

The FREETHINKER

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Views and Opinions.

Opinion and the Press.

The *Liverpool Echo* has been publishing a series of articles dealing with the relations of Christianity to modern life. It is hardly necessary to say that the writing of these has been entrusted to "safe" hands. None have been invited to contribute who would be likely to tell the truth about Christianity, one can safely trust the directorate of the *Liverpool Echo* for that. Had the editor been rash enough to invite the opinion of a Freethinker with courage he would probably have found himself in trouble, if not discharged. The Press has, indeed, many ways of administering "dope" to an ill-educated public, and one way is to invite an expression of opinion from writers whose views are known before they are asked, and who are invited because it is known they will say nothing to which the editor's supporters, and employers, will take exception. This enables the editor to say that various opinions have been invited and they agree upon this or that particular point. Those who would express themselves differently are not permitted to speak, and the public read under the impression that very weighty opinion has endorsed the view it itself holds. It is a game often played and with almost unvarying success. It is one of the ways in which established opinion manages to maintain itself, and which makes reform so uphill a task. And with the syndicalisation of the newspaper press on the one hand, and the habit of so many people depending upon the scrappy items selected and served up by the Press for their information on the world's affairs, on the other the evil of this newspaper "dope" is greater than ever.

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Christianity and Family Life.

One of the articles in this series was entrusted to Mr. G. K. Chesterton and deals with the subject of "Sex and Religion." That is a very wide subject, and a very important one, but Mr. Chesterton touches only on the question of marriage and the limitation of the population. I do not know that, with the exception of what he has to say on the question of population, I have any serious disagreement with his ideal of marriage, but Mr. Chesterton is a Christian and a Roman Catholic, and that means and explains much. It certainly explains his speaking of Christianity as provid-

ing the basis for ideal family relations, and his saying that "the Christian desires to create the conditions in which Christian marriage is most workable and most worthy of itself." Of course, the majority of Christians, like the majority of any other class of people, have a quite admirable ideal of marriage, but I am convinced that this is so because in the long run social forces prove themselves superior to religious teaching. Mr. Chesterton says that Christians want to create a Christian family. But what is a Christian family? Logically and properly it should mean a family in which its mode of life is derived directly and unmistakably—if not exclusively from Christian ideas and beliefs. And what Mr. Chesterton ought to have done is to show that the admirable ideals held by the majority of Christian families on the question of marriage are derived directly from Christian teaching. It is quite useless to point to Christian families where ideals and teachings are quite worthy. The same may be said of Mohammedan, or Jewish, or Atheistic, or of any other family where formal adherence is given to a particular set of beliefs.

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The New Testament and the Family.

As a Christian Mr. Chesterton must believe in the teachings of the New Testament, and as a Roman Catholic he must believe that these teachings are enforced and illustrated by the declarations of the Church. And what we should like Mr. Chesterton—or any other Christian—to do is to go carefully through the New Testament marking all passages where the family and married life are implied and then see what has been collected. I think it would be found to be quite impossible to get therefrom enough advice on which to bring up a family, or on which to base a marriage that should be worthy of itself. He will find the husband mentioned, but as the Lord of his wife. He will find the wife mentioned, but as one who is to be obedient to the husband, and who is to maintain a discreet silence in the presence of her Lord. He will find children mentioned, but chiefly as illustrations of the docility and credulousness which should characterize man in his attitude towards God and the teachings of religion. What he will also find is a complete absence of such pictures as meet us in contemporary pagan writings of the devotion of husband to wife, of wife to husband, of the love of parent and child, and of the civilizing influence of domestic life. None of these things come within the scope of the purpose of the New Testament writers. Husbands and wives and children are, of course, there. One could not write about human beings without at least having them in the background. But their existence is no part of the main texture of the New Testament writings. It was no part of the purpose which animated the writers of the New Testament to encourage domestic life or to dwell upon its significance in the history of humanity. Such facts as marriage, children, the attraction of sex for sex, were things that had of necessity to be faced, but to the true Christian they were obstacles to the realizing of the only thing that mattered—the salvation of one's own soul.

Religion and Sex.

The whole Christian conception of the relationship of the sexes is based upon the assumption that the sexual relationship is essentially unclean, but that as human nature is weak, and it is not given to all to reach what one great Christian writer calls the state of "angelic perfection"—namely celibacy, concessions must be made to human weakness, and marriage must be permitted, or even in some cases encouraged, in order to prevent a worse state of affairs. This is plainly stated by St. Paul, in the not very decent language, "better to marry than to burn." This conception of sex runs right through the New Testament, it is present in the classic Christian writings, and it runs through the teachings of the mediæval Church with its asceticism and laudations of celibacy. One can hardly assume Mr. Chesterton's non-acquaintance with these things, although he may assume that the Christian readers of the *Liverpool Echo* know little about them. But those who understand Christianity instead of merely believing it, know that in all that concerns sex the position of the earlier generations of Christians was a reversal to a very primitive conception of the nature of woman, with certain developed Eastern ideas on asceticism and sexual "cleanliness." To the primitive mind, as is shown by what is known of existing tribes of savages, there is nothing either morally or sexually unclean in the fact of sex, but there is something strange and fear-inspiring in the peculiar biologic functions of woman. It is this that leads to the belief that she is specially charged with supernaturalism, and needs to be guarded against, or to use Frazer's expression, insulated for the protection of man. What Christianity did was to take this savage conception of the nature of woman, superimpose an Eastern conception of woman's place in the social economy, and thunder it forth in the name of religion. Christian writings are full of warnings to man of the danger woman offers to his spiritual growth. The ideal held before him is that of celibacy. And this teaching was for centuries responsible for the steady sinking of women in the social scale, and for the degradation of life in many other directions.

* * *

The Influence of the Church.

The consequences of the Christian view of woman and the married state are not far to seek. In the first place, the emphasis placed on the evil of sex resulted in making the very subject actually unclean in the moral sense of the word. We have not outgrown that to-day, where in Christian societies the imagination of Christians runs so strongly to pornography that the very mention of a sex question gives rise to side-long looks and salacious sniggers. The very word morality came in the Christian mind to cover little else than sexual facts. The expression "an immoral man" hardly ever means in the Christian vernacular the man who is untruthful, or dishonest, or unfaithful. It means generally one who has committed some sexual offence. Christianity never succeeded in making men sexually clean, but it did succeed in poisoning the general mind to such an extent that even to-day it is almost impossible to discuss in public subjects that might be and ought to be discussed with ease and frankness. It is curious, too, to find Mr. Chesterton jeering at them who advocate restriction of population—as a good Catholic he has no choice in this matter—and remarking that the States which now lament a decline in population destroyed those monastic brotherhoods "that were a virile and voluntary limitation of it." Mr. Chesterton can hardly hope that so grotesque a statement can be taken seriously. I do not dwell upon the fact that there is very grave doubts whether, on the whole, the monastic population ceased to make their contribution to the increase of the race. But even

though they had done so, it could hardly be taken as an intentional limitation of the population, since the same Church that encouraged celibacy on the part of the monk, gave its fullest sanction to the utmost increase in population, and, as a result of its own conduct, from the most undesirable stocks. But the celibate life of the monk was just an illustration of the essentially unclean belief that married life could only act as a drawback to man's spiritual development. And that was really the governing fact when one is considering the influence of Christianity on the institution of marriage and the family. I know of no other great religion which is so blind to the value of family life as a civilizing agency as is Christianity. One can pick up one great Christian writer after another for some centuries and find a complete absence of the recognition of this factor. This phenomenon is not quite peculiar to the Roman Church, although it is there that one finds its strongest manifestations. If one takes that great Protestant classic, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, there is the same want. Of course, as we already said, the Church had to accommodate itself to the facts of sex and marriage, and human nature is generally strong enough to rise superior to its religion when its religion threatens something that is vital to its existence or its happiness. But we have not to thank Christianity for that. The original aim of Christianity was not the establishment of a stable and progressive human society, but the preparation of a select family of believers for an approaching end of the world and their translation to the heavenly spheres. It was only when facts demonstrated the absurdity of this belief that common sense got to work. Ever since the developing social consciousness has been steadily modifying Christian teaching and altering the outlook of Christians. Unhappily the type of mind that Christianity developed and encouraged is still strong enough to make popular and profitable such travesties of facts as the Press so liberally supplies. CHAPMAN COHEN.

"The Meaning of the Cross."

SUCH is the title of the leading article in the *British Weekly* of August 21, contributed by the Rev. Principal Selbie, D.D., Mansfield College, Oxford. Dr. Selbie is the head of an institution for the training of young preachers who, after a course of two or three years, become pastors of churches, in which position preaching will be their chief occupation. Naturally their sermons will be so many glasses reflecting the instruction received at the theological college. Consequently Principal Selbie's article is of importance as expressing, not only the theological views which he personally holds, but also the views that will be held by Mansfield men and characterize their preaching in the next generation. The dictionaries define the Cross as the emblem of Christianity, a symbolical representation of the instrument of punishment on which Christ died. The famous Robertson, of Brighton, says in one of his sermons: "The Cross was once a gibbet, but it is now the highest name we have because He hung on it." In his day Robertson was looked upon and cruelly persecuted by many as a heretic; but the heresies of seventy and eighty years ago constitute the orthodoxy of to-day. And yet the dogma of Christ's death for the world's salvation has altered but little for a very long time. Theories of the Atonement have been practically innumerable, coming and going no one knew how or why; but the notion that underlay them all was that apart from Christ's death there could have been no salvation for mankind. Principal Selbie says:—

The fact that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" is unquestionably one of the

fundamentals of the Christian faith. And it is characteristic of the present temper of mind both within the Christian Church and outside it, that the fact is not so much denied as ignored.

The Principal may be right so far as Oxford is concerned; but if he inquires he will find that in London, Liverpool, Glasgow, Manchester, and Birmingham, as well as in scores of smaller towns, there are tens of thousands of people who not only ignore but positively deny the alleged fact. It may be perfectly true that the indifference to this doctrine which prevails within the Church is due to the "legal, judicial, penal, and governmental terms in which" it used to be expressed for many ages, and also to the decreased sense of sin existing just now; but in the outside world the indifference is mostly caused by actual unbelief. Here people are not only less concerned about the matter of sin than they used to be, but are not concerned about it at all. To us sin, in its theological sense, is absolutely non-existent. Wrongs abound everywhere, but they are economic, social wrongs, wrongs which men inflict upon one another. Evil is abundant on every hand, but it only concerns human relationships here and now, and there is not the least mystery about it. It is purely human in its origin and in its consequences. Sin, in the ordinary acceptance of the term, is of human origin, too, and no one can become a true and fervent Christian without believing in it and having a deep and poignant sense of its reality. As Dr. Selbie says, "where there is little or no sense of sin and no deep longing for forgiveness, God's remedy for sin is not likely to be regarded as a question of surpassing interest." As soon as the sense of sin completely dies out in the world, as it is rapidly doing, the Church and Christianity itself will inevitably cease to be.

It is quite true that "men cannot permanently deny their own nature," and this fact fully accounts for the present growing lack of belief in supernaturalism. "The quest for God and for peace with God" is an artificial quest. So far is it from representing "an urge as intimate and imperative as that of any of our animal instincts," that unless it is artificially created by a long course of religious education it is never felt at all. So true is this that the clergy themselves, when advocating the importance of religious education in day schools, openly declare that in its absence our boys and girls would certainly grow up Atheists. The truth is that supernatural religion is entirely foreign to our nature, so foreign indeed, that the clergy exist for the one purpose of preventing it from dying out; and yet in spite of all their strenuous efforts, it is in the process of passing away.

Principal Selbie assures us that "the Cross of Christ is the outcome and supreme expression of the love of God for men." The Psalmist is of a different opinion when he tells us (vii., 2) that "God is angry with the wicked every day." The prophet Naham (i., 2, 6) declares that "the Lord avengeth and is full of wrath; the Lord taketh vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies"; and that "his wrath is poured out like fire." John the Baptist asked the Pharisees and Sadducees who flocked to his baptism in the wilderness, "Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come" (Mat. iii, 7)? Paul says in Thes. i., 10, that God raised his Son from the dead, "even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come." Why, the Bible, even the New Testament, is replete with allusions to the wrath of God and to Jesus as the only deliverer from it. Assuming the scripturalness of Dr. Selbie's contention that "Christ died not in order to make God love us, or to enable him to love us, but because he so loved that he gave," however, the question naturally arises, how could such a gift resulting in suffering and sorrow and a shameful death, be "the outcome

and supreme expressions of the love of God for men"? Is it not utterly inconceivable that a good and just God could demonstrate his love for mankind by inflicting terrific injustice upon his only begotten Son? And yet Principal Selbie calmly writes thus:—

In the Cross of Christ men see God doing for them that which they have ever been striving (and failing) to do for themselves. It is the light thus thrown on the nature of God and on his attitude to man that makes Christianity a religion of grace, through which salvation becomes a gift of God and not a reward of merit. It is true that there is something here against which human pride rebels.

Yes, surely, there is something in such a conception of God against which, not human pride in the bad sense, but human reason at its best, emphatically rebels, and it is this rebellion that is emptying churches and chapels throughout the land. But we have not finished the quotation:—

When Ruskin said "the root of every heresy and schism is man's desire to earn rather than receive his salvation," he was only giving emphatic expression to a human trait which has persisted within and in spite of Christianity. It must, therefore, be remembered that it is only under certain psychological conditions that the Cross can make its full appeal. These are a sense of sin and need, penitence and a real desire for help. To religious indifference or to superficial emotionalism it will always appear otiose and vain.

Clearly the Principal does tacitly admit that in its natural state humanity is strongly opposed to the Christian scheme of salvation. This vigorous enmity is rooted in a deep sense of its own dignity and self-respect. The Church's very idea of salvation is horribly humiliating to a man who is aware of the grand potentialities of his own nature. The saying "Know thyself," if taken seriously and put into practice, inevitably gives rise to another saying, namely, "Save thyself," and the one saying is just as true and applicable as the other. He who knows himself feels no need of any extraneous help, for he has learned the high art of helping himself. Only he who helps himself has the impulse and capacity to help others. Self-helping of necessity leads to helping one another. This is the Gospel so powerfully and eloquently preached in all the essays and lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson. He says: "Let a man know his worth, and keep things under his feet. Let him not peep, or steal, or skulk up and down with the air of a charity-boy, a bastard, or an interloper, in the world which exists for him." The world is ours and all its resources are at our disposal. The Cross, like Christ, as a saving power, is a myth which owes its existence to the religious imagination. In the long run, all people find out that what they are and may become depends upon their own thought and action. Such is the case even with Christians, whatever their professions may be. There is no other salvation than that which comes through self-expression and vicarious service.

J. T. LLOYD.

MR. G. WHITEHEAD'S MISSION.

Our missionary's visit to Leeds has been one of, if not the most, successful of his tour. The seven meetings held in Trafalgar Square were all attended by large, orderly and sympathetic audiences, and sales of literature and collections have been good. On the Sunday evening, Mr. Whitehead, in spite of other attractions, held his audience until ten o'clock. Our old and steadfast friends, Mr. and Mrs. Brown, gave excellent support. Mr. Youngman gave such help as his health permitted, and Mr. Lew Davis proved a capable and humorous chairman. Mr. Whitehead will be at Swansea for the next fortnight.

The Exodus from Houndsditch.

Who knew the seasons when to take
Occasion by the hand, and make
The bounds of freedom wider. —Tennyson.

Things are moving in the right direction towards more freedom and a more sensible outlook.—Edward Carpenter.

It is men and women who make movements interesting, and such a book as Belfort Bax's *Reminiscences and Reflexions of a Victorian* has a singular value and propriety. Besides being a record of things seen, and ideas urged over a number of years, the volume contains a personal note which is very welcome.

Hence much in these reminiscences will not fail to vex somebody. To woo the world with honeyed tongue has never been the author's way. Born in a narrow Calvinistic circle, and in his earlier years closely associated with influences which might have made for political Nonconformity, Belfort Bax moved steadily towards liberty of action in politics and religion. What a world it was, to be sure! Here are his own words:—

Then was the period—that of the early sixties—of the universal pot-hat (the old beaver was still occasionally to be seen with elderly gentlemen) of the broad-cloth, frock-coat, of women with enormous crinolines—the younger ones with hair done up in nets, the older ones sporting long curls; of tallow candles, which might be seen hanging up in bundles outside oil-shops, of bedroom candlesticks with their necessary snuffers. Gas had only recently been introduced into private houses, and was still looked at askance by some as a dangerous innovation. The tea-urn was in its afternoon glory. Daguerreotype photographs were by no means out of date. Smoking was not as yet very common among the middle classes—cigarettes being quite unknown to the general public.

The author notes the intellectual changes since his boyhood. He says bluntly that "the intellectual possibilities of the English people were then stunted and cramped by the influence of the dogmatic theology which was the basis of its traditional religious sentiment." Sabbatarianism was rampant, and he writes feelingly of the "horror of the tedium of Sunday." In Evangelical circles the theatre and the music-hall were then held in utter abhorrence, and he recollects a tract which told the story of the conversion of a lady-playgoer who, on passing into the theatre, was appalled by seeing the words "To the pit" in illuminated letters before her. This warning concerning the bottomless pit appealed to her so strongly that she turned back and became a converted being.

There is no tendency on the author's part to minimise the effects of religion. He quotes Mendelssohn's aria, "O Rest in the Lord" as a melody that typically embodies the emotional religious sentiment of the English middle-class of that time, and he compares it with the German "Ein feste Burg" and the French "Marseillaise" to our discomfiture. He even suggests that this religious emotion was pure hypocrisy; but this is, surely, too sweeping a generalization. For a man cannot be a humbug on Sunday without being a humbug for the rest of the week. There is more in life than is covered by elegant epigrams and polite phrases, although we have all heard of the Christian tradesman who left off sanding the sugar to go and say his prayers. The earlier history of Nonconformity was a history of something other than hypocrisy; and although Nonconformists are now mainly respectable and no longer fined and imprisoned, there is a flash of the old fire in the ranks of the Quakers and Peculiar People. And this was even more true in the "sixties" of the last century than it is to-day.

To Freethinkers these pages, dealing with the theological views then current, are of great interest. Belfort Bax is himself a Freethinker, but he always wore his "rue with a difference." He even says that the

work of the earlier Secularists was "crude and coarse." As if any reform was ever instituted, or abuse swept away, without wounding the susceptibilities of some ignorant or bigoted person. It is better to let every soldier of progress do what he can. It is idle to quarrel with another for being different. The bolder are apt to despise the less bold as wanting in courage, but that is usually a mistake. The less bold are still more apt to sneer at the bolder as vulgar and forward, which is usually a greater mistake.

Here is what Belfort Bax has to say of the later aspects of popular Freethought:—

It was not till the early eighties and the prosecution of Foote for blasphemy that the better educated middle classes began to have sense and justice enough to see the movement from below for freedom of thought, commonly known as Secularism, for what it was, namely, the plucky effort of men of the small middle and working classes to emancipate themselves, up to their lights, from the thralldom of an encumbering and galling superstition, fatal to all advance in knowledge and to all independent intellectual effort.

This testimonial, be it noted, is very different from the criticism of the older Secularists. It reminds us of the clergyman who, when invited to say grace before dinner, always began with "Bountiful Jehovah" if he saw champagne on the table, but moderated his transports in the presence of claret.

Belfort Bax was happy in his friends and acquaintances. He watched the celebrities he met with a critical eye, and jotted down his judgments with determination. The notable people he met were not all dream and gilding. We find a delightful glimpse of Bernard Shaw, which is illustrative of the famous Shavian humour. In his early journalistic days Shaw borrowed half-a-crown of Bax, and the next day returned the money. Bax rallied him on his scrupulous care in repaying the small debt. "Oh!" said Shaw, "it is my habit to show punctilious accuracy in small money matters, so that when the time comes, I may pull off my big coup with success."

Of William Morris he says that "the thing he hated most as a view of life was Puritanism in all its aspects." A thorough Pagan in the best sense of that much-abused term, Morris's generosity was Oriental in its splendour. He kept a drawerful of silver for almsgiving, which was chiefly expended on political refugees from all parts of Europe. The poet also kept an open table, and was always glad to welcome his friends at any meal. An amusing glimpse is given of Sir William Richmond, the famous artist, who on one occasion was found "suffering from gout and sitting up in bed reading Jowett's *Plato*, an incident which would have pleased the famous master of Balliol College.

An amusing story is told of Frederick Engels, who was a thorough Atheist. Dining one Sunday with some Manchester friends, the talk turned on the day's preachers, and Engels, on being asked what church he attended, replied that he always took a walk on Sundays. On hearing this, his host remarked, "You hold peculiar views, Mr. Engels, somewhat Socinian, I think." This was the extreme limit of theological heterodoxy conceivable by the respectable middle-class minds, adds Belfort Bax caustically.

William Sharp, the poet, was another friend, and we are told that "his ambitions were purely literary, and one felt in his case what Morris used to say of Swinburne, that he ought to have been born between two calf covers." Cunninghame Graham also figures in the book, and comment is made on the Stuart ancestry. Indeed, Belfort Bax adds, "his picturesque appearance, recalling, as some say, Vandyke's Charles the First, and others a Spanish hidalgo of the sixteenth century, contributed undoubtedly to spread his fame."

One of the most distinguished of the author's friends was Lord Haldane, whom he knew well in the "eighties." At that time Bax was living at Croydon, and the two friends had many a walk together over the charming Surrey hills. Once Haldane impressed upon his companion the legal point that, should any question of trespass arise, the correct thing was to tender a small coin for technical damage to the owner or agent, with the words, "I claim no right," which should stop all future proceedings. Bax says quite clearly: "Haldane's real interests have always lain in philosophy. The real Haldane is the metaphysician," and not the politician.

Hyndman's fondness for "the frock-coat, pot-hat, and linked shirt-cuff" is duly noted. He not only wore it constantly, but even sold Socialist papers in the Strand and Fleet Street whilst so garbed. Present-day Labour leaders flirt with Clericalism, but Hyndman was made of sterner stuff. He realized that it was perfectly idle to pretend that intellectual liberty and real progress could be found inside the ring fences of the Christian Churches. Hyndman had travelled very widely, and had campaigned with Garibaldi in Italy, and had mixed with beachcombers on Pacific shores. He knew only too well what the clergy had done in all parts of the world to have any illusions concerning them. Doubtless, in time, present-day Socialists will yet discover, like Red Riding Hood, that the Church is not a gentle grandmother, but a greedy wolf.

MIMNERMUS.

"The Freest Spirit That Ever Lived."

Just about the time when the first European book was being printed at Mainz, in Germany, and forty years before the discovery of America by Columbus, an Italian peasant-girl had an illegitimate child. In the opinion of Professor Orestano, this child grew up to be "the freest spirit that ever lived."

"Free"—"freer"—"freest"; these are terms that are somewhat indefinite. Sometimes, I think the freest spirit that ever lived was the Polish-German, F. W. Nietzsche. However, we will not stand disputing about these comparisons. Let us return (for we soon started wandering!) to the village of Vinci, not a great way from the city of Florence. The child was Leonardo da Vinci, and his father was a legal gentleman—a notary. Leonardo's mother married a villager, and the notary married a middle-class lady; but he took charge of the boy, and had him educated.

And just as I wrote the word "educated" on a September evening, 1924, I happened to look from my window, and I saw an aeroplane flying under a cloudy sky towards Hendon. This remark again looks like wandering! But wait and see.

Even as a boy, Leonardo was a clever painter. A rustic bought him a smooth, circular board, sawn out of a fig-tree, and asked for a picture; and, on the board, Leonardo drew and coloured an extraordinary dragon, whose body was made up of adders, lizards, toads, serpents, moths and locusts. His father, however, sold this work to a merchant; and the boy then made a picture of a heart transplanted by a dart, and gave it to the peasant. Probably the peasant was more pleased with this heart than with the dragon; for the common folk of the world understand all too well the riven and bleeding heart.

Young Leonardo went to an arithmetic, or Abacus, school in Florence; and from this first step he climbed to the science of mathematics, in which he was to be a master. Under the sculptor and painter Verrocchio he studied, one of his companions being the after-

wards famous Botticelli. Years later, Leonardo wrote the remark (a very good one): "Poor is the disciple who does not surpass his teacher." And he so far surpassed his teacher, that Verrocchio did not disdain to take hints from Leonardo da Vinci, aged 21. The man from Vinci evolved into painter, sculptor, architect, mathematician, engineer, mechanical inventor, philosopher.

From 1484 to 1499 Leonardo worked as an artist and creator, in the service of the Duke of Milan. On and off during ten years he studied the anatomy of horses (he loved horses and birds), and constructed a giant horse out of clay, which was the admiration of all citizens. Intending to have this horse copied in bronze, he left the task too long undone: the clay figure cracked, and the statue was never completed. Much of Leonardo's work suffered the like fate. He invented so rapidly, that he could not keep pace with his own ideas. Brimming over, he produced better than the old Hebrew God, who cut and shaped for six days, and had a Sabbath rest. Leonardo could not rest. He never had time for a love-affair; he never married.

Many a picture of his has perished. Two remain. One is the Smiling Lady (La Gioconda), at whom tens of thousands of people, visiting the Louvre at Paris, have smiled back. The other is the scene of the Last Supper, at which (so legend tells) Jesus and his twelve apostles sat and talked. All the figures are vivid, eager, human—as lively as a Communist committee in 1924, or a Strikers' Executive; and Judas Iscariot spills the salt. So splendid is this painting that, time after time, careful hands have recoloured the faded old scene; and even so recently as August, 1924, it was being retouched. Such are the true miracles of history, seen in the influence of genius upon generations born long after its labours have been accomplished. In this enduring power, we may witness an effective (if we care to use the word) "immortality." Sir Joshua Reynolds was thinking of such cases when he penned the words, now inscribed on the walls of our National Gallery: "The works of those who have stood the test of ages have a claim to that respect and veneration to which no modern can pretend."

Not only did he peer into the anatomy of the horse. He penetrated the secrets of the human frame, and, with his own hands, dissected more than a score of dead bodies, in order to reveal the physiology, without which we cannot truly arrive at the meaning of health and disease. People were scandalized at his daring, and even accused him of wicked science; that is, of heresy; but fortunately, nobody brought him to trial. Indeed, Leonardo seems to have attempted everything except marriage and poetry. In a vast number of notes and sketches which he left at death, we behold his universal genius. Artists and inventors of our own day find in his memoranda a treasury of interesting and even exciting hints. Da Vinci planned canals and hydraulic machinery; designed arches and domes; caught glimpses of new laws of weight, heat, light and sound; invented a clock with a pendulum; planned cities with broad streets and underground roads; hinted at the principle of the Camera Obscura; found new facts in the fertilization of plants; designed a parachute, and, on the basis of observation of birds, sketched a sort of flying-machine (and now you know why I mentioned the aeroplane of September, 1924); created the idea of a submarine vessel; examined shells, etc., in the soil, and struck out the notion of "fossils" as now understood by geologists; planned a dictionary of 8,000 words and word-roots; made good maps; and jotted down on scraps of paper wise observations on nature and on man, which are well deserving of our study to-day.

When he died in the year 1519, aged 67, at Amboise on the River Loire in France, he closed what was perhaps the most active life that any man ever lived.

He had what I like to call the Kosmic Passion. By that phrase I mean the intense love of order, of what the Greeks named "Kosmos," as distinct from "Chaos" (muddle, anarchy, topsy-turvy, confusion). Every man of genius is a Kosmic man: he puts order into manners, customs, law, morality, observation, induction, deduction, poetry, drama, painting, carving, building, crafts, commerce, finance, politics, or philosophy. On the other side is the disorder of the fool, the criminal, and the lunatic, whom I refer to here, not with thoughts of blame, but simply as examples of intellectual and social "chaos." And if we inquire what was Leonardo da Vinci's religion, we may reply that it consisted in this Kosmic Passion or Enthusiasm. He lived in the age when modern Protestantism was born. The air was thick, so to speak, with debates and disputes on God, Jesus, Salvation, Heaven, Hell, Sacraments, and the rest. Such tempests of devout discussion passed him by, and left him with scarce as much Deism as you will find in Thomas Paine's "Age of Reason." Mr. J. M. Robertson, in his *Short History of Freethought*, has justly observed of Leonardo:

In all his reflections upon philosophic and scientific themes he is, in the scientific sense, materialistic—that is, inductive, studious of experiment, insistent upon tangible data. "Wisdom is daughter of experience, Truth is the daughter of Time," "There is no effect in nature without a reason," "All our knowledge originates in sensations," such are the dicta he accumulates in an age of superstition..... In all directions we see the great artist, a century before Bacon, anticipating Bacon's protests and questionings.

We see better now why Orestano¹ has entitled Leonardo "The Freest Spirit that ever lived." And Orestano discusses Leonardo's religion, examines the many notes that deal with his outlook on life, and he affirms that, in essence, Leonardo was a Stoic. That is to say, his mind worked along the courageous, strong, severe lines of Zeno, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius, and not along the lines of Luther, Calvin, and Wyclif. If, says Orestano, Leonardo had lived at the time when Stoic philosophy confronted the young faith of Christianity (about the second century, that is), he would have accepted Stoicism, and turned from Christianity.

I will not speak of the relative values of Stoicism and Catholicism and Protestantism. I perceive values in the Stoic philosophy, as illustrated in the noble "Meditations" of Aurelius; and I perceive values in the Catholic faith of the Middle Ages. But let all that pass. I just put a few simple questions to orthodox people: How is it that so remarkable a genius as Leonardo da Vinci was left outside the gospel circle? Why are so many men of genius, in the period elapsing since 1519, excluded from the faith of Rome, and Canterbury, and Geneva? Why is a single genius shut out from a divine system which ought to pride itself on the inclusion of everything that makes for truth and beauty?

F. J. GOULD.

The new Church will be founded on moral science. Poets, artists, musicians, philosophers will be its teachers, the noblest literature of the world will be its Bible. Love and labour its sacraments—instead of worshipping our saviour, we will gladly build an altar in the heart for everyone who has suffered for humanity.—Emerson.

All the religions of the world are based upon error; humanity is higher than theology; knowledge is far preferable to faith; action is more effective than prayer; and the best worship man can offer is honest work, in order to make one another wiser and happier than heretofore.—Charles Bradlaugh.

¹ In *Leonardo da Vinci*, published in Italian.

Correspondence.

FAITH AND FOLLY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. C. W. J. Tennant's reply to my "open letter" is a typical example of Christian Science evasion and bluff. I challenged him to give us the proof that Christian Scientists can cure to-day just as it is said Jesus did 1900 years ago. He makes not the slightest attempt to deal with my challenge. He tells us that the spittle and clay Jesus used to anoint a blind man had nothing to do with the cure and that I did not see "the spiritual significance" of the incident. There is not the least justification for Mr. Tennant's interpretation, as anyone can prove by reading the chapter from John himself. But let that pass. Jesus *did* cure the blind (according to the Gospels and Mr. Tennant) and I am quite indifferent as to how it happened if only we can get authentic particulars of similar cures by similar means accomplished by Christian Scientists. I also must repeat my request for half a dozen names of Christian Science healers who can go with me and heal the blind exactly (and as quickly) as Jesus is said to have done. If Mr. Tennant cannot accede to my request, will he get Mr. Charles Herman Lea to deal with the matter? I am out to cure the blind and will not be put off if possible. But if they both refuse then I shall be compelled to call their Christian Science unmitigated humbug.

As for the Bible, Mr. Tennant tells us that "Christian Science through practical demonstration is restoring" the credibility and authenticity of the Gospels. Good. Assertion is cheap, so may we now have some proof? Give us half a dozen typical examples, beginning with the Virgin Birth.

I should not have referred again to the idiotic extract attributed to the *Freethinker* given in the *Christian Science Sentinel* had it happened to ordinary papers. But how comes it that Christian Science can make such a palpable error? Are Christian Scientists just as fallible as ordinary folk?

Mrs. Eddy's third (or was it her fourth) husband got her age from the dear lady herself, therefore she was to blame for the statement that she was forty when she was fifty-six. Did she point out the error (error again!) in any of her numerous publications?

H. CUTNER.

AFFIRMATION.

SIR,—I would like to report for the encouragement of others that, having recently been appointed a Justice of the Peace, I attended at our Town Hall to be "sworn in." I stated that I wished to affirm under the Oaths Act, 1888, and the Lord Mayor, who was officiating, without the slightest difficulty or obstruction, proceeded accordingly.

I made the statutory declarations, altering the statement to omit the words of imprecation where necessary.

I did the same thing when attesting for the Army, during the War, and if Freethinkers would have the courage of their convictions the frequency of affirmations would surprise many people, and would help to do away with a lot of the exhibitions of bigotry we hear about so often.

Certainly when sitting on the Bench, I shall see that any person who claims to exercise his statutory right of affirmation, has every facility of so doing.

FRED HOEY, J.P.

I belong to the great Church that holds the world within its starlit aisles; that claims the great and good of every race and clime; that finds with joy the grain of gold in every creed, and floods with light and love the germs of good in every soul.—Col. Ingersoll.

Oh, Fates, holding the reins of destiny, speed that glorious day when all mankind shall be free to live, love, and follow nature in all her sublimity as the monocrat of the universe. Then will religion cease, wars come to an end, and the brotherhood of mankind be all in all.—Judge Parish Sadd.

Acid Drops.

Dr. Hector MacPherson, minister of the Guthrie Memorial United Free Church, Edinburgh, in a paper on "The Universe as Revealed by Modern Astronomy," read recently at the Conference of Modern Churchmen at Oxford, said :—

The visible universe presented to the mind of man an impression of incomprehensible vastness, alike in space and time. It must be confessed that the first effect of this impression must be one of unsettlement. Little wonder that the conventional theologians fought this new cosmology long and fiercely. The new cosmology, however, did not, as they thought, contradict the Confession and the Creeds, but it somehow rendered them meaningless, for the power which the cosmology and the cosmogony of to-day alike hinted at was as much greater than the God of the Council of Trent or the Westminster Assembly as the universe of to-day was wider than the universe of Luther.

Christian apologists indulge in amazing intellectual gymnastics in their attempts to reconcile science and religion; but never before, we think, has one suggested that science does not contradict Christianity, but merely renders it meaningless. One can only infer that Dr. MacPherson means that the astronomer regards the Christian cosmogony with such a scientific contempt that he does not bother to deny it. It is certainly interesting to hear that "the facts of astronomical science are not hostile to Christian theism," and that astronomy is "in a real sense the handmaid of faith." Interesting, but hardly convincing. Modern cosmogony having shown that the old Hebrew creation myths are not even clever guesses at the truth, and having demonstrated that our earth, instead of being the hub of the universe, is an insignificant planet belonging to one of the lesser solar systems, is not opposed to Christian theism! The universe is an ordered one? Of course it is; that is the scientist's contention; whereas the religionist has always told us that it is subject to the caprices of a personal will, and that from time to time this personality has intervened, and set aside the orderly working of natural laws—made the sun stand still, or produced some other such startling phenomenon in the manner of a conjuror triumphantly producing a rabbit out of a hat! The attitude of these theologians who frankly recognize the antagonism of religion and science, and unequivocally declare that we must choose between them is at least logical, granted the act of faith by which they accept the Bible as a divine revelation of the truth. But those who at this late day attempt to reconcile the two, must either be hypocrites or possess the ability of thinking in idea-tight compartments. No one, we maintain, can make even an elementary study of astronomical science and continue to accept the God of Genesis. Indeed, we find it difficult to understand how any sensitive man (even if he is unacquainted with astronomy) can look up into the heavens on a cloudless night without such a sense of beauty and wonder that the foolish tales of a deity who showed his hind parts to the leader of a barbaric horde, and who descended incarnate upon the earth to perform divers acts, become positively repellant.

At the same conference Dr. J. S. Haldane, Fellow of New College, Oxford, replying to a discussion on a paper read by him on "Biology and Religion," declared, "If I did belong to a church I believe it would be my own Scottish Church, for one advantage it possesses is that it has got no Prayer-book."

However uncompromising the attitude of biology was towards obsolete details of theology, there was in reality nothing to come between biological science and real religion. The Churches could not afford to be hampered by unintelligible beliefs which were mainly materialistic accretions of Christianity and which greatly weakened its influence. Religion itself stood on ground which could not be assailed, and it had no use for ricketty defences.

Perhaps Dr. Haldane will tell us what is materialistic accretion and what is genuine Christianity. So far as we are aware it is not possible to point to any book of the

Bible which does not contain something ridiculous, something unscientific, something that is opposed unpromisingly to biological science. Take away the various marvellous (and often disgusting) acts performed by the deity in the Old Testament, and the miracles from the New, and what is left? In the Old Testament some shrewd, worldly wisdom of elderly Hebrews and the practical lessons they seemed to have drawn from their mundane existence, and some doubtful hygiene and detailed and unsavoury instructions for religious ritual; in the New Testament a deal of sentimentalizing about human affairs, which can either be interpreted as a kind of esoteric Communism, or as a system of slave ethics, just as suits the reader's temperament and social views. But of "real religion," the stuff that made men of old burn and hang and torture their fellow beings, the awful threats and lavish promises, the insinuations and force of suggestion that made the mentally feeble in the past forsake the world of common-sense things, to live like brutes in the deserts and waste places, and that induces them to-day to gather at street corners on Sunday to sing ugly hymns concerning the blood of the lamb, and to indulge in dreary, dreadful little sermons concerning Jesus crucified—of the mystical, hectoring teachings that scare and bewilder the ignorant and mentally feeble, there is nothing left. If such shrewd or cynical advice as is given in "Proverbs," such doubtful poetry as is contained in the "Song of Solomon" and the rather inchoate, purposeless denouncing of worldly comforts that is found in the Gospels and the "Acts" were to be judged critically, in the manner that any other literature is judged, then Christianity would not survive a generation longer.

Unhappily, whilst scholars like Dr. Haldane may have only a sentimental and hesitant regard for the Bible, hosts of people sincerely believe that it is an inspired account of nature and an infallible guide to right conduct. And so long as their minds are lumbered with such ideas, they can never take a really reasonable view of any problem, political, social, or scientific. For that reason, we suggest that all attempts to justify the Bible as "great literature," or "beautiful myth," or as man's earliest attempts to understand nature, or as being a metaphorical representation of the truth, and thereby the complement to scientific truth, or as dealing with a sphere of things that science and reason have no jurisdiction over, is pernicious and immoral. When Christianity has ceased to be a creed that dominates and warps the minds of millions of men and women, when it has ceased to fill the world with imaginary terrors for hosts of timid souls, and when it has ceased to receive a blind, unreasoning adherence from great bodies of people, then, perhaps, we can examine its sacred book as literature, and say that this or that portion is of literary value. But all attempts to-day are merely so much buttressing up of an uncouth and harmful superstition.

Is the Church unmindful of the social well-being and happiness of the people? Perish the thought! The churchyard of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, is now used as a dancing-ground by the members of the congregation, and is the scene of fox-trotting and one-stepping, and such-like religious exercises. Well, dancing is undoubtedly a healthier way of spending one's leisure time than nodding drowsily in an ill-ventilated church, what time a gentleman earns his salary by telling one how to behave. But we suggest, in all humility, that having thus done something to help solve the dance-hall shortage, the rector and his supporters should tackle the housing shortage—or those problems which in our Christian civilization lead to such displays of brotherhood as the Covent Garden strike.

In a gulf of despair, Dr. T. R. Glover seeks consolation in the fact that the work of Baptists and Methodists goes on and the Church is still the centre of negro life. The colour problem of America is a legacy of greed from slave-drivers to the third and fourth generation; slavery is not forbidden in the Bible, and Dr. Glover must know that plain or fancy religion to the negro is like extreme unction.

It is a simple sum in arithmetic. If fifty-eight members of the R.A.F. are killed whilst playing at flying, what will be the number when the game begins in real earnest? Meantime, what are the fuglemen of the Prince of Peace doing? Opening Cathedrals and carrying on the imitation Royalty business by enthroning a bishop.

After the brilliant "Air Raid" on the Stadium the performance finished with the singing of the hymn, "Abide with Me." Thus, stupidity, barbarity, and piety make a trinity that would make one despair for England if one only believed journalists and not the next man to us in the street who begins to see through the game.

When one settles down to read a leading article in the *Daily Telegraph* it is like eating suet pudding on a hot day. "Religion and Science" was the solid fare provided for country vicars and other members of the body politic comprising the backbone of England. Dr. Inge is described as the Erasmus of our age—a more just comparison would be to call him the Cinquevalli of our times; he has not enough courage to leave the Church, and his bitterness would not qualify him to become even a good pagan. With its usual flow of superlatives against the present rulers of Russia which has no relation to truth, the leader writer runs on until his allotted space is filled up, having smitten Russia, mildly approved of Mr. Bernard Shaw and M. Anatole France, and said nothing to agitate the minds of its reader, under the heading of "Religion and Science."

Mr. Louis Golding, writing in the *Daily Mail* from Zumaya, Castrille, describes a bull-fight:—

Nothing could eradicate from our minds the spectacle of a mild fawn bull leaning over the barricade, weeping slow tears, nuzzling the hands of the red-capped men who but thrust him back again upon the goads of the banderillero and the sword of the matador.

It was more terrible even than the sight of the gored blinkered horses stitched up in an outer encampment.

Spain is a notoriously religious country; we trust that the Pope is proud of his children; the Catholic Church might make a start on dumb animals first before attempting to bring the world into its fold.

A pretty sight is a dog sniffing round a hedgehog. The attitude of those "in the trade" in the theological professions towards evolution is somewhat similar. If the answer to the many questions involved in evolution will not disturb the so-called spiritual leader's position, we have no doubt that they will accept it; but evolution may throw overboard the Virgin Mary and Jesus and original sin, and what would the robin do then, poor thing?

We notice that there is an hotel proprietor who is going to build another hotel in Jerusalem at a cost of £120,000. There is something irresistibly funny about this statement, when we remember the dreadful trouble that thirty shillings caused in that locality. We trust that when the next Messiah is born better arrangements will be made to give him a good start in life. His present official followers—first-class dining saloons on trains—front seats at public poppy shows—nudge-elbow chats with dukes and lords—it was all a mistake that manger business—in the exoteric sense.

There is a Hindenburg line in front of established religion, and what we may describe as a "pill-box" is a statement by "F. R. B." in the *Saturday Review*: "A Christian State would no doubt be 'aristocratic'; but it cannot be said too clearly or too often that the Church is not on the side of 'privilege.'" This is enough to make a cod-fish laugh, but no amount of reiteration will remove the fact, that whatever king sat on the throne, there was always a priest in the shadow of it. Does F. R. B. think that there is no truth in Shakespeare's historical plays—and that an audience is incapable of forming a conclusion?

We do not know that anything shows the mental calibre of a great many Christians better than the kind of stuff they issue with a view to converting others to their beliefs. We have, for instance, just received a leaflet which gives an alleged conversation between a Christian and a Freethinking Socialist. The Christian was "a tall clean-shaven man" and good looking. The Freethinker was a beetle-browed, sullen-looking scoundrel, "more like a porcupine, his whole face bristling with hair." There is conversation, quite on the level of the description, and in the end the beetle-browed scoundrel is left almost converted. Now that kind of thing is circulated by the million, and there is always plenty of money for the printing. What we would like is an intelligent outsider's opinion of the kind of mentality disclosed by the writing of rubbish of that kind. Consider the kind of mind that can talk of nothing intellectually better from either its own side or from that of an opponent? And, more striking still, consider the venom and malice that lies thinly covered in the nature of these Christians who can write about unbelievers as though they were born criminals. We have said before that we should like Christians to explain why so much meanness is connected with Christianity? There must be an affinity between the two for them to be so frequently associated, and the talk of love and brotherhood only serves to hide a very ugly fact from the superficial, it does not remove it.

Opening a conference of modern Churchmen at Oxford, to discuss the scientific approach to religion, Dr. Inge, Dean of St. Paul's, said that the conflict of science and religion was still a long way from being reconciled. It was an open sore which poisoned the spiritual life of the civilized world. We thought it was now fashionable for Christian apologists to explain that there was no such conflict, and that there never had been. We commend to our Christian friends the advice that Lord Melbourne gave on a certain historic occasion: "It doesn't matter what we say, but let us all say the same thing."

Recently the Bishop of Kimberley preached in St. Bartholomew's Church, Brighton. The church is the largest parish church in Sussex, but so great was the crowd to see the bishop, that nearly a thousand persons had to stand during the sermon. When the preacher left his chair to give his address a woman in the congregation calmly moved forward, and took his seat. It is not recorded what happened when the Bishop wished to resume his seat. We can imagine the stony glare and severe sermon this daring woman would have received from Apostle Paul. "Let your women keep silence in the churches." Freethought propaganda has a lot to answer for.

Described as a lay preacher, Clifford Cochrane, a tailor, of Ilford, was sentenced to six months' hard labour by the East Ham Bench for an assault upon a little girl. The prisoner was a married man, with two grown-up daughters, and a member of the local Wesleyan Church. We can imagine that our pious contemporaries would have pointed a moral had he been an Atheist. As it is, Christian crime is far too common, we suppose, to call for any comment.

When a parson steps down from the pulpit and writes letters to the Press he should adjust his manner of address. The Rev. S. Skelborn, Wollaston Vicarage, Welshepool, apparently cannot do this. In a letter he states that "as men have lost faith in God they have adopted faith in force." It was only yesterday that munition factories were working at high pressure, and millions of men were engaged in war. We had the assurance from the Bishop of London downwards that it was a holy war, and Mr. G. K. Chesterton joined in the chorus, and everybody knows that the German soldiers' belts bore the words "Gott mit uns." It would appear that the Rev. S. Skelborn has yet to learn the difference between private and public silliness.

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.

NEW READER.—You can obtain your *Freethinker* and all our publications from F. Combes, 8 Kentish Town Road, N.W.1, Tobacconist and Newsagent, opposite the Camden Town Tube Station. The *Freethinker* is boldly shown there, and as pressure is often brought to bear upon newsagents by threats of their Christian customers to withdraw their patronage if our paper is displayed, our readers should encourage those who have the courage to stand up against it, by purchasing their other commodities.

H. MARSHALL.—There are very many "Freethinkers" in the neighbourhood of Dewsbury, although we are not able to give you their addresses. Enquiry should make you acquainted with some of them. Press correspondence, when editors permit, always does good.

H. S.—Glad you like our criticism of Canon Barnes. We plead guilty to length, but it is worth while occasionally to devote space to one of these lions of the church and see what kind of an animal is beneath the skin of the "king of beasts."

E. SMEDLEY.—Mr. Cohen has not yet made any arrangement for visiting Nottingham this season, but there is plenty of time. The rejection of Christian myths does not begin inside the Churches. They hang on to them as long as they possibly can. It is when the public mind is educated beyond them that men like Canon Barnes discover they are not true. One may put it that the *Freethinker* enables Christian preachers to be a little more rational and a little more honest than they otherwise would be.

H. O. PRINCE (New South Wales).—Thanks for subscription to Sustentation Fund. You are in good time as we do not propose opening it until October, when yours will be acknowledged.

The Secretary of the Manchester Branch asks us to acknowledge for him an anonymous donation of 3s. to the funds of the Branch.

A. G. BEVAN.—You will find the times, etc., of Mr. Whitehead's Swansea meetings in our Lecture Notices.

J. MORRIS.—We are waiting to hear from other Liverpool Freethinkers before arranging a visit. There are large numbers in the city, and we do wish they would bestir themselves. As you say, "the old city wants waking up."

L. MASON.—We are pleased to hear that your meetings in Painsbury Park continue to attract large audiences. Christian evidence speakers have an almost historic reputation for dealing with anything but evidence.

S. ELSEY.—There are no unanswerable arguments of the existence of a God. You will find the principal ones that are advanced in Mr. Cohen's "Theism or Atheism."

HOWELL S. ENGLAND.—It is always a mistake to attempt to make terms with Christianity. And the only genuine and scientific manner is to treat it as a survival of savage modes of thought, with interested attempts to "rationalise" it so that the unthinking may be fooled by the new presentation.

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

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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.

We have received a "Short History of the Leicester Secular Society," which, although it includes "an appeal" for more funds, is an inspiring document. The history traces back a Secular Society to 1852, but we are fairly certain that—probably under another name—there was some sort of a Freethinking organization in Leicester before that date. But the history starts with the distinctive name, and Leicester Freethinkers have made it one of which to be proud. The present handsome building, which is situated in one of the principal thoroughfares of the city, was opened in 1881, and the moving spirit of this venture was Mr. Josiah Gimson, father of Mr. Sydney Gimson, who has very worthily upheld the principles professed by his father. Leicester Freethought owes much to the Gimson family, and it is not too much to say that Leicester owes much to the influence radiated by the Secular Society.

The Secular Hall was owned by a limited company, and it was let to the Secular Society on not very exorbitant terms. A couple of years ago the company was wound up and the hall was offered to the Secular Society on remarkably advantageous terms. A Trust was formed to take over the Hall and to hold it in the interests of the Society, and about £2,500 is now required to complete the purchase money and so leave the hall free from mortgage. The appeal is directed to those wealthy Freethinkers who are in a position to help achieve this object, and we hope that the ambition of the Society to stand free from debt will soon be realized. The Society has a fine body of supporters in Leicester, and some of the foremost public speakers in the country lecture from time to time on its platform. Any information required concerning the Society can be obtained from the Secretary, Humberstone Gate, Leicester.

We regret that owing to want of space we are compelled to hold over till next week another of Colonel Lynch's very much appreciated articles on modern philosophic writers. The one we have in hand deals with Immanuel Kant, and will appear in our next issue.

The religious situation in America is very peculiar, and one is driven to conclude that the more ignorant type of Christian believer has a much freer hand there than he has in this country. This may, of course, mean that in America the better intellect of the nation is more completely divorced from religion than it is in this country, and is not so lavish—in public—of attachment to the Churches. But when one bears in mind the ignorant outpourings on Christianity of a man like W. J. Bryan, and that he has a very large following in America, it certainly does look as though ignorance has things very much its own way with American Christianity. A really scientific study of the conditions that give the lower type of Christian intelligence so much power would be worth having.

We were reminded of this by the fact of the Common Council of Grand Rapids just having passed an ordinance that anyone who speaks lightly of religion in a public place shall be punished with fine or imprisonment. We do not know how far this local regulation could be challenged in the High Courts, but we should imagine that it would be held to be unconstitutional. However, it may be taken as illustrative of what has just been said. And we suppose that when States can be found which ban the teaching of evolution from its schools, and prefer the childish cosmogony of the Bible, almost anything is possible. In another part of this paper will be found a poem by our good American friend, Mr. Howell S. England, on this matter.

The Tyranny of Words.

IN the history of human development, how potent the influence of words! It is a melancholy thought—but quite in keeping with what we know of man in other directions—that language: the prime instrument of human progress, chiefest means by which man ascended from the brute, has so often tended to enslave the human mind. From the days of primitive man, when words were deemed to possess a magic power of themselves, to the present day when a happily hit upon slogan is of more value in the commercial and political world than any amount of honesty, or sincerity of purpose; mankind has possessed a fatal tendency to be enslaved by the instrument of its own creation. Wars have been entered upon, whole peoples have been stirred to heights of heroism, elections have been fought and won upon nothing more substantial than the magic power of words.

It is in theology and metaphysics where the influence of words—words divorced from any counterpart in actuality—has been most baneful. In religion what damned error but achieves intellectual respectability through the judicious use of capital letters! It would be strange were it otherwise, for in metaphysics, where all study is book study, where there is no need to check ambiguity of expression, and “where a terminology is invented in which the theologian can sport free and irresponsible,” words, in the nature of things, come to be mistaken for realities. It is here interesting to recall Schopenhauer’s criticism of Immanuel Kant; not so much because Kant (what’s in a name?) is still, at the distance of a century, one of the greatest obstacles to the rationalization of philosophy, but because what is true of him is true of all metaphysicians.

Schopenhauer, himself a metaphysician, says:—

Kant’s language is often indistinct, indefinite, inadequate, and sometimes obscure. Its obscurity, certainly, is partly excusable on account of the difficulty of the subject and the depth of the thought; but he who is himself clear to the bottom.....will never write indistinctly, will never set up wavering and indefinite conceptions.....Moreover a man who is himself clear will not be always saying anew what has once been explained, as Kant does. In general such a man will not incessantly repeat himself, and yet in every new expression of thought, already expressed a hundred times, leave it in just the same obscure condition, but he will express his meaning once distinctly, thoroughly, and exhaustively, and then let it alone.

The most injurious result of Kant’s pernicious example was that the public were misled into believing that obscurity of expression betokened depth of thought, and a “host of hungry scribblers, without talent and without honesty” were able to exploit them all the time hiding their own intellectual nudity behind the camouflage of obscurity. Schopenhauer adding:—

But the height of audacity, in serving up pure nonsense, in stringing together senseless and extravagant mazes of words, such as had previously only been heard in mad-houses, was finally reached in Hegel, and became the instrument of the most barefaced general mystification that has ever taken place.

The essential facts of life—of man and his place in nature—are not only simple, but can be expressed simply, and in language that can be understood of the people. But this would not suit our word-spinning metaphysicians; they do not understand words of less than four syllables, and if compelled to translate their ideas into a sensible coin of the realm, they would find their occupation gone, and their heads reverting to their proper function—that of keeping their collars on.

Even scientists—men of the calibre of Herbert Spencer—have fallen under the baneful influence of the metaphysician, and in the very act of establishing a comprehensive conception of the universe, a broad all-embracing formula that shall clarify man’s mental vision and be a torch that shall light up the understanding of the meanest of us, have presented us with such question-begging words as Infinite, Absolute, and similar terms which instead of promoting thought arrest it. Such words are not conceptions at all, but negations of thought.

Even words that have a definite meaning, such as Evolution and Psychology, in the hands of the sophists become worse than meaningless, because they are too often made to mean anything the metaphysician chooses to read into them.

There is probably no word so ill-used to-day as the term psychology; one may say of it—to follow Mr. Cohen—that it began as a *formula*, continues as a *fiat*, and often degenerates into a *fetish*.

An eminently readable but little-read American writer, the late Mr. Jackson Boyd, sums up the use and abuse of words as follows:—

He who knows how to invent words and use them adroitly becomes a magician. He who knows their power, although otherwise ignorant, can dupe the whole race. They have led nations to war; they have made great philosophers immortal. They are the first requisite of every world iniquity. Not one of us but is more or less misled by words. Not only that, men invent words and dupe themselves with them. True thinking is not done with words but with ideas. No thinker is ever trustworthy who does not translate all his chains of thought into chains of fact. We must go over the real thing before we can trust our expression of it in words.

And in illustration of the foregoing:—

Idealism is a word, not a world philosophy. Take away from it the word Absolute, the Infinite, the Unknowable and a few others, and compel the thinker to translate his words into facts or ideas, and Idealism would cease to exist, or exist only as a monstrosity of antiquated thought. Spencer called it insanity, yet was deceived by it in the last analysis. Not one person in a hundred ever translates the words of Idealism into facts of any kind. Bradley calls experience the Absolute but if he were to take the word out of his book, it would ruin half of his conclusions. Kant when he went back to the Schoolmen for his terminology hypnotized the world and himself too. There is not a particle of reason for talking about the senses, the intellect, the will, the emotions in any other language than that of the people. The mind should be simplified not mystified.

Comment is surely superfluous.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

The Unwelcome Fairies.

THE occasion is an auspicious one. My friend, Henry Vendome, is by no means an ostentatious individual, nor yet over-blessed with the festive sentiment, but there is one particular day in the year when he concentrates everything in the joyous celebration of a precious event. There are *other* precious events, but this one stands before all the rest for the simple reason that it is concerned with the birthday of Henry’s only child, a bonny, blue-eyed baby-girl, whose lovely head is a mass of dancing, sun-tinted, sun-kissed curls. In his proud enthusiasm his charming wife shares. With them their child is their chiefest joy, their pure fount of inspiration, welding firmer their mutual love, as well as their all-important study (and they call her their “contribution to Life and Love and Art”). Being their honoured friend, I too have watched their

developing babe with almost as keen an interest as they. I'm the proud bachelor daddy! I'm an old man now. Why I've never married is another story. It is too tragic to detail in this somewhat retrospective narrative. Henry and his wife, Solielle, are young. They have the advantage over us old 'uns in not having their mentalities trammelled with so many cobwebbily conservative traditions, out-of-date habits, weak superstitions, and shallow notions.

Ah, well! To-morrow is Viola's third birthday. There is over seventy years difference between us, and I often wonder, as I muse over her ways and prattlings, whether my seventy odd years can really and adequately understand her three years' impressibility. I wonder now, too, with what worthy object I can gladden her baby-blue eyes. Last year, I remember, though as well intentioned as now, I fairly put my foot in it, as the saying is. Knowing the little pal already possessed a young colony of variegated, dimple-faced dolls, presented to her by her numerous admirers, I decided, innocently enough, to give to her some picture books. So I straightway hied me to a shop that particularly catered for children, and that always had a good range of romantic fairy-tale books. I was a child again at heart, falling in with the shop's alluring announcement: "Books for the young of all ages." I remember how excitedly I chose my present, at last feeling self-satisfied with a copy of *Little Red Riding Hood*, and also *Simple Simon*, which were filled with highly coloured and attractively decorated illustrations, and had a minimum of reading matter (for, of course, the little one would be unable to read them). I thrilled with anticipation o'er the pleasure I should give to Viola, as armed with my colourful tomes, I marched off to the home of my good friends as quickly as my rheumatic old legs could annihilate the mile-long road that divides them from my own little apartment.

Arriving, I kept my present in the dark until we had all eaten heartily of the wonderful little tea that Solielle had provided, hoping thus to give greater joy. After tea was cleared off the table I whispered my secret to Henry, and he asked to see the books. I gave them to him. As he slowly turned over the pages, my wonderful old man's joy sank deeply within me, deeply into the innermost hiding places of being, as I heard him saying to me: "My dear old chum, what can I say to you? We have always endeavoured to be sincere and frank with one another. There has never been even the shadowy suggestion of veneered pretence between us. I'd be the last person in the world to seek to hurt your feelings or to show you a lack of appreciation." I hardly sensed what he was so solemnly driving at, so, more puzzled and pained than I can well express, I asked him to state plainly what the matter was; was it merely that he didn't like the books; they were the best that I could buy, anyway.

"It is hardly that, Charles, hardly whether I like the books or not, but rather that Solielle and I have come to regard such literature with keen suspicion. Frankly, we must tell you that we don't consider fairy-tales are fit mental food for our little girl." I could see that he was in deadly earnest, otherwise I might have thought he was merely joking. I suppose my own face must have revealed something of the mingled astonishment and pain I was experiencing. I could see they were both in distress, too, because of me. They are so sensitive. So am I, for that matter, but I'm older, and I've had my full share of the world's rebuffs, and so am now I suppose somewhat "case-hardened." With an effort, I shook off my feelings of mental discomfort as best I could, forced a smile, and said to Henry: "Now then, lad, get it off your chest. Let me hear the worst. It is better to be frank, as you say, than to thank me for the present to the

girlie while, at the same time, any kind of displeasure is allowed to rankle. Why is it that you think that fairy-tales are not good enough for Viola?"

"I'm glad you take our disagreement so reasonably," Henry quietly replied. "I might have played the hypocrite with anyone else, but I couldn't with you. The peculiar thing to me is that, among all the truly interesting discussions we have had together, this subject has escaped our attention. Solielle and I have had it out over and over again, and are in complete agreement on the matter. We hadn't given it much thought until about six months ago when I happened to have a bit of a barney with a brother of mine, because I accidentally discovered that his own kiddie, a little dark-eyed girl barely a year older than Viola, was afraid of the dark, which to her was peopled with horrible bogies. On the other hand, the light was made desirable by the presence of fairies who looked after her, and sometimes brought her "goodies." I spoke to Bob about it, and the result was rather a heated argument. It had the effect of stimulating us, at any rate, to look more closely into the subject.

"Oh, I can quite agree with you there," I replied, though still a little puzzled. "It is a monstrous, and a regrettably deeply ingrained practice grown-ups have of telling the wee folks about such hideous and fantastic bunkum. I deprecate it as much as any one. It is just what we might expect from folk whose life and imaged after-life are utterly dominated by religious idiotic supernatural forms. All the same, I didn't know that you Bob was such a great lover of religion; or, at any rate, the "Powers of Darkness" paraphernalia."

"He isn't! That's the rub. Bob's like the rest of the great and growing army who are leaving Godology alone—he's just apathetic."

"Well, then," I continued, "now tell me, please, just what harm these little books can do to the precious mind of Viola? I mean, lad, she can't read them, and the illustrations should help to develop her colour-sense, and if you explain them to her she will also get better acquainted with the forms and names of common objects."

"That sounds quite reasonable. She cannot read. Well, we shall have to think about the desirability of this or that form of literature later as she develops closer to the reading stage. Just now we have, imperatively, to consider seriously what other things can impress her, and how and why, and what potentialities such impressions create in her. Now tell me, Charles, what is your opinion about this illustration?" Saying which he showed me a full-page, highly coloured, truly dramatic presentation of that part of the Red Riding Hood story where a muscular woodsman slays the horrible wolf with a huge tree-felling axe. Every detail was calculated to impress one with the essential characteristic of each action. It certainly looked a murderous picture. I could feel Henry's eyes boring me through and through.

"Not a very beautiful picture to show and explain to the mind of a very young child, is it?" he queried. I remained rather crestfallen, as it were, and silent. "And now gaze upon this one," he said, turning the pages back to where the wolf, in the half-veiled guise of the unfortunate Grandmother, lay in bed, showing just enough of his cruel carnivorous face beneath Granny's mob-cap to render the illustration as villainously suggestive as the printed passage relating to the incident was, and he was carrying on a super-mammalian conversation with the little innocent girl at the door. "Not very elevating, eh? And just consider the fact that this story is one of childhood's literary moral classics. Well, so much for this book.

Now let us glance at the other one, *Simple Simon*, wherein kiddies are given the idea that Simon is the average country lad—silly, sloppy, daft. For instance, what a pleasing illustration this one is!" He was showing one where the burly Pieman is kicking Simon's nether region cruelly because he has had the temerity to ask for a pie without proffering the penny demanded by commercialism. He showed another one depicting Simon falling into a vile-looking ditch from off the branch of a tree. The hideousness of these things having thus been pointed out to me, I was grateful, and expressed my sorrow at having brought them along. On the other hand, I was certainly unsatisfied with Henry's rejection of the fairy-story as a piece of literature for older children, so our discussion naturally ran along into more doubtful channels, into more agitated waters. Now, Henry's whole and utterly serious contention was that the characters used in fairy-stories were simply and solely a symbolizing of the bogies, gods, devils, gnomes, and angels of religion, of supernaturalism, of mysticism, of murky-minded mythology, and so served to prepare the child's impressionable consciousness, and poisonously to stimulate the child's easily roused imagination, in order that the later "broadcasting of bibulous bosh" (his own phrase) should reach a fertile soul, and so resulting (in the child become man or woman) in a too common type of personality unable scientifically to interpret material, economic factors governing their lives, and thus unconsciously trammelling scientific endeavour, and the growth of human sociability.

"There's a good deal in what you assert, my lad," I ventured to say at last. "But I think, nevertheless, that you exaggerate as to the possible evils of certain aspects of the fairy-story, aspects which are set off by others of a truly social and educative nature. Why not forget the magic for a while and consider the moral?"

"What moral? The moral attached to the omnipresent virtues of the kingly, the queenly, the rich and powerful—the moral that such as these are kindly disposed, eternally so, while their subjects, the working peasants and the townsfolk, remain loyally contented with their slums, and the crumbs of poverty. Ah, no, such things are not revealed! No, Charles, they contain the sort of 'moral' stuff responsible for the implanting of an anti-social and a distinctly slave-morality."

"Even so, Henry, I still think that you exaggerate. The kingly virtues mentioned may be but symbol-terms expressive of the highest, the noblest, in all of us. Besides, there's another point you seem to ignore, and a very important point it is, too. As you are probably aware, every child is more or less romantically inclined, and especially prone to imaginatively ramble into the land of make-believe; you *must* reckon with that. If you take away the fairy-lore, what will you replace it with in order to satisfy this characteristic?"

Henry was quiet for a moment. As a matter of fact, Solielle, who had thus far been content to listen, now replied, saying earnestly: "Everything that can possibly be done in the direction of supplying pure food for this admittedly natural, romantic outreaching of the child should most certainly and most seriously be considered. But we think, Charles, that it were worthier to call our baby's attention to the beauty, the poetry of grace and outline, the wonderful colour and activity, to be observed in Nature's material world, to supply her imaginative nature's craving, rather than substitute stories such as those introducing fairies, witches, evil and good spirits, and improbable events and situations."

"Oh, I don't know!" I replied. "I'll bet you

used to like your mother reading Grimms' to you. I know I liked nothing better myself when I was a lad."

Solielle smiled at me pleasantly. Her smile was always like vitalizing sunshine to me. She continued, saying: "Probably I relished Grimms and Hans Anderson quite as much in those days, but that isn't the point we desire to stress, Charles. We must go, at least, one better than our well-meaning parents. I don't suppose that they troubled very much about the impressions we might glean from such sources, being devoutly religious, they would hardly question the minor magic and celestial unrealism, or the tinier descriptions of virtuously acquired wealth, or the punishments meted out for unworthy actions that run through fairy-tales, revealing their kinship with the fairy-stories of religion. Little Viola's romantic nature shall have full opportunity for healthy development in the impressions she obtains, through ourselves, and from our explanations for her in reply to her queries (her never-ending queries) in regard to the material world of Nature, of people, and of children at play."

I had thus to admit that the subject was a deeper, more important one than I had hitherto considered it.

Probably, had I have had children of my own I would have thrashed it out before this. But, as I have mentioned, consideration for Viola was in me very keen indeed. Promising to delve more conscientiously into the matter, and to give them both my more mature thought later on; I left these two realist-idealists and journeyed home, refreshed with my association with such youthful enthusiasm for libertarian experiment, and yet considerably discontented because I had not been able adequately to defend my old-young love of the fairy romances of Grimm.

C. BRADLAUGH WARWICK.

Chats With Children.

ON OBEDIENCE AND REASON.

WHY do we obey?

Why do all religions teach obedience as their first demand?

Why must we begin at home and in school to obey; to do what we are told to do?

But what is the use of asking questions? The very idea of obedience is that we do not ask questions.

It is easy to understand how *things* obey man. The great artist, the clever workman, the man who "gets things done"; all these people force Nature to obey them. There is nothing more inspiring than to see how men drag Nature's forces into obedience to their wills.

Nature has to obey man.

Nature hides its coal, its gold, its water even. Man must strike the rock into submission. Look how the sculptor takes a block of shapeless marble and with deft blows makes the stone obey and follow his design.

Electricity ran wild till man made it obey him, and man invented wires to compel this gigantic force to follow obediently the course man has mapped out. The "wireless" is only a similar instance: man forces sounds to take a certain course (by the "transmitter") and draws the wave sounds into a certain channel where he can best receive them.

Nature obeys whoever knows the secret of control.

It was always the same. The savage could bend a green bough, compel a stone to obey his direction in its flight, or make the water keep him afloat when he swam.

The savage could see little difference between forcing a twig to bend and making a slave or a wife obey him. In each case it was only a question of force.

Man, of course, thought that the gods were like

himself. Priests taught men to give their goods, their children, and even their own lives, limbs or liberties to God, or at any rate to his priests. To force man to obey a command so clearly against his own interest the priests spoke of everlasting hell pains.

The word "obey" has no connection with reason. It leaves no room for argument or thought. It would be quite wrong to say that we ought never to obey. It is, however, a word that we ought to use as little as possible.

Before we begin to think, we are perhaps so nearly like lifeless objects that we may properly be forced to obey—that is to say, our limbs and our bodies must be moved by those who know better than we do, the use of our own powers.

It needs to be said that our parents and those who accept the results of our actions (those *responsible* for us) may rightly claim our obedience. This is quite clearly so when we are very young indeed.

Boys and girls of a thinking age (many boys and girls tell me they think a great deal on this very point) begin very early to doubt the right of a parent to enforce obedience on them.

Parents ought to be very sensitive about their children's early thoughts. Even if a father disagrees with his son and insists, probably rightly, on enforcing obedience to certain decisions against the boy's wishes, the parent ought never to refuse to give his reasons, to listen to his son's objections and patiently to answer them.

It is most often a defect of the parent if he fails to convince a reasoning and reasonable child. An appeal to reason is the most essential part of our education. We come, in fact, to the point where we see that obedience keeps us slaves, animals, children and senseless things all our lives.

Like most words, "obedience" can be used loosely: we even speak of "obeying the dictates of reason." This only means that we act up to the best of our judgment. It implies that some people prefer to follow a God, a priest or a Bible, even though wisdom and truth (which are sometimes called philosophy and logic) proclaim that gods and priests and bibles are wrong.

Why should we follow reason at all? Reason is another word for self. When we say we follow reason we mean our own reason. All creeds and rules and laws are the reasons of other people who wish us to obey them. We must weigh them for ourselves. If our own reason approves, we must follow.

But you repeat why? You ask again what is reason, even my own reason, that I should follow it? Even if we refuse to obey priests we may find other guides than reason?

The origin of the word "reason" is simply "the right thing." Reason is merely that process of observing, or studying which will enable us to see what is right.

Obey means Hark! Reason means Look! as well as Hark, Feel, Remember and Compare!

You need not waste much time in heeding those who tell you that reason is cold and barren; that love, imagination and knowledge are more important than reason. In the end there are only two schools of thought: those who believe we should obey (these people are called dogmatists), and those who think we should never do, say or believe anything of which our reason does not approve.

Reason includes everything except dogma (or religion).

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

The man is to be pitied who asks the temple of religion to teach him not to cheat, or slander, or destroy his fellow-man. All these virtues he can learn at the feet of an Atheist.—Prof. David Swing.

The Way of the World.

A BULL, OR A JOKE?

Mr. Hughes, the Secretary of State. Son of a Welsh father and of an Irish mother, he is yet the most typically American looking man of all the American lawyers; he might have been the descendant of the Pilgrim Fathers, so Yankee does he look—*except* that, instead of being long and lean and with straight hair and high cheek-bones, he has a full robust figure, as well as height; a full face, and he wears a beard.—T. P. O'Connor, "The Sunday Times."

A CANDID CHURCHMAN.

The Church might well seem to be dead, or at least in danger of dying. The educated world laughs at the open grave which lies before us. The young men and young women who are largely of the period of war, find little in our services or our doctrines, and least in those which approximate most the mediaeval model, to match their aspirations and their ambitions. The company of social reformers, whose methods may be wrong, but who certainly mean business, despair of even the conscience of a Church which is frightened at the conclusions of its own scholarship. The silent multitude of the unemployed have little to thank us for.

What can we do to stay the rot, and not only to stay the rot, but to go ahead and to make our religion a reality? — *Amicus Ecclesiae Anglicanae*, "English Review."

"THE TIGER" ON THE WARPATH.

Those American billionaires whose immoderate accumulations of wealth spread ruin all around them, will anxiously question the first-comer as to the most humanitarian way of spending the fortune thus acquired. I know of someone who when asked by that foolish ogre, Carnegie, what he should do with his money, answered: "Return it to those from whom you took it!"

By their holy books the Jews have conquered the West.....Though vanquished, we (the Jews) are their masters. Even in their heresy they proclaim the superiority of the children of Jehovah. When their God was incarnate in man, his choice fell upon a Jewish woman. He was born of a Jew. He promised the fulfilment of the Law. His apostles were Jews. Go into their temples. You will see nothing but statues of Jews which they worship on their knees.

I observed that the followers of Jesus possess the earth, conquer treasures which they reserve strictly to themselves, being for ever anxious to proclaim their indifference to worldly goods while inordinately preoccupied with collecting them.

It is a common idea among believers that the Creator of the Universe is open to receive from His creatures pleasant or unpleasant impressions, just as we are from our fellow-beings. These estimable people are convinced that the Good Lord of All is pleased or vexed accordingly as they act thus or otherwise. They hold Providence in such low esteem as to believe that it needs defending by those same human beings whom It could with a gesture reduce to the original dust. Do we not often hear it said that such and such a minister or party is bent on "driving out God" from somewhere or other, and that they would in all likelihood succeed but for some paladin, ecclesiastical or military, stepping in to defend the Supreme Being, who is unequal, apparently, to defending Himself?

Until the cosmic order changes, all that the weak can do is to cry out their protest, their vain appeal to universal justice, which, deaf, insensible, and paralysed, sits in mute contemplation of the disorder that constitutes the order of the world.

Religion consists principally in believing that we must by means of certain ceremonies get on the right side of God, who will otherwise burn us up. At the approach of death one tries to get the balance in one's favour at all costs. But this changes nothing in the conduct of life.
—Georges Clemenceau, "The Surprises of Life."

Religion at Grand Rapids.

OUT at Grand Rapids the Common Council—
The very common council—has passed an ordinance
Punishing by fine and imprisonment
All persons who, in public parks,
On street corners or in any other public places
May make light of any man's religion,
Or poke fun at any man's faith.

You may laugh at your mother-in-law all you like—
The widow, the grass widow, the diva, the divorcee,
The pert stenog.—the painted flapper,
The negro, the Irishman, the German and the Jew,
All these are always meat for your mirth,
And no matter how much you laugh at them,
They still stick around, and still persist
In saying and doing the infinite number of humorous
things,
That keep the whole world laughing and good natured.

Now the funniest thing about all these funny folks
Is their funny religion; but you must never laugh at that,
At least not in public, if you happen to live at Grand
Rapids.

The truth of the matter is that there is no religion,
So far invented or "revealed,"
That can survive a laugh! HOWELL S. ENGLAND.

Manchester Branch N.S.S.

To-night (September 7th) we have seen the close of a week's propaganda in Manchester. Six meetings were addressed by Mr. F. P. Corrigan, whose efforts in Stevenson Square were extremely successful, an immense crowd being attracted by his stentorian voice. Tuesday night was a rather tough affair, and towards the end of the lecture some object came hurtling through the air. On Thursday Mr. Corrigan's voice, which had lost something of its lustiness, almost failed, but Mr. Sam Cohen delivered a lecture at Alexandra Park, and the "respectable" class indulged once more in their abuse and vituperation and affirmed their great love for the methods of the Inquisition.

Nearly £4 worth of literature (including current copies of the *Freethinker*) was disposed of during the week. A quantity was distributed free.

On Sunday (August 31st) Mr. William Bowen—a local Wesleyan preacher—had challenged Mr. Corrigan or any other speaker to debate, but as Mr. Corrigan had to leave to fulfill other engagements Mr. Cohen undertook to accept the challenge, and the debate took place last Sunday. Mr. A. C. Rosetti was asked to take the chair—an arrangement which was quite satisfactory to Mr. Bowen.

Once the debate began both speakers expressed themselves clearly and well, and with good feeling. The members of the audience soon realized that both speakers were in earnest—that they were speaking from conviction, and accordingly they listened carefully to the arguments. In fact, the audience was exemplary, and I am quite sure that the Chairman proved satisfactory to both parties, as he observed an absolutely impartial attitude throughout.

HAROLD I. BAYFORD,
Hon. Secretary.

All sciences, except theology, are eager for facts—
hungry for the truth.—J. M. Robertson.

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, Right Hon. J. M. Robertson, "Modern Humanists Reconsidered: IV.—Ruskin."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 6.15, Mr. Marshall, 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, 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.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6, Mr. C. H. Keeling, "How Did It All Come About?"

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3 and 6, Mr. E. Burke will lecture.

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

COUNTRY. OUTDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.—Ramble to Bushy Glen. Meet at Clarkston Terminus 12.30. The Committee will meet after the Ramble.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Square): 8.15 each evening, Mr. Lew Davis.

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

MR. G. WHITEHEAD'S MISSION.—Swansea: September 13 to 20, outside Victoria Park Gates each evening at 6.30; September 21 to 27, The Sands each evening at 6.30.

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