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Views and Opinions.

The New Year.

Sitting in a tram-car a few days ago I overheard one man remark to another in anything but a cheerful tone, "Another year nearly gone!" "Yes," replied the other, "but there's another one beginning." That struck me as a healthy and proper reply. The past is gone, and save to rejoice over victories gained and the lessons for the future that one may snatch from even failures there is little profit in dwelling upon it. The future is always ours, and it is to the future that we look, and when certain philosophers assure us that the future is always in front, we may reply that it is as certain as anything else. For the past is gone, the present goes even while we reflect upon it, and the future is all that is left. And even though the pessimistically inclined may argue that the future never realizes all we look for and hope for, we may still reply that this is one of its charms and one of its sources of inspiration. I have not had much time to spend on my once favourite pastime of fishing of late years, but when I did indulge it was always what I was going to catch that was most attractive. Not the little fishes that I landed but the enormously large ones I might have caught spurred me on and satisfied me for the time spent. And as one looks back over the years spent in fighting for this or that forlorn hope, it is the ever-beckoning of yet unrealized triumphs that keeps one's interest alive and one's heart young. Expectation never wearies; that comes with complete satisfaction. An ideal that is realized ceases to inspire. The greatest gourmand revolts against his favourite dish when he is stuffed to repletion.

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The Outlook.

Now it would be quite easy to fill columns detailing the triumphs of Freethought in the past, but for the present and at the opening of a new year I am rather more concerned with the future. It is true enough that the triumphs of Freethought have been such as any cause may be proud of achieving. The most powerfully organized religion the world has ever seen has been compelled to drop one doctrine after another, and to seek safety in vagueness even with those to which it still clings. And this defeat

has been brought about by men and women, few in number, poor as the world's goods go, and without social standing or influence. What they have had behind them has been the steadily growing mass of truth involved in scientific discovery, and the increasing humanization of the race implied by social development. The growth of avowed Freethought on the one hand, and the "liberalizing" of religion on the other, has indeed gone on so rapidly that a great many have come apparently to the conclusion that it is unnecessary to bother further, that the forces set in motion will of themselves sweep out of existence what remains of organized religious belief. So might an educated Roman of the first century of this era have argued. Still more certainly would he have treated as an idle fancy the statement that so stupid a set of superstitions as afterwards became crystallized as Christianity could ever seriously threaten the civilization of which he was justly proud. But the time was to come when all that was best in the Roman civilization was to lie buried beneath a mass of as degrading superstitions as ever disgraced the human intellect.

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Running to Seed.

In a way the very advance of Freethought makes the danger of a reaction the greater. There was a time when the Christian Church, in virtue of the environment it had created, could claim the adherence of the best contemporary intelligence. And while that remained so this intelligence, being part and parcel of the Christian Church, served to keep the cruder and the more ignorant minds in check. But to-day, when the best brains in the nation are either definitely outside the Church, or are but doubtful supporters, and when the level of the intellect in the Church is such that men like Bishop Gore are counted as great thinkers, the more ignorant religious types are coming into their own, and are beginning to exercise influence on the established Christian Churches. When such religious fakirs as Hickson, and such ignorant mountebanks as Gipsy Smith can command the patronage of leading men in church and chapel, we are obviously faced with a situation in which there is a somewhat suggestive parallel of what must have been the position of affairs in the declining days of the Roman Empire. The Roman Catholic Church is gaining in political influence in this country, and there is a tendency on the part of politicians to pander to this or that group of organized religionists on account of the vote. This, again, lends significance to the manner in which ignorant men such as Hickson and Gipsy Smith, with the "faked" reports of their meetings are being exploited by the leaders of the Churches. They provide a temptation for the gambling of politicians, of which these may be quite ready to take advantage. The return of a strong Conservative Government also makes it tolerably certain that the Church will make a further attempt to secure a stronger dose of religious teaching in the schools, and although that is a possibility which, if realized, may bring secular education

a step nearer, it is one of which we ought not to lose sight.

* * *

The Farce of Liberalizing Christianity.

On the one side we have to reckon with the existence of masses of crude superstition which may be exploited by those who care to do so. On the other we have the indifference of many who should be taking an active part in the struggle, and who are thus presenting the enemy with the sum of their possible strength as a help to maintain their position. These people are apt to set up a defence by urging that the liberalizing of Christianity has gone on at such a pace that its near disintegration is certain to follow. If that were the case I am not sure that the world would gain much by the disappearance of one superstition and the establishment of another with a slightly more rational appearance. And there is nothing new in a number of parsons accepting a new reading of the old faith when the orthodox one becomes unprofitable. It was done at the period of the Protestant Reformation, which gave the Christian Church a new lease of life, and set back the intellectual progress of the race by about two centuries; and on a smaller scale it has been done many times since. But genuine Freethinkers are not out to rationalize the Christian creed, their intention is to destroy it. To give a new reading to such words as "God," "Religion," etc., is to give a new lease of life to ideas that might otherwise disappear. Scientific men and others use the words in a sense that has nothing in common with the historical and proper significance of the terms, and having established for them a certain currency, straightway hand them over to Christians to be used for bolstering up the old absurdities. Of course, it may be quite correct that in time this process of attenuation will completely destroy religious beliefs. But in other directions we have found it profitable to use our knowledge to hasten the evolutionary process. Why should it not be equally advisable here? If all those who really do recognize the absurdity of the Christian religion were to say so, its power in a civilized community would hardly last another generation.

A Likeable God.

* * *

Indifference is one of the most deadly enemies the reformer has to fight, and it is one of the best friends to all forms of obscurantism. Some years ago I came across an account of the discovery of an old Roman altar to "The God who takes no Heed." No one knew anything about this God, nor about the one who erected it. But one may imagine some daring fellow noticing that the pagan Pantheon sheltered gods for almost everything, and that these gods did not always do well. The god who should have secured a good harvest left a whole people to starve. Others failed to protect man from storm, plague, and pestilence. Things happened either as though the gods were not there, or as though they did not care what happened. And the builder of this altar may also have noticed that so far as men had come to understand the quality of natural forces and had learned to control them they proceeded with a greater degree of justice and decency. Finally he may have seen that because of their gods men hated each other, ill-treated each other, and set up many brutal customs. And from this vantage ground it would not be a great step to the conclusion that the best kind of a god a man could have would be one that left him severely alone. So while other men were praising gods for services they did not render, for a goodness they did not display, or a wisdom they did not manifest, this man thanked the god who never interfered in human affairs. And that is the best kind

of a god of whom I have heard; it is the only honest altar the world possesses, the most intelligently respectable religion ever devised, and the inscription was written by a man who had both wisdom and courage.

* * *

What To Do.

To take no heed is admirable so far as the gods are concerned, but its virtues stop there. So far as our own movement is concerned I find all over the country complaints that many display indifference to intellectual issues. There is nothing strange in this with a humanity in which the sheep-like qualities are so pronounced. Indifference to intellectual issues is common, otherwise we should find men and women divided into warring camps, concerning ideas which have the power to turn civilization upside down. But in the power of ideas the average man or woman is not interested at all. The papers that stand for ideas have the smallest circulation in the country. The journals which boast of their circulation in hundreds of thousands are those which serve up week after week a mass of scandal-mongering garbage or sensational rubbish that makes one almost sick to read. But the power of ideas is there and those who recognize this have the making of the better world of the future in their charge. The unfortunate thing is that Freethinkers, in common with others, share this quality of taking no heed. On a moderate computation there must be a couple of million non-believers in Great Britain. But the majority of these take no heed. They go on their way smiling at superstitions which by their own attitude they are helping to perpetuate. There is not a town of any size in the kingdom in which there are not enough Freethinkers to make their presence felt if only they were open in their unbelief and were determined to fight for the recognition which Christians will never give until they are forced. You cannot kill a superstition by passing it by on the other side with a smile of contempt. The only sensible policy is to kick it off the footpath and see that it stays off. Freethought will go on during the coming years as it has in the years in the past, but it will go on the more rapidly as we are all prepared to do something to forward it. More than fifty years ago John Stuart Mill said that the time had arrived when all should speak out plainly concerning religion. The time is still more ripe now. The world is riddled with insincerities and shams, and the greatest imposture of all is religion. Cannot we in the coming year show that we are each of us determined to do something to bring that age-long imposture to an end?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory."

THE ordinary reader may exclaim: "How hopelessly trite and obsolete those three words are; why use them at all?" Dean Inge has assured us more than once that in Anglican pulpits no ambitious preacher has the courage to allude to them for fear of offending the majority of his hearers. Of course, the Dean exaggerates, his statement being true only of his own party in the Church. But there are other parties in the Established Church which still cling to old-fashioned terms; and prominent among these parties is the Anglo-Catholic, which glories in having as its chief leader no less a man than Bishop Gore, who is the author of numerous theological works, such as *Lux Mundi* (1890) and *The Incarnation*. It is true that of *Lux Mundi* he was nominally only the editor, but it is also equally true that every article in the

book fundamentally expresses his own views. For Dr. Gore we cherish, in many respects, the highest possible respect, because of his active hatred of all shams and his deep interest in social reform. But on the present occasion we have to deal with him as a theologian.

The *Church Times* of December 12 contains a sermon by him which boldly employs the antiquated words as its title. From the orthodox point of view the discourse is a masterpiece. The greater part of it is devoted to a disquisition on the subject of Hell. It is admitted that the present is "a world in which there is a lot of good in people who appear to be without religion, and very grave faults in people who are very religious and have high principles." This is a stupendous admission and of incalculable significance. We thank the Bishop for making it, but confidently challenge him to explain it; which he does not attempt to do in this sermon. He refers to the natural tendency to disapprove of the biblical habit of classing people into black and white, and then adds:—

But in the tribunal of our moral consciousness and our conscience that is not the case. What is occurring there? I am tempted. There is present to my mind a good action which I ought to do. It is very troublesome, it interferes with my comfort, and I do not do it. Or a rather clever or rather amusing but certainly a malevolent and possibly untrue piece of gossip about So-and-so, whom I do not like, presents itself to my mind; and I know it is malevolent, but I say it. Or a thought comes to me with overwhelming force. I know it is bad, but I entertain it. Well, now, at those moments when I yield myself to temptation and sin, it is no comfort to me in my best self when I reflect upon the matter, that I did not commit a murder or steal somebody's purse. There was presented to me an alternative between good and bad, between right and wrong, between God and my own comfort, and I rejected the good and the will of God, and I did the bad.

Taking it as it stands, that passage furnishes us with a splendid illustration of the truth of Determinism. In each case the man acts in obedience to the strongest motive. He was so constituted that it was impossible for him to have acted otherwise. This is a universal necessity applicable to every human being. The notion of a free will is an empty dream of some philosophers and divines, and advocated for the purpose of releasing God from all responsibility for man's fallen condition and deadly guilt. From certain expressions used, one is inclined to infer that Bishop Gore is a Determinist, such as the following: "The first time or two when I yield to selfishness there is a struggle; but acts form habits, and habits become unconscious and stereotype into character, and character becomes fixed and irreversible." Now when a wicked character becomes fixed and irreversible nothing awaits it in the next world but everlasting punishment, a dwelling endlessly in a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. It is the Day of Judgment, and the following is represented as the Judge's final decision regarding the goats and the sheep: "And these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life" (Mat. xxv., 46). We agree with Dr. Gore's exegesis of all New Testament allusions to the duration of future punishment, and with him we are convinced that no one who believes in the inerrancy of the Gospel narrative can possibly hold and advocate what has been called the Larger Hope.

It is not with Bishop Gore's exegesis that we find fault, nor yet with his exposition of the evolution of character till it reaches finality, but with his treating the teaching attributed to Jesus on a future life as infallible, and his explaining the evolution of character in terms of supernaturalism. To him Jesus is the

supreme revealer of God and of the conditions of life in the world to come, while to us the Gospels are most untrustworthy documents and the Jesus they depict is largely, if not wholly, a legendary character. If our view of the Gospels and Jesus is correct, it follows that the Bishop's theology is like a house built upon the sand, doomed to utter destruction; and that is perfectly true of all systems of theology. In *Headlong Hall*, a novel by Thomas Love Peacock, one of the characters is a clergyman named Dr. Gaster, who charged the other characters with engaging in "a very sceptical and, I must say, atheistical conversation, and I should have thought out of respect to my cloth—" Another day the conversation had for its subject animal food. One was violently opposed to it, another lavishly justified it, while the third declared that there was much to be said on both sides. Then the story proceeds thus:—

"I am really astonished," said the Reverend Dr. Gaster, graciously picking off the supernal fragments of an egg he had just cracked, and clearing away a space at the top for the reception of a small piece of butter—"I am really astonished, gentlemen, at the very heterodox opinions I have heard you deliver, since nothing can be more obvious than that all animals were created solely and exclusively for the use of man."

"Even the tiger that devours him?" said Mr. Escot.

"Certainly," said Dr. Gaster.

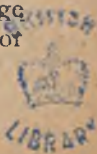
"How do you prove it?" said Mr. Escot.

"It requires no proof," said Dr. Gaster; "it is a point of doctrine. *It is written, therefore it is so.*"

We have italicized that last sentence in order to emphasize its theological import. *Headlong Hall* was written upwards of a hundred years ago, and yet Dr. Gaster and Bishop Gore could shake hands over that vast distance in token of their absolute agreement on the claim that the Bible is the basis upon which all theology is believed to stand. The Bishop preaches a most horrible, unspeakably cruel, and wholly inhuman doctrine of never-ending punishment, simply because the Gospel Jesus is supposed to have laid it down. He can calmly and patiently think of countless myriads of men and women from the beginning of the world until now who, because during their short lives on earth, averaging perhaps between fifty and sixty years, refused to make themselves compatible with God, are now destined to be tormented in the flames of hell for ever and ever, without even asking himself whether or not such infinite and endless punishment is worthy of a just God whom Christians praise as a God of love. Curiously enough, after treating us to such a tremendous description of future punishment the Bishop speaks thus:—

All knowledge of the meaning of eternal punishment, or of all those multitudes of questions which surge up into our minds, is infinitely slight; we are left in profound ignorance. It is true that the imagination of theologians and the popular imagination have drawn a vivid map of the unseen world and vivid pictures of the horror of the unending torments of the lost; but we know almost nothing. We ask ourselves whether the condition of having lost our soul may not prove to be also a condition of lost consciousness. But we have no answer to that question; we do not know the answer.....Let us be content to be agnostics, frank agnostics, on a matter of which we have no material for knowledge and no self-disclosure of God.

We presume, on the contrary, that we know nothing at all about a future world, not even that it exists, and we feel sure that our own ignorance is in reality shared by all others. Multitudes believe in its existence, and that it is divided into two or three departments, but no one possesses the slightest knowledge of it. Not even the Gospel Jesus had anything superior



to faith concerning it. For many centuries the Jews had no conception of a hereafter, and the Judaism of the Old Testament was a religion for this life only.

Bishop Gore has very little to say about heaven, and he does not believe in Purgatory. "Purgatory," he says, "has been a fatal diversion of the mind of the Church from its tasks and duties in the present world." The real subject of the sermon is Hell, of the existence of which there is no single spark of evidence. So far as our knowledge goes death is the end of individual human beings. There is nothing whatever in personality that either demands or deserves immortality. All our tasks and duties relate to this life alone. We are but children of the earth. Here we were born, here we live, doing or neglecting our work, and here we shall die and cease to be as we are now. In his glorious poem, *The Woods of Westermain*, Meredith says:—

Earth your haven, Earth your helm,
You possess a double realm;
Labouring here to pay your debt,
Till your little sun shall set;
Leaving her the future task;
Loving her too much to ask.

J. T. LLOYD.

Our Friend the Enemy.

Liberty, a word without which all other words are vain.—*Ingersoll*.

Speedy end to superstition, a gentle one if you can contrive it, but an end.—*Carlyle*.

SOME years ago it was a welcome habit to print an annual summary of the position of Freethought, and it may be topical to renew the practice on the threshold of a new year. Looking back at the close of each year is a kind of stocktaking in which it is usually worth while to indulge. It provides us with the opportunity of seeing, for one thing, what progress has been made in any particular respect, and also what new and unexpected developments have helped to hinder any advancement in the Freethought Movement. So if we take a very brief and cursory survey of the religious battlefield for the past year it may not be entirely without interest. Space is certain to compel the omission of a great deal, but just a few characteristics may prove sufficient.

There has, for example, been the failure of the Gipsy Smith Mission in London to effect a revival of religion. When the Methodist Church inaugurated their campaign last year it was hoped that the mission would, in some degree, emulate the successes of the Moody and Sankey mission of a previous generation. Nothing of the sort happened, and the historian of the past year has to record instead but the repetition of the Torrey-Alexander disaster. Wherever the faults lay, however, the revival mission has lost attraction, and has come to a standstill. By skilful organization the congregations of scores of churches are engineered into one huge building, but the great mass of ordinary citizens are undisturbed.

A far more momentous matter than the failure of an Evangelistic campaign, conducted by one of the Nonconformist Churches, is the parlous condition of the Church of England herself, which is steadily losing her grip on the national life. Whereas fifty years ago the Anglican Church had the lion's share in the nation's education, last year the Church could only claim 28.5 per cent. of the total number of children in attendance at public elementary schools. This process of disintegration is still going on. During the past five years 226 Church schools have been closed altogether, and 145 transferred to local edu-

cation authorities. Further, a very large number of children of Church worshippers are being educated in the freer atmosphere of undenominational schools.

The paralysis of the wealthy and powerful Anglican Church has been a slow process. There was a time when she could fairly claim to a representation of a part of the national life. She once had her broad wing, her scholars, statesmen, and thinkers, who found her borrowed mummeries and stolen creeds susceptible of mystical interpretation. Then there was the evangelical party, which was composed of sturdy Englishmen, who looked askance at Priestcraft, and regarded the Church as a valuable branch of the Civil Service. There was also a handful of Anglo-Catholics, more priestly than the Papists, who have gradually got the upper hand in the Church, leaving themselves more ignorant and bigoted than before. Gradually the whole Church has been made over to their "leprous likeness," and intellectual mortification has set in.

The success of Freethought propaganda contributed to this result. Every Churchman who became a Freethinker assisted the process. The more brains that were drawn out of the Church, the more did the huge mass part with its intellectual leaven, and tend to flatten down to a mere mass of ignorance and intolerance. What constitutes the obstructive character of the so-called Church of England in the year 1925 is the abyss which now separates it from the highest intelligence around it; the live, alert intellect of science, and the leaden, moveless, stereotype of theological dogma. And to-day the voices of the two Archbishops and the Bench of Bishops, at which men once trembled, attract less attention than the love affairs of an Indian prince.

As belief has waned in England, the Anglican Church has sought to imitate the mummeries of Rome. The Anglo-Catholics have taken possession of the Church of England. Maybe, they have not done all that was dreaded by Nonconformists, but they rule the ecclesiastical roost, and the Archbishops and Bishops are powerless. At this hour there are covered by the English Church's banner men who hold the extremest doctrine of the freedom of the individual, and men who will kneel before a monkey provided that the animal has a priest's cowl on its head. How long will this divided house stand? That a large and increasing number of Anglican priests were coquetting with Rome caused some years ago attention in the Roman Catholic Church, and the Pope had fleeting hopes of converting England, and of reimposing the yoke and Peter's pence which our forefathers threw off. But too much water has flowed to the sea since the English people acknowledged Papal supremacy, and were content to bear with the tyranny of Priestcraft engineered from Italy. The English people are not quarrelsome, and they are obstinate in their likes and dislikes. In darkened and superstitious times the power of the Roman Catholic Church was great, but the glare of the fires of Smithfield upset the temper of our countrymen. Priestcraft was never so unquestioned and unresisted here as in Italy, Spain, and France. There is a wholesome tendency in British blood, which is cooler than that of the Latin races. It shows itself whenever any specially arrogant claims to obedience are heard, as Charles I. and James II. knew to their bitter cost, and as the age-long battles for the freedom of the Press also proves. Clericalism had not a safe seat on British shoulders in the age of Faith, even before the days of the Reformation. It is an impossible dream now that there is an organized Freethought Party, which has inscribed on its banners that significant Voltairean phrase, "Crush the Infamous."

Where the Anglican Church fails, the Nonconformist Churches will fail too. In the last analysis there is precious little difference between an Infallible Church and an Infallible Book. All the Christian Churches are still entombed within the covers of an Oriental fetish-book. Men ask for the bread of knowledge, the Churches can only offer the stone of superstition.

MIMNERMUS.

A Happy Old Year.

OF course, when I congratulate people in general on having lived through the Happy Old Year, 1924, I mean it (to speak the fashionable scientific language) in a relative sense. "Everything is relative," the philosophers say, and all things human must be considered in relation to times and circumstances. Dr. Johnson very amusingly tells, in his *Rasselas*, of a supposed Happy Land, somewhere in Africa, from which the supposed-to-be fortunate inhabitants were glad to escape! Even King Solomon, immensely rich and possessing a thousand wives, was not happy (perhaps, indeed, because he had a thousand wives). And, though it is hazardous to state a view about affairs so far ahead as 5,000,000 A.D., I suspect the sweet young Futurists of that age will occasionally grumble at the cook, or the tailor, or the President of the World-republic.

Nevertheless, I venture to plead, in the name of common-sense, for the recognition of happiness as a reality of human experience, and not merely as a gift which some Santa Claus is going to drop down our chimney next year. And if happiness is a real thing, it is a part of happiness to recall itself, and (if I may so express it) to say to us: "Yesterday, I lived and blessed you." This is a vastly different mood from that which prays, in faint hope, for a boon to-morrow. And I am of opinion that such a mood is more possible to us now than it was to our forefathers. In other words, the human race grows in happiness, because it has learned to remember its accomplished joys, as well as to expect joys in the future. This strength of memory is an achievement of the ages. It is the result of long centuries of social evolution. It is an aspect of the enduring Revelation, or Unfolding, of the Nature of Man. Man knows himself better with each new sunrise. The dear good churches tell us, as if we were simple children, to believe in one Old Testament and one New Testament. You dear good churches, let me breathe into your ears the cheerful fact that the Testaments are countless, and one appears every day; we might even affirm that one appears with every heart-throb of humanity! These Testaments of discovery, industry, science and beauty pour out in an endless stream, while the priests of Yahweh and Christ are gazing backwards into the dim sepulchre of the Past, and muttering texts from two little out-of-date Testaments, written in Hebrew and Greek.

For instance, I will take two words, one drawn from the Old Testament, namely, "Jeremiad" (wailing and lamentation); and the other from the New Testament, namely, "Armageddon" (a place of widespread national tragedy).

First, "Jeremiad." We coin this term in our dictionaries from the peculiar temper of the prophet Jeremiah, who was in the habit of surveying the nations and empires, and damning at least one per day. He had reasons, social and political, for disliking Babylon in Mesopotamia. This is how he gave rein to his feelings:—

Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every soul! Be not cut off in her iniquity; for this

is the hour of the Lord's vengeance; he will render unto her a recompense. Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that hath made all the earth drunken; the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed; howl for her!.....I will break in pieces man and woman; I will break in pieces old and young; I will break in pieces the young man and the maid (Jeremiah, chapter li.).

Tradition assures us that the same Jeremiah wrote the Book of Lamentations, in which the Hebrew patriot thus mourns:—

All our enemies have opened their mouths against us. Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction. Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people! Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission (chapter iii.).

It is indeed, natural that, at times of misfortune, grief should weep. But what I here assert is that the general outlook of the Old Testament on public affairs in Asia, Africa and Europe was not happy, and led to no reasonable confidence. I do not jeer at this; I do not criticise it. What I object to is the impertinence of churches which, in 1925, ask you and me to accept this Old Testament as a standard of social and political judgment in the affairs of Europe, America, and the rest of the continents.

Secondly, "Armageddon," a term that occurs in the Apocalypse, or Book of Revelation. I believe Martin Luther rather objected to this Greek pamphlet (or Greek-Hebrew pamphlet) being included in the official "Word of God"; but the Catholic and Protestant authorities continue, in 1925, to place it as a proper climax to the Gospels of Jesus and the Epistles of Paul, Peter and John. Hence, we may regard the Apocalyptic views of history and politics as authentic expressions of the Divine Mind. When the Apocalypse was written, Rome (contemptuously called "Babylon" in this book) was the leading political and military power in the world, and practically symbolised the whole of the secular system of civilization as opposed to the religious Utopia of Jews, Christians, and Jewish-Christians. So the prophet John pictures three spirits of curse and execution:—

They are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.....And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon.....There were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.....Great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath (chap. xvi.).

Again I say, I do not jeer; I do not criticise this Early Christian sociology; for I can understand the misgivings felt by many earnest souls as to the future, ethical and material, of the Roman Empire. What I do object to is the impertinence of churches which, in 1925, ask you and me to accept this New Testament as a standard of social and political judgment in the affairs of America, Africa, and the League of Nations.

Since this romance of the Battle of Armageddon was composed, European thought has constructed, on the basis of patient research, a great scheme of history—pre-historic, classical, mediæval, and modern. As a scheme, one can hardly maintain that it is more than about a hundred years old. A young Frenchman, Auguste Comte, began, in 1820, to sketch the main lines of such a historical survey, and to-day this survey is being elaborated by thousands of critics.

philosophers, and teachers. I do not here pretend to describe its general structure. My present object is to affirm that, on the foundation of such studies, the human mind now develops a cheerfulness of outlook, and of memory, which was impossible to our less-instructed forefathers. Our fathers had so little sense of the achievements of the past that they could find their only consolation in dreams of the morrow. These prophets (who were the professors and, so to speak, journalists of those times) constantly lamented the decay and sinfulness of the nations, and perpetually threatened woe and collapse. In 1925, our faith attacks social evils by economic reform, legislative reform, educational reform, scientific reform, and the reform of international administration. And we do not adopt these methods as perfectly new and happy-go-lucky devices. We have been led to them by experiences—often bitter and terrible—of bygone ages. Such experiences can be well traced, for example, in England, which has had, among the nations, the longest continuous political training. The very essence of sound reform is a consciousness of the events and lessons of the past. In a reformer, you do not want diffidence, mistrust, and doubt; you want enthusiasm, audacity, and confidence. You cannot have confidence in science, or in education, or in politics, unless you can base your calculations on experience. The key to these calculations is what we call history. In the nature of the case, history, in any ample signification, was not an effective part of the knowledge of our ancestors. Herodotus was a pioneer in this study; the Old and New Testaments were leaves in the never-ending volume, but only leaves; and the vast work is still evolving:—

Slowly the Bible of the race is writ,
And not on paper leaves, nor leaves of stone;
Each age, each kindred, adds a verse to it,
Texts of despair or hope, of joy or moan.
While swings the sea, while mists the mountains shroud,
While thunder's surges burst on cliffs of cloud,
Still at the prophets' feet the nations sit.

—James Russell Lowell.

This is the book for daily reading. This is the Bible of All the Times. In its pages we con the record of love, order and progress, though the footnotes are oft of blood, error and darkness. Its chronicles are rich in heroism, conquests of science, and the wonders of art. We need never shrink now from a backward view, for every vision of memory will reveal the pioneers climbing the difficult hills, and razing the forts of evil. Henceforward, as each New Year opens, we may all the more courageously face the tasks to come because we are grateful to the Happy Old Year.

F. J. GOULD.

What is the Essence of Tragedy?

THE admission must be made at the outset that, owing to the complexity of the various factors leading up to the point at issue, and the difficulty of expressing in words the tragic idea, only a tentative experiment can be made to express what after all is only a vague idea.

To understand the tragedy of life, we should have to understand life in all its complexity and the meaning of existence. But an attempt may be made to analyse tragedy and to see in what it consists.

The clue to the essence of tragedy may be said to lie in action issuing from character or in character issuing in action. It is, therefore, with the complexity of human actions we must deal and the suffering and calamity which happens to, and which in some measure is brought about by, the principal characters themselves. We have not yet arrived at

that ideal period when "crime is considered a disease and disease a crime." As in Shakespeare's day, "good" and "bad" must still be judged according to the laws made to protect society; and the conventional view regarding morality—in its broadest sense—is, for all practical purposes, the right view.

Shakespearean tragedy is usually a tale of exceptional suffering and calamity which precedes and leads up to the hero's or heroine's death. The persons chosen for principal characters are of high position. The suffering and calamity are unexpected and contrasted with previous happiness and glory. Man, by quite innocent actions, may start a course of events the end of which he can neither calculate nor control. The caprice of chance or fate may hurl him from the height of earthly greatness to the dust. And ironically enough, the disaster which overcomes him and which he is powerless to prevent may be traced to his own innocent or, perhaps, good actions. It has been said that the depicting by Shakespeare of the downfall of the great and their powerlessness, despite their high position, to avoid the caprice of fate, particularly appealed to the audiences of his time. Whether this is so or not is a matter of opinion. The point at issue is "What is the Essence of Tragedy?" Cannot the tragic fact lie equally in the circumstances surrounding the peasant as well as those surrounding the king? Admitting that a calamity happening to or affecting people in high position may have infinitely greater and more far-reaching effects—as, for instance, the assassination which was instrumental in bringing about Armageddon—nevertheless, whether on a vast scale or a small one, whether affecting princes and their courts or paupers and their mates, the tragic fact remains. It is the emotion and feeling produced in the individual which counts, and to multiply the number of individuals does not increase the individual emotion produced.

That chance or accident have an appreciable influence during the action is beyond dispute. In a sense, the whole of life is chance throughout. It might be said that chance is *the* tragic fact of life. The accident of birth and the accident of environment; the laws of Nature and man-made laws; savagery and civilization and the infinitude of grades between; evolution; progress; the vicissitudes of life; all play their part in deciding upon and forming the complexities of man's character. And then man, the only reasoning creature, commences to seek some definite order for himself in the hopeless chaos and attempts to control the unknown forces.

After perusing the tragedies of the Master, one cannot refrain from asking oneself the question, "Is man, after all, a rational animal?" The wisest of men plot and counterplot, from which follows a series of inter-connected deeds, amidst the tangled skein of which they feel convinced they hold the threads which will lead to the triumphant disentanglement by themselves. The tragic fact is, that they weigh the pros and cons of each and every action (their estimate of the actions' full value may be perfectly correct and just) and adjust the scales so that the balance is exact. Then fate or chance introduces a factor entirely overlooked and the scales so carefully balanced are overturned and smashed.

It seems, too, that besides the chance that may arise among the series of inter-connected deeds (the chance from outside) there is also the chance, as I have attempted to explain above, which goes to the formation of man's character and decides—as in the case of many of Shakespeare's characters—that he shall be obsessed by some particular passion. It matters not whether the obsession be morally right or wrong, good or bad. The tragic fact remains that to be ob-

essed by an idea or passion, whether revenge or sympathy, ambition or contentedness, upsets the mental balance. The obsessed person becomes a kind of mental "sport" amongst his fellows. It seems as though Nature strives to produce an average type in all things, and he that deviates greatly from the type must suffer a penalty for differing from his fellows.

In A. C. Bradley's well-known work on Shakespearean tragedy he sums up the conclusion of his first lecture as follows:—

We remain confronted with the inexplicable fact, or the no less inexplicable appearance, of a world travailing for perfection, but bringing to birth, together with glorious good, an evil which it is able to overcome only by self-torture and self-waste. And this fact or appearance is tragedy.

Whilst admitting the truth of the quotation, both in itself and as a definition of the tragic fact, nevertheless one may offer a few comments on the thoughts to which it gives rise. The very essence of life is conflict. Man is ever striving and has ever striven after perfection. Civilizations come and civilizations go, but still the striving after perfection goes on. It seems that the efforts of mankind go in cycles, and that after attaining a certain height it is inevitable that man must complete the circle, start on the down grade, and commence again. It seems that the tragedy of life rests in the fact that man can *never* attain perfection, for should he do so the need for conflict would cease, and with the cessation of conflict comes stagnation and death. Man may aim at perfection, but may it not be the strife of attainment that he enjoys, whether it entails self-torture or self-waste or not, and not the attainment itself; and that the essence of tragedy is that man is ever striving for what would inevitably compass his downfall. Or, to develop the idea still further, that the tragic fact is: that the ideal or goal of perfection for which man is ever striving must be ever unattainable else he compass his own downfall; yet, unless the ideal be perfection, the conflict essential to life would be reduced and the same fate, stagnation and death, befall him. As Shelley beautifully expresses the ideal state:—

The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise; but man
Passionless; no, yet free from guilt or pain.

W. THOMPSON.

Acid Drops.

We suppose the Bishop of London can't help it. Some people are born Paul Prys, and the bishop is one of them. As a change from prowling about our public parks, and vilifying his fellow citizens, he has been casting his eagle eye upon the non-Christian Sunday-schools. Preaching at St. Paul's Cathedral recently, he said that "we have searched London to find the Secularist Sunday-schools that teach the blasphemous catechism which had been printed in the newspapers. We should have had them prosecuted for blasphemy, if we could have found them." Some day, perhaps, when the bishop gives up interfering with other folk's business, and finds time to reflect a little upon his own short-comings, and to educate himself somewhat, he may realize that a good many of these newspaper reports are apocryphal. But if they provide a good, heavy stick with which to beat the Freethinker, what does that matter? Christians have always had warped ideas about speaking the truth.

Meanwhile, however, we would suggest that this very moral man should turn his attention to the looseness of character that is the characteristic of his own sect. The same newspaper that contains the report of the bishop's sermon, also reports that the residents of Ammanford have been shocked of late by a number of youths persisting in playing cards for money in church during the service. Several, caught in the act by church elders, have suspended their pastime on the threat of being publicly denounced; but in other churches the games continue in spite of the vigilance of church members. Here is ample scope for all the Christian Pecksniffs in the country to exercise their detective faculties, without making themselves a nuisance to decent people.

The Pope has definitely condemned Socialism. He recently held a secret consistory for the purpose of nominating three cardinal's legates to open the holy door of the Basilicas on the occasion of the Holy Year. In his allocution, states the Exchange, he alluded to the return of the Papal Famine Relief Mission from Russia, and said the Holy See was resolved to continue helping the most destitute Russians, living either in Russia or abroad. He added:—

We deem it to be our duty towards all our children in God to urge that every endeavour should be made by common effort to ward off the very grave dangers arising from Socialism and Communism.

This endeavour should be made in the interests of peace, public welfare, the sanctity of the family, and respect of human dignity.

We wonder what the many thousands of Catholic supporters of the English Labour Party think of this, and how they will act. Perhaps they may even resolve that the religion which seeks to dictate their politics through the mouth of a foreign spokesman, is somewhat out of date in the twentieth century.

But it is certainly instructive to notice how cheerfully the theologians rush in to offer their dicta concerning matters which require expert knowledge. After all, the merits and demerits of modern Socialism can only be usefully discussed by those who have made a careful study of the theories underlying Socialist principles. Those theories may or may not be based upon accurate observation of social phenomena, and logical thinking on social problems, but certainly no theologian *per se* is competent to decide. When it comes to detailed and practical policy for the immediate future, such *e.g.* as the question of houses built by State and municipal enterprises *versus* houses built by private enterprise, that is a matter for English men and women to decide—since they must find the money, and live in the houses—without any advice from a gentleman who resides a few hundred miles from England, and has no real acquaintance with the matter under consideration.

Commenting on the experiments in thought-reading which enabled Professor Gilbert Murray to tell what was in Lord Balfour's mind, a professor of philosophy has remarked that this proves that "specially sympathetic minds will follow identical associations." Then, rather unkindly, he adds, "This shows how limited is the range of thought even in those possessed of the widest knowledge." However, it is rather comforting to those whose knowledge is not wide.

The Bishop of Durham declares that "the English nation, while not denominational, is sympathetic to Christianity." This looks as if the offertory bags are not too full of brace-buttons.

An appeal has been issued to all clergy and ministers on behalf of the Peace Society, the League of Nations Union, and the World Alliance of Churches, inviting them to observe "World Peace Sunday." This appeal, the Press report adds, has the cordial sympathy of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the President of the Free Church Council, and the Moderator of Evan-

gical Free Churches. Naturally it would. For the moment world-peace is popular, and the age-long policy of the Christian churches has been to be heartily in favour of whatever happens to be popular, and whatever is paid lip-service by everybody. We don't recollect these representatives of organized religion declaring in favour of world-peace during the last war; and we rather doubt whether they would support the severe political, social, and economic reforms which seem necessary if world-peace is to be assured in the future. To do that would be to offend powerful vested interests, and to be labelled as unpractical visionaries. And the churches are never with the advanced minority. An ideal must be thoroughly respectable and popular before they are prepared to espouse it.

We have seen another of the tracts issued by the Protestant Press Bureau, denouncing their Roman Catholic brothers in Christ. If Freethinkers used the violent language in denouncing one of the Christian sects that pious folk may employ with impunity, they would probably be denounced as bigoted, unbalanced sectarians. In the tract we have under consideration there are quotations from what a number of great Englishmen have said from time to time about the papacy. Most of the famous men cited were quite orthodox. Thus Sir Walter Scott described this branch of the Christian Church as "a mean and depraving superstition"; Dickens as "the most horrible means of political and social degradation left in the world"; Gladstone denounced Catholicism as "a perpetual war against the progress and the movement of the human mind"; Lord Acton (Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge University) declared ".....the Papacy contrived murder and massacre on the largest and also on the most cruel and inhuman scale. They were not only wholesale assassins, but they also made the principle of assassination a law of the Christian Church and a condition of salvation"; and Dean Alford remarked, "Rome is essentially a Pagan city.....All is as bad as possible—no public faith, no desire for the good of the people, Government servants miserably paid, and abandoned after long service, while speculation and corruption are unblushingly practised in the highest places." There are many others, too, but sufficient has been quoted to indicate the general tone of the leaflet:—

By this shall all men know ye are brothers.

Patriotism, the tribal instinct on a large scale, and the mantle to cover a multitude of fallacies, is beginning to wear a bit thin. Patriotic interests foresee trouble when the plan of the United States comes into operation. It is proposed to allow, in three years' time 90,000 of British origin to settle annually in the land of the Stars and Stripes. A Tory paper frankly states that no appeals of "stick to the flag" will keep Britons from grasping the opportunity extended by America. And in this way we begin to see the inevitable evolution of the idea, foreseen by Thomas Paine, and put into words when the parish pump of England effectually obscured a view of any other country.

In a review of two books of Mr. J. Middleton Murray, the critic states in 1924 what all the pioneers of Freethought implied, said, and were prepared to back their ideas by going to prison for them. Here is a little posey of Freethought from the *Times Literary Supplement*:—

The traditions of religious thought among us are no longer adequate to the exigences of the modern consciousness.

Now that the garden of criticism is safe, this delicate bloom may even grow in the austere columns of respectable papers.

After bravely battling for "votes for women" and getting them, we see that Miss Christabel Pankhurst has found the light and, from the Book of Daniel, takes up the thesis that the end of the world is at hand. It is a nice problem to decide what practical value are Miss Pankhurst's accomplishments or prophecy. If votes for

women will move them out of the tenth commandment for Christians, Miss Pankhurst will have done better work for her sex than joining the great circle of "have-beens." Not so many years ago, the appearance of a comet had the same effect on people as Miss Pankhurst's disappointment over the power making a cross on a piece of paper.

An epic will be written one day, but not by Mr. Arnold Bennett, of the vast unlovely battlefield that lies in Staffordshire covered by pit-heads. We are not sentimental enough to think that the miner does his work for love—as our dearly beloved brethren the parsons pretend to do theirs, but the collier's occupation is not unlike the soldiers on active service. It may come to an end suddenly. A reminder, if necessary, of the price paid for artificial warmth, comes in the person of Mr. H. Wilson, Mow Cop, Staffs. This hero is to be awarded the Edward Medal for the rescue of a comrade in the flooded mine, and one may contemplate the scurry and topsy-turvy scale of values that recognizes with greater rewards the art of killing as opposed to the unhonoured and frequently unsung occupation of the miner.

There is no accounting for taste. As a memorial to his son who was killed in the war, Sir James Knott is building a church, vicarage, and parish hall at Newham, Northumberland. Considering that Christianity blessed and approved the war, the results of which threaten to submerge civilization, the finest memorial is yet to appear. It will be erected as the last memorial to the last war, and the Christian vocabulary of blood, slaughter, and sacrifice will have been put away—as childish things.

COPEC has discovered that Christians cannot tolerate the present housing conditions, and that it is the important duty of all Christians and Churches ceaselessly to demand and work, politically and otherwise, for measures to secure a sufficient number of new houses to meet the housing shortage and to abolish slums. Such is the substance of a resolution passed at the recent Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship, at Birmingham. Really these Christians compel one's admiration. For a century the slums created by the Industrial Revolution have existed, and the physical and moral degradation which they have produced has been denounced by Christian preachers as being the product of a naturally perverse human nature, or the Fall, or lack of religion, or the like. Now that Secularism has so permeated the whole community that these metaphysical explanations no longer satisfy the vast majority of thinking men and women, our Christians discover the real root of the evil, and announce their intention to attack it. Well, some day we may have made so many converts to Secularism that the Christian Church will, in its perpetual search for popularity, decide that Christianity is the gravest obstacle to human progress that exists, and a Copec will pass a strongly-worded resolution calling upon all Christians to use their utmost efforts to abolish their own religion.

Lord Danesfort had better keep an eye on Mr. Wheatley. The ex-Minister is not treating the religious question seriously and solemnly. He suggests that the Deity of the Tories and the object of Mr. N. Chamberlain's faith is private enterprise. This appears to us as a game of skittles with the cherished convictions of our rulers, and a policeman ought to be called at once to protect them.

Miss Ethel Carnie Holdsworth, in her serial story, *Equality Island*, in the *Daily Herald*, makes one of her characters say "There is only one country—the world." Like ozone, a little of Thomas Paine goes a long way, and we wish the writer every success in her efforts via Utopia to fashion the world as Paine would have it; saints, madness, and slaughterers have hacked at it long enough to draw tears from the stars.

The National Secular Society.

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

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

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

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

To Correspondents.

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

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—C. L. Knight (Rhodesia), £2; Newrick Richardson, 10s.; G. Bush, 1s.; J. Cahn, £10.

LEONARD MASON.—Thanks for New Year's wishes. You make a good start for the New Year by getting two new readers. We join you in hoping that other readers will follow your example. Letter will appear next week.

G. BUSH.—Thanks for pretty form of New Year's good wishes.

L. HESSE.—We are afraid you under-estimate the intelligence of the better-class working man to whom the *Freethinker* appeals in common with the more thoughtful among other classes in the country. And as it takes all sorts to make a world, so it takes all sorts of articles to make a readable paper. The unintelligent among working men and among others are not likely to be interested in the *Freethinker* unless it changes its character and ceases to do its work. Something of the *John Bull* type is more to its taste. We note your appreciation of the paper. Will use your translation as soon as possible.

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.

Knowledge is the most valuable treasure, for it cannot be stolen nor consumed.—*Hitopadesa.*

Sugar Plums.

A happy New Year to all our readers, and it will only require a moderate amount of sense in the conduct of public affairs to make 1925 better than 1924. We talk so glibly of the power of knowledge that we are inclined to overlook, as George Eliot reminded us, the power of ignorance. Ignorance may break down in a year or two much that it has taken generations to build up. Or to put the matter in another way, ignorance is of to-day, ignorance is of the countless yesterdays, and it is against the age-long ignorance of mankind, established in institutions and consecrated by custom that we have to fight. It is a gigantic struggle against enormous odds, and all our energies are required to command success.

In the year that is just opening we trust that the claims of this journal will not be overlooked. It has fought the good fight for over forty years and will continue the fight to the end. It has behind it forty years of struggle and devotion such as few journals can boast of, and none but those most intimate with its maintenance know how severe that struggle has been. Its great source of strength has been the unfailing devotion of its supporters and to these at the opening of a new year we urge the possibility of a substantial increase of readers. Cannot each one interested make it a point of securing at least one new reader before January comes to an end? It can be done if we only make up our minds that it shall be done. And it is worth the doing. We do our best at this end to see that the paper is worthy of its best traditions, for the rest we are dependent upon the good offices of those who recognize its importance in the struggle for enlightenment.

We also take this opportunity of reminding Freethinkers of two other things. The first is the National Secular Society's Annual Dinner, which takes place at the Midland Grand Hotel on Tuesday, January 13. There will be the usual gathering of well-known Freethinkers, in addition to a good concert. As in previous years the number of tickets will be limited, and it is well from many points of view that application for these should be made as early as possible. In any case application should be made not later than January 8. This will give time for all the necessary arrangements to be made. The price of the tickets is 8s. each, and they may be had of either the general secretary, Miss Vance, or from the *Freethinker* office. We shall hope to see visitors from the provinces in addition to London members.

The second reminder is that all N.S.S. membership subscriptions fall due on January 1. These should be remitted as soon as it is convenient, and when remitting it is well to bear in mind that the fixed subscription is purely nominal, and that above that the amount subscribed by members is left to his or her inclination and ability. Unfortunately, a large number of *Freethinker* readers are not members of the N.S.S., and these are reminded that donations are acceptable as well as membership fees. The N.S.S. can do with all the funds it can obtain. Propaganda is far more costly than it was, and an extension of our work is greatly to be desired. A New Year's gift to Freethought might be a good method of starting 1925.

At 6.30 p.m. to-day (Jan. 4) Mr. William McEwan will deliver a lecture to the Glasgow Branch in No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street, "A" Door. The subject is "Imagination," and questions and discussion are invited. We trust as many Glasgow Freethinkers as possible will be present, so that the meeting may be thoroughly successful, and a happy augury for the New Year. On January 17 the Branch is running a social evening in the D and F Rooms, High Street, Glasgow, from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. Tickets, which are 2s. 6d. each, may be obtained at any of the Branch meetings.

Dream Plays and Poems.

AFTER three weeks of Shakespeare's fantastical Fairy play, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," wherein a beautiful comedy, and an excruciatingly funny burlesque are interwoven with a wonderful fairy play in which two sets of lovers in addition to Bottom the Weaver and the Fairy Titania, play important parts, we have had presented at the "Old Vic" as an appropriate Christmas programme what is called a dream poem, by Gerhart Hauptman entitled "Hannele," translated by the well-known playwright and critic, William Archer. This dream poem is a most extraordinary piece of work, a strange mixture of realistic melodrama with sentimental religious fantasy. It tells the story of a poor outcast beggar girl who is brought one evening to a pauper refuge of a mountain village. She is delirious when brought into the institution, and it seems as though, in her despair, she has attempted suicide.

After getting rid of the rowdy element in this "common lodging house" sort of institution, where the occupants are quarrelling and fighting and singing and kicking up an infernal row, the doctor is called upon the scene, and the poor girl raves of the ill-treatment she has received at the hands of her brute of a father; in her quieter moments she talks of joining her dear mother in her heavenly abode, and while her mind still wanders, she speaks in faint whispers of her Lord Jesus who will welcome her with open arms. Her schoolmaster comes to see her and tries to console her, and offers her loving words of comfort and hope. Her nurse, too, tries to soothe her, but she continues to rave and will not be comforted. At length her wretched brute of a father appears at the bedside. He denies that he has ill-treated her; with oaths and strong language he calls upon his God to strike him dead if he is not speaking the truth. At that moment a flash of lightning is seen at the window and the roll of thunder is heard in the distance, but her callous wretch of a father continues his speech to the end; and then with another flash, makes his exit. After this the schoolmaster comes again upon the scene, but this time in the form of the *Divine Man*, or saint; and tells the poor girl to be of good cheer, that the angels are coming for her, and that she must wear her bridal wreath and gown. The angels appear and one comes with them in dark apparel—the Angel of Death. The appearance of this dark figure distresses the mind of the poor girl, but the angels give her encouragement and hope. Under the instructions of the "Divine Man," she puts on a beautiful wedding dress and wreath, and attendants enter carrying a coffin with silver lining. Into the open coffin the poor girl is conducted, and there she lies to the wondering gaze of all, while the angels sing a glorious anthem and the "mysterious stranger" declaims some fine poetry. "The Divine Man" then says that the poor girl is not dead, but merely sleeps and taking her by the hand, helps her out of the coffin and leads her towards the group of singing angels. The poor girl then dreams of heaven, with singing angels and abounding joy. The lights are then lowered and we are again at the bedside of the poor girl. The doctor is there also and "the mysterious stranger." The doctor stoops and looks into the poor girl's eyes.

When he arises, he merely says, "*She is dead,*" and the curtain falls. This realistic little play, or dream poem, is very impressive in its way and greatly moved the religious portion of the "Old Vic" audience, who look for this kind of programme at Christmas time. The rest of the audience listened attentively and considered the play on its merits, and applauded the

actors, especially Miss Evelyn Neilson, who played the part of Hannele, the poor little outcast, with commendable skill and intelligence, and Ion Swinley, the "mysterious stranger," Gottwald, with dignity and power.

This "Dream Poem" was followed by "The Nativity Play," called "The Play of the Shepherds," No. 7 of the Chester plays—"The Paynters and Glasiers" which I described in these columns last year. It is only necessary to say now that it is a fine example of the primitive ideas of early Christians; its quaint mixture of piety and bucolic ignorance is instructive as well as amusing, and the clever character delineations of the actors met with the spontaneous applause of the well-pleased audience, most of whose members relish such Christmas fare as a necessary part of the annual instruction in primitive religious beliefs which, however, many of them still regard as true.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

A Fireside Chat about The Faith.

RELIGION is becoming almost as common a subject of argument as politics. All over the world from the study to the bar-parlour the debate is seldom adjourned and never closed.

In the course of listening to many such discussions among groups of friends I have been struck by the way in which the argument has been allowed to take one turn after another, to deviate from the pursuit of vital issues and to terminate in an atmosphere of intellectual confusion.

Frequently when a divine participates the fault lies with the unbeliever who fails to corner his wily adversary—the unbeliever in whom mere honest scepticism may not at the first sitting be a match for the pseudo-philosophical subtleties of a trained sophist.

Experiences of this kind cannot fail to impress one with the pathetic plight of many potential Freethinkers, who are being continually "doped" into intellectual submission by having their rebellious minds thrown into confusion—an operation which they frequently accept as a self-sufficient indication of their error, even in the absence of any lucid explanation which might be expected to follow as a corrective.

Thus intelligent young people—and I have seen many instances among the products of Sunday schools—are found believing vaguely what they cannot understand because they are not allowed to understand what they could believe clearly.

I feel that if, in the field of private religious discussion, which is an important one in the dissemination of religious thought, young Freethinkers would confine themselves to forcing their adversaries into the open, the logical issues would be a matter for small concern. By forcing our adversary into the open I mean compelling him to state clearly what he stands for in the world of belief. To ask him personally for a free confession of what he believes and why, is, I would urge, a perfectly legitimate request, for when a man is anxious to impose his belief on you, the least he can do is to be explicit about it himself.

A few incursions into ecclesiastical minds will reveal an interesting divergence of belief.

One divine holds one thing true, another prefers something else and a third accepts neither, while they are all engaged in wrangling about it in the intervals between teaching you the absolute and inspired truth.

However, if we press them with sufficient insistence we usually extract from a maze of lore certain things which are upheld in common, and without belief in which there is no justification for entering the

arena as a Christian. A short list would include the Deity, incorporated in some obscure manner in the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, his supernatural conception, salvation by his blood, his resurrection, the Judgment Day, heaven and (in some form) hell, and angels if not devils.

A great number of divines will be found believing on a wider and more fanciful scale than this, but let us confine ourselves to a minimum in order to include the "scientific" members of the Church. It is they who capture so many young recruits by their broadmindedness in refusing, for instance, to believe that the earth is flat or stationary, who are in fact willing to refrain from pressing every evident physical falsehood and retain only what is metaphysical because it baffles.

Plain fairy stories in plain words are easily dealt with by the mind. A physical absurdity like the illusion of God as a gigantic man, striding about some portion of the sky called heaven, can no longer be perpetrated upon the normal intelligence; but the metaphysical is essentially more elusive and the inability to refute it results in some minds in a species of tentative acceptance. For the obvious distinction between the physical and metaphysical are strangely confused in ecclesiastical minds.

Whenever, as in prayer, in worship, in penance, a temporary objective is sought for the emotions, the Deity emerges in person as the living God, who retreats only when surprised by some sudden scientific onslaught, taking refuge in one of his many metamorphoses by dissolving again into the indefinable, the mystical, the conceptual.

Led by your ecclesiastical guide attempt to follow and find him. It is futile. A point inevitably comes at which, be it physics or metaphysics, the guide is confronted with his own inability to use any words which mean to you some perceptible or even conceivable actuality. He can neither demonstrate nor construct in the imagination any reality corresponding to God which is consistent with human knowledge and human reason, unless God be the name of an idea and a confused one at best.

It is not surprising then, that you begin to probe more closely into the cause of a man's belief in something which he cannot understand himself—that you enquire by what operation of the mind he attains conviction in a sphere of mystery.

The answer comes readily enough. It would have saved much argument if it had been forthcoming earlier in place of tedious attempts to substantiate by evidence what is soon found to be outside the sphere of evidence.

The solution of all difficulty is found in faith, known to the Church as the "Rock of Faith," because it is the foundation on which rests the whole superstructure of the Christian religion. Let your ecclesiastical instructor but introduce you to Faith and a nodding acquaintance will suffice to show you its significance in Christianity.

It is axiomatic, self-sufficient and supreme. In its presence all scientific investigation and all philosophic enquiry are inadmissible. Evidence in support of it is as superfluous as evidence against it is futile, for by a holy paradox which only the Church could have the impertinence to advance, faith is the "evidence of things not seen." In fact, it might seem puzzling to observe the Church vigorously employed in collecting favourable evidence and attempting to refute, or better, to suppress that which is unfavourable, were we not fully conversant with her methods and had we not already formed an estimate of her philosophic purity and sincerity. But once we have found faith, the "open sesame" of Christianity, it behoves us to set about enquiring into the nature of it, not in

such a way that its meaning emerges obscured in a veil of words, but rather in a simple manner, by asking what a simple man must do or think in order that he may be said to "have faith." This after all is the essential aspect of faith as it concerns the man in the street.

To have faith you must believe something without any reasonable grounds for doing so.

To the superficial thinker who has been accustomed to regard his faith as something exalted in the intellectual world this may seem a preposterous statement, but it is nevertheless true, for to whatever degree the element of "reasonable ground" enters into a belief, by just so much enters the element of philosophy, vitiating the purity of faith. Dr. Wallace, in speaking of Sir William Hamilton's definitions of faith and philosophy, explains that "faith is the mind in a state of conviction merely, whereas philosophy is the mind in a state of reasoned conviction."

This very important distinction between faith and philosophy, where reason is the distinguishing element, should be continually borne in mind when arguing with a member of the Church so that he may be relentlessly and incessantly driven back upon his beloved rock.

If creed is the "what" of his belief, faith is the "why," and by it his belief must stand or fall.

The reader will perhaps pardon us if, in view of this, we seem to devote overmuch space to a discussion of what we are to understand by the term faith, particularly if we can show that the Church has abused it in theological debate, and indirectly created widespread confusion as to its precise meaning. Let us, so to speak, stroll up to the subject by an everyday route such as we might follow in ordinary conversation. We will commence by supposing that we accuse a churchman of believing the testimony of a Galilean fisherman given some two thousand years ago when he would not believe a similar testimony given, shall we say, by a Manx fisherman yesterday. He pleads guilty—he must, of course.

We then ask him in virtue of what does his mind grant such a superiority of the one testimony over the other that it accepts the one and rejects the other. He says that he "has faith" in the Galilean story because of its authenticity, because of its inspired character, because of the holy nature of the man who related it, because of the unquestionable veracity of the ecclesiastical authorities who accept and teach it, etc., whereas the Manx fisherman is a mere nonentity, his claim, if any, to be inspired is probably the figment of a disordered imagination, and in any case he has no "backers."

The erroneous nature of his reasons for "having faith" is not here the discussion; it is the fact of his offering reasons at all, and its object is to expose an ecclesiastical quibble on the word faith.

He may ask, "Why cannot there be reasons to establish faith? How often might a man say to his doctor, 'Because you have cured me I have faith in you, and in the wisdom and truth of what you say?'" Is there not a reason here and is this not faith? If a man may have reasons for faith in his doctor, why not for faith in his God?

Here is a very pernicious quibble. I do not say that a clergyman would choose this particular form in which to perpetrate it, but in defence of my having done so here, I do say that the Church exhibits the self-same quibble in her whole intellectual attitude towards theology, only it is not so blatantly displayed as here.

It is true a man may have reasons for faith in his doctor. In common parlance faith is used in this sense, and it here conveys that experience and reason have combined to give the man an appreciation of

his doctor's competence in the past and to engender in him a firm expectation of its continuance into the future.

Faith here then is nothing more than legitimate confidence founded on knowledge, but this is not the sort of faith which opens the door to *the Faith*.

In this case experience, philosophic scrutiny and reason do not and must not intrude. If they do the churchman himself will charge you with lack of faith. Further, faith here has no connection with knowledge, but, on the contrary, concerns supersensible things. In this sense the terms means blind, unquestioning and implicit trust, and the more blind, unquestioning and implicit your trust, the purer, the more free from the taint of reason is your faith and the higher your moral standing in the eyes of the Church.

The two meanings are distinct, yet Churchmen will constantly interchange them according as it is necessary on the one hand to justify an explanation favourable to their creed, or on the other, to exclude an unfavourable one from discussion.

They make their crowning confusion when they "explain" God's obscurity, by saying that He makes himself incomprehensible to "test your faith."

(To be Concluded.) "MEDICO."

Our Point of View.

EVERYONE believes that their thoughts and emotions are an individual and original possession; to their minds no one can have had quite the same experiences as those through which they have passed, and not only would the story of their lives be of absorbing interest to other people, but it is so strikingly unique that it would be quite startling and refreshing to those who read it.

It is, of course, true that no two persons undergo quite identical experiences, and this gives rise to the impression, which seems a necessary consequence, that all thought can be known as original. This idea, in common with so many popular ideas of psychology, is fallacious.

The attitude of mind which we modern people bring to our environment depends upon the instinctive reactions which have been slowly developed by the species throughout uncounted ages. It is, of course, probably more or less incorrect to speak of racial and hereditary instincts. At the same time, it must be remembered that instincts are developed in the higher animals as well as in men, by means of a process of adaptation to environment. Moreover, the primary instincts are very largely the result of reaction to physical necessities. Those rather more complex instincts which seem to have nothing whatever to do with physical necessities, are, however, the results of the same sequence of those necessities.

Again, a certain part of what is known as hereditary instinct is the result of that very potent influence, tradition. A child is always tremendously influenced by the mental attitude of its parents. It learns from them to behave in any given circumstances in the manner in which they behave, and as, since the rise of urban civilization, the variety of circumstances which can be applied to any individual has become more limited, so does the influence of parents' behaviour and state of development more profoundly affect the child.

At this point it may be interpolated that considerable changes have taken place in the course of man's development, and the sum total of these changes is known as the process of evolution. Every one of these changes depends upon a variability of character which has enabled an individual to become superior either to the reaction imposed by physical necessities, or to the

suggestibility with which he was impressed by his elders during the period when his mind was coming to its state of completion.

The effect of such outstanding influences is incalculable on the history of the race. An excellent example of the modification of human traditional mental outlook may be instanced in the modern sex attitude. It is the most interesting because the most universally experienced emotion. In the main, the modern man's idea of his relations to women is one of restraint and quite disinterested service. At the same time, this high ideal is slightly tinged with suspicion of the motives which guide the woman, and distrust of her implacable sexuality.

The modern man brings to his high regard for woman a certain resentment for her rapidly developed activity in what has been for many generations his peculiar sphere. Two qualities, which have up to practically the present generation, always been regarded as belonging to any and every woman, are gradually becoming to be regarded as romantic and merely complimentary. These are the reputed powers of intuition, and that extraordinary subtlety which was assigned to the sex in the last age.

The mental attitude which was responsible for this regard for the seeming mystery of women, is not dependent upon her true character at all. It is dependent upon something very far removed from anything which is experienced in modern civilization. It is quite a sub-conscious memory of a period of history from which all the graces of mankind may reasonably be supposed to have been derived, and that is the period of the rule of women, which is known as the matriarchate.

During that period, woman was wise; she was the fount of knowledge. In her hands were held all the small sciences with which man was acquainted, and this knowledge was, of course, of an extremely limited character. It was mainly homely wisdom, the knowledge of fireside arts, and the knowledge of the culture of vegetable food. Similarly, perhaps, some part of this wisdom was an acquaintance with the breeding of such animals as it had been found possible to domesticate in that early age.

With man's development on the warlike side, owing to the necessities which faced him under matriarchate rule, for perhaps the forcible obtaining of wives, and their equally forcible retention, the glory of the goddess of wisdom, woman, departed, or at least degenerated, and the modern man retains a certain feeling or sub-conscious memory of the struggle in which he engaged.

This struggle has, of course, proceeded throughout the ages until the subjection of woman, which has been a prominent feature of most civilizations.

Those stories of wisely evil women, against whom some chosen champion was forced to combat, and which are found in most mythologies, are stories of the primary struggle for supremacy between the sexes. Amongst these may be cited the story of Medea and that of Brunhild. Those evil magnificent women degenerated in the Middle Ages into merely ineffective witches, and the story of the savage persecution of these unfortunate wise women is that of a perversion of the struggle between rising man and those goddess women of ancient unwritten days, who were so wise and all-powerful.

Collateral perhaps, with this struggle for supremacy, developed the modern theory of love, which was palpably quite unknown in ancient times. Perhaps the first and most outstanding of modern lovers was the great poet Dante. He was content with the fire of his own passion, and quite satisfied to love without reward, because of the emotional quality which he experienced in loving. His love was something quite distinct from the chivalrous love of his day.

In a previous age, the Greeks had adopted quite a different attitude towards their womenkind. They knew little of this emotion for its own sake. They divided their women into two sharply defined classes, one to be the mothers of their children, one the courtesans, who were their companions in learning, as well as their companions in the debauchery of their day.

The modern attitude is quite a distinct development of Dante's. The equality of the sexes in marriage, and the idea of a self-satisfying passion, would perhaps never have been known if he had not first experienced it. It is an attitude of mind which is quite frequent in modern love. To-day it is an admirable attitude, whereas it must have been in his day a curiosity of temperament that would have raised laughter, if it had not been so obviously sincere. Probably that is the reason why the sex act is to-day commonly regarded as the least side of truly loving.

The change which I have endeavoured to define in man's regard for the sex relation, has caused what is practically a sub-conscious instinct to develop. The infinite number of points of suggestion throughout the ages which have been impressed upon almost every type of character, have stimulated what is to-day an almost instinctive physical necessity for reciprocity in love.

Similarly, the development of a complex instinct can be discovered in what is less universally appreciated, the mental reactions to colour stimulus.

The colour science of to-day declares that red is a stimulating colour, but we are not consciously aware of the stimulus which it exercises. The stimulus is exerted through the unconscious hereditary mental attitude which man has developed with regard to that colour. If we were aware of the stimulus, the reaction would be as instinctive as that of any other purely physical emotion. It is possible that a very young child might or might not be strongly affected by the presence of glaring reds in its environment, but it would be necessary to conduct a series of very carefully thought out experiments before this could be decided.

At the same time, it seems that the unconscious knowledge which is the heritage of the race, makes the average mentality of to-day susceptible to the influence of red, in the manner which the scientists describe. It is interesting to suggest a few points which may have assisted in the development of this unconscious reaction. In the first place, a wounded man or animal would be a sign of victory to him who had caused the wound, and in this sense the blood of a vanquished foe would be stimulating. Again, the red of fire, with its many uses, would be equally stimulating.

It is worthy of remark in this connection that whenever men have had a desire to impress their fellows they have garbed themselves in scarlet or purple or crimson. The kings of the earth wore their crimson robes, and the terror of the king's name was sufficient by the association of ideas to make red stimulating to that emotion. The colour was also carefully reserved to those in power by the sumptuary laws of the Middle Ages, and it was also reserved to those high dignitaries of that most terrible implement of Government, the Mediæval Church. Red was also the emblem of soldiers, or professional killers.

Again, particularly with regard to the people of North-Western Europe, red-headed people are the subject of scorn and derision, partially, no doubt, because they are few in comparison with the many of less striking colour, while the popular proverb attributes to them exceptional courage. Probably the dislike for red-headed people could be traced back to the raids of the Northmen, the great majority of whom

possessed this colour of hair, and the terror of whose approach has left its impression upon the racial temperament.

Red throughout the ages, therefore, seems to have been a stimulus at least to the instinct of self-preservation, which gives rise to the emotion of fear.

All this leads only to the fact that red in modern times of peace affects the human organism as a stimulus. The idea, therefore, that each individual holds his own point of view can hardly be maintained in the face of the experiences of history. The modern point of view, varying slightly as it does between individuals, is the outcome of the totality of experiences through which the race has passed. Every addition to experience which has been gained, has been passed on from father to son through generations.

Each generation, it must be admitted, differs slightly from that which preceded it, but each individual of each generation differs very much more slightly from every other individual of that generation. Those who are priding themselves upon their original views must not forget that the modern point of view has been developed slowly through uncounted generations, that they are the products of their million ancestors, and that they cannot therefore rightly claim that any of their thoughts or any of their emotions are original experiences, confined to themselves, as each one of us is inclined self-flatteringly to think.

G. E. FUSSELL.

Correspondence.

ARTHUR LYNCH'S "ETHICS."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It is hoped it is not considered I entered this interesting correspondence unceremoniously. I did so because certain statements by Mr. Hands which appeared to me to be misleading had been allowed to pass unchallenged by Dr. Lynch. Having recorded my protest I retire into the obscurity from which, probably in Mr. Hands' opinions, I should never have emerged. But I should like to invite the attention of others to Mr. Hands' definition of "mind" as the *reaction of the environment upon a sensitive form of matter competent to receive it*. Perhaps Dr. Lynch himself or "Keridon" would give an opinion thereon. JAVALI.

SIR,—I do not apologise for butting into the tranquil discussion of Col. Lynch's *Ethics*, the subject matter justifies my action, and, to use his elegant expression, the "cup" contains cholera germs which are dangerous to those who drink regardless of consequences. I leave aside the religious aspects of the *Ethics* as not germane to the issue between us, although a lance can be broken on that score later.

The repeated refusal to discuss and adhere to fundamentals, which is the main question at issue, may be understood, if I may hazard a guess, by a careful analysis of my first letter, which, if adhered to, overthrows the preconceived ideas of Col. Lynch in a particular sphere. It is not Egoism that he bars, but its *consequences*, his own articles are chock full of it.

With a desire to know, I would ask Col. Lynch to justify the first paragraph of his letter; mere negation is not sufficient, the fog remains. I challenge him to mention one or any number of actions that cannot, and necessarily so, be elucidated in terms of Egoism, which incidentally is not a pretty sentiment, but a necessary law of life as expressed in my first letter. A system of ethics that is "not directly law-giving" is useless and fundamentally false. This is the crux of the matter however, otherwise I would not have commenced the discussion, and on this the *Ethics* of Col. Lynch stand or fall.

Simplicity of criticism and literary style may hurt the dignified learning of Col. Lynch, but I can be frank enough to admit defeat if that learning can man-

age it. I never regret having to defend my principles, it is a joy, O Pioneer, and I wish to emphasize the sincere earnestness with which I pursue this matter. The question is a vital one, and therefore I again request a refutation of the principle I expressed. There can be no mistaking the issue now.

A. S. E. PANTON.

DEFINITION OF "MIND."

SIR,—It would be interesting to learn how Mr. Vincent Hands identifies his definition of mind as "the reaction of environment upon a sensitive form of matter competent to receive it," with that of "Javali's" as "the reaction of a particular form of matter to environmental stimuli."

To my mind the former is just an *inversion* (though somewhat mixed) of the latter, which is obviously quite in accord with the known facts. What Mr. Hands means by "reaction of environment" I cannot guess. As I could attach no meaning to what appeared to me a jumble of words I ascribed it to carelessness or a slip of the pen until I read his vigorous defence of it in the current issue.

A more satisfactory definition of mind cannot well be penned than that given by "Javali" in his first letter (last paragraph), published in the issue of November 23 (page 750).

I would have joined in the discussion *re* Nature and "ends"—a subject of particular interest to me—had it been conducted at zero (Fahrenheit best!)—a temperature at which logic sparkles and glitters; but when the dispute develops heat the ice melts and the controversy ceases to be either interesting or instructive to the readers.

KERIDON.

THE POPE AND SOCIALISM.

SIR,—The pronouncement of the Pope on Socialism has caused a sensation among readers of the *Herald*, and correspondence amongst which is a letter from John Scurr, M.P. He tells us that on questions of faith and morals speaking *ex cathedra* he is on such an occasion infallible. As a temporal sovereign he is not. As a human being he is not impeccable. These dicta are merely an attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable. The Catholic position was taken up, he goes on to say, years ago by Daniel O'Connell. "We take our religion from Rome and our politics from Home. As a matter of fact no religious man can, or ought, to separate politics and religion."

Neither does John Scurr do so. He goes on further to say Catholics who are Socialists will continue to work for Socialistic objects, which he enumerates, but will continue to oppose free divorce (whereby all true Catholics mean all divorce), birth control, etc. Now Socialists have got to learn, without philosophic opinion on the law of population and action thereon, all Socialistic efforts in the end must be a complete failure. The Pope and priesthoods generally will have the last laugh.

A. J. MARRIOTT.

ANATOLE FRANCE.

SIR,—Possibly many of your readers have not read in the *Fortnightly Review* of November last, W. L. George's brilliant article on Anatole France, in the course of which he disengages that great Frenchman's attitude towards Christianity. I venture to think it is worth a permanent place in your columns. Mr. George suggests, and rightly, that it is a fairly clear version of the Christian cosmogony:—

Anatole France was probably at his most ferocious when dealing with religion. Like all agnostics, he was interested in it, and to him it represented an eternal comedy. He saw faith as a form of cowardice, as the cry of a man who dares not die, who hates truth and takes refuge in superstition. He expressed this through the mouth of Riquet, the dog, who stares at his master and thinks: "My master warms me when I lie behind him in his armchair; that is because he is a god.....It is difficult and necessary to define the thoughts of the master.....I love my master, Bergeret, because he is terrible and powerful." And the little dog prays: "Oh, my master, Bergeret, God of Slaughter, I worship thee! Hail, oh God of wrath! Hail, oh bountiful God! I lie at thy feet, I lick thy hand. Thou art great and beau-

tiful when at the laden board thou devourest abundant meats. Thou art great and beautiful when, from a thin strip of wood causing flame to spring, thou dost of night make day."

ARTHUR T. BARNARD.

Obituary.

I regret to have to record the death of Marion Unsworth, aged nine, elder daughter of Albert and Jennie Unsworth, of Manchester. The child, who had been remarkably free from illness during her short lifetime, caught diphtheria, from which she died on Saturday, December 20. An appropriate service was conducted at the Manchester Crematorium by Mr. Bayford on Wednesday, the 24th ult., when the last offices of respect were paid. We extend our very deepest sympathy to the sorrowing parents and relatives in their great grief.—H. I. B.

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, a Lecture. The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 at "The Castle," Shouldham Street, W.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—No meeting.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham Road): 7, Debate—"Determination." Affirmative, Mr. P. C. Ratcliffe; Negative, Mr. Walter B. Wingate.

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

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GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. William McEwan, "Imagination." Questions and Discussion. (Silver Collection.)

HULL BRANCH N.S.S. (Metropole, Albany Room, West Street): 7.30, Annual General Meeting. All members urged to attend.

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