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Views and Opinions.

Liberty and the Law.

Several weeks ago, in the "Acid Drops" column, I referred to Lord Danesfort's Seditious and Blasphemous Teaching to Children Bill, which has just passed its second reading in the House of Lords. I did not deal with the matter then at any length, and preoccupation with other articles has prevented my dealing with it before now. In any case the subject will take no harm from the delay. I have not a very exalted opinion of the devotion of political parties to intellectual liberty, but I think it scarcely likely that the Bill will become law. But one never knows. It may suit the Government of the day to beat the big drum of "royalist loyalism" or of "religious purity," and in that case we may all have a very unpleasant awakening. We may be a liberty-loving people, but our love of liberty has its limitations, and its manifestation is sometimes so peculiar as to remind one of the gentleman who did not question the other party's affection for him, but was puzzled to understand why he was kicked downstairs. The promoters of this Bill profess the greatest regard for liberty of opinion—so long as they do not violently disagree with it; and there is nothing more dangerous or more common than to clothe one's intolerance with a regard for the moral welfare of the community. That is the way, in fact, in which intolerance has always worked. It makes the persecutor a social benefactor instead of a racial and social scourge.

Intolerance and Credulity in Office.

If the Bill really became law, it might easily turn out to be one of the most serious menaces to intellectual liberty that has been seen for a long time. As the Bill stands it aims at making it a punishable offence for anyone to have in his possession writings intended for young people under sixteen years of age, if these writings contain either blasphemous or seditious matter. The same rule will apply to teaching in any form. What is a seditious or blasphemous teaching is a matter for magistrates to decide, so that there is hardly anything which attacks the established order that might not be brought within the scope of the Bill. If it became law it would not be long before there would be a "raise the age movement," since it is certain that its promoters would not be content to stop at

sixteen years of age. The Bill is professedly aimed at the Communist Sunday schools. The promoters of the Bill, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is one of its supporters, admit that they have not very precise evidence as to how many of these schools there are—they say it is very few; and they can get no proof of undeniably "indecent" or "immoral (two words constantly on their lips) teachings that are given. They say that the fact of their not being able to get the evidence makes it the more dangerous. They know, by some occult means, that it is there, and if they cannot find it that is all the clearer proof of the devilish ingenuity with which these schools are conducted. That is a kind of reasoning that appeals admirably to the type of mind that saw a vast Russian army crossing England in the dead of night or perceived the Mons angels hovering over the British army.

* * *

"Blasphemy."

What are the teachings that so shock the highly-developed moral sense of the House of Lords, including the bench of bishops. I can only go by what is quoted, and must confess myself unimpressed by statements that certain of the teachings are "filthy," "immoral," and "indecent." Words such as these may mean anything or nothing. Usually they mean that their users have a very violent disagreement with the opinions they are attacking. Politically it is pointed out that children are told a patriot is an international blackleg. This may be right or it may be wrong—there is a current maxim, quoted freely enough, that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel—but it does not appear to furnish ground for legal action. Again:—

Thou shalt teach rebellion, for rebellion means the abolition of the present political State, and the end of capitalism, and the rising in their place of an industrial republic.

Again a legitimately debateable proposition; but there is nothing in the British Constitution against working for revolution, so long as one does not seek to bring it about by armed force. On the religious side we have the following horrible examples of the filthy, immoral, and indecent lessons given to children under sixteen:—

- Did Jesus Come from Heaven? No.
- Was his mother a virgin? No.
- Who was his father? Joseph, just in the ordinary way.
- Then the story is a legend? Of that there is no doubt.

Also the following:—

Christ on the cross dying for sinners is so ridiculous that one despairs at the hold this superstition has on the minds of the working class.

This yelling and shouting about God and the King is only thimble-rigging. We want not their glory nor their fiery hell.

These are the only samples of the horrible blasphemy given by Lord Danesfort, and it is interesting to note his confession that "a call for action had been made

by a number of distinguished ecclesiastics." Lord Danesfort is evidently a stalking horse. It is the distinguished ecclesiastics behind the scene who are the prime movers. We can assure Lord Danesfort that if the Bill becomes law there will be no scarcity of cases—that is, if the authorities have the courage to enforce it.

* * *

Absurdity in Excelsis.

If a parent dares to tell his boy or girl of fifteen that Jesus was the son of Mary and Joseph in the ordinary way; or if he tells them that the story of Jesus is a legend; or that the hold the superstition of the cross has upon people makes one despair of the human intellect; or if he tells them that the advertising cries about God and the King is only thimble-rigging; or that one suspects the newspaper smile of the Prince of Wales, he may be fined or imprisoned for teaching such immoral and indecent things. What a pity it is that someone in the House of Lords had not the courage to get up and point out that every one of the quotations might be described as an attempt to relieve the character of Mary of a gross slander. It is only saying that Mary's son was the child of her husband, which does not seem a very dreadful accusation to level at any married lady. Evidently Lord Danesfort has not developed to the point of reading the *Freethinker*, or he would know that we have been saying to all that the story of the virgin birth is a myth, that the story of the cross is a superstition, and that the acceptance of the Christian legends as historic facts is a disgrace to human intelligence; we have been saying these things for very many years. We have been saying these things to all quite irrespective of age. We shall keep on saying them. Moreover, fifteen or sixteen years of age is just about the time that youngsters should be told about these things quite seriously if they show any desire for the information. If a youth at that age has not the intelligence in these days to see the truth of such statements, it would seem that Nature had indeed foredoomed him to be a Christian, and to move in the impoverished mental atmosphere in which Lord Danesfort evidently has his being. Some people seem predestined to Christianity as others are to epilepsy or alcoholism.

* * *

Education and the Child.

I wrote a few weeks ago in defence of the position that to force upon the mind of a child as actual fact what is admittedly a mere opinion, is to prostitute education and to take a cowardly advantage of a child's helplessness. If the proposal prohibited this kind of instruction being given to a child, whether with regard to religion or politics, however impossible of realization by force of law it might be, it would have my sympathy. But one does not expect decency from an Archbishop or fair play from "distinguished ecclesiastics"; and the expressed desire is to protect the child from the opinions of its parents when these happen to differ from those of Lord Danesfort and his crew. If a parent believes that an industrial republic is the better form of government, or that Christianity is a myth, he may not teach these things to his children, but he must hand them over to established authorities who will tell him all sorts of fantastic stories under the guise of history, and poison his mind with religious absurdities before he is old enough to understand what is being done with him. And the parent must stand quietly by for fear of being laid by the heels of these "distinguished ecclesiastics." Lord Balfour, with his usual air of imparting profound wisdom while really saying nothing to the point, said that "the doctrine of liberty dealt with discussion between equals, between adults capable of having an opinion." That really has nothing to do with the

point at issue. The real point here is that the aim is to take away from one set of adults—even that of the parent—the right to train a child's mind in a certain direction while leaving it quite open to another set of adults to give a youth prepared tracts, or deliver stupid sermons, or give it religious and political lessons, to which the child's natural guardians may be altogether opposed, and may believe to be ruinous to the child's mental welfare. The fanatical and stupid tract distributor, with his prepared lies and deliberate slanders is to have the road prepared for him by all opposing literature and teaching being cleared out. The parsons, who see little in children but material out of which customers may be fashioned for their ridiculous joss-warehouses, are to have full control over the young during their most impressionable years. The old cry used to be, "Give me the child till it is seven years of age and you may do as you please with it afterwards." Our "distinguished ecclesiastics" are not satisfied with that. Their demand is to have the child till it is seventeen, and when they have addled what intelligence it possesses by cramming its mind full of absurd stories: of a child that never had a father, of a God who had no beginning, of heavens opening and dead men walking, and with a set of political teachings to match their religious doctrines, then they will allow the genuine social reformer to work on the product. One might as profitably set to work to make a scientific thinker out of the average village curate. It is a pity that the polite atmosphere of the House of Lords prevented anyone characterizing this measure in the language it deserved. If it comes before the House of Commons we shall see what will happen there. Meanwhile there are certain aspects of this question that are worth while dealing with.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be Continued.)

What is Life?

The Story of an African Farm. By Olive Schreiner, with an Introduction by S. C. Cronwright-Schreiner. Published by T. Fisher Unwin, Ltd., London. Price 3s. 6d.

THIS is a new issue of a novel which first saw the light of publication forty-one years ago and which has never been out of print since. How many other works of fiction published in the year 1883 are still in circulation to-day? The very titles of the overwhelming majority of them are no longer known, and their authors have been utterly forgotten. What accounts for the longevity of this comparatively small volume of 346 pages? It must be borne in mind that it was composed by a girl in her early twenties, who lacked the advantages of technical education, and who, born and brought up in the wilds of Africa, had come into contact with scarcely any intellectual white people. Her earliest acquaintances were uncivilized aborigines, whose appointed teacher and civilizer was her own father, and even when in her twentieth year she began to earn her living as governess, it was among ignorant and superstitious Dutch farmers that she was destined to live, move, and have her being. Yet by the beginning of 1881, in her twenty-sixth year, Olive Schreiner had completed *The Story of an African Farm* and arrived in London for its publication. These circumstances, as related by her husband, Mr. S. C. Cronwright-Schreiner, in his excellent Introduction, are of the utmost importance, showing beyond dispute that the writer must have been a born genius of the most brilliant order.

Furthermore, the principal characters in *The Story of an African Farm* are of simple origin, and lead simple, agricultural lives, and we are introduced to them while they are asleep at night. First comes

Tant', of Aunt Sannie, the Boer woman, who always goes to bed in her clothes, and who is now a widow, but has had two husbands, the first a young Boer, and the second a consumptive Englishman, who had a daughter called Em. In another room there are two small beds, in one of which sleeps Em, "a yellow-haired child with a low forehead and a face of freckles." In the other lies Lyndall, Em's orphan cousin, who is of quite elfin-like beauty. In a cabin, some distance from the house, sleeps the German overseer of the farm. In the same cabin lies his son Waldo, who has "a great head of silky, black curls and two black eyes." Waldo is two years older than the two girls who are each twelve. The German is profoundly pious, passionately fond of the Bible and the hymn book, and is in the habit of conducting divine service at the farmhouse every Sunday. Waldo loves his father and shares his piety, but, unlike his father, he is troubled by doubt. Conversant with the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel, whose sacrifice on the altar was consumed, in answer to his prayer, by a fire from heaven, poor Waldo also laid his sacrifice on the altar, and earnestly prayed, but no fire came down to consume it. He is greatly puzzled, and the only conclusion he can come to is, "God hates me." Two years later he makes his sad confession of unbelief:—

There was a secret he had carried in his heart for a year. He had not dared to look at it; he had not whispered it to himself; but for a year he had carried it. "I hate God!" he said. The wind took the words and ran away with them, among the stones, and through the leaves of the prickly-pear. He thought it died away half down the copje. He had told it now (p. 19).

Circumstances impel him later not only to emphasize that confession, but to go far beyond it. One day, in an interview with Lyndall, he almost hissed out: "There is no God; no God; not anywhere." This fierce exclamation supplies the novelist with the opportunity to express a deep truth:—

In truth, is it not life's way? We fight our little battles alone; you yours, I mine. We must not help or find help. When your life is most real, to me you are mad; when your agony is blackest, I look at you and wonder. Friendship is good, a strong stick; but when the hour comes to lean hard, it gives. In the day of their bitterest need all souls are alone (p. 93).

Em was a simple-minded, ignorant, and superstitious little girl, but her character was above reproach. She was as true as steel. Lyndall, on one occasion, in reply to one who reviled Em by saying, "She is not half so good as you are," vehemently retorted: "She is so much better than I that her little finger has more goodness in it than my whole body." Lyndall, on the contrary, possessed a marvellously fine intellect, high ambitions, noble ideals, and an insatiable thirst for knowledge. At twelve years of age she was surprisingly well versed in history, and had an intuitive insight into peoples' characters.

At this stage we witness the advent to Tant' Sannie's farm of the most contemptible hypocrite that ever cursed the earth with his presence. He came on foot, with his pendulous red nose, ragged clothes, and broken boots, but accounted for his disreputable appearance by describing the most appalling misfortunes which had recently befallen him. Lyndall discerned his true character at once, and openly denounced him as an atrocious liar. The old German fully believed in his honesty and honour, and pleaded so eloquently on his behalf with Tant' Sannie that she consented to let him stay on the farm for a few days. He ingeniously utilized the easily bamboozled German as a stepping-stone to secure his own advancement

with the Boer woman. Having ascertained that the overseer usually conducted divine Service on Sundays he represented himself to be an expert at that glorious task, and offered to officiate on his first Sunday at the farm. So when that Lord's day arrived Bonapart Blenkins, arrayed in the German's best clothes, had the audacity to preach a sermon on the text: "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." From the moment he entered the farm he had done nothing but tell gigantic lies; and his very discourse on the awful doom of liars in the world to come consisted wholly in the recitation of historic falsehoods. The congregation, however, being wrapped in dense ignorance, was most favourably impressed, and learned to look up to him as a veritable man of God. At the suggestion of the good, old German he was appointed schoolmaster at a salary of £30 a year. His pupils were Waldo, Em, and Lyndall, and the latter asked awkward questions about which he knew absolutely nothing:—

"Lyndall made him angry," said the girl (Em) tearfully, "and he has given me the fourteenth of John to learn. He says he will teach me to behave myself when Lyndall troubles him."

"What did she do?" asked the boy.

"You see," said Em, hopelessly turning the leaves, "when ever he talks she looks out at the door, as though she did not hear him. To-day she asked him what the signs of the Zodiac were, and he said he was surprised that she should ask him; it was not a fit and proper thing for little girls to talk about. Then she asked him who Copernicus was; and he said he was one of the Emperors of Rome, who burned the Christians in a golden pig, and the worms ate him up while he was alive." (pp. 60, 61.)

For long he became the most important personage on the farm; and even ventured to make love to the Boer woman herself, who accepted him as her suitor and promised to marry him. At last, however, he overreached himself, as most such men ultimately do, an act which resulted in his own destruction.

We are assured in the *Life of Olive Schreiner* that Bonaparte Blenkins was not a purely fictitious character, but that such a man did actually exist and was known by his real name to the famous novelist. The present writer also is able to testify from both observation and experience that South Africa used to be often pestered by such stupendous hypocrites, whose one aim in life was to deceive their fellow-beings.

Now Olive Schreiner used her characters as instruments for the expression of herself and her philosophy of life, and the remaining question is, What is the Philosophy of Life embodied in *The Story of an African Farm*?

J. T. LLOYD.

(To be Concluded.)

St. Paul.

ST. PAUL of Crete, like a flame of fire,
Through many towns did speed,
And preached of a Christ that from desire
The hearts of men would lead.

St. Paul of Crete, with eyes on heaven,
Knew not a maiden's love;
His task to turn the thoughts of men
From joy to some God above.

St. Paul of Crete, most serious,
Walked blinded by a vision,
And beauty in the female form
He treated with derision.

St. Paul of Crete, chief lunatic,
Is laughed at by the youth,
For passing beauty by to woo
His chimera of truth.

OSWYN J. BOULTON.

Through Catholic Spectacles.

I had rather be a dog and bay the moon than such a Roman.—*Shakespeare.*

Reason is a rebel unto faith.—*Sir Thos. Browne.*

I see but one cross remaining on earth, and it is that of the unrepentant thief.—*Landor.*

MR. GILBERT K. CHESTERTON is one of the best-known figures in the literary arena, and it is customary to refer to him as a very up-to-date journalist. Yet it is as plain as a pikestaff that Chesterton represents reactionary thought. He has attacked woman's suffrage; he dislikes Jews; he is never happier than when telling the working-man when and where he is wrong. He has a pretty talent for burlesque, and in his *Short History of England* he has exercised his undoubted gifts in an unexpected manner, and with the most extraordinary results.

For Mr. Chesterton approaches history with a definite idea that most previous works on the subject have been written by men with no more regard for truth than Baron Munchausen or the authors of *The Lives of the Saints*. To that end Mr. Chesterton dipped his pen in crimson lake, and rewrote the history of our country in the light of the spiritual truth of the Roman Catholic Church. Our history is traced, not through rulers, statesmen, and documents, but through such picturesque personages as Edward the Confessor, Thomas à Becket, and many other faithful sons of Catholicism. His imaginative point of view is epitomized in the phrase: "The thorn of Glastonbury from which has grown the whole story of Britain."

This method of Mr. Chesterton has its drawbacks, for it drives ordinary readers to the mood of Davy Jones, "a friend much dreaded by mariners." Indeed, being instructed citizens of an educated nation, readers know that Mr. Chesterton's observations, like Rudolphe's in Gautier's story, lack common sense, though, like Rudolphe's, they make up for the deficiency by the most brilliant qualities. As an example, Mr. Chesterton says that the English who destroyed the Armada and stopped Spanish aggression were "as dingy, as undeveloped, as petty and provincial as Boers"—which is the merest abuse. Roman Catholics, naturally, receive all the bouquets, and Mr. Chesterton says, pontifically: "Though the Stuarts failed in England, they fought for things that succeeded in Europe"—an assertion that should make the exiled Hapsburgs, Hohenzollerns, and Romanoffs look at their bank balances and wonder what has happened.

Mr. Chesterton has not a good word for the Reformation, or for the naughty Protestants, and he sighs for the return of the ages of Faith. We much prefer the comparative freedom of our own degenerate days. There is no Star Chamber to fine, pillory, lop the hands, slit the noses, and cut off the ears of a Stubbes, a Prynne, or a Leighton, men misguided enough to publish wild liberal opinions. Even tramps are no longer treated with the resources of civilization familiar to Catholic England. In those times, when the Government did not like the opinions of an author, it mutilated or murdered him. The fires of Smithfield may have been pleasant to Catholic onlookers, but they were a grim reality to the victims. Such is the freedom and civilization which Mr. Chesterton sighs for. "The man died under our hands," reads one of the official reports describing the torture of an offender in those days of Faith. One need not be a specially educated citizen to understand that Mr. Chesterton's history is coloured, not plain. Sobriety of judgment is not precisely the quality in which his talents shine.

This is no passing mood of Mr. Chesterton's. In his *Victorian Age of Literature* he uses his talents

tyrannously in the service of the most reactionary of the Christian Churches. He has nothing but crude insults for the great "intellectuals." Ignoring a shelf-full of masterpieces that has come from the greatest of living English novelists, Chesterton says of Thomas Hardy that he is "a sort of village Atheist brooding and blaspheming over the village idiot." Swinburne, a poet of extraordinary genius, is accused of composing "a learned and sympathetic and indecent parody on the Litany of the Blessed Virgin," surely a most ironical accusation in a Protestant country. In speaking of *Songs Before Sunrise*, he tries to belittle these superb lyrics by making the schoolboy joke that they were songs before a sunrise that never arrived. According to Chesterton the great Victorians were "lame giants." Even Robert Browning is reproached for making puns about a Catholic priest. One of the most remarkable women of the century, Emily Brontë, is attacked, or, rather, side-tracked. She is described as being as "unsociable as a storm at midnight." The only "intellectual" to whom Chesterton is decently civil is James Thomson, the shy genius who wrote *The City of Dreadful Night*, who, he says, knew how to be democratic in the dark." As Chesterton spells the poet's name with a "p," the compliment is a doubtful one after all. Mr. Chesterton, be it remembered, is the man who challenges the dogmatism of the Freethinker; convinces scientists of irrationality; and who pretends to find liberty inside a Church which boasts of its nunneries and monasteries.

Reactionaries, like Mr. Chesterton, who like to think that progress is illusory, would do well to look, occasionally, beyond the pages of Roman Catholic historians. Even in the files of old newspapers, they would find things which might help to shake their belief in the "good, old times," they so often praise. Take, for example, the following cutting from the *Sunday Times*, January 22, 1826. It loses none of its force by recording an occurrence in the Rome of the Popes, and the sacred city of the Roman Catholic world only a century since:—

Rome: Previous to the execution of the Carbonari a dispute arose among the priests. It had formerly been the custom when a criminal rejected conversion to compel him to yield by applying to the hands and feet of the culprit burning torches. The priests wished to reintroduce this custom; they had nearly succeeded when the court forbade their doing so, saying that such conduct would expose the Roman Government to obloquy.

That Gilbert Chesterton should court public approval as a modern Saint George attacking the dragon of Prethought proves to what desperate shifts the champions of Christianity are reduced. Resplendant in motley, he attracts crowds by his high spirits and boyish wilfulness. Happily for us, he nullifies the effect of his own work by making his hearers feel that nothing matters very much, and that present-day religion is a practical joke played on the working-classes, although it is not a pleasant one.

MIMNERMUS.

MR. WHITEHEAD'S MISSION.

In consequence of local political and other societies having temporarily abandoned outdoor propaganda at Bury, our Missioner's meetings were not so well attended as usual. Nevertheless, six addresses were given to satisfactory audiences, and a further visit will be arranged. Requests from Blackburn and Bolton for return visits having been granted, Mr. Whitehead is spending this week in Blackburn, and will return to Bolton on Saturday, July 19, remaining until Friday, July 25, when meetings will be held nightly on the Town Hall Steps.

Timothy's Epistle to Paul.

The manuscript, of which the following is a translation, was recently found in the possession of some Nestorian Christians in the interior of China.

DEAR brother in Christ,

I have both your first and second epistles, and must apologize for not replying to them earlier. But the affairs of this small church, of which you left me in charge, have taken up most of my time, as the bishops and deacons are rather more of a hindrance than a help to its successful management. It is no easy job, as you yourself have experienced, trying to keep a lot of new converts in the right path. Many of them have still to learn the necessity of being off with the old faith before being on with the new; while their almost incurable hankering after the flesh-pots of Egypt is a serious barrier to their sanctification and growth in grace.

You speak of having delivered two of these converts, Hymenæus and Alexander, over to Satan; and that is one of the doctrines of the faith upon which I wish further enlightenment. Because, recently, I saw a correspondence in the *Damascus Evening News*, entitled, "Is the Devil Dead?" Some of the correspondents affirmed that he was as dead as a door-nail, and others stated that he had lately been seen, although in a dejected condition, in the back seat of a Salvation Army meeting; while others claimed that he had never existed at all, except in the imagination of the ignorant and superstitious. So, in view of the present unsettled state of the controversy, I have thought it best not to mention the Devil in the pulpit until I hear from you.

I note your advice to take a little wine for my stomach's sake. But when the United Kingdom Alliance read that there will be no end of trouble. They have already explained away the Old Testament passages of Scripture relating to strong drink, and say that instead of Christ turning the water into wine at the feast of Cana in Galilee, what he really did was to turn the wine into water. They say this is the true version of the story. So when they read this new passage recommending wine, it will have the same effect upon them as waving a red rag in front of a bull. These temperance reformers have already caused a division in the church by insisting that the communion ought to be celebrated with wine that is unfermented. This is another controversy that you will have to settle.

Your mention of my grandmother, Dais, brings back some vivid and touching memories. Though the voice I loved for ever now is silent, I'll remember my whole life long the thrill that stirred my heart on hearing my dear, old grannie's twilight song. I can picture her there, in her old rocking chair—but you will know the song, and will have heard it on the gramophone or the wireless. Grannie thought a lot of you, Paul, though she never quite forgave you for deserting the faith of your father, and adapting what she called the new-fangled doctrines of the Nazarene. It is said that she died a Christian, but this is not true. Mother did indeed read the first chapter of Genesis to her in her last moments, but she was too far gone to understand. She had many good qualities, and she fully appreciated your great kindness to my mother, Eunice and myself.

By the way, I saw a church almanac the other day which had a picture of mother and me sitting studying the Scriptures on a parchment scroll. It represented me as a little boy leaning over her knee listening to the story of Jacob in search of a wife. But they had mother dressed in a bright blue costume, and, as you know, mother always wore black. I suppose she would be in mourning for father, although, strange

to say, I have never heard him mentioned. But the publisher probably put her in bright colours to make us harmonize with the gaudy appearance of the rest of the almanac.

I may say, mother also has a high opinion of you, and is fond of relating the story of that wonderful exploit of yours, when you fought with wild beasts at Ephesus. We have had several South African big-game hunters here lately who have told mother taller stories than yours of their wonderful feats, but the wild beasts at Ephesus stand easily first in her admiration. She regards your prowess as more daring than any of the matadors in a Spanish bull-fight.

Coming to the more serious matters pertaining to the faith, I note all your instructions with regard to those widows, who are widows indeed, having reached the age of three score; and also those younger widows of uncertain age, who are not widows indeed; and also those whom you term grass-widows, and war-widows, and merry-widows. Really, I had no idea there were so many different kinds of widows until I read your epistles. But, with all due deference to your learned judgment and wider experience, I think it is a mistake to fix the age of a widow, who is a widow indeed, at three score years. We had a case here recently of an old lady who had been a widow for thirty years, and at the age of eighty-four married an old man who was ninety-six. Another, who had been a widow for the same period, was nearing her latter end and was receiving the clergyman's ministrations. By way of consolation he remarked that she would soon be in Abraham's bosom. To which she replied that she was mighty glad, as she had not been in anyone's bosom for thirty years—and that was a long spell. So that it does not seem to me advisable to regard a widow as a widow indeed—well, until she is dead, and you have the doctor's certificate, or the undertaker's bill. I would even hesitate to regard my own sainted mother Eunice as a widow indeed, unless she took the veil and went into a convent.

All widows are an uncertain quantity. When I read out to them in the meeting what you had written as to treating the younger widows as "sisters," they first smiled, and then laughed, as if what you had said was some kind of a joke. When I told them I did not see anything to laugh at, they only laughed the more. But you seem to understand the character of these younger widows, who are not widows indeed, when you speak of them as being "idle, going about from house to house; and not only idle, but as tattlers and busybodies—speaking things which they ought not." It is rather a hard task, I may tell you, trying to make saints out of material like this. I do wish you had left me in charge of some church where there were not quite so many of these widows. Their numbers, too, have considerably increased since you left, but I have a suspicion that it is the new curate they are after.

One of these widows, a Mrs. O'Neill, I really thought a most saintly person, as she helps in every good work. She promised to put me wise as to treating the younger widows as sisters, thinking apparently that I had still something to learn on the subject. So when I took her the weekly church allowance, she asked me in to have a cup of tea. And when she had closed the door she greeted me with one of those holy kisses, which, she said, you had recommended as a suitable form of Christian salutation. There may, of course, be such a thing as a "holy" kiss, but I am very certain Mrs. O'Neill's wasn't one of them. She displayed such a coming-on disposition that I began to think that discretion was the better part of gallantry; so, making a firm resolve, like Joseph of old, I made for the servants' quarters, and escaped by the back door.

I am beginning to think that there is something in a name after all. I am certain I would have had a more powerful influence in the church if they had called me by any other name than Timothy. These younger widows, who are not widows indeed, whenever my name is mentioned, always regard it as an occasion for a smile, as if there was something in the word Timothy that was amusing. Timothy may be all right for a little child, but as a name for a full-grown man, it lacks that dignity and weight which ought to belong to manhood. You say, "Let no man despise my youth"; but while one can outgrow one's youth, it is no easy matter to outgrow the juvenile associations attached to such a name as Timothy. These church almanacs have a great deal to answer for in always representing me as a little child, forgetting that I am now an elder in the church.

I noted especially your remark that, "Some men's sins are evident, going before unto judgment; and some men also they follow after." This reminded me of the lines of Shakespeare:—

The bad that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interr'd with their bones.

Although the wording is somewhat similar, the idea is not quite the same; but I think that Shakespeare's philosophy is the sounder of the two, seeing that he does not go beyond the facts. Your "before" and "after" had also a familiar ring about it, and I have just now remembered the passage where it occurs. It is in Shelley's *Skylark*:—

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not.

you may remember that Shelley's father was also called Timothy, which must have been a great handicap to the poor fellow in his station of life. He has my sincere sympathy.

I note your request to bring the cloak you left at Thoas, and also the books—*Tom Jones* and *Rhoderick Rhandom*—which I will try to remember not to forget. Indeed, I will only be too glad to come to you as soon as possible, and leave the care of all these widows in the hands of someone who understands feminine nature better than your humble servant. I think £15,000 a year none too much for any job that has to do with widows of a religious turn of mind.

There are several other matters which I will discuss with you when I come. May the Lord help me.

JOSEPH BRUCE.

IMMORTALITY—THAT IS THE GREAT THING.

In Philadelphia a meeting of Protestant Episcopalians discussed going back to Rome, from which the Episcopalian Church was separated by Henry VIII of England. The Episcopalian gentlemen wondered to what extent they should recognize the Pope; just exactly how infallible the latter's decisions should be, etc. Any reader of history can assure the Episcopalian brethren that they can unite with the Roman Catholic Church as the canary bird unites with the cat, and in no other way. The Catholic Church of Rome is too old and wise to make any uncertain bargains.

The Rev. Dr. Fosdick suggests that all Christians might get together on one single thing: "A hope in immortality." That's interesting, for it expresses the inside of all religious belief. Our early ancestors of a hundred thousand years ago saw their mothers, fathers, friends, dying and vanishing into the earth. They said: "This life is short, frightfully short."

Along came Pagan priests—of different kinds and different names through the ages—saying: "Rely on me, pay me reasonably, and I will guarantee you a happy immortality. If you don't take good care of me, you will be immortal, but you won't like the place you land in." A mere "hoping for immortality," without any promise of punishment if you don't behave, would be rather vague. And incidentally it would be a bad thing for the material prosperity of all the churches.—*Detroit Times*."

Acid Drops.

Liverpool Christians are up in arms against the proposal that music shall be permitted in the public parks on Sundays. Canon Copner has warned Liverpoolians that "when Liverpool people become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God the greatness of the city would go." That is very affecting! But it is noticed that neither God nor his lovers appear to be greatly perturbed at the awful slum dwellings of Liverpool, at the one-room lodgings without either light or ventilation that have existed, and still exist—we believe—in the city, any more than God and his lovers were upset when the pious city was the centre of the slave trade. But music in the parks! Well, that is quite a different proposition. One wonders what the future will think of men like Canon Copner? All we can say is that they are worthy of their creed and their creed is worthy of them. To use a figure of Ingersoll's, they fit each other like the upper and lower jaws of a hyena.

At a newspaper function the other day Mr. T. P. O'Connor paid an expected compliment to the independence and honesty of the British press. We say "expected," but not deserved, because at a gathering of newspaper men one expects to hear that the press is the fount of all that is pure and elevating. One hears just the same sort of thing at a church gathering—about churches. The art of praising one's self is a well practised one, and when one has the means of broadcasting the advertisement it is one that is certain to bring its reward. So one was not surprised to hear from Mr. O'Connor that the British press was the purest and the most independent in the world, and that the one instance of an English newspaper being subsidized to maintain a certain opinion—and he had to go back about 100 years to find this—so disgusted the British public that the paper soon disappeared. All of which sounds like a passage from one of Gilbert's librettos, but it is not. It is simply a speech from Mr. T. P. O'Connor at a gathering of newspaper men.

The curious thing is that Mr. O'Connor and those who were listening to him all knew quite well the exact value of what was being said. Many knew that if they only attempted to say what they really thought about many things they would immediately lose their positions. They know that papers are deliberately run to foist particular views upon the public, and deliberately suppress news and information that may interfere with their purpose. They can remember the story of the massacred British population in Peking; the way in which certain war stories were exploited by this incorruptible press; and the manner in which it lent itself to all sorts of misrepresentation of facts during the war; and the ready way in which anything was seized upon that promised to gain new readers among a sensation-loving public. Finally, they all know that with regard to religion not one of them dares to speak the truth. There are plenty of Freethinking writers on the London press, but they must not air their Freethought. They must play the religious game at—least to the extent of not saying anything against religion. Their position would not be worth a month's salary if they did otherwise.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor appeared to think that the fault of the only instance of British press corruptibility he has been able to discover was due to the paper being run to suit some single wealthy patron. That may be the case, but we question whether that kind of thing is more dangerous than having to please innumerable patrons in the shape of the public. After all, it may be said that when an individual paid for a paper to be kept going it was generally because he had some sort of an opinion to promote, and provided his editor kept that before him he could have a free hand in other directions. But to-day, with the rage and the necessity for huge circulations, papers are run not for the benefit of a single

patron, but the entertainment of the multitude and in order to get the money of the advertiser. The consequence is that every form of superstition, prejudice, and prurient idle curiosity is catered for and encouraged. When a man commits a murder he becomes a celebrity, and tales of his life, which would in the old days have only been seen in "broadsides" sold in the gutter, now take their place in the daily papers with all the pomp and circumstance of important contributions to our national life. The idlest and silliest of superstitions are exploited to the full. But for sheer vacuity the pages of illustrations beat all else. Portraits of celebrities one can understand; but day after day to be shown the Prime Minister leaving No. 10, the King walking through a hospital, the Queen looking at two babies, the Prince of Wales looking at a running match, the wife of a Cabinet Minister talking to an ex-soldier, etc., all these surely show the limit of emptiness. Everything must be sacrificed to large sales, because large sales are necessary to large advertising rates, and neither can be gained unless the least thoughtful of the general public have their silliest superstitions protected and all their prejudices respected. The corruption of the press to-day may not be of the same kind as once existed; but personal corruption was a comparatively easy thing to cure compared to the widespread and impersonal corruption that exists to-day. We have only to add that we have not said what we have said for the information of Mr. T. P. O'Connor. He knows far more of the newspaper world than we do.

In *Recent Prose*, by Mr. John Masefield, we read the following panegyric of Englishmen hunting a fox:—

All these were kindled and cheered by the beauty and glory of the horses, the colour, life and manhood of the sport, and the sympathy that linked that world to friendship and fellowship. Religion moved thus once, so did poetry.

One wonders for whom or what this was written. For our fine old English gentlemen, if any, or merely for the sake of covering paper?

It is said there are 25 "Colleges" in the Middle West of the United States where the teaching of Darwinism is forbidden. All that one can say is that the mentality of the teachers and pupils must be all the time illustrating the simian relationship which they will not allow to be taught of the body.

The *Daily Telegraph* is greatly impressed with the value of the new cathedral to the people of Liverpool. It says that hope and faith will be the brighter for the pile raised on St. James' Mount. For our part we imagine that lives would be cleaner and better worth living if the money spent on the cathedral had been expended on clearing out some of Liverpool's horrible slums, about which the clergy who are so closely interested in the cathedral are so silent. The service of God is only another name for the doping of man.

Miss Viola Tree, writing in the *Star*, says "The glory of these [the Bible and Prayer Book] are my one hold on a faith I do not understand." There was no necessity, that we can see, for this young lady to rush into print to exhibit her mental peculiarities, but we would, as she invites comment, strongly advise her not to gush over the beauties of the Bible until she shows some clear appreciation of its nature and its growth. At present it looks as though the expression, "I do not understand," covers more than Miss Tree's faith. How she can hold on to something she does not understand we are puzzled to see. We fancy that had such nonsense been written on any subject other than religion the editor of the *Star* would promptly have consigned it to the waste-paper basket. As the letter deals with religion he probably thought the nonsense quite in its proper place.

It is calculated that the average age of the clergy, on

the active list is 52, and that less than 12 per cent. are under 36 years of age. These facts are brought out in an interim report of the Archbishop's Committee which has been set up to deal with "the grave shortage in the number of clergy." The spread of scientific knowledge, and the application of science to industry is fast making man indifferent to or frankly sceptical of the old Christian mythology and cosmogony. Mechanical civilization and Christianity are entirely incompatible. As Paul Lafargue (*Social and Philosophical Studies*) remarks:—

The machine, in spite of its miraculous power and productiveness, has no mystery for him [the operative]. The labourer in the electric works, who has but to turn a crank on a dial to send miles of motive power to tramways or light to the lamps of a city, has but to say, like the God of Genesis, "Let there be light," and there is light.....He would be greatly surprised if one were to come to him and tell him that a certain God might, if he chose, stop the machine and extinguish the lights when the electricity had been turned on; he would reply that this anarchistic God would be simply a misplaced gearing or a broken wire, and that it would be easy for him to seek and find this disturbing God.

Even those who are not thus directly associated with the mechanical applications of science in their daily work cannot remain untouched by the general scientific developments. Practice teaches them scientific determinism. Naturally, those who are most acutely affected by this increasing application of scientific knowledge and principles to practical communal requirements, are the younger members of the community. At open-air evangelical meetings it is always a noticeable fact that most of the participants are elderly men and women. And the Church is discovering that as a profession it is growing less and less attractive to young men. Yet if it consistently fails to attract them it is doomed to become progressively feebler, and finally to lose all influence in social affairs.

The religious leaders are keenly aware of this danger; hence their eagerness to find some means of attracting new and intelligent recruits to the ranks of the clergy. The Archbishop's Committee is to deal in another report with the financial difficulty, "which is urgent and undoubted." Doubtless, if the Church is made sufficiently attractive as a profession from a financial point of view it will not lack recruits. But it will still lack that support which is born of sincere intellectual conviction. As a purely business concern religion may stabilize its position for a time. But in the end it will be doomed to pass into the limbo of forgotten things, unless it can get honest and unselfish support, and can convince both its priests and its devotees of its fundamental truth and value to society. It is that realization, perhaps, which is making organized religion turn more and more towards the Labour Party. Here is a new political party, the Churches probably reason, which seems to have a future; let us associate ourselves with it and so get a new lease of life for the supernatural creeds we stand for. It is not the first time that religion has adopted such parasitic tactics. Indeed, a careful study of most of the religions of civilized and semi-civilized communities suggests that religion generally is a kind of parasitism upon other and more virile movements. One has only to think, for example, of the part that religion played in the "Great Rebellion" in this country in the seventeenth century. What was essentially a civil war fought around social and political questions, was exacerbated by religious fanaticism. And when new countries, such as tropical Africa are opened up to commerce, the religionists lose no time in sending out generous supplies of missionaries and Bibles to the natives, and by undermining the natural religious and moral ideas of the savage society help prepare the way for the complete breakdown of the primitive culture which must precede the exploitation of the new regions by white men.

To return to the question of the age of the clergy. Dr. Hensley Henson, Bishop of Durham, at the Durham Diocesan Conference recently said: "I believe that the establishment of such an age limit, and provision of an

adequate system of pensions, would do more for improving the efficiency of the Church than any other reform." The establishment of an age limit for bishops might certainly meet with the approval of the younger clergy, since it would provide them with better opportunities for advancement in their profession. Bishops certainly seem to do their best to emulate the long-lived patriarchs. The Bishop of Bangor, for example, is 79 years of age; the Bishop of Llandaff is 77; the Archbishops of Wales and Canterbury are each 76; and the Bishop of Southwell is 73. Perhaps there is something soporific about Christianity which makes men intimately connected with it lead leisurely, pleasant lives, free of the wear and tear of practical life which men in other walks encounter. Or perhaps the energy that other men expend in intellectual questionings is conserved by the clergy and used for vital purposes.

After all, why should there be an age limit for the clergy? It seems to us that no person can be too young or too old to believe in Christianity. The older or the younger the better. It is the years in between that present the serious difficulty.

One of the alleged Lourdes miracle cures has been investigated by 54 doctors at the Hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth, St. John's Wood, N.W., recently. A young girl arrived at Lourdes on May 28, 1923, and included in the evidence submitted to the doctors was a statement by a nurse that when the patient came for her first bath on May 29 the fingers of the right hand were contracted into the palm, and there were suppurating wounds and ulcers in the palm and back of the fingers. "When she came out of the bath," the statement added, "there was no pus. In the evening.....there was no sign of pus, and the wounds were closed." After three hours' investigation the doctors passed a resolution that on the evidence the case was not proven. We trust that our religious contemporaries will give as much publicity to this as they do to the alleged miracles that occur.

Mr. Ingleby Oddie, the Westminster Coroner, during an inquest held on a man who committed suicide, observed that people who became spiritualists often became insane. Will the various religionists rise in righteous wrath and indignation to defend their beliefs against such an insinuation?

Just as the minister had left the pulpit of the Baptist Chapel in Wellington Street, Luton, one evening last week, and was preparing for the Communion Service, a naked man rushed into the building. To the amazement of the congregation he entered the pulpit, and harangued them in an excited manner. The chapel authorities came forward and the man was eventually carried into the vestry. Afterwards he was taken home on a police ambulance. He proved to be a respected local tradesman. Perhaps he had been reading the lives of the saints, and was tempted to emulate the early anchorites who dwelt naked in the desert, or the other Christian zealots who went about naked on hands and knees and ate the grass like wild beasts. Had the unfortunate man burst into one of the now much discussed Socialist or Communist Sunday schools we can imagine the solemn manner in which the clergy would have pointed the moral that these places have a pernicious effect upon human beings.

A friend sends us a copy of a circular, with circular letter advertising "Wellbank's Boilerette." We do not know anything about it beyond the circular, but that is, in its way, a gem. Mr. Wellbank, judging from his letter-heading is also an evangelist, and manages to use Jesus Christ as an adjunct to his business, although we have no evidence in the New Testament that either Jesus or

his mother ever used a boilerette. Mr. Wellbank informs us that over forty years ago he entered the Congregational College at Nottingham. He was then led to abandon himself "entirely to our Lord"; then he had "fellowship" with George Fox, also with Carlyle and Fichte, all of whom "clearly expressed the views I held concerning deep religious truths. Mr. Wellbank's experience "as an evangelist, inventor, manufacturer, and man of business has been part of the divine programme," and the result of this combination of Our Lord, etc., is the "Boilerette," which Mr. Wellbank will send to anyone who forwards him one of various sums ranging from 15s. to 75s. Really, when Jesus, Carlyle, Fichte, George Fox, and Mr. Wellbank combine to produce a boilerette it should be something unapproachable in the saucepan line. Naturally, Mr. Wellbank does not print testimonials. That would be an impertinence. The boilerette is part of the "Lord's programme," we take it. We fancy that, after all, teaching people how to boil potatoes properly is as useful as anything else in the "glorious gospel." But we fancy that Mr. Wellbank has, to use a colloquialism, his head screwed on the right way.

Mr. S. H. Sime, who has made such a success with his exhibition of drawings in London, is one of the most profane of living artists; years ago he created a sensation with a series of "supernatural" cartoons in the then popular *Pick-me-Up*, and the less popular but more profane *Butterfly*. One we remember vividly. It depicted the dock on the Day of Judgment, and a shivering business-man, clad only in the shirt he died in, being led away by two fiends with policemen's helmets. "What have you got, Jones?" asks a friend sympathetically. "Thirty thousand years, 200 Centigrade," was the reply.

Another drawing, quite as amusing, depicted two friends meeting in Hell. "Fancy meeting you, old man," says one; "I thought you built the tin tabernacle at the corner of our road."

During a storm in Radnorshire a wagoner and his horse were both killed. If they had been sparrows Providence might have been kinder.

Max Beer, in his book *Social Struggles in the Middle Ages*, suggests that Duns Scotus, William of Occam, Arnold of Brescia, the Blessed St. Francis of Assisi, and Thomas-à-Kempis are all more or less in the line of Bolshevik ancestry. This may be true, but Dean Inge is doing his best to square a financier's civilization with the teachings of Jesus.

In a minor key General Sir Ian Hamilton, in his speech at the unveiling of a war memorial at Crewe, was sceptical about the blessings of the Great War. He asked those present not to listen too much to the men who made the war. He might also have added to these the fifty thousand who were exempted and stoked up the fires of recruiting with texts from the Bible.

What is wanted, says the Rev. Dr. Williams, Bishop of Carlisle, is a larger number of people who will read books with which they do not agree. That is exactly what we have been saying for very many years, but the Bishop has a very easy way of showing whether he really means this. Will he advise his hearers to read a journal like the *Freethinker*? If he will, we undertake to send a free copy to every member of his congregation. But we doubt very much whether the Bishop would advise the reading of books which make a strong and uncompromising attack on his religion. He would probably discover that religion is a subject on which it would be well to put some other rule into practice.

The National Secular Society.

THE Funds of the National Secular Society are now legally controlled by Trust Deed, and those who wish to benefit the Society by gift or bequest may do so with complete confidence that any money so received will be properly administered and expended.

The following form of bequest is sufficient for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by will:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society, and I direct that a receipt signed by two of the trustees of the said Society shall be a good discharge to my executors for the said legacy.

Any information concerning the Trust Deed and its administration may be had on application.

To Correspondents.

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

G. FORTNAM.—The situation is a delicate one. Mr. Cohen has written you.

J. HOUSTON.—Glad to know that the article on "Personal Identity" has so much interested you. We may follow with others on similar lines when opportunity offers. See "Acid Drops."

J. G.—If we were not so used to it we should be surprised at the childish stupidity of the tracts that are distributed on behalf of evangelical Christianity. Yet the large number that are printed and given away bears witness to the very poor type of mind that constitutes a very large proportion of convinced Christians. They help us to realize how it is that Christianity persists.

PRINCE HOPKINS.—Received. Next week.

H. R. WRIGHT.—We have not yet read the book. Prices put a sharp bar to acquisitions to one's library.

H. BAYFORD.—"The Massacre of the Innocent's" leaflet has been out of print for some time, but we are sending you a copy we happen to have in the office. It is rather too topical for reprinting, although the principles involved are as applicable now as when it first appeared.

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.

There is nothing like persistency if one wants anything done, and for that reason we again remind our friends that the summer months offer splendid opportunities of introducing this paper into new hands. There are always chances of making new acquaintances, and, without making one's self a nuisance, a quiet little bit of propaganda can be done. Remember that our motto is, "Every one, another one." That is a sure way of doubling our circulation.

There is a certain class of grown up "boy-bloods" in the country who have visions of a huge international Jewish conspiracy for the overthrow of Christianity. We fancy the Duke of Northumberland is one of its distinguished adherents. This body of conspirators has been in existence for hundreds of years, and managed to bring about the English revolution of the seventeenth century, the French Revolution of 1789, the late war, and all the important intermediate troubles. The *Morning Post* used to be the mouthpiece of the adherents of this theory, and we enjoyed reading about it as we have enjoyed nothing since our *Jack Harkaway* days. Anyway, one of these individuals turned up as a disturber of the meetings of the South London Branch, so probably the N.S.S. has been placed on the list of this secret association. In spite of that we are glad to learn that the Branch had good meetings, and there was a ready sale of literature.

The Manchester Branch has arranged one of its Sunday Rambles for to-day (July 20). Intending participants will meet at the Piccadilly tram shelter at 11.30 to take the car for Altrincham. Tea will be provided.

We are glad to learn that the meetings of the Finsbury Park Branch at Finsbury Park and Highbury Corner continue to improve. Mr. Corrigan was the speaker on Friday and Sunday last and had the pleasure of addressing two of the largest meetings he has yet held. Several new members were enrolled, and there was a good sale of literature—both good indications of interest aroused.

Messrs. Watts & Co. have reissued *The Popes and Their Church*, by Joseph McCabe (price 3s. 6d.). Freethinkers will find it an interesting and useful sketch of papal history; and Roman Catholics—if any of them can be induced to read it—should have their eyes opened to a very considerable extent. But one of the difficulties of the propagandist is always to get those who most need his message to listen to it. However, he can but do his best, and somehow or the other, and at some time or another, the message does reach its intended destination. So the constant need of the propagandist is patience and pertinacity.

The Rev. R. T. Newcombe, a young Hull vicar, is producing a film depicting the early beginnings of Christianity. Miss Sheila Kaye Smith, the novelist, has collaborated with him in his story. In all there will be 4,000 or 5,000 feet of film. Probably the Conference of Advertisers, now meeting at the British Empire Exhibition might be able to suggest other up-to-date methods of booming religion in this country.

The Rev. C. L. Drawbridge, writing from the offices of Christian Evidence Society, points out that the "best way to deal with Atheistic Communist Sunday schools is to draw away their children into Christian Sunday schools, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Church Lads' Brigades, Boys' Brigades, and similar organizations." We can appreciate the gentleman's natural solicitude for a business rival.

Roman Luxury.

The mode of proceeding by social critics in all ages has differed but little, and in all ages have their products been accepted and enjoyed. There is always a mixture of good and bad in every society, and a writer can, merely by judicious selection, paint the picture he wishes of the moral condition of his people. And the more complex a society is, the greater is the opportunity to distort the picture by ingenuity of selection.—J. S. Jerome, *Aspects of the Study of Roman History*, p. 115.

CHRISTIAN apologists are very severe upon the extravagance and luxury indulged in by Roman society during the ages preceding the reign of Christianity. They quote from the description of Trimalchio's Banquet in the *Satyricon* of Petronius, from the *Satires* of Juvenal, and the Epigrams of Martial, and serve them up with the denunciations of the moralists, Seneca and Cicero, as if this was an accurate picture of the normal life of Pagan Rome.

To take the satires of Juvenal and the epigrams of Martial as giving a true picture of Roman society under the empire, would be as unreasonable and unjust as to take the hateful satires of Swift, or the terrible caricatures of Hogarth and Gilray, as representative of English society in the eighteenth century.

The late Mr. J. S. Jerome, who, as we have seen, has done such good work in revealing the animus of the historian Tacitus against the Roman emperors, also deals with this question of Roman extravagance and luxury. Juvenal published his *Satires* between the years A.D. 100 and 138; the best known of his sixteen satires, in spite of its indecency, is the sixth, on Women. Mr. Jerome, in dealing with Juvenal's railing accusation against women, observes:—

In curious contrast to the universal sinfulness at which Juvenal frantically rails is the fact that in this very era there is abundant evidence testifying to the charm and purity of family life of his contemporaries, whether it be the imperial household of Trajan and Plotina—where she and the other women of the family were honest, right-minded, and affectionate, modest in their toilettes, simple in their manners, and devoted to the domestic virtues—or the families of nobles like Agricola, Tacitus and Pliny, and the many others of whom we catch glimpses in the latter's Epistles, or the host of obscure folk of whom we hear so little in literature, but so much in inscriptions. Viewed with this perspective, it is abundantly evident that Juvenal's gloomy canvas is vivid but unreal. By skilfully omitting the good and sedulously seizing on the evil elements present in every highly organized society, the brilliant but morbid rhetorician constructed a distorted and consequently untruthful picture of his age.¹

The method employed by Juvenal against society in general, is exactly the same as that employed by the historian Tacitus against the Roman emperors in particular, and it is mainly upon the testimony of Tacitus and Juvenal that the Christian indictment of Roman society, during the first and second centuries of our era, is based.

Martial, the epigrammatic poet, is another source often quoted from to show the decadence of Roman society at this time. Martial was born in Spain in the year A.D. 43, he came to Rome to seek his fortune in the year 66, where he resided until the year 100, when he returned to his birth-place. The early part of his life at Rome was a sordid struggle. He became a parasite of the wealthy, and his works abound with fulsome flattery of his patrons, especially of the Emperor Domitian. As Mr. Jerome remarks:—

Martial's epigrams suggest the picture of a rather uncouth, nervous man, who, wearied by his eager, fruitless search for patronage, proceeded to depict

the evils of society from the point of view, and with the prejudices and notions concerning the great, of one of that unhappy crowd of educated, sensitive, ambitious and disappointed poets and rhetoricians who besieged the antechambers of the nobles by day, and at night exchanged with their fellows observations on the sourness of grapes. (p. 71.)

Then there is the moral philosopher Seneca, who lived between the years 4 B.C. and A.D. 65, whose denunciations of the luxury of his time have been much drawn upon to illustrate the prevailing extravagance. Mr. Jerome says:—

Seneca never wearies of returning to lavish invective against this mania for boundless self-indulgence and pampered voluptuousness. But it has become gradually clearer to modern scholars that luxury as viewed by a moralist is not always just what the ordinary mind understands by that word, and some have even suspected that the fall of the Romans into this great sin was something very much akin to what we generally call "progress in civilization." (p. 87.)

For instance, Seneca reprehended building spacious houses by the sea, or on the hills. The use of marble in building is shocking to him. The ideal habitation he declared to be a cave, or at most a hut, made of branches, leaves, and clay. Window-glass, water-pipes, locks, keys, and the warming of houses by furnaces are all offensive luxuries to Seneca, and sternly condemned. The use of mirrors awakens his wrath, and he denounces the use of woven cloth for clothing. He considers skins and feathers are more in accordance with Nature. He thought a bath every day was an excessive luxury; once a week was quite sufficient. Mr. Jerome observes upon this:—

We are here coming in sight of that curious attribution of ethical merit to personal squalor, that exaltation of foulness which forms so remarkable an element in the ascetic morality soon to dominate the world. The mysterious miasma was stealing over the world, and a few keenly sensitive souls like Seneca already felt it. He had many of the instincts confusedly seeking expression, which at a later age would have found the due environment for a full efflorescence, when his emotional and intellectual characteristics would have made him a great and glorious saint for the admiration and adoration of mankind; instead of which, born too soon, he could be no more than a peevish critic of a dying world. (p. 92.)

Seneca has been described as a "Christian before Christ," and the early Christians did not hesitate to compose a series of letters purporting to be a correspondence between Seneca and St. Paul, now universally condemned as rank forgeries. St. Jerome, the most learned of the early church fathers, speaks of him as "*Seneca nostra*," "Our Seneca."

Running through Seneca's criticism of all the innocent ameliorations of life, as Mr. Jerome remarks, is an element of sourness, suggesting a person in a chronic state of discomfort who, finding no relief in ordinary physical pleasures, feels bitter towards those who enjoy them. Seneca, like all true Christians, regards the body as a prison, a burden, and a cause of suffering; contempt for it is the true liberty—

It is a mark of divine favour to have ill health and trouble, for it shows that "God has thought us worthy subjects on whom to try how much suffering human nature can endure." Misery is a proof of goodness; comfort is the enemy—the more discomfort, the more virtue.¹

These are not the sentiments of a normally healthy man, and, in fact, Seneca was an invalid most of his life. When a youth he had long periods of illness, as a young man he practised many forms of abstinence, became extremely emaciated, and was so depressed on several occasions as to contemplate suicide. For

¹ J. S. Jerome, *Aspects of the Study of Roman History*, p. 77-78.

¹ Jerome, *Aspects of the Study of Roman History*, p. 99.

some years his health improved, but his later years were full of the pains of chronic illness. Mr. Jerome says that his writings suggest that he was a victim of some chronic digestive disorder, perhaps gastric neurasthenia, whose effects upon the mind are such as appear in his case. As Mr. Jerome remarks: "It has been a well-recognized custom of moralists in all ages to convert their digestive insufficiently into moral worth" hence his denunciations of gourmands and luxury in eating; Seneca himself being restricted to vegetarianism. During all his life he was tormented with fears. The world seemed to him to be full of objects of dread. To quote Mr. Jerome once more:—

The letters of this timid, sickly, worried, old man, afraid of Nature, afraid of the dark, afraid of his fellow-men, longing for a sense of safety and security, seeking anxiously a refuge in the brave doctrines of Stoicism against the terrifying fancies of his morbid imagination, penning maxims which he had learned to repeat but did not feel, cautiously counselling his friend Lucilius, equally a victim of psychasthenia—these furnish a spectacle deeply instructive and profoundly pathetic. But it is not from a timid child lost in the woods at night that one gets a complete and accurate description of what is round about. (pp. 83-84.)

Of course not. If the same methods of selection and exaggeration employed by Juvenal, Martial, Petronius and Seneca, were employed in describing our own society, an equally dark picture could be drawn. All the vices depicted by these writers still flourish in modern, as in ancient Rome; and the same may be said of Paris, Berlin, and London. They are to be found in all great cities, ancient and modern. But to represent them, as Christian apologists do, as characteristic of the mass of the population of Pagan times, is as libellous and untruthful as to say the same of our own times.

W. MANN.

The Foundation of Psychology.

We are all Gullivers in our way, finding in the course of our travels strange scenes and wonderful countries where the standards of life are turned topsy-turvy, and when our travels are over we derive most amusement from those experiences which were at the time the most troublesome. That is one of the consolations of living. I am in such a predicament now, and this is the little story. At the last meeting of the British Association I sent in a paper on psychology and a paper on ethics, these subjects having been my life-long study. The papers were duly rejected on grounds which did not bear examination—that the list was full, for example—and at the meeting I found to my astonishment that the British Association, so justly celebrated in certain domains of science, had presented a series of tawdry papers, amongst them one from Bishop Welldon, to which by no indulgence could the name of science be applied. I have referred the matter to Sir Ernest Rutherford, in his capacity of President of the British Association, and the question is being investigated. I do not intend to let it drop, for to me it appears to have the aspect of a little ring of professors less careful of the interests of science than of those of their own little set, as exclusive as it is incompetent.

Once started, however, on this strain of thought I propose to examine the whole subject in a wider scope, and see how we stand in these years of grace in the sphere of philosophy. But in the first place I am bidden, like John Alden, to speak for myself.

I HAVE been asked, how does my Psychology and my Ethics—the Aletheian system—differ from those of my predecessors? To answer that question I remark that in all my reading I endeavour not only to appreciate an exposition as it stands but to search for the "germinal idea." Without the germinal idea the work is but half comprehended; once in possession of that clue, we can follow the structure and development of the fabric. I offer a sacrifice by giving at once my own

germinal idea. The origin of the work is to be found on the ethical side. I proposed to myself the problem, not very dissimilar to that of Herbert Spencer in his *Data of Ethics*, that is to say, to discover ethical guides and sanctions in the very nature of the cosmos which surrounds us. Most people find the indications required in the doctrines of revealed religions, but as these differ it is evident that they cannot be all true, though there is nothing in that fact alone to guarantee that they may not be all false. If they be found, either in whole or in part, at variance with the deep laws of the universe, they cannot be accepted; if they prove concordant, and if they depend for certitude on such assurance, then surely it is better to rest not on the revelation but simply on the superior ground of our science.

* * * * *

After devout and diligent reading of many philosophies, notably those of Kant and Spencer, I became more and more dissatisfied with them. In the case of Spencer, for example, I joined issue at length at the very base—his conception of the doctrine of evolution as expressed in any one of his many definitions. I find that he has not formulated a veritable "Principle of Nature" at all. In my *Ethics* I have entered elaborately into the question, but to those who have some acquaintance with mathematical forms I will sum up my objections in a few words: Spencer has enunciated a proposition in which the number of variables is in excess of the number of equations, therefore, no precise determinations are available. With the failure of the fundamental principle the whole edifice, in so far as regarded as a scientific exposition, falls to the ground. What remains? The views and suggestions of a man of high endowment; the opinions of Herbert Spencer. Yes, but I was in search of something better.

The problem of ethics, as I conceive it, is highly objective. Here already is a profound difference, for since Aristotle all our great ethical teachers have started from the subjective side—their own little moods and desires being paramount. Kant, for instance, does not seek to explore the cosmos for guidance; he wants to save "this Freedom"; he wants to knock Hume over; he obscures his vision in the fumes of old theological disputes derived from his Scottish ancestors.

I am not concerned directly with any of these things, I do not want merely to overthrow Kant, or to go one better than Hume; I want to do something that they both failed to accomplish—to show from the deepest ascertainable base, and thence in as wide a scope as possible, the structural forms and the principles of development of this great world that impinges on all our acts and thoughts.

In the material universe this resolves into the study of the sciences—physics, chemistry, biology—into which our limited modes of understanding has forced us to divide science.

But surrounding all this lay the domain of psychology. There I saw that if I failed to solve what I have called the central problem, all my speculations, like those of my predecessors, would be but the pulling this way and that of an illimitably tangled skein; with the solution of that problem, however, I would have something comparable to a beam of light to a man hitherto blind.

The central problem deals with the discovery of these elemental forms of thought—what I have called the Fundamental Processes—which have this analogy to the chemical elements of the material world, that, given these in hand, I can show how by their combination is built up the whole domain of thought, the most complex as well as the simplest. The pith of my exposition consists in the formulation of these processes, the explanation of their mode of action, and

the proof that they are "necessary and sufficient" to cover the whole ground.

I cannot boil down just here into a few lines the results of twenty years of severe labour, but the reader may refer to my *Principles of Psychology*, while in the *Ethics* he will find at p. 97, *et seq.*, the indication of the main lines of research and argument.

Once in possession of this secret the system becomes of importance also as an instrument in illuminating a series of century-old problems, and also in examining some of the fashionable philosophies of the past and of to-day. How powerful this apparatus of analysis may be found becomes evident from such an example as this: I dispose of Freud, in as far as affecting to found a system scientifically, by showing, in the light of the Fundamental Processes, that his conception of the mechanism of reason, or the enchainment of thoughts, is inadequate, even to the point of sheer ridicule.

The "predicaments" of Aristotle correspond, more or less, to my Fundamental Processes; I show that his system is both insufficient and redundant; and the whole superstructure, as far as depending on this, falls down. Kant's "categories" are derived from Aristotle's, and without essential improvement; Kant as the founder of a scientific philosophy disappears from the horizon.

Hegel—I leave him to Oxford and to the Lord Chancellor who talks science like—a Lord Chancellor. Bergson? He is a false light that our London contemporaries have followed, to their own glory and to their philosophical ineptitude.

The principles of a true science are lacking in these great spiritual eponyms; in their followers other essentials are lacking, but not the capacity of building up false reputations behind stone walls of protected interests.

I hope to return to this point later—and with a vengeance.

ARTHUR LYNCH.

The Boy Scout Movement.

WHAT IT IS. WHAT THREATENS IT.
WHAT IT OUGHT TO BE.

THERE is a story told of a company of travellers discussing the relative advantages of different roads, and after much time had been spent in controversy, it was found that they were bound for different destinations. It is no wonder, therefore, that they could not agree as to the road. The story teaches us how wary we ought to be in matters of this sort; and in the question under discussion "roads" and "destinations" loom rather large. The Boy Scout movement is a means to an end, and the value of the means is entirely dependent on the end in view. The end of the Founders was to make good citizens. It was to be an extra-educational movement supplementing the mere school instruction; to further that "complete living" which, as Herbert Spencer said, was the function of true education. The "means" has been, on the whole, admirably fitted to this "end," save for the fact that the movement has become (or is likely to become) the happy hunting ground of two factions—the *militarists* and the *parsons*, whose "ends" are somewhat different, and in consequence the "means" are in danger of change. What these are, we will have to consider presently, but first of all we ought to know precisely what the Boy Scout movement is. Later, I propose to discuss the dangers threatening it, and finally to demonstrate the potential values in this movement, which, if guided by Secularists, might become actual values. It is high time that we became Secularists in the true sense of the word, and paid

as much attention to the constructive as to the destructive. Of course, we know the old Secularist reply to this would be that by rooting out the weeds the ground has a better chance for the cultivation of something useful. Just so, providing that you attend to the "cultivation of something useful." If not, the weeds will still grow. Let us enquire, then, (1) *What the Boy Scout Movement is*, (2) *What Threatens it*, and (3) *What it Ought to be*.

(1) WHAT THE MOVEMENT IS.

The Boy Scout movement was instituted in this country in 1908 by R. Baden-Powell. Two years later it found response in the United States; and to-day it may be found in full vigour in many other countries, and claims to have a world membership of about 1,500,000.¹ The Founder has described the aims of the movement thus: "To train our future men to be level-headed and British, to give fair play to all, to be unselfish in themselves, manly and responsible human beings." What is claimed for the movement in this section is based on the utterances of its founder, who is the Chief Scout in the British Empire; and Mr. James E. West, who is the Chief Scout in the United States.

It is interesting to see exactly how the movement originated. Baden-Powell was an army officer, and his experience in the army, where he was the first to conduct experiments with young soldiers and boys by means of character, intelligence, and individual initiative tests, led him to the conclusion that many of the defects which he found were due primarily to our defective educational system. Adding his own experiences to those of real scientific educationalists, Baden-Powell came to the conclusion that there were four things lacking in the training of the average schoolboy. These were in the direction of: (a) *Physical development and health*, (b) *Skill in handicrafts*, (c) *Character and general intelligence*, and (d) *Service for others*. Baden-Powell's army experience convinced him that "scouting" would materially develop the first three of the above. That is to say, his system of "scouting" would produce an efficient individual, and all that was necessary then was to produce a socially conscious person, i.e., a citizen. How these ideals are to be reached are set forth as follows:—

(a) *Physical fitness and health*.—The doings of backwoodsmen, knights, adventurers, and explorers are held up as ideals for boys to follow. This means an outdoor life, and, above all, a life in the country. Since the movement aims "to make good citizens," its founder tells us that "it was judged unnecessary to introduce military drill." Yet drill of a different kind exists in scout life, and it is of such a nature that it conduces to physical fitness and health.

(b) *Skill in handicrafts*.—"Through camp-life, boat-work, and nature study can be found," says Baden-Powell, "all the attractions for a boy, which, at the same time, will be a medium of instruction. The instruction takes the form of active self-expression on the part of the boy, rather than his passive reception of ideas." "Through 'scouting,'" says Baden-Powell "the boy has a chance to deck himself in a frontier kit as one of the great brotherhood of backwoodsmen. He can track and follow signs, he can signal, he can light his fire and build his shack and cook his grub. He can turn his hand to many things in pioneer and camp-craft."

(c) *Character and general intelligence*.—"Honour is made the high ideal for boys. The *Scout Law*, on which the movement hinges, is taken from the code of knights." "The *Scout Promise*, to carry out on his

¹ This must be a serious under-estimate, since in Scotland alone we have 30,000.

honour, so far as in him lies, the *Scout Law*, is the binding disciplinary force." "The boys get to know the joys of life through the 'out-of-doors.' 'Through sips of nature-lore, imbibed in woodland 'hikes,' the puny soul grows up and looks around. The outdoors is *par excellence* the school for observation and for realizing the wonders of a wondrous universe." The American Chief Scout sees the value of the movement, in that it teaches boys "to do for themselves and others, teaches them patriotism, courage, self-reliance, and kindred virtues.....placing emphasis on the scout oath for character development, citizenship, training, etc." Units are purposely kept as small as possible, "so that Commanders and Leaders may have personal knowledge of each individual."

(d) *Service for others*.—Given the consummation of a, b, and c, Baden-Powell holds that we have the requisite material for the making of our ideal citizen; for he insists that the primary aim of the movement "is to make good citizens." "For that reason," he says, "it is non-military, non-political, non-class, and interdenominational." Similarly in the United States, the movement is claimed to be "non-sectarian and non-partisan." Here, then, we have the "means" and "end" of the Boy Scout Movement according to its Founder and Chief Scouts; and there are few Secularists who are not in complete agreement with them. Unfortunately, there are people who have other "ends" in view, and among them are the *militarists*, who want to breed a "citizen army," and whose "means" is the "military spirit," and the *parsons*, who are anxious to revive their waning influence by "means" of the "religious spirit." I will discuss these "threatenings" in another article.

H. GEORGE FARMER.

(To be Continued.)

The Making of Freethought Myth.

II.

(Concluded from page 438.)

ANOTHER writer who was to find Catherine less charming, in her attitude to Freethought, than she at first appeared to be, was Novikov. In a journal called *The Drone* he attacked the vices of Russian political and social life. Ultimately Novikov's articles caused Catherine to become very angry, and in 1770 she suppressed the paper. But later on Novikov and Catherine came to an understanding, and together they issued a new publication called *The Painter*, which was suppressed in 1774, when the empress suspected Freemasonic tendencies in Novikov's contributions. Another journal which Catherine suppressed was the *St. Petersburg Messenger*. It first made an appearance in 1779, but had to be discontinued in less than two years.

Novikov, however, continued at his work of making popular the humanitarian views which he held. He distributed a number of pamphlets, founded schools and printing works, took an interest in the spread of education, and even advocated woman's right to a superior education. As a Freemason he propagated religious doctrines which were not always clear and consistent, while he tried to reconcile faith and reason, religion and instruction. He was assisted in large measure by other masons, and they were for a time encouraged in their work by Catherine. But when the latter thought she saw a strong connection between Freemasonry and the French Revolution, she became reactionary, and Novikov was arrested in January of 1792, and put into prison. This incident brings into relief Catherine's excessive fear of anything likely to bring about actual freedom for all, if, as K. Waliszewski says, in his *History of Russian Literature*, the

Freemasons of the period were fundamentally reactionary in character. (See above work for details of Catherine's treatment of Novikov, pp. 91, 94, 121 to 123.) Whether Novikov would have turned out to be more than an idealistic dreamer in relation to a fundamental reconstruction of society, if the revolution had been Russian instead of French, is doubtful. Revolutions are often very attractive—when they are a long way off, and one is often justified in a suspicion that an enthusiast about education is in reality concerned to prevent revolution by educating the people into quiet and respectable ways of living. It is a mistake to think that all who are active, and sincerely active, in the spread of education are necessarily lovers of progress in the fullest sense of the word. Education can be directed in the interests of the privileged class; and reactionaries are not so much afraid of education as they are of the work of educating getting into the hands of the—from their point of view—wrong teachers.

Catherine the Great is supposed to have made great efforts in the work of spreading education, and is even credited with having founded or ordered the founding of many schools. But this so-called Freethinker's idea of educating the masses may be gathered from the following:—

The Empress Catherine II wrote to Count Pierre Saltykov, Governor-General of Moscow: "The lower orders must not be given any instruction. When they know as much as you and I, Marshal, they will no longer be content to obey us, as they obey us to-day." (*The Russian Empire and Czarism*, Victor Bérard, p. 271.)

Which leads one to conclude that in any schools opened at Catherine's instigation every effort would be made to educate the *next to lower* orders in the way of looking up to *their* betters. With no instructions for the lower orders and the right kind of instructions for the orders next to be named in the list of social dignities, the great empress would prove herself to be quite safe as an advocate of education. Whether she spent as much on education as she did on the Church and sex pleasures, is a question for those who are active in the work of spreading the details which go to the making of the myth of Catherine as a kind of Freethought Saint.

One or two quotations from the writings of Catherine, which are given on page 3349, vol. 5, of the *Harmsworth History of the World*, may be of interest. At one time she wrote: "Freedom, thou soul of all things, without thee all is dead; I wish to have obedience in laws, but no slaves." While at another time her pen traced the following: "The nation is not for the ruler, but the ruler for the nation. The equality of the citizens consists in their only having to obey the law; freedom is the right to do everything that is not forbidden by the law." Catherine no doubt well remembered that if the law forbids almost everything there is very little freedom left; and she seems to have written with full knowledge that if ever freedom tended to become anything more than a poetic fancy, in her kingdom, she could bring down the iron hand of oppression. At any rate, Vladimir Milkowicz, the writer on Russia in the above-mentioned history, says that Catherine did not alleviate the conditions of the peasants. On the other hand, she increased the prerogatives of the landowners, by giving them greater power of jurisdiction, and even allowing them to send their serfs to Siberia. The peasants were of course not permitted to utter a word of impeachment against their lords.

That the number of serfs increased during Catherine's reign is an admitted fact. J. S. Clarke, in his *Pen Pictures of Russia*, says:—

Besides the incredible tortures to which serfs had to submit, a father or mother could now be sold by

proprietors who wished to retain the children. In short, serfs were looked upon by the laws of Catherine as mere animals, and treated as such. (p. 275-6.)

Thus could this perverted lover of freedom, the "soul of all things," and friend of the French philosophers crush her people.

Perhaps some Freethinkers have seen an act of Freethought, on the part of Catherine, in her having in 1764 taken practically the whole of the Church lands and settled small, if permanent, revenues on ecclesiastical offices. As if religionists had never been known to rob their Church. Perhaps we shall some day find Henry VIII of England turned into a martyr for Freethought, on account of his plundering the monasteries. While Catherine was charged with having taken much wealth from the Church, she was credited with paying back a great deal in the form of valuable gifts to her confessor, whenever she found it needful to repent of her many sins. The feat of taking God's wealth with one hand and paying it back with the other no doubt won favour for her in the eyes of the Lord.

Not only did Catherine spend a good deal of money in buying forgiveness of sins, she also spent fortunes in satisfying her sexual passion; it being her habit to make a costly gift to each lover, when he had served his turn, and was dismissed to make room for another. Even if we admit that Catherine had every right to indulge her passion for sexual delights just as she wished, provided she could do so without forcing herself upon others, there was no justification for her spending much of the nation's wealth in making huge presents to those who served her in her lust for the flesh. On this aspect of Catherine's character there is no need, for our present purpose, to go into any great detail. A quotation or two from Sanger's *History of Prostitution* will meet the case. On page 267 Sanger says:—

She has usually been considered a monster of lust; but she was no less infamous for her cruelty, and for the total absence of all those qualities and feelings which form the chief grace and beauty of woman's inner life.

Then, again, on page 268:—

After Catherine had caused Peter III to be murdered, and had ascended the throne as empress in her own right, she abandoned herself to the fullest gratification of her passions, both royal and personal.

As it is no part of the work of Freethought to advocate sexual debauchery, Freethinkers who are anxious to pander to the memory of kings and queens for the sake of dignifying, as they think, their freedom of thought with pomp and power, would do well to put a check upon the myth-making tendencies of their minds. Especially where such human monsters as Catherine the Great of Russia are concerned. There is no need to drag this type of intellectual libertine and time-server into the sphere of Freethought.

Even if it were proved beyond doubt that Catherine was a Freethinker, in matters of religion, she would not be an ornament to the cause of Freethought. Her bigotry and brutality on the political and economic side of life class her with the tyrants and reactionaries; and literary fanfares, to the glory of her freedom of thought, are but products of myth-making in the sphere of Freethought. E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

Correspondence.

"A LIVERPOOL LARRIKIN."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have waited a fortnight now to see if the Rev. M. Armitage would make good his boast and accept the challenge. Evidently the valiant man-of-God is not having any. I don't blame him, as for one of his talents

the carrying through of a debate would be a fatiguing job.

I do not think it worth while to reply to the letter of Harold Hughes, who is evidently a Christian, and I should suppose a fugelman of Mr. Armitage. Let the cobbler keep to his last. If he wants any further information he can apply to Mr. Armitage.

I wonder when the Freethinkers on Merseyside are to waken up. There are not half a dozen doing anything for the Cause, and I am sure there must be hundreds of men and women who are emancipated from superstition in Liverpool. The enemy never sleeps. Why should we.

JAS. W. K. LEIPER.

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 PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "The Endowment of the Family."

OUTDOOR.

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

FINSBURY PARK BRANCH N.S.S. (Highbury Corner, Islington): Every Friday at 8 p.m., Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK.—11.15, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY.—Freethought lectures and debates every evening in Hyde Park. Speakers: Messrs. Baker, Beale, Hyatt, Harris, Hart, Keeling, Knubley, Saphin, Shaller, Dr. Stuart, M.A., Mr. Vincent, B.A., B.Sc., and Mr. Howell Smith. Friday, at 8, Debate—Mr. C. H. Keeling v. Rev. Hugh Parry.

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

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3.30 and 6.30, Mr. A. D. McLaren will lecture.

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

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—Ramble to Castle Mills. Meet Piccadilly tram Shelter at 11.30. Car to Altrincham. Leave Altrincham 12.30. Ramblers take own lunch. Tea provided at Castle Mills.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor, near North Road entrance): 7, Mr. Carlton, "The Futility of Prayer."

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