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Views and Opinions.

Religion and Honesty.

There are few who talk more about the rights of conscience than do Christians, and there are few who more completely ignore its demands in practice, or who accord it the consideration it ought to receive even when circumstances demand its stopping short this side of practice. Long experience has shown that all the average Christian means by the rights of conscience is the right of his conscience, the right of other people matters but little. More than that, he often appears surprised that anyone who differs from him should claim to have conscientious scruples about anything. This, of course, is the product of his education. He is living, and has been educated under the influence of a religion that has never even theoretically admitted an equality of opinion, either before the law or in public life. His great concern is that Christianity—his form of Christianity—should have the fullest expression, while other forms of belief may be suppressed to the extent to which circumstances will permit. And this has naturally had a reaction in our public life. The mass of people value the right of freethinking to a correspondingly small extent. It is easy to practise intolerance, and still easier to drift along careless of whether opinions are right or wrong so long as one is not called upon to bother over-much.

A Bad Beginning.

A friend of mine has a boy at a certain public school, and a little time ago the boy was informed that he was about to be appointed one of the school prefects. But on taking office he had to sign a roll which made him undertake to uphold the "Christian" character of the school. Now the boy was not a Christian, and had not been brought up a Christian, and he properly objected to promise to uphold the Christian character of the institution. A perfectly wise master would have recognized the point of view, and would have congratulated himself on having in his care a boy who was so scrupulously honourable and thoughtful as not to promise something which went clear against his convictions. The boy was quite willing to promise to uphold the honour of the school, and it may safely be said that a boy having raised the objection could be better trusted to do this than another one who would sign the roll as a matter of

course without thinking any more about it. But it was explained to the boy that the signing was a mere matter of form, and that was supposed to remove the objection. The matter may appear to some a simple one. To us it opens some very important matters. Schoolmasters—particularly when it happens to be a boarding school, where the children are removed from home influences—must play a considerable part in the formation of the character of those under their care. But it will certainly not go to the making of a better character when objection is raised to a boy who honourably refuses to undertake an obligation he cannot carry out, particularly when that obligation should never have been imposed. The phrase "uphold the honour of the school" should be quite enough. But it is a curious position where the pupil shows a nicer sense of honour than his master, and when the master attempts to induce a pupil to sign an objectionable document on the ground that it is a mere form. But for the Christian religion being concerned we have not the least doubt but that the schoolmaster would agree with every word we have said. As usual it is the Christianity that corrupts the man.

* * *

Honesty in Public Life.

Now this occurrence in the school is only a replica on a small scale of what takes place in the world at large. The other day I received a letter from one who could not understand why I was always "sneering" at those members of political parties who kept their religious opinions in the background while conducting a political campaign. My objection really centres round that word "kept." If a man's opinions on religion remain unexpressed when he is dealing with a subject that has no necessary connection with religion, no objection whatever can be raised. That is a proper course to pursue. But when he finds other people mixing their politics and religion and when, as we all know to be the case, he refrains from letting his own attitude be known for fear of losing support, then he is adopting a policy of deliberate concealment, and is deliberately misleading. He would probably say, as did the schoolmaster, that it was a mere form, and my reply is that it must have the same general influence on public life, and that a bad one. It places a premium on hypocrisy and a tax on honesty, and it secures a lower type in public life instead of a higher one. There can be no guarantee whatever that a man who will not be straightforward where his opinions on religion are concerned will be any the better in connection with other subjects. If he will dissimulate in the one case he will practise dissimulation in others. To the man who offers a guarantee of his sincerity by affirming opinions on religion opposed to the majority the utmost hostility is shown. The man who conceals his opinions, and who is ready to mislead by silence, or by subscribing to misleading forms, is warmly welcomed. In practice the honest man is boycotted, and the hypocrite is welcomed. The bigoted religious man sets the tune, the timid heretic dances to it. And then wonder is expressed that public life is not more

sincere than it is. What can one expect? Public life will only be sincere when the public shows that it values sincerity above all else. And that will only be when the influence of Christianity is very much weaker than it is at present.

Paying the Price. * * *

One other illustration to the same end may be given. In an essay on Lord Bolingbroke Mr. Augustine Birrell remarks that "if he had only put into the fire his lucubrations about Christianity he might have accomplished his exit from a world he had made worse for seventy-five years with a show of decency. But he did not do so; the 'cur Mallet' was ready with his volumes, and then the memory of Bolingbroke was exposed to the obloquy which in this country is (or was) the heritage of the unorthodox." I do not agree that Bolingbroke was a worse man than the majority of his contemporaries in the political world, and certainly Mr. Birrell's doubt as to whether obloquy is now the lot of the heterodox hardly seems justified by his own expressions. Walpole came nearer the mark when he said that Bolingbroke "was a hero, a patriot, a philosopher, and the greatest genius of the age, but the moment his *Craftsman* against Moses and St. Paul are published we discovered that he was the worst man and the worst writer in the world." In any case the lesson is there. Be the greatest blackguard possible in public life, but so long as you maintain a show of veneration for the Christian religion, and accompany your rascality with mouthfuls of Christian expressions, all shall be forgiven you. But no matter what you be, if the one clearly honourable trait in your character is that you will not play the hypocrite in matters of religion, then all your virtues shall count as naught, and the venom of Christian hatred—the most detestable and the most venomous of its kind—shall be slavered over you. Only believe has been the age-long cry of the Christian Church, and it cares little for anything else. Or, it says, if you cannot believe, at least pretend to. We do not mind the hypocrite in the least. For him the highest offices in the State shall be open, and if he has done wrong we will do our best to hide it. But dare to be honest in your disbelief, tell the world plainly that you do not believe in our religion, and there is not a crime too vile to be placed to your credit. A pretty creed! I am never surprised when the murderer grasps it on the way to the scaffold, or that thieves and wrong-doers find in it the comfort and the consolation they cannot obtain in the society of decent men and women.

Why Not End It? * * *

Thus, so far as the influence of Christianity is concerned the game goes on, from schoolboys to maturity, and thence to the end, with posthumous praise or slander according as one has fallen into line with the popular superstition or fallen foul of it. If there is a better plan to secure insincerity and hypocrisy and dishonesty I am not acquainted with it. The child is taught that even in the attainment of school honours it is wisest to conceal hostility to Christianity and pretend to believe. The man in business or in public life is faced with the same lesson. It is true that there is a little variety in the form of hypocrisy you are permitted to adopt. You can exchange the humbug of one church for the humbug of another, but that is the limit of the freedom allowed so long as Christian influence is supreme. And yet if only all those who do not believe in Christianity were boldly to say so, and would not permit themselves to be terrorised by a long-standing tradition, there are quite enough of them to put an end to this wholesale manufacture of hypocrites. "Divide to conquer" is a

very old maxim of government, and it is strongly illustrated where Freethought and Freethinkers are concerned. It is time we all made a stand against this policy. Let all who dissent from Christianity say so. Let them bring up their children with a sense of pride and of responsibility towards their own opinions. Let men engaged in public life drive home the lesson that in subscribing, by their silence, to the policy of forcing a tacit assent to Christianity they who do so are attracting a lower type to the public service than might otherwise be available, let us show that, without being fanatical, we can be sincere, and we shall be developing a type of mind that must soon have a powerful and beneficial reaction on public life. Christianity is not less harmful because it no longer burns or imprisons for unbelief, but probably more so. History shows that the policy of open persecution provoked resistance, and so helped to end itself. But the policy of concealed terrorism and of unavowed boycott makes quietly but surely for a general and widespread cowardice and dishonesty. It is time the ghastly farce of civilized men and women submitting without concerted protest to the domination of a savage superstition was brought to a close.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Our Thought of God To-day."

THE Bible represents God as a being who cannot change either in thought or in action, and yet there is no being about whom people's ideas are so wonderfully changeable. Canon Storr, of Westminster, in a sermon published in the *Christian World Pulpit* of November 13, enumerates the changes which have taken place in the human conception of the Supreme Being. There is one thing, however, which Canon Storr dare not do, namely, trace the evolution of God himself. To do this thoroughly would be openly to undermine the Christian Faith altogether. No priest will ever undertake that duty and still be allowed to occupy his pulpit. And yet, within exceedingly narrow limits, that is exactly what the Canon is doing in the discourse now before us. Men's thought of God is ever changing because God himself is undergoing the same process. The reverend gentleman is fully aware of the never-ceasing growth of knowledge in this scientific age, and he claims that "every bit of knowledge in any subject has something to do with our knowledge of God; and there has come to us in the last fifty years an enormous mass of new knowledge on all kinds of subjects which is having its influence on our thought of God, so that our thought of God is changing." The Canon speaks erroneously of our "knowledge" of God, whereas, in reality, no such "knowledge" exists at all. The most profoundly pious folks in the world have not the least knowledge of God; they only believe that he exists and the depth of their piety is in exact proportion of the strength of their faith. In this region, as Tennyson says: "We have but faith; we cannot know."

The first change in our thought of God, according to Canon Storr, is that "we have put behind us the thought of a God who lives up there, in some distant region apart from the universe.....Now to-day, owing to the influence of the idea of life and of biology, and the thought of evolution, we think of God as somehow dwelling in this universe, not apart from it." Then he says:—

If you think of the difference between a machine and a living thing you will find one of the great distinctions that characterize a living thing is this, that in a living thing there is some principle of inner control; you may call it Life Force, you may

call it what you will, but there is something inside the organism which makes it develop true to type, which regulates the movements of all its cells; there is some marvellous principle of control. But in a machine the principle of control is outside, it is in the engineer. The man made the machine, and the engineer stands outside it. He has made it in such a way that it goes by itself, but not without his attention. So that the principle of control is outside.

The difference between a machine and a living thing, as defined in that extract, is much more theological than scientific, and it is framed to promote the interests of theology. Its sole object is to prepare for the introduction of "God as the indwelling principles of life, dwelling in his works and sustaining his whole creation; the indwelling, controlling spirit." As a matter of fact, there is not a single shred of evidence of the actual existence of God either as Creator or indwelling, controlling principle of the universe. Canon Storr's conception of a machine as having its controlling principle outside is wholly fallacious. He thinks only of man-made machines; but the universe is not a machine after that order at all. The universe is a machine that runs itself and never makes a mistake. The amazing fact is that the Canon is a thoroughgoing evolutionist. He believes that once this earth "was a ball of gas without life on it." Its process of cooling down covered many millions of years.

When its crust was hard enough to receive life, life appeared in very lowly fashion, quite minute forms of life, but those forms had the power to develop and grow. And so again through millions of years life began to branch out, and a certain line of advance became clear. There was a movement toward the back-boned animals. The back-boned animals in their turn developed, and after them came man; not man as we know him now, but man rude, savage, and uncivilized, but with that beginning which contained the promise of enormous future growth, with a mind far superior to the animal mind, with a conscience, with a moral sense, which could appreciate the distinction between right and wrong.

Apparently the Canon regards that scientific story of the tremendously slow evolution of the earth and its forms of life as literally true, though it occupied unnumbered millions of years, and after reading his recital of that story we come to the following astounding statement:—

So it looks as if God's purpose in creation was the gradual production, through many, many stages, of personality, persons with their moral nature, with their spiritual ideals, and with their capacity for love and fellowship, with their desire to know God and their aspirations after him. So if you ask me what I mean by God, what I know about God from his work, I should say this indwelling creative spirit is quite certainly interested in personality; the end of this long process of evolution contains the meaning of it; all the other stages have been leading up to that, and that end is personality. So I think of the purpose of this indwelling Spirit as the creation of a kingdom or a society of human persons who shall live together under the laws of righteousness and love.

Evolution as delineated by science is the strangest and most complicated of all processes known to us; but when a theologian gives his approval to the theory and introduces God as the infallible director of the whole movement, evolution impresses us as an infinitely foolish, cruel, and wicked process, and through his association with it God completely loses his moral character, and becomes the most despicable of all conceivable beings.

Now, according to Canon Storr, the God of evolution, who must be held responsible for an incalculable amount of suffering and sorrow in all parts of the universe, becomes the Spirit of Holy Love in the

Christian religion. The Canon assures us that "Spirit is the highest thing we know"; but we are firmly convinced that Spirit is a figment of the religious imagination. No such being has ever existed or ever will exist, and to call God a Spirit is but politely to bow him into nothingness, which is practically what Canon Storr does. Take the following as a sample:—

Think of our morality, of our sense of right and wrong, of our dreams of being better, of the visions that we see of a time when there shall be no more war, no more class hatred, no more sin. The whole of these ideals, all those visions, in my judgment, become perfectly meaningless unless at the back of them there is a Being who is one day going to realize them, and in whom they are now permanently realized. In other words, the moral nature of man points upwards to a personal source of moral goodness from which that moral nature came and to whom it is tending.

Two things characterise that passage, namely its low view of human nature and its base conception of God. The moral nature of man points, not upward, but downward, to a source in the animal world. In a community of ants we find the sense of right and wrong in full operation, and the moral sense is germinally active in the dog and the monkey. But man's noble ideals and enrapturing visions are by no means meaningless "unless at the back of them there is a Being who is one day going to realize them." The very existence of such a being is rendered more than doubtful by the fact that down to the present he has done absolutely nothing towards the moral elevation of mankind, and there is no ground whatever for the belief that "one day" he will awake and act. Indeed, Canon Storr represents the Supreme Being as unable to do anything without our co-operation. His holy, benevolent purpose falls to the ground unless we help him to carry it out. The preacher exclaims: "What a terrific thought it is that we, in virtue of our freedom, can thwart God's purpose." After all, God is not supreme, and the Bible is mistaken when it says that his will is being universally done. It is easy enough to assert that man cannot defeat God and that in the long run God is going to win; but the reverend gentleman makes such an assertion in total ignorance. He does not and cannot know what the future is going to be, nor has he any authority for affirming that God will do then what he cannot do now.

In reality, Canon Storr's sermon furnishes us with a powerful argument for the non-existence of the Divine Being in whom he so ardently believes. The God who does not act now will never act, and for this statement the history of the world hitherto is our all-sufficient authority.

J. T. LLOYD.

Flogging a Dead Horse.

We think our civilization near its meridian, but we are yet only at the cock-crowing and the morning star.—*Emerson.*

They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of Truth.—*Lowell.*

Rough work, iconoclasm, but the only way to get at Truth.—*O. W. Holmes.*

IN controversy with Freethinkers it is the fashion for the jesuitical defenders of Orthodoxy to explain smilingly that in attacking the barbaric doctrine of hell-fire the "intellectuals" are but flogging a dead horse. That quadruped, however, has a distressing habit of resurrecting, and that there is plenty of kick left in that ancient animal is demonstrated by the literature issued as propaganda by the Orthodox, and also in the publications issued for the alleged instruction of guileless and unsuspecting children. Free-

thinkers, who imagine that one of the oldest and most barbarous religious dogmas is losing its hold on the national mind because the clergy appear to be giving the old, bad, savage ideas faint support in their public utterances, will do well to notice that, while the very objectionable dogmas are still taught quietly throughout the Christian world, the protests of the humanitarians are boycotted in religious family circles, in public and private libraries, and in the newspaper Press. Wherever the clergy retain any of their old-time power they still preach a hell of literal fire. The Roman Catholic Church, the most powerful of the Christian Churches, has never damped one solitary spark of fiery damnation. The Church of England, particularly the High Churchmen, who form the majority of that body, still hold forth on brimstone; and the Salvation Army, which caters for the least cultured and least educated of the community, includes hell in its stock-in-trade. Baptists, Primitive Methodists, and many other Christian sects, still carry on the hateful tradition. In spite of clerical denials, hell is still one of the main characteristics of a creed, the priests of which, outraging the spirit of the age, pray for rain, make daily supplication for the welfare of individual members of the Royal Family, and bless battleships.

Let there be no mistake upon this point. Away from the inquisitorial eyes of Freethinkers, the clergy do all they can to put back the clock of civilization. In this matter, presbyter is but priest writ large. High Church clerics are as reactionary as Roman Catholics and Salvationists. In a book, bearing the imprint of Mowbray & Co., and entitled *The Blessed Sacrament; Drawn from the Writings of the Saints*, the old bestial ideas are restated with frank realism. This publication, it should be borne in mind, is used for young people who are preparing for their first Communion, and these disgusting ideas are therefore forced upon them at the most impressionable time of their lives. Here is a sample of the kind of thing the clergy teach privately to children, while, in public, they attempt to flatter the "intellectuals" by a sham retreat:—

We have about us, or, to speak more truly, we are ourselves immortal souls. We are beings who have once been born, but who now can never die. We came out of nothing, but we cannot go into nothing again. O God forbid, the merciful great God forbid, we should pass into nothing! When they who have led lives of pleasure, of covetousness, of self-willed sin—when such, I say, come to be upon their deathbeds, they may perhaps feel that awful, impossible wish that they could pass into nothing; for to be nothing were better than to be in the strong grip of Satan, and the intolerable heats of hell. Dying sinners may feel that their immortality is to be an unendingness of pain, of remorse, of despair; and the deadness and the dumbness of passing into nothing, though it surely would make even a dying sinner shudder, would be more bearable to think of than the life in hell—the living in fire, the feeding on fire, the breathing fire, the being clothed in fire, the thirsting for cool water where all, all is fire—above, beneath, on this side, on that side, a far-stretching country of burning fire.

This precious publication almost merits the attention of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and there are plenty of other books quite as bad. Anyone can see them displayed in bookshops devoted to the sale of Anglo-Catholic and Roman Catholic publications. Some Nonconformist publishers sell books and tracts filled with similar horrors. One tract, for example, issued within the shadow of St. Paul's Cathedral, bears the title, *What is there after Death?* and it proclaims a hell of literal fire. Here is a passage which shows clearly that some Nonconformists are tarred with the same brush as their High Church and Roman Catholic brethren. Inci-

dentally, it shows how far the Christian Religion is in harmony with civilization and humanism:—

I wonder if you die unsaved whether you will see your believing wife after death? She, afar off, and happy with her Saviour; and you with the curse of unforgiven sin upon you in hell. And some of your children are in heaven, and others are on their way. And when you die your Christless death, will you for a moment see afar off your little ones with the light of heaven on their faces, and the peace of God upon their heads? Oh! these eternal separations! Families broken up for all eternity. Some in light and some in darkness.

Publications such as these raise once more the question not only of the alleged value of the high spiritual and moral tone of the Christian Religion, but also the conduct of the clergy. How small, mean, crude and contemptible such a creed as Christianity appears, after all, with a rationalistic philosophy such as Secularism. Were Lucretius, the noblest of the Roman poets, to reappear upon the earth and see great nations professing to believe in hell, devils, and eternal torture and damnation, he would wonder what blight had fallen upon the human intellect after the lapse of twenty centuries. The blight is Priestcraft, which is now being found out and exposed by the Freethinkers, but which so many people are taught to respect. Fortunately, an ill-educated and superstitious clergy cannot indefinitely control the education of this country, and bend the intellectuals to its will. The power of Priestcraft is passing, and not much longer will it "make a goblin of the sun." The verdict of the jury of the "intellectuals" of the civilized world is now dead against Satan and his flaming abode, a verdict that kills the Devil and puts out hell-fire. This is a verdict that brings relief and delectation to all except those reactionaries who use the lever of fear with which to force open the doors that they may exploit their less educated brethren, and the little children in the schools. English people must modify their present views concerning the clerical control of education, a control which is completely out of touch with the times in which we live. For it is becoming quite plain that men may be ordained to the Christian ministry, and yet have never been converted to civilization.

MIMNERMUS.

Christmas Day Four Centuries Ago.

IN ample time before December 25, I am writing this appeal to all readers of the *Freethinker* to celebrate Christmas Day as an occasion of special observance. No persons with any pretence to education and good feeling should let this memorable date pass without dwelling on the remarkable associations with which history has invested it, and without recalling the illustrious name attached to it in the calendar of civilization. When the feast is spread, or the candles are lit on the tree, let them remember. As to the manner in which the Churches will salute the great name, you will learn if you attend Church on Christmas Day.

I refer, of course, to the name of Vasco da Gama, the discoverer of the Cape route to India. He died on Christmas Day, 1524.

Columbus had discovered America in 1492.

If the Bible had been truly a supernatural revelation, I think the Biblical intelligence should have discovered America before Columbus; and presently I will indicate the point at which I consider the discovery might suitably have been made.

Meanwhile, a new route to India was badly needed by the commerce of Europe. The land-route from,

say, Smyrna to Persia, and Persia to India, was rendered difficult by the hostile power of the Moslem peoples of Western Asia. At that time, the Portuguese exhibited immense energy at seafaring. Prince Henry the Navigator ("navigator" being a most honourable name for prince or commoner) had explored the west coast of Africa. And now it fell to the lot of Vasco de Gama to attempt the tremendous enterprise of a voyage round the Cape. In July, 1497, he set out from Portugal. Southwards he sailed, and beheld, at night, the constellation of the Southern Cross. His four ships rounded the famous Cape. Northwards they passed, along shores where the hippopotamus plunged in rivers, and brown natives watched in amazement the wondrous vessels of Europe. On Natal Day, or Christmas Day, they sighted a land to which they gave the name of Natal; and it bears that name to this our time. Canoes shot out to meet them at Mozambique. The black folk of Melinda greeted them with drum-beats, and a Melinda pilot, who knew the seaway to India, guided the Portuguese across the Indian Ocean; and, after many days, this pilot raised a cry at dawn:—

"Calicut!"

They had reached the port of Calicut, and crowds of Hindus stood wonderingly on the beach. The date was May 17, 1498.

Gama revisited India in 1502, and again in 1524. So far as his influence prevailed, the Hindus were treated with justice. Evils in the Portuguese administration were great. Gama's last months and days were devoted to reform; but he died in the midst of his labours, on Christmas Day, 1524.

In that very year was born Luiz de Camoens. This Luiz—soldier, trader, traveller—both sailed the seas, and appreciated sea-heroes. He composed an epic poem, in which he pictured, in valiant and sonorous verse, the voyage of Gama from Portugal to Calicut; and he proudly called it "Os Lusíads," or "The Portuguese." Once he was wrecked off the mouth of the River Mekong, in China. He swam to shore, having lost all his property except the manuscript of his poem; but to him this was the most precious thing in the world. Camoens died poor, but he had enriched his country's literature; and to-day no name receives more honour in Portugal, or in Brazil, than that of the author of this Epic of the seaman Gama.

In the vivid pages of the *Lusíads*, we find the voyage round the Cape invested with legendary marvels of spirits and divinities. The ancient Greek Gods appear, and take part in the struggle of Vasco da Gama with his difficulties of wind, wave and human opposition. At the Cape a ghastly demon rises up before the eyes of Gama and his companion; and this demoniac Ghost of the Cape forbids the rash Portuguese from proceeding past his rocky fortress and domain. Vain command! Gama pursued his course, and the spirit vanished. All this machinery of the spiritual realm was familiar to poets and readers in the sixteenth century. Nobody accepted it as more than the bright device of an imaginative writer. The poem is not only one of the ornaments of the world's thought, it is an admirable tribute to the courage and resolution of Vasco da Gama and his comrades of the ocean.¹

As already intimated, neither America nor the Cape were known to the keen, well-informed, and inspired (or alleged so to be) writers of the Old and New Testaments. And we might have expected that, in a flash of insight, all the regions of the globe would have been beheld by the Christians who received the Gift

¹ I may be allowed to refer to my *Conduct Stories*, a volume of stories for young readers (published Allen & Unwin, 40 Museum Street, W.C.1; 3s. 6d.), containing a long account, based on Camoens' poem, and entitled "Round the Cape."

of Tongues on the Day of Pentecost. The *Book of Acts* describes the exciting scene in Jerusalem, when crowds of pilgrims heard the Christian preachers talk in the languages of Parthia, Media, Elam, Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia (the province), Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, Rome, Crete, and Arabia. This was the moment when the *Evangel* was to be launched on its victorious career among the populations of the earth. Why were not the curtains of geography drawn aside, and America, Australia, Japan, China, India, and the Cape laid open to the view?

No; fourteen centuries had to pass; and then an Italian unveiled America, and a Portuguese traced the water-way round Africa to Calicut. And later annals of heroism were to tell of Magellan, Drake, Hudson, Anson, Dampier, Cook, Franklin, Peary, Amundsen, Scott, Shackleton, and the rest.

I have often said that, regarded simply as works of art, the two booklets written by "Luke" (whoever he was), namely, the *Third Gospel* and the *Acts*, are the best constituents of the Bible. That is to say, if you look at them as novels, or dramatic legends, and judge them objectively and impartially, as you would judge the works of the late Anatole France, they are admirable ethical stories. The theologians and priests, who understand the Bible less than the common man, have transmuted these books into a rigmarole of "revelation," and so spoiled the ingenious and moving art of "Luke." We have, in this absurd situation, a right to ridicule. We have a right to ask how it is that New Testament authors, who were supplied with hints and data direct from the Publicity Offices of the Tenth Heaven, could not, in plain terms, disclose the existence of America, etc., as regions which were now to be included in the preaching tours of the Saints?

"Here are continents and islands," the sacred voices might have proclaimed, "which swarm with races, Yellow, Brown, Black, Red—waiting to hear the tidings of salvation. They are all brethren of Jerusalem and Athens and Rome. The business of the new Faith is to embrace them all in a splendid unity, harmonious in their economic and political relations."

The voices were dumb. With gigantic efforts, with innumerable distresses, and at the cost of suffering, atrocities, exploitations, and bitter discipline, it was left to human travellers to discover, piece by piece, the far-spread spaces of the globe, and it was left to human wisdom, tragically impeded by human folly, to spell out the secret of the final League of Humanity.

F. J. GOULD.

Books and Life.

In our last note we finished with a promise. Mr. Gerald Cumberland, in his novel, *Striving Flame*, has touched Sir Thomas Browne. It is impossible to deny that the author of *Religio Medici* will repay reading so that one may take from him something of mental utility. We are not particularly interested in style for the moment, and shall not at any time exhalt style above matter. To read him is to come face to face with a gorgeous imagination, free from the fetters of discipline or subjection. Although he is crammed with learning of and ahead of his time, where can we pick up a meal to justify the time expended on him. According to John Addington Symonds, the author of *Religio Medici* held theological opinions which, in their boldness, savoured of Freethought. His evidence helped to convict, at Norwich, two victims of witch-hunting. He wished that the human race could propagate like trees—and had eleven children; and was a mental aristocrat. And by this, we conclude that he was seventy-five per cent. a man, capable of seeing that the pure flame of life which is but love and sympathy is the

centre of the cosmos of all passions. We might wish for something worse for mankind than the possession of the harmony of the solar system; we cannot strive for anything better. Call it what they will, pure flame, mystic fire, invisible sun, it leaps into the light of comprehension when Nietzsche describes Justice, as "love with seeing eyes." We forgive Sir Thomas Browne his inconsistencies, and for the curious or the deeply interested, it may be something more than a coincidence that he was born on October 15 and Nietzsche was born on October 19.

Learned professors have sent us to sleep with their lectures on the "Romantic" and the "Classic" struggle; Billy Merson and Nellie Wallace, at the Palladium, demonstrate this aspect of controversy in a much more effective manner in "Don-Juan Up-to-Date." There is much bowing and scraping and "thee-ing" and "thou-ing" under the bedroom window of Julia (Nellie Wallace) by Don Alfonso, Don Fernan and Don Juan (Billy Merson). As he fails to awaken Julia with a serenade, Don Juan looks round for an effective means whereby and, an Irish pebble, in the shape of a brick, is flung through the casement window to the sound of crashing glass. "Who the hell threw that brick?" asks the fair Julia rushing out on to the balcony. From the romantic to the classic in the shake of a lamb's tail; from the atmosphere of fancy to fact. In the world of ideas it is necessary to throw bricks with a good aim; those "in the trade of philosophy" resent them. Those who do not treat philosophy as a water-tight trade are few and far between, but the Julias of theology must by now be getting a little tired of asking her questions. There would be no need for it if their castle was made with the stones of truth well and truly laid.

Speech, the metaphor of the mind, is sometimes a guide for understanding. If we get a little deeper, and inquire into causes, the result is very often illuminating. Borrow and Arnold, two figures in the world of books, are good subjects for psycho-analytic methods. Read, if you have nothing better, *Lavengro*, *Romany Rye*, or *The Bible in Spain*. Borrow adds to his vagabond leanings with lies of the first magnitude; he would, when dramatically useful, pitch Protestantism against Roman Catholicism, the son against the mother, in the period when these beliefs were held to be of importance. Matthew Arnold, with his rigid discipline, shows us the tightness of the bearing-rein in his poetry when he mentions gypsies. In the *Scholar Gipsy*, in *Thyrsis*, in *Resignation*, he took the outward symbol of gypsy life for what he wanted himself—liberty, but this he dared not take. His early environment conquered the scholar, and he sang his songs in a minor key. The woof of doubt marked them all; the dead hand prevented him from affirming what he knew. And his music tortures the air about what he was doubtful; he worked from the outside to the centre within himself. Landor, as an antidote to Arnold is excellent. His *Imaginary Conversations* are the antithesis of Arnold's poems, and, in his *Diogenes and Plato* we hear another brick through the casement window of tenuous speculation, when the man with the lantern says, "I meddle not at present with infinity or eternity; when I can comprehend them I will talk about them." John Butler Yeats stands on the same ground: "I call myself a Greek, because I will not pretend to know what I do not know, and because I reject a faith which is not true to fact." Like the tinkle on a triangle against this sounds the line, "Light half-believers of our casual creeds." If Matthew Arnold as a boy had run away to sea, his music might have been written in the major key of an affirmation.

As a man of the world, whose philosophy is not afraid of bricks, we gave the "Negro Spirituals" a trial at the Æolian Hall. They are neither. Evidently this show is wearing the wrong hat. The songs are written in nigger English, and if they are spiritual, so is that bright gem of the music-hall, "It ain't gonna' rain no mo'." Mr. James Payne has a fine voice, and a good

presence, but the sight of an evening-dressed audience listening to Salvation Army songs from the cotton fields was pathetic. The white race has to obtain forgiveness from Nubia, and Booker T. Washington is a better tip up of the balance than the singing of songs that are broken English, and remind us of what we would forget—the missionary, our choicest export.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Acid Drops.

Gipsy Smith, who has had "God Speed" wished to his mission by the King (it must be very annoying to have to patronise every form of religious insanity that happens to be well advertised, but there are drawbacks to every profession), has had a query put to him by one of his converts. The convert explains that he once robbed a cousin of a considerable sum of money, and wishes to know if he will be saved if he prays. To this Gipsy Smith replies:—

There can never be any peace save through restitution. Pray on, but put the wrong right so far as you can.

Now that case throws a very illustrative light upon the quality of the converts made by these evangelists. The conversion—providing the missionary is telling the truth—is clear. The man is convinced of the power of Jesus, and he is also desirous of being saved. A decent character, however, would not have required to ask the question whether he ought to hand back the stolen money or not; he would have done so. What he is asking is really whether he can keep the plunder, but save his own soul by a little extra prayer. In plain language the man is at heart as big a thief as ever, but wishes to know whether he can keep the swag with safety. There are many similar conversions in cases where a policeman puts his hands on a man who has stolen something, and the man gives in quietly and hands back the stolen property. We have a little curiosity as to whether the convert will act in the same way as the detected thief. But whether he does so or not, he will still count as one of the converts.

For the rest, we are sorry to say that Gipsy Smith's theology is quite wrong. There is no warranty in genuine Christianity that restitution *must* be made before forgiveness can be granted. The great illustrative story here—the leading case, as lawyers would say—is the story of the thieves on the cross. One of these was promised paradise by Jesus himself as a reward for a simple act of faith. There was no mention there of restitution, that was an obvious impossibility. The thief simply had faith in Jesus, and that placed him on a level with those who had lived a life of rectitude throughout. And there are death-bed repentances. What is to become of these if restitution must be made before forgiveness can be granted? Another great evangelist, the Rev. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, once said:—

My dear hearer, whoever thou mayst be, whatever thy past life may have been, if thou wilt trust Christ, thou shalt be saved from all thy sin in a moment; the whole of thy past life shall be blotted out; there shall not remain in God's book so much as a single charge against thy soul.

Now that is sound Christianity, and it is the most frightfully immoral teaching, the greatest ethical falsehood that the world has ever listened to. It explains the attraction Christian preaching of the Gipsy Smith variety has for poor characters in which the emotional and the cowardly dominate the courageous and the intellectual. It is a preaching for essentially poor characters. It leaves the man or the woman not a bit the better, and the world much poorer than it might otherwise be. It leaves the sources of human misery and vice absolutely untouched, but it provides occupations for men like Torrey, and Smith, and gives the parsons a chance for a cheap advertisement for a creed that disgusts the man of genuine character and rational discernment.

The Morinons of Bradford appear to have made themselves unpopular by carrying out a Mormon baptismal ceremony in the Corporations Baths. The seven converts to be baptised stood shoulder deep in water, whilst an elder performed the baptism. Except that the ceremony is reminiscent of the old negro Mississippi spirituals, there does not seem to be much cause for Christians to be indignant. Maybe, however, it is a case of business rivalry and jealousy. Like most American products, Mormonism knows how to advertise itself well, and although our own priests have very little to learn in that direction, they prefer more polite and less-flamboyant methods. Perhaps they have the uncomfortable fear that some day they will have to compete with the latest Christian sect, and hire public buildings for the purposes of advertising their ritual.

The Rev. R. T. Glover thinks that people should be permitted to think differently in matters of religion, but points out that the Roman Church does not agree with this. Now that is not quite fair to the Roman Church in thus singling it out, and it is an implied condemnation of Christianity. For if the New Testament is to be trusted our eternal salvation depends upon our all thinking alike. "Ye must believe" is the keynote of salvation, and there is no room made for differences of opinion. Hell has always been the reward of those who choose to do their own thinking, careless of consequences. But Mr. Glover belongs to that curious type of Christian who first of all tries to find out what is most generally acceptable, and then declares it to be true Christianity. In this way Christianity is always up to date; or rather we might say it is the religious method of bringing God Almighty up to date.

Dr. Scharlieb, in discoursing about matters of sex, stated that the whole thing had been brutalised, the glory and beauty of human life, the wonderful adaptation of every part of the body and mind to its own purpose, had all gone down in a sea of selfishness and vulgarity. What on earth does the lady expect with the various churches having the loudest voices in these matters? Look at the collection of saints! Look at the number of monasteries and convents, and look at the vicious attacks on any individuals who try to speak rationally on these matters. Man was born in sin and shapen in iniquity. With that as the beginning, we do not see how anything will come right, and we suggest that Dr. Scharlieb takes her enquiry a little further and publicly names the institutions or papers responsible for the state of affairs she condemns.

Some Christians are quite outraged at the growing hold that Freethought is getting in Weston-super-Mare. One of these frenzied individuals, writing to the local paper, declains against it as the "biggest catastrophe that can be brought upon any town in the United Kingdom." His agony grows as he gets on and he exclaims, "For the sake of the little ones, how happy one would feel if Christian fathers and mothers of Weston had the power to crush the formation of such a society in this town, but the law, unfortunately, has to be considered even in such a crisis as this." This good Christian evidently longs for the good old days of the rack and thumbscrew, or at least the right to make use of the expanse of water round Weston by dropping Freethinkers therein. He makes a frantic appeal to Christians to attend any future meetings that may be held. We wonder what for. We also wonder what decent-minded Christians think of this kind of religious product?

We are glad to see in the *Daily Herald* an appreciative notice of Thomas Paine's work as a great democrat. It overestimates rather than underestimates Paine's influence in the development of English Democracy. The authorities, wiser in their day than the *Daily Herald* appears to be in ours, freely recognized that the most dangerous of all his works was his attack on the Christian superstition in his famous *Age of Reason*. Paine saw you cannot get the rights of man so long as the

human mind is clogged with superstition. But then Paine was not concerned with getting votes and did not write with one eye on the chapels to see whether what he wrote would lose their support or not. When some of our reformers have the courage to attack Christianity they will be getting to the roots of a great many of our troubles. A free mind means eventually a free body. But slavery of the mind invites slavery in every other direction.

In 1902 the then Pope instituted a commission to report as to what was the correct interpretation of biblical teachings. The result, duly authorised by the Pope, was issued a few years ago, and that Roman Catholics are informed they must believe that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, they must believe in the literal truth of the story of creation, that man and woman was formed as the Bible states, and that the devil in the form of a serpent casually caused man to fall. That is going the whole hog. There are no half measures here, and all we can say is that anyone who can swallow that lot really deserves some sort of a reward—either here or hereafter.

Did the mammoth once rove the forest glades of Pall Mall and Piccadilly? Did prehistoric monsters slough and wallow in the ooze of the River Thames as it flowed through the jungle of Charing Cross? The picture is conjured up by the discovery of prehistoric remains by workmen digging foundations for a new building near the Admiralty Arch. Professor Sir Arthur Keith, in a report on the bones, states that they belong to a period anterior to the so-called ice age. This was many thousands of years before the alleged date of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden.

A writer in the *Church Quarterly Review* expresses the hope that a more intimate association may develop between Christians and Jews in preparation for the day when there will be no religions, but only Religion. This statement is as clear as Chelsea Bridge on a foggy night. It is a juggle with words which is theology in a nutshell.

A Socialist clergyman, the Rev. Ingle James, writes to the *New Leader*, complaining that many would join the I.L.P. were they not afraid that it is at heart hostile to the Christian faith. To that the editor replies that the *New Leader* has published sermons, and states that "the majority, probably the immense majority, of the I.L.P. consists of believers." The editor would have shown more courage had he contented himself with the statement that the I.L.P. did not interfere at all with religious opinions, and simply ran a propaganda which appealed to men upon grounds that might be common to all whether they believed Christianity to be true or not. It is true that this policy has its dangers. It might lose votes from those who are Christians before everything else, and who are of the curious mental type that can believe the mission of Jesus to be the securing of a reduction in the hours of labour and the municipalization of the food supply. And the sentimental slops served up by Christian Socialists and candidates who are out for the chapel vote have been too liberally dispensed for another, and a more honest policy, to be easily adopted. As it is we would like to know what genuine Socialists make of the society of the future in which some men decline to work with others because they are not Christians? What will the Christian Socialists do with them? Do they propose to have a lethal chamber in the Socialist Republic to which all who do not believe in Jesus Christ will be dispatched?

But we are inclined to question the statement that the majority of I.L.P. members are Christians. If some kind of enquiry were made the editor might have his eyes opened on this point. What we believe to be the case is that those members who are Freethinkers foolishly allow Christians to intrude their own religious opinions while keeping silent regarding their own beliefs concerning the Christian superstition. We know this to be

the case in a very large number of instances, and, as we have said very often we believe this to be quite a mistaken policy. If Christians of the James type will chatter their foolishness about Jesus it is only right that Freethinkers should drop their attitude of looking at them as so many irresponsible children, and say quite plainly what *they* think about the master superstition. By remaining silent they encourage these people to believe they are in the majority, they are conniving at the discouragement of their own beliefs, and are assisting at a general process of dishonesty and dissimulation. We would strongly advise Freethinkers who belong to these movements to let their opinions be more generally known. It would at least permit some of their leaders to be more straightforward than they are at present when dealing with religion, and a little greater intellectual honesty than at present exists in our public life would do no harm.

In connection with what has been said we commend to Christian Socialists an article on "Socialism and Religion," in the November issue of the *Socialist Standard*. It indulges in some very plain speaking on the relations between Christianity and labour.

The case of Dr. Haydn Brown, who has been struck off the medical register for alleged advertising, has aroused considerable interest, and one would like to be quite clear whether the motive operating is mere trade unionism or care for the public interest. If the latter, one finds it rather hard to reconcile this concern with the silence of medical men all over the country—with a rare exception here and there—in the face of such wholesale impostures as the Hickson healing mission. There can scarcely be a medical man in the country, certainly not one who is fit to be trusted with the care of the public health, who is not aware of what a gross imposture this is, and of the very serious after effects in many cases. And yet they remain silent! Were they to speak out this exploitation of public ignorance and credulity would soon be stopped. For various reasons, not one of them very creditable, our doctors remain silent. And to be silent in the face of this imposture, while acting so energetically in other cases gives rise to the suspicion that it is the trade union spirit rather than the public interest that is most active.

The Suffragan Bishop of Whalley judges the characters of the couples he marries by looking to see if they cross their t's and dot their i's when they sign the register. Mr. Way-of-the-World, in the *Daily Herald*, suggests that John Jones and Mary Ann Brown, when joined in holy matrimony by him, scored.

We suppose that the rule to say as little about Freethinkers and Freethought as possible—unless it is something bad—must be observed in newspaper offices. So we are not surprised at finding the *Observer* attributing Colonel Ingersoll's wish that instead of the Pilgrim Fathers landing on Plymouth Rock, Plymouth Rock had landed on the Pilgrim Fathers, to a "well-known Professor." But the world never does know how much it owes to the despised Freethinker, in much more important matters than the one noted.

The *Evening Standard* in warning the British public that a great deal which appears in the French Press must not be taken as representative of French public opinion, explains that in France there are a large number of papers which are known as "journals of opinion." These are run by "able and active journalists" and express only individual opinion. The *Standard* says we have nothing like it in this country. We are inclined to say "so much the worse for this country." These journals of opinion do represent individual opinion, and are therefore a better representative of genuine public conviction than is our own syndicated Press which so often looks round to see what will "take on," and then proceeds by a process of suppression and distortion to

create a bogus public opinion in this or that direction. Individual opinion represents individual conviction. What do our newspaper combinations—which will run a paper expressing one view in one town and another view in some other town—represent? One way and another it is not easy to say whether the good or the evil influence of our Press is the greater.

The Bishop of St. Albans is not content to take physical disease as sent by God. All we can say on that is that the Bishop is in flat contradiction to the Prayer of the Church of England, and so should resign. The Prayer Book is quite clear on the point. "Whatsoever" the disease may be, "know you that it is certainly God's visitation." The Bishop knows better, but he will draw the salary nevertheless. Honesty in religious matters does not follow the same rules as honesty in other directions.

When the Bishop proceeds to give reasons for his belief he does not impress one. He says that all a medical practitioner does is to assist nature to do the work of healing, and what the physiologist calls nature's laws are God's laws. But disease in the physical sphere is against God's will. Now that is rank, staring nonsense. Disease is as much an expression of "Nature's laws" as is health. Natural law does not say be healthy; all that is meant by natural law here is that given certain conditions either what is called disease or what is called health will result. There is no more discord in nature when man has disease than there is when he has the most robust health. The childish imbecilities of the pulpit would surprise no one were they not so common.

Police Inspector Williams, of Bangor, summoned three men who did unlawfully on the Lord's Day work at the task of converting a motor van into a passenger vehicle for use at a funeral. The magistrate dismissed the summons on the ground that the work was one of necessity or charity. Quite seriously we should say that it will be both an act of necessity and charity to the rest of the community if in the very near future these same three men are called upon to prepare for another funeral in which the principal figure will be Police Inspector Williams. "He served the country by his death," would not be an inappropriate epitaph.

The late Rev. E. L. Savory, Stowmarket, Suffolk, left estate of the value of £117, 698. Having ignored Christ's injunction regarding the storing up of wealth, we tremble to think where the unhappy parson is spending eternity.

The Rev. William Guthrie, Vicar of St. Mark's, in the Bowery district of New York, must be badly shocking the American puritans. Following the prohibition by Bishop Manning of "services" in which barefoot "Greek goddesses" danced before the altar to suitable music, the vicar has staged an elaborate Indian aboriginal festival before the uncurtained altar of his church. The entire service, says Reuter, was drawn from aboriginal sources, the congregation being invited to join in prayers to the gods of the Indians, while Oskenton, a professional Indian singer, stood at the lectern in a feathered headdress chanting dirges in his native tongue. The intermittent beat of concealed tom-toms heightened the effect, while the so-called "rhythmic" lights, which the vicar recently installed, flashed and dimmed. The people "sat spell-bound, enveloped in a heavy cloak of incense that sent stifling fumes throughout the church," the report adds. Mr. Guthrie's plea is that people are fatigued and "need to be shown old things in a new way." The clerical gentleman is certainly original, but all the same we fancy his show will pall more quickly with the inhabitants of the Bowery than the cinema does. However, whatever his brethren in Christ may say, the Rev. Guthrie certainly knows all there is to be known about the priest's art—that is, how to appeal to the senses of a mob.

Our Sustentation Fund.

Previously acknowledged, £360 19s. 6d. W. B. Columbine, £25; K. C. Sanjana, 10s.; R. L. Martland, £5; Mr. and Mrs. W. Hopper, £2 10s.; D. Cameron, 2s. 6d.; J. Gair, 2s. 6d.; T. Dixon, £2 2s.; J. Hardie, 2s. 6d.; G. R. Baulkes, 5s.; A. Lane, 10s.; J. Adams, £1; Mr. and Mrs. H. Black and Family, 10s.; P. F., 2s.; K. J., 2s. 6d.; The Taylor Family, 7s. 6d.; F. J. Roberts, 3s.; W. G. D. (Streatham Common), 5s.

Per E. Pinder: H. H. Woolley, 10s.; E. Haining, 2s. 6d.; E. Pinder, 10s..

Per H. Bayford (Manchester): H. Richardson, 2s. 6d.; E. C. Bentley, 2s. 6d.; S. Cohen, 10s.; F. E. M., £1 1s.; H. I. B., 4s.; J. Lazarick, 10s. 6d.

Total, £403 7s.

As we go to press on December 2, and the closing date for the Fund is fixed for December 7, the final list of acknowledgements will appear next week.

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.

A. LANE.—We fancy the work referred to is *Pagan Christs*, by J. M. Robertson.

H. BAYFORD.—Thanks for remittance. We quite appreciate the desire of many to contribute, who are unable, under present circumstances. But it is still possible to help the Cause in other ways than financial ones.

F. J. ROBERTS.—Thanks. We are quite well, and delighted to find you as enthusiastic in the fight as ever.

E. TAYLOR.—Pleased to hear from you, but sorry the news is not better. The weather this year has been very trying, perhaps that is partly responsible. Regards to the rest of the family.

A. G. COWELL.—Yes, you have the office address quite correctly, which we presume is the one to which you refer.

M. J. STANTON.—The references are Psalms lviii., 10-11, and Psalms cxxxvii.-ix.

LIEUT.-COL. SANJANA.—We are glad to have your high appreciation of the *Freethinker*. We have many readers in India, and they are not the least interested among them. After all, what is said against the Christian superstition specifically will apply with change of terms and emphasis to all other forms of the same evil thing.

F. J. WOOD.—Next week. Crowded out of this issue.

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 "Midland Bank, Ltd., 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.

To-day (December 7) Mr. Cohen will visit Hull. It is many years since Mr. Cohen lectured there, but there must be a large number of Freethinkers there, and there should be good meetings. The meetings will be held in the Metropole, Windsor Room, which, we understand, is a large one, so that there will be room for all, and we hope the capacity of the place will be taxed to the utmost. In the afternoon Mr. Cohen will meet the members of the Branch and discuss the prospects of future work in the City. That meeting will be held in the Albany Room in the same building.

Mr. Cohen had a very good meeting on Sunday last at Leicester. The hall was quite full, and there was what one might call an excellent "atmosphere" pervading the meeting. The hall has been newly decorated and is a credit to the Leicester movement. Mr. Sidney Gimson occupied the chair, and we were pleased to see him looking better than when we were last in Leicester.

Mr. F. I. Bale will speak to-day (December 7) in No. 2 Room, City Hall, Glasgow, on "The Gospel of Secularism." The meeting will commence at 6.30. There will be a silver collection. On the following Sunday Mr. George Whitehead will visit the City. We hope that friends will make the meetings as widely known as possible.

To-night (December 7) Mrs. E. Bannister, member of the Cremation Society, will speak on the subject of Cremation. This is a subject on which most Freethinkers for various reasons—sanitary and otherwise—have very decided opinions, and there will no doubt be a good attendance. The occasion is a good one to introduce new comers.

On behalf of the Executive Mr. Whitehead lectured on Sunday last at the West London Trades Hall and Institute. There was a good meeting and an urgent request for more on the same lines. They should get them.

The National Secular Society's Annual Dinner is fixed for Tuesday, January 13. Fuller particulars will be announced later. We are making this statement as early as possible so that London and provincial Freethinkers may keep the date open. The dinner will be, as before, at the Midland Grand Hotel, St. Pancras. It is very easy to get at, being well served by 'bus, tram and train from all parts of London. We advise all to make a special note of the date.

Each generation of physicists discovers in so-called brute matter powers which, but a few years ago, the most instructed physicist would have thought incredible. When there is forced upon him the inference that every point in space thrills with an infinity of vibrations, the conception to which it tends is much less that of a universe of dead matter, than that of a universe everywhere alive.—Herbert Spencer.

The Government of the United States is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion.—George Washington.

Karl Marx.

IV.—THE RUSSIAN EXAMPLE.

WHILE in Moscow I kept pinching myself all day long to know whether I was asleep or awake; my own senses seemed to tell me that I was awake, the phantasmagoria around me was like a dream.

In an ordinary way those who come across a proposed Communist settlement never regard the matter as serious, while hitherto the few experiments actually made, whether of Fourier's phalanstery or even the community of the Doukhobors, or, in another sphere, Ford's Peace-ship floated on high ideals, have become at length more absurd than the extravaganza of a comic poet; but it is hard, it was almost impossible for me, actually on the spot, to realize that one of the greatest countries in the world should form the entire scene of a Communist settlement.

I had more than one reason for looking forward to my visit with pleasure, for I had been the first member of Parliament to propose the recognition of the Republican Government in Russia, and, on the other hand, certain of the professors in Petrograd and in Moscow had shown a real appreciation of my Psychology. These matters I mention now to indicate that if I had any personal bias it was entirely in favour of the Soviet rulers, for having gone to Russia by invitation of the University of Moscow, with the approval of the Government, I was styled a "guest of State."

I travelled from Riga to Moscow in company with the American Relief Association—it was during the Famine—and it was lucky for me that chance threw me in their way, otherwise I should have perished of hunger on the journey, which occupied two days. The train was destitute of any kind of comfort, and at night we lighted ourselves with the uncertain flame of a tallow candle. When finally it was announced that we had arrived at Moscow I looked at the place with stupefaction. The rails had run into a terminus certainly, but as I looked out of the window the general impression was that of the hasty improvization of a railway station at some new mining camp, except indeed that there was no crowd to await the coming train. There were no officials visible, no porters, except two or three Chinese, or so they seemed to me, who made no offer to assist with the luggage.

There was no one to meet me, and as a stranger arriving at Moscow in the circumstances is looked on with suspicion, I had probably spent my first days in prison but for the good nature of two fellow passengers who, after securing a droshky, came back to enquire for me. These were two members of the Foreign Office staff, one of them being Mr. Ahrons, who was afterwards in the company of Vorovski when he was shot at Geneva; in conversation on the train I found that both these gentlemen had lived at Hampstead, not far from my abode, for many months. Here I touch on one favourable aspect of modern Russia—a rare sense of fraternity, and, amongst friends, of real friendliness of manner, and with a sudden recollection of Oxford, I said, Gods and little fishes, is this alone not worth a revolution?

We drove to the Foreign Office, and that drive through miles of streets was a weird affair, for those streets were all deserted, and in all the houses the shutters were up or the windows were broken, and the only sign of vitality consisted in flaming notices on walls here and there, "Workmen of the world, unite." Remember that at that time Moscow had two million inhabitants.

Near the centre I saw from time to time knots of people, looking like workmen, but these disappeared down side streets before we came up with them. There

was apparently something so mysterious and sinister in these signs that I could not help thinking of the desertion and burning of Moscow in Napoleon's time. Still nearer the Kremlin we saw other groups who remained. These were soldiers, badly dressed, and wearing a curious spiked helmet of white felt with a red star on the front. These were the soldiers of the Cheka—the organization of the Surety.

At length we arrived at about seven o'clock at the Foreign Office, but as no word had been sent about myself I had to wait below, while my companions kindly mounted the stairs to see what could be done.

Now my American friends, expecting to reach Moscow early in the morning, had served out breakfast at six o'clock; but for a train to be several hours late is quite normal in Russia, and we had arrived at about four in the afternoon. I had had nothing to eat or drink since six in the morning and I was hungry and cold.

After waiting an hour I was asked to go upstairs, and after passing a series of Tartar-looking soldiers with fixed bayonets I found myself in a large room that looked like an improvised accountant's and typist's office of a new commercial firm. I was there introduced to a black-haired, young little Jewess, very good looking, full of intelligence and Yankee energy—she had like most of the others there come from New York—and who kept jolting a telephone up and down as if she would impart to it some of her own "buck."

After a long time she got a response, and at length, and, having been put on, I heard to my joy the voice of Krassin. He was delighted to hear from me, but evidently disconcerted. They had had no word of my arrival, and he did not know where on earth he could put me up—this in one of the greatest capitals of the world.

At length in desperation he asked my friends to try and find me a place for that night at the Savoy; on the following day they would get me a "logement," as he said. The Savoy! I pictured a luxurious palace, for I had heard of the Savoy of old. We arrived, and we were again confronted with Tartar-looking soldiers with fixed bayonets, but after some parley we were allowed to ascend.

I was shown into what must have been a fine bedroom before the Revolution. There was no carpet, but there was a rickety table and two chairs, one of which was smashed. The walls were bare, except for a quaint picture of a sportsman shooting a fox—I noted these details, for I was left here alone for three hours—there was a fine bath with hot and cold water-taps, but with neither hot or cold water, electric light fixtures but no light. I sat there in the dark thinking out a pleasing cross between "Alice in Wonderland" and "Don Quixote," when suddenly out of this desolation came a ring on the telephone, and the good Schwetz, Krassin's secretary, said he would call on me in the morning. Then at midnight came my friends, "like good Christians," as the goody-goody books would say, but they happened both to be Jews; their goodness, however, was indisputable, for they asked me to go to their room for supper.

I confess that at so divine a word my mind dilated to a great vision—a supper in Moscow! With Ambassadors! Well we shared all there was—what good souls and fraternal they were—and my share was a piece of German sausage about the size of my thumb, a slice of white bread that tasted like Witney blankets, and a small hunk of black bread that from its consistency and savour might have been cut from a door mat. On the other hand, we had coffee, strong enough to make one's hair stand on end.

Meanwhile they had found me a better bedroom. There was no furniture there, but a bed which might

have spoken as Abbe Sieyès did of his Revolution—"I survived." Yes, but not without difficulty. It had a ridge in the middle so sharp that with a little start I fell out on one side, and rectifying that, fell out on the other. In the end, lying flat on my back and balancing myself with judgment, I called on the god of sleep. He did not come, but now how can I, without offending delicate ears, say who did? You remember Wordsworth's admonition against having contempt for the smallest thing—perhaps they weren't the smallest, and my sentiment certainly was not that of contempt. I recognized their power, their energy, their malign intelligence, and I, balanced like a new Prometheus on my ridge, found safety only in one chance, and that is that the forces were as strong on the right as on the left.

Then next morning when I mentioned the fact, perhaps peevishly, to a young Quaker lady who had come over from Moscow to look after the children, she smiled sweetly and said, "Yes, but you must remember that they were there before you!"

The good Schwetz came late in the day, and he asked me what I would like. As I had had nothing to eat at all, I made a cheerful suggestion to that effect, but immediately I regretted it. I saw pass over the benevolent countenance of Schwetz a shade of pain and perplexity; then like one recalling a strange and fleeting vision he said he thought he remembered a place where I might get breakfast. As a matter of fact we found it, in an underground hole like a cellar, and I had a sort of bun and milk, but never dinner at Voisin's or the Café Marguéry tasted like that mysterious bun and dubious, possibly lacteal, fluid.

Afterwards I met Krassin at his office, a tremendous office, absolutely humming with business—apparently—for nothing seemed to come of it; and, to get me this new "logement" he spoke of, bells were rung, messengers dispatched, the Kremlin was kept in agitation for hours; at length seeing how I had already pained my good friends by my demands, I said, "Oh, well, I had better stop at the Savoy," and so I did during my stay in Moscow.

I have told these tales to show the conditions to which the Communist régime had reduced the Russian capital; but the most amazing discovery to me was that of the incapacity of the Government to do the simplest things. I could give all sorts of instances, but this is typical: Outside the front door of the palace of the American Relief—for which, by the way, they had to pay £10,000 for rent—there was a load of bricks, and for some reason or another Major Carroll, who was then in charge, was troubled about this and he wanted it removed. The negotiations with the Government were carried on for a fortnight, during which the Kremlin was loud with telephone rings, and orders galore were given, till at last Djerjinsky, the head of the Cheka, sent down a man to smash all the bricks with a sledge-hammer. Major Carroll could no longer say that there was a load of bricks outside the door; a fragment is not a brick! A part may be greater than, but it is not equal to, the whole.

About this time the "new economic system" was decided on, and a little private trading was allowed. The whole trade of Moscow at first consisted of a pedlar's stand with long bootlaces of many colours, and the wares of a dozen women who stood in the gutter facing the footpath, each with a plate in her hand, and on each plate reposing a dozen slices of the white bread and black bread I have described. On the following day the butchery trade was installed—a fellow with corduroy breeches and top-boots sitting on the footpath with his boots in the gutter, and with half a raw sheep on his knees; from this carcass he cut off, at exorbitant prices, pieces of meat.

The next day appeared women with fruit, which was abundant round Moscow. For one apple I paid what in English money would be sevenpence, a price which I found afterwards to be the equivalent to a railway conductor's wages for a month. So much for wages, and for the abolition of profiteering! On the following day appeared a flaming perfumery shop, and the ladies made a rush for it.

In the next article I will give other impressions.

ARTHUR LYNCH.

Correspondence.

ARTHUR LYNCH'S "ETHICS."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In conversation with a religious friend some time ago I happened to mention Mr. Lynch's name. Instantly my friend exclaimed, "But Lynch himself is a religious man, if you read his *Ethics* you'll find he believes in God and immortality." As, at that time, I had only read Mr. Lynch's critical essays in the *Freethinker* I thought my friend had made a mistake, but having read the book in question I find that my pious friend was fully justified in claiming Colonel Lynch as a soldier of the Lord. Thus we find Mr. Lynch's name used in support of superstitions that he would be the first to denounce, whilst on the other hand there is nothing compensatory in the way of added knowledge, or clearer modes of thought. His "God" is merely a name he gives to an unknown factor, or factors. All that is vital in his system of Ethics rests on a surer foundation than theological speculations that, I still insist, are purely anthropological. That, in brief, is the charge I have brought against Mr. Lynch, and whether I have justified it or not I must leave to the judgment of those readers who have followed this discussion and who have read Mr. Lynch's book.

Mr. Lynch in his last letter says the critical question is really, Is Nature conscious? I reply that the "critical question" is nothing of the sort, and that it would be difficult to express a greater fallacy in three words than Mr. Lynch here contrives to do. Consciousness is, primarily, a state of awareness; it is the expression of a relation. If then we ask ourselves, Is Nature—meaning by Nature the universal process—conscious? we are bordering on absurdity. For if Nature is conscious it must be conscious of something, and if Nature is everything—it is a *reductio ad absurdum*.

To ask, Is there consciousness in Nature? is not a modification of the above query; it is a different thing altogether, and to answer the one is not to answer the other. Consciousness only appears under certain conditions, and Mr. Lynch neatly, if unwittingly, exposes the whole fallacy by referring to human consciousness. He falls into Sir Oliver Lodge's error of assuming that what is true of a part is true in like degree of the whole. All that we can assert is that the phenomenon of consciousness exists *potentially* (like everything else) in the fundamental energies of the universe.

Javali's letter consists, in the main, of mere captious quibbling. In a discussion such as this one cannot stop to "explain the explanation" and remove every misconception that is likely to arise in the minds of one's readers, even if the infirmity of human language permitted it. Certain things have to be taken for granted, except when one is writing for a Kindergarten. Thus: when I speak of Nature, every intelligent reader knows the sense in which I use the term. It is a perfectly-legitimate and unambiguous expression. There is no need for me to append a footnote saying: Gentle reader, in speaking of Nature I have not in mind a genial old lady with side-curls and a capacious bosom, but merely use the term to express the universal process. I doubt if anyone, except Javali, regarded my use of the term Nature as an attempt to personify "eternal cosmic forces."

Javali's criticism of my use of the word "ends" in Nature is the result of a complete failure to distinguish between the *general* and the *particular*. To speak of

an "end of Nature" (*general*) is a contradiction in terms; but to speak of "ends in Nature" (*particular*) is perfectly consistent with the most rigorous mechanistic philosophy. Javali himself speaks of *processes*, viz. particular processes, in contradistinction to the one general process.

In inorganic Nature the conflicts of the opposing forces and energies end always in equilibrium. In organic Nature the conflict ends in adaptation—another form of equilibrium. The equilibrium in both cases is, of course, relative and not absolute. "End" is itself relative, and has nothing in common with the assumed ultimate end "to which the whole creation moves" beloved by the theologian. (Javali would probably reply that "results in equilibrium" would be a more correct description, but it is the same thing, for when a number of factors in combination effect a certain result that is the end of that particular process, even if that "end" becomes one of the factors in a further process.) There is no real analogy between Nature and what we ordinarily understand by an "endless chain," but even in the latter the individual links do not lose their identity.

When Javali says I contrast the ends of inorganic and organic Nature with those of human beings, as though the latter were not in the same category as the organic, he is again exhibiting the same confusion with regard to the *general* and the *particular*. For whilst man is, in general, subject to the same environment as the rest of the organic world, he differs (and the difference is a vastly important one since it is the chief thing that marks him out from the rest of the animal kingdom) inasmuch as he consciously adjusts means to ends not, as the "animal" does, by utilising the products of Nature immediately at hand, but by tools of his own invention. Javali will surely not deny that one of the results of this is to enable man to utilise energies of inorganic Nature that were previously wasted so far as he was concerned, and to secure adaptations in organic Nature in considerably less time and with considerably less waste than is effected by natural forces not under the conscious control of man.

It is when Javali comes to deal with the question of "waste" that he exhibits most clearly his complete lack of appreciation of the questions in dispute. When I speak of "waste" in Nature I do not use the term to signify an absolute leakage. I do not picture to myself a sort of back-door to Nature through which the wasted energies, having "wangled" out of their job, escape, trailing, like the ghosts of Erebus, into the outer darkness. "Waste" is relative; it implies the possibility of economy. Energies are "wasted" in the sense that, being capable of doing useful work, they accomplish nothing but useless dissipation. A light or a heat wave that is capable of affecting a beneficial change in a sentient being but does not do so is certainly wasted so far as that being is concerned. Am I anthropocentric? Possibly I am. We are all anthropocentric in so far as we judge the universe by human standards, and we do so for the simple reason that they are the only standards we have, and we either have to pass judgment accordingly or surrender ourselves to "faith." When we witness in Nature what in everyday experience we term "waste," we ought, consistently, to call it by its proper name. The attitude that there may be some ulterior motive in this "apparent" waste, is one proper to religion, not science.

I am under no delusion concerning man's place in Nature. I recognize that I am of no more importance in the universal process than the beetle I crush under my foot. But whilst I differ from Mr. Lynch in thinking that Nature has any purpose with Man, I think that Man can have a very definite purpose with Nature (I am not here suggesting a separation), and evolve a system of society in which a relative equilibrium will be attained without the present heartrending waste of human potentialities.

In re mind: here again I trusted to the general sense of my remarks to make my meaning clear, and I doubt if anyone but Javali thought I made of mind a "material entity." I am substantially in agreement with his definition, although it is rather laboured and not entirely free from that ambiguity he would impute to me. I

should express it more directly by saying: *Mind is the reaction of the environment upon a sensitive form of matter competent to receive it.* I hope, at some future date, to deal with the whole subject of mind and matter from an avowedly materialistic standpoint but avoiding some of the extravagancies of the older materialistic school.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

SIR,—It is with some reluctance that I take up the cudgels again in defence of my *Ethics*, but Mr. Panton's letter might give rise to misconceptions in respect both to my methods and conclusions.

As to the "mediocre intelligence" with which he twits me, I remember the French proverb which may be roughly translated: The prettiest girl in the world can give no more than she has. So I, with my mediocre intelligence, have tried to give my best.

I deny, however, the "manufactured opinions"; nothing is further from the mark.

In reviewing the studies which have underlain the *Ethics*, I have not ignored that "of the animal and early man." This is already clear in *Principles of Psychology*, while in *Ethics* I devote a special chapter to the question of evolution in relation to ethics, that chapter being the condensation of material for a volume.

Next, I nowhere make an appeal, as one might gather from Mr. Panton, on grounds of religion; the whole intent of the book is opposed to that. On the other hand, there is no reason why the study of religions should be excluded from the purview of a work on ethics.

Without pursuing Mr. Panton's objections point by point, I will indicate somewhat grossly, for the sake of brevity, the main guiding lines on which I have relied:

I first of all remove all pre-conceptions due to religions or previous ethical systems. All that is consistent with giving, as I have done, a rapid historical review of the most notable of these systems. I desire objectivity in the manner of regard. Next I solicit the help of all the sciences, not only the biological but the physical and the mental, in order to gain as clear a vision as possible of the world in which our actions take place. Considering man first as an individual I submit him to some study, and there my *Psychology*, which is the foundation of the system, comes into play. This study affords certain criteria of higher development. Then I look at man as a member of a society.

Without presuppositions, the enquiry for standards is pursued, with the aid of what I have already indicated, so as to gain lines of guidance. In this investigation the principles of "Truth, Energy, Sympathy" emerges as basic. I have called these, simply by way of convenience of expression, the "tripod of ethics."

I submit a discussion to show that each of these principles is necessary, and that their combination is sufficient to give us our foundational structure. Then I trace out the consequences that arise from the acceptance of these positions, and I show, by way of application, the forms of intercourse, the institutions, the laws that arise in the best functioning of societies cast in the moulding shapes of modern states.

I offer the above simply by way of general indication of the bare skeleton form; in the actual work *Ethics* the whole is shown as a closely inter-knit organism, and if there appear to be assumptions and jumps here and there, that is because the elaborate and precise working out would be too extensive, especially as in the *Psychology* I have given the example of minute examination.

ARTHUR LYNCH.

SHAKESPEARE'S IRRELIGION.

He (Shakespeare) is of no age—nor, I may add, of any religion, or party, or profession. The body and substance of his works came out of the unfathomable depths of his own oceanic mind.—*Coleridge's Table Talk.*

When I am asked if, after death, these faculties (personal attributes, mind, sensation, etc.), will exist, I am almost tempted to ask if the warbling of the nightingale will exist when the bird has been devoured by an eagle?
—*Voltaire.*

Manchester Branch N.S.S.

FREETHOUGHT ON SEX.

The National Secular Society (Manchester Branch) invited Miss Ettie Rout, author of *Safe Marriage* (Heinemann) and prophylactic worker with the Australian and New Zealand Armies during the war, to give two lectures at the Engineers' Hall on Sunday last. Mr. S. Cohen occupied the chair in the afternoon and Mr. F. E. Monks in the evening.

In the course of her address Miss Rout claimed that the Freethinkers above all others should stand fast for the dissemination of scientific knowledge in regard to the medical prevention of sexual disease and the medical prevention of conception. She claimed that the two problems were parallel and could not be considered separately, and that they could only be solved by thinking freely and acting courageously. It was not a fact that a knowledge of medical prevention spread promiscuity: on the contrary, the classes, e.g. the professional classes, which were best informed on these matters, were the most restrained. It was knowledge, not ignorance, that was beneficial to society. The religious people were spreading sexual disease—by preventing the prevention of preventible diseases, regardless of the fact that innocent and guilty suffered alike. Lord Trevethin's enquiry and every other official enquiry had held that the fear of disease had little deterrent value. The fact was that the world would be neither better nor worse morally by the abolition of venereal disease, only much cleaner. The free clinics had destroyed the fear of sexual disease to a very large extent. For example, one Medical Officer of Health reported last August that in one treatment centre there were 745 male patients, of whom 359 were primary attacks; but 311, after an interval of freedom from symptoms, exposed themselves to a second infection and returned to the clinic diseased—61 for a third time, 12 for a fourth time, and 2 for more than four times. "In other words," said the Medical Officer, "more than half the total number were habitual libertines." If fear was to be relied upon, then sexual disease should be made as fearful as possible. It should not be treated at all—innocent and guilty alike should be allowed to become disabled or insane, and ultimately to die. The Ministry of Health should be called the Ministry of Disease, because it was opposing the prevention of disease. The Venereal Diseases Act, 1917, prohibited the sale of v.d. preventives as such and refused to let chemists tell a foolish and erring man how to mitigate the evil he had done. Chemists who disobeyed this law were liable to two years' imprisonment with hard labour. Thus syphilis was being spread by Act of Parliament. When the chemists denied selling the articles they were prohibited by law from selling, then the Ministry of Health claimed the absence of such sales as evidence of there being no demand. What was needed was Personal Health Clubs or Men's Welfare Centres, set up by private subscription and under voluntary control, with medical supervision. These institutions would be just as valuable to the community as the Women's Welfare Centres. Men were just as anxious to know all about the medical prevention of sexual disease as women were to know all about the medical prevention of undesirable conceptions. The public did not need to be told how to make sexual intercourse safe by having none of it. In marriage the public believed it was abstinence, not intercourse, that was unnatural, and they claimed that the law regarding conjugal rights established this view. The reproductive capacity of man, as of all animals, was so far in excess of the reproductive requirements, that some form of birth control was inevitable. Contraception was the best means, and contraception promoted morality, health and happiness. Somehow or other the population had to be controlled, and the alternatives to contraception were abortion, self-gratification, high infantile mortality, slaughter of adults in war, famine, pestilence, and so forth. Public health efforts had decreased the death-rate and increased the length of life by some ten to fifteen years; therefore contraception was now more than ever necessary. It was a false surmise to say that humanity in general would abuse the knowledge of contraception rather than use it for the welfare of society. If such

knowledge was not being applied by the less fit classes of the community, that was a reason for making the knowledge more widespread—not a reason for suppressing it among the fit. As to immoral women using this knowledge, why should anybody want immoral women to be fertile rather than infertile? Actually the trouble was not the possible infertility of the unfit but their actual fertility. Moral imbeciles and mental defectives would not apply birth control. Apart from segregation and sterilization it was difficult to see how the swarming of the unfit could be prevented. Nations committed suicide by prolonged warfare and the slaughtering of the best potential fathers, by failure to stamp out sexual disease and by reproduction from diseased stock.

Obituary.

It is with deep regret that we have to announce the death of Walter Black, the youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. Black, of the Manchester Branch. The boy was ten and a half years old, and some little time ago had an operation when one of his legs was amputated. He recovered from the effects of this operation, but later he caught a cold, pneumonia supervened, and he died peacefully on November 27. A Secular Service appropriate to the occasion was conducted by the Branch President, Mr. F. E. Monks, at the Crematorium, on Monday, December 1. We extend to Mr. and Mrs. Black our deepest sympathy in their sad bereavement.—H. I. B.

An old Lancashire Freethinker died last week in the person of Mr. William Humphreys, of Eccles. Deceased was in his eighty-first year, and for the last ten years he has been paralysed. Mr. Humphreys is well remembered by older Freethinkers, who tell me he was an ardent supporter of the Secular cause whenever he was able, and he died in the principles he had professed during his life. We offer to his family and his relatives our sympathy in their loss. A Secular Service was conducted by Mr. Bayford at the Crematorium on Monday last.—H. I. B.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY,
NOVEMBER 28, 1924.

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

Minutes of last meeting were read and confirmed.

The monthly Cash Statement was presented and adopted.

New members were received for Finsbury Park, Glasgow, Hull, Manchester, Newcastle, and the Parent Society. Correspondence from Swansea, Manchester, and Preston was read, and an application for a speaker from the Portsmouth Sunday Lecture Society was granted.

A letter accepting the Executive's offer to run a series of four lectures in Birmingham was also received and the receipt of essays in connection with the new Lectureship scheme was also reported.

The West Ham Branch was thanked for their assistance towards a most successful meeting at Stratford Town Hall.

The date of the Annual Dinner was fixed for Tuesday, January 13, at the Midland Grand Hotel. Price of tickets, 8s.

E. M. VANCE,
General Secretary.

A God who creates, could have left uncreated a devil, hell, crime, war, idiocy, ignorance, monstrosities, pestilence, famine, inundations, death. Are these reconcilable with Divine Omnipotence and love?—Otto Weltstein.

Religion and Morals.

A correspondent has been kind enough to forward some tracts issued by the Protestant Press Bureau. They are intended, it seems, to convince the public that the Roman Catholic Church is altogether degraded and loathsome, and that Protestantism is the only true faith. However, they make interesting reading for Freethinkers, and call to mind the adage about rogues falling out. In one entitled "Known by its Fruit," we are told that "In one year 21,324 prisoners passed through Liverpool Gaol. Of these 13,676 had been trained in the faith and morals of 'the only true Church,' while Protestants of all denominations numbered only 7,648." The following table is also given, having been compiled from information derived from a Parliamentary Return giving the creeds of the inmates of the prisons in Great Britain on March 28, 1906.

	Prisoners	Per 100,000 of denomination
Salvation Army	11	2
Congregationalists	53	3
Baptists	132	9
Methodists	469	10
Presbyterians	1,803	46
Church of England	16,235	118
Jews	262	116
Roman Catholics	5,378	247

One is always a little suspicious of statistics, which can generally be used to prove almost any case. One would like to see such tables for years other than 1906. But without accepting the accuracy of these figures, one notices a very significant fact. *The entire prison population analysed in the Return is Christian, with an insignificant Jewish element. There is not a single Freethinker included.* We wonder whether pious Protestants, or outraged Catholics who study the tract will notice this fact and draw the proper conclusion—namely that religion does not prevent men and women becoming criminals, whilst lack of religion does not lead to immorality.

The same tract quotes Father Ivory at St. Patrick's Church, Rochdale, as saying, "National education under Nonconformity would breed widespread dishonesty, debauchery, and villainy, and finally would paganize England!" Well, these Christians ought to know one another better than we know them.

Another of these tracts, "*Semper Eadem*" (Always the Same), offers evidence that the Catholic Church would visit torture and death upon unbelievers to-day, even as it did in the past, if it had the power. According to the leaflet, M. L. Bourgeois, ex-Premier of France and ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs, in his preface to the collected speeches of Georges Trouillot, published in 1906, quotes the following passage from the *Théologie de Clermont* (1899 edition): "The Church has received from God the power to constrain and repress those who deviate from the truth, not only by spiritual, but also by temporal and corporal punishments, to wit, imprisonment, flogging, torture, mutilation, and death." Cardinal Newman (author of "Lead, Kindly Light"), is also quoted as having favoured the infliction of the death penalty for heresy. All of which may be perfectly true. But what our Protestant apologist omits to mention is that the persecuting spirit has been just as bitter in the Reformed Churches in the past, and, in a somewhat different way, is just as bitter to-day, particularly in America where Puritanism has developed most powerfully. If evidence of this is wanted, the American Press will supply it with accounts of outrages performed by the Christian Ku Klux Klan against Catholics, Jews and infidels. The truth of the whole miserable business is that religion so distorts men's vision and so warps their natures, that all kindly feelings are destroyed, and they have been, and still are prepared to do, in the sacred name of religion, atrocious acts from which, but for the theological poison, they would recoil in horror. W. H. M.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on postcard.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (160 Great Portland Street, W.): 7.30, Mr. A. Hyatt will mix a little entertainment with a lot of instruction. 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, Miss E. Bannister, "Cremation and Public Opinion."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham): 7, Mr. G. Whitehead, a Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Dr. F. H. Hayward, Celebration "Leonardo da Vinci."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit., "Keeping Good Company."

OUTDOOR.

FINSBURY PARK.—11.15, a Lecture.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. F. L. Bale, "The Gospel of Secularism." Questions and Discussion invited. (Silver Collection.) On Saturday, December 13, a Social Evening in the "D" and "F" Rooms in High Street, Glasgow, from 7 p.m. till 11 p.m. with High Tea at 2s. per head.

HULL BRANCH N.S.S. (Metropole, Albany Room): 3, Mr. Chapman Cohen; (Metropole, Windsor Room): 6.30, "Things Christians Ought to Know."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Patrick Braybrooke, "John Morley as a Writer and Thinker."

DREADING That Climax of all human ills, the inflammation of the weekly bills, harassed Freethinkers look expectantly toward Bakewell whenever the wants are sartorial. If you would learn why they are never disappointed, ask us to-day to send you any of the following:—*Gents' AA to H Book, suits from 54s.; Gents' I to N Book, suits from 99s.; Gents' Overcoat Book, prices from 48s. 6d.; or Ladies' Coat and Costume Book, costumes from 60s.; coats from 46s.* The firm that gives you references.—MACCONNELL & MABE, New Street, Bakewell, Derbyshire.

YOU WANT ONE



LATEST N.S.S. BADGE.—A single Pansy flower, size as shown; artistic and neat design in enamel and silver. The silent means of introducing many kindred spirits. Brooch fastening, 9d. post free.—From THE GENERAL SECRETARY, N.S.S., 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

BOOK BARGAINS

ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY, by ISADOR H. CORIAT. Published at 10s. 6d. Price 4s. 6d., postage 6d.

BODY AND WILL, by HENRY MAUDSLEY, M.D. Published at 12s. Price 4s. 6d., postage 6d.

THE ETHIC OF FREETHOUGHT, by KARL PEARSON, F.R.S. Price 5s. 6d., postage 6d.

A CANDID EXAMINATION OF THEISM, by "PHYSICUS" (G. J. ROMANES). Price 3s. 6d., postage 4d.

LIFE AND EVOLUTION, by F. W. HEADLEY. Price 4s. 6d., postage 6d.

KAFIR SOCIALISM AND THE DAWN OF INDIVIDUALISM, by DUDLEY KIDD. Price 3s., postage 6d.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

President:

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary:

Miss E. M. VANCE, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Principles and Objects.

Secularism teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

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