

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions.

### Defending the Faith.

My last week's notes were concerned with the manner in which writers in defence of Christianity, in their attempts to meet the advance of reasoned unbelief, continually ride off on what are altogether false issues. The subject seems important enough to continue. These false issues are not always raised deliberately, but it is almost impossible to believe that in very many instances this is not the case. A man like Canon Barnes may be accounted for on the ground of mental confusion. He does not strike one as being in any genuine sense a thinker, but rather as belonging to what one may call the political class of theologians, quick to see the trend of public opinion and ready to take advantage of it. On the other hand men of the type of Dean Inge certainly have the mental capacity to see the hollowness of many of the excuses for religion which they advance. For it is not always the case that the argument may be weak in itself, but that however strong it may be as an argument it simply does not meet the point that is in dispute. This is often plain enough to strike a mere schoolboy engaged in a little exercise in logic. It is quite certain that if the case as laid down by the apologetic Christian were one to be argued before a legal court, the average judge would not be long before he informed the counsel for the defence that his arguments had nothing whatever to do with the case before him.

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### Jesus Christ.

Let us take as an illustration of this the belief in Jesus Christ. The foundation of the Christian faith is the belief that Jesus was God. The Freethinker objects to this on the grounds that no one knows anything about Gods, that there is nothing in even the reported life of Jesus that justifies the belief that he was essentially different from other religious preachers of antiquity, and that the story falls into line with a whole group of saviour-god stories with which the student of mythology is perfectly familiar. How does the modern Christian meet this? The primitive Christian met it with the plea that Jesus did things that no mortal man ever did, or could do, save through power vested in him as God. He referred unbelievers to the miraculous birth, to the miracles worked by him,

and to the crowning miracle of his having risen from the dead. If these assertions were accepted, they at once lifted Jesus out of the ranks of mankind and placed him in a category by himself. The modern educated believer argues none of these things. Far from resting his case on them he admits that the Virgin Birth was probably a story which affectionate piety assumed to be true, he says that his miracles were probably due to the imaginative efforts of fervent believers, and that his resurrection from the dead is to be accepted as a spiritual one, much in the sense that any man or woman whose influence conquers death and leaves it an active force with those who are still living attains to immortality. Finally, we have the general and popular plea that Jesus was a good man, an ideal character, and that his life and teachings are such as ought to demand the world's homage.

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### Christian Sophistry.

Now each of these pleas is quite beside the real issue. Christianity rests upon the conviction that the Jesus Christ of the New Testament was born of a virgin, was the son of God, and was raised from the dead. There is no question as to what they who framed the Christian religion understood by these things, there is no question as to what believers have always understood by them. To argue that they might mean this or that, that when the expression "Son of God" is used it is in the sense that we are all sons of God, is waste of time. If these do not mean what the churches and Christians have always understood them to mean then Christianity is false. It takes a Christian to argue that if the original word can be used in another sense therefore the original meaning of the word is quite correct. Christianity must either be true in the sense that the creeds and Christians have always taken it or it is false. So with the argument as to the goodness of "our brother Christ." The *prima facie* Christian claim is not that Christ was a good man, but that he was a divine man. Christians did not say "Jesus is divine because he is good"; they said, "He is good because he is divine." The Freethinker contests the belief in the divinity of Jesus, and the Christian retorts with arguments to prove that Jesus was a good man, a social reformer, a social regenerator. But admitting that Jesus was a perfectly good man, in what way does that prove that he was God, and that he assumed human form for the purpose of saving the world? So far as Christianity is concerned, the Freethinker is not concerned with the character of Jesus but with his nature. A good man is a man that is better than other men. A perfect man is a man with human qualities raised to the highest imaginable degree of excellence. But in either case we have not got beyond the limits of human nature. And the Christian claim is not that Jesus was a good man, but that he was more than man, that there was something in him which lifted him out of the ranks of mere humanity. The Christian does not refute the position of the Freethinker, he does not even meet it. The apologist is simply throwing dust in the eyes of the people. He

asserts one thing, and when challenged proceeds to prove another with which his first statement has not the slightest connection.

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#### Christian Evidence and Charity.

Next to the plea based on the alleged goodness of Jesus Christ comes the one based on the goodness of Christians. By their fruits shall ye know them, cites the believer. But when the unbeliever points to some of the very unlovely fruits that have accompanied Christianity everywhere and at all times, he is told that he must not judge Christianity by Christians, but must test Christians by their allegiance to Christianity. As usual, it is a case of "Heads I win, tails you lose." And in return if we are willing to let him have all the good Freethinkers as so many products of a Christian environment, they are agreeable to our keeping the remainder. But the positive side of the reply to the Freethinker's request for proof of the truth of Christian doctrines is the alleged good done by Christianity—the number of charitable institutions founded, the amount of charity dispensed, etc. Now what kind of bearing can these things have on the question raised? How can the building of a hospital prove the truth of the resurrection? What is the logical relation between, say, the miracle of the Virgin Birth and the founding of a home for crippled children? We ask for proof of the story that Jesus fed a multitude of people with a handful of fishes and a few loaves and are told by way of reply of the soup and coals distributed by Christian agencies. What relation has the one to the other? Apparently there is some numerical relation, in the mind of the believer between the two things, for it is plain that looking after one crippled child, or giving away just one or two blankets would not be looked on as proof of the resurrection even by the Bishop of London. It is the quantity that does it, and so one is led to ask, how many gallons of soup does it take to prove that Jesus was born of a virgin? How many tons of coal are required to prove that Jesus rose from the dead? If we could only get definite answers to these questions we should know better how we stand. As it is, it is always open to the Freethinker to reply that as charitable actions did not commence with Christianity, and that as they exist apart from Christianity, it is just possible that the source of these may not be Christianity at all. In any case the citing of Christian charity to prove the truth of Christian doctrines is about as relevant as would have been Patrick Mahon trying to prove that he did not murder Miss Kaye by stating that he was once a very good Sunday school teacher.

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#### Conversion.

I will deal with some of the more serious attempts to sidetrack criticism next week. For the present I may as well deal with what may be described as a first cousin to the Christian charity argument. A certain number of people are, given certain circumstances, led to turn over what is called a new leaf. I am not going to discuss the often very questionable moral value of these conversions. It very often happens that religious activities only serve to give other undesirable moral characteristics a freer scope while stemming the manifestation of particular ones. The peculiar thing is that the observed modification in conduct is attributed to the operation of a supernatural agency. No notice is taken of the fact that modifications in conduct are going on everywhere and all the time and in connection with all sorts of subjects. People are converted from habits of early or late rising, from Conservatism to Liberalism, from meat eating to vegetarianism, without the slightest suggestion of supernatural influence. Why is this dragged in in the case of conduct? For the machinery of the operation is so obvious. People are

not converted in solitude, the change is never unconnected with their past careers. The conditions of the change is always *social*. And it may be up or down. The same kind of agency that converts one man to honesty may turn another to thievery. Christians admit the power of human agency in turning a man from good ways to bad ones; why may not the same force turn a man from bad ways to good ones? It is a strange philosophy of human nature which makes humanity powerful in the one direction and powerless in the other. And a Christian may surely be asked the pertinent question, why, if the power of God is so mighty to save, why is it not equally powerful to prevent? Or does God, following the example of his professional evangelists, think more of the "bad egg" and its advertising value than he does of the ordinary human character which is generally striving to do what seems best in the best way that lies open to it?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### Christ's Dynamic.

In the *Christian World Pulpit* of September 18 there is a sermon by Dr. F. W. Norwood, of the City Temple, which he preached in the Park Avenue Baptist Church, New York. Where the reverend gentleman stands theologically we have no idea, but it is significant that during his present visit to America his services are said to be in equal demand by the Fundamentalists and the Modernists. At Lake Winona, notorious as a centre of Fundamentalism, he delivered two addresses, and among his audience on each occasion, was the quondam popular revivalist, Billy Sunday, occupying a seat on the platform. The title of the discourse now before us, "The Power that Amplifies Personality," indicates very distinctly what its central thought is. Dr. Norwood asserts that "Christianity began as a demonstration of power." He maintains that until Pentecost, "the disciples of Jesus were not sure that he could save the world." He admits that previously they felt, "as men have always felt, the charm of his personality, his winsomeness, and the mystic wisdom of his words," but claims that they also "knew that evil was too deeply entrenched to be washed out by rose-water." Then follow remarkably strange utterances:—

Much as they loved their Lord, they were always afraid for him. The cross came upon them like a long-dreaded stroke of doom. A little while later, though they had seen their Master bodily put to death, they were preaching that his spirit lived. But even this consciousness that he was alive did not energize them with power. They had no programme. They did the one thing possible—they waited in prayer. But at Pentecost, something persuaded these men not only that Jesus was alive, but that he was powerful with a dynamic sufficient to cause to be put into effect the principles that for three years he had taught them. This sudden faith in the dynamic of Christ created the Christian Church, which began its history as a demonstration of power.

What an absurd and unique demonstration of power Pentecost was, to be sure. The disciples were all assembled in a house when suddenly there came from the heavens a noise like that of a strong wind rushing by; it filled the whole house in which they were sitting. Then there appeared tongues of what seemed to be flame, separating, so that one settled on each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with strange tongues as the Spirit prompted their utterances. Such is the account of Pentecost found in the Book of the Acts, and in what sense it can be regarded as a demonstration of power is an insoluble enigma. It is a demonstration, rather,

of the ignorance and credulity of those who could look upon such a story as true and declare that it created the Christian Church.

Dr. Norwood's main point, however, is that a vision of Christ such as was enjoyed on the day of Pentecost never fails to amplify the personality of those to whom it comes. They are bigger and stronger men and women for ever afterwards. Dr. Norwood puts it thus :—

We need only to read the New Testament to discover that in those early days they expected that everyone who received the spirit of Christ would be amplified, would have a new mental, moral, and spiritual quickening given to him. The first Christians doubted the position of those, however orthodox in creed, who displayed no increase of personality through touch with the spirit of Christ.

Dr. Norwood frankly acknowledges that his view of Christ's dynamic is not generally held. He complains that "ever since Christ came, men have been willing to believe almost anything about him except that he is force." He greatly exaggerates the friendly attitude of the multitudes towards the Gospel Jesus, and is guilty of sheer falsehood when he avers that "all great writers pay tribute to Jesus Christ." Arnold Bennett, for example, is universally recognized as one of our great writers, but he does not pay tribute to Jesus Christ, for he is a publicly avowed Freethinker. The same thing is true of Eden Philpotts, and of many others. But even on Dr. Norwood's own showing, those great writers who do feel "the charm of Christ's personality, his winsomeness, and the mystic wisdom of his words," have never had a far-flung conviction of his power."

We must now face the pathetic question, why is it that the overwhelming majority of those who admire and love the Gospel Jesus do not believe in his power to enhance or amplify the personality of his followers? It is because they can see no palpable evidence of its existence anywhere. Taken on the average, Christians are neither better nor worse than non-Christians. After giving expression to his peculiar theory as to the amplifying and increasing power possessed by Christ, Dr. Norwood himself seems to realize that it does not work well in practice, or that in any sense can he be honestly pronounced the Saviour of the world. Take the following :—

Since the terrific, shattering manifestations of force in the Great War we have seen the world rocking on a volcano's edge.

At this point, however, Dr. Norwood gives Christ and his amplifying power the go-by, and concentrates on human nature and its glowing endowments. He says that "there is among us a deep searching after righteousness, a longing for purity." Then, disagreeing with the majority of preachers, he says: "This generation seems to me to be oppressed by the burden of sin." He immediately endeavours to explain and justify that doubtful statement :—

Some of you would correct me here. You would say that you observe indifference to guilt. No one cries out that he is a sinner and asks for mercy on his soul. No; it is not personal sins, but human sins, that we are confessing. A man does not talk about his personal sins because he thinks that others are just as bad. He doubts the salvability of human nature. The loss of idealism in this vision of the universality of moral weakness prevents the confession of personal failure. Everywhere we are conscious of the peril confronting the world. We see what ought to be done, but we feel that humanity is not equal to it yet.

Thus we learn that the oppression of this generation by the burden of sin is deplored by the minister of the City Temple. It is an oppression not justified by the facts of life, and Dr. Norwood exclaims: "I

want to lift up my voice and say seriously that human nature is not altogether bad. There is more good than evil in the world. Good, not evil, holds the world together and keeps it sane." With that declaration we are in complete agreement. But on the assumption of the truth of such a declaration what conceivable need is there for the Christian Gospel? Furthermore, it should always be borne in mind that when the Church exerted supreme authority in Christendom, and when the priest's word was final law, all sorts of evil held high carnival everywhere, and the Church itself was often the greatest of evil-workers. More strangely still, when the Church's dominion began to weaken and the priest's word to lose its force, morality showed plain signs of liberation and improvement. The rise and influence of Rationalism meant the gradual disappearance of supernatural beliefs. Now, when the Church is at its lowest ebb with no discernible sign of another flow, mankind are steadily rising in the moral scale. Dr. Norwood says :—

They tell me that business morality is lower than it was. Yet I am persuaded that business cannot exist without a certain fundamental honesty. If everybody were dishonest for a month, what would become of commerce? Some men may make quick and easy fortunes by defection from integrity; but that is because other men plod steadily on the road of fair-mindedness.

The wonder to us is how Dr. Norwood can believe and preach the Christian Gospel, which regards human nature as utterly bad and doomed to eternal torment unless it puts its trust in Christ, and at the same time hold and boldly advocate the serenest Humanism. If the former is true the latter is damnably false. If our friend would but surrender his supernaturalism, he would be a most admirable and successful moral and social teacher.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Real Road-Makers.

A willing slave for years,  
I strove to make men free;  
Mine were the labours, hopes, and fears,  
Be theirs the victory. —Gerald Massey.

The right to sincerity is freedom's dearest gift.  
—H. W. Nevinson.

THE other day I saw on a bookstall a well-worn copy of one of Charles Southwell's pamphlets, and the grey-coloured cover, coarse paper, and small, cramped type set me thinking of the personality of the man who will always be remembered as the first editor of the first definitely Freethought paper in the English-speaking world. During the stormy and dangerous period prior to the birth of an organised Freethought party in England, Southwell stood in the forefront of the movement. His eloquence, ability, and courage attracted the "intellectuals," and drew on him the resentment of the orthodox. Living when he did, he performed a high and useful task, and his keen, bright sword played havoc with superstition and imposture.

Charles Southwell's life is one of the most romantic pages in the history of Freethought. Born in 1814, the year before the battle of Waterloo, he was the youngest of a very large family of thirty-three children. His father was a man very much out of the common. He was a militant Freethinker at a time when heresy was dangerous, and when over seventy years of age married a handsome young lass of twenty. Charles was the offspring of this unique marriage of May and December. In his schooldays young Southwell was chiefly remarkable for playing truant, and for possessing a most wonderful and tenacious memory. When he left school finally at the age of twelve, he

had, to quote his own words, "Knowledge enough to puzzle pedants, and ignorance enough to disgrace a Hottentot." His subsequent career was one great adventure. During his short life he was orator, soldier, actor, Socialist, Freethought advocate, writer, editor, and prisoner for liberty of speech. At one time he actually joined the Spanish Legion, formed for the purpose of assisting Queen Isabella of Spain to maintain her position against Don Carlos. For two years Southwell fought with this ragged regiment of soldiers of fortune, and, in spite of loathsome surroundings, chronic starvation, attacks of fever, and lack of money, he came through without serious damage, thanks to a vigorous constitution.

On his return to England he acquired a big reputation by his oratory, and he made history with the publication, in 1841, of *The Oracle of Reason*, the first periodical entirely devoted to Freethought propaganda. Southwell started with high literary ambitions, and modelled his paper on the more serious reviews. The literary tone of *The Oracle* may be estimated by the contents, which included articles on "Symbol Worship," "The Theory of Regular Gradation," and "Is there a God?" The clergy could see at a glance that this man meant mischief. Alarmed at the bold challenge, they forgot the text concerning loving their enemies, and threatened Southwell with all the rigours of the law in this world, and red-hot damnation in the next. Southwell had not been a soldier for nothing. He hit back at once, and with all the power at his command. Faced with imprisonment for publishing literary and philosophical articles, he met force with force, and the pages of *The Oracle* changed from the mildness of the *Hibbert Journal* to the sterner tone of a man defending his liberty against overwhelming odds, and inevitable disaster. Southwell had not long to wait. On the appearance of the fourth number Southwell was arrested, tried before Sir Charles Wetherell, and, in spite of a most eloquent defence, sentenced to a year's imprisonment, with a fine of £100. During Southwell's imprisonment George Jacob Holyoake edited the paper; and when he, in turn, was sentenced to six months' imprisonment, Thomas Paterson took his place. "Bull-dog Paterson," as he was affectionately called, was also sent to gaol, and his last fling at the enemy as he entered the prison gates was the publication of his trial under the saucy title, *God versus Paterson*. George Adams and his wife, Harriet, stepped into the breach, each to be sent to prison. William Chilton succeeded them, and kept the flag flying to the end, which was hastened by the heavy debts incurred in the continuous law cases, the fines imposed, and the confiscation of books and pamphlets.

*The Oracle of Reason* lasted just over two strenuous years; and in that time had five editors, each, in turn, dragged to prison. During its short and stormy career it created a profound impression, which, in due time, led to the formation of a properly organised Freethought Party. After his release from prison, Southwell carried on a Freethought mission in many places, and ultimately settled in New Zealand, where he edited *The Auckland Examiner*. He died in 1860 at the early age of forty-six.

Charles Southwell was a voluminous writer, but most of his work was simple journalism, and of no lasting value. His pamphlets were largely lively rejoinders in controversies which have now lost their interest. The most durable of his books is *The Confessions of a Freethinker*, published in 1845, a candid and fascinating piece of autobiography. There is an elusive element in his life, and the record is almost like that of an unfinished story. So much is vague that whole chapters of his life are blank. The few photographs of him have been described as unsatis-

factory, and a biographer is reduced to inference. A brilliant and unfortunate man, Charles Southwell fought well and suffered much in the cause of Human Liberation.

The work done by Charles Southwell, and his comrades and successors, is an important chapter in the history of Freethought. During the years which have elapsed since this Homeric period of Freethought propaganda, great and far-reaching changes have taken place. The most important are the safeguarding of bequests to Freethought; the right of Freethinkers to sit in Parliament without taking an oath; the right of affirmation; and the ever-increasing number of women associated with the movement. In the days of Southwell, Holyoake, and even Bradlaugh, the audiences at Freethought meetings were almost entirely masculine, whereas to-day the position is very different. To its credit, the Freethought Party is still in the vanguard of Progress, sheltering behind it all the weaker heterodox people, who otherwise had been crushed by the weight of Priestcraft.

Secularists have a right to be very proud of their history. As the little *Revenge* earned an undying name by hurling herself against the many great battleships of the Spaniards, so the Freethinkers have displayed extraordinary courage in attacking the more formidable Armada of Superstition. The greater the perils, the greater the victory; and in the ripe years to come recognition must be given to the superb courage which, disregarding any reward, was satisfied with the knowledge that their action would diffuse the blessings of Liberty. For in that happy time the stormy note of battle will be changed to the triumphant music of victory.

MIMNERMUS.

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## Does God Trouble About Man?

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FOR several weeks past the inhabitants of Peckham have been confronted with the following conundrum: "If God thought no more about man than man thinks about God, what would happen?" This interrogation appeared on a large hoarding outside a Dissenting Church in one of the main thoroughfares of this working-class neighbourhood, and I have been wondering whether any sensible person has been provoked to offer a reply to this very pointed question. Personally, I do not expect that the question is addressed especially to the unbeliever, but rather to the lukewarm Christian who does not patronize any of the local churches, established or otherwise. The unbeliever is looked upon by this section of narrow-minded Christians as altogether outside the pale of civilized society, although, as a matter of fact, he may be among the most cultivated and civilized section of the community. But whether any lukewarm Christian or Nothingarian, has offered an answer to this question, I, who have discarded belief in any and every kind of God or gods that have ever been conceived by human imagination, for over half a century, make this reply; not for the benefit of the parsons of this little local Bethel, but for that of any thoughtful person who may seriously consider the meaning of such an interrogation. While I have no belief in any of the Gods—I know a good deal about the origin of the God idea. Indeed, I have a clear and definite idea as to how it began in the untutored mind of our primitive savage ancestors, and how it ultimately reached the anthropomorphic stage, when man regarded his God as an enormous man-like ghost—with all the attributes of man very much exaggerated. And all the conceptions of God that men have since formulated have been but modifications and imaginary improvements of this idea, until they have reached the con-

ception that God is an ethereal kind of being that permeates the universe and possesses among his attributes those of infinite wisdom and goodness combined with infinite power.

Let us take for a moment the first part of the question and ask "When has God ever troubled himself to think about man?" Only in the early ages of man's evolution when men believed in God or gods, and accepted the priest or prophet or medicine man as his representative on earth. In the various so-called sacred books we may read of God's alleged thoughts about his children, and of what he did either for his own glorification or for their satisfaction. But as man became more civilized the gods have done less and less for mankind, just in proportion as the latter became capable of doing things for themselves.

It may be said, however, that God is the author of Nature, and that he works through Nature to accomplish his ends. What we have to ask ourselves then is, does God manifest his love and kindness to man through the works of nature? Is God kind to his children when he sends an earthquake which destroys thousands, inflicting upon them unspeakable misery, and pain?

John Stuart Mill has most powerfully put the case in his splendid essay on Nature (page 29):

Nature impales men, breaks them as if on the wheel, casts them to be devoured by wild beasts, burns them to death, crushes them with stones like the first Christian martyr, starves them with hunger, freezes them with cold, poisons them by the quick or slow venom of her exhalations and has hundreds of other hideous deaths in reserve, such as the ingenious cruelty of a Nabis or a Domitian never surpassed.

If Nature does all this and God is behind Nature, then must we not hold God responsible for all these cruel and destructive happenings? Or take the case of disease and famine, surely even a dissenting parson would hesitate at this time of day to argue that such calamities are for the benefit of mankind, to say nothing of how far they exemplify the wisdom or goodness of God. The fact is, Nature has no more regard for the life of man than it has for that of a worm. As Shakespeare puts it in the play of "King Lear" (Act IV., scene 1); he makes Gloster say:

As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods;  
They kill us for their sport.

Man, however, has unquestionably thought about his gods, not only in the past, but even up to the present day. In every country of the world he has built temples and erected shrines to extol the greatness of his gods and to proclaim their glory; and while men have lavished their wealth and expended their labour in this way, the gods and their prophets have left them to grovel in ignorance and filth, until they had developed sufficient intelligence to extricate themselves and walk warily along the narrow path of progress. Even in this country to-day we spend millions of pounds annually to enable Archbishops and Bishops to live in mansions, and fifty thousand of the clergy to live in desirable residences, many of them in comparative luxury, while the masses of the people are struggling hard to get a mere subsistence.

And then we are asked what would happen if man gave no more thought to the question of the existence of God than the gods give to the well-being of man? In my judgment if man once had the necessary intelligence and courage to banish all ideas of God or gods from his mind he would soon begin to concentrate his entire attention on the affairs of this world. The first thing he would do would be to set his house in order. He would see that his children's minds were not contaminated with the pernicious nonsense of theology and that all religious instruction was excluded from

State-aided and rate-supported schools. Children might then get some useful instruction in Physical Science and History, free from religious prejudice and political bias. And when they had grown to an age, capable of forming a rational judgment, then their parents might advise them to read works on Comparative Religion, or on the evolution of religious beliefs and cognate subjects. And, finally, when they reached manhood and womanhood they might tackle problems of more practical value in daily life.

For instance, I can quite conceive of a rising generation dealing with such a far-reaching problem as the population question in a perfectly rational manner—grappling at the same time with the more complex question of breeding a race, by preventing the mentally and physically defective from becoming parents. And I can quite conceive of a highly intelligent people devoting their time and attention, not primarily to the making of wealth but to the performance of social service for the benefit of the whole of the community. This "consummation, devoutly to be wished," could only be brought about by the complete banishment of the tyrants of the skies—the Gods and devils of theology—so that man might be left in freedom to work out his own salvation. And this brief reply, to the above question, I now leave to the honest judgment of my fellows whatever their race, colour or creed.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

## Heinrich Heine.

The spirit of the world  
Beholding the absurdity of men—  
Their vaunts, their feats—let a sardonic smile  
For one short moment wander o'er his lips.  
*That smile was Heine!* —Matthew Arnold.

It has been truly said of Heine, by Sharp, his English biographer:—

There never has been any such as he: and another Heine can hardly appear again. As Théophile Gautier wrote of the poet after his death, what long and slow combinations will it cost nature before she can reproduce such a head! There are flowers which bloom much more rarely than the aloe—human flowers which unfold their fadeless petals but once, it may be, in the whole slow growth of humanity.

Mr. Havelock Ellis, who also fell under the spell of Heine, says that he possessed "the secret of speaking with a voice that every heart leaps up to answer." It may be asked why this supreme literary artist is not more popular? For you may read the popular Press and the weekly and monthly magazines for a year and scarcely meet with a mention of his name.

The answer is that he was laid on the procrustian bed of British respectability and found to be a bad fit. He jarred upon the four great British p's: British pride, British piety, British patriotism, and British prudery. He affronted our pride by his description, in his *English Fragments*, of our manners and customs, gleaned during his four month's residence in England. But we are apt to forget that he wrote quite as scathingly of his own country, Germany, and we are ready to applaud that. Moreover, the description he gives of the English of that time—the reign of George II.—was, as is now admitted, quite true. He shocked the pious, because, being born a Jew, he rejected Judaism, embracing by turns Christianity, Deism and Atheism, rejecting all and indulging in not a little mockery at their expense. Then he offended our patriotism by his idolization of Napoleon at a time when children were frightened with the ogre "Boney" if they did not behave themselves. And, lastly, he offended Mrs. Grundy by transgressing the very limited licence which the prudery prevailing at that time allowed.

All these causes operated against Heine's appreciation in this country, consequently the work of this fine genius never received the attention it would otherwise have received. But there is no reason why they should operate to-day. Worse indictments of the reign of George II. by Englishmen have been written since then, than Heine ever thought of. All our ideas have undergone an immense change in religion, and in our estimate of Napoleon, and our prudishness is wearing somewhat thin. The modern man will be more inclined to agree with Heine in all these matters than to condemn him.

Heine, then, was born in Germany, at Dusseldorf, on the Rhine, on December 13, 1799, of poor Jewish parents. As a boy he saw Napoleon enter the town of his birth. In later days he describes his emotions upon this occasion when: "I saw with my own highly-graced eyes, himself. Hosannah! the Emperor!" A police regulation forbade riding down the avenue:—

And the Emperor with his retinue rode directly down the avenue. The trembling trees bowed towards him as he advanced, the sunbeams quivered, frightened, yet curious, through the green leaves, and in the blue heaven above there swam visibly a golden star. The Emperor wore his invisible-green uniform and the little world-renowned hat. He rode a white steed, which stepped with such calm pride, so confidently, so nobly.....Carelessly, almost lazily, sat the Emperor, holding his rein with one hand, and with the other good-naturedly patting the horse's neck. It was a sunny, marble hand, a mighty hand—one of those two hands which bound fast the many-headed monster of anarchy, and ordered the war of races—and it good-naturedly patted the horse's neck. Even the face had that hue which we find in the marble of Greek and Roman busts; the traits were as nobly cut as in the antique, and on that face was written, "Thou shalt have no Gods before me."

As a young man Heine was sent to Berlin and studied under Hegel, at whom he launched many a witty shaft. "I saw Hegel," he says in his *Confessions*,

with his almost comically serious face, like a setting hen, brooding over the fatal eggs (Atheism), and I heard his cackling; to tell the truth, I seldom understood him, and only through later reflection did I arrive at an understanding of his works. I believe he did not wish to be understood.

In after life Heine never mentions Hegel without ridicule, and referred to this period as that in which "he herded swine with the Hegelians." Heine's light, trifling, and withal brilliant mockery—in his travesty of Hegel's philosophy—is more deadly than the most philosophic criticism. He begins it:—

I was young and arrogant, and it gratified my self-conceit when I was informed by Hegel that not, as my grandmother had supposed, He that dwelt in the heavens, but I myself here on earth was God.

And keeps up the same whimsical vein for several pages.

In the lambent flames of his unequalled humour and the flashing interrogative lightning play of his wit, he bathed all things accounted sacred by mankind. "It was as though," says Sharp, his biographer, "a million spirits of satire possessed him, and whenever he opened his mouth one leapt forth and became verbally tangible." Even his friends never knew exactly where he stood, and as the same writer observes: "It is no wonder that when Heine gave greeting with his right hand and pinched agonizingly with his left, acquaintances fought shy of him. Börne, the austere Republican, quarrelled with Heine for his slackness in the democratic cause, declaring:—

I can be indulgent to the games of children, indulgent to the passions of youth, but when on the bloody

day of battle a boy who is chasing butterflies gets between my legs; when at the day of our greatest need, and we are calling aloud on God, the young coxcomb beside us in the church sees only the pretty girls, and winks and flirts.

But, as Havelock Ellis remarks: "Börnes are ever with us, and we are grateful: there is but one Heine."

Never of robust health, in 1837 he had intermittent attacks of violent pain in the eyes. In 1844 he was prostrated by an illness from which he never really recovered; the last seven years of his life he was completely paralysed, and lay helpless on what he called his "mattress-grave." Yet his transcendent literary power survived the wreck of his physical body, his last poem written shortly before his death is considered by many critics to be his best. As a poet and a writer Heine achieved the very pinnacle of fame, and if Goethe could record, "the Chinese with trembling hand paints Werther and Lotte on porcelain," Heine could point to the fact that his poems had been translated into Japanese.

Unfortunately he was unable to enjoy the fruits of his fame. He laments:—

But at this moment I am as indifferent to my Japanese fame as to my renown in Finland. Alas! fame, once sweet as sugared pineapple and flattery, has for a long time been nauseous to me; it tastes as bitter to me now as wormwood. With Romeo, I can say, "I am the fool of fortune." The bowl stands filled before me, but I lack a spoon. What does it avail me that at banquets my health is pledged in choicest wines, and drunk from golden goblets, when I myself, severed from all that makes life pleasant, may only wet my lips with an insipid potion? What does it avail me that enthusiastic youths and maidens crown my marble bust with laurel wreaths, if meanwhile the shrivelled fingers of an aged nurse press a blister of Spanish flies behind the ears of my actual body? Of what avail is it that all the roses of Shiraz so tenderly glow and bloom for me? Alas! Shiraz is two thousand miles away from the Rue d'Amsterdam, where, in the dreary solitude of my sick-room I have nothing to smell, unless it be the perfume of warmed napkins.

He who reads Heine needs to be keenly alert, for many of his most exquisite creations end unexpectedly in a burst of mockery. In conversation he was the same, even his friends were constantly deceived. Of his poetry we have only space for one short poem, entitled "Questions."

By the sea, the dreary nocturnal sea,  
Standeth a Stripling,  
His breast full of sorrow, his head full of doubt,  
And with gloomy lips he asks of the waters:  
"Oh solve me the Riddle of Life,  
That harrowing, world-old riddle,  
Whereon many heads have pondered and brooded;  
Heads in caps hieroglyph-scribbled,  
Heads in turbans, and heads in black beavers,  
Heads periwigged, and a thousand others,  
Poor aching human heads—  
Tell me what signifies Man!  
Whence has he come? And whither goes he?  
Who dwells up in the golden stars?"

The waves they murmur their endless babble,  
The wind it blows, and the clouds they wander,  
The stars they glitter coldly indifferent—  
And a fool waits for an answer.

As Sharp, his biographer says:—

He has given voice to our inarticulate resentment against we know not what; he has been our advocate against a blind tyranny of nature; he has given expression to our unexpressed pain. A new note, an intensely modern note, vibrates in the nervous prose of his sentences and in the magic of his verse. For the first time a strange voice is heard laughing at the sanctities of four thousand years; not a mere

mockery, the ripple of which has passed over the sea of humanity from all time, but the laugh of the modern man who has reached the summit, or what he believes the summit, of human life, and does not see even the most ordinary Pisgah beyond, much less the Promised Land.

Heine was the child of impulse. The sun shines, a fair girl laughs, he loves and is loved.

Then all is well; love vanishes and *ennui* comes, and 'tis an east wind, then, ho, for poison that will rankle and stiletos of speech that, like Sefchen's sword, will thirst for blood.

Liberation! this was Heine's slogan in all his brilliant though desultory campaign against oppression, spiritual and temporal. "Lay a sword upon my coffin," said Heine, "for I was a brilliant soldier in the Liberation War of Humanity." His last breath was spent in a mocking reference to God. An anxious friend, with officious zeal, asked if the dying man had made his peace with God. "Do not trouble yourself," he replied, with a wan smile, "*Dieu me pardonnera; c'est son metier.*"<sup>2</sup> These were the last words uttered by Heinrich Heine, says Sharp. "His untamable irony illumined even the shadow of death."

W. MANN.

### Acid Drops.

The Christians are determined that Atheists shall not claim a single murderer as theirs. The Rev. A. J. Waldron proudly asserts ownership of Patrick Mahon. And now Father Fennessy, secretary to the Roman Catholic Bishop of Southwark, lays claim to the Frenchman, Vaquier. In a letter to the *Tablet* he says:—

He received Holy Communion on the Sunday at Mass, and on the Tuesday in his cell, on this latter occasion making the responses himself. Afterwards a chaplain read the litanies in which Vaquier devoutly joined. Among his last words were, "I die as a Catholic and a Frenchman."

Mahon saw the "light of God" and walked calmly to the scaffold. Vaquier died as a good Catholic and is certain of heaven. The examples of these eminent men should prove a warning to all Freethinkers who may feel inclined to murder someone. They have nothing to cheer their last moments and lead them to march to the scaffold with the conviction that they will spend eternity singing hymns and playing harps. There is nothing in their beliefs that will provide for such an emergency. In this respect Christianity meets the needs of murderers far better. If it cannot prevent a man committing a murder it does at least provide for the murderer's after needs and secure him a comfortable end. And when that is seen, we fancy that most Atheists will agree that the sight of a Christian being hanged is less distressing than would be that of an unbeliever.

It is reported that there is a division of 25,000 Chinese Christian soldiers who have appropriately celebrated their conversion by taking part in a war with other Chinese. We do not know the rights and wrongs of each party, or the points in dispute between Fi-fo-fum and Ho-He-To, but it looks as if, once again, the honest toiling industrial population were to be made the tools of ambitious statesmen. No doubt the winner will be looked upon as a patriot, and, if he murders a sufficient number of people, he may be acclaimed as an Empire maker. A very old story, but we had thought that the Chinese were too practical to countenance such outbreaks of barbarism.

General Feng's brigade of Christians have been exchanging old arms for new, upon which occasion "the men were baptised and the new weapons solemnly blessed." We have heard of this sort of thing through many hundreds of years, and it provokes some reflections. That the superior quality of the new weapons will prove much more reliable than the benediction. And we also

wonder what brand of Christians these are, and whether they may not—following ancient precedents—soon be fighting with one another upon matters of doctrine. More probably they will be out for what they can get. Could they not quote the Christian Faulconbridge?

Bell book and candle shall not drive me back,  
When gold and silver beckons me to come on.

Someone has been discussing in the *Wolverton Express* the thesis whether in the case of an incurable disease it might be advisable to put the sufferer painlessly out of his misery. We are not concerned at the moment with the right or wrong of this, but with a letter in reply from a Rev. Mr. Barford, who, in opposing the suggestion, cited a case within his experience of a sufferer who stated that "the most valuable part of his life were those last weeks of agony." The case is worth noting because it illustrates some characteristically Christian frames of mind. First, we have grave doubts whether the case existed in fact. Clergymen have so got into the habit of inventing these illustrative cases, and their sense of truthfulness in the matter is so slight, that it may well be a pure invention. Secondly, it does not say much for average human nature if a severe and painful and fatal illness is required to rouse it to a sense of duty. To say that this is true of the larger number of those who suffer from serious and painful diseases is simply not true. Thirdly, the argument well illustrates the quite unhealthy nature of the Christian outlook on life. Disease is here, and it is part of the discipline God has designed for us. And a God who could permit cancer, or tuberculosis, or other hideous diseases for the purpose of disciplining character may be one which the average Christian may think it is safe to worship, but the decent-minded man or woman will think that the less one has to do with him the better.

"Our national ignorance in religious matters is profound and appalling." Thus the Bishop of Liverpool (Dr. David), in a message he sends to the first of a series of conferences of diocesan clergy, at Liverpool Cathedral. The Bishop bemoans the fact that "religious teaching has almost disappeared from the home.....In most primary and secondary schools it is fragmentary and not very efficient.....in the Universities it hardly exists at all. The result is that the adults of the present generation have heavy arrears to make up....." With a view to helping on this desirable consummation, the Bishop adds that he hopes to provide lectures and classes, which "will both meet and stimulate a growing appetite for religious enlightenment." We agree with this frank admission that to-day there is no intellectual interest in religion. But we fear the Bishop is doomed to disappointment if he really imagines that such interest can be generated by the running of theological classes. The fact of the matter is that people of to-day who have a taste for intellectual matters are not prepared to waste time over barren and unsatisfactory theological speculation. Three centuries ago the Bishop's plan might have met with success. Then, it seems, the dilettante turned naturally to theology and metaphysics; but in these times he prefers to read popular science, or to interest himself in wireless, or to take a University Extension Course in some useful subject. If religion is to maintain its position it must give up all hope of winning intellectual adherence to its vague and rather dreary doctrines. Among the uneducated and among the hysterical members of the community it will still find its converts and supporters; but those who take an intellectual interest in life have no use for it. Thoughtful and studious people, such as the Bishop may have in mind, are those most keenly affected by the general tendencies of the time and these tendencies are unequivocally anti-religious. Indeed, to such an extent has religion decayed, that those thinkers and workers who do most to form the intellectual tendencies of the age, scarcely ever refer to it. The Bishop might as well hope to revive intellectual belief in witchcraft or the religion of ancient Assyria as to revive Christian beliefs in thoughtful men and women of the present age.

Sunday games are banned in Brentford's new park at Boston Manor, which was recently opened. We have protested before against the manner in which small and

<sup>2</sup> "God will pardon me; it is his business."

<sup>1</sup> Sharp. *Life of Heine*, p. 197.

unscrupulous, but organized minorities can bully the majority of a community. No honest person can pretend that the majority of English men and women are Sabbatharians; or that they have any use for the gloomy views of the old Puritanism and Nonconformity. And yet all over the country such opinions force themselves into local administration. It certainly seems high time that those who take a kindlier and wiser view of human needs should make some organized opposition to the small organized cliques of kill-joys who force their antiquated opinions upon their neighbours. In most districts the Sabbatharians are in a hopeless minority, and yet by organizing opposition to the wishes of the rather lazy, tolerant majority they carry the day. The only way to deal effectively with these gentry is to meet them with organized opposition. The eagerness with which the new facilities for Sunday games in the London parks have been used, suggests that if in any district a few energetic Secularists were to organize opposition to the Sabbatharian element they would receive plenty of public support on crucial occasions. To expect the general public to exercise that eternal vigilance which has been said to be the price of liberty, is foolish. And it is because of this general disinclination to take any effective steps to protect popular liberties or to extend them, that small bodies of restless fanatics are able to exercise a mild tyranny over their neighbours. But those who steadily oppose them can usually rely upon a fair measure of public support when a crisis arises. By providing this kind of vigilance committee Secularists in their respective localities would do a practical work that would, we believe, heartily commend them to many citizens who simply are not interested in theological or anti-theological arguments, but who are anxious to be allowed to indulge in harmless pleasures.

All the old religions gave expression to fear, but none to love and sympathy as did the Christian faith, said Mr. J. A. Hatfield, of King's College, London, in a paper which he read at the Conference of Modern Churchmen at Oxford. Assuming that Mr. Hatfield would argue that the books of the terrible Old Testament, with their picture of a barbaric impetuous deity, are pre-Christian, we should be pleased if he would explain how Christianity differs from other religions in not giving expression to fear. The New Testament is full of exhortations to men and women to flee from the wrath to come; and full of insinuation that a cataclysmic end of the world is drawing near. In particular, "Revelations" is not the kind of literature to cheer and amuse a neurotic. Furthermore, it is fair to claim that the Christians of the first two or three centuries of the Christian era were at least as good judges of what was true Christian teaching as is a gentleman of the present age. And judging by the way in which tens of thousands of Christian converts fled from all the joys of this life, to lead dreadful lives of self-maceration in the deserts and wildernesses, and judging by the fearful phantasms that tormented these unhappy creatures, and the horrible terrors of hell that afflicted them, often to the point of madness, primitive Christianity must have been a very terrifying religion indeed. Most religions have their records of abnormal, hysterical saints and anchorites, men and women imbued with a deadly belief in their own worthlessness, which drives them to inflict self-torture, but no creed has ever exercised such a malign sway as primitive Christianity did. No man of feeling can read the horrible accounts of the life of the early Christian anchorites and monastic orders, or read anything of the hideous fears that pursued devout men and women into the waste places of the earth, and continued with them day and night till they were driven mad—lived naked, maybe, like dumb beasts, feeding on hands and knees on the grass and wild herbs, or pursued by an imaginary legion of fiends, hurled themselves to death in a chasm, or river—no feeling man, we say, can read such accounts without a deep loathing for the religion which produced such hideous things. Christianity has been forced to deny these outrageous beliefs by the conscience of civilized humanity. But if to-day Christianity is little more than a feeble sentimentalizing over the social ills that are with us, or a kind of celestial insurance against a painful hereafter, it is no merit to Chris-

tians. Read Lecky, or read Buckle on the true Christian spirit, the former in the first two or three centuries, the latter in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Scotland, and Mr. Hatfield's contention is utterly ridiculous.

In the Emmanuel Church "Circular," the Rev. F. G. Shepherd remarks upon the fact that with the impending resignation of the Rector of Weston-super-Mare all the parishes in the town with the exception of Holy Trinity will have changed incumbents during the space of three years. At this rate we shall soon have the professional followers of the Nazarene carpenter emulating the founder of their cult, and tramping the country with a few select followers, and delivering impromptu sermons or performing magic. Another 50,000 tramps on the roads would complicate the already difficult problems of poor relief. But perhaps our pastors would avoid the casual wards.

The Acting-Governor of the Leeward Islands has telegraphed further information regarding the hurricane which struck the colony on August 28. In the Virgin Islands all the churches but one were destroyed. Apparently the deity has been up to his old tricks again, although in these less heroic times he does not indulge in worldwide destruction. But no doubt pious people will be called upon to pay for the damage which their God has done to his own churches.

We see a clergyman has been complaining that a racing pigeon flew in at his study window while he was composing a sermon. If the early Christian iconographers are to be trusted it was in that guise the Holy Ghost paid its visits to people. And we tremble to think of what is awaiting that parson if, instead of falling on his knees and worshipping it, he spent his time chasing it round the room and cursing it for interrupting his work of altering someone else's sermon so that the congregation would not know where it came from.

Here is a story with an obvious moral, taken from the *Detroit Times* :—

A large tom cat was crossing the street with a mouse still alive in its mouth. An automobile ran over the tom cat, broke his back, made him open his mouth, and the mouse, a little wet, escaped. If in the course of evolution that mouse had reached the stage of the ordinary superstitious human being it would have said and believed, "The Supreme Being that runs this universe suspended all other business and sent that automobile along in the nick of time."

We should be interested in some of our religious readers pointing out the difference between their own customary attitude and that of the superstitious mouse.

## How to Help.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## The National Secular Society.

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

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

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

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

### To Correspondents.

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

S. HAMPSON.—We are always obliged to readers who send us newspaper cuttings. We cannot see all papers, and local ones often contain items that are interesting to Freethinkers. Even when not used in the paper they are often useful in other directions.

H. EMERY.—We have no hesitation in saying that when Professor Haldane says that "Religion stands on ground that cannot be assailed," he is, provided he is using "Religion" in a justifiable sense, talking absolute nonsense. Of course, if he uses the word in a special sense, and does not mean by it what people have always meant, then he may be right, but then it would not be religion. The unscientific manner in which some scientific workers talk about religion pays small compliment to their capacity for genuine scientific thinking.

ARTHOS ZENO.—Articles received, and will be used. Glad to know that you have secured new readers for the *Freethinker*. It can be done if people will only try.

J. W. HINLEY.—Thanks for cuttings. The man who can say, as does Canon Woods, that if Christian missionaries had not come to our shores centuries ago we should still be living in undressed skins and staining our bodies with wood, is evidently of the type of mind of which good Christians are made. Any attempt to improve his mental outlook would certainly rob the Lord of a follower.

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.

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

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

We have had a number of overseas visitors this year, and more than one has suggested the desirability of doing something that will tend to bring Freethinkers in the Colonies and Dominions into closer contact. This is very desirable if it can be done, and if it is to be done it would seem that the *Freethinker*, which is the chief agency for bringing Freethinkers together, is the proper medium for the task. We are not quite clear as to what are the best steps to take, but as a start we suggest that Freethinkers in Africa, Australia and elsewhere might send their names to this office, and we could then either publish their names and addresses for the benefit of others, or could, privately, place them into communication with one another. If there are any who would care to act as connecting links between Freethinkers in distant parts of the Empire, their names could, if they are agreeable, remain permanently in the *Freethinker* for reference. We hope that those who read this paragraph will not wait to see what others are doing, but act on it at once. To wait for the other fellow means that no one does anything.

Our readers may be interested in a meeting of the League of Nations Union which is to take place at South Place Institute on Tuesday, October 7, at 8 o'clock. Admission is free. The speaker will be Mr. C. Delisle Burns, and the subject is one that deserves all the attention that can be given to it.

We are pleased to hear that Mr. Percy Ward had excellent meetings at Manchester on Sunday last. To-day (September 28) he will speak, for the Manchester Branch, in the Pendleton Town Hall at 3 and 6.30. We hope to hear of continued good meetings.

The South London Branch is removing its winter meeting place to the New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, near Clapham Road Station. It opens the winter season on Sunday next, October 5. To-day (September 28) the Branch is holding a Bradlaugh demonstration in Brockwell Park.

## Herbert Spencer.

SINCE the days of Aristotle, Herbert Spencer is the only philosopher I can find who deserves, by virtue of his intention at least, to move in the same sphere as the great Stagyrte. Kant, it is true, perceived the cardinal importance of the predicaments, or, as he called them, the categories in the establishment and development of a true system of psychology; and Kant would have been wondrously great had he been great, that is to say, had he envisaged the problems of philosophy from a high objective point of view and had carried out to a successful issue his research for these categories. He failed, as we have seen, in both endeavours; drunk with the fumes of old theological disputations, he has given us but a wild and confused dialectical collie-shangie with Hume in place of the illuminating exposition that should light up the foundations of man's mental realm and from that deep basis show us the determining structural forms of the moral world in which his destiny must be wrought.

Then came Spencer, with insufficient mental equipment certainly, but with a project that at first sight seemed no less comprehensive and fundamental. The basic motive in Spencer's scheme was that of finding a law, or principle of nature, which would serve to explain the transformations now, and always, proceeding in the biological world and eventually in the mental world of man, so that a standard of higher evolution as against a lower evolution having been established we could, if sufficiently enlightened by his exposition, see before our eyes the gradual changes implied in the progress of the world.

This would have been excellent if the proposal had been carried out with success, but the more I have reflected on this matter the more convinced I have become of the fallacious character of the reasoning that constitutes the essential part of the Synthetic Philosophy.

Here perhaps a little personal explanation may not be out of place, for even in the most abstract studies, mathematics for example, I find it helpful to know the intent and style of the author, and I am glad to be able to cite in this respect Klein's remarks in a preface to Riemann's works, in which he shows the influence of the personal factor even in that objective science.

Well, then, in the first place, I do not fall foul of Spencer on the ground of mere captious criticism. After Locke, and after my profound disgust with the casuists, I felt a sense of gratitude in coming upon the work of John Stuart Mill, in his technical treatises, such as the *Logic*, and later I was delighted when I read Bain and Herbert Spencer. At one time indeed I was so impressed with Spencer that it seemed to me a worthy life's work to study him to complete understanding, so as, by ways of popular forms of exposition, to make his ideas penetrate into the mass of the people.

If I do not now so regard the matter it is because I see Spencer's work within a wider scope, and I have scrutinised his arguments and found that his statement of evolution does not fulfil the requirements of a law of nature, and that in a great number of instances the premises on which he attempts to base generalizations are insecure or false, while his mode of argument even on this basis is not always justifiable.

To prove this by analysis of Spencer's works, by bell book and candle, or the scientific equivalents of these, would be difficult in any case, and impossible in a short article, for he has written many ponderous tomes; but I will adopt another method, that of searching for the "germinal idea," and this form of examination will prove especially fertile if the reader will add a little of his own co-operation, referring, if necessary, to Spencer and re-reading him in this light.

In the first place the cast of his mind, and the trained habit of his thought, all led him to generalizations. Huxley said of him wittily, "Spencer's notion of a tragedy is a generalization killed by a fact." The habit of generalization, which, after all, constitutes a mark of the scientific mind, became with him something of a vice, and I could run through a series of his generalizations that now sound absurd.

What, then, is the great generalization of all? I will answer this with a little care, for the search will reveal the germinal idea. Spencer, posing to himself the question as to how to determine, or at least in a general way to describe, the processes by which man has arrived at his fully developed intelligence—the highest product of our world as we know it—casts his eye upon the biological and physical conditions that have influenced such a development; and then, for clearer definition of what that development means, he goes by way of contrast to a very rudimentary type, the *amœba*; then he notes point by point the differences in the scope and mode of life, and he expresses these differences in general terms; and then finally he seeks for one comprehensive enunciation which will contain within its terms the essential principle of evolution.

What he found, or thought he found, was that the *amœba* was a very simple, almost homogeneous structure, man being by contrast an elaborate compound of heterogeneous parts; that the *amœba's* activities were haphazard and purposeless, while man's are based on a multitude of considerations and are directed to wise ends and much more precise in responding to conditions of time and space.

These descriptions refer mainly to biological pheno-

mena, but as Spencer held that the mental development proceeded *pari passu* with the physical, and in accord with it, the result of these reflections he endeavoured to put in a sentence, and here it is as a specimen of Herbert Spencer's style: "Evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion, during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity; and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation."

Such is the enunciation of his famous principle of Evolution, but it was not without sweat and heat that he came to the discovery, for as a matter of fact he has given other versions of the principle, and he has included in the enunciation those phrases about motion—"concomitant dissipation of motion"—which are obscure in themselves, and which nowhere in his subsequent detailed discussion does he clarify.

I suspect that he threw them in on the consideration that without them his definition would rest on biological factors, whereas he wanted to found it very deeply in nature, and so therefore had to refer to the physical conditions of the inanimate world whence sprang the animate.

This enunciation of principle I have submitted to an elaborate examination, which those interested may find in my "Ethics"—it is far too long to be reproduced here—but the gist of the criticism may be given to those who have been trained in mathematics: the number of variables exceeds that of the equations from which we are supposed to determine them. Or, again, as an aid to grasping these difficult points: consider a youth standing at the cross-roads, one of which leads to skill in cricket and the other to expertness in philosophical arguments; now try strictly by the use of Spencer's principle to find which is the higher evolution. It becomes evident that the formula is useless without quantitative definitions, and defined relations between the factors, and these are not, and cannot be, in these terms, forthcoming. Or again, there is nothing in this to decide as between higher evolution and certain forms of degeneration.

A criticism that strikes deep is that Spencer was not only deficient in knowledge and grasp of methods in the domain of physical science, but that his learning in the domain of physiology, and also of biology at large, was defective. He had a conception of the *amœba* which, in proportion to our acquaintance with that lowly form, seems more and more inadequate. The *amœba* is not homogeneous; life of any kind implies ingestion of nutriment and excretion, and these functions imply elaborate mechanism; further we must have a transporting system in the organism, and a capacity to respond to stimulus, favourable or unfavourable; and these functions imply rudimentary analogues to the circulation of the blood and the activities of the nervous system.

The suggestion from which he proceeds is good, but he has not taken into account all the factors and conditions, nor has he, in a form, definite in itself and leading in its applications to sure developments, expressed the factors he contemplated. If all these were reviewed and fresh enunciations elaborated we would have, not even then a law of nature, for the definition would be merely descriptive, but certain guiding principles on which a scientific system of classification might be established.....

We will find that by this mode of examination we have got a lamp which will help to explore all Spencer's writings, for he continually refers, through and through, to his principle of evolution, and the structure of his works is simply that of a representation of his theme in different guises and in the domains of various sciences. But if the principle itself fails at the base what remains? Simply that these elaborate

expositions are not in the nature of cogent arguments—there is no manifestation of a causal process vivifying it all—but they are merely illustrations superadded to exemplify a theme. The ponderous character of his works, moreover, is not due to any strain of continuous exposition even on these lines; they are formed in great measure by taking bodily the accounts of various sciences, biology for instance, such as one finds in a popular text-book. Suppose we were to run our dissecting knife through the body of his work so as to remove these parts which—as far as his original and special thought is concerned—are merely accretions, what remains?—little indeed until we come to the pith of it all, as in the *Data of Ethics*, which consists really of the giving forth of Herbert Spencer's personal opinions.

I do not say this in disparagement because his opinions are highly to be respected, the opinions of an honest, well-meaning, very thoughtful and considerate bourgeois, whose temperament, however, was not expansive, and whose experience of life and comprehension of science were cast within far too limited a scope to be of supreme value. When it comes to the expression of opinion, and when we get out of the special environment of the age and the country, and compare him with Aristotle, the great Greek seems to me to have an overwhelming advantage.

The actual history of Spencer's work is instructive. For a long time his writings attracted little attention, even after they had already contained all that was essential and vital in his conceptions. But as I have been long convinced, books even of reason do not make their way, except amongst an extraordinarily restricted élite, by virtue of their reason. Something quite extraneous to this makes their fortunes or their condemnation. This was brought home to me one night in the Underground when a Member of Parliament seeing me with the two volumes of my *Psychology: A New System*, which had just been published, showed great curiosity—imagine my delight at finding an M.P. with a tincture of "Thought"—and examined them with close attention. When I say, "examined them," he examined the binding, he scrutinized the print, as he was apprehensive that it might have been linotyped, he questioned me as to the publisher's status, he turned over the leaves of the analytical index, he announced again and again, "two volumes," he weighed them and said as he handed them back, "This work is monumental"; then added, "But I was brought up on Kant—must stick to Kant, you know." And all this time he had not read a line of the book! The whole performance was rich in instruction; it made me see the exact value of contemporary fame.

And so it was not until Spencer's works became weighty, not only by their matter but by their avoirdupois, that he became "recognized." He was received into the Athenæum Club, not because he was a good thinker, but because in the special line of philosophy he was a Big Manufacturer. He was a Captain of Industry in abstract goods. Oxford took a higher stand; it withheld its patronage until it had received the assurance that this work of thought was revolutionary only in domains that did not count, viz., in philosophy; it left the great landed interests intact. Spencer in Oxford was the lay bishop of an esoteric but innocuous creed.

But so as not to leave any but a respectful judgment about Spencer I will conclude by quoting a characteristic passage, which indicates his line of thought, and which, short as it is, may in regard to the import and validity of the last argument plunge us into deep reflections:

It was shown that throughout Evolution, motive and act become more complex, as the adaptation of inner related actions to outer related actions extends in range and variety. Whence followed the corollary

that the later-evolved feelings, more representative and re-representative in their constitution, and referring to remoter and wider needs, have, on the average, an authority as guides greater than have the earlier and simpler feelings.

ARTHUR LYNCH.

## "Queen of Peace and Universal Mother."

SOME seventeen hundred years ago (if one can believe Apuleius, a novelist of the second century), a devout man bent in prayer on the sea-shore. He had desired to see the Feminine Spirit in whose being were concentrated the essence and powers of the Universe and of Goodness. His prayer was answered. From the moonlit water arose a Lady who was crowned with flowers, and guarded on each side by a serpent holding a blazing disc. Her white robe changed its colour to yellow, and then to red, even as the sky changes with the course of the sun; but over her shoulders hung a black cloak, bordered with stars. Then said the Lady:—

I come in answer to your supplication. I am the Nature-Mother; mistress of all elements; womb of ages, queen of the world of shades. Become my servant, and live in hope by constant devotion and stedfast purity, to see my glory in the world to come.

The Lady was Isis, whose image was carved by the Egyptians as that of a mother holding in her arms the child Horus, or sun-god. At the period when the Christian faith was being slowly shaped by many minds, the worship of this divine Lady spread all round the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea, and remains of her temples have been found in Cologne, in Holland, and in the British city of York. In her honour, multitudes of women in the Roman Empire offered sacrifice, chanted hymns, and took part in festivals. She was fervently addressed as "Thou who art all, Queen of Peace, and Universal Mother." Goddess of spring-tide, protector of fruit and harvest, she was also guardian of sailors at sea. Nearly twelve years ago, when on a journey to India, I saw, at the harbour of Marseilles, a church on a hill, and over the roof of the church rose the figure of a Lady—"Our Guardian Lady" was her name—who was believed to watch over the safety and destiny of fishermen and sailors. I wrote some notes about her in the *Freethinker* at the time. Of course, to French sailors, the Lady is Mary, who is adored by the Catholic Church; but a little reflection will lead to the conclusion that the Guardian Lady of Marseilles is but the popular successor of the Guardian Lady Isis, of Egypt, Rome, and Cologne on the River Rhine. The Catholic titles of Mary—"Good Mother," "Mother of God," "Salvation of the Weak"—would equally well apply to Isis, though naturally the later legend of Mary would approach more closely to modern conceptions of womanhood than the legend of Isis.

The above-quoted picture of the devotee of Isis, and his vision of the Lady of the Sea, I have borrowed from a recently-published work on "Woman in World History," by Miss E. M. White.<sup>1</sup> In a very interesting series of sketches, amply annotated, Miss White traces the story of woman through the phases of civilization represented in Primitive Times, Ancient Egypt, Babylonia and Assyria, Hinduism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Judaism, Ancient Greece, Rome, and Christianity. It is not a controversial book. So free, indeed, is it from controversial motives that the author, while writing on strongly Humanist lines, has avoided methods of censure, except in passing and

<sup>1</sup> *Woman in World History: Her Place in the Great Religions*, by E. M. White. Herbert Jenkins; 416 pp. 8s. 6d.

infrequent comments. She offers no grave criticism of the Catholic attitude towards woman in the Middle Ages; but neither does she attack the manners and customs of Islam, or Israel, or any other religious system. The volume is a clear and impartial record of womanhood through the ages, useful to students, and attractive to the general reader. In the earlier pages, we have glimpses of Primitive Woman, and her supposed influence on the fertility of the fields. In Sumatra, one may readily see a survival of very early ideas in the sowing of rice by women, who, at the time of sowing, let their hair loose, so that, in sympathetic magic, the rice may grow luxuriantly. We pass from stage to stage of culture till we reach the worship of the Lady Isis, as I have already indicated. When we arrive at the close of the long study in the twentieth century, we come to no dead halt. We find ourselves still in the stream of progress. The Christian faith is obviously fading, and yet no fact can be plainer to the observer of social movements than the ascent of woman towards levels that lie beyond the old Catholic and Protestant regions.

I am well aware that vast numbers of women in Europe, America, and elsewhere still cover their ideals with Christian terms, and still say that their good works are done in the faith of Jesus and the service of the heavenly Father. But, if we turn from the consideration of words and attend to social realities, we shall see how far across the old theological frontiers the modern woman has marched. I will merely remark two out of many possible illustrations, one in the political sphere, the other in the field of social benevolence.

I can remember how, fifty years ago, only a few women anticipated, or wished for, female suffrage. At that time, John Stuart Mill (who was not a Christian) had begun to stir thought by his essay on "The Subjection of Women"; and, later, I heard such speakers as Lydia Becker, Helen Taylor, and Jessie Craigen. These were forerunners of the Feminist Gospel. What do we see to-day? We see the political activity of women all over the globe. Various countries, including our own, have extended the vote to women; and even in the Far East women are waking to the modern call and the modern evolution.

I open a *Handbook of International Organizations*, published by the Geneva office of the League of Nations. I notice an immense variety of objects for which people band themselves together by oversea links—agriculture, transport, Trades Unionism, hygiene, finance, law, art, science, education, Red Cross, suppression of opium and alcohol, suppression of prostitution, sport, bibliography, Esperanto, and so on in a tremendous array. Among these associations for world-welfare appear numerous alliances of women. I select a few: (1) International Council of Women, for the development of a feeling of solidarity and mutual understanding among the women of all countries; at The Hague, in 1922, delegates gathered from twenty-six nations. (2) International Council of Nurses, for establishing friendly relations among hospitals, etc., in all lands. (3) International Co-operative Women's Committee, with Dutch, English, Norwegian, Swedish, Swiss, Austrian, Tcheko-slovak, French, etc., connections. (4) Women's League of Peace and Freedom, having for its aim "Peace, Internationalism, Freedom in the sense of the complete emancipation of the sex, and the introduction of these principles in all systems of education." Other instances abound; I have simply chosen leading types.

If, after a glance at this League of Nations catalogue, we turn back to the ancient worlds of Babylon, Greece, and Roman Empire, we are struck by the immense change of atmosphere and outlook. Let us suppose we could "call spirits from the vasty deep,"

and set the apostles Paul, Peter, Andrew, James, and John (I would excuse Judas Iscariot, as the invitation might embarrass him) in the midst of the far-reaching enterprises of modern women. These Asiatic gentlemen were accustomed to the sight of every mission being conducted by the Almighty Patriarch, bearded and heavily-robed, men following close on his heels as kings, priests, and prophets, and women timidly huddled in the rear. No doubt, the worship of Isis had occasionally caught their eye; but, as one perceives from a slight examination of the New Testament, they had no intention of installing a "Queen of Peace and Universal Mother" in their system of doctrine and church-worship. Gazing about the world of 1924, our Asiatic friends would be astonished at the innumerable examples of women's association and self-government in the cause of humane order and progress. They would, perchance, accede to the ladies' request, and attend this or that committee. But once they were seated at the usual horseshoe table, and looked round at the lady-chairman, the vice-chairman, the secretary, and the members of the Executive, I suspect the apostles would be smitten with bewilderment, and decide not to make fools of themselves by offering advice unsuitable to the times. Silent men are often accounted wise.

In sober truth, the modern Woman Movement has no need for the apostles of Jerusalem and Tarsus. Its affairs, on the whole, go very successfully. Civilization is even now well forward on its way to the age when womanhood will be saluted as the effective "Queen of Peace and Universal Mother," whose influence will dominate the manners and the economics and politics of the entire globe. P. J. GOULD.

## Agnosticism.

In method, Science is perfectly mechanistic, its word for Realism, but in philosophy it is Agnostic, largely due to the bluffing of Idealism. The solving of ultimate problems may seem to be a matter of minor importance to the practical scientist working in his laboratory according to mechanistic methods, but.....if science takes the position that it is unable to apply its principles to ultimate problems, it can rest assured that its surrender of this branch of knowledge will be taken over completely by Theology, and human life will be a flash of light between two eternities both unknowable.—*Jackson Boyd.*

If any philosophy can be justly termed negative it is Agnosticism. It writes an eternal "Don't know!" across the universe. Lest I be accused of exaggeration or mis-statement, we will take the attitude of agnosticism as expressed by one of its foremost exponents, and one of our greatest living scientists, Sir Ray Lankester. Speaking of the position of science, Sir Ray Lankester says:—

As to what, if anything, is outside or behind this mechanism of Nature, as to whence or how it came about, or whither it is going, as to what it and what our consciousness of it really are, and why it is, and why we are here, modern science has no answer.

What a fine opportunity for the theologian! At one bound, it places any village curate and Sunday-school teacher on a level with the greatest scientist in the land. One can imagine it being read by the parson to his congregation, not as an example of the modesty of a great man, but as an expression of the impotence of science and scientific men. If this innocent-looking statement be true, then is the whole future of the human race abandoned to supernaturalism. No wonder Agnosticism is respectable!

Fortunately for the human race there can be no limit to the domains of science. Science ceases to be science if it limits the sphere of its activities. Everything, the known and the unknown, comes within its

province. The field of science is all Nature, and science is daily proclaiming the self-sufficiency of the universe. The governing principles of one branch of science apply to the whole of nature. Agnosticism says science knows nothing of the supernatural. True philosophy says all that is natural. There is a world of difference between the two statements. The former leaves religion undisturbed; nay, confirms it in its feeling of supremacy. The latter dispenses with it altogether.

It is misleading and untrue to say that we cannot arrive at a reasonable explanation of nature. We can answer the questions of why, whence, and whither. Surely we know to-day, if we know anything, what we are and what we are here for. If we accept the classifications of the metaphysicians then "ultimate knowledge" is beyond our grasp. But why should we? The classifications of metaphysics—the purely arbitrary division of nature into Phenomenon and Noumenon; the assertion that the universe is the expression of the Unknowable, and that the relativity of human knowledge forbids us ever attaining to a knowledge of Ultimate Reality—have never worked anything but confusion; they shed no light in dark places. To revert to our golden rule: their aim is to mystify, not simplify. Even if we accept these classifications, we still have to go to the sciences for knowledge; human well-being, the fulfillment of our destiny, still depends on our study and mastery of the laws of nature. The method of science is mechanistic, and so should its philosophy be. In practice the mechanistic method is gloriously productive of results, and it should be boldly and unequivocally avowed. If modern science is ever going to fulfil the promise contained within it, it must show a bold front to supernaturalism. If scientists will not do it, then others—who fear neither vested interests nor public opinion—must do it for them.

No essay on Agnosticism would be complete without reference to the question of the existence of God. And here let it be said, that whatever apparent justification there may be for agnosticism regarding the universe at large, there is none whatever—save the desire for mental or social convenience—concerning God. No plea for suspended judgment can save the agnostic from the charge of wilfully temporising on a question that is so easily capable of being decided. There is nothing about which to suspend judgment. We know the origin of the God-idea; we know its evolution from the conceptions of the savage right up (or down) to that of the modern philosopher. "God" has long since been explained out of existence. It is difficult to believe that the leading exponents of Agnosticism are not aware of the fundamental fallacy of the agnostic position; but by a tacit understanding they continue—for the sake of the respectabilities—to use a term which they must know has no justification in philosophy. If they do not know it—well, that is the worst that could be said of them. Class consciousness enters into all phases of social life, and G. W. Foote's description of an agnostic as an Atheist in a tall hat is the expression of a truism.

An impotent agnosticism—useful only for weaning purposes—will never oust the theologians and obscurantists; they do not even fear it. Why should they since its message—in so far as it is Agnosticism—is to proclaim the impotence of human knowledge? The *Freethinker* and the *National Secular Society* are still the most feared and hated in the religious world, because they do not dilute their message for fear of shocking the susceptibilities of timid minds. May the occupants of 61 and 62 Farringdon Street be forever preserved from the blight of respectability that has descended upon Johnsons Court!

VINCENT J. HANDS.

## Correspondence.

### WHY DOES THE BIRTH-RATE FALL?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In yours of September 7 Mr. C. E. Pell replies to me, but unfortunately his letter is full of the wildest statements. For instance, he says:—

It has been conclusively proved that the favourable conditions of captivity reduce the fertility of wild animals, and the effect is greater the more completely they are protected from the hard conditions to which they are subjected under nature.

It is difficult to say what Mr. Pell means to infer from this, but in any case it is true only of some animals. The domestic rabbit and pig are not less fertile than the wild ones, although they are well fed and protected in every way. The lion and tiger are less fertile, but they might differ from Mr. Pell in his view that their condition is a "favourable" one. There is an interesting discussion by Darwin on this point in Chapter IX. of the *Origin of Species*.

Mr. Pell says: "Birth controllers may be safely challenged to produce a single instance of the reduction of birth-rate and death-rate without the aid of improved hygienic conditions." Mr. Pell has himself told us that the birth-rate and death-rate began to fall in France at the beginning of the nineteenth century, while in England, Germany, Scandinavia, and Holland they did not begin falling for seventy years or more after that time. Evidently Mr. Pell regards France as the leader of the world in hygiene! Most people are under the impression that France always has been, and is to-day, behind every country I have named in hygienic conditions. The French death-rate began falling a hundred and twenty years ago because, and only because, the French birth-rate then began falling; consequently more of those who were born were able to survive.

Mr. Pell tells us that "when Dr. Halford Ross, by drastic hygienic measures, brought about a big fall in the death-rate of the Suez Canal zone there was an immediate corresponding fall in the birth-rate without any help from contraceptives." How can Mr. Pell possibly know that it was done "without any help from contraceptives"? In such a cosmopolitan place one would expect everybody to know something about contraceptives. But then Mr. Pell, who has lived eleven years in New Zealand, thinks the people there know nothing about contraceptives; while I, who have never been there, have received the most circumstantial details about the manufacture and wide sale of contraceptives in that country.

Mr. Pell talks about "the fall of the birth-rate in France at the end of the eighteenth century, without any contraceptive propaganda and without the aid of any reliable contraceptives." Well, well; what mortal, except Mr. Pell, does not know the method adopted in the early days in France. Did he never hear of *coitus interruptus*? Robert Dale Owen visited France a hundred years ago, and described it all in his *Moral Physiology*. The Catholic Church has had exact means of information through the confessional, and entirely agrees with Owen. On page 444 of *The Declining Birth-rate* Monsignor Brown says: "The almost universal thing in France that all religious workers get up against is the *coitus interruptus*."

Mr. Pell says: "Let Mr. Kerr quote, if he can, a single statistical return from his clinics adequately analyzed, and showing that they have had the effect of reducing the average fertility of their clients below the average of those who use no contraceptives." Mr. Pell has me there, as the clinics have published no statistics. Both clinics are, however, in the charge of very honest and competent doctors, who gladly give information to any responsible person who cares to call and ask for it. I do not know the average fertility of those who use no contraceptives, and neither does Mr. Pell nor any other man. I know, however, that the people who go to the clinics are mainly drawn from the poorest class, who are to-day as fertile as ever; and that they consist almost entirely of young women in deadly fear of further pregnancies. By going to the clinics Mr. Pell can easily ascertain, if he has any confidence in human veracity, that the successes greatly outnumber the failures.

"But," says Mr. Pell, "the facts of organic evolution show that the degree of fertility has been graduated down to compensate the falling death-rate." Nobody doubts that; but biologists have always said that that was gradually brought about by natural selection. Great prolificness interferes with individual growth; consequently nature weeds out those who are more prolific than the needs of the species demand. An elephant obviously runs far fewer risks than a rabbit: it would therefore be a nuisance to an elephant to have the prolificness of rabbits. Natural selection takes many generations to work itself out, however; while Mr. Pell maintains that, without any aid from natural selection, a reduced death-rate is instantaneously followed by a reduced birth-rate. No biologist in the world agrees with him, and it is not likely that one will ever do so. R. B. KERR.

#### A CORRECTION.

SIR,—In my article on *Idealism* the first paragraph on page 598 commencing, at the second line, should read as follows:—

.....but in order to retain its hold upon the thinking minority a metaphysic is introduced as an auxiliary to theology. That metaphysic to-day is Idealism.....Any professor in any of our great conservative colleges and Universities who openly dissociated himself from it would be discriminated against. The reasons for this are manifest, for since Idealism does not threaten any vested interest, there is nothing in it calculated to alarm in the slightest the upholders of the present order of things.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

#### THE DISESTABLISHMENT QUESTION.

SIR,—I think the late Mr. Hyndman's political work was quite consistent with his Socialism that he advocated so ably for many years.

To disestablish the National Church it is first necessary to abolish the Monarchy; in this country the Crown and King get their power and authority from the Church, but Hyndman, appealing to all classes in his constituency, obviously did not make "Disestablishment" a test question in that he was logical as a Socialist who places Socialism in front of his reforms and leaves the question of Republicanism or Monarchism alone as a side issue and not of first-hand importance, especially at Election time and before all kinds of voters who more or less, perhaps unthinkingly, favour the Monarchy idea. The late Mr. Bradlaugh—of honoured memory—we know was a staunch Republican, and thus wrote and argued for disestablishment of the National Church which goes with the fall of the Monarchical system. THOS. MAY.

#### Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission.

Swansea has well upheld its reputation of being the wettest town in Wales during Mr. Whitehead's visit, and consequently some of his meetings have been spoiled, but those that could be held were well attended and satisfactory, the members of the Branch being both active and enthusiastic. Mr. Whitehead concludes his successful provincial tour and returns to London on September 29. He will continue to address outdoor meetings during October, his efforts being chiefly confined to North London.

Materialism is the science of all sciences, of all facts in nature, of the modes and operations of matter, of all demonstrated knowledge. Materialism means nature only, not nature and a God. Matter is force, physical and chemical. There is no God because there is no need for one. Tyndall said, "Nature is seen to do all things spontaneously, without the meddling of the Gods." Nothing exists but matter. Remove matter from the universe, and naught remains. Remove Gods, devils, souls and spirits, and all nature continues serenely eternal. All living organic beings are composed of materials, and subject to the inexorable law of nature.—*Otto Wettstein.*

#### 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, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit., "The New Era."

##### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain) : 3.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK BRANCH N.S.S. (Highbury Corner, Islington) : Every Friday at 8, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK.—11.15, a Lecture.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY.—Freethought lectures and debates every evening in Hyde Park. Speakers: Messrs. Baker, Beale, Brayton, Hyatt, Harris, Hart, Keeling, Knubley, Saphin, Shaller, Stephens, 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) : 4.30, Miss E. M. Vance, "Charles Bradlaugh: An Appreciation and a Refutation."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park) : Bradlaugh Sunday Demonstration, Speakers: Messrs. Keeling, Saphin, Corrigan, Baker, Shambrook, Hyatt, and others. Commence at 3 and continuous until 6.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.) : 7, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, "Charles Bradlaugh."

##### COUNTRY—INDOOR.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone Gate) : 6.30, Concert by "Arcadian" Orchestra and Local Artistes. (Silver collection.) At 3.30, Re-Union of Members, etc. Tea at 4.45.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Pendleton Town Hall, Broad Street, Pendleton) : Mr. Percy Ward, 3, "Has the Universe a God, and has Man a Soul?" 6.30, "Do the Dead Return?" (a £1,000 Challenge to Spiritualist Mediums.)

#### LEAGUE OF NATIONS UNION BRANCH

The First Meeting of the Season will be held at SOUTH PLACE INSTITUTE on TUESDAY, OCTOBER 7.

MR. C. DELISLE BURNS

will speak on the subject of the League of Nations, the League of Nations Union and the work of our Branch. Commence at 8 sharp. All are invited to come and bring their friends.

BOOKS FOR SALE.—*Freethinker*, 16 vols., Bound from 1881, Illustrated, including prosecuted and seized numbers, £3 10s.; *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, 4 vols., *Evolution of Man*, 2 vols., E. Haeckel, Illustrated (Keagan, Paul & Trench), £2; *Pagan Christs*, J. M. Robertson, 5s. 6d.; *Christianity and Mythology*, J. M. Robertson, 5s.; *A Short History of Christianity*, J. M. Robertson, 4s. 6d.; *Supernatural Religion*, E. Cassels, 5s.; *The Descent of Man*, C. Darwin, 4s. 6d.; *The Wonders of Life*, Large Edition, E. Haeckel, 3s. 6d.; *Matter and Life*, William Naismeth, 3s. 6d.; *The Supernatural: Its Origin, Nature, and Evolution*, 2 vols., John H. King, 5s. 6d.; *Man an Organic Community*, 2 vols., John H. King, 5s. 6d.; *The Meaning of Rationalism*, C. Watts, 2s. 6d.; *The Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, Lecky, 2s. 6d.; *A Modern Zoroastrian*, S. Laing, *Problems of the Future*, S. Laing, Large Editions, 5s. 6d.—Address Books, 18 Sandhurst Gardens, Belfast, Ireland.

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