

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions.

### The Reign of Credulity.

The subject of last week's "Views" appears to have attracted attention, although it is not quite a pleasant reflection that at this time of day the question of faith healing should do so. Perhaps it only emphasizes what we have so often stressed as to the skin-deep nature of our culture and our education, without that skin suggesting anything of a pachydermatous character. And one feels that this is so because many of our men of learning who know better will not speak out. They find that plain speech on anything connected with religion exposes them to all sorts of inconveniences, and in our Christian-soaked society the tradition of the social value of plain and honest speech has never been sufficiently stressed for it to become as operative as, say, that gambling debts must be paid before those contracted to a mere tradesman, or that to be without a religion is to place oneself on the border line of social respectability, if not completely outside it. As I said last week, the "cures" effected by professional evangelists such as Hickson are well known in medical practice, without the slightest suggestion of "divine help," and when the operator happens to be a poor devil trying to exploit the "faith" of the public—and getting the same percentage of cures—by some fakement or the other, doctors are not slow to rush into print and expose the pretensions of the quack. But let the same kind of quack turn up in connection with religion, and the mass of doctors remain curiously silent, or else struggle for a share of the limelight by jabbering the same kind of nonsense about the healing power of religious faith. So both parson and doctor join in the game of exploiting the ignorance of the general public. With an educated public things might be different. With a public as it is, the handicap is on the man who tries to speak the truth.

### Trading on Ignorance.

In view of what has just been said, it is the more pleasing to note that some medical men are finding the latest dose of spiritual healing, with its harking back to the atmosphere of primitive savagery, rather too much to stomach, and some mild attempts are made to let a little light in on the subject. Mr. Inman,

the Superintendent of Charing Cross Hospital, pointed out to the *Daily News* representative that if some of the cures which have taken place in hospitals had occurred in a church they would have been hailed as miracles. Mr. Inman might have added that they would have been proclaimed miracles had doctors been such shameless traffickers in human weakness and ignorance as are the clergy and these professional travelling evangelists. Mr. Inman gives one case of a woman who had been paralysed for seventeen years. She was bedridden and could not even feed herself. Two specialists in the hospital could find nothing organically wrong, and diagnosed the case as a form of nervous paralysis. By some means the doctors managed to implant faith in themselves, and in a day the woman walked about the hospital. In a fortnight the cure was complete. There was nothing of Jesus here, nothing of the "Divine healer," none of the mummery of the clergy preparing the patient, the laying on of hands, or any other tricks that belong to the savage medicine man. And the doctors did not advertise it. It was simply one of many similar cases, well understood and of common occurrence. Dr. Otto May, of Hampstead, also writes to the *Times* a letter on similar lines, instancing similar cases, and asking very mildly whether it is right to call these well-known cases matters of "spiritual healing"? Of course, it is not, but one wonders when the medical men of this country will play their part in exposing this gross fraud which a number of bishops and other clergy are at present imposing on an ignorant public. I ask again, wherein lies the difference between the game that is being played by these clergy and that which was played by so many men who have been arrested by the police and punished by the courts for trading on the ignorant credulity of their patients?

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### Faith and Fact.

The main body of the clergy are incorrigible. So long as anything promises even a temporary advertisement for the crumbling creed they will seize it and exploit it for all it is worth. But others in the Christian camp are more alive to the feeling of disgust that may be awakened among thoughtful men and women by such orgies of ignorance and credulity as these healing missions provide. Thus the *Church Times* points out there are serious dangers attending these healing missions. It says that the harm done by recent healing missions in Australia—in which, I believe, Hickson was the central figure—was extremely grave. Doctors are aware, it goes on, that if a healing mission is held in their locality some of their patients are almost certain to be healed. "This in itself proves nothing which is not already known. To say, for instance, that a cripple threw away his crutches and walked does not convey the same implications to a medical man as to a layman with no knowledge of pathology." Exactly. The doctor knows from the numerous cases that fall within his own practice, that there is nothing mystical or supernatural about such cures. There are thousands of

people suffering from imaginary complaints who may be cured at any time by any sufficient stimulus that can be brought to bear upon them. Doctors know this; most educated men and women know it. It may be that men of the type of Hickson do not know it, but it is certain that many of the clergy who wink at his practices know it. Of course, the cure is there. If a patient believes he cannot walk, and does not walk, he is cured the moment that paralyzing conviction is removed. But to say that this is due to the power of Jesus, or to the divine influence filtering through Hickson, is from the scientific point of view a lie. Yet large numbers deliberately circulate the lie because they believe it will profit their religious organization. Only the other day a man at Derby, who had not been able to speak for years, was knocked down by a motor-car, but was otherwise unhurt. When he was picked up, to the surprise of his friends he began to speak. He had recovered his voice—with the aid of a motor-car. In what respect does this differ from the power of Jesus via Hickson? And if the maker of the car advertised his cars as the make that causes the dumb to speak would he be acting any differently from the Hickson gang? We suggest that he does so and asks the bishops to issue their certificate with the car. Among good Christians they should have a ready sale. Protestants are fond of holding up the winking Madonnas of the mediæval Church to the scorn of present-day believers, and point to such things as illustrations of the lengths to which dishonest men will go when they believe it will advance the interests of the Church. May I ask, in all seriousness, how much is the exploitation of the ignorant in the present crusade better than the exploitation of the ignorant by mechanical dolls dressed up to represent the mother of God? It is the shameless dishonesty of the whole thing that almost sickens one. And yet if doctors would speak out as a body they could kill this sham very quickly. The *Church Times* thinks that the doctor should work in co-operation with the "spiritual healer." The fact that they do not is enough to show their opinion of the whole thing. But more than that is required. What is needed is for medical men to say plainly and publicly that these missions, blessed and fathered by the bishops of the Church are no better than a scandalous deception practised upon the ignorant and the sick.

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#### A Threat to Civilization.

They who take an interest in watching the direction of civilization and attempting to detect the nature of the forces that help or retard its development, would do well to consider carefully the significance of the phenomena with which I have been dealing. On the one side the existence of a large body of people whose ideas of natural causation are very little above those of a primitive savage. And on the other a body of men claiming to be educated, standing in positions of power and privilege, who are either fundamentally not better than these primitive-minded individuals, or who are morally not above exploiting them to their own ends; while many of those who do see the real nature of what is going on are afraid to risk their social standing, or comfort, or profit, by speaking the truth about the imposture that is being carried on. It is in this way that civilizations have been wrecked in the past, not merely the great civilizations that stand out prominently in human history, but many smaller centres of comparatively advanced culture. Lower ideas, backed by a sufficiency of force have over and over again meant the downfall of an advanced people. The widespread empire of Rome, with its culture, its freedom of thought, its laws, and its literature went down before the advance of the bar-

barism of Christianity. To-day our own culture is an island of not too great an extent, surrounded by an ocean of ignorance and superstition, of craft and duplicity. And all the knowledge of the few will not save that culture in the absence of other safeguards. It requires small intelligence to use the products of scientific thought; they can be utilised as well in the interests of barbarism as in the interests of civilization. The "great" war was proof of that. The mass of the people are not interested in bringing about their own ruin, but they are so much at the mercy of their established teachers that they may well do so. All the greater the duty of those who see the truth to express it. Civilization is created by the few, even though it is perpetuated by the many. It is the many who make it secure; it is the few who make it possible. The duty of the few is as imperative to-day as ever. And if the duty of the few is carried out they are to-day sufficiently numerous and sufficiently powerful to make their voices heard above the clamour of the knaves and fools who sense in human ignorance and suffering the condition of their own aggrandisement.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### The Anglo-Catholics and Persecution.

As long as the Christian Church remains orthodox, in the true historical sense, it must persecute heretics. The moment it becomes tolerant towards heterodox views it loses that unqualified exclusiveness attributed to it in the New Testament and claimed by it in all succeeding ages. The Christian religion is alone true, all others being false and fatally misleading, and it follows inevitably that it is the sacred duty of the only true religion to suppress all the false ones as quickly as possible. This duty the Church has always used all diligence in the attempt to discharge, and while there is considerable truth in the old saying that the blood of martyrs has always been the seed of the Church, yet it cannot be denied that there have been occasions not a few when persecution succeeded in achieving the object it had in view. Has it not often struck you as strange that Protestantism has never been able to establish itself in Spain? The only explanation is that the Spanish Inquisition, the official persecuting agency of the Church, did its nefarious work with remarkable thoroughness. The Albigenses in France were massacred wholesale and ceased to be.

The truth is, that the persecuting powers possessed and exercised by the Church in the past were of the most terrific order conceivable; but the persecuting spirit is as alive to-day as ever, especially in the Roman Church and the Catholic Party of the Anglican Church. In the Anglo-Catholic camp the fire of persecution is at present burning most violently against Dr. Barnes, the recently appointed and consecrated Bishop of Birmingham. Fortunately for the poor prelate, this is not a material fire which can destroy his body, but a metaphorical fire intended to irritate his feeling and make his life as Bishop of Birmingham a perfect misery. As is well known, Dr. Barnes is a Modernist, who denies the historicity of the early chapters of Genesis, and consequently throws overboard St. Paul's doctrine of the nature of salvation. It is not our present purpose either to eulogize or to condemn the Bishop of Birmingham on account of his views, though as a matter of fact we regard his science as bad and his theology as worse. But the point we wish to emphasize is that the Catholic is not the only party, nor perhaps the most

numerous, in the English Church, that being only one of several parties, it has no moral right to expect all the clergy of the Church to be of its way of thinking. The *Church Times*, the official organ of the Catholic party, expresses the view that "the faithful ought not to be silent with regard to the appalling heresy of the new occupant of the see of Birmingham." Without a doubt, within the diocese there are not a few Modernists and at least a sprinkling of Low Church evangelicals; but, according to the *Church Times*, the Bishop should be compelled to express no views other than those held by the Catholic party or to renounce his Orders. A correspondent in the issue of October 17 says:—

If he will not do this, the laity of Birmingham diocese should make him realize that to them as to (I venture to say) the greater body of the Church, he is but a bishop in name. Parents should refuse to allow their children to be presented to him for the Sacrament of Confirmation, and the Archbishop of the Province should be appealed to in order that the services of an ex-Colonial bishop might be obtained to give Confirmation to the children whose parents are repelled by the heresies of their diocesan.

I know that much is said and written about the comprehensiveness and elasticity of the Church of England, but I am inclined to believe that such tolerance as made it possible for this scientist to be consecrated to the office of a bishop in the Holy Catholic Church is really a form of cowardice, which places the sanctity of the Sacrament of Holy Order in grave peril.

Let the laity fight, if necessary, for the maintenance of the Faith once delivered to the Saints and no other.

This correspondent is a Catholic of the most rabid kind, who is either deliberately dishonest, or grossly ignorant of what the Anglican Church's theological position really is. According to the xxxix. Articles there are only two Sacraments ordained by Christ, while this correspondent speaks of ever so many Holy Sacraments. Confirmation is a Sacrament, and Holy Orders is another. But in his closing sentence he makes an egregious mistake. He alludes to "the sanctity of the Faith once delivered to the Saints," well knowing or culpably ignoring the fact that such a Faith has never existed at all. The Christian Faith never came down in its entirety as a revelation from heaven, as St. Paul contended, but is a purely human product, the growth and development of which covered many centuries of bitter strife and acrid controversies. This is one of the truisms of Church history now which no Christian scholar ever dreams of denying.

The *Church Times* has published several letters on the same lines as the one just quoted, and it has also devoted a number of leading articles to a hostile criticism of Dr. Barnes' appointment. In the latest of these in its issue of October 17 it encourages the Church people of the diocese of Birmingham to make their feelings known:—

Birmingham has loved its bishops, and has been trusted by them. Hardly in any diocese have the relations between chief pastor and people been so intimate and happy. No wonder, then, that they are amazed and silent. But they must not allow their silence to be misunderstood. If the Bishop has spoken plainly, and, from his point of view, with honest courage, they are bound to reply with equal candour. His words are plain in their implication. They cannot be misunderstood by the average man. Unusual opinions about such matters as the Fall of man leave many simple people unaffected. Such questions, they may feel, are abstract and remote, more a matter of speculation and of terminology than of vital religion. But when a man is kneeling before God's altar, and the words "pagan sacramentalism," or "magic formula" drift through his mind

—not as a statement of some anti-Christian Rationalist, but as part of his Bishop's first message from the cathedral pulpit—then the case is different. It is a direct temptation to disbelieve in something he has always held supremely sacred.

We commend the Birmingham Churchmen for their discreet silence, and express the sincere hope that they will not break it in response to the howlings of crazy extremists in the *Church Times*, who, if they were perfectly honest, would find their home in the Church of Rome. Being the sworn enemies of Protestantism they have no right to remain in a Protestant Church and enjoy its emoluments. They are in the Anglican Church as foreigners, and yet they do not hesitate to sit in judgment upon and openly persecute those members who have the courage to call themselves Protestants. We are not admirers of the Bishop of Birmingham; but we entirely disapprove of the cruel persecution meted out to him by a section of the narrow-minded Catholic party. Their conduct is mischievous in the extreme as well as ineffably silly. The quarrel is about things which are of no real importance to anybody. Theology is often called the first and greatest of all the sciences, but that is a radical mistake. Theology treats of the existence, character, and attributes of God; of the virgin birth and sacrificial death of Christ, and of salvation through faith in his name; but both God and Christ exist only as creatures of the human imagination with whom or which science has absolutely nothing to do, and concerning which all knowledge is positively impossible. Consequently, Catholics and Modernists are fighting, not for realities, but for figments of the fancy, which have no existence at all except as such. The chief difference between Catholics and Modernists is that the former believe much more than the latter and severely persecute them for the scantiness of their faith. To outsiders, the situation is extremely ludicrous, and they are highly amused as they contemplate it. The total absence of knowledge acts as a strong stimulus to religious controversy, for the higher powers, in whose name and for whose sake the dispute is carried on, never call either party to account for its views. Anglican Catholics *imagine* that they know far more than the Modernists do, and therefore talk down to them as inferiors. This is why they persecute the Bishop of Birmingham, and urge certain of his flock to do the same; but their assumed knowledge is a wholly imaginary possession, so that their persecution is simply the waste of physical and mental energy.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Dante's "Divine Comedy."

Your termes, your colours, and your figures,  
Keep them in store, till so ye be indite  
High style, as when that men to kings write.

—Chaucer.

King who hast reigned six hundred years.—Tennyson.

Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea.  
—Wordsworth.

By the general suffrage of the literary world Dante's place has been assigned among the three greatest masters of his art. Yet comparatively few people know intimately the writings of the greatest of the Italian poets. Thousands of books, in many languages, on Dante and "The Divine Comedy" have increased to such a point the difficulty of studying his works that, to the bewildered modern reader, tossed on the perilous waters of contradictory commentary and subjective criticism, little is left but to take shelter in the safe haven of conventional admiration.

What wonderful changes have taken place in Europe since the time of Dante. Poets have rushed, comet-like, across the literary horizon, lightened the darkness for a moment, then as rapidly departed. Their songs, their message, even their names, have been forgotten as the snows of yesteryear. Dramatists have provided fun and tragedy for the public of their time. Most of their names are lost to memory, and even their plays have ceased to attract. Time is merciless, and strews the poppy of oblivion over all but the worthiest. Dante is one of the select few. He has had but one superior during the centuries since his death, and that is William Shakespeare, the greatest name in the world's literature.

Of Dante's life but little is known. Even before his death he had come to be the subject of many flourishing legends. It is well nigh impossible to make out exactly what he did. So deep is this obscurity that his stature gains from the uncertainty an unreal proportion like that of a tall man in a mist. Dante Alighieri, "the voice of ten silent centuries," was born in Florence in the thirteenth century. He was of noble birth, and had a passion for knowledge. He learned all that the schools and Universities of his time could teach him "better than most," fought as a soldier, did service as a citizen, and became chief magistrate at Florence. While young he met Beatrice Portinari. She made a great figure in his life, and a greater in his immortal poem. He married another, "not happily." In some Guelph-Ghibelline strife he was expelled the city, and ate the bitter bread of banishment. Without a home, he turned to the world of imagination, and wrote *The Divine Comedy*, one of the most remarkable of all books, and died, not old, at the age of fifty-six.

Dante's masterpiece, *The Divine Comedy*, is of interest to Freethinkers. The three parts, "Hell," "Purgatory," and "Paradise," form an epitome of the Christianity of the Middle Ages, a very different thing from the invertebrate and decadent substitute which is to-day known, facetiously, as the Christian Religion. The poem was written in an age of Faith, and Dante was a firm believer. His uncompromising realism brings vividly before us the full extent of the credulity of those far-off days in which Paganism and Christianity were intermingled. However strange, however grotesque, may be the appearance which Dante undertakes to describe, he never shrinks from describing it. His similes appear the illustrations of a traveller. Dante even introduces the great classical writer, Virgil, as his guide to the Infernal Regions. He compares the precipice which led from one circle to another in Hell to the rock which fell into the Adige on the south of Trent. The place where heretics were confined in flaming tombs resembled the cemetery of Arles. He puts Francesca da Rimini, whom he had nursed on his knee as a child, among the damned, "imprisoned in the viewless winds, and blown about the pendant world." Count Ugolini is introduced among other sinners. His own loved Beatrice, the lode-star of his stormy life, continuously appears and reappears throughout the poem. Dante was all imagination, but he wrote like Hakluyt.

The power of Dante's genius carries everything before it. Even in translations his power is felt. Such transcendent originality of conception is alone rivalled by old Homer, and alone surpassed by our own Shakespeare. For his having adopted the popular superstition in all its extravagances we no more blame Dante than we criticise Homer because he uses the Pagan deities. None the less, *The Divine Comedy* is a reliable mirror by which we may view mediæval Christianity, a sure guide as to what men believed in the Ages of Faith.

There is an air of grief and sound of lamentation over all this lurid and unlovely conception of life. A monster sits in the seat of deity and rules a terror-stricken world. Dante shows us horrors on horror's head. He points to a series of hells, each more abominable than the last, round every species of petty offenders. He pictures in unforgettable language the torments of the lascivious, the unbaptized, the gluttons, the avaricious. Some are tossed in furious winds, some are lying in filth under a constant hailstorm, others are punished in burning tombs, whilst numbers are tormented in rivers of blood. Except in the writings of the neurotic Fathers of the Church and Christian theologians, few have ever had such ideas of filth and corruption. The tender human emotions of the man are almost strangled by this hideous theology, this gospel of corruption. The gloom of the Infernal Region tinges even the flowers of Paradise, and dims the glories of Heaven.

The Christian superstition, of which Dante sings with such imagination and such power, is now in the melting pot, and the conscience of the race is rising above its crudities and barbarities. It must be so as education spreads. The strength of priestcraft always lies in the ignorant, unthinking, and uninformed masses. In nine cases out of ten the Christian is a man who does not understand his own religion, who does not know what he himself believes or disbelieves, and has never given a single hour's study or thought to his own or any other faith. The Christian religion always battened upon ignorance, and its greatest strength is the tail-end of civilization. It represents the lowest culture in modern society.

All this matters little to *The Divine Comedy*. The daring genius, the artistry of the great genius of Italian literature can never stale, for there are few lines of Dante's great poem without those superb felicities of speech, which, like jewels, sparkle for ever and capture the imagination. His reputation has already outlasted empires, kingdoms, commonwealths. Nations degenerate, cities become desolate, great generals and statesmen fade into mere names, but the supreme glory of a great poet survives the centuries, and clothes an illustrious name with immortal glory. Transcendent genius has made the name of Dante ever illustrious, and his greatness is as secure as the everlasting hills; but the religion he sings of will, in a few generations, be as remote as the Paganism which preceded it.

MIMNERMUS.

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#### AN OLD GORDIAN KNOT.

Let man with man, let race with race, let age  
With age æonian linked in serried line,  
Scale the celestial station crystalline  
And with high God continual battle wage;  
Nay, let them pace in patient pilgrimage  
Toward that unknown mysterious hidden shrine  
Where dwells the very truth and life divine,  
If haply they may greet and kiss their liege.  
O whither, whither shall their steps be led?  
Upward or downward, on what paths of thought?—  
Have ye not seen the clouds that morning bred,  
Storming Olympus with fierce thunder fraught?  
Ere noon they went their way, and overhead  
The same clear web of limpid light was wrought.

—John Addington Symonds.

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Millions of animals in a drop of water. Who made them? "God" the preacher says. How? With his hands? Why does he make them? The church cannot answer. Is it not more reasonable to believe they simply evolved from the potencies of matter?—Otto Weltstein.

## The Victory of Materialism.

Has Science ever retreated? It is Catholicism which has always retreated before her, and will always be forced to retreat. Never does Science stop; step by step she wrests truth from error.....It makes one laugh to hear people assign a rôle to Science, forbid her to enter such and such a domain, predict to her that she shall go no further, and declare that at the end of the century she is already so weary that she abdicates! Oh! you little men of shallow or distorted brains, you politicians planning expedients, you dogmatics at bay, you authoritarians so obstinately clinging to ancient dreams, Science will pass you and sweep you all away like withered leaves.—Zola, Rome.

WE were reading the article on the late Anatole France in the *Times Literary Supplement*, October 16, and came across the following gem: "Driven from his native Eden into the inhospitable climate formed by the materialistic and despairing philosophy of the sixties and seventies." If such a senseless piece of verbiage can appear in our leading literary paper we need not be surprised at what we see in the daily Press. What was this Eden of belief from which we were driven? It was the teaching that mankind lay under a curse, because of the disobedience of Adam in eating some forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden several thousand years ago. In consequence of which we were all condemned, after death, to an eternity of torment; the author of the curse, however, relented so far as to send his own son as an expiatory sacrifice—to himself—that all who believed in him might be saved and spend the rest of eternity in singing psalms of adulation to the sacrificer of his innocent son. Any good father would have sacrificed himself if it was necessary, but God's ways are not as our ways, and a good thing too. Even then all were not saved; in fact, very few. For we were assured, with much emphasis, that the road to destruction was broad, easy of descent, and crowded with passengers; but of the path to heaven, we were told, narrow is the way and straight the gate, and few there be that enter in; and when we reflected that after a few million years of psalm-singing, hell itself might be welcomed as a relief, the outlook was distinctly pessimistic. Better annihilation's dreamless sleep, than eternal life in the grip of this tyrant of the skies.

Why has the religious world such a hatred of Materialism? As Huxley observed, they watch "the progress of Materialism in such fear and powerless anger as a savage feels when, during an eclipse, the great shadow creeps over the sun."

It is because Materialism affords no foothold for superstition. In all the operations of nature, the Materialist sees no vestige of the operations of the supernatural. At one stroke all the gods and devils, heavens and hells are swept to annihilation. Agnosticism does not deny the supernatural, it leaves the door open; therefore it is respectable. The daily newspapers, when they mention Materialism, always use a stereotyped set of words to describe it. It is "blank Materialism," or "blatant Materialism" or "despairing Materialism," or "the discarded Materialism of the eighteenth century." Surely they must have a card hanging in the office containing these *cliches* ready for use. But then it is so much easier to fix a label than to enter an argument upon the subject, and if you begin to argue about it you never know where you will find yourself at the end.

During the last quarter of a century, more has been discovered as to the nature and inner constitution of Matter than in all the ages that preceded. How does Materialism stand in the face of this immense advance in our knowledge? If we listen to the pulpit, or the Press we shall learn that these discoveries have

completely disposed of the Materialistic philosophy. That the indestructible Atoms of Democritus, adopted by the scientists of the last century, are discovered not to be indestructible at all; therefore the materialistic doctrine of the indestructibility of matter falls to the ground. And, further, that recent researches tend to show that matter is, in the ultimate analysis, composed of electrons. That, in fact, Matter has disappeared and left nothing but force behind. And we are informed by some preachers that this force is really "spiritual," and its author is God. We have heard of the "Great Architect"; we suppose it will have to be altered now to the "Great Distiller!" Anyhow, the Materialist is told that Matter has incontinently disappeared and his vocation as a Materialist has disappeared with it, therefore he had better come to church and kneel down along with grandfather and Uncle Tom, as Materialism really is dead this time, and not a mere pulpit invention.

But Materialism has been reported dead so many times. We have mourned over the body, we have heard the clergy read the burial service—omitting that piece about a glorious resurrection—only to find we had been cruelly hoaxed; that they had not buried the body at all, but a dummy fashioned out of their own imagination.

What are facts? It is true that the atom is not the single and indivisible unit it was thought to be. It is true that it is built up of electrons, or units of electricity. But the same methods that revealed this, also revealed the fact that electricity is not a fluid; it is matter; it is atomic. Professor Millikan, the distinguished physicist of the Ryerson Laboratory, who has the greater part of the credit for establishing these facts, tells us:—

The fourth discovery that I wish to mention is the discovery of the atomicity of electricity, the proof that the thing we call electricity is built up out of a definite number of specks of electricity, all exactly alike, and that what we call an electrical current consists simply in the journey along the conductor of these electrical specks, which we may call with perfect justice definite *material* bodies.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Ernest Rutherford, our own equally distinguished countryman, confirms this statement. In an address to the Royal Institution, on March 12, 1921, he said: "The fundamental basis of electricity, which has puzzled the world since the time of Leyden, has been established." Electricity, he declared, "was not fluid; it was atomic." That is, that when we send a telegraphic message, we are witnessing a rush of matter along a wire.

Sir Oliver Lodge, who speaks with authority upon electricity, gives the same testimony. Writing to Mr. Blatchford to suggest that he has been too hasty in discarding the material properties of matter, he says:

So far as I can judge, Matter is quite real, and the dissection of the Atom into electrical corpuscles is not a revolutionary change. The fundamental unit which we used to think was the atom of Matter, we now think to be the atom of Electricity. It is extraordinarily smaller and more active; it is more intimately associated with the Ether; it is more obviously tractable as source of light and radiation; its vibrations and motions are of incredible rapidity. But it seems to me just as material—or perhaps one should rather say physical—as Matter was. Even the Ether of Space—that fundamental entity, out of which everything appears to be made, and of which all material bodies seem to consist—that, too, is as physical as anything else, and has definite metrical properties which can be ascertained by experiment.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Professor R. A. Millikan. *Lecture to the American Institute of Engineers. English Mechanic*, October 19, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> Cited by Mr. Blatchford. *Sunday Chronicle*. April 23, 1922.

Thus, when we come down to the primordial basis of the universe we are still in the presence of Matter. Force and Matter, one and indivisible, is the first and last word of science. Materialism triumphs all along the line.

W. MANN.

## The Church in a Fix.

As long as I can remember the Church of England, as by law established, has been in a bad way, and to-day it seems almost to have reached the limit of intellectual and moral collapse. Many of the fine old churches in various parts of London, which years ago had a fairly regular and numerous congregation, are now almost entirely deserted. The clergy have been at their wits end to offer some sort of explanation of this terrible falling off in the number of their members, but all their excuses merely amount to this most obvious fact, that the rising generation have no use for the Church, nor its teachings, and are more interested in sport and amusements of various kinds than in repeating responses, or singing hymns to the glory of the Lord.

No doubt some earnest Christians have given up attending Church because, as Miss G. N. Highley pointed out at the Church Congress, they found that the clergy often preached doctrines they were not prepared to practise, and, as she said quite truly, that it was no good preaching advanced ethical teachings and then sending "some of the congregation back to homes where ordinary decency and morality were all but impossible." In other words, the clergy, on the whole, were not interested in social problems; most of them were crusted old Tories, and they were the last persons in the world to tackle such problems from a really fundamental point of view.

Another speaker at the Conference (Mr. H. V. Elwin) told the Bishops the unpleasant fact "that the Church appeared to the youth of to-day to be run by the middle-aged, for the middle-aged."

He might have gone farther and said that the Church was run by elderly clergy for the spiritual benefit of elderly and weak-minded persons. I know of one Church in South London that used to be very popular when I was a youth, where the late vicar held on to his post until he was about eighty-five years of age and his curate a couple of years younger, and between them they preached the church empty—or at least until the congregation consisted of the "two or three that gathered together in my name" that we heard so much of in the days of our youth. All this is true, and the clergy are therefore driven to the expedient of adopting any sensational method for attracting an audience, and only a week or two ago the vicar of a Church in the Old Kent Road invited a notorious costermonger named Duckworth to read one of the Lessons in the Church, and have by his side his two boys in coster costume "with pearlies" as an additional attraction. In fact, it only required that Mr. Duckworth should have sung Albert Chevalier's well-known song, "Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road," to have made this coster turn complete. And this is only one case in many. But serious as these indictments are from a Christian point of view, they are as nothing compared with the intellectual and moral confusion that exists in the Church respecting the teachings that are now being given in various churches in London and the provinces. Indeed, to-day *the Church is without a definite creed*. Two or three prominent Bishops—Bishop Barnes, of Birmingham, Bishop Gore and the Bishop of Woolwich (Dr. Hough), are openly proclaiming their disbelief in the Story of the Fall of Man as

founded by the Church upon certain statements in Genesis, on the ground that such teaching is opposed to Science which declares that man has come up from lower animal forms through a long series of changes; but though each of these learned Bishops denies the doctrine of the fall they nevertheless cling tenaciously to the belief in the doctrine of the atonement, which has no *raison d'être* apart from the Fall and which is alike opposed to the teachings of science and common sense. Further, Bishop Barnes and other dignitaries of the Church disbelieve in the stories of the Flood, and the Confusion of Tongues at the Tower of Babel, stories which were believed in most implicitly by Christians a decade ago, and are still believed in by many simple-minded Christians who have not yet outgrown their swaddling clothes. Dr. Barnes and Dr. Hough, moreover, have nothing but contempt for the anthropomorphic conception of God as given in Genesis, and though they still believe in "God the Father" of the Old Testament they do not identify him with the Old Jahveh (Jehovah) of the early books of the Pentateuch. They are still logically bound to believe in a "God the Father" of some sort, because they must believe in "God the Son" (Jesus), who they allege died on the Cross to blot out the sins of mankind; and they must also believe in the mysterious being called God the Holy Ghost, or what the late Dr. Pankhurst described as "the Foggy member of the Trinity," because it is absolutely essential that their God must be three persons in one God. In other words, they are quite prepared to throw over any portion of the Old Testament that does not fit in with their new conception of evolution as applied to religious beliefs. But all this leads inevitably to confusion and chaos in the Church, and to the painful disturbance of the beliefs of the unsophisticated and credulous members of their congregation.

Some of the learned clergy have gone so far as to call in question the alleged truth of the Virgin Birth; others are in doubt about the story of the Resurrection, and others, again, throw doubt upon the alleged miracles of Jesus. Amid all this shattering of old beliefs, how can any reasonable person expect anything approaching *discipline* among the clergy. They cannot, and therefore no one should be surprised to learn that the clergy are gradually breaking the fetters that have bound them for ages, and asserting their right to teach what they believe according to their reason and their conscience. But where will this lead? Who can say? Dr. Barnes on taking up the bishopric of Birmingham said, "The process of adjusting ourselves to the new conditions of the universe was bound to take time, but as a Church we had a valued tradition of intellectual freedom. Our scholars were setting the old Faith of the Church in its new environment. When the process was completed we should again have the confidence which marked the great Anglican divines of the seventeenth century."

I certainly doubt the learned Bishop's conclusion. It will undoubtedly take many years to convince old-fashioned Christians of the truth of the doctrine of evolution. Meanwhile, all the old beliefs of the Christian Faith will have to be given up, and out of the wreck of long-cherished beliefs, little or nothing of the old Faith, in my judgment, will remain, but the name.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Are you in earnest? Seize this very minute!  
What you can do, or dream you can, begin it!  
Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.  
Only engage, and then the mind grows heated.  
Begin, and then the work will be completed.

—Goethe.

## The Way of the World.

### MISLEADING PAGEANTS.

The mistake of these pageants, romances and what not, is that they tend to create the impression that past ages were jollier than this, and that people who are dead were more interesting than those who are not.

For instance, you would be rude if I suggested that I was a picturesque and romantic figure. But depend upon it, in 2,300 A.D. a pageant programme will include: Part 35, Early twentieth century, Episode 10: "A journalist goes to work," and 5,000 spectators will say: "How picturesque life was in the good old days." .....Look at it thus, and you'll see that people in the Middle Ages felt just as fed up with a darned dull life as you do.—*Daily Herald*.

### TENNYSON'S DOUBTS AND FEARS.

Tennyson, as he aged, became in secret more morbidly afraid of personal annihilation and publicly more loud-voiced in his conviction of survival. For belief in the survival of the spiritual, as the only real and true essence in a world of phenomenal matter, was not enough to satisfy him; he demanded a retention of the ego. Of this he could not convince himself by argument, nor did science come to his aid.

Once, listening to the choristers in the Abbey, whither he was brought at last to rest, Tennyson said, "It is beautiful, but what empty and awful mockery if there were no God." On the fields of Flanders there was no God, and the mockery and squalor of it all was relieved by no white-robed choristers, voicing a consolatory strain.

With a grieved stoicism that scarcely rings true, he wrote: "We must bear or we must die. It is easier perhaps to die; but infinitely less noble." To him, if truth be told, it was neither easy nor noble. It was unthinkable.—*Tennyson*, "*Hugh l'Anson Fausset*."

### PROVIDENCE THE LAST RESORT.

The conduct of the Mohammedan and Western nations on the subject of contagious plague illustrates the two extremes of error on the nature of God's moral government of the world. The Turk changes providence into fatalism; the Christian relies upon it—when he has nothing else to rely on. He does not practically rely upon it at all.—*Coleridge's "Table Talk"*.

### THE MISSIONARY AS A PIONEER.

First the missionary, then the gun-boat, then the land-grabbing—this is the procession of events in the Chinese mind.—*George Lynch*, "*The War of the Civilizations*."

### THE RIGHT NONSENSE, AND THE WRONG.

There is a story that as an examiner at Cambridge he (Sidgwick) found in the candidate's paper some mysterious Hegelian passages, and he observed to a brother examiner: "I can see that this is nonsense, but is it the right kind of nonsense?"—*John Morley*, "*Recollections*."

### HOW THE CHURCHES HELPED!

When Lord Shaftesbury was struggling to get laws passed to prevent children and women from being slowly murdered by factory-owners, he put it on record that he had received no help from official Christians.

He was an official Christian himself. He wanted always to put the Churches in the best possible light. But he was forced to write, with a feeling of pained bewilderment, that from the very people who ought most to have helped him he received no help at all.—*Daily Herald*.

[Christians claim all the credit for the reforms now.]

## Acid Drops.

One sometimes wonders whether it will ever happen that Christians will be perfectly honest where their religion and their religious interests are concerned. Probably this will only happen when there is no real belief in Christianity left, and when social conditions are such that it no longer pays people to pretend they believe it. Here are a couple of cases that may illustrate what we have said. The first is from the *Daily Telegraph*, reporting a case of supposed demoniac possession in Italy. There was no need for the paper to report the case, still less to comment on it, but after describing it, the writer goes on to say that nearly all the Saints of the Catholic Church believed in demoniac possession, and it lets it go at that. But why did he not point out that Jesus Christ also believed in people being possessed of devils, and that appears to be the only theory of disease he knew. It is quite clear that the D.T. did not mention the Gospel Jesus as the great teacher of the reality of demoniac possession because that might have suggested he was no better informed on this point than ignoramuses of the Church or the uneducated peasantry of Christian Italy.

The second illustration is from the *Daily Herald*. In a special paragraph dealing with the use made of the alleged motto of the Russian Government: "Religion is the Opium of the People," it says that those who use it do not know that the phrase was first used by Charles Kingsley, who said that people used the Bible "as if it were an opium dose for keeping beasts of burden patient," and, it adds, "in that sense the phrase is used in Russia." This is doubly incorrect. In the first place the wording and the meaning of the two sentences differ. The Bible is not religion, even though it may be the book of a religion. Kingsley meant exactly what he said, and so did Marx, the author of the expression. And the Russian Government means what it says also. Whatever the Bolshevik rulers may be they are not fools. Neither their friends nor their enemies accuse them of being imbeciles. And when they say religion is the opium of the people they mean religion—the belief in God, the soul, and in the supernatural generally, not the Bible. And we fancy the editor of the *Daily Herald* knows this as well as we do. But the *Herald* is a daily newspaper, and it has large numbers of Christian readers, these Christian readers have votes and it does not pay in this country to be honest where Christianity is concerned. Quite seriously we have neither met nor read of a form of religious belief that has been responsible for so much intellectual crookedness as has Christianity.

Canon Lewis Donaldson has been playing the rôle of the fat boy of *Pickwick Papers*, and has been trying to make our flesh creep. In a luncheon hour address at Christ Church, Westminster, recently, he declared that civilization was doomed because it was anti-Christian. We are reminded of Clifford's remark, that Christianity destroyed two civilizations, and almost destroyed a third. Certainly we agree with the canon that the spirits of Christianity and civilization are incompatible, and that one or the other must be destroyed. But happily common-sense and scientific knowledge are to-day sufficiently powerful to save our civilization from suffering the fate that has overtaken so many other civilizations with which Christianity has come in contact. Christianity helped destroy the old Roman civilization, and the ancient civilizations of South America, and the primitive civilizations of all the African people with whom it came into contact. And to-day it is bitterly opposed to the civilization which has grown up among the white races—a civilization which, although it is permeated with Christian superstition and Christian prejudice, is essentially anti-Christian (as the canon admits), in all its important details. Christianity has no use for science, philosophy, art, and literature; it has no concern with social attempts to make this world a happier place for men, women, and children to live in; it has even opposed

the purely materialistic achievements of Western civilization, such as the use of the printing press, and the application of scientific knowledge to industry. Always it has been looking backwards, or looking heavenwards, except during the many hectic periods when Christians have been busily engaged in murdering one another for the greater glory of God. We heartily agree that civilization is anti-Christian; although we do not share the canon's gloomy fears.

Canon Donaldson made one amazing claim for Christianity, which caused us to wonder whether we saw aright when we read the report of his address. He declared that the main revelation of the war was the failure of the moral forces of the world to stand for that international loyalty which was involved in Christ. It was He who had broken down the partitions between nations and made Jew and Gentile one and stood for a patriotism which was deeper and nobler than mere love of country! We almost suspect that the reverend gentleman was having what he considered to be a little joke at the expense of his congregation when he uttered these remarks. Canon Donaldson cannot be ignorant of history, and he must be perfectly aware that what he said is undiluted nonsense. If there is one outstanding fact about Christianity it is that it has been the most fruitful cause of dissension and bitter warfare that the world has ever known. Its whole history is a dreadful tale of factious quarrelling that continually breaks into open war; of violence and torture, applied by various sects of Christians to other sects, and by practically every sect to non-believers; of long drawn-out religious wars, massacres, and persecutions. Why, one has but to look across the Irish Sea to-day, to see how Christianity has divided men, whom geographic and economic facts should make one community, into warring opponents. The canon, we fear, was deliberately stating what he knew to be a downright lie when he said that Christ had broken down the partition between nations.

One reason given at a Dunstable Church Conference for the need of church inventories was that a hard-up vicar at Eaton Bray not only sold the church organ, but the oak pews and the church harmonium, and the parishioners had to collect enough money to buy the harmonium back again. The vicar should have trusted God to clothe him like the lilies of the field, and to feed him as he does the birds of the air. Or if his faith was not sufficiently strong for this, he should at least have raised money in a more respectable manner.

The Rev. W. H. Badger, of Ambrosden, is "only a humble country vicar." At least, he says he is, and he ought to know. He told his colleagues at Oxford that he would not call himself a worm, because if you call yourself a worm you become one, and he did not want to become a worm if he could help it. Such humility would bring tears to the eyes of the late lamented Uriah Heep. This declaration of Christian meekness seems to have been a prelude to the unloading of some anti-Bolshevik propaganda, for the vermiform gentleman proceeded to inform his audience that "every day in my own family prayers, and every Sunday in my Church, I pray that God may deliver the Russian people from Bolshevism." Even a worm will turn, and one can understand the reverend gentleman's lachrymose tendencies when he regards his out-of-work brethren in Russia. A Government which encourages Atheism! Lamentable. Come! let us weep together!

In a church outside Weston-super-Mare, in the harvest festival, sheaves of former years, carefully stored away, have reappeared for this year's garnishment of the church. We wonder what the Deity will think of this frugality. It reminds one of the Chinese habit of burning paper money, houses, etc., on the death of a wealthy man, in a make-pretence survival of the old custom of destroying real property during the funeral

ceremonies. It is here, as in China, a sure sign of a dying religion, that these old and once tremendously important rituals should now be little more than empty ceremonies, to be performed as cheaply and easily as possible.

The Rev. T. Thistle, who has a vicarate in the New Forest, and is a member of the local District Council, has made a grave discovery. He told his fellow councillors recently, that "the other day he saw three men engaged in putting kerbs in Eling Lane. Therefore he wished to report it." According to the Press account these grave words raised a laugh. The reverend gentleman admitted that he was surprised to see the labourers at work. As one who has successfully dodged work himself, he should be an authority on the subject. But as a piece of sheer impertinence this rebuke to labourers for being work-shy (whether the allegation be true or not), by a member of the most parasitical of all professions, takes a good deal of beating.

We are obliged to a correspondent for the following from *Reynold's Newspaper* :—

The Revivalist scenes connected with the faith-healing demonstrations at Bradford are productive of an immense amount of harm. Cruel disappointment necessarily awaits those who expect to be cured of cancer and all sorts of incurable diseases. There may be cases where a temporary, or (extremely rarely) even a permanent cure, is recorded for some trouble which has its origin in a nervous affection. But the good is negligible compared with the immense amount of harm done by working crowds of people up into a state of extreme hysteria. That this sort of thing should take place with the sanction and approval of the Church of England is a grave reflection on the common sense of those responsible.

This is strictly accurate, but we would draw the attention of the Editor of *Reynold's* to the fact that there is not a pennyworth of difference in the quality of the Hickson healing mission and the healing mission of Our Lady of Lourdes, which has the official sanction of the Church of Rome. Dr. Boris Sidis once spoke of the travelling evangelist as little better than a criminal, and, if we use that term without regard to the legal view of it, it appears to us to be fairly correct. Church of Rome and Church of England Bishop, and peripatetic evangelist, they are all alike fattening upon the ignorance and credulity of the public. But there never was a Christian Church that cared about that so long as it stood itself to gain from the outcome.

We commend the Rev. W. S. Scott, of Hampstead, for giving his fellow Christians a piece of common-sense advice, which the more gloomy-minded of them have long needed. People without a taste for the drama are no better Christians because of the fact, he observed. A puritanical scheme of life which ruled out the drama was faulty and inadequate, he added. Opposition to the drama is one of the many minor ways in which Christianity has tended to retard moral and intellectual progress. The drama at its best not only amuses people—that alone would amply justify it in a world not rendered too genial by puritanical humbugs—; it also educates them, teaches moral lessons in a forceful way, and holds up high ideals. Yet from the days of the Elizabethan drama onwards, organized religion has either openly opposed what it has recognized as its great rival in the realm of ethical instruction, or at the best has mildly patronized it. Even to-day the stricter puritan sects are still in the habit of referring to the theatre as something morally reprehensible. Belfort Bax in his *Reminiscences*, for example, tells of a lady some years ago, who was in the habit of visiting the theatre. Otherwise she was a perfectly "good-living" person, it appears. Entering the theatre one evening, she saw ahead of her in flaming letters, "To the Pit"; and realizing suddenly where her love of pleasure was taking her, turned back, and thereafter was (we presume) a saved if somewhat melancholy soul.



## Our Sustentation Fund.

We have said very little about this Fund since its opening on October 5. The hurried General Election turned many people's attention in other directions, and, as a consequence, the Fund has not mounted up with the same rapidity as on previous occasions. Now that the elections are over, we shall hope to see the Fund cleared out of the way in the course of the next few weeks. Frankly, it is not a part of the paper that we look at with very great pleasure. It is, of course, gratifying to see the steadiness of the support given to the paper by its friends, and the terms of affection in which they refer to it. All the same, one would like to see this annual appeal unnecessary. There would still be many opportunities for friends to show their interest—monetary and otherwise—in the grand old Cause.

Mr. John Harrison, in enclosing a cheque, says, "The *Freethinker* must not be allowed to sink." We do not think there is any likelihood of that occurring. After battling as it has done for over forty years and living through the war period, there is small chance of it sinking now. But we should like to see it floating in smoother waters. Our valued contributor, Mr. C. Clayton Dove, sends cheque and regrets that the Fund is not so well supported this year as it was last. We think the state of trade has something to do with this, and many who sent earlier last year, have, we know, only delayed sending.

Mr. J. S. Mann writes thanking us for the "great help I receive from your wonderful little paper. I came across it a few years ago, and have enjoyed it ever since." R. Bell writes as one of the unemployed, but who cannot resist doing his "bit." Mr. R. Edmundson says, "The enclosed from an almost new reader is but a small token of the pleasure and instruction I have derived from your pages during the past two years. Its sanity of outlook and fearlessness of expression is a weekly tonic. The better world of the future will owe much to work such as yours." Mr. J. Seddon suggests printing a subscription form which *Freethinkers* could use or hand to their friends. The suggestion might be a very useful one under certain circumstances, but we do not think that the bulk of *Freethinker* supporters need more than the reminder given in the usual way when the time comes for them to play their part in our campaign.

An old and valued reader, who, judging from his list, appears to have the whole of the family with him, writes: "By your remarks I glean that you have a scheme, or schemes, to relieve you of the financial worries of the *Freethinker*. I sincerely hope that one of these will be successful, and take the burden off your shoulders. I shall endeavour to do what I can towards same, if it is only a small share."

The scheme is not ours, but that of several friends who are interested in the future of the paper. When this Fund is out of the way, the way will be cleared for these friends seeing what can be done, and when the details of the scheme are completed readers of the *Freethinker* will be informed of what is contemplated, and their co-operation invited. Mr. Rudd, we know, is always to be counted on to do what he can.

Finally, I must note before closing the many letters received from those who would like to send, but do not find themselves able to do so. I appreciate these more than I can easily say. It is an indication of the hold the *Freethinker* has upon its readers, and while that is there one feels that one can go ahead with renewed courage and confidence.

Previously acknowledged: £250 18s. R. B. Harrison, 5s.; "Anno Domini," 10s.; J. W. Hill, 10s.; Greta, 2s. 9d.; J. Seddon, 5s.; J. Foote, £1; F. Lovie, 3s.; V. H. Smith, £2; "Three Highland Readers," 8s.; W. P. Kernot, £1 1s.; D. C. Drummond, £1; Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Rosetti, 5s.; T. H. How, 10s.; C. C. Dove, £5 5s.; J. Harrison, £1 1s.; Miss D. W. Coleman, £1; A. W. Coleman, £3; J. T. Shank, 5s.; J. Brodie, 2s. 6d.; W. E. Hickman, 10s.; "In Memory of Sir Hiram Maxim," £5; R. Bell, 5s.; A. M. Wright, 5s.; Mrs. Gray, 2s. 6d.; Mrs. Redhead, 2s. 6d.; R. Edmundson, 10s.; W. P. Rudd, £1 1s.; Mrs. N. Rudd, £1 1s.; C. Rudd, £1 1s.; B. J. Rudd, 5s.; S. Holman, 5s.; Miss E. L. Wace, 5s.; W. E. Pugh, £2 2s.; W. Nelson, £2 2s.; F. MacClachlan, £1; R. Storey, 10s.; R. Speirs, 6s. 6d.; T. Roberts, 2s.

Per Miss Vance: A. Goodman, £1; E. Wilson, 10s. Total, £288 6s. 9d.

*Corrections.*—H. G. Bell, in last week's list, should have read H. Boll and G. Boll. W. P. Kernot should have read £1 1s.

We shall be obliged if subscribers will point out any errors that appear in the above list of acknowledgments.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## 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.**

GRETA.—We can quite believe that Belfast is one of those places where freedom of expression might be better recognized than it is. But the same is true of most other places. Our experience of Belfast was a very pleasant one, and we hope to renew acquaintance one of these days. Thanks for cuttings.

T. HURST.—We are obliged for the replies of your questions to candidates concerning the Blasphemy Laws, but the publication of your letter advising *Freethinkers* would be too late to be of service to voters.

A. T. GILLIAM.—We do not suppose that a reasoned estimate of Shelley would be affected by anything said by writers of the calibre of the late Marie Corelli.

H. BOLL.—Sorry we omitted from last week's list the subscription of Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Redhead. They are acknowledged this week. Thanks for corrections.

T. DUNBAR.—Thanks for warning, but we feel sure the mistake is quite an innocent one. We are making enquiries.

H. MARTIN.—The explanation is that your informant is a liar. Mr. Cohen has been consulted by many people during recent years with regard to the drawing up of their wills, and he has given them the benefit of whatever advice he was able to offer. But he has neither asked nor received payment for any such service, not even to the extent of any out-of-pocket expenses to which he may have been put.

JOSHUA PITTS.—We are obliged to you for the trouble you take to put before us the complaint from which you are suffering, but we are not in need of case illustrations. We can assure you that religious stupidity is sufficiently plentiful in London to obviate the necessity of our travelling to Beclishill for examples. Still, your case is interesting enough, and we have noted for illustrative material in the future.

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.

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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.

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

Last Sunday's meeting at the Parkhurst Theatre was a surprise to all concerned. The weather was wretched enough to tempt anyone to stay by the fireside, and as a counter attraction to a Freethought meeting there were large electioneering meetings in all directions. But when Mr. Cohen came upon the platform the large hall was quite three parts full, and many more came in soon after the lecture commenced. Mr. McLaren occupied the chair, and the lecture itself was punctuated throughout with laughter and applause. A number of questions followed the close of the address, and there seems every reason for following up this opening so soon as it can be done. The advertising of the meeting had been under the direction of Miss Vance, and it had been thoroughly well done. Mr. Mason, the secretary of the Finsbury Park Branch, with his helpers, had also worked well to advertise the meeting, and deserved the success that was attained. It was a live meeting from beginning to end.

A very pleasant feature of the meeting was the reunion of many old friends. Among these may be noted Mr. John Foot, looking as hale and hearty as ever; Mr. W. Mann, who is now resident in London; and that old veteran, Mr. E. Wilson, whose enthusiasm for the Cause increases if possible with the advance of years. Thanks in the conduct of the business part of the meeting are also due to a number of ladies: Mrs. Downing, Miss Dawson and Miss Fansett, Mrs. Mason and Mrs. Ratcliffe, and Messrs. Mason, Judge, Ratcliffe, and Samuels. All worked with a will, and all appeared satisfied with the result of their labours. It is an experience that should be repeated elsewhere, and if as well organized is certain to meet with the same success.

Mr. Whitehead, whose capacity for work is almost inexhaustible, held no less than seven meetings last week, and then took a busman's holiday by attending the Parkhurst Theatre, as a listener, by way of a change. In the conduct of these meetings he was well supported by Mr. Mason, who took the chair at each meeting, besides selling and distributing literature. He should be well backed by North London Freethinkers.

The General Election is now over, and it has all been done in too short a time for us to do more than call the attention of Freethinkers to what they could do to keep the questions in which we are interested to the front. But a number of candidates have been questioned, and some of their replies show the need to attend to their education as rapidly as possible. There is deplorable ignorance among them as to the meaning of the Blasphemy Laws, as well as to the scope of Secular education. The latter does not, of course, mean putting anything new into the schools; it means only leaving something out—religious instruction—and so eliminating a sectarian teaching and an element of obstruction. The injustice of establishing the religious opinions of a section, and compelling all to pay for it whether they agree with the religion or not should be plain to anyone of common sense. That is the political aspect, but we think the moral aspect of the unfair advantage taken of the

child's helplessness is even more striking to anyone who is not a fanatical sectarian or a vote-catching politician.

On the question of the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws there crops up the usual assumption that they prevent the use of coarse language. They do nothing of the kind. Sir H. Nield replied to the question put him, that he did not think "with the existence of Socialist Sunday-schools poisoning the minds of children it is a suitable time to relax any safeguard. Putting on one side the question of the character of the Socialist Sunday-schools, although, from our point of view, the worst poison that could be injected into the mind of any child is the poison of Christianity, it is plain that Sir H. Nield is terribly ignorant of what the Blasphemy Laws do. They cannot prevent anyone teaching children that Christianity is a lie or an imposture. They protect children against being taught that Christianity is untrue no more than they protect adults from the same kind of instruction. A Scottish minister recently suggested that every candidate for Parliament ought to pass an examination in the Bible. If they had to pass an examination in elementary constitutional law we are afraid that Sir H. Nield would fail to qualify.

Dr. Addison promised his support to a Bill for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, but Sir William Bull, his opponent, indignantly refused to vote for such a measure, and was astonished that such a question should be asked. We did not know that Sir William Bull's reputation as a bigot was so well established as to cause astonishment that anyone should expect him to vote in an enlightened manner. Another candidate for the same constituency, Mr. Ernest Wetton (Liberal), said he would decidedly oppose the alteration of such a necessary and stringent Act. Mr. Wetton is probably not aware that his leader, Mr. Asquith, believes in the alteration of the Act as being quite unnecessary and out of date. If he had known this he would probably have answered differently. The Rev. Groundwater, candidate for a Banffshire constituency, answered also in the negative. Naturally the reverend gentleman, seeing that his Deity has always had the protection of the policeman, is rather fearful of what might happen if God Almighty were left to look after himself. All these replies, with others, enforce the moral that candidates need educating, and one of the best ways of doing this is to make as many Freethinkers as possible.

And once more we beg to point out that there is no better way of doing this than by increasing the number of readers of the *Freethinker*. The *Freethinker* is the only organ of fighting Freethought in this country, and the putting on of a hundred new readers in a single town would exert an enormous propagandist influence, to say nothing of its enabling us to get into touch with Freethinkers when action is required. Of course, getting these new readers means a little work, probably a little inconvenience, but it is the best of all contributions that one can make to the Cause. We beg of all our readers to give their hearts and minds to this task for the next six months or so, and then note the result. The *Freethinker* has been showing a rising tendency of late, and we want to see that upward movement accentuated. Like everyone else we have felt the effects of bad trade, but we hope to overcome that in time. And, after all, the needs of a paper such as the *Freethinker* are not great. If each one of our readers did for the paper what he or she would do for a church or chapel if they belonged to it, we should find ourselves in clover.

Mr. A. B. Moss, with his usual zeal for the Cause, took care to attend the meetings of candidates in order to put questions on the subject of the Blasphemy Laws and Secular Education. Unfortunately the uproar at the Liberal meeting prevented any questions being put. The Labour candidate, Mr. Hugh Dalton, carefully hedged on the blasphemy question by saying he was in favour of their revision, but not of their repeal. He would have made quite a nice inquisitor pleading for the molten

lead to be just a trifle cooler before it was poured down the victim's throat. On the question of Secular education he wanted classes for Catholics, Protestants, and apparently anyone else who commanded votes. We should say that the less Parliament sees of obliging gentlemen of this type the better.

To-night at the St. Pancras Reform Club a particularly interesting debate will take place on the question: "Are the Working Classes Eugenically Equal to the Upper Classes?" The speakers are, the Editor of the *New Generation*, Mr. R. B. Kerr, who affirms, and Mrs. C. B. S. Hodson, F.L.S., sometime tutor of Lady Margaret Hall, Cambridge, who opposes. Will North Londoners please note and let us have a "Full House"?

In connection with Mr. Cohen's proposed visit to Hull a meeting of Freethinkers will be held in No. 5 Room, Co-operative Institute, Albion Street, at 7 p.m.

## Bishop Barnes.

IN Kazan during the Russian famine I saw a little boy of twelve on the footpath, nursing the head of his little brother of ten who had died of hunger; when I returned the other, too, had sunk to death. I have seen at one moment a young soldier, handsome, joyous, full of life; at the next a mangled and shattered corpse. I have seen whole countrysides devastated, and famine, and hopeless struggle, and death in many shapes looming before the vision of the inhabitants. These sights were indeed terrible, but they come all within the ambit of that strange and motley campaign in which man has from the first fought his way upward.

But I have seen sights that more than these have made me sad:—

Professor Dawes-Hicks or Bosanquet going to the lecture room;

Dean Inge or Canon Barnes in the pulpit.

Ah, there was something that was not within the ambit of man's necessary campaign; there was something that could not be measured by the toll of energy, suffering, mortal pain; there was the deformation of man's sole weapon of reason, the masking of the beam of light by which alone his intellect may hope to pierce the fog in which he moves.

Even of these people I trust I may write without personal bitterness, for in their own way of life they may possess what they believe to be the virtues of good citizenship; they may pay their taxes cheerfully, repeat the Athanasian Creed without ever asking what it means; they may be even kind to children and fond of animals.

Yet I regard them—taking them as types—as the chief enemies of man, and by virtue of their positions of influence and control the wickedest agents in retarding the progress of the world.

Let us in earnest come to grips with these.

I once heard Canon Barnes, as he was then, in Oxford, for, yes, it is true I have been in that great University and have met the stagnant brains and have survived the potted air in which they are conserved.

The Canon spoke in an earnest, protesting sort of way as of a virtuous man wrongly accused, and the friends I was with remarked what a good soul he was and how deserving of sympathy for his progressive attitude. I thought otherwise. He had a shrewd, or perhaps I should use the masculine of that, a donish way of compressing his lips, and, perhaps, because of the protestations of the virtuous man, I thought that his eye had a evil gleam.

But what was more to the point was the style of his argument. He would, by way of exculpation of his advanced excursions, give forth arguments that were good in themselves, and then when the inevitable consequence of the arguments—that is to say, the renunciation of Christianity and the impeachment of the Church—seemed inevitable, he would jump sideways and baffle our senses with that extraordinary and meaningless patter to which the title of high spirituality has been so wrongfully ascribed. It was precisely this that offended me as much as it pleased the congregation.

I will give a specimen or two later, but let us here and now sit down to a little serious thinking. When that familiar friend of our boyhood, old Euclid, was investigating a problem he was ready at times to assume that a certain proposition might be true, and he led us step by step along a path consistent with adherence to that belief, when suddenly we were confronted with an impossibility. This was called the *reductio ad absurdum*. But note this fact. When Euclid arrived at such a position he remarked simply that we must reject the original position which had led to the absurd consequence. Then having exhausted the alternatives he brought us to the correct result.

Familiar and puerile, you may say; I reply, yes, and I would not insist on a familiar and puerile piece of logic unless indeed it be violated, and consequences of great importance to ourselves be forced upon us by reason of that violation; then we are entitled to insist on the familiar argument even up to the point of smashing the gainsayer and all his works on that irrefragable rock of truth.

I would have been even more shocked had not some years of Parliament made me acquainted with this fraudulent style of debate on the part of ambitious, tricky, and unscrupulous men. It is possible on such a ladder to climb to the Premiership; it is extraordinarily difficult to climb there without it.

Anticipating a little, I say now that the Church itself seems to be only a branch of politics, in which creeds, ceremonies, institutions have, with the great majority, lost all veritable meaning, except to remain as the passwords of a vast association built on material interests and seeking to justify itself by the publication of false balance-sheets like a spiritual Farrow's Bank.

Bishop Barnes has written but little, astonishingly little, considering the high position to which he has attained, and the only work of his that I can find at the British Museum is a booklet on *Spiritualism and the Christian Faith*.

Here are some of the propositions I have culled from that pious manual: "Now Christianity has a definite philosophy of the nature of the universe founded upon the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ."

That teaching, however, is so obscure that the Bishop is forced to find an excuse for it: "Christ had to speak their language and use their forms of thought."

There was a time, and not so long ago, when the Bishop himself would have been burnt at the stake for uttering this apology, for it implies that these teachings cannot be taken at their face value.

What has changed the attitude, in as far as it has changed, of churchmen, and made Bishop Barnes and Dean Inge appear as bold pioneers of progress?

In a word, Science. Generations of men of the type of Bishop Barnes, some of them quite as highly placed as he is now, led indeed by the highest of all—for the Church says so—Queen Victoria herself, heaped upon Darwin every term of derision and contumely by which they hoped to obliterate him. Unanimously they thought his teaching inconsistent with the validity of the Gospel, and they said so in no uncertain voice. Now these political humbugs

—I apologise, Mr. Speaker—these high and holy men have found that not only was Darwin right but that his doctrines constitute the firmest basis on which the truth of the Scriptures may be established.

When John Knox or Spurgeon were sure that God said a "day," Bishop Barnes can see that ten million years was really meant. How delightfully simple. But if our uncertain steps are allowed to range so freely in magnitude, what exists to take away our privilege of diminishing also in like proportions; so that our scope of error in this philosophy of the universe is not less than 100,000,000,000,000 per cent.?

And yet I have known a scientific man, a stickler for the Established Church, moreover, laugh at the apocryphal Irishman who said something was as big as a piece of chalk. And on the Continent the medical men have fought shy of Sir Almroth Wright's "opsonic index" because they found it to vary a few points in a hundred!

A few points! Why does not my reverend teacher—to whom I take off my cap—call himself a prophet, or a bishop, even a rural dean? and then, great heavens, what a vista! it would not matter whether the phagocyte contained one or a thousand million million bacilli; and, moreover, he would not be expected to know the difference till some quite extraneous science—and that of the Bureau of Longitudes, for instance—gave him the indication.

Ah, yes, truly what a wonderful thing is faith; it will make us now take seriously the remark—as they walked to the Ark, of the ant to the elephant: "Mind who you are shoving!" They seem much of a size, you see, at least "in a higher spiritual sense."

The Bishop says of Jesus: "Much of his teaching seemed—still seems—impracticable, if not foolish, in the world as we know it."

In all the teachings of the New Testament so far as they are direct, consistent, and intelligible at all, this world is presented as a mere place of trial in preparation for a greater scene, and the fact that such teachings are impracticable has been so far verified in history that no nation nor community has ever attempted to put them into practice—the nearest experiment I can find is that of the Doukhobors of Russia, who are regarded as insane by their Christian neighbours—while the ideas, the lives, the manners of the clergy are so directly at variance with these teachings that I marvel at their impudence in quoting from the book. I remember during the war the consternation produced in the House of Commons when one of the members, Mr. Outhwaite, came down with a big Bible and began to read some of the precepts of Christ. He was howled down indignantly; the members called it an outrage. I was one of the warriors myself at the time, and therefore opposed to Mr. Outhwaite's views, but I could not help laughing at the perturbation of these Christians when an appeal was made to the source from which they professed to derive their inspiration and authority. Suppose that at a Congress of Electrical Engineers Faraday had been cited as an authority, and that in order to settle a disputed point, a member had looked up Faraday's own words, would he be flung out of the room?

In another place the Bishop remarks: "Undoubtedly those whom Christ taught believed implicitly in the existence of a personal devil; undoubtedly the Lord Himself used language which confirmed their belief."

He says further that the Apostles' Creed expresses belief in the "Resurrection of the flesh," and he quotes John Wesley: "Giving up witchcraft is, in effect, giving up the Bible."

And then, in a further discourse, he has a passage

which unconsciously lets in a beam of light upon the whole question: "In Palestine, during the lifetime of Christ, the disease (hysteria) was apparently rampant."

Let us—but no, I renounce. The strength of the Church is not in truth, but in material interests, superstitions, traditions, prejudices, prerogatives, privileges—eventually money and all it stands for; my one weapon, reason, here fails in direct attack, even as our friend Euclid's propositions cease to have meaning to those who cannot, or will not, think. The difference is that by adherence to true principles and the developments that have flowed from them we have dowered the earth with all the wonders of mechanical science, from great bridges to wireless telegraphy; whereas the only institutions that have flouted reason and common-sense, and yet flourished, are those not of religion but of the political institutions of deceit and oppression that have used certain dogmas of religion as a dope to the people.

Bishop Barnes sees this; at any rate in part, but in a recent address he falls back on the old shibboleths and covers the plain issue in a smoke cloud of canting words. Is this the attitude of a great pioneer blazing a trail for progress, but keeping in touch with the people, or is it the spirit of a reactionary tactician who, yielding when his strongholds could be carried by force, staves off as long as he can the ultimate defeat?

ARTHUR LYNCH.

### Mr. Lynch's "Ethics": A Criticism.

CONSIDERATIONS of modesty should restrain a critic from indulging in mere captious criticism of a work that has been slowly and strenuously elaborated in the author's mind over a period of years of thoughtful study and patient research; whilst, in the present case, a sincere admiration for the ability and courage of Mr. Lynch makes extremely difficult—if not actually distasteful—the task of criticising certain portions of his book wherein he seems to me to have departed seriously from the rigorous canon he himself lays down.

In the preface to his work on *Ethics* he says: "I demanded that the system of Ethics, however presented, should rest on a deep base, and that it should arise by reasonings, cogent and consecutive, to the conclusions it expressed." This is wholly admirable, and in so far as Mr. Lynch adheres to this method, we have no cause for complaint. With his system of Ethics as a whole we are not for the moment concerned, the errors, if errors there be, appear to be those of omission rather than commission. For instance, the book takes very little account of Ethics as presented by those who hold what is termed the Materialist Conception of History and whose theory of Economic Determinism, however inadequate as a complete philosophy, is yet very fertile in results. Again, the student of scientific determinism might justly complain that a system of ethics that does not give some sort of definite guidance on the historic question of free-will; and which, claiming, as it does, to rest on a scientific basis, does not emphasize the need for a recognition of the principle of determinism as an essential pre-requisite to the systemization of Ethics is not a complete system. As a matter of fact, Mr. Lynch nowhere evinces as thorough an appreciation of heretical opinion as he does that of the fashionable obscurantists; whilst his treatment of philosophic Atheism is, as we hope to show, quite grotesque in its ineffectiveness. But when all this is said, the first two parts of his book remain wonderfully suggestive.

His search for what he terms the "germinal idea" of the philosophies of famous men is brilliantly illuminative, even though his treatment of Spencer's conception of evolution lacks the clearness and simplicity of our own Mr. Cohen's exposition of evolution in *The Grammar of Freethought*.

[It would do me good here if I may be permitted to observe that in all my researches into the realms of philosophy I am continually having to hark back to Mr. Cohen for a clean cut exposition of fundamentals.]

In Part III. we have a couple of chapters devoted to a consideration of "certain great encompassing conditions that affect the meaning of Ethics; such as the Immortality of the Soul; the Ideal; ultimate Purpose." As with Spencer's famous excursion into metaphysics, so with Mr. Lynch. The book gains nothing and loses much by its inclusion, for it demonstrates that Mr. Lynch so far from being an "oriented individual"—to employ a suggestive phrase of Mr. Jackson Boyd's—still moves in that endless metaphysical maze which leads nowhere, and which has never benefited mankind one iota. Here: where the need for a strict application of his methodical canon is most stringent, our philosopher forgets all about it.

If this part of the book represents Mr. Lynch's mature reflections I cannot for the life of me see where it differs essentially from any common or garden "God's in his heaven all's well with the world" theology. There is nothing in it that would prevent Mr. Lynch becoming a highly respectable pillar of Unitarianism, or an ornament of Modernism. Nothing whatever. As for his views on God and Immortality, I have seldom read, even in Christian Evidence literature, so inadequate and unsatisfactory a presentation of the religious case. Had Mr. Lynch not been moving for so long in such highly respectable Military, Political, and Academic circles, it is doubtful if he would have written stuff that has long since been turned inside out in twopenny Atheistic pamphlets. There is certainly no evidence of a thorough, systematic chain of reasoning here. There is a revival of the Paleyan argument for design, and the usual misrepresentation of the Atheistic position, together with some sentimental nothings about an aerial voice that whispers in our ear and a mystic hand stretched from above to sustain us, and that is all. As a matter of fact, "God" is only introduced because, in the author's words, it lends strength to the argument for immortality; the latter being introduced because—in some way not stated—"our conceptions of ethics will become greatly modified according to the view we take whether this life be the be-all and end-all of our conscious existence." Just imagine a writer who claims to be following a scientific method arguing for, and accepting the existence of, a "God" without even defining the sense in which he uses the term; and who accepts the immortality of the soul without in any way demonstrating the soul's existence. And who, in both cases, ignores entirely the findings of anthropology.

Having emphasised the existence of order and regularity in the universe, Mr. Lynch makes the Atheist say that it is all the result of "mere chance." This is an old Christian Evidence dodge, and if Mr. Lynch's painstaking search had embraced the reading of twopenny pamphlets he would not have made use of it. When we speak of anything happening by chance all that we mean is that we do not know all the factors at work. Everything happens under the inexorable law of cause and effect, actually there is no room for chance anywhere. The Atheist therefore agrees with Mr. Lynch that to speak of chance in the sense implied is absurd. The amazing thing is that Mr. Lynch regards this as a complete vindication of the

God-idea. On the strength of this, "Our Father which art in Heaven" is again enthroned—with scientific honours.

Mr. Lynch's reasons for believing in the immortality of the soul are even more meagre, and may be stated thus: There is nothing in science inconsistent with the conception of the immortality of the soul, [Really nothing, Mr. Lynch?] *ergo*—the soul exists and is immortal. It will be seen that even if the former were true, it would not prove the latter; we should still have to demand irrefragable proofs of the soul's existence, before building an ethical system on the basis of immortality.

In dealing with the "material conditions of consciousness," Mr. Lynch says, "All that we can assert is that to every thought there is a physical correlative." This is good science. Then comes the following:—

If the senses be necessary to produce impressions or ideas or thoughts, then if the senses cease to function, thought, it may be said, must necessarily cease. I do not know that that argument is correct. The physical antecedent is necessary to our thoughts, as we knew them, within a limited scope of experience, but when we are dealing with such questions as the universe and immortality, we should recognize how limited that experience is.

After this delicious piece of question-begging obscurantism, Mr. Lynch gives us an illustrative anecdote about a man in a dark cell, who thinks light has ceased to exist because it is temporarily obscured, but afterwards finds out his mistake. It is a favourite method of argument with obscurantists, especially University men (witness Dr. Lyttleton), and it usually has the merit of undoing you if you accept the story. In this case it is not relevant to the issue. Such stories seldom are. After the story comes a question that would have delighted the heart of my old mentor, Sir Oliver Lodge—"Who can say that nothing analogous may happen to the soul at death, *if indeed there be a soul?*" (*My italics.*) This is rich. It is Lodge at his worst. What a brilliant example of a scientific method! The case for immortality closes with an appropriate quotation from Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*. Henceforth human survival is, in terms of the Lynch thesis, a *fait accompli*.

Mr. Lynch claims for his system that it not only illuminates many domains of human conduct (and this one may readily grant) but demonstrates Purpose—spelt reverentially with a capital—in the universe. He tells us so explicitly. He says: "Over all our lives looms a great Purpose." I don't know how Mr. Lynch can possibly know this unless he is a confidante of the Almighty; one more ambassador of Omnipotence. He certainly doesn't tell us what that purpose is. Purpose in the abstract may be all right, but as a pawn in the game I should like to know exactly what the Deity is driving at. I have long felt that an explanation should be forthcoming from the "Giver of all good gifts"—I am sure Mr. Lynch will concur in this Sunday-school view of God; he might protest that my view is too anthropomorphic, but it follows—with more logic than Mr. Lynch employs in their establishment—from his premises. After all, a God that is not anthropomorphic ceases to be a god.

I should like to put a pointed question to Mr. Lynch. Does he regard the universe as eternal? If so, whence comes the purpose of it? For surely purpose implies an end; the realization of a pre-conceived idea. Then what is the use of talking of purpose in connection with a never-ending process? If there is to be an end, and man is destined to drop out of existence with the universe, where is the moral justification of it in terms of the Lynch system of ethics?

Mr. Lynch anticipates the arguments from the pain, unmerited suffering, disease, waste, etc., in the universe and meets them in the usual way. He suggests that much of it is due to our own imperfections (what imperfect parts in a perfect whole, Mr. Lynch?) and will be seen to vanish in the harmony of the whole (visions of Rev. R. J. Campbell discoursing on his New Theology). He then goes on to tell us, with quite unnecessary elaboration, that things—as they are because—they are what they are—which is hardly satisfactory as an answer to earnest moral questionings.

In dealing with certain aspects of ethics Mr. Lynch says cricket is excellent practice for—cricket; war is excellent practice for—war. We venture to remind him that the pain and struggles of the present life, though they do not admit of a moral justification, are excellent practice for—the present life. They certainly have no reference to another.

As a book Mr. Lynch's *Ethics* is interesting and suggestive. But the chapters I have criticised are certainly calculated to confirm the religionist in his superstitions. The need for uncompromising free-thought is greater to-day than ever.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

## Correspondence.

### SCIENCE AND FREETHOUGHT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—You will endorse my view, I think, that the major percentage of Freethinkers are not sufficiently consistent, neither are they united, in action.

Progress in the Secular movement is seriously jeopardised in view of the fact that so much energy is expended in the direction of almost futile, and certainly incongruous attempts to extirpate the unfounded and dogmatical belief in "The inspired word of God." This issue is not fundamental, and if, on the contrary, an organized programme is instituted when all administrative parties connected with the movement would concentrate upon crucial scientific matters (even though they may be elementary), I feel convinced that more rapid strides would result, particularly because science is the most effective weapon against superstitious diseases. Ridicule or attempts to disprove the validity and sincerity of ancient "inspired" writers invariably leads toward a *cul de sac*, whereas science is invulnerable.

H. JOHNSON.

### ARTHUR LYNCH AND KARL MARX.

SIR,—In response to the suggestion that I should deal with Karl Marx may I say first a few general words? With the disappearance—in the intellectual sense—of the authority of the old religions, man's desire for a guidance in this mortal life becomes even more urgent. The necessary standards must be found in the nature of the world itself, and these must be ascertained by observation and reasoning, or, as we say when these reach a certain level of comprehensiveness and organization, by science.

It is in this spirit that in my *Psychology* I sought to lay the foundations of this new mode of philosophy; the principles of *Psychology* is the basic work; *Ethics* is the superstructure. The examination of Karl Marx would appear as one of the many possible applications of the principles set forth in the preceding writings, and now that his name has been mentioned and we know the importance of his work in the social and political world, the problem tempts me—to use a simile of Leibnitz about the brachistochrone—as the apple tempted Eve.

I will only promise that, as far as a mere clay-man can, I will free myself from political bias, and then in company with the readers of the *Freethinker*, whose encouragement I greatly appreciate, I will endeavour to think the matter out to some conclusion.

ARTHUR LYNCH.

## 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 postcard.

### LONDON.

#### INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (174 Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Debate—"That the Origin of Christianity was Divine." The Rev. S. J. C. Goldsack v. Mr. E. C. Saphin. The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 at the "Lawrie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7, Debate—"Are the Working-Classes eugenically equal to the Upper-Classes?" Affirmative, Mr. R. B. Kerr; Negative, Mrs. C. B. S. Hodson, F.L.S.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham): 7, A Social Musical and Dramatic Entertainment. All Freethinkers welcome.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. F. J. Gould, "My Visit to Berlin."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Right Hon. J. M. Robertson, "Modern Humanists Reconsidered: VI.—Herbert Spencer."

#### OUTDOOR.

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

FINSBURY PARK.—11.15, a Lecture.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Speakers: Messrs. Baker, Constable, Hart, and Shaller.

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

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. Hale, "The Story of the Comet." Committee will meet after the meeting.

HULL BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 5 Room, Co-operative Institute, Albion Street): 7, "Arrangements for Mr. C. Cohen's Visit."

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Youngman's Restaurant, 19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds): 7, Ex-Alderman Thaxton, "My Recent Visit to the Antipodes."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Hon. Bertrand A. W. Russell, M.A., "Socialism and Education."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, 120 Rusholme Road, All Saints', Manchester): Mr. George Whitehead, 3, "Gaul—by a Gaul-bird"; 6.30, "The Psychological Basis of the Penny Dreadful."

WOLVERHAMPTON FREETHOUGHT DEBATING CLUB (Redhead House, 13 Pipers Row): Monday, November 3, a Meeting at 8.

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