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## Views and Opinions.

### Mystery Mongers.

There is a story, which has the unusual quality of being quite true, told of a Provost in a small town not far from Glasgow. The Provost was known for his Freethinking opinions, and as if to emphasize them he never, or hardly ever, attended Church. One Sunday morning, however, one of his friends met him and learned that he was going to the Kirk. "Why," queried the surprised man. "Oh," said the Provost, "I hear the minister is to preach on the mystery of godliness, and I just thought I would go and hear what he has to say." Again the two friends met, a little later in the week, and enquiry was made of the Provost as to what he thought of the sermon. "By God," said the Provost, "it is as much a mystery as ever." I am reminded of this story every time I come across a preacher or writer who dwells upon the mysteries, or "sacred" mysteries—for it appears that there are several kinds of mystery—of the Christian religion. When a thing is called a mystery this kind of person thinks, not only that he has stopped enquiry, but that he has in some mysterious way given a satisfactory explanation of the question at issue. Of course, one can quite understand that a religion people could understand would not—as religions go—be a very satisfactory article. Again, to quote a Scotch story, the old lady who greatly enjoyed her minister's sermons, but declared that she wouldn't be so impertinent as to pretend to understand them, is not a very uncommon type. There is a kind of mind with which familiarity does indeed breed contempt. They are impressed with what is far off, or cloudy, or incomprehensible. One recalls the ingenious surprise of one of the late Labour Ministers who discovered when he met the King that he talked to him just as an ordinary man. He was doubtless impressed, but one would imagine that with that type the glamour of Royalty would soon wear itself off. And that type of intellect would seem to be ready made by nature for a religious office.

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### Religion and Ignorance.

Now it is quite true there are quite a lot of things in the world we do not understand, but it does not follow that the mere fact of not understanding affords ground for believing it or worshipping it. And

calling it a mystery and printing it in capital letters does no more than exhibit our ignorance in large type. In ancient times the pagan priests had their "mysteries," but they did not use the word in quite the same sense as does the modern Christian. They were mysteries to the people, things the uninitiated did not understand, but they were not mysteries to the initiated. Indeed their claim to veneration was that they were conversant with the mysteries. By divine favour they knew, and because they knew, they held control of the people who did not know. But as time passed the veil of mystery wore thin. It gradually became difficult, in some cases impossible, for the priest to keep up the old pretence that he was conversant with things which to the ordinary Tom or Dick was a "mystery." So the medicine man was compelled to change his ground a little. He could not do without mystery of some sort, that is an indispensable part of his stock-in-trade. But the mysteries were pushed farther back. They belonged to the region of the unknown and unknowable. They were a mystery now and would be for ever, or at least until man died and knew the secret of things. And as when a man died he did not come back to tell us whether he knew anything or not, the priest felt himself quite safe. And if only the race could be stricken with incurable stupidity, then would the rule of the priest be ensured and the reign of religion become eternal.

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### Theologian's Logic.

The only use of these religious mysteries is the help they give to a professional priesthood. They are positively useless to anyone else. If I do not understand how the world came into existence, how am I helped by being told that it came by an act of God, followed by the information that how it was done is a mystery? The world is a mystery. Granted; but does the mystery become less when "God" is added to it? Is God less of a mystery than the world? And how does one mystery become less of a mystery by having another one added to it? Double nothing and the product is—God. Or if I cannot understand the relation of mind to body, if that is a mystery, does that disappear when I am told there is a directing "soul" which keeps them both going? As I do not know what a soul is, and should not know one if I came across it, how can it help me to understand something else of which I am supposed to be totally ignorant? The facts are what they were before the new mystery was introduced, my understanding of them is precisely what it was; I am enriched only by a "mystery" about which I know nothing whatever. Our ordinary procedure is to attempt to explain the imperfectly understood by the better understood, and so far as we speculate about the unknown, to do so in terms of the known. To explain what we do not know by appealing to what we know is common-sense. To explain the known by the unknown, or the obscure by the inconceivable is a procedure worthy of a lunatic asylum. And it is the accepted method of a good old-fashioned theology.

**Playing with Words.**

The truth is that, as is often the case, the religionist is just playing with words. "Mystery" is used for but one purpose, and that is to stop criticism. Otherwise the statement that a thing is a mystery leaves us exactly where we were, with the difference—a very important one to the Christian preacher—that we are called on to believe something connected with it. For example, the Christian asserts a belief in the Virgin Birth. What does this mean? A man, Jesus Christ, is born. Granting this there is no mystery about his existence. But it is said that in his case, alone among the countless millions that have been born, no human father is concerned; and this is the mystery. But this is not a mystery; it is sheer verbiage. It conveys no meaning, and nothing more reasonable than the statement that Jesus grew on an apple tree. For so long as we bear in mind the facts of reproduction it is impossible to conceive a child born into the world without male and female parentage. And if we do not know the nature of reproduction the statement stands for no mental conception whatever. Thus, our first step is to lay down a mentally inconceivable proposition, and then when asked for an explanation call it a mystery as a means of evading criticism. To say that we believe in a mystery is nonsense. We cannot even say what it is we believe in, but can only mouth a phrase. We can say we believe in it, but we might as well mutter abracadabra, and consider the matter settled.

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**Belief and Knowledge.**

But it is often said, and by those who should know better, that we are compelled to believe in many things we do not understand. I deny this completely. Belief does not imply the absence of knowledge or of understanding; it implies rather the possession of knowledge which falls short of completeness. I may believe that to-morrow may be wet, or warm, but I do so on the ground of my knowledge of what previous days have been like. Were my knowledge complete I should not believe, I should know. But in every case belief waits on understanding. So when I am told that we are bound to believe in electricity, or gravitation, or in life, without knowing what these things are, I meet the statement with a flat contradiction. It is reading into our beliefs more than they contain. I observe certain phenomena which we agree to call electrical. Scientists tell me how to measure the voltage of an electrical current, its direction, amperage, etc. And the things which I know about electricity cover absolutely all I mean when I speak about electricity. Electricity is not to me or to anyone else the sum of electrical phenomena plus a mysterious and unknown something called electricity. It is a general term covering a class of phenomena which we agree to call electrical. And my belief concerning it keeps pace step by step with what I understand concerning it. To believe a thing we must be able mentally to realize the thing believed. Whatever lies beyond the capacity of mental realization cannot give rise to any state of mind whatever. It is the indication of a complete blank.

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**Personifying Ignorance.**

After all mystery mongering is one of the oldest games of the medicine man. He was at it in the very dawn of history, and even before history began to be. And he is still at it in the most modern of cathedrals. None of them can afford to dispense with it. There is indeed something significant in the dictionary description of the derivative word "mystify" as "to perplex, to bewilder, to befog." For that is the essential thing about the religious chatter concern-

ing our lives being built upon a mystery, "the essential mystery" of things, etc. It is an attempt to bewilder, to perplex, to befog. It will be noted that there is no other department in which so much stress is laid on "mystery" as there is in religion. Everywhere else where we find ourselves up against a wall of ignorance we confess it with a sense of sorrow or of failure. But the religious advocate announces it as one proclaiming glad tidings or as the indication of a victory. And if it were admitted it would be a victory for the Christian medicine man and his supporters. He can no longer pretend, as did the ancient priest that he has powers which are denied the ordinary man. His strong card to-day is to insist that religion rests upon fundamental mysteries that are beyond the understanding of anyone. In this way it is hoped security may be gained. And if this were agreed, then security would be his. For while man is content to personify his ignorance and fall down in stupid worship before it religion remains enthroned. It was so in the far-off days of the cave-man. It is so to-day with his modern representatives. It is when instructed intelligence plays on religion that the gods totter and crumble into dust.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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**Christianity and Peace.**

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Think not that I came to send peace on the earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes shall be they of his household.—Mat. x., 34-36.

We have all noticed, no doubt, the amazing frequency with which the word "Sword" occurs in the Bible, and this is nearly as true of the New Testament as of the Old. The Gospel Jesus himself is represented as openly expressing his belief in his own dependence and that of his followers upon the stern ministry of the sword. At first he sent forth his disciples without purse, and wallet, and shoes; but toward the end of his life the order was reversed. "Now," he said, "he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet, and he that hath none, let him sell his cloke and buy a sword" (Luke xx., 35, 36). It is a fact that elsewhere Jesus disapproves of the sword, saying that "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Particularly in John's Gospel his supreme emphasis is on peace: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (xiv., 52). It is also true that in the Epistles Jesus is described as his people's peace. Furthermore, it must be borne in mind that the Church has always called him and sung his praises as the Prince of Peace, but strangely enough the New Testament never gives him that beautiful name, and more strangely still history knows him not by that character. The truth that must be faced is that the Church has never been the home of peace, nor the producer of peace outside. The Corinthian Church, founded by the Apostle Paul, was seriously marred by bitter contentions, fornication of the worst possible nature, arrogance, and drunkenness. All this we learn from the apostle's first Epistle to it. The Galatian Church was equally disappointing to its Pauline founder.

It must be admitted that Christianity pretended at first to be an anti-military system, and Church members were not allowed to lead a military life. On this statement two remarks may be made. The first is that the opposition to military service was rooted in the soil of the general hatred of the Pagan Empire which all Christians fully shared. To serve the Em-

pire in any capacity whatever was regarded as a sin against Christ. The other observation is that the refusal to render military service was but a mere pretence. Had the Christians been invited to bear arms against the Empire in all probability they would have gladly consented. It was not fighting that they condemned so much as fighting for their enemies. How fiercely they hated the Romans is well known to intelligent people. Had words been swords the Empire would have fallen at the close of the first century or the beginning of the second. The Romans were a tolerant people. Pittacus, one of the seven wise men, was the gentlest member of society, in whose eyes revenge was a vice. Mr. Farrer tells us, in his *Paganism and Christianity*, that "when he had it in his power to avenge himself on someone who had wronged him, he let him go, saying, 'Forgiveness is better than revenge, for whilst the former is the sign of a gentle nature, revenge is that of a savage one.'" There were numerous stories like that in the Pagan world. But the Christians, in their attitude to Paganism, showed the most relentless hostility. Mr. Farrer, in the work already mentioned, goes so far as to say: "If you want to find the true spirit of the Founder of Christianity you will find more of it in the fragmentary literature of Paganism than in all the works of the Fathers put together." Then he says:—

There is, indeed, no fact more patent in history than that with the triumph of Christianity under Constantine the older and finer spirit of charity died out of the world, and gave place to an intolerance and bigotry which were its extreme antithesis, and which have only in recent years come to be mitigated (p. 79).

Take the story of the cruel murder of the pagan teacher of philosophy, Hypatia, at Alexandria. Cyril was now the Patriarch of Alexandria, one of the most ambitious, selfish, cruel, arrogant, and unscrupulous men that ever lived. Conscience he had not, and so highly did he estimate the powers of his exalted office that, as Gibbons says, "he gradually usurped the state and authority of a civil magistrate." He championed the Athanasian Creed, and punished with the utmost severity all who dared to criticise it. He cruelly oppressed the Novatians, "the most innocent and harmless of the sectaries," and his treatment of the Jews reached the very acme of mad inhumanity. At Alexandria there was a Neo-Platonic school and in succession to her father, Theon, Hypatia became the head thereof. She was one of the most distinguished philosophers and mathematicians of that age; and in addition to her great learning she had the fascinating gift of eloquence, which made her lectures irresistibly attractive. Let us listen to Gibbon's impressive account of the end of her sad story:—

The persons most illustrious for their rank or merit were impatient to visit the female philosopher; and Cyril beheld, with a jealous eye, the gorgeous train of horses and slaves who crowded the door of her academy. A rumour was spread among the Christians that the daughter of Theon was the only obstacle to the reconciliation of the prefect and the archbishop; and that obstacle was speedily removed. On a fatal day, in the holy season of Lent, Hypatia was torn from her chariot and stripped naked, dragged to the Church and inhumanly butchered by the hands of Peter the reader and a troop of savage and merciless fanatics: her flesh was scraped from her bones with sharp oyster shells, and her quivering limbs were delivered to the flames. The just progress of enquiry and punishment was stopped by seasonable gifts; but the murder of Hypatia has imprinted an indelible stain on the character and religion of Cyril of Alexandria (*The Decline and Fall*, vol. v., p. 131).

The Church neither possessed nor imparted peace. The first religious war took place in the year 514 under the reign of the Emperor Justinian, who was really the first persecutor on a terrifically large scale. To the Samaritans of Palestine he gave the choice of conversion or the sword. Being brave people they accepted the sword, and a bloody war ensued in the name of Christ, and according to the most careful computation some hundred thousand Roman subjects lost their lives in it. And yet in spite of Justinian's callous brutality in defence of the uniformity of faith and worship, heretics and heresies still prevailed, his own wife, Theodora, once a most notorious prostitute and actress at Rome, even she "had listened to the monophysite teachers; and the open or clandestine enemies of the Church revived and multiplied at the smile of their gracious patroness. The capital, the palace, the nuptial bed, were torn by spiritual discord; yet so doubtful was the sincerity of the royal consorts that their seeming disagreement was imputed by many to a secret and mischievous confederacy against the religion and happiness of their people."

When the Church was not engaged in open conflict with outsiders it was waging a never-ceasing warfare within itself. From 412 to 1632 the nature of the Person of Christ was the main subject of hot controversy. Was he two persons or one? Had he two natures or one? If two, how were they related to each other? What was the object of his incarnation as the second person in the Holy Trinity? What did he do for man? These were some of the questions under discussion, and generally the discussion gave rise to violent tempers and angry, insulting words. Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius of Constantinople took conspicuous parts in the dispute, the former being described as "a monster, born and educated for the destruction of the Church. J. T. LLOYD.

(To be Concluded.)

## The Revival of Religion.

Who loveth not his brother at his side,  
How can he love a dim dream deified?

—James Thomson.—

The creed of Christendom is gradually melting away like a northern iceberg floating into southern seas.—  
G. W. Foote.

ONE of the leading London newspapers, *The Daily Express*, prophesies that this country is on the eve of a great awakening of religion, and that we are about to enter upon "an era of new faith and new hope." These are bold words, for, as George Eliot once pointed out, prophecy is the most gratuitous form of error. Indeed, an astute American told the soothsayers of his time: "Don't prophesy unless you know." *The Daily Express* has chosen to ignore this sage advice, and, in a leading article, has attempted to give reasons for its bold dash into the future.

It seems that the *Daily Express* leader-writer is convinced of the revival of religion in this country because an evangelist, named Gipsy Smith, has filled the Albert Hall for a series of so-called revival meetings. This, the newspaper asserts, is not an easy thing to do. Maybe, it is not easy, but the thing has been done many times before by singers, by musicians, by cinema-managers, and even by boxing promoters. And no one pretended, in the latter instances, that the huge audiences were athirst for anything other than entertainment. "Only Jesus could have filled the Albert Hall like this," declared Gipsy Smith himself. "No politicians and no scientists could do it." And, presumably, the huge audiences applauded the flamboyant showman with all the zest of children at their first circus-show.

A scrutiny of the newspaper reports reveals the secret of the filling of the Albert Hall. It was simply a small triumph of organization. The Methodist Churches of London and neighbourhood organized an evangelistic campaign, and the Albert Hall audience was composed of worshippers from the Nonconformist chapels for miles around. Report after report printed in the newspapers proves this. "Women were in the majority," says one journalist. Another commented on the presence of grey-headed and grey-bearded Methodist "elders" with their ejaculations of "Amen" and "Glory be." Yet another said the audience was composed principally of women and youthful shop-assistants. But the thing that places the matter beyond dispute was a much-advertised message from Buckingham Palace, which informed the audience that the King "wishes God-speed to the effort in which the Methodist Churches are now engaged."

The campaign is called a revival, and it is indeed a revival of the past. The methods are precisely those used during the past half century by Moody and Sankey, by William Booth, by Torrey and Alexander, and by hosts of imitators. It is simply an emotional appeal by a religious agitator to ill-educated and superstitious people. Everything is as commonplace and threadbare as the "old, old story," which the evangelist tries to bring up to date by mixing with American methods. Lively hymn-singing alternates with dirge-like refrains, and the time-honoured wheezes of the music-hall and of melodrama are pressed into the service of religion. When the collection is a good one, the evangelist flings his arms towards the ceiling and thanks the gods of his mythology. One evening the number of converts is announced as 9,000, and the next the conversions have increased to 13,000, and so on in well arranged arithmetical progression. And, mark you, all these "wicked infidels," who have been snatched from the fire everlasting, are actual attendants at other places of worship. They come in, like a procession of undertakers, and find the hymns in their books as readily as the evangelist himself. Arithmetic always appears to be a weak point with Christians. In the pages of the *War Cry*, for example, if the lists of conversions be added together for some years the total sum will be found to be rather more than the population of the whole country, which, as old Euclid says, "is absurd."

Why, it may be asked, does a big London daily support a show which bears a strong resemblance to a Negro camp-meeting. The *Daily Express*, mark you, is not the only newspaper engaged in throwing flowers at Orthodoxy. In spite of their rivalry, the English newspapers are of one mind in suppressing advanced thought, which is always understood in newspaper offices to be fatal to fat dividends. The conspiracy of silence against Freethought is passing wonderful. The papers devote columns to the most disgusting murder cases, and report all the salacious details of divorce and blackmail cases. In the summer, when space is plentiful, there is always the sea-serpent or the big gooseberry. In the midst of the late war room was found for yarns of "angels" on the battlefields, or of miraculous happenings to stone statues of the Madonna. Let there be no mistake on this point. The writers of this trash do not all believe it. It is not entirely due to fanaticism or ignorance, but is simply done to promote huge circulations. It is, in the last analysis, a matter of business. Journalists know better than that Freethinkers are all fools or criminals, but they wish to curry favour with the many-headed orthodox. The imbecilities of the Bishop of London, and other clergymen and evangelists, are reported weekly in the

papers, but the leaders of Freethought never by any chance have a line devoted to their work, unless by way of disparagement and insult.

The result is that readers of newspapers are not only kept in blissful ignorance of the intellectual ferment that goes on in this country, but many of them are taught to believe that the Christian Religion is actually making progress, and that all is well in the Lord's vineyard.

So far from there being a real and genuine revival of religion, the opposite is the truth. Scores of churches are half empty of worshippers, no less than nineteen having been condemned as derelict in the City of London alone. There is a shortage of curates in the Established Church, and of ministers in the Free Churches. Many Nonconformist places of worship are hard put to it to keep things going. Sunday school work, especially on the boys' side, suffers from lack of workers, and such teachers as they have are not of the same calibre as their predecessors. Indeed, all the activities of the churches and chapels are crippled for want of public support, and in the case of Nonconformist organizations the question of finance is one of increasing embarrassment. So much is this the case that many Free Church ministers have thrown up their profession and sought work in the Labour movement. There is no proof of a real revival of positive religious faith. After-war conditions have stimulated criticism of the Churches, and roused doubts as to the value of the Christian Religion itself. The complicity of the various Churches with the existing social order causes many to despair of their influence. The critical processes initiated by the widespread industrial depression is by no means confined to dissatisfaction with the Churches. If the fundamental articles of the Christian creed are not openly called in question, they are in so many cases relegated to the land of dreams.

It must be so. Knowledge has widened in ways never dreamed of by the Oriental fanatics who helped to build the fabric of Christianity. New tones have grown into human sentiment. All the lights and shadows of life have shifted, and its whole surface has been dyed in different colours. Obviously, we are progressing beyond the reach of two-thousand-years-old ideals. They voice different views which men have outgrown, and they can make no real response to them. They come like "the horns of Elfland, faintly blowing," and men are beginning to realize that they were meant for other ears than ours, and are but an echo from the far-off days of ignorance and bigotry. In other words, the conscience of the race is rising above the old-world dogmas of the Christian Religion, and neither leather-lunged evangelists nor hired journalists can delay for long the process of enlightenment.

MIMNERMUS.

### Professor Sayce and the Bible.

PROFESSOR SAYCE was one of the earliest in the field in the interpretation of the early Babylonian records. His grammatical sketch of the primitive Sumerian language of Babylonia (1870) which laid the foundations of Sumerian grammar, placed him, at the early age of twenty-four, in the foremost ranks of the scholars engaged in deciphering the ancient cuneiform records. Delitzsch, the Assyriologist, called upon him, and after sitting down, apologised for interrupting, and said he had called to see "Mr. Sayce, the Assyriologist, who had written an Assyrian Grammar," and Sayce had some difficulty in convincing him that he was the person in question, as Delitzsch had expected to find a venerable gentleman with a white beard.

It has been a standing enigma to many of us that with all his natural ability and learning, Professor Sayce should have spent so much time in attempting to vindicate the historical character of the early books of the Bible. Many are inclined to shrug their shoulders and point out that Sayce is a clergyman of the Church of England, and leave it at that.

But this hardly meets the case, for a large proportion of the clergy emphatically reject the historical and scientific accuracy of the first five books of the Bible; even officials high in the Church, like the Bishop of Birmingham, proclaim it from the pulpit, in terms long familiar to Secular platforms; and Canons Driver and Cheyne are higher critics of the Bible directly opposed to the views of Professor Sayce. Among Nonconformists, that strenuous opponent of "Infidelity," the Rev. Frank Ballard, has, for many years advocated cutting the painter of the Old Testament and casting it adrift, on the ground that it is a Jewish book and Christians should leave to Jews the task of defending it. There is therefore no reason why any clergyman should, at this time of day, hide his unbelief. In fact, a literal acceptance of all the statements in the Bible is now looked upon by the mass of the congregations as a sign of weak-mindedness. Which may be illustrated by the story of the boy who, during the school religious lesson, questioned his teacher upon some points connected with Noah's Ark. The teacher observing one of the other boys in a state of suppressed laughter, asked him what he was laughing at; he pointed to the other boy and said, "He believes it's true."

Professor Sayce has recently published his autobiography, under the title of *Reminiscences*, and we have read the book to see if it would throw any light upon the subject, and it does, a great deal, indirectly.

We remarked in these columns a few weeks ago how widely our conception of some prominent person differs from the real person as he is in himself. Professor Sayce provides another illustration in proof. We already knew the learned philologist, the Gifford Lecturer, the author of the *Higher Criticism and the Verdict of the Monuments*, and other works dealing with Egypt and Babylon, and had formed an impression of a learned but narrow-minded and dogmatic personality, without a trace of humour, a theologian first and before everything. One who lived laborious days among dusty records of past ages and renounced the joys of this life for the beatitudes of the next. We expected that a large part of the book would be taken up with a tedious, prolix and verbose vindication of the Bible. None of these forebodings were fulfilled.

The Professor has very little indeed to say upon his defence of the Bible; in fact, it could all be included in a single page of his book of nearly five hundred pages. And far from being the ascetic renouncer of the pleasures of life, we find him enjoying good wine and good company with the most worldly, and the book fairly sparkles with good stories.

Professor Sayce seems to have numbered among his personal friends all the most prominent Freethinkers of his time. He tells how Herbert Spencer invited him to dinner, the other two guests being Huxley and Tyndall, who capped one another's stories while the other two listened. Another personal friend was Renan, of the exquisite charm of whose conversation he gives an account. Sir Richard Burton, who was a pronounced Freethinker, and delighted in shocking the conventional ideas of his acquaintances, and boldly quoted with approval a passage from the *Freethinker* denouncing the obscenity of the Bible, in his great translation of the *Arabian Nights*, was another friend; they made plans for a journey through the Arab tribes of the Cyrenica, but were prevented

by their official duties. Sayce was one of the founders of the Savile Club in 1868, where, he tells us, Professor "Clifford preached Agnosticism as he stood in front of the drawing-room fire." And last, but not least, Bishop Colenso, whose famous work on the Pentateuch finally destroyed, once and for all, the scientific accuracy of the Bible. We learn with surprise that Sayce actually had a hand in the production of that work! At home, he tells us, "orthodox Anglicanism reigned"—his father was a clergyman—but Professor Earle, whose sympathies were with Colenso, led the young scholar away from the orthodox fold, and he says, "Colenso's book accordingly fell on fertile soil, and I began to look forward to the day when I could champion his cause." That day arrived when "a few years later I saw his sixth and last volume on the Pentateuch through the Press."

Leaving for the present the explanation of Sayce's attack on the Higher Critics, which appears still more enigmatic in the face of the above evidence, we cannot resist the temptation to give our readers a few of the good stories the book contains. The first concerns the witty Father Healy, with whom Sayce maintained a long and pleasant friendship. Our author relates:—

Mahaffy and I were dining with him (Father Healy) along with Lecky, the historian, who belonged to the somewhat silent "dour" class of Irishmen who take life too seriously to perceive the humour of it. When we entered the little dining-room a long line of claret bottles was arranged all along the wainscoting, and I asked the Father if this were his wine cellar? "No," he replied indignantly; "and they will all have to be drunk before you leave me to-morrow." And so they were. Eventually in the early hours of the morning an old china bowl was placed in the middle of the table, the necks of a number of bottles were knocked off and their contents poured into the bowl, while Lecky looked on with sad and wondering eyes.

What a mixed party! A Catholic priest, an English clergyman; Lecky, the historian of Rationalism, and Mahaffy, the historian of the social life and religion of ancient Greece.

Sayce was repeating to Mahaffy some stories he had heard of Bishop Wilberforce, who seems to have been a butt for the wits of his time, was nicknamed Soapy Sam, and seems to have been of about the same mentality as the present Bishop of London. Mahaffy, in his turn, told one of how the Bishop was staying in a house where there was a young lady of High Church beliefs, who was particularly respectful to the Bishop. On the first of January she greeted him with the salutation: "A happy Circumcision to you, my Lord, and many of them."

Another good story of Mahaffy's was about Coghlan, a popular preacher in London. Coghlan was attending a Protestant clerical meeting in Ireland, where a paper was read on St. Peter, by a youngish parson of more advanced opinions than his fellow clericals:—

When the paper was finished, an old clergyman rose and said that they had been listening to an underhand attempt to inculcate Popery, and he was sorry to be obliged to state his conviction that the author of it was a Jesuit in disguise. Thereupon another clergyman arose and said he could not agree with his esteemed brother who had just sat down; in his opinion the paper did not inculcate Popery, but Atheism. Then a third intervened and declared that there was no cause for disagreement between the last two speakers; Popery and Atheism were really one and the same thing, and while the paper was being read he could not but notice how craftily and subtly they were both insinuated in it.

There is another story told by Henry Smith, the mathematician, as to the way in which choir boys, while singing the music correctly, sometimes substitute words of their own. Smith related how, a Sunday or two previously, he had attended service at Worcester Cathedral, where he had been given a seat immediately behind the choristers. In the middle of one of the Canticles the small surpliced imp below him chanted:—

Who's this coming up the aisle?  
She's a regular snorr-ter!

to which the corresponding imp on the opposite side returned the response:—

Hold your tongue, you son of a gun!  
It is the Bishop's dorr-ter!

Aldis Wright tells a story concerning Christopher Earle and Baron Rothschild. Earle happened to be wearing a shabby overcoat, and the Baron remarked upon it. "Well," said Earle, feeling his coat, "it isn't very new certainly; what will you give me for it?"

Of Tennyson we are told that: "Up to the last he confessed that when he passed a stranger in the street who was laughing or smiling he could not overcome an uneasy feeling that the laugh was being directed against himself."

Once while he was staying with the Ginsburgs, they gave a dinner party, at which the two Bishops of Winchester and Ely, and Hepworth Dixon were present. During a lull in the conversation the voice of Hepworth Dixon was heard laying down to his neighbour in his oracular voice: "It is a well-known fact that the highest ecclesiastical caste in all countries has always been polygamous." What the Bishops thought of this pronouncement is unfortunately not recorded.

W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

## The Apostate of Avignon.

IN Diderot's famous work entitled *Le Neveu de Rameau*,<sup>1</sup> which consists almost entirely of a dialogue between the author and a character who might be described as the Perfect Cynic, the latter with regrets admits that some persons then living have surpassed him in the exclusive cultivation of self-interest. Among these he instances with peculiar respect the Apostate of Avignon.

Let us take up the dialogue at this point:—

I.—I never heard speak of that apostate of Avignon, but he must indeed be an astonishing man.

He.—So he is.

I.—The history of great personages always interests me.

He.—I quite believe it. This one lived with a good and honest man from those descendents of Abraham, promised to the father of the faithful in number equal to that of the stars.

I.—With a Jew?

He.—With a Jew. He had first beguiled commiseration, then benevolence, and, finally, entire confidence. For, behold, how it always happens: we reckon so much on our benefactions, that it is rare that we conceal our secret from the one whom we have loaded with our kindnesses. How can there be no ingrates when we expose men to the temptation to be such with impunity? This is a just reflection which our Jew did not make. He confided to the apostate that he could not conscientiously eat

pork. You are about to see all the advantage that a fecund wit knew how to draw from this avowal. Some months passed during which our apostate redoubled his attentions. When he believed his Jew well touched, well caught, well convinced by his efforts that he had not a better friend in all the tribes of Israel.....Admire the circumspection of the man! he did not haste; he let the pear ripen on the tree before shaking the branch; too much ardour might wreck the project. It is that, ordinarily, greatness of character results from the balance of several opposite qualities.

I.—Oh, leave off your reflections and continue your story.

He.—That is impossible. There are days when I have to reflect. It is a malady that has to be left to take its course. Where am I?

I.—At the intimacy established between the Jew and the apostate.

...He.—Well, then, the pear was ripe.....But you do not hear me. What are you dreaming of?

I.—I dream of your tone, sometimes so high, sometimes so low.

He.—Is it possible that the tone of a vicious man could be single?.....He arrives one evening at his friend's, the voice broken, the visage pale as death, trembling in all his members.

What is the matter?

—We are lost.

—Lost, and how?

—Lost, I tell you, without help.

—Explain yourself.

—A moment, that I recover me from my fright.

—Go on, recover yourself, said the Jew, instead of saying, "Thou art an arrant rascal, I know not what thou hast to tell me, but thou art an arrant rascal; thou playest the terror."

I.—And why should he have spoken thus?

He.—Because he was false, because he had surpassed the measure; that is clear to me; and do not interrupt me any more. "We are lost.....lost! without help." Do you not feel the affectation of those repeated *lost*s?....."A traitor has reported us to the Holy Inquisition, you as Jew, I as apostate, as an infamous apostate....." See how the traitor did not blush to serve himself of the most odious expressions. It needs more courage than one thinks to call himself by his name; you do not know what it costs to get there.

I.—No, certainly. But that infamous apostate?

He.—Is false, but it is a very clever falsity. The Jew is affrighted; he tears his beard; he rolls on the ground; he sees the officers at his door, he sees himself wrapped in the *san benito*, he sees his *auto-da-fa* prepared. "My friend, my tender friend, my only friend, what must be done?" Done? Show ourselves; affect the greatest security, behave ourselves as ordinarily. The procedure of that tribunal is secret but slow; there is need to use its delays to sell everything. I will hire a vessel, or cause one to be hired by a third party, yes, by a third party; that will be best; there we depose your fortune; for it is principally your fortune that they desire; and we go, you and I, to seek under another heaven the liberty to serve God, and to follow the law of Abraham and of our conscience. The important point in the perilous circumstances where we find ourselves is not to commit an imprudence....." Said and done. The vessel is hired, and provided with vituals and with sailors; the fortune of the Jew is on board; to-morrow at point of day they will set sail; they will sup gaily and sleep in security; to-morrow they will escape their persecutors. During the night the apostate rises; despoils the Jew of his purse, and his jewels; goes on board; and lo, he is off.....And you believe

<sup>1</sup>Diderot. *La Religieuse. Le Neveu de Rameau*. Paris. Ernest Flammarion. Editeur. 26 Rue Racine 26. The translation (strictly literal) is mine. The dots are in the original, and they indicate rhetorical pauses, not omissions.

that is all? Good, you are not there. When they told me this story, I divined that which I have been silent of to try your sagacity. You have done well to be an honest man, you would never have been but a small rascal. Up to here, the apostate is that only, he is a miserable knave whom no one would desire to resemble. The sublimity of his wickedness is to have been himself the betrayer of his good friend, the Israelite, of whom the Holy Inquisition will get hold when he awakes, and of whom, some days later, they will make a bonfire.

And thus it was that the apostate became the tranquil possessor of the fortune of that accursed descendant of those who crucified our Saviour.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

### Acid Drops.

The *People's Journal* publishes an account of the case of a man in Broxburn, B.C., who killed his grandchild by attempting to drive out devils. The child was ill and the grandfather declared it was possessed by devils. He covered the infant's nose and mouth with his hand, and the child died from suffocation, the whole family kneeling round and praying. The paper says the man was suffering from religious mania. But why? Did not Jesus Christ drive out devils from people who were sick? What was the matter with him? Was he suffering from religious mania? And if it was not that in ancient Judea why is it that in British Columbia? And what, after all, is the substantial difference between this man's methods and that of Hickson? It is true that Hickson did not kill people in his ministrations, but that may only have shown greater artfulness, not stronger religious faith. We are quite certain that if Jesus were alive in British Columbia, with his views unchanged, he would quite agree with the opinion of the man who is now charged with murder. And it is just probable that the jury which will declare him insane for believing that disease is produced by devils will all take the oath on a book which teaches that identical thing.

The *Schoolmaster* appears to have correctly sized up the proposals of the Church Assembly. The paper states that the new scheme would give the Church all it wants in the way of religious education, while relieving it of its part of the charge. This is a Christian bargain. But denominational teaching in schools will make a pretty problem as there are now Christian Scientists and Spiritualists to be added to the number to be catered for, without counting the followers of Gipsy Smith, Evan Roberts, and the next one. In the words of Mark Twain, we trust that the *Schoolmaster* will not let the children's education interfere with their schooling.

The Rev. T. E. W. Pym seems a nice brotherly sort of man. Apart from the fact that people can and do get married without the assistance of members of his trade union, this gentleman wants a question put to those intending to marry. They should be asked if they are Christian people, and, presuming that the answer is a lemon, they, Messrs. Pym & Co., ought to be able to refuse the rights of Christian marriage. He shows a peculiar state of mind in connection with the Church that has to enter into competition with every form of amusement to attract a congregation; he also demonstrates what a nice jolly state of affairs were the good old days when Christianity was firmly seated in the saddle. We can only hope that the Rev. T. E. W. Pym is successful in his efforts on behalf of the religion that cannot save a parish, much less a world, and that Civil marriage at a Registry Office, a "naming" of a child, and a secular service over the dead prove that he and all his kind are superfluous. If they doubt it, let them go on strike.

We see that the "Man in the Street," who writes for the *Daily Sketch*, has fallen foul of the parson over

the question of the "no drink" embargo on certain London music-halls, and the matter of Sunday cinemas. The Rev. W. B. Sandberg acted as spokesman for the Middlesex Sunday Defence Committee, when an application for permission to open cinemas on Sunday came before the licensing justices, and commenting on the matter, "Mr. Man in the Street" remarked, "Mr. Sandberg, who opposed the application, announced roundly that the question was one of morality." The parson now asserts that this is "a distinct perversion of what I said," and continues, "the word 'morals' was used by me in the sentences: 'This is not a question of legal intricacy, but a moral question.'" With a certain air of bewilderment the "Man in the Street" declares that "having read this sentence a number of times, I am still at a loss to imagine how I can have been guilty of a 'distinct perversion.' There may be some subtle difference in meaning between the sentences, 'The question is one of morality' and 'This is a moral question,' but I cannot detect wherein it lies, and am ready to give at least tuppence to any reader who can enlighten me." Pausing only to remonstrate with the journalist upon the levity with which he treats his father in God, we should like to warn him that the moment one enters the realms of theological controversy, one must discard all the rules of logic, and be prepared for extraordinary and rapid changes in the meaning of the most common words. "When I use a word," Lewis Carroll makes Humpty Dumpty say, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." And that, "Mr. Man in the Street," is how the theologian treats words. Apply common sense to religion, and the mystical ritual connected therewith which masquerades under the name ethics, discuss it in words that retain their everyday meaning, and the whole foolish business is quickly seen for the fraud it is. But clothe your arguments in queer words that have some peculiar meaning of their own, make subtle differences in meaning where none exists, and you will confuse the average person, and persuade him that there is some profound truth in religion, "if philosophy could but find it out."

But this controversy between the priest and journalist exhibits the illogicalness of the religionist's argument so strikingly that we cannot refrain from making another quotation "The Man in the Street" writes:—

If the opening of cinemas on Sunday involves a question of morality (or, if Mr. Sandberg prefers it, "a moral question"), it is ridiculous that residents of Middlesex should be able to flout morality by crossing the road to a picture house under the control of the L.C.C. Similarly, if the sale of drink in music-halls is immoral, it is scandalous that this form of "immorality" should be permitted at sixteen music-halls and forbidden at seventeen others. But, of course, neither question has anything to do with morals, but merely with common-sense.

The explanation of course is that the religious apologist is always on the lookout for some advantage. It is not so much a question of principle being involved, as a question of how the position of his creed can be strengthened, and its social importance magnified. In the words of the *Daily Sketch* writer, "The Middlesex Sabbatarians say in effect: 'If I can't drag you into my church, at least I shall take dashed good care that you don't go to the other fellow's cinema.'" That sums the matter up in a nutshell. Make religious services the only form of Sunday recreation, and in sheer boredom people will attend Church. One can see it working in villages and small dull provincial towns.

"Religion is caught more than taught," is the latest admission of the Bishop of London. A good many other diseases are contagious, too. Indeed, it is a rather painful fact that illness, bad habits, and most of the ills that plague mankind are like religion—they are easily and naturally acquired, whilst good health has often to be coaxed, and the qualities that exalt humanity developed by hard, consistent training. But still the bishop is scarcely playing the game by his own profession when he makes such a candid confession. He must be a terrible cross for some of his more wily colleagues to bear.

Gipsy Smith says that tenants of slum property are being poisoned to death and their children lamed from the cradle. "The day will come when God will put His finger into the collar of the hypocrite's robe, and rip it clean down to the bottom." The phrase has a fine Old Testament flavour about it: it is fiercely denunciatory, without being in the least bit clear. One is left in doubt whether Gipsy Smith is referring to the slum landlords—among whom we should probably find some of our most sanctimonious clerics—or those priests or ornaments of our numerous churches who blandly tolerate a social environment which of necessity breeds men and women warped in body, mind, and morals. In any case we would suggest to this modern Isaiah that if he really wishes to reform the slum dwellers, he should start at the right end and reform the conditions in which they live. The Gypsy may not be a determinist; nevertheless common sense must compel him to admit that foul conditions are unlikely to produce beautiful characters. And if ten thousand Gipsy Smiths preached every day of the week for a year, they would not produce the slightest effect upon the slums of our great cities, rebuild a single tenement, or induce a single landlord to put his property in something like order.

Gipsy Smith would like to choke the devil with the last bottle of liquor. For sheer inebriety of speech this will take some beating.

The Rev. Dr. W. J. J. Cornelius, Vicar of All Saints, North Peckham, says that his parish has only one bathroom. There are 7,000 people in his district, but bathrooms do not appear to come under the heading of things that the Lord will provide.

When distinguished ladies speak they are always interesting. Mrs. Baldwin, wife of the Premier, says that "the flag of Christianity is the flag of peace—a white flag." Mrs. Snowden, the wife of the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, has stated that the Red Flag is the flag of Christianity. The difference of opinion and the subject between these two ladies appears to be on the level of an argument between Boy Scouts about their taste in jack knives. If flags are of any use, and have magical properties, Mrs. Baldwin ought to send a white one by aeroplane to Egypt; besides being sensible it would be the first time in history that an aeroplane had done anything useful.

It's a jolly old religion anyway. The Bishop of Bangor after toiling in the Lord's vineyard retires on a pension of £1,400. And that is precisely where the preachers of poverty put their fingers to their nose at the teachers of common-sense, and chance their luck with the eye of a needle.

The Rev. Mr. Woodlock, writing to a London newspaper, says "nineteen out of twenty Englishmen seem to have no use for the Church by law established." This is an unsolicited testimonial to the spread of Secularism.

Apparently the brighter London movement is casting covetous eyes at the Church. At any rate, proposals for introducing lighted candles and the white vesture into the baptismal service were discussed recently when the House of Clergy resumed discussion of the Revised Prayer Book Measure, 1923. According to the Press report the proceedings were quite jovial, and interspersed by a good deal of laughter. After having kept a straight face whilst conducting a church service in public, it must be a considerable relief for priests to be able to indulge in a hearty laugh at the whole nonsensical business. When matters affecting the duties of godparents were under discussion the Rev. Mr. Pyne spoke of the present attitude of sponsors at baptisms as little more than a farce, and said that they took their obligations to involve little more than the presentation of a perfectly useless mug, and later in the taking of the child to the Zoo. If that is the case there seems something to be said

for baptism after all. The child might learn something useful at the Zoo; most certainly it would not at church.

Mr. Hillaire Belloc has written an introduction to a book entitled *Pagan and Christian Rule*, by Dom Hugh G. Bévenot, O.S.B. Mr. Belloc, with his twin brother-in-thought, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, can see the promised land somewhere in the Middle Ages. Dom Bévenot adopts the historical method in support of his argument that our civilization must return to the Roman Church or be destroyed. If anyone can find solace in the word-juggling of the Roman Church we feel sure that these triplets above will not want convincing that they are progressing by going backwards. As citizens of the world we should imagine that the question of what is to be done with the products of the machine in the present age is of more importance than trying to set the Roman Catholic Church on its feet again—in order to enable it to climb on our backs.

"I know as well as you that there are still too many—far too many—insanitary schools," said Mr. Baldwin, when, with Lord Eustace Percy, he was a principal guest at the dinner of the London Teachers' Association, at the Holborn Restaurant recently. Will the Prime Minister have an enquiry into the sanitary (or more probably insanitary) conditions which obtain in the denominational schools, and either thus end the widespread belief that many of these schools are terribly insanitary, or, if circumstances warrant, take these places away from the control of those who are incompetent to safeguard the children's health?

Einstein's theory of Relativity hardly sounds a likely subject for the film. All the same it is to be the theme of a new Pathé picture. The producers hope that the people who see it will understand the theory. There must, we think, be some magnificent optimists connected with Pathé. However, the project opens up an interesting speculation. Having explained relativity to us through the medium of the film, perhaps the producers will turn their attention to some theological problems. The mystery of the Trinity, or the incarnation, or the Virgin Birth might be explained to us by means of the film. We make a free presentation of this inspiration to our theological publicity agents. Such films should rival "The Ten Commandments" and "The Moon of Israel" in their capacity to draw big houses.

That hoary old chestnut propounded by Christian Evidence people "Where are your hospitals?" to the questioner who wants to get down to the fundamentals of Christianity might receive as an answer, "Look at Glasgow." This would be in the nature of answering a fool according to his folly. We are told by Mr. William Bolitho, who writes of Glasgow,

that the very soil is impure, uncleanable, in this city that lies in mists of river and chimneys, in the northern, sunless cold. In its black, high barracks, that elbow each other desperately for room, millions have lived, "cramped like salt fish in a barrel" for a century.

Scotland never lacked piety. England has never been short about it, but between the two concentration on the mansions in the sky has allowed the lovely Venice of the North to reach this state. The cry of "one world at a time" always provokes professional Christianity, and Freethought would become respectably useless if it would only mistake the shadow for the substance.

If you would rather buy a pair of boots then don't buy this book as there is nothing like leather:—

*The Pope*, by Jean Carrère. 18s. Just published. A well reasoned and historically supported plea for the "divine right" of the Papacy by a *persona grata* at the Vatican.

This *persona grata* at the Vatican evidently found the hospitality there more spacious than that in Glasgow, where seven sleep in one bed—or in Ireland, where 'taters and tea are the staple diet.

**EVERY ONE ANOTHER ONE—To Gain a New Reader for the**



## Our Sustentation Fund.

Previously acknowledged, £403 7s. A. & R. Fincken, £5; Colonel Littledale, £2; G. Brady, £3 3s.; J. Macpherson, 10s.; Mary M. Rogerson, £1; G. Royle, £1 1s.; W. P. M., £1; G. Dixon, 5s.; V. Neuburg, 3s. 6d.; A. W. Voss, 10s.; E. Langridge, 7s. 9d.; G. Alcorn, 6s. 3d.; F. Collins, 2s. 6d.; R. H. Sennett, 5s.; E. Davies, 5s.; Dr. A. Hawkyard, 10s.; "County Down Clodhopper," 10s.; W. Petherbridge, 5s.; W. Howells, £1; T. Richards, 2s. 6d.; J. W. Stevenson, 2s.; Mr. and Mrs. Fothergill, 2s. 6d.; W. Millroy, 5s.; "Anon.," 10s.; W. Kilroy, 5s.; T. A. Horf, 10s.

Per F. Rose (Johannesburg): B. M. E., £1 1s.; L. Lent, 10s. 6d.; F. Rose, £1 1s.

Total, £426 os. 6d.

This Fund is now closed. CHAPMAN COHEN.

## To Correspondents.

A. STEWART.—Your card informing us of Mr. Whitehead's visit to Glasgow reaches us just as we are going to press. We hope this will call the attention of Glasgow Freethinkers to the meetings.

J. FOTHERGILL.—Pleased to hear from you. Hope that there will soon be opportunities for greater activity in your district. The large number of Freethinkers on Tyneside should be more alive in the cause than they appear.

J. MACPHERSON.—We must leave it to the judgment of each to assist as he best can.

R. J. T.—Hope things will soon improve.

G. BRADY.—But you do come in, and many of us have the habit of putting off things that we mean to do in the end.

M. ROGERSON.—The contributors to the *Freethinker* will all be pleased to know of the pleasure you find in its pages. Thanks, we are keeping quite well.

A. W. VOSS.—Working for a Cause one loves brings its own compensations, and not the least valuable is the esteem of those friends in all parts of the world who share with us a hatred of shams and superstitions.

V. NEUBERG.—Shall hope to see you when you come this way.

S. DOBSON.—We were under the impression that the paper was being supplied by someone locally, but if that is not so we will send it from this end. Please let us know.

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.

As will be seen from another column, the Sustentation Fund closes this week with a total of £426 os. 6d., and we have to thank most sincerely all who have contributed to this result. Many have written apologising for the

smallness of their contribution, and others to explain that the hard times have prevented their sending anything at all. We appreciate the feelings that prompted both kinds of letter. None of us can do all we should like to for the Cause, but it is usually sufficient if each does what one can. The unfortunate thing is that so many do not do all they might easily do to help in the struggle. We do not know that this is a peculiarity of the Freethought movement; it is rather a fault of human nature, no matter what the Cause may be. But we do not want to mar our thanks for what has been done by even an apparent complaint. Year after year the *Freethinker* struggles along; it keeps the flag flying in the face of tremendous difficulties, and that it does this is largely due to those faithful friends who never fail to respond when the call is made. And so, once more, we thank them. Sometime in the New Year some friends who are deeply interested in the future of the paper may have suggestions to make which, if they can be carried into effect may place the *Freethinker* upon a basis of permanent financial security.

To-day (December 14) Mr. Cohen will lecture twice in the Pendleton Town Hall, at 3 and 6.30. Owing to a misunderstanding there has been but little time for advertising these meetings, and we hope the Manchester friends will do their best to get them as widely known as possible.

Instead of coming straight back to London, as usual, Mr. Cohen will visit Bolton on the Monday evening, and will speak in the Miners' Hall, Bridgeman Place, at 7.30. Doors will be open at 7. Although he has visited many towns in Lancashire during the past thirty-five years, Bolton is a town Mr. Cohen has never yet spoken in. The new Branch is looking forward to the meeting with great interest.

Hull on Sunday last was greatly excited over the fate of the young man Smith, sentenced to be hanged on Tuesday, December 9, with meetings and processions all over the place. In spite of this the hall was comfortably filled to listen to Mr. Cohen, and the keenest appreciation of his lecture was forthcoming. The new Branch is very much in earnest, and so long as the members pull together their work will be certain to bear fruit. There must be a large number of Freethinkers in the city, and a strong endeavour should be made to bring them into touch with our movement. There were many requests for a return visit, which may be arranged early in the New Year.

The study of Folk-lore is nowadays a serious and scientific business, and rightly too. It is recognized that these stories handed down from generation to generation, and repeated by those who are quite in the dark as to their origin and meaning, offer a valuable contribution to the cultural history of mankind. By their aid we may understand customs and institutions that otherwise remain incomprehensible. The latest contribution to the now huge literature of the subject is *The Folk-lore of Fairy Tale*, by Dr. Macleod Yearsley, who, in the midst of a strenuous professional career, finds time to produce works that are all of interest to Freethinkers. In this, his latest volume, Dr. Yearsley introduces us to the primitive beliefs and customs that are enshrined in fairy tales, and so throws a strong light upon the frames of mind that have given the world its fundamental religious beliefs. The book says much, and hints at more. The quality of the work is such that while it may be read with profit by the adult with a working knowledge of the whole subject, it may also be read with interest and instruction by an intelligent youth that has not left his own fairy tale phase of mind far behind. And once a youth reads a book of this class it will probably send him—or her—back to the fairy tale to read with a new interest and a healthy appreciation of the part they have played in the history of mankind. The work is published by Messrs. Watts & Co. Price 7s. 6d.

**"Freethinker" is Equal to Doubling Your Own Subscription**

## Karl Marx.

### V.—THE RUSSIAN EXAMPLE—Continued.

A MAN walks without knowing how he walks; a thousand actions and reactions automatically performed go to form this simple exercise. Walking seems no wonder; but suppose someone were to take a sharp knife and cut the nerves, the ligaments, the tendons of the body with the intention of making the person walk by applying electrical stimulation to the muscles, then it would require an extraordinarily accurate and comprehensive knowledge of anatomy and of electrical effects in order to produce any sort of an imitation of a walk at all.

This analogy will indicate what the Bolsheviks have done in Russia. They have disrupted all the communicating fibres, the connective tissues, the motive powers which keep trade moving in civilized countries as usually organized, and they have endeavoured to direct from one centre, and by all sorts of artificial devices, that moving system of which the function seems so simple—till it be disturbed.

If you keep that image before your mind you will find that it is not necessary, in accounting for the chaos, the stupefying misery, and the tragic absurdities that prevail in Russia, to suppose that the Bolshevik rulers are tyrannical or wicked men. They are simply well-intentioned leaders of the proletariat who have put into operation a theory of reconstruction that has no real sanction in scientific sociology. They have pressed the doctrine of Karl Marx to a point where its ridiculous character springs to the eyes.

Do they see it in that light? Most of them not at all. Even with this spectacle before our eyes—incidents that would make a cat laugh, happenings that would make angels weep—some of them used to ask me, with a pathetic hopefulness in their voices, if I was not pleased with the results that I saw. The fact is, Communism with them is a Religion, and when that word is uttered reasoning, demonstration, common-sense all go by the board.

I will not dwell on the famine, because that would lead too far afield. The whole panorama of that haggard destitution has left ineffaceable records in my memory, and these are not rendered easier to bear by the knowledge that famines were common under the Tsars. The Bolsheviks blamed the war and the blockade, and no doubt these were contributory factors, but they did not explain all. The Communist system was in itself one of the main causes, as I now briefly indicate. Ninety-eight per cent. of the population were illiterate and the two per cent. who could read and write did not use their superior knowledge to lead the rest in the path of civilization, but to oppress them and exploit them. Most of these ninety-eight per cent. were peasants, and they hailed the revolution which placed them in possession of their homesteads and little parcels of land. When, however, the Bolsheviks came and took their surplus grain they were less rejoiced at contributing to the Common Cause than exasperated to see themselves deprived of the fruit of their labour. Next year, therefore, they set out only to cultivate for their own necessities so that there should be no surplus. Here it may be said that if people are not prepared for Communism it is impossible to force it on them at the point of the bayonet; if they are prepared for it, then there is no need for the force of bayonets.

The transport system of the country, always very inefficient, had broken down, and that was also a contributory cause of the famine. A far-seeing, resolute statesman, with an organizing brain—a Napoleon—might have done something to cope with the situation,

but anything that implied purposive energy, constructive power, seemed to be beyond the men I met. Many of them talked well, but for sheer incapacity in administration I never saw their like. The load of bricks that defied the Kremlin is a symbol.

After I had been in Moscow three weeks the Professor who had been empowered to send me the invitation to come actually wrote to me to London to know when I was likely to arrive! From Kazan I sent him a telegram, endorsed and delivered there by a Government official, but he, also a Government official, never received it at all. He was not astonished. He simply said: "Our social system has broken down; we never know what passes next door."

The only part of the social system which was in full activity was the spy system. Here I speak with some uncertainty, for it was difficult to gauge the extent of this branch of the Government. On one occasion at Kazan on the Volga, the officers of the Cheka suddenly seized one of the Russian helpers of the American Relief, and that was all we knew. It was as if out of the surrounding darkness a swift arm had shot out, had seized its prey, and had disappeared into the darkness again. I say darkness, because that is the vague feeling produced by the suppression of the newspapers. There are a few journals printed in Moscow, but they are all Bolshevik organs, and it is the absence of publicity, the enveloping sense of mystery, that in the end results in an abiding impression of disquietude that may easily rise to terror, or horror. This system is the worst feature of all; it is damnable.

How many have the Bolsheviks killed? The London papers profess to give the exact figures, beginning with a million or two and ending in units. Incidentally I say that it seems to me that nearly everything they print is invented, not even invented in Moscow, or in Riga, or in any place where they know the Russians, but in Fleet Street; but the Bolsheviks by their obliteration of the liberty of the Press have only themselves to blame. Tchitcherin told me that the total deaths caused by the Revolution was under 9,000, and for such a gigantic upheaval that was small; but then again, how prove it?

Tchitcherin, good soul, works sixteen hours a day, and lives like a little brother of the poor, but these private virtues are only part of the qualifications of a Minister of Foreign Affairs, and not the most important.

Lenin was already a sick man at the time of my visit. He, like most of the leaders, was a highly educated person, filled with good intentions to the world, that is to say, as seen by Communist eyes, but he was above all a disciple of Karl Marx; he was the Communist Manifesto in action, "Das Kapital" incarnate; and yet he, more surely than his colleagues, at length saw the absurdities of the system.

Trotsky seemed to be an interesting blend of Sidney Webb and Julius Caesar, and the army was certainly the best organized of all the State functions. None of your pacifism there!

I have spoken of the friendly spirit prevailing amongst the people; that is a medium which dissolves a multitude of faults; but it was amongst the leaders that this fine quality was least apparent. I recall the sarcasms uttered against the Government here when Downing Street was barricaded off from the public; but what would these critics say if the whole of Whitehall neighbourhood was walled round as a city within a city, where the ordinary citizen could never penetrate and where every entrance was guarded by soldiers with fixed bayonets. Such is the Kremlin.

Sometimes out from beyond the mysterious portals a motor car issues at top speed scattering the common people right and left; that is the car of a Soviet

leader, a Commissar. There comes to my mind a picture on which Gustave Doré and Phil May might have collaborated—an old woman with straw plaited slippers suddenly making a jump, straw slippers in the air, just in time to escape an automobile that whirled by her at ferocious speed. Comrades? I never saw a greater gap between ruled and rulers than in Moscow.

I remarked that I paid as much for one apple as the railway conductor got in a month. How then does he live and keep a family? By all sorts of illicit practices, including forbidden trading. The insupportable conditions bring about infractions of the law, and as these are inevitable they must be winked at, and the result is that corruption makes its insidious suggestions, and this leads to demoralization of the people.

I think all the leaders were at the beginning not only honest but filled with a fanatical fervour for what they thought right; gradually, and especially when they lived abroad, they began to look after their own interests, and in some cases to feather their nests. Corruption, profiteering, the scoffing at ideals!

As to persecution of religion I did not see anything of it; in fact, all that I was able to observe gave me assurance of the contrary. On the walls of the Kremlin I saw the famous inscription, Religion is the Opium of the People, but under the shadow of that very wall I saw the venerable little church which is one of the most ancient in the country, in and out of which an incessant stream of worshippers were going; and as I watched this strange sight, a woman whom I did not know came up to me, and in the hearing of the soldiers with their fixed bayonets, began a tirade against the tyranny of the Bolsheviks who prevented the people worshipping God. I did not know what to think; on both sides good argument or clear reason seemed to be negligible quantities in this enchanted land. Since I was there I have read circumstantial stories of persecution; I can neither confirm nor infirm.

Out of all the desperate efforts, most of them ending in futility, which the Soviet leaders were making to realize Karl Marx, it would be strange if no good resulted. Readers may remember a striking passage in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, where he describes the Convention and its work, and shows what grandiose projects, some of them of great value, were put into effect by the men execrated in our orthodox histories.

So with the Bolshevik régime; when we are able to look at it in a long perspective we shall find that many of its errors were temporary or rectifiable, and that one mighty good, the impulse to Education, out-balanced most of the rest.

Yet after all it is impossible to hold a vast country within that Procrustean mould. Russia is destined, I believe, to become one of the greatest nations of the world; the people are so intelligent, so fervid in their desire for knowledge, so filled with aspirations towards great ideals, so vital with energy, yet so well endowed with fortitude and patience, so gifted mentally and physically, that they may well expand their hopes to a wonderful destiny.

But the present régime will not see it. What will? I can only hazard a guess. The Russian revolution has repeated on a grander scale, and with slower but more gigantic steps, the progress of the French Revolution. We are only now at the Robespierre stage; that of the rigid doctrinaires. We will find next a weak Directory, and then at length arising among the young military commanders—capable, bold fellows—a régime not dissimilar to the Consulate of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Next week I will sum up the review of the Karl Marx system.

ARTHUR LYNCH.

## Adjusting Their Creeds; Or, The New Christian Faith.

SINCE Dr. Barnes has been appointed Bishop of Birmingham many laymen as well as clergy of the Established Church have been looking to him for some sort of lead in the formulation of the new Christian creed. Having disposed of the old doctrine of "The Fall" by the adoption of the scientific explanation of the evolution of man from lower animal forms through a long series of changes, covering millions of years, it was naturally expected that the learned Bishop would proceed to give some further indication as to how much more of the Bible was to be rejected as the infallible word of God, and interpreted as a purely human production. So far, however, Dr. Barnes has been discreetly silent. He has only committed himself to the extent of saying: "The process of adjusting ourselves to the new conditions of the universe was bound to take time, but as a Church we have a valued tradition of intellectual freedom." That may be true, in a sense; but it is also true that when the Church had the power it persecuted the heretic within its pale, as strenuously as it did the unbeliever outside; and Dr. Barnes knows now from practical experience, how bitter can be the persecution of one section of the Church against him personally, for having the courage to throw over the crude and immoral teaching of the Fall, especially as it meant to many of his brethren of the cloth the kicking away of the foundation stone of the old Christian Faith.

But if one story in Genesis is to be given up because it is opposed to the plain teachings of Modern Science what has Bishop Barnes to say of the Story of the Flood, or the Story of the "Confusion of Tongues" at the "Tower of Babel"? Surely these stories are just as unscientific and absurd as the story of the Fall? And as he has practically admitted their absurdity, what is his new interpretation of these stories? Can the story of Adam living to be nine hundred and thirty years of age be regarded as historically true, or that of Methuselah living to be nine hundred and sixty-nine?

The story of Abraham preparing to plunge a dagger into the heart of his only son to demonstrate his faith in Jahveh is too much like a primitive drama to be regarded as a real event. Then what has the Bishop to say of the stories of the plagues upon the poor Egyptians recorded in Exodus, which followed on God "hardening the heart of Pharaoh" so that he would not let the children of Israel go? We might go through the whole of the Pentateuch and ask similar questions regarding a large number of incidents recorded therein, but at this time of day it is scarcely necessary. Most of the clergy know full well that the Pentateuch can neither be regarded as scientifically nor historically true, and many of its teachings are now admitted to be distinctly immoral. But the ordinary layman, "who professes and calls himself a Christian" is decidedly interested in knowing how much of the Old Testament he is expected to throw overboard as unworthy of credence, or what new interpretation he is to put upon these writings in order to regard them as God's method of dealing with mankind in primitive ages? Nor is it necessary to go through the long list of books included in the Old Testament—thirty-four in all—excluding the Pentateuch—except to ask what part they are to play in the Christian philosophy in the future; whether Christians may ever quote again the passage in the tenth chapter of Joshua to demonstrate that "the sun stood still upon Gideon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon" because this warrior had called upon the Lord to assist him to defeat his enemies; or the Book of Judges quoted to give an account of the exploits

of Samson with the jawbone of an ass; or the Books of Samuel and Kings, referred to in order to show how the Israelites clamoured for a king and how Samuel anointed Saul whose chief qualification appears to be that "from the shoulders upward he was higher than any of the people"; or to learn something of the life of David, "the man after God's own heart," who was nevertheless a liar, an adulterer, and a murderer. Certain, however, it is that such prophetic and poetical effusions as are to be found in the Books of Psalms, Proverbs and Isaiah, will be retained to show how, under the influence of Divine inspiration, these gifted men of God could write verse of imperishable value to the teachers and preachers of religion.

And then, of course, we come to the New Testament. I am not quite sure how Dr. Barnes views the question of the alleged Virgin Birth, but certainly as a believer in the doctrine of evolution he cannot regard such a belief as compatible with the teachings of modern science. And if Jesus was born like any other child, and had two human parents instead of one, then it would be difficult to maintain that he was the second person of the Trinity, the only begotten son of God, co-equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost.

And further that this God who was born of woman grew up from babyhood to manhood, and appears to have ultimately become obsessed with the belief that he was of Divine origin; although Dr. Barnes and many other learned Bishops of the Church, as well as many of the more intelligent clergy know perfectly well that the gods of other beside the Christian religion have been alleged to have been born under similar mysterious circumstances. And finally that this God—Jesus of Nazareth—came to die to blot out the sins of mankind and by his death to atone for those sins—which if the doctrine of Evolution be true, were never committed against God, but only against their fellow-man.

Now, how are Bishop Barnes and the Bishop of Woolwich and their followers going to adjust these absurdities and contradictions and make any interpretation of them fit in with a rational statement of a new Christian Faith? Experience in the past has always demonstrated the impossibility of fitting the false in and reconciling it with the truth. It cannot be done. In other words, these learned Bishops have got an insuperable task before them. Dr. Barnes admits that it will take a long time. It certainly will; and the longer the learned Bishop lives the more assuredly will he realize the hopelessness of the task he has set himself. And, further, one of these days he will perhaps find time to give some meed of praise to the great Freethinkers of the past who through years of turmoil and suffering have helped to emancipate him and his colleagues and followers from such a mass of primitive ignorance and superstition which he is now not only willing, but anxious, to consign to oblivion; and to seek in future to rest his creed upon the surer foundation of reason and science. One of these days also he may be able to reach the conclusion of the late Professor Max Muller who, writing on "the Religion of the Future," said: "The true religion of the future will be the fulfilment of all the religions of the past—the true religion of Humanity; that which in the struggle of history remains as the indestructible portion of all the so-called false religions of mankind. All religions, so far as I know them, had the same purpose; all were links in a chain. Nothing to my mind can be sadder than reading the sacred books of mankind—and yet nothing more encouraging. They are all full of rubbish; but among that rubbish there are old stones which the builders of the true Temple of Humanity will not reject." (From a letter in 1883 quoted in "Fellowship.") And even then it will be doubtful if he has reached the whole truth.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

## Correspondence.

ARTHUR LYNCH'S "ETHICS."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—If a critic were to object to the Differential Calculus, a mathematician might well ask him to show where in that elaborate mechanism some flaw could be precisely pointed out. It would not be sufficient to say that some conclusion which had been reached in accordance with the Calculus was unacceptable to the critic; an objection of that sort was indeed urged against the undulatory theory of light—that a spot of light should appear in the midst of a shadow—till Fresnel said, let us try; the spot of light appeared.

That expresses the main line of my reply to various critics. It is true that I have held up as a model the methods of Galileo and Lavoisier, and that adapting them I have disposed, so I claim, of Kant, Hegel, Freud; but that was after years of searching which enabled me to find a deeper base and more rigorous arguments than theirs.

Mr. Vincent Hands conceives the idea that I have been biased by religious prepossessions although he has no warrant for this impression in anything I have ever said or done. In the whole range of literature I can find only one who has been so entirely neutral to prevailing religions, and that is—not Vincent Hands, for he reacts decidedly even though in opposition—but John Keats. To this little company I would like to add Aristotle, but, as the Scottish minister with his two saved, "not quite sure of Tonal," I speak somewhat conjecturally of the great stagyrite. The list, however, is still open. Who offers?

Coming to particulars, Mr. Vincent Hands does not dispose of the statement that the "critical question is really, Is Nature conscious"; he merely repeats his negation in an involved manner in which a *petitio principii* appears, together with a material fallacy, such as misled the Idealist Berkeley, of tacitly assuming localization of mind.

We ourselves are part of Nature; our whole organism determines our modes of consciousness, and, in a sense well understood in science, as when we say that by throwing a stone we shift the centre of gravity of the universe, so the universe determines the actions and reactions of our organism. Yet our consciousness is able to find within its scope the contemplation of the relation of different parts of the organism as a whole. The argument, I submit, has no validity that because Nature is "everything," that the question is thereby negatively answered, Is Nature conscious? I am here tempted to quote the great Pantheist poets, Shelley, Coleridge—his ode in the valley of Chamounix is wonderful—but that would be not argument, only literary adornment.

Nor does the expression, the "flux and reflux of Nature," dispose of Purpose; the phrase itself is an assumption, but even if it were justified, something appreciable to us as Purpose might appear in each successive phase. The principle of Evolution, if indeed there be a process of evolution definable in terms of any principle, would be an instance in point.

ARTHUR LYNCH.

SIR,—One cannot but admire the sublime recklessness with which Col. Lynch refers readers of his *Ethics* to his *Principles of Psychology*.

My main point was that had Col. Lynch taken thoroughly into account "the animal and early man" he would not have arrived at Truth, Energy, and Sympathy as the fundamental basis, but a much deeper basis—Egoism.

Col. Lynch denies making an appeal on grounds of religion. That is wholly untrue, for he has placed such emphasis on the immortality of the soul (a purely religious question) as to offer, if I am not mistaken, to remould his whole book if a certain passage be overthrown. It is true there is no reason why religion should be excluded from a *purview* of a work on ethics, but Col. Lynch's book is purported to be a work laying down the fundamental principle of ethics, which essentially must exclude religion. Ethics have no attachment to religion, but religion has a vital attachment to ethics.

Therefore I fail to understand how misconceptions could arise from my letter, for in spite of its gross brevity it was a refutation of the basic principles of Col. Lynch's *Ethics*, in so far as they are put forward as the fundamental basis of ethics; and Col. Lynch nowhere meets it in his letter.

The remark, "without pursuing Mr. Panton's objections point by point" is naïve indeed, for they contain the most vital to my argument; I would ask readers to note this.

I submit that a discussion to show the necessity of the principles, Truth, Energy and Sympathy, is necessitated only by the study of the actions to which those principles give rise. This no more makes those principles the fundamental basis of ethics than the use of a pound note makes its intrinsic value a golden sovereign.

If Truth, Energy, and Sympathy are the fundamental basis principles of ethics, then the refutation of the principle I expressed is all I ask of Col. Lynch.

A. S. E. PANTON.

SIR,—I cannot agree with Mr. Vincent Hand's topsyturvy definition of "mind" as the *reaction of the environment upon a sensitive form of matter competent to receive it*. Had he defined that elusive and enigmatical word as the reaction of a particular form of matter to environmental stimuli I could, at any rate, have partially agreed with him.

Mr. Hands now explains what he meant regarding certain words which he, in my opinion, had previously used somewhat ambiguously. By "waste" in the universe he meant waste relatively to beings on this planet. In that case I admit that, as our sun sends us but the one 2,200,000,000th part of its light and heat, it certainly is, from our narrow view-point, a spendthrift. Mr. Hands regards my criticism as "captious quibbling," but is he justified in doing so seeing that, not only among the laity, but among many biologists and psychologists, the existing confusion concerning vital and mental phenomena is mainly due to the careless and, indeed, unwarrantable use of the words "life" and "mind." I could quote many examples, but one will suffice here. An F.R.S.E., a world-renowned writer on biological subjects, claims that mind acts on brain and brain reacts on mind, and yet denies that mind is a physical entity. As though there could be action and reaction between a physical mass "brain" and a "function" of, or "process" in, that mass. Mr. Hands' excuse of "trusting to the general sense" is not permissible in scientific discussions. Possibly the writer of a certain well-known text-book on physics "trusted to the general sense" when he used the word "force" with over a dozen different connotations to the dismay of all students of the subject. Possibly, too, Hegel expected his readers to supply the meaning when, in the preface to his *Phenomenology of Mind*, he wrote:—

The spiritual alone is the actual; it is the being or In-itself-being—the self-contained and determined—the Other-being or For-itself-being—and in that determination or its Other-being in itself remaining; or it is in and for itself. This In-and-for-itself-being is only at first for us or in itself, it is the spiritual substance."

But no reader has supplied the meaning, nor, for that matter, ever will.

JAVALL.

#### BIRTH CONTROL AND DIVINITY.

SIR,—It is no longer a question to-day of whether Birth Control, the most vitally interesting subject to the reading public of this country, is right or wrong, but whether its practice should be permitted to spread to the working masses.

The Church characteristically modest takes the lead in opposing mass enlightenment, and with its benevolent eye fixed on heaven it places its equally benevolent foot on the throat of progress.

The Brighton Town Council recently called upon the Government to grant power to the local authorities to advise married persons in the use of contraceptives. (It is to be hoped that other local bodies will follow suit, especially in the condensed London areas, and that members of the medical profession who approve will openly support the appeal.)

Following close upon the action of the Town Council came forth a manifesto straight from the mouth of the Christian Social Council, asserting that "the establishment of clinics to advise married people in the use of contraceptives would rouse the strongest opposition on moral grounds on the part of those who hold the accepted Christian standards." Thus runs the Church's ultimatum to Science, and it is to be hoped that some day the medical profession will be strong enough to retaliate in more powerful and convincing terms.

It should be observed that the C.S. Council is composed of Christians of all denominations who, in this great emergency, have agreed to bury their sectional grievances.

The manifesto proceeds to point out that morality must be built up on "self-control," "unselfishness" and "self-sacrifice." All very hackneyed. I cannot believe that the unhealthy doctrine of sex suppression commends itself even to healthy-minded Christians. It is one thing to agree that there may be a Deity. But quite another to consent to the persecution of their bodies for his sake. Harder still to believe that any Deity who was all-wise and all-good would exact such sacrifices from his children. If continence is practicable, why marry? Most people do not marry just to bring up large families. Nor do they look upon marriage as the school for celibacy. Young and normal people marry to gratify a spiritual and physical need for a closer and more intimate relationship.

Birth control, we are told, provides "a physical satisfaction which is purely temporary at the cost of eliminating those qualities which alone make married love permanent."

Some of us, miserable sinners, would like to know more about those particular qualities that make love permanent.

It may be un-Christian to say so, but it is likewise true that the spirituality of a marriage depends upon its being physically satisfactory. Yet we can only achieve spirituality if we follow the logic of our Christian advisers by accepting fatalistically the tragedy and squalor of frequent and undesired pregnancies.

Sometimes in marriage, as out of it, self-control is an obligation, and is practised by most decent people without question. But as a means of controlling birth it is worse than futile. The act of cohabitation might only take place once in a year and the result could still be a child every year.

Hoping to influence the woman by the morality argument, the divines claim that municipal sanction of birth control will be regarded by some as giving moral sanction to the practice among unmarried people. But I doubt very much whether this alleged point cuts much ice. Those who want to be immoral do not ask for sanction, nor are people moral from fear of consequences. The really immoral person, the prostitute, is usually well protected with information on the subject.

The wives of the upper and middle classes have not been deterred from the adoption of practical and hygienic methods of regulating their families by any foolish fears of this kind. Why, then, should the married woman of the working class be urged that it is in the interests of morality that she should remain in ignorance of her own body and the facts of motherhood, the most important things in her life?

By what right does the Church, the most dangerous opponent of birth control, seek to impose upon the weakest and poorest the burden and responsibility of large families, or, as the only alternative, the practice of continence?

Is it not enough that the poor have to submit to undernourishment, and unemployment?

Morality must be served, and the vast mass of the people must be left to breed out of ignorance, that the world be peopled with consumptive, rickety, tubercular, and blind babies to the everlasting glory of the Lord!

The manifesto concedes grudgingly that God does not intend his children to live in conditions to which modern civilization has reduced them. If this is so, then the materialists and advocates of birth control are carrying out his will in showing his children how to live healthily and breed discriminately until modern civilization becomes civilization indeed.

ROSE WIRCOP.

## CODDING COMMERCIALS.

SIR,—As an old commercial traveller I found Mr. Vincent J. Hand's article under above heading interesting. In the current issue of *Good Lines*, under article, "Bibles in Bedrooms," the writer says: "While the instances are not many that come to the immediate notice of the Committee, it is well known they have brought calm and peace to many a troubled mind, leading them on to thoughts of higher things. Hundreds of instances no doubt have occurred whereby the Bibles have fitted and prepared the traveller to overcome his daily cares and troubles"—sounds uncommonly like a tract. I often wonder what even the rare "goody goody" commercial does really think of the literary? part of *Good Lines*. It never seems to dawn on the writer that the man who draws comfort from the Bible would be just the man the committee need not bother about; he would have it in his bag. The other sort—the ninety-nine out of the hundred—find no end of comfort in a good day and a full order-book. The ungodly often refer to *Bradshaws* as the travellers' Bible. Yes, we are looked after—Bibles in the bedrooms and texts on the wall. Well, I have marked three bedroom Bibles in such a way that I could detect if they had been used. This I have done in week-end hotels, viz., hotels popular for spending the Saturday and Sunday in, with result, one was unopened for just over two years, one remained unused for seventeen months, and the third had been opened under two months. Enough said.

It is a fact though that quite a number are used to keep the looking-glass from swinging. I remember a popular week-end house in Penzance, where the landlady always gave me a good room, but said I was a dreadful man for I turned the texts to the wall. In Exeter my bedroom was entered and I was robbed of fourteen pounds. Over the bed was a text: "The Lord will provide"; he had—for the other fellow. The Commercial Travellers' Christian Association provides us with a "library." G. W. Foote was once hung up in a quiet country town and stayed at the commercial hotel and described the library as one possibly selected for servant girls of the early Victorian period. About sixty books—absolute rubbish—are on the shelves. I don't think a dealer would give one penny per volume. Three times I have put on the shelves Philip Vivian's *The Churches and Modern Thought*, a book that should offend no one. By next journey the book had been stolen—I beg pardon, removed by some member of the C.T.C.A., doubtless on the "coddling" principle.

In an Essex commercial house I used, the proprietor always acted as "president" at dinner and used to say grace. Alas for his "grace," he was a heavy whisky drinker, apart from this only twice in thirty-five years have I ever heard grace said at dinner, and both occasions on a Sunday.

At dinner each commercial puts a penny in the box for the Commercial Travellers' Schools, a splendid institution, but, as I have often pointed out, the Freethinker's penny goes with the others to a school where a creed is taught with which he disagrees. It is a real loss to the community that the average commercial is poorly read. Intellectually he is keen and quick enough; if he read a little more solidly his influence would be very far reaching; his calling would make him a kind of travelling missionary on the side of culture, for no man can keep his knowledge to himself. Still he has sufficient all-round information to prevent him being a bigot, and to-day the Freethinker in the many friendly debates which occur in the commercial room gets a fair hearing. How different to the old days when I was abused, shunned, or prayed for! Now, if he is well equipped he is listened to with keen interest. Not once a year do I find a Christian who has read enough ably to defend his own belief, and where evidence of fairly wide reading is given, one can wring such admissions as startle the listeners and help the Freethinker. In the old days my outspokenness brought me many enemies; to-day it frequently brings friends. So even we "coddled" commercials do move after all.

J. W. WOOD.

Superstition says, pray and you shall receive. Science says, sow and you shall reap.—Prof. Oswald.

## North London Branch N.S.S.

Last Sunday an excellent address was given at the St. Pancras Reform Club by Miss E. Bannister, who is a member of the Cremation Society of England, our only regret being that there was not a larger audience to listen to the lady, who dealt exhaustively with the subject in a most interesting manner.

To-night, our old friend, Mr. George Bedborough, will address us on the necessity of taking religious instruction out of the schools. Those of us who have read Mr. Bedborough's recent articles, written for children, in the *Freethinker*, will recognize how competent he is to deal with this subject, and we hope there will be a good audience for this, our last meeting before Christmas.

We open again on January 11 with a debate between Dr. Arthur Lynch and Mr. T. F. Palmer on "Republicanism." So keep the evening of January 11 free.—SECRETARY.

## 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. Hanson, a Lecture. The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 at the "Lawrie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7, Mr. George Bedborough, "Why not take Religion out of the Schools?"

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham Road): 7, Mr. Walter B. Wingate, "The Unco' Guid."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. Joseph McCabe, "The Legend of the Lost Atlantis."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit., "Visions of Real Life."

## 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.

BOLTON SECULAR SOCIETY (Miners' Hall, Bridgeman Place): Monday, December 15, at 7.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Things Christians Ought to Know." Admission 6d. and 1s.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): Mr. George Whitehead, 11.30, "Constructive Secularism"; 6.30, "Bernard Shaw and God." Questions and Discussion. (Silver Collection.)

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mrs. Dora Russell, "Birth Control."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Pendleton Town Hall, Broad Street, Pendleton): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "The Making of Man"; 6.30, "Things Christians Ought to Know."

**A** REMINDER that there is a remnant of *THE EVERLASTING GEMS* to be had at 2s. a copy, post paid, from THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

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