well-being of working men and women is little more than a stalking horse. The real objection to the opening of Wembley on Sunday is a purely religious one. If that were not so, and clerics were actually as considerate for the welfare of the Exhibition workers as they would have us believe they are, we might hear more from them from the pulpit and in the press concerning the disgraceful wages which are being paid to some of the people employed at the Exhibition.

"C.J.A.," under the clock, ticks off his daily tarri-diddles and reports that there is only one bath in 151 houses in the Salisbury Street area, which the Bermondsey Council propose clearing. View his efforts to be smart and epigrammatic:—

Is there a great rush for it? No, it is used as a store for old clothes. If cleanliness is next to godliness, the religion in this area seems to be something more definite than Philosophic Doubt: it looks like rank Atheism.

"C.J.A." must poke a little deeper; the Ecclesiastical Commissioners know quite a lot about property in Bermondsey. The lovely Eden of Tabard Street has been cleared away; and the angel with the flaming sword was our old friend the L.C.C.

Dr. Hopkin Evans, from the Sinia of the musical conductor's chair, asserts that the true function of congregational singing was to direct the worshippers mind to the contemplation of the sublime and holy. We were always under the impression that congregational singing was only an excuse for having an organ in a chronic state of repair.

Cardinal Bourne is described as one of the best-looking princes of the Church. Note the vocabulary where men are all equal. It reminds us of the story of Victor Hugo, who, when told by a priest that he was made in the image of his maker, replied, after looking at the representative of religiosity, "Then your God must be very ugly." May we infer from the description of Cardinal Bourne that it is necessary to make a song about good looks in the Lord's vineyard?

Mr. E. V. Knox, in the *Daily News*, has a mildly ironical article on "The Sunday Opening." The writer tries to tickle the brains of Sabbath bigots with a feather. The quarter-staff of plain speech would be much better, Mr. Knox—but it might not have seen daylight in the columns of the *Daily News*, and we toss our denier of thanks for small mercies.

How to Help.

There are thousands of men and women who have left the Churches and who do not know of the existence of this journal. Most of them would become subscribers if only its existence were brought to their notice.

We are unable to reach them through the ordinary channels of commercial advertising, and so must rely upon the willingness of our friends to help. This may be given in many ways:

By taking an extra copy and sending it to a likely acquaintance.

By getting your newsagent to take an extra copy and display it.

By lending your own copy to a friend after you have read it.

By leaving a copy in a train, tram or 'bus.

It is monstrous that after forty years of existence, and in spite of the labour of love given it by those responsible for its existence, the *Freethinker* should not yet be in a sound financial position. It can be done if all will help. The Paper and the Cause are worthy of all that each can do for them.

To Correspondents.

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

L. MASON.—Pleased to hear of your success in getting new readers for the *Freethinker*. We know it can be done; and if every one gets another one the increase should be rapid. But will each one do so? That is the vital question, and it is one we put to all who are interested in the future of this journal.

L. W. K. BEIPER.—Sorry we are obliged to hold over your letter till next week. I expect we are all sane on one point or another. The great thing is to determine which.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges: Mr. F. W. Theobald, 2s. 6d.

C. J. LINDON.—Gerald Massey's *Book of the Beginnings and The Natural Genesis* are now out of print. Second-hand copies would probably cost you about £5 or £6. In some respects Massey's speculations as to the course of civilization have received confirmation in the important writings of Professor W. J. Perry.

ALFRED HOSE.—It is not at all unusual for editors of papers to decline to print any criticism of religious articles which appear in their pages. That is one of the blessings of our glorious free press. Like yourself, one wonders what the "Medical Press" does with an article which denounces birth control on the ground that it is contrary to the laws of God. Nearly the whole of medical science might be anathematized on the same ground.

R. CHAPMAN (South Shields).—Sorry you were unable to attend—for the first time for many years—the Preston Conference. We missed the South Shields delegates, but hope to see the Branch properly represented at the next Conference. We are keeping well, but not over-well.

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.

Next week we shall print the usual report of the N.S.S. Conference; confining ourselves to the Annual Report in the present issue. It is enough to say now that the proceedings of the Conference were marked by good humour and a cheerful spirit of critical optimism that augurs well for the future of militant Freethought. The discussions were all of interest, particularly the one that followed the paper by Councillor Monks on "Methods of Propaganda"—a paper which we hope to print shortly. There were many friends from near and far present; while the

number of young men who are taking an interest in our movement is again a very hopeful sign. The enthusiasm of youth is the life-blood of any movement, and especially so of Freethought. To fight the entrenched forces of superstition is one of those adventures which should appeal to those of the younger generation.

The evening meeting was well attended; all the speakers were in excellent form, and their remarks met with evident appreciation. Mr. Lloyd's return to the platform was very pleasing to all, and his voice and language showed the platform to be still an inspiration to him. Mr. Whitehead was telling in his direct and forceful manner; and Mr. Corrigan managed to drive home with success what the Roman Catholic control of schools would mean. Mr. Clifford Williams was, as usual, eloquent and telling; Mr. Moss dealt some swinging blows at the prevailing superstition; and Mr. Rosetti's speech was excellent as regards both matter and manner. Perhaps the best tribute to the speakers was the interested manner in which the audience sat for just on two and a-half hours, until the President dismissed the meeting in a closing speech which sent everyone home delighted. It was one of the most successful evening meetings for some years.

Mr. Cohen had to leave Preston at the conclusion of the evening meeting, but we believe that arrangements were made for the delegates and friends to visit Blackpool on the Monday. If that arrangement was carried out, we are glad to say that, in spite of a threatening morning, the day remained without rain. And that is indeed something this summer. It only remains to add that the Preston Branch worked very hard to make the Conference a success, and received the deserved thanks of the Conference for its efforts. Unfortunately, its present Secretary is leaving Preston for Manchester, and it will be no easy task to find one able to carry out the work as well as he has done. His example, however, will act as an inspiration to others.

Some of the letters that should have been dealt with in this week's issue must stand over for a week. They were posted to Mr. Cohen from the office, but they had not arrived when he left Preston. They will probably be received back at the office later in the week.

Mr. Corrigan lectures to-day (June 15) in Finsbury Park at 11 o'clock. He will also speak at Highbury Corner, Islington, on Friday evening at 8. The Finsbury Park Branch has decided to hold meetings here every Friday, and North London Freethinkers might make a special note of the fact. On June 6 Mr. Corrigan held a debate here with the Rev. J. Pitts on "Is the Belief in God Reasonable?" Mr. Pitts does not appear to have presented his case in the most attractive of forms—to even a Christian audience—but the debate had the good effect of permitting Mr. Corrigan to drive home the Freethought case to a very large audience, and that could not but do good.

Here is a letter received from a young Parsee in England who is experiencing a loneliness which may come to anyone in a strange place or country. I print it for anyone whom it interests. Replies to this office will be forwarded.

DEAR MR. COHEN,—I am a Freethinker of long standing, and doing advanced zoology here. I come from Bombay, India, and am a Parsee. So far I have not met any Freethinker in this country. I shall thank you if you will be kind enough to put me in communication with a young English gentleman, Freethinker, of your acquaintance contemplating a short holiday on the continent in the month of July. I should be glad to meet some Freethinkers. I find it so difficult to understand the peculiar conservatism of the English people; a few in India I know are not so. It isn't a question of difference in manners, customs or ways of living.

Yours sincerely,

J. J. ASANA.

N.S.S. Conference.

Executive's Annual Report.

BY THE PRESIDENT.

In submitting its annual report the Executive is pleased to be in a position to state that in spite of the many difficulties in the way of our propaganda—which will be touched on later—there has been steady progress in the dissemination of our ideas, while the work of the Society has been satisfactorily maintained. More than a general survey of the past year is not required, as those to whom this report is addressed are kept in weekly touch with what is being done through the medium of the *Freethinker*.

It is, however, necessary to offer a word of warning to those who would seek to estimate the value of the strength of our movement by either the actual membership of the Society or by its financial resources. Although for several years the finances of the Society have been in a healthier state than at any previous time in its history, its work has always been carried on with slender funds and a comparatively modest membership. How far the future will alter these conditions remains to be seen. It should be mentioned that as the House of Lords decision in the Bowman case has removed all bars to the leaving of bequests for Freethought purposes, while the creation of a Trust Deed for the National Secular Society has provided quite adequate legal protection for its funds, there is very solid ground for expecting improvement in the direction of finance. The Society is down for bequests in several wills recently drawn, and unquestionably more will follow.

On the other hand, a very large membership is not to be expected, unless the Society were to aim at founding a new Church with all the usual appeals to sectarian feelings, and so father the usual evils of sectarianism. In that case it would probably be found that the value of our work would suffer just in proportion as we achieved a great increase in numbers.

The main work of the N.S.S. is primarily pioneer work; and its influence is largely permeative. For every one who openly allies himself to an unpopular and socially unprofitable movement, there are a dozen who are affected by our propaganda and who show its influence in their changed mental attitude. In evidence of this one need only point to the great change that has come over public opinion during the past half-century in relation to theological questions, and the hesitating attitude of the clergy with regard to their most cherished doctrines. Our more than half-century of strenuous work has had its effect, and if they who are largely responsible for the more enlightened public opinion which prevails do not receive credit for the work done, they are only receiving the usual reward of pioneers.

In addition to the usual steady influx of new members, Branches have opened at Preston, Hull, Nelson, Bolton, and Finsbury Park. The Society wishes these new Branches every success in their work; and given the qualities of courage, pertinacity, and industry, a reasonable measure of success is assured.

Taking a general survey of Branch work, it may be noted that Glasgow continues its propaganda with marked success, and it is to be hoped that before long new Branches will be opened in other parts of Scotland. On the Tyneside, Newcastle is showing renewed activity; and in the centre of so large a district there is both room and material for a very active propaganda. Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester, with other places in the North and Midlands are maintaining their work in the face of very great difficulties, largely owing to the depressed state of trade. South Wales has not been so active as in former years; and at Plymouth financial difficulties have prevented the Branch doing as much work as it had hoped to do. In London the Metropolitan Branches have had their usual quota of meetings: West Ham and Bethnal Green in the East, South London in the South, and North London and Finsbury Park in the North have kept the flag flying. The Executive arranged for two special meetings at South Place, and one at Stratford Town Hall, each of which were addressed by the President, and each meeting was markedly successful.

Special mention might be made of two meetings addressed by the President at Weston-super-Mare. This is not an ideal spot for advanced propaganda of any kind, but thanks to the persistent propaganda of one local friend, a very marked impression has been made upon the town, and the two meetings held were distinguished by good attendance, and a sympathetic interest shown by those present. The meetings are mentioned here as an illustration of what may be done under the most unpromising circumstances, if the right persons can be found to carry on the work.

The Executive regrets that the health of Mr. J. T. Lloyd compelled him to stop lecturing during the larger part of the winter, but it is hoped that his absence is only temporary, even though he may not lecture so frequently as he has been in the habit of doing. There is no speaker who would be more missed from the field in which he has won such well-deserved honours.

Other lecturers have been busy in London and the provinces. Messrs. Corrigan and Rosetti continue to win the appreciation of audiences wherever they appear on the platform; and Mr. A. B. Moss, a worthy representative of the older school of fighters, makes one doubt chronology by his activities. Your President has, as usual, been active, lecturing to large and interested audiences. The Executive takes this opportunity of again urging upon local Branches the need for encouraging and developing platform ability among its members.

During the past summer, as again this year, the Executive engaged Mr. Whitehead for a series of open-air meetings in London and the Provinces. Mr. Whitehead has visited a great many parts of the kingdom, and in nearly every instance has had large and interested audiences. The new Branches at Preston and Bolton are some of the fruits of his work. The Executive hopes, with the approval of the Conference, to keep him at the work as long as is possible, although it must be pointed out that to keep a lecturer travelling about the country in these days involves no light cost. The Executive has no intention of relinquishing this work, on the contrary, it would like to extend it, but it must point out that the length of time over which the work may be carried on and the degree to which it may be extended must depend upon the liberality of those who believe in its value.

On this question of finance the Executive desires to offer a word of counsel to all concerned. Costs are so high to-day that with the present state of trade headquarters has been compelled to give a larger measure of financial aid to Branches than has ever before been given. But there is a danger in the "dole" to groups as well as to individuals, and it is possible that some Branches are relying, or may rely, upon headquarter assistance to the neglect of securing local contributions. This should not be the case. There are plenty of Freethinkers in nearly every locality—many of them non-members—who would be quite willing to give financial help if they were approached in the proper manner. The Executive advises that local Secretaries should keep a list of these sympathizers, with a view to enlisting their help. Either financial or moral help on the spot would be preferable to help from far away.

During the year the funds of the N.S.S. have been replenished by a grant of £200 from the Secular Society, Ltd. This is the first time for many years the N.S.S. has needed help from that quarter. So far as the movement as a whole is concerned, it matters little from which side the help comes, but it is advisable that the N.S.S. should be in a position to pay its way from its own funds.

During the past year the Society has lost by death, among other friends, a well-known and universally respected worker in the cause—Mr. James Partridge, of Birmingham. Mr. Partridge was one of the most devoted and least assuming workers in the Freethought movement. He was for over thirty years Secretary of the Birmingham Branch, and during the whole of that time was seldom absent from its meetings. He was a familiar and loved figure at Birmingham meetings, and the Society in placing on record its appreciation of his many years of unselfish work, but feebly expresses the sentiments of all who knew him. Another Birmingham Freethinker whose death we have to record is that of F. W. Walsh.

Mr. Walsh was well known to a wide circle of Freethinkers, not by his appearance among them—he was bedridden for many years—but because of the heroism he displayed in his terrible affliction. For over twenty years he lay hopelessly paralysed as the result of an accident. It was during his illness that he became a Freethinker, and the heroism he displayed under his terrible affliction, as well as his keen interest in the world in which he could no longer move in person, endeared him to all who knew him. In London we have to record with the deepest regret the passing away of Mr. George Standing, who took a very active part in our movement during the Presidency of Charles Bradlaugh and the early years of his successor, G. W. Foote. Mr. Standing dropped active work in connection with Freethought during the later part of his life, but he played his part well and ably for many years; and in the list of the lesser known but gallant fighters for Freethought his name must always take a prominent place. Finally, the Executive has to report the death of Mr. F. W. Wood, another of the followers of Charles Bradlaugh, who retained his active interest in the Society till the end. Mr. Wood was a director of the Secular Society, Limited, and was for many years a member of the N.S.S. Executive. His cheeriness and good nature was proverbial; and his interest in all that affected Freethought never suffered relaxation. In him Freethought has lost one of its most devoted and most genial followers.

Turning to more general but still cognate matters, the first subject that calls for comment is the position of the movement for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. It will be remembered that immediately after the last prosecution for blasphemy, a Society for their repeal was formed, on the committee of which the N.S.S. is well represented. No opportunity has been lost by this body to promote the object for which it was formed. It managed to get a discussion in the House of Lords, and it has a Bill ready for discussion in the House of Commons. The procedure of the House prevented this Bill reaching a second reading, but the Society recently asked Mr. Henderson, the Home Secretary, to receive a deputation on the subject. Mr. Henderson consented, and your President was one among those who laid the case for the Abolition before the Home Secretary. Mr. Henderson professed his cordial agreement with the object of the deputation, promised his vote whenever the matter came before the House, and also undertook to lay the claims of the Society before the Cabinet when it was mapping out its legislative programme for the next session. This is all the deputation could obtain, or, in the circumstances, expect; but your Executive strongly urges Freethinkers all over the country to make this question a leading one at all elections, and secure promises of support wherever possible. It should be added that a full report of the deputation is in the press and can be used by Freethinkers for distribution and for the education of parliamentary candidates.

On the question of religious instruction in State-supported schools, the position remains what it was. But the religious leaders are making vigorous efforts to further their special interests. Conferences have been held between the leaders of the various religious bodies, and various schemes have been propounded that were thought likely to serve the interests of the Churches as a whole. Fortunately no agreement has been reached, and it is to be hoped that this want of harmony will continue. But the danger of agreement is always present, and it is not always remembered how much of our security is owing to the divisions among our enemies. It is that alone which prevents them using their combined strength with what might, for a time, well be crushing force. Our only protection against this is to go on making Freethinkers, and it is, indeed, only by sapping the faith in religious doctrines that the bulk of Christians will ever agree to their religion being kept out of the schools, and thus perform an act of elementary justice to the child and to civilization.

A resolution on the Agenda calls attention to the need for all opponents of State religious teaching withdrawing their children from religious instruction. If this were done on a general scale, very much good would result.

There is but space in this report for the very briefest of

glances at Freethought abroad. In the United States the *Truthseeker* continues its gallant fight, and it is pleasing to see that its friends come to its financial assistance with promptitude and liberality in order to enable it to face the heavy losses incurred through recent events. In South America there appears to be going on a very active literary propaganda, and the Churches are being attacked in what has been in the past very strong centres of clericalism. In Europe many of the Freethought organizations are beginning to pull themselves together after the disruptive influence of the war; but in Italy there have been many retrogressive steps resulting from the alliance between Mussolini and the Vatican. This alliance between retrogressive political forces and the Churches may bring with it grave dangers to our Freethought brethren abroad, but they are assured of our sympathy, and whatever help we may be able to give them in their struggle.

In this connection it may be noted that after the lapse of twenty years another International Freethought Conference is to be held in Rome, and this challenge to religious obscurantism in one of its principal strongholds must have the effect of centering world-wide attention on our great cause. It is the opinion of the Executive that the National Secular Society should be as strongly represented there as is possible, and a resolution will be placed before you to that effect in the course of the business of the day.

The fact of the Conference meeting this year at Preston, said to be one of the strongest centres of Roman Catholicism in the country, brings to mind the expressed opinion of two such opposites as Charles Bradlaugh and Cardinal Newman that the final struggle will be between Roman Catholicism and Atheism. Certainly we may put it that not only the final struggle, but the constant and all-important contest in the history of civilization is that between freedom and authority in matters of opinion. In this great fight the Roman Catholic Church has stood for many centuries as the typical example of the one, and it is our pride that we stand and always have stood for the other. The final struggle is as yet a long way off, but all existing circumstances tend to bring this fundamental issue into the foreground. The political situation, with the extension of the franchise to a point at which the vote is practically universal, induces political parties to seek alliance with this or that Church, and to take advantage of religious mass psychology for party ends. But Churches and Chapels do not give their services for nothing. Their main consideration is sectarian advancement, and the price they will ask, and perhaps get, is one that will place their beliefs in a position of greater power and security. We believe that all such concessions threaten the higher interests of the race, and meanwhile behind the manoeuvres of the smaller religious bodies stands the sinister figure of the Roman Church, which has never abandoned its claim to secular supremacy, and which has never yet permitted the interests of civilization to stand in the way of its pretensions.

Never in the history of the past three centuries was the existence of a body of men and women, animated by the single desire to arrive at the truth, and standing aloof from party or sectarian consideration, of so great importance to the well-being of the community as at the present moment. The ruling powers have made many concessions to the demand for liberty, and the Churches have toned down or discarded many of their most objectionable doctrines but it should never be forgotten that these advances have been made because there existed a body of men and women who were determined that the truth should be known by all, and that it should be printed and spoken in a manner that could be understood by all. Nor do we think it can be called vanity to claim that the historian of the future will regard the work of a Society such as ours as of incalculable importance. Wherever and whenever they trace the history of the reforms of the past century and a-half, the fight for a free press, a free platform, the equality of the sexes, the rational treatment of the criminal, the substitution of arbitration for war, the rationalizing of the day of rest, and the disappearance of many of the more objectionable and more revolting of those Christian doctrines that made

life a burden and a terror, they will find the Freethinker in the van.

It is left for us Freethinkers of the twentieth century to carry on the work and to prove ourselves worthy sons of our predecessors. The form of the fight may change generation by generation, but the principle, the fundamental issue remains the same. We are engaged to-day, as Freethinkers have been for centuries, in the age-long struggle of freedom against arbitrary authority, of science against superstition, of truth against established falsehood. We carry with us into that fight the tradition of very many gallant men and women who faced torture, imprisonment, and even death, in upholding what they believed to be true. In our hands we carry for weapons the truths of science and the findings of experience. And if we can by our efforts advance the great cause of freedom, justice, and humanity ever so little we shall have neither lived nor have fought in vain.

Freethought on Sex Problems.

V.

(Concluded from page 363.)

In conclusion, may I say that the following seem to me the most important directions in which freethought should be exercised in regard to sex problems:—

(1) Birth Control is only the first step. What we need as well is Life Control and Death Control; that is, the beginning, the continuance, and the ending of life should be a matter of personal responsibility and management. The claim of the Churches that birth and death must be in God's hands—that is, must be a matter of blind chance—has led to the production of countless thousands of undesirable and unwanted children, and to the cruel extension of lives of needlessly prolonged agony—such as those of the sufferers from incurable tuberculosis, cancer, and other diseases not yet conquered by science. Obviously such sufferers should, on their own request, instantly be given the relief of a kind and honourable exit; and Science should place at their disposal the efficient professional service which Superstition still denies them. Similarly, Freethinkers should assume control of their own life and its expression—intellectually, emotionally, sexually, and in every other way. The guiding principle is simply the maintenance of the health and happiness of the individual and of society—for *joy is the object of existence*.

(2) Every effort should be made by theoretical research and practical experience to improve the present methods of contraception. They are by no means perfect. To my certain knowledge most of the methods advocated by the leading birth controllers in England are inefficient and unreliable, and their teaching is in consequence mostly nonsense and lies. No one method is secure. The best security is available by the combination of methods I have set out in *Safe Marriage* (obtainable at 3s. 6d. from Roberts and Co., 19 Villiers Street, Strand; or direct from the publishers—Heinemann). The MS. of this book was submitted to and approved by all the leading medical authorities in Great Britain and on the Continent. I shall be pleased to answer privately any detailed questions sent to me, care of the *Freethinker*, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

(3) No great advance can be made until contraception is studied in the medical colleges and laboratories in the same way as any other aspect of medicine and surgery. The Church persistently blocks such study and teaching, and then scolds the public for following the quacks, amateurs and egomaniacs who have undoubtedly done very good service in keeping the subject under public discussion, but very bad service in advocating inefficient and uncomfortable and even dangerous methods. The public should be able to trust the doctors, but at present it cannot do so

because the doctors themselves are uninformed in the majority of cases—just as full of ignorances and prejudices as the public themselves.

(4) The reproductive organs should be regarded as a wonderful and delicate piece of physiological machinery. But a man's body is his own, and a woman's body her own; and freethought would grant them the natural inalienable right to do what they like with their own bodies, so long as they inflict no harm or unhappiness on society in general. Such freedom of action is impossible at present because of the fear of impregnation and the fear of sexual disease. Therefore impregnation must be controlled and disease must be extirpated. Both these objects are desirable in themselves and in their ultimate consequences, and they are possible—once the Church stops blocking up the gangway of Knowledge.

(5) A permanent well-ordered marriage is naturally for the majority of people the most comfortable and happy arrangement. But men and women should enter upon and remain in a marriage entirely of their own accord—not be trapped into it, and kept in it against their will; and there should be an easy and honourable exit. It is nonsense to say that the welfare of society is founded on the mutual unhappiness of any individual pair. Nor is the welfare of society injured by the growing tendency to "try it out" before entering upon the formal marriage contract. There is certainly a growing popularity for unofficial marriage as a preliminary, and such trial marriages are often founded on higher ideals and greater personal and social love, honour and responsibility than the more conventional unions. Freethinkers should beware of being shocked by criticism and condemnation founded ultimately on ecclesiasticism. The Christian communities can endure quite calmly all the newspaper reports of the Russell case—in fact, they have now discovered that this case has great social value—therefore, the rational discussion of the most desirable forms of marriage in modern life cannot possibly be adjudged improper and indecent. Indeed, Freethinkers should adopt the attitude of mind that there is nothing common or unclean about sex; nothing beyond the sway of Reason and Romance.

(6) The problem of the "prostitute" should cause no anger of mind to the Freethinker. We are all the products of our heredity and environment. Prostitution, that is, promiscuous instead of selective intercourse, is obviously "unnatural." Its existence is merely a proof that either the heredity or the environment is out of tune with Nature—perhaps both are. Till we can clean up our blood and improve our upbringing by eugenics, education, and the economic reorganization of society, the prostitute will be with us; and we have merely to decide whether we shall regard her as a "worker" or an "entertainer," and in what way we can best exercise supervision over her efforts, for her own benefit and for the benefit of society. Gibbering about "making vice safe" won't help at all. Why should vice be left dangerous? Everybody knows now that sexual disease is contaminating innocent and guilty alike—that in fact it often hits the innocent and misses the guilty, by mere chance or because the guilty know the danger and may guard against it, whereas the innocent are often unaware of the danger or have been misled by the Church into believing that disease comes from misconduct only. As for the prostitute, she is no better and no worse than women living in legal chastity with husbands whom they do not love and may even abhor.

(7) As to the theory of life-long monogamy—one man one woman for ever—that has quite patently broken down in practice; and the rationality of a

change of partners unsuitable to one another is frankly admitted. But no one system should be imposed on all men and all women. For most of us, monogamy seems to be the most comfortable and happy relationship; but we should be tolerant and remember what Darwin taught so clearly long ago. On page 363 (Part II, Chapter XX) of *The Descent of Man*, he says:—

Polygamy, as just stated, is almost universally followed by the leading men in every tribe. Nevertheless, there are tribes, standing almost at the bottom of the scale, which are strictly monogamous. This is the case with the Veddahs of Ceylon: they have a saying, according to Sir J. Lubbock, "that death alone can separate husband and wife." An intelligent Kandyan chief, of course a polygamist, was perfectly scandalized at the utter barbarism of living with only one wife, and never parting until separated by death. "It was," he said, "just like the Wanderoo monkeys."

Since the time of Darwin there has been much study of the habits of the native men and women in Australasia and Polynesia generally, and we are finding that what was previously believed as to their "promiscuity" is erroneous: that in fact, they are highly selective, but have a number of love-unions during their lives, in some cases the love ripening into the quiet, deep affection necessary for a happy and continuous marriage. These natives have a wide practical knowledge of love-making; they understand the physical basis of happy sexual intercourse; they know a good deal about birth control and artificial miscarriage, etc.; and our view of them as "heathen in their blindness" is inadequate and inaccurate. On trying to balance the good with the evil, one wonders sometimes if they have really benefited by our process of civilization—and syphilization. Their cleanliness of mind and body has been ruined, and their communal ownership of food, clothing and shelter—of air, water and land—has been destroyed. Till we go among them, no native woman need be poor or hungry—hence none need prostitute themselves against their inclination for the mere sake of "maintenance" and actually they do not do so.

(8) Science can tell us definitely how to prevent sexual diseases by medical measures which are partly a matter for the community, but mainly a matter for the individual. After contact, for a few seconds, the germs are on the outside of the skin and of the mucus membrane. Immediate self-disinfection will kill those germs before they can penetrate into the tissues. The prophylactic campaign during the war, and the detailed measures for men and for women, I have recorded in *Two Years in Paris*, published by myself. Copies can be obtained from the Editor of the *Freethinker* at 2s. 6d. each—the proceeds to go to any fund he directs.

(9) Finally, as the aim and object of freethought as applied to sex problems, let us take the following from the *Times* (May 29) report of the Presidential address given before the Twenty-ninth Annual Congress of the South-Eastern Union of Scientific Societies:—

The President's address dealt with "Science in Civilization," its purpose being to revive the belief in the power of science to promote both spiritual and material progress, and to plead for a fuller recognition of what it had done for the benefit of man, as well as for a wider use of its methods in the consideration of all problems of social life. "Science," he said, "represented knowledge as opposed to ignorance; light as against darkness; the beauty of truth and the truth of beauty. It was the duty of science to fight ignorance and all that was implied by it; to be intolerant of all that was false; to make honest doubt a virtue, and condemn credulity as a crime."

ETTIE A. ROUË.

The Way of the World.

MR. CHESTERTON'S GARGANTUAN MEAL.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton is 50 years old to-day (May 29), and I understand the little village of Beaconsfield, where he resides, is *en fête*. Fountains of ale are running for all residents. Hot cocoa is in readiness for visiting Liberal journalists. Two fat oxen are being roasted whole in the village street—one for Mr. Chesterton, one for his guests.....The publicans of Sussex, introduced by Mr. Belloc, will present an address of congratulation and wet their mugs to toast the joint patron saint of their beneficent industry. A large number of tempting birthday presents, including a fine set of paradoxes from Mr. Philip Guedalla, will be on view.—"Daily Herald."

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE UNPHILOSOPHIC.

The philosophy of the common man is an old wife that gives him no pleasure, yet he cannot live without her, and resents any aspersions that a stranger may cast on her character. Of this homely philosophy the tender cuticle is religious belief; really the least vital and most arbitrary part of human opinion, the outer ring, as it were, of the fortifications of prejudice, but for that very reason the most jealously defended; since it is on being attacked there, at the least defensible point, that rage and alarm at being attacked at all are first aroused in the citadel.—George Santayana, "*Scepticism and Animal Faith*."

PASTEUR, THE BARNUM OF SCIENCE.

The priority of discovery of these truths [the cause of fermentation, and the silk-worm disease] in biology is now clearly established in favour of Béchamp.....Not only did Béchamp, who was six years the senior of Pasteur, discover the basic facts, but he had in some cases completed his investigations before Pasteur had begun his studies of the subject.....Pasteur never acknowledged the pioneer work done by his contemporary Béchamp. Indeed, he had the effrontery—born of a secure position in the eyes of his countrymen—to steal the thunder of his great rival.....He (Pasteur) may be said to have been the first professed scientist who applied advertising methods to his career.....This Barnum of Science was, moreover, the darling of Napoleon III, to whom he dedicated one of his books.—"New Age."

[Pasteur was a Roman Catholic, and is often cited as an edifying example of a truly religious Scientist.]

Correspondence.

CANON DORRITY AND THE FREETHINKER.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

MY DEAR BROTHER,—Absence from home, coupled with a little indisposition, has prevented me from writing earlier about your article on my letter in your issue of May 4, but I hope it is not yet too late to say a little which may be serviceable to us both.

I venture to think that much of your able article is somewhat vitiated by the fact that you write of one thing, while my letter deals with another. I wrote of people who profess to hold the Christian faith, but live as if they don't; while you write about people who definitely, and on theory, deny that faith, and even decline Theism—for, of course, a man can be theoretically a Theist and yet not a Christian. You seem to hold a brief not only against Christianity—though I see no benefit to anyone in this—but also against Theism. But do you honestly think that it can be maintained, with any show of reason, that for the past 1900 years the vast majority of the great thinkers of the West have not been both Theists and Christians? You seem to me like a modern Mrs. Malaprop (no offence meant) trying to keep back an Atlantic with a mop!

I must write disjointedly, I fear, and as thoughts strike me, for it would take more time than I can spare to endeavour to make a pretty essay of this letter, and I

will notice first of all your remark that when a Christian "comes to deal with an actual problem of life—moral, intellectual, or physical—he acts, and is compelled to act, as though there were no God able or ready to interfere in the normal processes of Nature." My dear brother, I must meet that with a direct negative: "In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, he lets his request and his needs be made known unto God." He doesn't believe that there is anything outside that God's cognizance and purview; nor does he think that prayer makes no difference. If to a chain of causes containing no prayer there will be one consequence, he believes that prayer adds another link and that there must be, of necessity, a different consequence. He doesn't always get what he wants or asks for, but what he is really "out for" is not to get his will done, but God's; and if his request is not granted he believes that "it is goodness still which grants or denies it." And, by the way, I don't like your word "interfere," and never use it; I prefer "intervention." I never think of God as "interfering" with or "violating" the laws of Nature, but—believing in a Personal God—I don't in my thought about him put him into a straight waistcoat and deny him freedom of movement. I am encouraged by him to speak of all that is in my heart, as a child would prattle to his father, but I am not such a fool as to think that I know better than he about anything; and so I leave the matter to him, believing firmly that if he grants my innocent and ignorant request, it is well, and that if he deny it, it is also well—for he knows best.

I think that I must perforce acknowledge that, like yourself, I have occasionally got a little bit confused, and have sometimes found myself confounding—both in my sermon and my letter—the professing Christian who lives as if it had been demonstrated that there is no God, with the man who is on theory an Atheist. But I cannot believe that the Atheistic thesis is as likely—far less more likely—to lead to a virtuous, benevolent, and beneficent life. That is not my experience, nor do I believe it to be the experience of mankind at large, and every individual life is based and lived upon its fundamental philosophy concerning God and Man. In the words of Savonarola, "A man only believes what he practices." Turned round, that means that a man's conduct is the picture-book of his creed; and, indeed, all men really practice what they really believe—not what they say they believe, but what they really do believe.

I could almost write a book in reply to your article, but time and your patience and space would fail. Let me for the present conclude with a few remarks upon your implied belief that "the natural morality endorsed by Atheists" is "of a much loftier and a much more serviceable character than that endorsed by strictly Christian teaching. The assumption of superiority is quite unwarranted, either from a theoretical or a practical standpoint."

I could almost have shouted with laughter (no offence once more) as I noticed those two words "serviceable" and "practical." I look round and search in vain for the benevolent institutions founded by Atheists: hospitals, orphanages, rescue homes, etc.; the thousand-and-one institutions for the amelioration of human woe which owe their foundation to the teaching of Jesus, and to the efforts of those calling themselves by his name and really trying, though with many faults and failings, to follow in his steps. My dear brother, when you and your confrères have something to show under this head you may begin with some appearance of justification to speak with your enemy in the gate. "By their fruits ye shall know them" and I do not hope to gather figs from the thistle of Atheism!

Nevertheless, you are still my brother, and I am yours; and I would, like Paul of Tarsus, that you were even such a one as I am, except these bonds which bind me—bonds of selfishness, self-centredness, disloyalty, and so on—but perhaps in a better world than this we shall know more, and see more clearly, and the evening bring all home!

Ever yours sincerely,

DAVID DORRITY, B.D.

Rector of St. Ann's Manchester;
and Hon. Canon.

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. Harry Snell, "Empire Responsibility and the Subject Races."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Henry J. Golding. "Mr. Bernard Shaw's *St. Joan*."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 6.15, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK.—11.15, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture. Also Friday, June 13, at Highbury Corner, Islington, N., at 8.

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

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6, Mr. H. C. White, a Lecture.

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

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BOLTON SECULAR SOCIETY (Socialist Club, 16 Wood Street): 2.15, Discussion—"Why Christ's Teachings are Immoral." Opener, Mr. W. H. Sisson. Special Meeting of Members about Summer Campaign.

HULL BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 5 Room, Co-Operative Institute, Albion Street): Wednesday, June 17, at 8, Branch Meeting.

OUTDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.—Ramble to Cathkin Loch. Meet at Burnside Terminus 12 noon. The Committee will meet at the ramble.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor, near North Road entrance): 7, Mr. A. Hogan, "Foundations of Faith."

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