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Views and Opinions.

Experience and Religion.

When one sets out to track down and expose Christian fallacy there is no lack of subjects from which to make choice. Some of the better known have already been dealt with in previous articles¹, but there are many that yet remain. There is, for instance, the familiar appeal to experience by the very evangelical Christian. Not that it is confined to that peculiar type of person. The other week, for instance, I had a friendly letter from a very well known clergyman assuring me that if I could only know the value of the sense of communion with God my whole outlook on life would be changed. But this could only come from personal experience. No argumentation was possible. And in one way or another the Freethinker is always being met with the assurance that the experience of generations of Christians must outweigh in point of value the arguments of the most intellectual of unbelievers. Now as a Freethinker I should be the very last to question the value of experience. It is one of the best guides we have, but the best of guides need not be infallible, and the advice of the most knowledgeable of teachers may sometimes be wrong. I do not question for a moment that my correspondent has experienced some sort of a feeling which he finds pleasant and comforting. On that he must be the final judge, and the only possible judge. I do not know what his feelings are, and cannot tell. On that head I am quite at his mercy, and if he tells me that he has had some sort of a feeling which he chooses to call communion with God, I must let it go at that.

Faith and Fact

Before analysing this statement concerning experience it may be as well to note the curious tangle into which the Christian gets himself. The Freethinker is told he cannot understand the Christian position because he lacks the experience which the Christian has had. But to get this experience he must first of all believe in Christianity, since it does not come to those who disbelieve. To gain the experience one must believe. But if one must believe to get the

experience the belief in Christianity cannot be based on experience at all. The Christian does not believe because he experiences, he experiences because he believes. And I should certainly be the last to question that. All sorts of curious things may happen to people if they believe. Faith can really do things, provided it is not asked to do things that lie outside the region of its operations. Faith can produce evidence to the Christian that Jesus Christ lives and is looking after him. It can also convince the Mohammedan that the prophet held communion with the angel Gabriel, and that the African wizard is in daily communion with the tribal ghosts. The whole business of the quack medicine vendor is based upon this power of faith. Faith can cure an imaginary cancer with an imaginary drug, it can cure imaginary indigestion with bread pills, or rheumatism with a "magnetised" ring. I do not question the power of faith at all. I assert it. It can create and it can remove, but what it creates, and what it removes, are quite other questions, and go too deeply into the subject for one to expect the average parson to concern himself with.

* * *

Fact or Fancy.

The Christian too often forgets—as I have frequently had occasion to point out—that the main issue between believer and unbeliever does not arise from a difference of experience, but from a difference in the interpretation of experience. Structurally, there is not the slightest difference between the Christian and the Atheist. Anatomically and physiologically they are the same, and what is true of their bodily structure and its functions is equally true of their mental make up. No one has yet held that a psychology that held good of a Christian did not also hold good of a Freethinker, although the significance of the fact is not always appreciated. The Freethinker and the Christian are both living in the same world, and there is not a feeling experienced by the Christian that is not also experienced by the Atheist. Mrs. Eddy would assure me that a boil on the back of the neck is unbelief made manifest, and I may repudiate the interpretation without at all denying the presence of the boil. So it is with Christian "experiences." The visions of the saints were quite real—to them—but the question of their causation is another thing altogether. They were authorities in the one instance, their word is quite worthless in the other. I do not doubt at all that the monk after torturing his body, and meditating on the wickedness of women saw visions of the Virgin, or that the nun, under similar conditions, saw visions of Jesus holding out his arms to embrace her. I take their descriptions of their experiences at their full face value. But when it comes to an interpretation of them, I venture to think that suppressed and distorted sex feeling will explain all that is set before us.

* * *

Religion and Ignorance.

If mere experience could have given us the truth of things the history of intellectual development would

¹ See *Freethinker* for September 21 and 28, and October 5 and 12.

have been very simple and very straightforward. But it is in our interpretation of experience that the essential issues are raised. When the Gospel Jesus saw the insane and the epileptic his experience could give him no other explanation than that they were men and women who were possessed by devils. We have exactly the same facts with us to-day, but instead of the ignorant thesis of the Christian figure-head we properly place insanity and epilepsy in the category of neural disorders. There is not the least difference in the comets that flame across the sky to-day and those which our ancestors of five hundred years ago saw. Our experience is as theirs was. But we no longer interpret them as messengers from God, bringing plague and disease as a punishment from God. And visions, whether celestial or diabolic, whether seen by the Christian saint as a consequence of lonely vigil and prayerful meditation, or by a drink-soddened person as a consequence of alcoholic indulgence, have no substantial difference in their mode of origin. It is entirely a question of interpretation whether we regard them as supernaturally caused or look for a more scientific explanation of what lies before us. Saint or sinner, dipsomaniac or "mystic" science sweeps them all into the same net, and explains them on the same principles. Had the Gospel Jesus known what we know of nervous disorders he would have seen no elements of supernaturalism in the cases around him. Here as elsewhere it is ignorance that supplies the forcing ground of profound religious conviction.

* * *

Exploiting Human Nature.

Now what has been said of the interpretation of experience on such obvious matters as the nature of insanity of vision or of disease in general, is equally true concerning those emotions and feelings which are taken as evidence of the reality of religion. Broadly, it may be said that all the alleged evidence of communion with God, and of the comfort derived therefrom are so many instances of a misunderstanding and an exploitation of the social side of man's nature. Before all else man is a social animal. He is not merely gregarious in the sense that many other animals are gregarious; he is social, and that expression covers a very much wider and a much more important truth. It is in virtue of the social factor that what we call civilization goes on, that improvements are added to little by little, that the experience of one generation is conserved in speech and writing and handed on for the benefit of other generations. There is no other of the higher animals that is so completely dependent upon the society of his fellows as is man. And this is shown by the fact that if he is by any chance condemned to an absolutely solitary life the purely and distinctive human characteristics weaken and disappear. The consequence of this is that man's emotional nature has always been developed with regard to others. He cannot help paying some regard to others, however slight, since in this way he is ministering to some of the most imperative demands of his nature. And if we were to assume that each understood his own nature, as we all have some smattering of knowledge concerning the nature of disease, the man of to-day would no more think of God in connection with the manifestations of his feelings than he does in connection with a case of insanity. But a large part of his education is designed to prevent his realising this self-knowledge. As a child he is filled with religious phrases that serve as a preparation for what is to come later. At adolescence, when the social side of his nature begins to develop rapidly and when there is a reaching out to take part in the wider life of the race, he is taught to consider this as a yearning

for communion with some supernatural power. The desire for communion, which has no meaning apart from the social life of the race, is twisted into a desire for communion with God. In a thousand and one different ways his nature is exploited in the interests of religious organisation. He is kept on the level of the savage, even though he may express himself in more polished language. He misinterprets his experience because he is never allowed to understand it. And this exploitation of human nature in the interests of this or that church represents a social wastage of no mean order. It means that instead of human energies being intelligently directed towards the betterment of life, they are squandered in the perpetuation of beliefs and prejudices that are among some of the most difficult obstacles the reformer has to overcome. When the time comes for the weighing up of the evils that religion has inflicted upon the race it is certain that this frustration of human power for good will not be the lightest charge laid against it.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"On Praising God with a Song."

SUCH is the title of Dr. John A. Hutton's article in the *Christian World* of October 23. Like all the reverend gentleman's articles, this one contains several statements of doubtful accuracy and not a few steeped in Christian prejudice. The very first sentence which asserts that "the power to sing is in a sense peculiar to human beings" cannot be accepted as true. The power to sing may be more highly developed and charged with greater intelligence in a man or a woman than a canary or a nightingale. Of course, Dr. Hutton's object in making that assertion is to set man apart from all other living beings. He totally disagrees with "those who are concerned in our day to deprive man of his spiritual rank," and it is his opinion that they "may labour and do violence to their own good sense in order to persuade us that probably there is some kind of final identity between the whistling of the wind, the chirping of a bird, and the outpouring of a human soul in a song." We do not know what he means by "final identity," but all we believe is that the difference between a bird's voice and a man's is the result of the evolutionary process, and not of any special creation of man, as many theologians teach.

It is perfectly true that music plays a most prominent part in Old Testament literature. The Jews of that period are represented as being particularly devoted to music and dancing as chief contributors to the happiness of life. In Temple worship instrumental and vocal music was the most conspicuous feature. Doctor Hutton puts it thus:—

The blare of brass instruments, the clanging of cymbals, and the voice of man rising like a melody, the worshippers processing to the altar and there laying down their gifts, whereupon, as we read in Chronicles, there was a blast of trumpets—must all have symbolized in a way which makes us regret our excessive self-control, the joy of those simpler days when men sang and danced before the Lord.

"Before the Lord" is an expression peculiar to the Old Testament, and means before the ark in which Jehovah was believed to have his abode. This was the primitive Jewish idea of God, that he lived, moved, and had his being within a comparatively small box called the ark. Even as portrayed in the Bible God is a rapidly evolving being, and what is true of the Biblical Deity is as true of all other divine beings; and not of a single one of them have we either the intellectual or the moral right to affirm that he ever actually existed. Dr. Hutton is honest

enough to confess that we do not know there is a God; but he believes that his belief in his existence has sufficient probability on its side to justify our holding on to it. We are obliged to characterize that position as utterly illogical and absolutely untrue. There is no evidence whatever of the Divine existence; and yet we are called upon to praise God with a song, taking his existence for granted.

Dr. Hutton, after alluding to the Jews as a people "who to-day, in spite of the frustrations and brutalities to which they have been exposed for the last two thousand years, can yet sing and make melody," proceeds as follows:—

Only grave people do sing. Only severe people, in the sense of people who live by a discipline, will continue to sing in this difficult world. People may explain it as they like; the fact is that self-indulgence, laxness, low-views of life—all these take from the heart of man the capacity and instinct to sing. If we have no faith in life's high meaning—that is to say, in God—I do not for the life of me see what there is to sing about. In such a world you may have raucous songs, or some low, seductive melodies; but there will be no great music. For the function of great music is to support and confirm our faith in the greatness of the soul. There is so much in life and in our own lives to suggest that we are but creatures of the day, foolish victims of this and that, the laughing-stocks of time; but in great music man asserts his personality and claims kinship with God.

Whilst some sentences in that passage are, alas, only too true, yet the bulk of it is deeply rooted in religious prejudice. Can Dr. Hutton tell us what life's high meaning is, belief in which, according to him, is equivalent to belief in God? We are convinced that in the order of Nature life has no meaning at all; that man is of no greater value than a snail; and that value itself as applied to natural objects is a wholly unscientific term. The truth is that the meaning of life is determined by ourselves and that it varies in exact proportion to the differences in temperament and character between the people who contemplate it. Well, music is one of the greatest servants of life, which life itself has produced for its own comfort and delight. But Dr. Hutton is entirely mistaken when he declares that in the absence of faith in God he does not for the life of him see what there is to sing about. Happily the great German musician, Wagner, though an unbeliever in religion for most of his life, realized that the world was brimful of things well worth singing about, and about which he did sing with amazing sweetness and light. His *Tristan and Isolde* is described as "the nearest approach to what a musical drama ought to be." *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* is another musical drama of exceptional beauty and power, and destined to exert a wholesome influence upon the minds of men to the end of time. But the point we wish to make emphatic is that their author was not a Christian believer, and that, according to Dr. Hutton's teaching, he could not have created them. Here is another strange passage:—

About this faculty for singing there is something which is finally mysterious; and what is mysterious is Divine. As our Lord said about the birth of a soul, so we may say about the birth of a song: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whether it goeth." We often sing, we know not why.

It is perfectly true that religion and music have been closely associated in all ages, but the connection between them is not vital. To those who verily believe in God it is much easier and pleasanter to praise him with a song than in cold, unmusical prose; but that

only shows how wonderful the charms of music are, and not at all how real a being is God. Jane Harrison well says that "one art, beyond all others, has blossomed into real, spontaneous, unconscious life to-day, and that is Music; the other arts stand round arrayed, half paralysed with drooping, empty hands. The nineteenth century saw vast developments in an art that could express abstract, unlocalized, unpersonified feelings more completely than painting or poetry, the art of Music." Christianity is not an art, but really the enemy and destroyer of art. At present the belief in Christianity is steadily dying out, and the number of people who praise God with a song is perceptibly decreasing; but the art of music is marching on to greater heights of perfection, and its association with religion is becoming less and less pronounced. Comparatively believers in God are fewer than ever before, and God's place is being filled by Man, whom we are slowly learning to praise with inspiring music.

J. T. LOYD.

Slandering Shelley.

Sun-treader, life and light be thine for ever!—

—Robert Browning on Shelley.

Me, who am as a nerve o'er which do creep
The else unfelt oppressions of this earth.

—Shelley on himself.

MATTHEW ARNOLD once described the poet Shelley as "a beautiful, ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain." But if there is anything certain concerning Shelley it is that his work, from a literary and social standpoint, is not "ineffectual," and his artistry not "in vain." Not only is Shelley's poetry loved more sincerely by present-day readers than by his contemporaries, but his opinions upon social and religious questions have become far more acceptable to an ever-increasing number of persons. Even a European war, with its attendant paper famine and restricted output of books, did not damp the interest in this great English poet.

During Shelley's lifetime he was regarded by the Orthodox as a very dangerous young man. For writing a pamphlet, entitled *The Necessity of Atheism*, he was expelled from Oxford University, and his Atheistic poem, *Queen Mab*, was the subject of many blasphemy prosecutions, both men and women being sent to prison merely for selling the work. Because of Shelley's known Freethought, Christians were determined to crush him, and he only escaped imprisonment by leaving the country. A Christian Court of Law decided that his opinions were so dangerous to society that the poet was not to be regarded as a fit guardian for his own children. The literary world was just as cruel and contemptuous, and Theodore Hook's jest that Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* was likely to remain unbound is the keynote of fifty years' so-called criticism of the poet's work. Even at the Centenary Celebration at Horsham there was sounded a note of diffidence and apology, and most of the speakers referred very discreetly to Shelley's Freethought opinions, and over-emphasized his claims on the Sussex country families, mostly bucolic farmers innocent of literature.

Indeed, the younger soldiers of the Army of Human Liberation can have little conception of the intense hatred and antagonism which the pioneers of Freethought raised in the Christian camp. In the battle for Liberty, for instance, Richard Carlile, and his wife and shopmen, endured fifty years' imprisonment, and bore heavy fines. Daniel Eaton, who was so nobly defended by Shelley, was prosecuted seven times, and had £2,500 worth of property destroyed by order of

the Law Courts. Charles Bradlaugh had to fight hard for eleven years before he could enter the House of Commons as member for Northampton, and only the loyalty and courage of George Foote prevented Bradlaugh's imprisonment for blasphemy. Foote's own share of Christian charity was a year in prison. It was not a Christian sense of justice that stopped this persecution, but the simple fact that the Freethinkers finally became too numerous to be so scandalously ill-treated.

The lie is still at the mouth of the Christian, and a hundred years after Shelley's death the slanders of the pious still pursue his memory. Only this week a posthumous publication of Marie Corelli's contains a most outrageous slander on Shelley, the more indecent because it appears in a work which is in no way associated with literary criticism, and which professes to be an account of a love-affair, written from a woman's point of view. In Chapter XVI. of *Open Confession to a Man from a Woman*, as the book is called, Marie Corelli writes:—

Latterly I have been reading Shelley—and I cannot blame his father, Sir Timothy, for declining to have anything to do with him. To put it plainly, the poet was an unprincipled rascal and all his fine weaving of verse can make him nothing else. His Atheism was a pose, the pose of an abnormally self-sufficient young man, who, in the first hot effusions of his brain, conceived himself capable of remodelling the universe, yet was totally lacking in the very first beginnings of decency and order.

After a bitter denunciation of the poet on his first marriage, and his separation from his wife, Marie Corelli continues:—

Yet, all the world (of men) acclaim him as a transcendent genius—and I try to find out where this transcendent quality can be found. Half his poetry is utterly incomprehensible, it is of no service either to uplift or to inspire. Two poems alone are perfect—the *Ode to a Skylark* and *The Cloud*. These the world may well be grateful for. But the rest?

There is much more of this sorry stuff, but beyond the jaundiced remark that *The Cenci* is "an abominable piece of work, comparable to the writings of Oscar Wilde, the whole passage is but feminine hysteria, coupled with religious prejudice. Marie Corelli's estimate of Shelley is not worthy of criticism, but it is an excellent example of Christian clarity, which thinketh evil of all opponents.

As for Shelley's influence, both literary and political, much has happened since Shelley's untimely death. The young Freethinker who was expelled from the chaste cloisters of Oxford University for his opinions, is now generally recognized as one of the greatest poets, if not the greatest, of the nineteenth century. Years ago, in publishing a penny edition of Shelley's poems, W. T. Stead, no mean judge of public opinion, pointed out that some of the poet's work met with "great acceptance" at the hands of the "fierce democracy that musters in Trafalgar Square," and that the great poet's verses had "as their chief motive the struggle for Liberty and the attempt to realize the aspirations after the ideal." *Queen Mab* was not the juvenile work that the orthodox critics pretend. If it had been so, there would have been no need to send men and women to prison for distributing the volume. During the last years of his life, when his intellect was at its maturest, Shelley told his friend Edward Trelawney, that the matter of *Queen Mab* was good; it was only the treatment that was faulty. Shelley's masterpiece, *Prometheus Unbound*, written in the meridian of his splendid genius, deals with emancipate Humanity no less than the earlier work. The glorious speech which ends the third act describes thrones and altars

as parts of a system of misrule and misgovernment, and pictures man as sceptreless and really free. This, indeed, is the keynote to all Shelley's writings, both in verse and in prose. Emancipate Humanity is a direct contradiction to the Christian Religion, which insists on the fall of man, and upholds Kingcraft. If Shelley had but contented himself with singing of wine and women, he would have escaped a lifetime of persecution, and a Niagara of insult and lies at the mouths of priests and their dupes. Shelley's unforgivable crime was his Freethought, which was the alpha and omega of his life-work. Freethought glows in the splendid rhetoric of *Queen Mab*, it sparkles in the nobler music of the *Revolt of Islam*, and it bursts into the brightest of flames in his masterpiece, *Prometheus Unbound*. Shelley meant every word that he wrote, and this is the reason his memory has been pursued for over a hundred years with every slander that pious malignity could invent. But genius such as Shelley possessed rises superior to all the priests of Christendom. Slowly, but surely, this great poet is being recognized as one of the legislators of emancipate mankind, whilst the Christian Superstition will, before many generations, be as remote as when the star of Ormuzd burnt out in the troubled midnight sky.

MIMNERMUS.

Politeness and Truth.

MATTHEW ARNOLD said that conduct was three-fourths of life. Manners may be said to be three-fourths of conduct. The importance of courtesy based on goodwill, on a disposition to help, to see the bright side, and to make the best of all with whom we come into contact, is unquestionable. It is, in the illustration of Gautama Buddha, the linch-pin in the chariot of life. Yet manners may be made too much of, and, by a fastidious conventionality, override yet weightier concerns. Politeness is much, but it does not comprise the whole duty of man. Truth and Justice have still more important claims. An old motto says, with much truth, "manners make the man." I prefer the saying that man makes manners. Cultivate men, broaden their sympathies, improve their tastes, and good manners will flow spontaneously, apart from conventional fashions. The gentleman, as Emerson says, "is the man of truth, lord of his own actions and expresses that lordship in his behaviour, not in any manner dependent either on persons or opinions or possessions." Little folk are usually particular about behaviour, but greater ones are careless, knowing it flows naturally from their own personality. A gentleman remains one whether in prison or on a throne.

Freethinkers continually have to face the question how to comport themselves towards opponents. In forming our opinions we may and should have a single eye to truth, but in expressing them we must consider their effect on others. Questions of expediency, seasonableness, and fitness come in. To take an extreme case, one may believe that there is no resurrection from the dead, yet refrain from obtruding this opinion upon a believing mother who is weeping over her lost child. Because we see there is a time to speak and a time to hold one's peace, we need not palter with our convictions. Circumstances alter cases, and each must judge for him or herself how best to adjust complete loyalty to truth with respect to the feelings of others. Polite reticence does not always serve beneficial ends.

John Morley says with truth: "One reason why so many persons are really shocked and pained by the avowal of heretical opinions is the very fact that such avowal is uncommon. If unbelievers and

doubters were more courageous, believers would be less timorous. It is because they live in an enervating fool's paradise of seeming assent and conformity, that the breath of an honest and outspoken word strikes the so eager and nipping on their sensibilities." The time is pretty sure to come to all when they must speak out what is in them or play the hypocrite. Who can doubt which is the manly part?

There are many ways of saying a disagreeable truth. One will put the matter bluntly; another finds it more congenial to his genius, to show his refinement by taking a circuitous route. Like the gentleman in the song, "So politely he kicked me down stairs, you'd have thought he was handing me up." "A man may be capable," as Jack Ketch's wife said to his servant, of a plain piece of work—"a bare hanging; but to make a malefactor die sweetly was only belonging to her husband." But what is the appropriate treatment for one who for his own objects says the thing that is not? Here is a fine field for casuistry, which an acute writer calls "the soul of ethics." But casuistry in the abstract is in the air. Put case, as Browning says. An eminent minister publishes as fact a story of an eloquent but dead Atheist lecturer, whom no one can indentify as such. What shall we call the story of the Atheist Shoemaker? I know but three terms really appropriate to the circumstances. Untruth, falsehood, lie. This seems to me not a case for the retort courteous but for the lie direct. For lies, as Touchstone says, are of various degrees. Some are white, some grey, some black. When Mrs. A. tells Mrs. B. that she is very pleased to see her and that her dress is most becoming, while she thinks the very reverse—society excuses such "fibs" or "taradiddles," or classes them with the white variety excused by *la politesse*. To my vision untruths about a dead man's opinion are of the black species. I had rather a man call me "liar" to my face than spread a story that I recanted on my death-bed. But forcible terms are out of fashion. Nobody lies now, at least no eminent ministers. But then unfortunately there are still some from whom it is impossible to get the truth. They could not tell it if they tried. They do not see the thing as it is, and to describe it accurately is not among their accomplishments. On the first and only occasion upon which I heard the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, and reported in the *Freethinker* of 1887 two instances of unvaracity in a brief speech, I set him down as probably of this species, and he has since amply vindicated my judgment. Politeness is due to all of possible worth. But when a man or a system is found worthless, politeness must give way to justice and to truth.

Worth makes the man, the want of it the fellow;
The rest is all but leather or prunella.

Plain speaking is the natural companion of free-thinking. For the Freethinker protests against the hypocrisy of the age which plays at pretending to believe that which is no longer credible. He goes for a clear issue. The Bible is or is not the word of God. Jesus either was or was not born of a virgin. He did or did not work miracles. The offence of the *Freethinker* has ever been that it puts what educated people really think upon such matters into plain and popular language. Mr. Holyoake could never be expected to agree with this policy. While others were seeking to strike hard and strike home, he has ever been looking for smooth phrases. To dispute about taste is proverbially useless, but common sense tells that an oppressed minority need the courage of resistance as well as of endurance. Even as a matter of style, I uphold that plain words are best. Look at the great writers, Bunyan, Swift, Cobbett, Paine, Sydney Smith, or Carlyle. No circuitous beating about the

bush there, but forthright, direct, unmistakable speech, to which, indeed, some judicious qualifications might often fairly be added. But a person in the thick of the fight cannot always exhibit the suavity of the polished fencing-master. He must know that his blow tells. In the phrase of the backwoodmen, he must "hew to the line and let the chips fall as they may." Swift said, "Proper words in proper places make the true definition of a style," and Swift, who so keenly ridiculed "the art of polite conversation" would have said that lie is a proper word to apply on some occasions. Paul, a forcible, though not always a clear writer, did not scruple to use the term. He quotes with approval that "the Cretans are always liars," and a reference to the Concordance will show that both the noun and adjective are frequently used by the Bible writers.

Revolutions are not made with rose water. The pioneers of progress have to make up their minds for rough, hard work. It is no use trying to upset established imposture with kid gloves. Luther was coarse and rude. Bradlaugh hit out straight from the shoulder. A leader of the Freethought party should always know when to strike and when to stay. This is why Mr. Holyoake, with all his high qualities and many services, was futile in that position. His tender regard for the feelings of opponents hindered him from ever dealing a valiant blow for victory.

J. M. WHEELER.

A Kingmaker.

In the obscure days of their history, a prophet named Samuel ruled over the Jews on the pretext of being appointed and directed by "the Lord" with whom he was able somehow or other to converse. But finally they determined to have a king like the surrounding tribes. Samuel naturally objected; and to deter them he vividly described the tyranny of kings. Finding opposition useless, he pretended to get the consent of "the Lord" to their request; and to be commissioned by him to fulfil it. The thing was to find someone over whom he would have such an influence that through him he could still rule the people. His choice fell upon one named Saul. This man had the courage and the noble presence that charm the masses; and he had also the melancholy, the credulity, and the superstition which are dear to priests and prophets. A meeting occurred in consequence of Saul approaching Samuel, as a wizard, to inquire after some lost asses. The seer made him a feast, lodged him for the night, and anointed him privately in the morning. Then to inspire him with confidence he gave him three predictive signs, namely, that at stated places there would meet him, first two men with information touching the asses; then, three men with provisions; and last, by a band of prophets. As the nature of these incidents proved beyond doubt that they could only have been arranged and disclosed by Divine Providence, Saul, experiencing them successively, had his faith completely established. He became at once Samuel's very obedient servant. Alas, however, this spirit of dependence did not long continue. For, in the second year of his reign, Saul, being in great danger from the Philistines, and finding that Samuel was behind his appointed time in coming to offer sacrifice, offered it himself, thereby putting more fat into the fire than that of the victims. For Samuel arriving on the scene showed much displeasure at the usurpation of his functions, and promptly declared that "the Lord," who would otherwise have preserved Saul's kingdom for ever had now determined to confer it upon another more

to his liking. Still the prophecy was not immediately fulfilled; and no effort might have been made to fulfil it, but for the following occurrence. Saul was extremely fond of war, and once, when he had none in hand, Samuel came, saying, he brought him an order from "the Lord" to destroy the Amalekites, man, woman, child, and cattle, because some centuries earlier the tribe had oppressed the Israelites when these were on their way to invade Canaan. Saul, however, did not obey the command exactly. He massacred all the Amalekites but Agag the King; this independence greatly annoyed Samuel who told him that because of his disobedience "the Lord" had rejected him from being king. Saul expressed deep contrition, and implored Samuel to honour him before the elders of the people by accompanying him in his public worship. This favour Samuel granted; and then, after murdering Agag, the prisoner of war, he departed and came no more to Saul the rest of his life. The account says he mourned him; but the mourning appears to have been that of the crocodile, for he went and anointed a stripling called David king in Saul's place.

Here again his conduct is referred to the bidding of "the Lord."

The Lord tells him that he has discarded Saul for one of the sons of a Bethlehemite named Jesse. The Lord sends him to Bethlehem to consecrate the future monarch; and provides him with the false pretence of going thither to sacrifice. The Lord makes him reject the seven sons whom Jesse presents for his inspection, and to select the eighth and youngest who has not been presented. Doubtless there were reasons for selecting a son of Jesse, and the immature years of the one selected would make him docile. The act was, of course, a treason; and it cannot be justified by anything reported of Saul, who appears to have ruled his barbarous people well under difficult circumstances. The historian is very careful to make out that David treated Saul with perfect loyalty. But he overlooks the fact that in submitting to being anointed by Samuel, David conspired with him against their master; and also that it was certainly improper for David to become the private musician and even the armour-bearer of Saul, when he knew himself to be his acknowledged rival. Hence the stories of David's fidelity to Saul are open to suspicion; and there is reason for thinking that contrary narratives have been suppressed. Indeed, on the occasion that Saul was routed and slain by the Philistines, David and his men came up with the enemy, whose request alone caused them to depart before the battle. Moreover, after the death of Saul, "there was a long war" between his house and David's, until the latter prevailed largely through the vindictive treachery of Abner, commander-in-chief for Saul's son and successor, Ish-boseth, who had accused him of having carnal intercourse with Rizpah, his late master's concubine (2 Sam. iii.). The men who respectively killed Saul and Ish-boseth were executed by the order of David; but the latter on a trumpery excuse surrendered to death, the two remaining sons of Saul, and five of his grandsons, maintaining alive only another grandson, Mephiboseth, who "was lame of both feet" (2 Sam. ix. 13); and therefore a rival but little dangerous in that state of society. The shrewdness of David was equalled solely by his unscrupulousness. The man, clever enough and heartless enough to contrive the death of the noble Uriah, would be exactly the person to express indignation over a murder that secretly gave him joy; and to abet another inflicted upon the very same family. He would also be quite capable of collecting the bones of the victims and of burying them with great pomp in the ancestral tomb (2 Sam.

xxi. 12-14), chanting over them to the wailing melody of his harp a tender pensive dirge.....The above is a fair specimen of the literature to which it belongs. Theological prejudice is the most striking feature occurring in the historical works of the Old Testament, especially in the Samuels, the Kings and the Chronicles. In the two last it reaches the apotheosis of absurdity. The monarchs there introduced are approved or condemned solely on the standard of the religious faith held by the writer or writers of the accounts. There is not a word said about social improvements; and even wars are but scantily described unless they furnish occasion for illustrating the conduct of the tribal deity towards his people. Let the reader imagine a fanatical Puritan writing the history of Queen Elizabeth as follows, and he will have a just idea of the historians in question:—

She did brake in pieces the images that Mary her sister had set up, and did cast into prison the priests that came from the Great Whore that sitteth upon the many Waters; nevertheless, her heart was not right with the Lord, as the heart of her father was, for she took certain prophets of the Lord, even the Brownists, and threw them into the stocks; wherefore the Lord was angry with her, and did send the Spaniards with a great fleet, but it repented him of the evil and the fleet was wrecked.

If it be argued that the Israelites, having a better religion than the Canaanites, would exceed them the more in conduct the closer they kept to their faith, it may be replied, first, that past and present experience disproves the fact of morality being commensurate with religion; secondly, that the religion of the Israelites had much in common with the religion of the other members of their ethnical group, whilst its distinguishing features are chiefly supposititious ordinances, feigned by priests and scribes who flourished long after the time to which they attribute these inventions; and thirdly, that David, who is taken as the standard whereby the succeeding kings are measured, because he "walked perfectly with the Lord his God," could hardly have been outdone in cruelty, duplicity, and lust even by the worst of the rulers to be found among the surrounding tribes.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

Books and Life.

There may be a few of our readers who will be startled by the above title for what we hope to make a serial feature. "Literary Gossip" was felt to be too flippant a description of our project, and, in finding the correct head-gear for our purpose it may be interesting to know what led to this choice. If one has read widely it becomes a question of relativity. How many miles of print must the eye travel over before anything happens? You will see that we become provocative early in our venture, but that will be but a minnow in comparison with the big fish that we hope to catch. The figure of Faust in his study bending over his book, pondering as to what was the beginning, was but our old friends "first causes." The beginning of all things for our purpose took place in the throat. In the beginning was the word which drew order from the chaos of things without names. At some later date came books which preserved for us the song of man in his march through the ages, and, drawing our bow, like Robin Hood, to mark where our paragraph shall end, we affirm that printed thought is the silver cord of immortality.

Assurance that the above paragraph was written previously to reading the following extract will be accepted by readers. Mr. C. E. M. Joad, under the "Book Mark" in the *New Leader*, appears to have also reached that stage in print reading when he draws himself up with a jerk and asks what it all means, what is

the good of it, what is the practical value, and to what end? Let him speak for himself:—

What, after all, is the object of reading, unless something comes of it? What is the object of studying history, philosophy, morals, biography, unless they affect your own life and action in the present world? What is the sense of reading poetry or fiction unless you see more beauty, more passion, more scope for your sympathy than you saw before?

As all knowledge is eternal and available to mental sympathy, we salute a fellow knight in the quest perilous, but not before we have recognized in our colleagues in this paper the same spirit.

Mr. Arthur Lynch is doing for some of our modern mental physicians what Schopenhauer did for the cobweb spinners of his day. Mr. Vincent J. Hands is vigorously striving for that simplicity which brings the absolute within reach, and in a recent article by Mr. Andrew Millar our intuition told us that his cup of grace was overflowing, and that his mental strife had taken him up on the peaks of solitude. Our Editor, with his analytical mind, is ably demonstrating that Christians cannot have their cake, give it away, keep it, and eat it. There is something electrical in the air when we see the decks being cleared for action. The speeches of Demosthenes had one end, and that end was action. If we absorb goodness from good books, and it becomes part of our life reflected in our conduct, we have an answer to the three questions asked by Mr. Joad, and printed speech has resolved itself into action.

We have stated our thesis. Let us now try it on a current novel by Mr. Gerald Cumberland who, in *Striving Flame*,¹ makes a book of a devil that refused to be cast out. At the end of the volume before us, the author tells us that part of it was written at Fontainebleau in 1923. At one time it was thought that this place was to give us the golden key to humanity's problems. Many eminent authors went there; some were profoundly interested in the destiny of mankind and others were interested in themselves, but nothing appears to have come out of this retreat in which supermen were as babes and sucklings. Mr. Cumberland has a vigorous and incisive style and his story of modern business life poses the eternal question of the conflict between good and evil—between affairs of the head and the heart. His power and ability to sketch character in a few words is undoubted, and his projection of an ugly figure is well done. This woman, Mrs. Spain, is, in cinema language, a vampire; in current jargon, a wet blanket; she is really a strong woman masquerading as a weak and misunderstood person, who finally sets her cap at a Roman Catholic priest in order to experience the pleasure of a capture. Mr. Bernard Shaw has stated the same matter in *Man and Superman*, but his female character is a sorceress whilst Mr. Cumberland's creation is a witch to make us question the purpose of evil. At a guess we should say that evil exists to prevent the good from getting lazy and fat. Our author is to be congratulated for bringing, once again, a direct purpose into the novel; as readers will find to their pleasure, this worthless baggage meets her match in Mrs. Dunn, who believes in plain speaking to this impostor, and breaks, once and for all, the spell of a vampire who lives for scenes and has been made worse by too much sympathy and kindness.

The religion of humility that is strong enough to close public-houses on Sunday, and was strong enough at one time almost to close the book of life for mankind is a good parallel with Mrs. Spain. Its words sound passable, but its deeds give the game away. There are great rejoicings when Mrs. Spain drowns herself, and, as everyone, whilst seeing through her, had only tolerated her, the story ends with two happy expectant mothers. This novel is mainly pathological, and it lifts the curtain on a stage, where anyone, with the will, may grapple with real evil (as distinct from the fictitious evil of theo-

logy) and learn something of the science of life. Mr. Cumberland has done well; he would have done better if he had kept closer to his text which was a quotation from Sir Thomas Browne: "Life is a pure flame, and we live by an invisible sun within us." This is, and is not mysticism, and, at the same time, is common sense as we hope to demonstrate in due course.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Acid Drops.

The *Church Times* is rather apprehensive over the conclusions that some people may draw concerning the professional faith-healers that are working under the patronage of the clergy. In the issue for October 31 it says:—

There is a financial side to certain aspects of this cult.....Perhaps we must not press the analogy with the work of Christ too far, but can we imagine Him, or any of his saints deriving an unchecked income from collecting boxes? The danger of scandal is a real one and ought to be safeguarded against; for there are sceptics who are not sentimentalists, or even Christians, and they may say damaging things. The spiritual healer needs no kind of apparatus. Unlike the proprietors of any commercial cure, he needs no laboratories, factories, nor boards of directors. He need not spend a penny on advertisements; the clergy in their present mood, and the public Press at any time will see to that for him. He is in a position to make money out of ignorance, out of human suffering and popular credulity.

That is pretty plain, and it is only saying what every sensible person must be thinking. Here are men who travel round the world in first-class style, practising a species of deception which would quickly be denounced if practised apart from the use of religious jargon and the help of the clergy, they succeed—as anyone could succeed with any kind of nostrum—in inducing a number of people who are suffering from imaginary complaints to think they are cured, and the clergy rush in and preach about the power of religion and so get their share of the advertising and payment for backing up the professional healer. The C.T. is quite correct, it is making money out of human suffering and popular credulity. Only we would like to ask what else can religion do in a civilized community?

In connection with this we would direct the attention of our readers to an article in the *Daily News* for November 4, by Mr. Phillip Inman, who is, we believe, superintendent of one of the London hospitals. He says quite plainly, what we have pointed out very often, that every medical man in the country can supply numerous examples of cures through auto-suggestion; in other words, by faith. But this faith has no more to do with the healing power of Jesus than it has to do with Old Mother Hubbard—in fact, so long as Old Mother Hubbard and her curative power is believed in that old lady will prove quite as effective as will our Lord Jesus Christ. Mr. Inman says pretty plainly—although not quite so plainly as we would wish—that this faith-healing mission is a fraud upon the public, and we should like to see other public men take their courage in both hands, tell the clergy to go to the devil, and speak the truth about the matter. One thing seems to us certain. The medical man who does not realize the true nature of these cures is unfit to be entrusted with the care of a single human being. And if he does see it and does not speak out, he is false both to his duty as a medical man and as a citizen. Falstaff said he was not only witty in himself, but he was the cause of wit in others. The clergy might also say that not alone are many of them hypocrites in themselves, but they are also the cause of hypocrisy in others.

Somewhere, in the hierarchy of those potent forces that shape the destiny of mankind, we shall find in person the Bishop of Plymouth. At a prize distribution this gentleman told the girls of Henrietta Barnett School that "God has put us into an extraordinarily interesting world." We can only trust that when the girls grow up, or even at the present moment, they

¹ *Striving Flame*. Gerald Cumberland. 7s. 6d. net. Grant Richards, Ltd., St. Martin's Street, W.C.

will put that kind of sloppy thinking in its right place—which is somewhere on the same level as the information that the building of a new cruiser will take three years and will help to relieve unemployment.

Visitors to the seaside may have noticed the imposing diagrams on the blazers of young men and old men. The ancient Britons used wood, but the modern form of snobbery is a sign that puts a question mark to the output of the educational machine, and makes one wonder about the value of our Public Schools. With the air of a discoverer, an "Old Public School Boy" lets off, what is only a damp squib in the October issue of the *Review of the Churches* :—

The facts must be faced, Christianity is handicapped as no other religions have been handicapped, by the fact that its ideals do not appeal to the average man.

At this rate of progress, an "Old Public School Boy" will some day overtake the Freethought movement of fifty years ago.

Mark Twain's *Autobiography* will substantiate all that we already knew of his correct estimation of the value of professional Christianity. It requires no courage to write and sign a column a week rattling the bones of orthodoxy—such as that expounded by Dr. T. R. Glover, or, for that matter, flourishing a wooden sword at Rome. When six hundred Maros were killed by American soldiers in the Philippine Islands, Mark Twain did not consider popularity in his anger :—

With six hundred engaged on each side, we lost fifteen men killed outright and we had thirty-two wounded..... The enemy numbered six hundred—including women and children—and we abolished them utterly, leaving not even a baby alive to cry for its dead mother.

This is incomparably the greatest victory that was ever achieved by the Christian soldiers of the United States.

In his account of dinner with Kaiser Wilhelm II., the American humorist, tells us what is already known, that under generous floods of beer, the Emperor and his half-dozen grandees were reduced to the level of very ordinary people. This phenomenon is not particular to Germany, but applies to all places where a name is mistaken for a man.

In the Charge of the Light Brigade, we are told that someone had blundered. Similarly, in the consecration of St. John's Church, Torquay, someone forgot to make a note in an ecclesiastical diary that the Church had to be consecrated, with disturbing effects to people who have been married there. It is thought, so we are also told, that no legal steps will be necessary to ensure the validity of marriages already solemnized. Probably the great rush entailed by unveiling war memorials is responsible for this lapse; we trust that the matter will be speedily readjusted so that Torquay and the world may breathe again.

The Bishop of Southwark, following his visitation of the diocese, delivered a charge to the clergy of the Archdeaconry of Southwark in the Cathedral, recently. In the course of this he admitted that "Belief in organized religion had been gravely shaken.....It was generally admitted that during the last few years there had been a widespread repudiation of the institutions and doctrines of orthodox Christianity. To-day men often neither knew nor cared if there was a God at all. Doubt pervaded every class. Church attendance was no longer what it was. To-day in society it was as much the right thing to abstain from church as once it was the fashion to attend.....With the honourable exception of two or three of the greatest of our newspapers religious news in the London daily Press was confined, as a rule, to an occasional paragraph of ecclesiastical controversy, gossip, or scandal." All of which statements are truisms. But having thus admitted that to-day religion has ceased to have any vital appeal to large masses of the community, the bishop continued, "Lack of interest in the Church and the failure to accept orthodox belief did not mean that there was utter indifference to religion. That was certainly not the case. Many who

stood apart from organised religion were eagerly looking for truth. Our generation was not Atheistic." This kind of argument is becoming increasingly popular with Christian apologists. Their churches are nine-tenths empty every Sunday, ministers are obliged to run socials and dances in order to attract the younger generation at all, the Press ignores religion, the vast majority of our best-known publicists and writers rarely mention it, and everywhere there are unmistakable signs that Christianity is rapidly decaying as a social and political force. Faced with these awkward facts, which refuse to be explained out of existence, the apologist for Christianity takes refuge in the unproven assertion that whilst "organized religion" is losing adherents, "true religion" is attracting more and more thoughtful men and women. We should be very pleased if some of these ingenious gentlemen would explain to us how it is possible to have religion without some kind of organization, which will make possible all the rites and ceremonies, without which religion ceases to be. Moreover, the talk about men and women eagerly looking for truth, and the widespread desire for the growth of kindlier feelings in social and industrial relations as though these were signs of a growing Christian spirit, is pure nonsense.

To-day, thanks to the decline of religion in this country, we certainly have more real tolerance and kindness in social affairs, than heretofore. Also undeniably we have a more passionate desire for truth, scientific truth, truth about political, economic, and social affairs. Everywhere there are signs of the triumph of the Secular spirit—the turning away from barren theological speculation, and its consequent sectarian strife, and the growing desire to tackle the problems of life in a common-sense or scientific attitude. But this has only been made possible by the decline of religious emotion. That religion which inflicted centuries of ignorant superstition upon the Western world, which produced hideous massacres and religious wars, and which has always looked with contempt upon happiness in this world, cannot by its very nature help progress and the growth of humanitarian feelings. Even the Bishop of Southwark, we suspect, must draw the obvious moral. On the one hand we have the decline in interest in theology, admitted by the majority of religionists, on the other the development of a keener social conscience, and a yearning among all sections of the public for real, scientific knowledge of the universe—as is evidenced by the popularity of such publications as *The Outline of Science*, *The Splendour of the Heavens*, and *The Outline of History*. The mists and fumes of religion are clearing away, leaving men and women clear-headed to face the problem of life and society.

We see from a cutting from the *Chicago American*, which a correspondent has been good enough to forward to us, that the Rev. Z. Colin O'Farrell, one of Butte's most prominent pastors, recently preached to a large congregation at the First Baptist Church, with a monkey tied to a broomstick beside the pulpit! Several times during the sermon the monkey dashed at the preacher with bared teeth, and Dr. O'Farrell was forced to shout aloud above the din the creature made, in order to make himself heard by the congregation. The antics of the monkey caused the kiddies of the congregation to laugh several times, whereupon the reverend gentleman paused in his sermon to admonish them. The reason for bringing the monkey to the Church, this enterprising publicity agent of Christianity explained, was because his daughter had recently asked him whether she were descended from a monkey, explaining on being questioned, that her teacher had so informed her at school. "This," said the preacher solemnly, "is what the world seems to be coming to. In my opinion, the cause of the awful Franks murder in Chicago is the result of this sort of teaching." Whether he was referring to his own ridiculous performance or not is not altogether clear. But we see that the monkey several times nearly bit him. We can sympathise with the intelligent animal's natural resentment. Also, we have a lurking suspicion that something—perhaps a mad dog—must have bitten the pastor.

Our Sustentation Fund.

Previously acknowledged: £288 6s. 9d. J. B. Middleton, £10; A. G. Lye, 10s. 6d.; C. E. Hill, 10s.; James Neate, £1; T. C. Kirkman, £2 2s.; Mrs. J. Neate, £1; C. E. Turner, 10s.; Mrs. R. C. Niven, £1 1s.; Frank Taylor, 2s. 6d.; H. Silverstein, 10s.; A. E. Graham, 5s.; R. Daniell, 5s.; R. H. Lovekin, 5s.; C. Clithero, 1s.; R. Young, £1; A. Potts, 2s. 6d.; E. Lechmere, 2s. 6d.; H. Barber, 2s. 6d.; J. Sarsfield, 2s. 6d.; Mrs. Sarsfield, 2s. 6d.; Fred Smith, 5s.; Mr. and Mrs. Williams, 5s.; F. Lonsdale, 5s.; A. Rogerson, 5s.; A. W. Davis, £2 2s.; D. W. Allen, 5s.; H. F. Porter, 5s.; S. Hicks, £1; V. J. Hands, 10s.; W. W. Kensett, 10s.; Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Harden, £2 2s.; M. Quinton, 10s.; T. A. Reid, 2s. 6d. Total, £316 7s. 9d.

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.

Will the lady who asked for friends to communicate with her through the Worthing Post Office be good enough to write to the Editor?

R. S. ASTBURY.—Thanks for cutting. There is no reason why Freethought meetings should not be arranged in the Stoke-on-Trent district. Why not try and get a few friends together who will look after the necessary local arrangements?

A. J. ALBERT.—We will take the first opportunity of dealing with the question of causation, as raised in your letter. Dr. Lynch's *Principles of Psychology* is published by Bell & Sons. Many thanks for your attempt to introduce the *Freethinker* to new readers in South Africa.

G. A. HAWKINS.—Sorry we did not keep the cutting on which the paragraph was based. But if you refer to the two or three issues preceding the date of the paragraph, it will be found.

F. W. EDWARDS.—Thanks for note, but it is fairly well known that the Rev. John Newton, author of the hymn, "Jesus, lover of my soul," was engaged in the slave trade before he became curate of Olney. But as there was nothing in his religion to forbid his doing so, we do not see that it can be brought against his character as a Christian.

J. SARSFIELD.—It is good of you to promise a weekly contribution to the *Freethinker* if required, but we hardly think that will be necessary.

R. YOUNG.—We have no doubt the article would be interesting to many, but we have no one at present who would undertake it on that special subject, and there are many other papers that deal with it.

A. G. LYE.—We can all serve the Cause to the measure of our capacity and opportunities, and if we all did that we should make rapid progress.

MR. A. W. DAVIS writes: "May I also add my mite of praise to the present excellence of the *Freethinker*? I have been a regular purchaser and reader since 1888, and I never liked it better or found it more stimulating reading than now."

S. HICKS.—Hope your wishes for smoother times may materialise. In any case we shall keep pegging away so long as we can.

D. W. ALLAN.—If your newsagent gets his copies direct from this office he can receive *Freethinker* posters as required with them. If through a wholesale agent, we can send him posters at stated intervals if he will let us know how frequently he requires them. Thanks for rest of your letter. See reply to A. J. Albert.

SINE CERE.—Thanks. Will be used next week.

T. MAY.—Merely to talk about what are secular affairs without saying a word in opposition to the superstitions of the Christian world is quite what the clergy would like to-day. In our opinion there is a greater need than ever to-day for a definite attack on fundamental religious ideas.

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

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street London, E.C.4.

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4., by the first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen is paying another visit to Weston-super-Mare on November 16. He will lecture in the Palace Theatre, The Boulevard, at 3 and 7 o'clock.

We are asked to announce that on Saturday next there will be an American Tea and Social on behalf of the Manchester Branch, at the Engineers' Hall, Rusholme Road. The function will run from 3 till 10 o'clock, and articles that may be offered for sale will be thankfully received by the Branch. Friends can bring articles with them, and the proceeds will be devoted to replenishing the Branch funds. The Branch is in need of funds in view of the programme of work that has been mapped out for the winter. We hope to hear that the efforts of the promoters of the Social have been crowned with success.

Mr. T. C. Kirkman, in enclosing cheque to Fund, writes: "The small sum I send is out of all proportion to the benefit I get from the *Freethinker*. I wish it were ten times as big. For if any causes deserve support it is the one for which you have fought so long and so strenuously—and I am sure the *Freethinker* is essential to that Cause. I wish that all who really sympathise with freedom of thought would take the *Freethinker* as regularly as their breakfast; they would get the best threepennyworth there is." We should be delighted to see that last bit of advice followed. We dream dreams of one day seeing the *Freethinker* with the circulation it deserves, and although we may never live to see the dream become a fact, it is something worth working for. And we are often made happier by striving after something we never get than by what we actually achieve.

Another old supporter of the paper, Mr. J. B. Middleton, writes: "I have much pleasure in sending along cheque for the Sustentation Fund, satisfied in my own mind how necessary it is to support such a worthy Cause. I think it is by such articles as are served up weekly in our bright little paper and scattering them broadcast that we can best serve our Cause." The friends the *Freethinker* makes it keeps. Like most things that are worth anything the hatred it inspires among the enemies of freedom of thought is compensated by the strength of the affection it develops among its friends.

An excellent and very stimulating debate took place at the St. Pancras Reform Club last Sunday night. The

question of heredity was much to the fore, and Mrs. Hodson, who is a Fellow of the Linnean Society, has kindly promised to give a lecture on the subject at our next session. Mr. Kerr, whose skill in debate always makes an evening delightful, deserves the thanks of all North London Freethinkers for giving them so much of his valuable time. These debates only want to be more widely known, and the Hon. Secretary of the North London Branch would be grateful if anyone would be willing to distribute some of the syllabuses. This evening Mr. J. H. Van Biene will lecture. Particulars are given in the Guide Notice.

We note in a recent issue of the *Yorkshire Evening News* a telling letter from our contributor, Mr. Vincent Hands, on the use of lightning conductors on churches. It is curious, when one thinks of it, that Christians have not faith enough in the providence of their Deity to trust him not to knock about the buildings devoted to his praise. But that perhaps is not less curious than the fact of Christians prating about their trust in the Lord and then rushing to an insurance company to protect them against lightning.

A report of Mr. Cohen's meeting at the Parkhurst Theatre appears in the North London *Sentinel*. The report notes that in spite of the wretched weather and the excitement of the General Election there was a "wonderful meeting." Our own opinion, as readers already know.

Chats With Children.

MOTHER EARTH. A FAIRY TALE

WHEN Mother Earth was millions of years younger than now she was, strange to say, far less attractive than she became later on. She lived in the clouds, sometimes she was almost drowned with floods, she suffered like all folks suffer who are growing. Her parents, as we know, were Father Lightning and Madame Universe. It was said that little Earth would never have been born but for a terrible quarrel between her two parents. Her Father once struck a cruel blow at Madame Universe, who still lives, but has never wholly forgiven Father Lightning. Mother Earth had a dreary childhood and but for her strong vigorous parents would never have survived. She feared her father and yet she loved and admired him. He always lit up her face with smiles and made old Madame Universe bright by the mere flash of his presence. Father Lightning, grown more gentle in his old age, became more and more helpful. In time he chased away the misty vapour which clung like a cloudy garment round Mother Earth.

Mother Earth became a cheerful and verdant part of the family of the old universe. She began to be seen. The Sun was no longer hidden from her. She came into his orbit and with new-found pride turned on her heels and showed first one side of her face then the other to the astonished sun.

On the hitherto naked earth began to appear a bright green dress, changing naturally (as the seasons demanded a change of fashion) from green to red, from red to white and back again to green.

But all this time our Mother never spoke and never thought. There were no books to read, but always the silent presence of the sun by day and the moon and stars by night.

Effortless and unconsciously Earth learnt her lesson. Listen: she was not *Mother Earth* until the first green spot appeared on her spring garment: this was the first sign of Motherhood. From that strange new coloured button all that Mother Earth has ever produced has come. *MOTHER* indeed now, although for millions of years nobody saw anything of her marvellous family except these woven garments of hers.

Yet in the pockets of these garments lurked the mysteries of Birth and Life and Movement. Wonderful and almost invisible pets began to scamper round the feet of Mother Earth. Ages passed and Earth's pets learnt new tricks. Mother Earth looked at the tiny fishes she had made, and found one no longer swimming but clambering up the bank of the stream. Ages passed and curious animals appeared, the children's children's children of the earliest ones—but different in size, in looks, in dress, and in action. And now monkeys climbed and swung their hairy bodies from all the jungle trees. Elephants and bigger animals than elephants appeared, until it seemed as if size alone mattered. Fearful quarrels occurred. Great beasts fought their fellows and it was found that size was not everything. The biggest animal fell when attacked. The little ones hid in caves or grew wings and disappeared in the air. And amongst the rest some were found who had a new and hitherto unsuspected artfulness, both in attack, pursuit and escape.....something was arriving, some new thing, some wonderful quality.....it was the first dawn of reason, the first glimmering of thought, the beginning of intelligence.

The intelligent animal began to stand upright. He learnt new ways of finding food. No longer contented to starve in winter, he stored a portion of his summer's plenty. In time one pioneer first thought of studying Nature's secrets. He wrested from Mother Earth the secret of her annually renewed supplies of food. He planted seed! This, then, was man; this was Mother Earth's darling youngest son!

Men fought more bitterly than animals had ever fought. Man was not born wise, he was only born strong and cunning. At first he fought for food, then he fought for wives, then for property, for gold, for land, for the right to make slaves of his fellow men.

There were times when Mother Earth wept tears of blood as she saw her favourites fight and bleed and die. Their mother's body has at times been drenched with the blood of her sons. Yet her old love survived every shock. She still wove beautiful fantastic loveliness to charm men's visions into sacred peace. She still gave free food to all the sons of men, even though men bought and sold her gracious gifts, fought for them, destroyed them, put a blighting curse on the ground where Earth's gifts were plentifully spread abroad.

The end of man, if not the end of Earth, would have arrived long ago but for the same story of progress and persistent upward growth that has been Earth's destiny since the first chemical explosion which was the birth of Mother Earth in the womb of the Universe.

There are even now monsters like those early horrors which infested the swamps where life began on earth. There are through all the stages of the development of living things, survivals of the worse past. That law remains true to-day. It is a sign to rejoice at and not to deplore. It is not the survivors of the past who make earth fit to live in; it is the pioneers, those who are a stage in front of the past; it is those who have evolved beyond, even if it be but a step beyond the others—these are they who make the future. And these are always better than those who went before. They bear an unmistakable sign of their rank, it is the sign of LOVE.

First came Form without Life,
then Life,
then Movement,
then Consciousness,
then Reason,
then Sympathy,
then LOVE.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Mr. Wittling Sees It Through.

No one could truthfully say of Zachariah Wittling that he was cast in a heroic mould. A small man, of insignificant appearance, he seemed doomed by nature forever to play small parts. Nevertheless, there burned within the unpretentious bosom of Mr. Wittling the smouldering fires of a great ambition. He longed—with a longing which, if suppressed, was calculated to set up a really first-class complex—to be famous; he yearned to occupy a pinnacle from which he should be the cynosure of all eyes. When he lay in bed at night, in the stuffy little attic that served as a bed-room, he would grit his teeth, and clench his small bony hands and tell himself that one day—well, you know the rest. For many nights "in the hot dark where he lay hid" Zachariah had planned plans and evolved schemes for apprising the great remorseless world of his existence. Surely the pang of unrequited love are as nothing to the tortures endured by the unappreciated genius—particularly when, as was the case with Zachariah, one isn't a genius, but only thinks oneself such! One of Zachariah's chief troubles was that he felt himself to be so surpassingly great in so many directions that he couldn't determine in which particular rôle he should make his bow to the plaudits of the world.

His first attempt to court the favour of the public was when he secured a small part in a travelling melodrama entitled: *The Drugged Favourite*, billed as "A racing drama with a moral"—your theatre-going, blood and thunder-loving public are hot stuff on morals. It is true that Zachariah only appeared in one scene, and then only to exclaim—in his part as the honest stable-boy—"Blue-Flash 'as bin poisoned and Lord Luvaduck 'as done it!" But no pen can do full justice to the passion our hero contrived to infuse into that denunciation. It is said that a great artist literally leaves his soul upon the canvas, and the soul of Zachariah Wittling became crystallized in those few words. For weeks he had slowly perfected it until it had become a purple patch of palpitating passion. It seemed impossible that a genius so rare should go unrecognized; professional jealousy alone can account for the fact that the Press notices contained no reference to him, and after a short tour—but not so short as not to enable the management to get six weeks in arrears with Zachariah's wages—Mr. Wittling was left to chew the cud of bitter reflection, which he did at the expense of the public whose favour he sought to win.

About this time Zachariah—who had often tried his hand at rhyme—conceived the idea of writing a pantomime for a syndicate that was advertising for new and original shows. For several days he worked at it with great enthusiasm, he had got as far as where the old hag casts off her cloak—thus revealing a be-spangled lady in horrible pink tights—and exclaims:—

And now, dear Cinderella, have no fear,
For I, your fairy-godmother, am near.

[Cue for song: She's only got one tonsil, but she's all the world to me.]

And there he stuck! Try as he might, Zachariah could get no further. He besought a lady friend, who enjoyed considerable popularity in the locality, because it was rumoured that she had once deputised for a principal boy, and asked her advice. An excellent authority on Guinness, but no judge of poetic values, the lady in question was quite frankly unsympathetic. It is unnecessary—and inadvisable—to quote her verbatim, but the interview left Mr. Wittling extremely discouraged. In fact, he was heard to complain to a crony, that principal boys were all legs and no soul. A discovery that has been made

by many others before him. After this rebuff, it may well be conjectured that our hero's pantomime never saw the light of publicity, and I have every reason to believe that this offspring of his creative genius was stillborn.

What does not the world owe to those earnest souls who, as Browning says, "Fall to rise," and other words to the same effect? Such a one was Zachariah. O happy, ardent soul who sees in the dark hour of defeat the far-off gleam of ultimate victory. Bunyan in his prison cell; Bruce deriving inspiration from the antics of a spider; Mr. Wittling experiencing a spiritual regeneration as he watches the flames devour his unfinished and unappreciated manuscript. Let us humbly thank that Providence that puts the pretty colours in peacocks' tails, and which slaughters thousands with sublime impartiality, that such things should be:—

Let us now praise famous men
And the fathers' who begat us.

It was a happy inspiration that led the ill-shod feet of Mr. Wittling into the paths of grace; true it is that his conversion was made possible in the first instance through the very materialistic agency of a soup-kitchen—but who shall question the ways of Omnipotence? May it not be that in the very odour of stewed bones there is something of the Divine essence—to a hungry man? If the dried bones of a saint can work miracles why not the stewed bones of a sheep?

One cannot presume to set a limit to the means by which the Almighty manifests Himself; he is a wise man who realizes that the ways of God are inscrutable.

The congregation at Paradise Street Mission Hall declared that they had never before listened to such a moving testimony as that given by Zachariah Wittling. The oldest member, who, for fifty years, had never missed an emotional debauch, declared that he had never seen the Holy Spirit so move a man to eloquence as on that occasion. Zachariah, under the influence of the Spirit (and the soup) spoke with the tongues of men and of angels; although, as his faithful biographer, I am constrained to admit that his description of past sins and hideous infanities when he was yet unsaved, did not err upon the side of moderation. As Zachariah resumed his seat, the audience spontaneously sang:—

I'm only a sinner saved by grace,
Only a sinner saved by grace;
This is my story, to God be the glory,
I'm only a sinner saved by grace.

Thus did Mr. Wittling find his soul. As an evangelist he occupied that pinnacle of fame to which he had always aspired. In the dotting worship of his followers his soul found peace. Furthermore, it led him to the great *desideratum* of human ambition; the Mecca of human hopes—economic stability. Then came Love. And the countenance of Zachariah Wittling shone like one who had gazed upon the majesty of the Everlasting. Let us pray!

VINCENT J. HANDS.

Obituary.

The Freethought Movement has lost another loyal supporter. William Fletcher was interred on November 3rd in Edmonton Cemetery, the service being performed by Mr. George Whitehead. Mr. Fletcher was aged only 29 years and died of consumption contracted as a result of his activities in the late war. He was very popular with all who knew him, and the esteem of many who mourn his death was indicated by the large collection of wreaths and flowers in evidence at the funeral. We tender the deepest sympathy of the Secularist Movement to his sorrowing family.—G. W.

Correspondence.

ARTHUR LYNCH'S "ETHICS."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I had hoped rather to have drawn the fire of the other side, but short of that pleasure I must be content with the duty of defending my *Ethics* against Mr. Vincent Hands. In a general way I think it is not irrelevant to say that when *Ethics* first appeared it was criticised invariably from the point of view of the critic. For example, the Comtists detailed where it ran counter to Comte, and without more ado gave these marks against it; and so with the others.

My reply is that this view of the matter tends to injustice, and that I am not answerable to the mere authority of Comte, nor of Kant, nor Hegel, nor Herbert Spencer, nor Buckle, nor Karl Marx, for I have laid my foundations deeper than any of these, and from that basis have conducted my arguments in a form of consecutiveness and rigour which, though essential, is absent in the great lights cited above. *Ethics* should be read in connection with the foundational work, *Principles of Psychology*, where the close enchainment of the propositions is thrown more clearly into evidence. In *Ethics* I have taken longer steps, because thereby the principles having been exhibited, I am able to cover an immense subject in a book of reasonable compass. Now to points:—

- (a) The foregoing replies to the objection: "The book takes very little account of *Ethics* as presented by those, etc."
- (b) *In re* Free-will, this is elaborately discussed in the *Psychology*.
- (c) Herbert Spencer is so great a figure, and his doctrine of Evolution so vital in his system, that I thought it well to offer an elaborate examination of that doctrine.
- (d) The chapter on the Immortality of the Soul is far indeed from the tame orthodoxy that Mr. Vincent Hands suggests. I begin by looking at, and casting away as of little weight, the discourses of Plato and of St. Paul. This part of the book is, however, the weakest according to my own standard of reasoning. I say as much in the course of my theme.
- (e) I have nothing whatever to do with Utilitarianism or Modernism or any school whatever. If I have affinities they reach back to Aristotle, whose work on *Ethics* is a marvellous performance, though it suffers from the lack of an ascertained base.
- (f) Military, political, or academical circles have never dominated me. Like Coleridge, who disbelieved in ghosts because he had seen too many, so am I distrustful of Universities in matters of philosophy.
- (g) Paley turned the argument of design to foolish uses; he got it, I think, from Bell, whose work on the Hand is well worth studying. I have looked at the argument again in a new spirit and with a better interpretation. In this regard it is seen to be an informing principle of research, and of great use in the development of science.
- (h) I accept the proper meaning given by Mr. Vincent Hands to "chance." If I have the opportunity I will delete the word "mere."
- (i) Mr. Vincent Hands says "we do not know all the factors at work." But that is a phrase; I have here and there summed it up in a word. My position here is so far Agnostic; I am willing to learn.
- (j) Mr. Vincent Hands quotes a passage from *Ethics*. In the *Psychology* this whole question is minutely examined; I am, however, content to stand the gaff here. Overthrow that passage and I will remodel the whole book, but not till then.
- (k) Purpose is implied in the development of science and the illumination in regard to correlation that the development brings. The operation of dynamic actions and reactions throughout the scope of the Universe, even dimly interpreted as

it is by what we already know of law, is in itself an indication of Purpose. Mr. Vincent Hands must not force my meanings here beyond what I express, nor must he fall on me too severely for using a capital P. Remember we speak of Parliament with a capital, and without reproof.

- (l) I am not anthropomorphic; rather it is that the objections of Mr. Vincent Hands come from a repressed anthropomorphism, which he is tempted to impute to me.
- (m) He says: "I should like to put a pointed question to Mr. Lynch. Does he regard the universe as eternal?" He anticipates my answer, and in this reveals a bias, for it is not the answer that I wish to give: I regard the so-called laws of science as local and temporary, and I do not believe that the universe, as we know it or conceive it, is eternal. I will later explain these dark sayings.

ARTHUR LYNCH.

FREETHOUGHT AND THE PRESS.

SIR,—Arising from my letter published in your last issue, it is topical and interesting to note the effects of concentrated effort during the General Election.

It will not be disputed that the concordant atmosphere infused by the Press was primarily responsible for the overwhelming and sweeping victories gained by the Tories, although incidentally it will be argued that the climax carries no particular significance since the mass are still divided.

Nevertheless, it is demonstrative evidence that the opinion and thoughts of the people are swayed in no uncertain manner by the printed word, and it is compatible with this fact that equivalent organization against all forms of superstitious belief would have similar results, although perhaps not with such revolutionary precipitation.

Since, however, the Press are as honest and sincere in religious matters as they are in connection with politics, the Cause cannot expect similar progress unless concentrated effort is made to propagate the circulation of the *Freethinker*, which is the only journal in this country that gives, *ipso facto*, news and views, and substantiates attack by logically indefensible criticism.

HAROLD JOHNSON.

BIRTH CONTROL.

SIR,—There can be no better test of an untenable case than the fact that what is regarded as the best evidence in its favour invariably turns out upon examination to provide the most decisive proof against it. This is the effect yielded by the statistics furnished by Mr. Kerr as to the results obtained in New York at the birth control clinic conducted by Dr. Dorothy Bocker. Of course, to know what statistics really signify it is necessary to be in possession of full details, as, for instance, the number of people who omitted to report results, probably because they had conceived. I am extremely suspicious of the very vague and scrappy details furnished by Mr. Kerr, but I will waive all that and assume the figures to be reliable.

Judging from the figures furnished, of fourteen methods tried only two were worth anything. One of these yielded two per cent. of failures over a period of from two to twelve months, and the other three per cent. of failures for a similar period. The average period, therefore, would apparently be about six months, so we get an average of failures for the two best methods of from five to six per cent. per annum. Obviously, then, the two best methods applied under the most skilled advice are unreliable. If they are unreliable in some cases they are unreliable in all. As inquiry after inquiry has shown that the average completed family among those who use no contraceptives only amounts to two or three, and as these people will be mostly those who consider their families already large enough, it is clear that the potentially fertile among them will all complete the families sooner or later in spite of the contraceptives. Thus at the end of two years 12 per cent. will have conceived, and so on until the average comes into line with that of those who use no contraceptives. All that could be justly claimed would be a certain

amount of delaying action, the net ultimate effect of which upon average fertility and the birth-rate would be microscopical. Yet this is the result obtained by the best methods among that trifling fraction of the population who take the advice of a "highly skilled physician." The average man blunders along without skilled advice, and with methods which are often the merest frauds; while inquiries have shown that only a minority take any serious contraceptive measures at all.

The less reliable methods give results which are even more illuminating. We are told that some methods showed as high as ten per cent. of failures without, unfortunately, any information as to the period of time. But it is clear that they are practically worthless. Now the blunder into which Mr. Kerr continually falls lies in assuming that if he can prove that the best methods, applied with utmost care under the most skilled advice, can be made reliable, he proves his case. But this is mere illusion. What he closes his eyes to is the fact that until quite recent times none but those methods which have been proved to be worthless were available. Thus the Knowlton pamphlet, and the book which Mrs. Besant based upon it, contain nothing but a condemnation of *coitus interruptus*, a vague reference to the *bandruche* which would be meaningless to most people, and, for the rest, nothing but equally vague descriptions of methods now completely proved to be worthless. Yet these trivial works were credited with having initiated the decline in the birth-rate in spite of the fact that it had been declining in France for nearly a century, in Sweden from 1860, and in Australia from 1863; and in defiance of the fact that in five leading European countries the decline in fertility really commenced the year before the Knowlton trial occurred. Thus Mr. Kerr has again completely given his case away.

It is useless for him to try to kick up a little verbal dust over Dr. Norman Haire's admission in regard to *coitus interruptus*. I am prepared to take Dr. Haire's remarks exactly as quoted since they show that method to be worthless, which is all that I need to prove. I agree that "it requires a degree of self-control which many men do not possess," but this is true of the vast majority of men. The futility of attempting to ascribe the fall in the French birth-rate to that method is illustrated by the case of Scotland. The Scots are surely as thrifty, careful, and intelligent as the French, and they know just as much about *coitus interruptus* and the burden of large families. Yet their birth-rate was in no way affected until the Health Act of 1875 brought about a fall in the death-rate, when the birth-rate began to decline instantly, as happens in every case.

I am prepared to maintain that if any city in the world be taken, where the death-rate is very high owing to unhygienic conditions, and drastic hygienic measures be applied, the resulting fall in the death-rate will be instantly accompanied by a corresponding fall in fertility, even in the absence of all contraceptive propaganda without the aid of hygienic measures? Of course he would not. A frenzy of self-deception and a genuine belief in the validity of one's own assertions are two quite distinct things.

My test has already been carried out in the Suez Canal zone. It is very interesting, in view of the results obtained by the best methods under the most skilled advice, as given above, to try to imagine the ignorant natives attempting to control their own fertility without any skilled advice, without any knowledge of suitable contraceptives, and at the mercy of every kind of fraud. Perhaps, in view of the well-known powers of self-control, they successfully practise *coitus interruptus*, and even succeed in conquering malaria, typhoid, and multitudinous other diseases by such methods, the initiation of drastic hygienic measures by Dr. Halford Ross at just the moment when the spirit moved them in this direction being merely a casual coincidence!

The other side of the picture is furnished by the inhabitants of our slums, who are the most fertile section of the community. A raging, tearing propaganda in favour of birth control is carried on among them, full information is available at nearly every chemist's shop, and on the main streets the articles themselves are tastefully exposed to their view. And as a result they remain the most fertile portion of the community, their

birth-rate only declining in proportion to the decline of the death-rate as hygienic conditions gradually improve. The excuse is their ignorance of birth control methods; while in perhaps the next paragraph, following another line of special pleading, it is hinted that the natives of the Suez Canal zone, far lower than the inhabitants of our slums in every respect, know all about these things without the aid of any propaganda. Truly, to be a good birth controller one must needs be as tone-deaf as Trilby in the matter of logical consistency!

The official Egyptian figures referred to by Dr. Dunlop are quite worthless. They are, or were, collected by native barbers and midwives without either system or method. They include the figures provided by the pilgrims to Mecca, who pass through that area in vast numbers, and by a large floating population of Bedouins, and every other kind of absurdity. Dr. Halford Ross was employed by the Canal Company, the officials of which are in a position to compile their own statistics. To a medical man like Dr. Dunlop the Egyptian official figures should provide their own refutation. Would he suggest that a drastic hygienic campaign, carried out by trained European scientists with adequate powers, could result in an increased death-rate, and that they should, nevertheless, together with the heads of the company that employed them, be under the illusion that there had been a vast reduction in the death-rate? Would he suggest that it was possible for both Dr. Halford Ross and the heads of the Canal Company to be under the impression that Port Said had been transformed from a notoriously fever-stricken hole, overflowing and reeking with sewage, into a health resort, when, as a matter of fact, the death-rate had actually increased? The work and report of Dr. Halford Ross are endorsed by the Prince d'Adenburg, President of the Suez Canal Company at that date, copies of whose letters I hold, and to suggest that the Egyptian figures represent the true results would be to suggest that both Dr. Halford Ross and the officials of the Canal Company are either hopeless liars or else hopelessly insane.

CHARLES EDWARD PELL.

ATHEISM AND LABOUR.

SIR,—The *Daily Herald* last week published a letter in which the writer rebutted the accusation of Atheism so often flung at Labour men, and said that the real Atheists were those who, whilst professing Christianity, had no faith in human nature (and various other bad qualities). I sent a rejoinder refusing to accept such a back-handed blow; I said that Atheists had been the salt of the earth from Bruno to Bradlaugh, and for a reward Christians had burnt Bruno and banned and libelled Bradlaugh, as their correspondent was doing to Atheists now. That our only remedy was to do our best to destroy the creed that inspired such slanders upon us.

Up to now I have seen no reply inserted to the libellous letter. I wonder whether any other of your readers sent one. I expect they did.

W. W. KENSSETT.

A CORRECTION.

SIR,—The first paragraph on p. 702 in my article on Mr. Lynch's *Ethics* should conclude:—

He then goes on to tell us, with quite unnecessary elaboration, that things are as they are because they are what they are—which is hardly satisfactory as an answer to earnest moral questionings.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON OCTOBER 30, 1924.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Moss, Neate, Quinton, Rosetti, Samuels and Silverstein, Mrs. Quinton, Miss Kough and the Secretary.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

The monthly cash statement was presented and adopted.

New members were received for Bolton, Finsbury Park, Hull, Leeds and Newcastle Branches and for the Parent Society.

A letter was received from Mr. J. T. Lloyd tendering his resignation as representative on the Executive of the Welsh Group, as the condition of his health no longer permitted him to attend evening meetings. The resignation was received with deep regret and it was resolved that Mr. Lloyd be heartily thanked for his unceasing devotion to the service of the Cause. Mr. T. Gorniot was then elected to fill the vacancy caused by Mr. Lloyd's resignation.

It was reported that the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited, had made a grant for the general purposes of the N.S.S., and it was resolved that the thanks of the Executive be sent to the Board.

An application from the North London Branch for financial support was received and dealt with.

The letter to be sent to applicants under the Lecture-ship Scheme, with list of books, was submitted and approved.

The result of the meeting at the Parkhurst Theatre on October 26 was reported, and it was unanimously agreed that it was the finest meeting that had been held in London for a considerable period.

It was resolved that the Annual Dinner be held at the Midland Grand Hotel in January, and that arrangements be also made for a Social and Dance in February; arrangements to be announced at the Dinner, and the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE,
General Secretary.

Science and Religion.

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

THAT'S so, J. M.—let us see why.

All other sciences depend for their very existence Upon natural phenomena carefully observed.

No other science depends for its existence upon Being pounded into the immature minds of children, Before those children reach the age of ten years!

Let us suppose that geography, geology, biology, Astronomy, chemistry, physics, physiology, psychology, And all the other natural sciences, known to man, Depended for their existence

Upon being pounded into the immature minds of children—

And depended not at all upon the careful observation of natural phenomena;

What would they be worth? How long would they last? What grown man or woman could accept them seriously?

Again let us suppose that we had sciences of centaurology, satyrolgy, and griffonology, Postulating the size, habits, habitat and mental, moral and physical characteristics

Of centaurs, satyrs and griffons;

Can you imagine such sciences "eager for facts—hungry for truth?"

To be accepted seriously by grown men and women They would have to have been first pounded into the mind of the immature child all right!

Is there any relationship whatever between Theology and any natural science?

Can theology deny its blood-brotherhood To our supposed sciences, centaurology, satyrolgy and griffonology?

Natural science, like the natural man, is at enmity with God!

The only science of theology is comparative mythology.

HOWELL S. ENGLAND.

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.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE.—(Emerson Club, 14 Great George Street, Westminster, Side Entrance: 3.30. Lecture in French by Mlle. Delbende on "Histoire de l'Ecriture." All invited.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (174 Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin, "Christian Art and Ritual" (with lantern illustrations). 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, Mr. Joseph H. Van Biene, "A Few of My Opinions for what they are Worth."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham): 7, Mr. E. C. Ratcliffe, "God and Nature."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Dr. F. Hayward, "Celebration—Joan of Arc."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe, "The American Presidency."

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, Demonstration—Speakers: Mrs. H. Rosetti, Mrs. Venton, Messrs. F. Warner, F. G. Warner, R. H. Rosetti, A. C. High, and H. C. White.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. D. Curry, "Scribes—Ancient and Modern."

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Youngman's Restaurant, 19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds): 7, Mr. Bert Knell, "Poetry"; 8.15, Members' Meeting.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Tom Mann, "Experiences in Siberia."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, 120 Rusholme Road, All Saints, Manchester): Saturday, November 8, an American Tea from 3 p.m.; also a Dramatic Sketch by the Social Committee. Useful articles for sale will be gladly received.

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