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Views and Opinions.

Christianity and Socialism.

The recent Papal announcement on the subject of Socialism has had a disturbing effect on those Roman Catholics in this country who have been busy proclaiming the identity of Socialism with "true Christianity." Particularly is this noticeable with many readers of the *Daily Herald*, who are in love with the sentimental slosh which that journal so often serves up as real religion. Much feeling and little sense is what appeals to this class of believer, and so long as what is called religion supports the political theory they hold, little concern is shown for either the historical facts or the official pronouncement of what doctrines are Christian or otherwise. One of these writers to the *Labour* daily may well serve to illustrate what we mean. He explains that if the Pope and his followers will come and live and toil under the same conditions as the workers, then, "and then only, shall we Socialists be converted to the belief in God shining through the Pope." One is left wondering in what way the fact of the Pope and his priests coming to live with working men would prove that the Pope represents God on earth, or whether there is a God to be represented by anyone. As a matter of fact there are, we believe, many thousands of priests living in a manner at which any working man would turn up his nose, but we do not know that this is to be taken as evidence of their divine mission. And if the working men of this country are to be led away by such sentimental rubbish as this the outlook for them is not very cheering. People who can be fooled so easily present very pliable material for anyone who cares to exploit them.

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An Elaborate Stupidity.

The assumption that the truth of Christianity may be proved by the professors being good to the poor is just one of those stupidities upon which a religion such as Christianity fattens. When someone remarked to Ruskin that the clergy were the only friends the poor had he replied that if true this was one of the most terrible condemnations of Christianity he had ever heard. For it meant that in spite of the control which the Christian Church had exerted for so many centuries, it had trained people so badly, and had developed the social sense so slightly that they had

but a rudimentary sense of the obligations which the more fortunate ones owed to the less fortunate. But, as a matter of fact, the Churches have never been greatly disregarding of what is called the duty to the poor. From the very earliest times the Christian Church has taught the virtue of the rich giving to the poor, and it has never ceased to insist that the poor must always receive attention. That is, indeed, about as far as its social policy has extended. It has never found anything incongruous, or even undesirable, in a multitude of poor living upon the alms of a few rich men or women. And its attention to the poor has been one of the methods by which it has—to use its own favourite expression—kept the people in order. To the rich it has preached the virtue of almsgiving, to the poor it has preached contentment and the blessings of poverty. And by making itself the official almoner it has maintained an influence with both rich and poor, and so helped to perpetuate the very evils against which it has officially warred. The *Daily Herald* correspondence proves that many of its supporters have not yet outgrown the paralysing effects of this historic attitude of the Christian Church, and we fancy that the nonsense which the *Herald* is so fond of serving up as genuine Christianity has not a little to do with perpetuating this infantile state of mind. Really it would be worth while ultimately to sacrifice the votes of some of these half-developed Socialistic believers in order to get a more virile mental tone into the rest.

* * *

Character and Christian Truth.

But this talk of people being ready to believe in Christianity if only Christians would lead unselfish lives, reminds one of the companion stupidity that attributed the unbelief of men like Bradlaugh to the fact of certain Christian clergymen not living up to their professions. Suppose that every Christian in the country were a shining example of all that is good and noble. How would that prove the truth of Christianity? The case for disbelief in Christianity does not depend upon Christians being scoundrels. As a matter of fact, when their religion is not concerned and is not allowed to influence them, Christians are very much the same as other people. And, also as a matter of fact, there have always been plenty of Christians who were quite good men and women. But the truth of Christianity rests upon certain teachings concerning God, and his son, and a future life, and you cannot demonstrate the truth of these things by showing that certain people who believed them have been good to the poor. And from Socialists—who do claim to have something like a scientific conception of the nature of human society and its evolution—one would expect an assertion of the simple truth that whatever goodness is displayed by Christians must be attributed to social and human influences and not to the influence of belief in a discredited supernaturalism. There is really no need to assert that all Christians are bad men in order to impeach Christianity, and if the Pope came down to Whitechapel and worked at some East End factory

for a pound a week it would not prove that the ideas for which the papacy stands were either truthful or useful. If the leaders of Socialism would only drive that into the heads of some of their followers—that is, those leaders who are sufficiently developed themselves to do so—they would be building up a much more hopeful future for their movement than by pursuing the present policy of exploiting their nascent superstition.

* * *

The State and Christianity.

What on earth has a genuine Christianity to do with Socialism? Socialism is a theory of the State. It may be right, or it may be wrong, but it is essentially that. And it holds that its conception of the State is based upon purely scientific grounds, that its appeals are to the acts and the potentialities of social life, to be tested by existence on this earth. It has nothing whatever to do with any one of the essential ideas that go to make up Christianity. On the other hand Christianity has no theory whatever of the State—good or bad. From beginning to end of the New Testament there is not the slightest indication as to what form of State is good or desirable. It does say a deal about how a man shall behave in relation to established authorities, but that is all. It bids man give the most complete obedience to established authorities, but does not make this obedience dependent upon the quality of the State. It bids man turn one cheek when the other is smitten, it exhorts slaves to obey their masters, whether they be good masters or bad ones, and promises greater compensation if the obedience involves undeserved punishment. It denounces the rich, but it also preaches patience and submission to the poor, for they are blessed, and will receive their reward—not in this world, but in some future life. Theories concerning the State come to us from pagan sources, from Greek and Roman life, and elsewhere. Traditions of human dignity, and of civic independence, come to us from the same sources, but from the New Testament we get nothing at all. And Socialists would do well to reflect upon the fact that at periods of social revolt during the past three or four centuries it has been Greek and Roman life that has supplied the examples, while it is the New Testament to which appeal has been made in order to enforce the duties of obedience and no-resistance to established powers.

* * *

The Christian Aim.

The aim of Christianity was not a better social state, but the preparation of men for the next world. It began to take an interest in the affairs of this world only when time disproved its original expectation of the approaching end of the world which was to be heralded by the return of Jesus Christ. And even then its sole aim was to secure a social state in which the Church should be supreme. So long as this was achieved it mattered little what form the State assumed. It has been ready to bless a republic, or an autocracy, a plutocracy or an aristocracy, and it is only carrying out its traditional policy in pandering to Socialism in one direction and in denouncing it in another. It supported with vigour the institution of slavery so long as the social conscience would tolerate it, and denounced it as anti-Christian when its doom was assured. In the worst days of the factory system every Christian Church in the country found it consonant with its teachings, and exhorted all to obedience and to busy themselves with the salvation of their own souls. In this respect Christianity has always been true to its traditions, and those Labour leaders who, with an eye on the voting capacity of Christians, are fond of parading their own theories as true Christianity, are meeting Christians with their

own methods. With what success time alone will tell. But it will be an entire reversal of what has gone before if in this battle of opportunists the "great lying Church" does not manage to score at the expense of justice and social well-being.

* * *

Religious Bunkum.

Certain of the correspondents of the *Herald* have been citing some of the Christian Fathers on the beauties of brotherhood, the right of the poor to a share of the world's wealth, etc. These quotations are given either in ignorance or deliberate duplicity. To claim that the Christian Fathers had in view the formation of human society on anything like Socialistic lines is the sheerest distortion of the truth. Most of those from whom such quotations are made were men who shunned human society as something essentially evil, and who regarded even family life as a drag on a man's spiritual development. Of course they talked about brotherhood, and the need for helping the poor. These are the commonplaces of teachers in all ages and under all conditions. But the brotherhood of man in the mouth of one whose ideal is a Christian monastery wherein men sacrifice their manhood in the desire to save their paltry souls is one thing. The brotherhood of man in the mouth of a modern social reformer is quite another thing. And the Christian Church as a whole has never ceased to preach the brotherhood of man, the right of the labourer to his hire, etc. But it is what men *mean* by these things that is of importance. And with Christians they have never prevented all the worst evils of the ages. One ounce of sound practical legislation is worth a ton of words that may mean anything or nothing, and usually stand for nothing more than a slopping over of unreasoning sentimentalism. The theory of "our brother Christ" will not do. The New Testament drama was not written, the Christian roll of martyrs was not compiled, sects have not been formed, the fires of Smithfield have not burned, nor were the tortures of the inquisition perpetrated in order to secure better hours of labour, more wages, or the municipalization of this or that. To a Christian there was always something of vastly greater importance than these things at stake. It is a good sign that the development of the social sense of mankind has compelled it to keep its supernaturalism and its real aims in the background. But it is not quite so good that they who pride themselves upon being social reformers should be so easily misled by a mass of sentimental absurdities. "Reformers should be made of sterner stuff." And they should be at least alive to the perpetuation of savage ideas in a civilized form, and of co-operation with a form of religious belief which has during the past sixteen centuries found it possible to co-exist with the worst forms of tyranny, and which has given its sanction to some of the greatest evils that have ever oppressed the human race.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

After all that has been so plausibly written concerning the innate idea of God; after all that has been said of its being common to all men, in all ages and nations, it does not appear that man has naturally any more idea of God than any of the beasts of the field. He has no knowledge of God at all. Whatever change may afterwards be wrought by his own reflections, he is by nature a mere Atheist.—*John Wesley (the Father of Methodism)*.

Indeed, give more than you get, for it is a sign of mediocrity that a man should seek more out of the world than he can bring into it.—*Eden Phillpotts, "The Treasures of Typhon."*

A Christian New Year's Motto.

It is customary with pastors to offer their congregations at the beginning of each year some verse of Scripture as a guiding principle for the coming twelve-month. The very popular minister of Emmanuel Church, Montreal, the Rev. J. W. G. Ward, once, we think, exceedingly well known in North London, offers all English-speaking Christians, through the *Christian World Pulpit* for January 1, the following motto: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. xxxiii, 27). Mr. Ward is an exceptionally clever man, and his treatment of any text makes it look as fair and acceptable as possible. Of Moses himself he says that "his service for Israel began with the summons to faith and ended with the song of faith." Taking the crossing of the Red Sea and the forty years' wanderings in the wilderness as historical facts, he has good reasons for adding concerning the famous leader, "I imagine a man who had been through all which Moses had, through all the experiences that lay between Egypt and Canaan, between Mount Sinai and Mount Nebo, without becoming embittered." It would have been a perfect miracle if it had ever actually happened. All truly great men lived thousands of years ago. Mr. Ward says:—

After the struggles, the anxieties, the incipient revolts, and wearisome complaints of those years, he had yet a word of praise for God and of encouragement for man. Contrast that with ourselves and the world about us. Many a man is disillusioned at twenty-five, embittered at thirty-five, and a rank pessimist in pose, at least, for all time thereafter.

With what tearful sadness we should pity our own unfortunately poor age; but it is not quite so far behind older ages as the preacher believes it to be. It is perfectly true that there is more disillusion to-day than at any previous time; but surely Mr. Ward must admit that it is a beneficent deliverance when illusions take their departure, and he is also bound to grant that such a wholesome riddance is not naturally followed by embitterment and pessimism. Doubtless there are pessimists among Secularists, but they are necessarily few and far between. The overwhelming majority of pessimists are Christian believers, whose very beliefs fail to minister peace and joy to them. Mr. Ward goes so far as to confess that "though we do not altogether lose faith in the providence of God, sometimes the strain of life is so great that the cords binding us to the unseen wear perilously thin. Hope dies down to a heap of 'mouldering embers if not to ashes grey.' The song of rejoicing dies on the lips." Then the preacher proceeds thus:—

Why is this? It will not do to blame everything on the times in which we live. That is too easy a method. Moreover it is the resort of the beaten and the craven. It will not do simply to say that the conditions of life are too hard and its demands too exacting, for faith to flourish. We know that faith ought to be strong enough to surmount all such obstacles. Yet there is something wrong. Is it ourselves? Is it the world? Or is it both? Plainly, we are in danger of being overborne by the weight of our responsibilities. If not overwhelmed by sheer force of opposition, we are yet being worn down by constant attrition. And though we are baffled rather than beaten, we are aware of times when we feel our incapacity, when a sense of helplessness spreads over the soul.

All that is depressingly accurate, and the only fault we find with Mr. Ward is that he makes the statement with an ulterior and almost foreign purpose. His purpose is not to encourage those who feel the hard-

ness of the task of winning true manhood by saying to them, "Be of good cheer, however severe the conflict with evil forces may be, you have within yourselves all the requisite means, if prudently and unceasingly employed, ultimately to achieve a most gloriously triumphant victory." His purpose is rather to discourage violently and apparently hopelessly struggling people from even dreaming of salvation as an achievement of human self-reliance, self-effort, and self-discipline, but as a free gift from Christ to be received for the mere asking in faith. Mr. Ward does not define salvation in those words, and it is possible that his conception of it is much higher and nobler than that entertained by popular revivalists; but the fact remains that, according to his teaching, no man can secure his own redemption without supernatural intervention. Mr. Ward says much in this sermon which, if it could stand by itself, would be beautifully true and most eloquently expressed, but no such paragraph can be found. He supplies us with a movingly eloquent and ideally charming picture of a human home. He says:—

"Man goeth to his labour until the evening." Yea, and with the fading of light he comes back tired with his toil, harassed with care, and yet happy to find the glowing ingle, and the love-light of the family circle. He shuts the door on the warring factors without. "The world forgetting and by the world forgot."

But that lovely image is painted with a purpose. The most adorable human home may be tragically broken up beyond all hope of restoration, and then follows a most pathetic description of a broken-up human home. Listen to this:—

We have enlarged on the poignant for a practical purpose. What home used to be, what even the sanctuary may have been in years past, God is to those who know him. Our Father is the Changeless amid the Changing. Admittedly. "Times change and we with time." The refuge that once stood open to us may now be unavailable. Friends, on whose loyalty we could depend have been taken from us or their attitude has altered. Yet, commonplace as the truth has become, like a well-worn coin from which both image and superscription are almost obliterated, the value is unaffected. God is ever the same. His heart yearns over his children with an imperishable tenderness. His ear is perpetually open to their supplication. And the varied demands that each generation may make on his love, find it undiminished and its resources untaxed.

Such is the Gospel so eloquently and so passionately preached by Mr. Ward, and to us it is not in the least surprising that his church is crowded. All pulpits filled by such men command overflowing congregations. It is neither God, Christ, nor the Holy Ghost who attracts the multitudes. It is only men and women endowed with natural oratory, and who have acquired the art of successfully appealing to audiences who can do that, and they never fail as long as their gifts are at their service.

J. T. LLOYD.

If a worm, crawling at our feet, could think and imagine this world, and all it contains, were made for him, it would be no more ridiculous than for us to believe that "on the fourth day" a personal god, "walking in the garden," then and there made our sun and "the stars also" to give light upon the earth, placed them in their respective localities billions and trillions of miles off in space, without scorching a single hair on his head, then complacently created whales and other "creeping things" the next day!—*Otto Wettstein*.

The Making of a Bigot.

Oh threats of Hell and hopes of Paradise!
One thing, at least, is certain—this life flies.
One thing is certain, and the rest is lies;
The flower that once has blown for ever dies.

—Omar Khayyam.

CHRISTIANS are justified in making the most of their men and women of genius, and Freethinkers do not quarrel with them on that account. For that reason one is not surprised at a single-volume edition of the works of Christina Rossetti, although it is yet too early to decide whether the collection will prove a repository or a mausoleum. It is, indeed, noteworthy that one family should have produced two such eminent poets as Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Christina shared with her brother the delight in mediæval colouring and subject, and in the sensuous appeal of verse; but, unlike Dante Gabriel, she had a strong strain of superstition in her character, and she soon lost her vision of a brightly hued and romantic world, and turned her tired eyes to the contemplation of purely religious subjects.

At the outset Christina Rossetti's verse showed a definite personality. It is, perhaps, her sex which renders her lyrics more bird-like than her brother's verses. It can be nothing but her constant experience of ill-health which made her in later life dwell so constantly on the morbid side of religion.

Death, which to Shelley, Swinburne, Whitman, and the Freethought poets, seemed own brother to sleep, was to her a more horrific shape, and was a perennial subject for her verse. The constant burden of her muse was the mutability of human affairs. And when to physical ailments were added love disappointments, entirely caused by religious bigotry, there is small difficulty in understanding how Christina Rossetti became a devotional poet; and one of such distinction that only Crashaw, Donne, Vaughan, and Francis Thompson can be held her compeers. And John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's, be it remembered, mitigated his raptures concerning the Saviour coming in the clouds in glory by writing on less sacred and more welcome subjects, such as seeing his mistress get into bed.

Many of Christina Rossetti's poems are very short, and are concerned with trite religious subjects. In nothing is her skill so much shown as in the fact that so few are commonplace. Had she not had genius, they might have sunk to the dead level of pious verse, orthodox in purpose, and contemptible in execution. The only trait she has in common with the ordinary hymn-writer is a morbidity in dwelling on the pathological side of religion. She dissected the Scriptures, and her brother, W. M. Rossetti said, with justice, that if "all those passages which were directly or indirectly dependent upon what can be found in the Bible" had been taken from Christina's later verse, it "would have been reduced to something approaching a vacuum."

Starting her practical career as the one woman member of the Pre-Raphaelite enthusiasts, she, naturally, showed the effect of that romantic spirit in her first mature poem, "Goblin Market," and "The Prince's Progress," both of which have the glow and rich tints of Dante Rossetti's and William Morris's early works. The meditative and introspective sonnets of her later years have something in common with this early artistic impulse. But what a change was there! It is impossible not to deplore the narrowing down and petrifying of Christina Rossetti's poetic interest. Here was a woman of warm blood and a passionate sense of beauty, who, with better health and satisfied affections, might have interpreted the joy of life. Instead she "chanted

hymns to the cold, fruitless moon," and turned with morbid pleasure to the contemplation of the sickly delights of a barren religiosity. She was a paradox, an anomaly, a Puritan among Catholics, a nun outside the walls of the nunnery garden. Necessarily pre-occupied as she was with attenuated religious emotions her melodies with difficulty escape monotony. And yet nature will out, and again and again the old, half-forgotten romantic instinct asserts itself. The truth is, she was not a sacred, but a Secular poet. Her religious fanaticism forced her natural sympathies into wrong channels. To the real world she became indifferent. With actual life, its questionings, its humours, its perplexities, its despairs, its hopes, its loves, there is no echo in her poetry. Beyond the walls of her cloistered residence her tired eyes saw but a mad world rushing to perdition. Her idea of wisdom is to withdraw from the tumult of life into an inner shrine of pious meditation, disturbed only by feminine anxiety for the fate of the Church of Christ.

Her piety was essentially of the womanly, prayerful, submissive kind, so soothing and attractive to priests of all ages and all countries. It asks no questions, it is posed by no problems. It only kneels in adoring awe, and gives money and service freely.

Of course, her picture of the world, of which she knew so very little, is grim and forbidding.

Loathsome and foul with hideous leprosy,
And subtle serpents gliding in her hair.

And she fears lest her feet "cloven too, take hold on hell." This jaundiced view of life partially blinds her eyes, and "makes a goblin of the sun." When she notices the beauties of Nature it is always through religious spectacles. She could not rise to the vision of Coleridge's:—

Hidden brook,
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Or the magic of Meredith's:—

Hear the heart of wildness beat
Like the centaur's hoof on sward.

Nor could she utter the brave defiance of Emily Brontë:—

No coward soul is mine,

but she has a haunting music all her own:—

When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me,
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree;
Be the grass green above me,
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And, if thou wilt, remember,
And, if thou wilt, forget.

This, however, is an exception. Usually, her emotions were regulated and refined by ascetic priestly traditions, and this places her at an enormous disadvantage among poets of free utterance. At the worst, she is never crude, extravagant, or commonplace. She challenges comparison with the singers of her own sex. Elizabeth Browning is the inevitable foil of Christina Rossetti, and the two suggest each other by the force of contrast. The author of "Sonnets from the Portuguese," "Casa Guidi Windows," and "The Cry of the Children," is the very antipodes of the woman who gave us the shy, devotional "New Poems." There is none, of course, of Elizabeth Browning's fluency in Christina Rossetti's work, but the sister-poet lacks the splendid humanity of the other. Christina, despite her lyric gifts, hardly stands the comparison. How should she? A delicate spinster, she held the Christian Superstition in the most absolute and most literal manner. Shadow, not light, was her nourishment, and her music was a delicate undertone. We long for something real. Like the dying farm-labourer, we like substance and

not shadow. His friends tried to solace him with the golden joys of heaven. He raised himself for a last word, "'Tis all very well for thee, but give I the 'Pig and Whistle.'" His mortality, like that of most of us, was unequal to raptures too severe. Christina Rossetti's life and work is, in its way, an impeachment of Orthodoxy. In spite of its beautiful language and ancient association, it explains nothing, and adds nothing to human knowledge, but leaves the world in the clutches of the priests with their inhumanities and superstitions. MIMNERMUS.

The Schools of a Revolution.

La Commune est l'objet d'une suspicion et souvent d'une exécration, en bloc. C'est une injustice.

—Edmond Lepelletier.

A REAL history of the Paris Commune has yet to be written. Not that there are no histories of the movement both "for" and "against," but I refer to the need for the history of the "ideas" of the Commune. The battle against the Versaillese, the sittings of the members of the Commune, the thousand and one odd details, which one expects in all revolutions, do not help us to appreciate what the Commune meant by one iota. Karl Marx said long before the Commune: "Whenever there is a revolutionary convulsion, there must be some social want in the background which is prevented by outworn institutions from satisfying itself.¹ It is this "social want" that historians must seek if they would learn the causes of revolution, and in the Paris Commune of 1871, a considerable index to the "ideas" of the movement may be obtained from its educational projects. Here we find a "social want" that was bound to find expression, whether the official *delegates* to the Commune wanted it or not. Indeed, much of what I have to say about the educational theories and practice of the Commune is not the "official" attitude, but the sheer will of the "mere people."

I.

The educationists of the Paris Commune seem to have been attracted to the revolution as much by reason of its means as its ends. This fact is patent everywhere in the movement, for, in addition to the educationists who protested against the "class distinction" which marked public instruction on every hand, there were those who condemned not so much an unjust administration as the false and sterile curriculum which obtained. Let us turn first of all to the grievances of the political reformers of education.

The Constitution of 1791 had decreed a "public education common to all citizens, and gratuitous in respect to all those parts of instruction which are indispensable to all." That, as we know, was not accomplished, as the revolution, the real intellectual revolution, was arrested at the fall of the Cordeliers and the aggrandisement of the religionists. But we must pass on. Under the Consulate (1802-4) the *lycées* and colleges were re-organised, and higher education benefited generally, but still not a word for primary schools. At the Restoration 50,000 francs was the total amount set aside for primary education for the whole of France! No wonder that when Louis Philippe took the "citizen purple," more than half the male, and quite three-quarters of the female population could neither read nor write. On the advice of Guizot, this monarch certainly opened primary schools for boys in 1833, but the reactionary

law of Faloux placed these at a disadvantage by encouraging denominational schools, which permitted teachers with no further qualifications than a bishop's "letter of obedience" to officiate in the schools. Under the Second Empire, little or nothing was done for popular instruction. The working man, despite his meagre wage, had still to contribute towards the cost of the education of his children, and though a Voltarian, as he invariably was, he was compelled to place them in the hands of the priests who ruled in the schools. Then again, what was this education, even when paid for, that his children received? At best, it was just as much as enabled them to become clerks or book-keepers, there being no such thing as an attempt to fit them for any other vocation, such as even the industrial or mechanical arts. The colleges, *lycées*, and special schools were beyond their reach. These institutions were the appropriation of the bourgeoisie and upper classes, from which their children were placed in the best grades of office under the Government. And so, in 1871, "the people" realized seriously that the education "free to all," willed by them in the great revolution eighty years before, was as far off as ever. So far the case for the political reformers of education, whose main policy was directed to secure an education—*Free, Compulsory and Secular.*

Side by side with these were the curriculum reformers. Ever since the days of Rousseau's *Emile* there had been groups of educationists planning and plotting against the conventional curriculum. All the educational reforms of late years (except free and compulsory schools) the "liberty of the pupil," the kindergarten, the gymnasium, the laboratory and workshop, vocational instruction, and all that is included in the observational and psychological methods of education, to say nothing of free feeding and clothing, and the substitution of civil and moral training for religious instruction, had been advocated by Robert Owen, George Combe, Cabet, Babeuf, Fourier, Saint Simon, and others, whom the Philistines still look upon with horror as Socialists and Freethinkers! The curriculum reformers maintained that education should not aim at merely furnishing a child with knowledge, but should more properly strive to bring out and develop its mind, to convert the potential mental energy into the actual. That the liberty of the pupil should be inviolable. That authoritative expression should not exist in the schools, but that all instruction should proceed from, and find its authority in, the gradual development and understanding of the child. This education, which begins in the kindergarten at the earliest years possible, should proceed under three headings: *Physical, Intellectual and Moral.* *Physical* education came not by mere muscular but by cerebral development. *Intellectual* education meant not mere knowledge gained from text-books and abstract statements, but the observation and experience of the pupil in the garden, workshop, and laboratory. *Moral* education excluded all theological and religious sanctions. The child should be prepared as a future citizen in its duties towards its fellows and in the well-being of the community, instead of being taught its duties towards God and the well-being of its individual soul. Education, too, should aim finally, at fitting the child for its vocation in life. By the multifarious ways and means with which this observational system of instruction furnished the teacher, it should be easy to discover in the child's nature the direction of its bents and ideas, and so the vocational training to which it is naturally adapted, should take its place in the course of the child's education.

This revolutionary curriculum was known at the time of the Paris Commune of 1871 as *L'Education Intégrale* or *L'Education Nouvelle.*

¹ Marx: *Revolution and Counter-Revolution.* p. 14 (Kerr's Edition).

II.

"Education," says Lissagaray, the great historian of the Commune, "was bound to write one of the finest pages of the Commune, for after so many years of study and experiments, this question should spring forth ready armed." That is true. It did, indeed, "spring forth ready armed," for no sooner had the revolution of March 18 accomplished its military and political purpose, than the rebel educationalists of Paris rushed in, "ready armed," with schemes and proposals for education under the new social régime. Many of them had joined a *Société de l'Education nouvelle*, and this group held a mass meeting at the *Ecole Turgot* on March 26, at which five delegates were elected to draw up a mandate of educational reforms to be presented to the Commune. The delegates comprised:—Henriette Garoste, Louise Lafitte, J. Manier, J. Rama, and Marie Verdure. Two of these, Manier and Rama, were well-known educationists, who were afterwards appointed by the Commune to a sub-committee for education. Marie Verdure was the daughter of an ex-schoolmaster and a member of the Commune, and herself a teacher, as were the two other ladies.

The petition of the *Société de l'Education nouvelle*, which was published in the *Journal Officiel*, insisted, like Pestalozzi, that education was the "mother question, which embraced and dominated all other questions, whether political or social, and without the solution of which, no serious or lasting reforms could ever be made." An education, said the petition, fitting the child for the private, professional, political, and social life it must afterwards enter, should be considered "a public service of the first order," and in consequence, should be free and complete for all. This education, ran the petition, should be rational and *intégrale*. It should employ exclusively "the experimental and scientific method, that which always starts from facts—*Physical, Moral and Intellectual*." To ensure the safer and proper working of this new system, several reforms were of basic necessity. First and foremost, it demanded in the name of liberty of conscience and of justice, "that religious and dogmatic instruction be immediately and radically suppressed for both sexes in all the schools and educational establishments supported by the State, and be left entirely to the free direction of the family." It therefore pointed out the necessity for suppressing all questions of a religious nature in the examinations, the removal of religious images and objects of worship from the schoolrooms, and the abolition of prayers, worship, or anything which should be reserved for the "individual conscience."¹

We shall see that this petition contained all the reforms attempted or carried out by the Commune, with the exception of the free feeding and clothing of the children, which was installed independently by the *arrondissements*.

HENRY GEORGE FARMER.

(To be Continued.)

Theologians view matter as mere dirt unless stirred, like the fabled pools of Bethesda, by the potent touch of Jehovah. But why first divest it of its blest powers and attributes? Let them restore to it the qualities of which it has been robbed, and they will soon see in it the beautiful elements that make the precious opal, the amethyst, and the brilliant diamond, the delicate bluebell and the violet, the lily and rosebud, the ruby lip and the love-lit eyes, the palpitating heart and the wonderful brain.—B. F. Underwood.

¹ *Journal Officiel*, April 2.

Will.

MANY people imagine that man has an organ for choosing called the will, just as he has an organ for seeing called the eye, and an organ for hearing called the ear. A man, say they, may have some one thing which he does not know whether to do or to forbear doing; or he may have several things of this sort; under the condition that any one of them, but only one of them, can be done at the time; and in both these cases he comes to a decision by using his will, the function whereof is independent choice. This statement, however, is very incorrect. Man always acts from desire; and without desire, he could never make a choice of any kind. If he desires to do something he will certainly do it, provided it be within his power, and he have no different, or contrary desire, say that of inactivity. If he desire to do different things, of which any one can then be done, and each of these desires have another contrary to it, he will certainly fulfil the strongest of the lot, if there be one; exception being made for cases when a desire though stronger than its opposing desires severally, is weaker than they are collectively. Thus, man constantly acts upon the desire, or the group of desires, which at any given time is the most prevalent with him; and this principle when it reaches the point where it brings him to action, constitutes his will. Take an instance. If a man who loves his family and hates his master, suddenly bethinks himself that to rob the latter would enrich the former, he will be likely to experience various desires. On the one side, the desire to gratify his love to his family, and his hatred to his master; on the other, the desire to keep out of prison, to preserve a good name, to hold fast a pure conscience, to observe the moral law. Whether he commits the robbery or not, depends solely upon the difference in force between the desires moving him to it, and those moving him from it; or indeed one particular desire may be so strong as to make him disregard all the rest, e.g. the desire to help his family, or the desire to remain upright. Some desires bring us to act immediately, others bring us to act only after they have been thought upon. Of these, the first are called impulses, the second motives.

Take the case of voluntary homicide. Two men who have never met with, or heard of each other before, meet and quarrel. One of them kills his fellow with the evident design of doing it. This man acts from impulse. A profligate youth is the heir of a rich uncle whose death he compasses in a slow and stealthy way. This man acts with a motive. Yet both of them were brought into action by desire: the one desired blood, the other money. Impulses are unweighed desires, motives are meditated desires. This is their only difference. When a desire becomes sufficiently strong to determine the conduct of a man, whether he shall act or not; and if he shall act, what he shall do, then, it is his will. Thus will is simply a quantitative modification of desire; in other words desire at the degree of prevalency. This degree is of course purely relative, for a very feeble desire prevails if opposed to another, or more, feebler than itself. Thus it is a fact that unless externally hindered, man always does what he wills; and unless externally compelled, nothing but what he wills. Although will is only determinant desire, it is, as was before remarked, vulgarly conceived to be an independent faculty for making choices. This mistake is easily explicable. From peculiarities of constitution, we have many desires which are so obscure that we hardly perceive them, although individually, or in varying combinations they determine us to perform certain acts. Again, the differ-

ence in strength between our desires is often so small that we overlook it in choosing what to do, or to forbear; and thus we feel at such times as if our choice were not determined by anything. Finally, a great part of the conduct we pursue is habitual, and here the desires which move us to action proceed without our observing their interference. Take the example of a young man selecting a necktie. The articles, say, are of the same shape, and price; they have plain colours and no patterns. If the young man has a fondness for some one colour, and has a sweetheart who likes some other colour better, then he will choose her colour, if she be dearer to him than his colour is; or his colour, if it be dearer to him than she is. But he may have no favourite colour, and no sweetheart who has one; in which case there might seem nothing to determine his choice. The truth, however, is far otherwise, for he may have an indigestion and thereby be temporarily averse to gay tints and disposed to dull ones; or he may be more acute in touch than in sight, and therefore inclined to take whichever appears the softest; and in these and in similar ways his choice might very well be determined though he were quite unconscious that anything was determining it. The history of the word "will" supports the view that I am upholding, for this term originally meant, and still generally means, "strong desire," not "free choice." A "wilful boy" is a boy determined to have his own way, not a boy apt at choosing things. The man of "strong will," whom the copy-books extol, is not distinguished by any fine elective faculty but only by some mighty desire which pushes him on continually, very often with disastrous results to his fellow men.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

Acid Drops.

The Rev. R. J. Campbell, who was once taken—by Christians, and on the strength of his hair and "soulful" eyes—to be a great thinker, among Christians, is writing a series of articles in the *Sunday Express* on "Christianity and Modern Life." The first one deals with "What is Christianity?" and the fact of it being necessary to explain this after so many centuries of established Christianity is a commentary in itself. What Christianity has been the official creeds tells quite plainly. It was a teaching which embodied some of the darkest superstitions that have ever afflicted mankind. It taught the existence of devils who caused all forms of disease, it encouraged the belief in witches and wizards, and was responsible for the deaths of many thousands of men and women, it taught the belief in a hell which would have driven humanity mad had they ever realized all it meant, and which did, in fact, send very many insane, and it has a system of morals which for sheer and disguised selfishness has never been beaten.

What Christianity is it would puzzle anyone to say definitely. It means anything, everything, and nothing at all. It means in politics Socialism to one, Communism to another, Conservatism to another, and Liberalism to yet another. It means placing the next world first to this man, and last to that. It means exactly what anyone cares to make it. To Mr. Campbell it meant once the revolutionary gospel of the City Temple. Now it means the staid and highly respectable gospel of the Church of England. And he is as certain of the one thing as he was of the other. All Christians agree in believing in Jesus so long as they do not discuss what the deuce it is belief in Jesus means. Once they commence to discuss that, there is as pretty an exhibition of a religious Donnybrook fair as one could wish to see.

Mr. Campbell says that what the world wants is not Jesus, the teacher of morals, but the "elder brother, who has thought his way through the problems of existence." That is only replacing one absurdity with another, or

with even a greater absurdity. As every one of the moral maxims attributed to Jesus were commonplaces long before he was born, there is nothing improbable in his having used these sayings as part of his stock-in-trade. But Jesus as the profound thinker is screamingly ridiculous. There is not a single indication throughout the whole of the Gospels which would indicate that the Jesus of the New Testament was intellectually a step in advance of the Judean peasantry whom he addressed. He endorsed every one of their most ignorant superstitions. He was miles behind the best thinkers of Greece, Rome, and Egypt, and we should really like Mr. Campbell to tell us a single instance in which, taking the New Testament as a guide, Jesus displayed the possession of either unusual intelligence or that he was abreast with the knowledge that others without divine assistance had already acquired. Or if Mr. Campbell does not, perhaps some other Christian clergyman will oblige.

The congregation of two churches have gone on strike owing to the decision of the parson who controls them to appoint a lay reader in place of a full-fledged curate. We like this idea very much, and suggest, as we have done before, that it should be carried further. For instance, people believe in God because he was supposed to do something. They offer prayers asking him to do something concerning the weather, the harvest, health, etc. The usual plan is to thank him for what he has done, whether he does it or not. And so he goes on shamefully neglecting his most obvious duties, as witness the extraordinary weather we have been getting. Now we suggest that it would be a better plan to use the weapon of the strike, and publicly to proclaim that if he goes on as he has gone on all the churches will be closed until he shows some amendment in his conduct. If the strike is a good weapon against God's representative, there does not seem any valid reason why it should not be used in other directions.

The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, in a judgment delivered recently, decided that it is legal to run excursions on Sundays to resorts or camping grounds in the Province of Manitoba. The question arose as the result of the passing of a local Act permitting the excursions. The Court of Appeal of the Province having decided that the Act was valid and in force, the Lord's Day Alliance of Canada appealed to the Privy Council, alleging that the Act was *ultra vires*, as it dealt with a matter within the powers of the Dominion Parliament. We congratulate the people of Manitoba on having thus routed their Sabbatarians.

But really the impertinence of the Sabbatarians is an astonishing thing. And, probably because it is so audacious, the general public seem scarcely to realize the insolence of the bigots who endeavour to (and to a considerable extent succeed) in dictating to us how we shall spend Sunday. One can imagine that if a vegetarian league succeeded in smuggling an Act through some legislative body, making it a penal offence for the inhabitants of a borough or township to eat meat, or if some body of faddists contrived to get legislation carried compelling the members of a community to wear sandals, or shave their heads, there would be an immediate outcry, and a wave of indignation that would speedily put an end to the faddists' power of interfering with their neighbours. But Christian faddists are patiently tolerated. They tell commonsense folk that they shall be dull or bored on Sunday, and their edict is meekly accepted. They attempt to stir up a persecution of non-Christian Sunday schools, and yet their own Sunday schools are permitted to function almost without protest, in spite of the fact that in them children's minds are warped, and they are taught as ascertained truths a vast mass of foolish, and sometimes unsavoury doctrine and fable. A topsy-turvy world!

Professor Sergius Bulgakov, an ecclesiastic of the Russian Orthodox Church, recently lectured at King's College, Strand, W.C., on the present position of religion in Russia. His lecture was delivered through an interpreter. It appears that the Criminal Code of the Soviet

states that freedom of religious or anti-religious propaganda is permissible. The teaching of religion in schools is forbidden to children under the age of eighteen, but it is allowed after that age. Sacred relics once traditionally respected had been declared to be pernicious superstitions and placed in museums, and very great efforts are made to convince children of the non-existence of God. From this we gather that *force majeure* when on the toe of the other boot is not liked by those who once used it. The Soviet's religious declarations are but the other side of the medallion that all liberal thinkers know only too well. They are also the Soviet's own affairs, and we can imagine nothing sillier than the Soviet attempting to convince children of the non-existence of God, unless it is a Russian ecclesiastical professor coming all the way to England to tell us of it. As God is the stock-in-trade of all ecclesiastics, and no two person's idea of him are the same, and the onus of proof is on them, it is a bit late in the day to bring this particular chestnut along. If it is true that the Soviet are smacking this bladder of words, we trust it will soon concentrate on readin', writin', and 'rithmetic now that Professor Bulgakov's occupation is like Othello's. The late Anatole France, in Book IV. of *Penguin Island*, has said the last word on sacred relics. In his whimsical history of the Revolution, Mother Rouquin says to her man: "It would be a good thing, in readiness for the day if we kept a handful of ashes and some rags and bones in an old pot in our lodgings. We will say that they are the relics of St. Orberosia and that we saved them from the flames at the peril of our lives.".....On that same day Mother Rouquin took home with her a little ashes and some bones, and put them in an old jam-pot in her cupboard. In Book VII. this incident appears in *The History of the Miracles of the Patron Saint of Alca*, in the following words: "A poor woman of great piety, named Rouquin, went by night at the peril off her life to gather up the calcined bones and ashes of the blessed saint." One can only conclude that this excessive love for the dead leaves none for the living by those whose imagination ceased to grow when children.

Experiments in voice amplification are being carried out at Westminster Abbey. Microphones have been placed over the pulpit and the reading desk, while two square stone-coloured loud speakers have been fixed on top of the choir screen in such a way as to throw the voice of the preacher into the long nave. So does theology make use of its long-abused enemy, science. But we fancy that something more drastic than loud speakers is necessary in order to inaugurate the long-promised religious revival. Something, we would suggest, on the lines of the bewildering, bile-producing coloured electric signs used by the Salvation Army. A good slogan might help as well. Perhaps a close study of the methods used by the advertising staff of a well-known health salt might repay our theological publicity agents.

The *Schoolmaster* publishes some interesting details of the inquisition for teachers established by the managers of a school at Saffron Waldon. "I was one," writes a teacher, "of four chosen for interview at British School, Saffron Walden (headship). These are some of the questions I was asked:—

1. Do you believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ?
2. Do you take the Unitarian point of view?
3. What are you—a Methodist, Baptist, or what?
4. Are you Bolshevik?
5. Would you salute the Union Jack?
6. Would you sing the National Anthem and stand bare-headed when you sing?
7. Are you an abstainer?
8. Do you smoke?
9. Are you married, and how many children have you?

"The interview," explains the correspondent, "was held just about the time this year when the *Daily Mail* was running the stunt about Communist Sunday-schools, and you will quite understand that I smiled when these wonderful people asked me these questions. And, except that I smoke, all the questions could be answered satis-

factorily; but before the interview was half-way through, my mind was made up that before I would serve as a school teacher under such managers I would eat my hat."

As the *Schoolmaster* rightly comments: "So long as we have dual control we shall have religious tests." And the danger is that by means of such inquisitions our religious and political bigots will place the education of children largely in the hands of the least conscientious and least principled type of teacher. The man and woman who sets a high value upon truth and frankness, and who holds firmly to what he or she believes to be the truth, is scarcely likely to pass such test questions to the satisfaction of the narrow-minded little bigots who control the schools; whereas those applicants who are either too muddle-headed to have any definite religious and political convictions, or else are unscrupulous enough to deny their opinions, are likely to commend themselves to the selection committee. The only way to avoid such danger is to secularize education completely, and to take away the control of schools from these pinchbeck czars.

The Bishop of Aberdeen and Orkney is of opinion that the greatest dance the human race has produced is the eightsome reel. If his lordship is not very careful he will find himself dogged by one of the sleuths of his brother of London, to see that this avowal of interest in dancing is not a subtle indication of some terrible viciousness.

Messrs. Jonathan Cape, Ltd., in an advertisement of *Trimblerrigg*, a new book by Mr. Lawrence Houseman, wish to assure the public that the author wishes to make no reflection on the leadership of the Free Churches in this country. After this assurance we shall be able to sit down to our Sunday dinner in peace; we thought it had something to do with the three card trick.

What may be described as Irish stew is a half-column in a newspaper wherein Mr. John Scurr, M.P., unloads his opinions of the Pope's declaration on Socialism. He writes: "The Pope is the representative of our Divine Lord on earth.....The Pope is a human being." We know that the latter statement is true because he recently had an attack of influenza, but the former statement is just one of those muzzy efforts with theological language that give onlookers an idea of the mentality of members of Parliament. One may imagine world affairs being discussed by such people who are in the minority compared with the ancient religions that had their being long before Peter was handed the keys.

How to Help.

There are thousands of men and women who have left the Churches and who do not know of the existence of this journal. Most of them would become subscribers if only its existence were brought to their notice.

We are unable to reach them through the ordinary channels of commercial advertising, and so must rely upon the willingness of our friends to help. This may be given in many ways:

By taking an extra copy and sending it to a likely acquaintance.

By getting your newsagent to take an extra copy and display it.

By lending your own copy to a friend after you have read it.

By leaving a copy in a train, tram or 'bus.

It is monstrous that after forty years of existence, and in spite of the labour of love given it by those responsible for its existence, the *Freethinker* should not yet be in a sound financial position. It can be done if all will help. The Paper and the Cause are worthy of all that each can do for them.

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.

L. KENT.—We have read some curious stories about these Knights of Columbus, but we do not know much about them. Some grown-up people of very primitive mind, have a curious fondness for dressing themselves up in ridiculous costumes and parading. We have plenty of it here from the Knights of the Garter downward. How far these are used for political ends, here and in America, we do not know.

E. SMEDLEY.—You practically supply the answer to your own question. Thousands of people, both earnest and honest, have believed in every kind of absurdity. When Dr. Johnson was asked why he omitted something from his dictionary, he replied, "Ignorance, pure ignorance." There is no need to go round a long way to find an abstruse reason when the obvious one is right before you.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—"Bricklayer" (Auckland, N.Z.), £3.

A. RUSSELL.—Sorry, but your criticism is rather too far removed from the date of the publication of the article criticised.

N. MURRAY.—The affirmation is not something that may be permitted by judge or magistrate. It is a legal right which a witness may demand, and an official may not refuse.

S. LARMONT.—In theory we are aware that the Nonconformists approximate to the Freethought position of the non-interference of the State in matters of religion, but in practice they are at one with the upholders of the established Church so far as it pays them to be so. As a rule principles have little power with Christians where the interests of their religion are to be served. That is one of the principal reasons why Christianity represents so dangerous a force in the State.

T. MAY.—If an editor altered his paper week by week to suit the varying tastes of certain of his readers, he would soon be without a paper to edit. We have to remember of a paper what the shrewd Scot said in another connection, "It takes all sorts to make a world." We do not agree with you in the least that the time has gone by for the direct attack on Christianity. There seems to us more need for it than ever. There is too great a habit of accommodation with the Churches not to make them a deadly danger to the general welfare.

J. BRYCE.—Thanks. Shall appear as early as possible. Hope the New Year will be full of good things for yourself.

W. JACOBS.—A fine instance of the way in which religion distorts one's sense of moral values.

M. A. G.—Will enquire and let you know later.

F. HAMPSON.—Next week. What you say is quite true, but the boycott is to-day made much easier than it need be because so many who do not believe in Christianity remain silent on the subject. That is a truth we are always emphasizing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

There promises to be a good gathering of Freethinkers at the N.S.S. dinner at the Midland Grand Hotel on Tuesday evening next, January 13. The President will occupy the chair, and he will be supported by many who have spent their lives in the battle for reason and justice, besides a goodly number of younger workers. The dinner is timed for 7 o'clock prompt, and it will be served promptly. There will be a number of brief speeches and an excellent musical programme. By the time this issue of the *Freethinker* is in the hands of its readers all applications for tickets should have been made to the General Secretary. It will be their own fault if any are crowded out.

To-day (January 11) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the afternoon and evening in the Engineers' Hall, Rusholme Road, Manchester. South Lancashire friends will please note. We hear that a number will be present from Bolton, and Mr. Cohen will be glad to see them. If they can induce Christians to attend so much the better. Next Sunday Mr. Cohen will visit Glasgow. Full particulars will be announced later.

The North London Branch N.S.S. has prepared a very interesting programme of Sunday evening discussions, at the St. Pancras Reform Club, Victoria Road, N.W. The programme opens with a discussion to-day (January 11) on "Is Republicanism a vital issue to-day?" in which Dr. Arthur Lynch will take affirmative, and Mr. T. F. Palmer the negative. The proceedings should be of interest to many.

We have been asked by a correspondent whether we are still sending specimen copies of the *Freethinker* free. The answer is, Yes. We will send the *Freethinker* to as many addresses as we receive for four weeks on payment of postage—one halfpenny per copy. This is an excellent way to introduce the paper to new readers, and often leads to a regular subscription.

Mrs. Fawcett, in her biography just published by Fisher Unwin (*What I Remember*, By Millicent Garrett Fawcett, 12s. 6d.), relates that she heard a sermon by F. D. Maurice, to whom "spiritual things were the greatest realities in the universe"; a singular contrast to the parson under whom she had "sat" at home. He was an Irishman, who had a way of interpolating little remarks of his own into any part of the service. For instance, he would read, in his rich, rolling Irish voice: "The people who sat in darkness (that was their state) saw a great light (that was a better state.)" To the words "King of Kings, Lord of Lords," he once added, "There's a many sort of lords. Lord Rendlesham! What is he? Nothing but a poor, carthy worrum; that's not the Lord we have here."

We are asked to announce that to-day (January 11) Mr. W. Sisson will speak on behalf of the Bolton Branch N.S.S. at the Socialist Club, Wood Street, on "Modern Astronomy and Freethought." The meeting commences at 2.15 p.m.

Mr. G. Whitehead visits Birmingham to-day (January 11), and will lecture in the Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street, at 7 o'clock, on "Christianity, Socialism, or Secularism." We hope to hear that the hall was filled; it will be if members take care to advertise the meeting among their friends.

Mr. J. A. Sutherland writes us from Cairo, "The three great Christian groups are, of course, spending much money and effort to keep the flag flying and obtain converts. Both Christianity and Mohammedanism claim many converts from each other, but, of course, it is the stage army again, and neither side admit the existence"

of those who leave the theatre's pretence for the solid facts outside." Mr. Sutherland is desirous of getting into touch with other Freethinkers who may be in Cairo. His address is 18 Sharia el Falak, Bab el Luk, Cairo.

Time's Forelock—An Old Story.

SOME witty fellow once remarked on the many eloquent speeches he had never made! and even I recall some golden opportunities lost, the words I should have said, the way I should have said them, and their shattering significance coming to me among the bedclothes in sleepless visions of the night. Let me recall one instance leading on to another story: It was on the night of my lecture at the "Literary," my subject being "The Night Thoughts of Doctor Young."

At the close of the essay a local editor, a very good but somewhat "superior" friend of mine, no doubt wishing to uphold the dignity, taste, and example of his patronage, remarked pleasantly in his highly polished but thinly superficial way that attention to his "menu" might have saved the essayist such sleepless nights and thoughts. I was much mortified, and the great man's presence being quite unexpected—his visit in fact being a decided compliment to myself—I fear I made but a lame and confused reply. Strange that years after when my friend, to my regret and loss, was resting in the clay—just last night, in fact, evolved from a chapter of accidents and poignant impressions, the answer I should have made came home to me with all the force and clearness born of a noble irritation. "I asserted and I repeat," etc., said Huxley to Wilberforce at the right moment, so the proper sequence revealed itself to me. I might have said: "The nightmares referred to were not mine, but those of an eminent theologian wrestling with his impossible faith. I respect, I am grateful to, my critic for many reasons, but he should be the last to sneer at my religious difficulties, or those of Doctor Young. There is no "menu" so menacing to society, or more nightmare-producing than this. And it is better that the inheritor of religious beliefs should examine them carefully, however painfully and fearfully, with the chance at least of arriving at sanity, clarity, emancipation than that he should acquiesce, like my critic, in a secular and religious teaching that, in the words of Robert Owen, renders the mind "irrational for life."

And now for another story, of an earlier occasion, when I had time by the forelock, but in a greater magnanimity, spared the same gentleman my wrath: I would spare him still: he was helpless then: he is more so now—*de mortuis nil nisi bonum*. Yet, *fiat justitia, ruil cælum*. Many readers will remember Foote's article on Meredith in the *English Review* of March, 1913. My local editor did not like it, and, later, when I passed on to Foote the provincial opinion he penned a note beginning: "The creature to whom you draw our attention——" I refrained from passing on the condign epithet, and instead wrote my friend as follows:—

Sir,—In lieu of an article this week, will you allow me to reply in public to your private letter on the matter of Foote's article on Meredith in *English Review*? Whatever you may think or say, it is a momentous pronouncement, and may become historic. The tide of rationalism is flowing in from far and near and slowly but surely sapping and mining all the foundations of faith. There is no question of the fact, but only the question remains, made the most of by the pious, Is it for good or ill? A long line of illustrious thinkers have assured us it is a movement

towards a better state of society, and the man in the street, less ignorant and credulous than hitherto, is more and more inclined to set the natural philosophers above the theologians. It is time we flung away the pitchfork and prepared the boats. The voice of the heretic is no longer a voice crying in the wilderness, but the defender of the faith is still as an ostrich with his head buried in the sand.

Foote's article, referred to, sounds in my memory like a strain of magnificent music. Your proffered antidote to hero-worship—though it does me honour and is a credit to you—is merely the clever but squeaky fiddler's finale when the organ has ceased to sound. But this is not the end. Hark! it begins again, and even the editorial ear, oft jangled out of tune and harsh by time's opportunist distresses may list the strain. The nobler, fuller music of humanity, not scannel pipes of wretched straw! This need not dismay or belittle you or me, though it magnifies G. W. Foote. It is a matter of natural and intellectual proportion; why should we be puffed up? The molehill does not envy the mountain: the mountain does not despise the molehill—they are of kindred earth—but cannot help overshadowing it. The truth must hurt someone: ultimately the truth will help all. What Foote says of Meredith is true: it has not been denied, only ignored. The truth is, the truth is not welcome; it is bad taste. "It will surprise me," you say, "if Mr. Foote's article meets with much appreciation from any save those who pooh-poooh what Mr. Foote pooh-pooohs." Is this the judgment of Poooh Bah? Well, sir, I do not wish to fill this letter with mere names but just think for a moment of the famous people now living—not to speak of the innumerable dead—who pooh-poooh the very things that Mr. Foote pooh-pooohs. But perhaps Foote is not so "dignified" as some of these: the world suffers much from spurious dignity. It can easily be proved that no man has more true dignity, moral and intellectual dignity, with a very noble pride, than G. W. Foote. You accuse Mr. Foote of bad taste in his commenting on the action taken by Meredith's relatives concerning the disposal of his body, also his reference to the officiating clergyman as a "couple of black birds," a Dean as "principle showman," to the whole ceremony as a "farce," and as coming oddly from "a man of some literary reputation." Well, it was so to him. I have no doubt he spoke advisedly. No man is more careful in his utterances, no man has more practice, no man has more need to be careful, for no man is so cordially detested by those who pooh-poooh, etc. Yet no man is more lovable to, or beloved by, those who really know him. But the whole aspersion is the mere impertinence of lesser spirits. Other times and places, other manners; suppose Foote had been describing the funeral practices of some African tribe, no one would have objected. Missionaries are fond of retailing stories of such benighted heathen practices; but anyone with the most elementary idea of religious origins knows these primitive customs are the sources of our own, ours differing from these only in so far as they are *less religious*. Foote would never have dreamed of laughing at such savage ceremonial: he would have expected it, and left such "bad taste" to the missionary. His scorn was reserved for the so-called civilized people, who ought to, and in most cases do, know better, perpetuating the infantile rites and superstitions of the savage. This, with the travesty and mockery of his living opinions over a great man's grave, was the cause of Foote's indignation, making imperative his writing just as he did. The outstanding fact is that Foote is a great man, he understood the situation and its necessities. His crime in the eyes of the orthodox is that he speaks

the truth. It is bad taste. Oh, the vulgarity of truth! Meredith says in one of his letters: "The parsonary.....are interwound with the whole of the middle class like the poisonous ivy. Meredith said that—more bad taste, but the truth. All great men are guilty of such bad taste—which is really their superior taste—in the eyes of conventional thinkers, those who are impregnated with ideas from without, not reared in the mental structure of their own right minds. We must allow for the "bad taste" of the Comtes, Footes, Spencers, Darwins—and for lesser folk it is surely sometimes nobler to be unfashionable than insincere—the old broken bucket of theology will fail to lave these oceans dry or even to muddy their eternal springs. Foote said recently, referring to a comparison between Comte and Mr. Harrison of the *English Review*, that "To mention Comte and Mr. Harrison in the same breath was like mentioning Mont Blanc with Primrose Hill." Not taste only is doubtful in many critics, but entire sense of proportion. Foote knew and acknowledged his masters in English, men like Meredith and Hardy. How many "great men" have failed to acknowledge Foote! Speaking of Meredith's search for consolation on the death of his wife, which he did not find, Foote says of him: "His philosophy had stood the test. Heated in the fires of grief, it had been cooled again in the fountain of wisdom, and was henceforth as strong as steel." Foote said that. It is both vain and stupid to try and belittle a man who can feel and utter such a sentiment. It won't do. It is merely the boycott. If we must hate this man let us hate him honestly, he can bear it, he can repay, or he can despise it. When Meredith says, in *Modern Love* :—

Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
When hot for certainties in this our life!
In tragic hints here see what evermore
Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,
Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse
To throw that faint thin line upon the shore.

"That wonderful image," says Foote, "is almost too great for the perplexed couple of tragic figures even in that wonderful poem. It fitly applies to the whole range of man's finite life in the midst of the infinite universe. Huxley and Spencer devoted whole pages, whole chapters to Agnosticism and the Unknowable. Meredith, before them, put the entire substantial truth into four of the greatest lines in the poetry of the world."

Is such criticism common insight, common vision? Think it over, read it again, and see if, like Meredith's letters to Foote, it does not "amount to much"—what blind parsimony of grudging concession! You must read it again, even at the risk of admiring G. W. Foote. I know you admire Meredith already, because your conventional world—I don't know why—accepts him. Still you will remember that even the devil is reputed to be a very clever fellow, but perhaps it would put too great a strain upon your charity to give the devil his due; only a Burns could do that, or a Milton."

Again I draw a long breath! After all 'tis but a dialogue of the dead—but with a lesson for the living. I do not wish to "get even" with my late local editor; I seem to owe him so much that accounts are squared. So, also, I feel indebted to our "Old Master," G. W. Foote, and in gratitude recall his greatness. In the above letter I seemed to have had Time by the forelock, but it was never posted: It seems I was not too eager to be "even" with my editor even then!

There was a great saying uttered in the Italian Parliament recently, by the octogenarian Deputy, Signor Gioletti. It was a stern rebuke to Signor

Mussolini regarding the freedom of the Press. Taking time by the forelock, addressing himself to the psychological moment, and drawing himself up to his full height, the aged statesman said—and the words may form a fitting end to this article :—

Public liberty does not depend on the tolerance of Prefects. Italy has had more difficult moments than at present. No Government from the beginning has ever dreamed of suppressing the freedom of the Press, which has increased the fame of our country abroad.

You have a habit of attacking your predecessors. Your example is imitated by many of your followers. But for the love of your country and for the prestige of Italy do not treat the Italian people as if they are unworthy of the freedom they have always enjoyed.

A great silence prevailed over the Chamber for a moment. Signor Mussolini sat nonplussed and did not offer to answer his clever antagonist.

Surely a "noble gesture." ANDREW MILLAR.

A Fireside Chat about The Faith.

II.

(Concluded from page 12.)

WHAT happens if we take their explanation at its face value and examine it critically—in other words, if, following the recent injunction of Canon Barnes, we commence to "think things out"?

We are going to consider God's behaviour from the standpoint of Justice, and for this purpose we shall use that sense of justice which God has graciously given us as a guide to equitable conduct. We can be assured that it will not lead us into a false comparison, for has He not made us in his likeness?

Here are the facts.

God is omnipotent, therefore He was able to create Man in any wise whatsoever.

God is omniscient, therefore He knew exactly what Man was going to be like before He created him. Under these conditions Man was created, and God afterwards decreed that he should believe, on pain of hell, a certain story touching his creation and some other divine matters. But God, knowing what type of mind was designed to find conviction through faith and what type could only find it through reason, deliberately created minds of each type, and then framed the story so as to be inconsistent with reason, which consequently became the direct route to damnation.

Now He sits on high and ever tests your faith. He sees the new-born babe brought into His world of woe. He sees, as in a prophetic vision, the development of the child and the man, the approaching conflict between dogma and reason, the ultimate triumph of sheer intellectual strength and sincerity of belief. Finally, the test over, He awaits in judgment the soul which He knew from the beginning was but born to feed the fires of His hell.

What has the Church to say about this? Of course, there is always the good old shibboleth that "these things are beyond your understanding," but even clergymen are beginning to realize that you cannot fool "all the people all the time," so they have adopted the view that one good explanation deserves another. Here is the other, and the extraordinary thing is that though any man of humble intelligence could satisfy himself of its untruth by one minute's reflection, it meets with almost universal acceptance among orthodox people.

God has given you free will, and so placed you in a position to accept or reject the Faith freely. They only are damned who have had an opportunity of be-

lieving, who have been shown the light and deliberately turned away.

Now there is a lively controversy always in progress over the question of free will, much of it highly technical and unsuitable for our fireside chat; but happily it is beside the point.

If it is an intricate task to prove that we cannot think (in the sense of merely entertaining ideas) and act with perfect freedom, it is a simple matter to prove that we cannot so believe.

Ask any clergyman to believe Santa Claus comes down the chimney at Christmas bringing toys for the little children. Offer him untold rewards, coax him, attempt to persuade him by metaphysical arguments about the uncertainty of everything with a consequent possibility of the truth of anything, then revile and abuse him, threaten him with torture or death and you cannot make him believe, because he cannot make himself.

Contemplate that. Not under the greatest inducements that the mind can invent could that clergyman attain conviction though he wept tears of blood praying that he might believe in his secret heart—that's the rub—in his secret heart.

God, be it remembered, knows the secrets of his innermost soul and so, if Santa Claus were the test, he would be damned in the face of all his protestations of belief and entreaties for salvation. A profession of belief could only delay the evil hour, for if by it he escaped penalties in life, he could not flee the hell-fire of God when once his heretical soul had quitted the flesh.

What then is the effect of God's test of faith on wavering hearts? Only to make cowards and hypocrites in this life and victims in the next.

Where is the justice? What is the solution of our difficulty now? Only a return to the dreary old theme "beyond your understanding." Faith, always ready to oblige, steps in whenever there is a hitch in the reasoning.

There is a gigantic wheel at Blackpool, where for a small charge you may take an eventful round, alighting at the place from which you started. In the world of intellectual gyrations the Theological Wheel awaits you, where for a trifling sum in the collection box you may do the same, again alighting where you embarked—upon the Rock of Faith.

Before concluding our fireside chat let us return for a brief consideration of our original object, and review its relation to the discussion which has followed. We set out to force our ecclesiastical adversary into the open, and we have tried also, in a general way, to show the necessity for doing so. We have tried to show that when we press him into discussing his religion from the standpoint of a definite logical issue, he must necessarily be at a loss, because he has been accustomed to great elasticity in thought and has always enjoyed the privilege of promiscuous equivocation.

We have perhaps indicated that clear and open issues in religion can never be attained while we allow the Church to "bamfozzle" us with an endless series of theological acrostics, which should cease to fascinate the attention when we realize that no solution for them ever existed.

If we have laid much stress on a precise interpretation of *what* a Christian believes, we lay more on *why*, because we contend that what he believes is merely ridiculous, whereas why he believes it entails a type of folly which is a positive menace to the mental evolution of the race.

Let us finally consolidate in our minds what we understand by "faith," so that we make no mistake about the basis on which rests all that the Church teaches and professes to believe.

Faith in the truth or integrity of something is either complete trust in it or not. All will agree that to carry conviction trust must be complete, for the word incomplete applied to trust is equivalent to saying that it is less than convincing.

If faith is not complete trust then it cannot alone carry conviction, and where it is alleged to take part in it we may safely infer the presence of some complementary element. Such can only be reason, which automatically becomes a necessary and integral part of the conviction.

Surely the Church will not postulate such a relation between faith and conviction, where the complete breakdown of the latter would always follow invalidation of the "reasonable grounds." If so, we will accept her definition, or any definition, for that matter, so long as it is unequivocal and she adheres to it.

If, on the other hand, she uncompromisingly insists that it is in the essential nature of faith to stand alone, then she must not attempt by sophistry and equivocation to filch a prop from reason.

All her voluminous theological rationale is meaningless if spoken from the Rock of Faith.

As a matter of fact if ecclesiastical teachers were perfectly honest when they gave the grounds for their belief, they would say to us, at the end of all their profound dissertations, nothing better than this: "Centuries ago certain men wrote for us to read, saying, 'Believe whatsoever we tell you and hold your peace.' We can only echo their words, saying unto you, Do likewise." If you do likewise you have faith, if not you have not faith. "MEDICO."

Retrospect.

EIGHT years ago I had the opportunity of publishing in the *Freethinker* a comparative table of the membership of various religious organizations, and it showed a considerable decrease following the War. In the period 1916 much effort has been put forth to recover the lost ground. The results are somewhat meagre even if we credit the past year's figures published by the churches. Considering the influence that the clergy and ministers can bring upon the people, the charitable funds and non-ecclesiastical charities which are mostly under their control, and the "pleasant Sunday afternoons," musical evenings, men's meetings, mothers' meetings, sick clubs, district visitors, parish magazines, bands of hope, Sunday-schools, boys' brigade, scouts, girl guides, sports clubs, to say nothing of the tea meetings and bazaars, it is somewhat surprising that no more than about five per cent. have been added in seven years. The population of England and Wales has increased three per cent. in the same period, so we may say that the churches claim is a net increase of about two per cent. upon their previous membership. Here are the figures of an increase in round thousands: Church of England 100, Catholic 112, Wesleyan 20, Baptist 23, Primitive Methodist 15, Calvinistic Methodist 3, United Methodist 13.

The Congregationalists have ceased to publish the numbers of their membership, perhaps because of the losses, and the Presbyterians lost 2,800 in the same seven years. The various small persuasions appear to be about the same numbers, but all the churches report reductions in the number of Sunday-school scholars.

The teachings of the clerical bodies are undergoing a change. With the exception of the Salvation Army and some of the minor sects a great difference is to be noted in the beliefs. Hell is not considered to be a mere place of torment, the idea of a personal Devil (I give him a capital for courtesy costs nothing, as the old lady said, and "one never knows") has largely disappeared. Some clergy are frankly ashamed of the crudities of the Old Testament and desire their expurgation. Lots of people are "confirmed" and thus are counted as members of the Church of England, but do not attend or support it.

If they mention religion at all they will confess that all they believe is that "there must be a God for everything must have had a beginning and a cause." This is the very ghost of a belief. However, when such statements are met with the purely logical question: "In that case, what was the beginning and cause of God?" they are nonplussed. Their imagination did not get as far as that. In the industrial districts of England we find Secular concerts, cinemas, and Labour gatherings well patronized on Sunday evenings, and during the summer there are well patronized country excursions, and bands in the parks drawing larger crowds than ever.

In spite of the fulminations of the clerics it is not too much to say that the dreaded Continental Sunday has come to England and seems likely to stay. Looking back to my young days the change in half a century is very marked. The Sunday evening—dark, drunken, pious, and miserable, has given place to freedom, light-some recreation and complete change from the working week. Family visits to outlying places of resort in the summer are now indulged in, instead of slavish attendance at church with family prayers to wind up a dull and unhappy day. These new habits of the people have revolutionized the Sunday to the benefit of the health and happiness of the vast numbers of English workers.

E. ANDERSON.

Correspondence.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I should like to supplement the remarks of Mr. Clayton Dove in your issue of December 21 with reference to the Virgin Birth. As the writer of the above article only deals with the New Testament Apocrypha, and the early Fathers, a few words dealing with pre-Christian beliefs in miraculous births will, I trust, not be out of place.

This story of the miraculous birth of Jesus is obviously based upon materials found in similar tales existent long prior to the advent of Christianity. In fact, the belief in the heavenly origin of gods, kings, and heroes was universally accepted by the ancient world, especially in the East. Buddha in India, Horus in Egypt, Confucius in China, Zoroaster in Persia, and a score or more of minor characters in Rome and Greece were credited with miraculous births.

I notice that Mr. Clayton Dove does not mention that Justin Martyr also admits and asserts that Bacchus, Æsculapius, and others were virgin born. But in admitting this, Justin Martyr only fights Paganism with its own weapons. His attempted justification may even be turned against the Christian doctrine of the miraculous birth of Jesus, for if these virgin born gentlemen were so common in those days, why make such a fuss about Jesus being so born? He was no more wonderful nor divine than they were. And as Christians believe all stories but their own to be myths, may we not fairly conclude that the story of the miraculous birth of Jesus is a myth also? Why should Christians believe this story and reject all similar ones as false?

As Mr. Clayton Dove remarks, only two out of the eight New Testament writers tell us the tale, and no where else in that collection of books is it even hinted at. The story as told by Matthew comes to us in such a dubious form as to be absolutely worthless as evidence for so wonderful a tale. And even Luke, according to his own account, wrote after many others had taken the story in hand.

The source of this particular belief in the miraculous birth of Jesus is easily shown. As a sample of what is possible in this respect let me submit the following interpretation of an ancient Egyptian drawing as given by an eminent Egyptologist, Professor Samuel Sharpe, in his *Egyptian Mythology* (pp. 19, *et seq.*). He tells us that on the walls of the Temple of Luxor there is delineated a series of events which so closely resemble the gospel account of the birth of Jesus that he is con-

strained to style it the Annunciation, Conception, Birth, and Adoration. First there is the god Thoth, who is announcing to the maiden queen that she will "bring forth a son" who will be a ruler in the land. Next we have the god Kneph (who corresponds with the Holy Ghost) and Athor, who both take the queen by the hand, and place in her mouth the symbol of life which was to be the life of the future child. Then appears the midwives in attendance upon her during her labour, rubbing her hands to ease her pains, while close by are the nurses with the child itself with its finger to its mouth. And finally, we have a number of priests or wise men paying adoration to the newly-born child. As the above is immensely older than the Christian account of a virgin birth, it is obvious that the Egyptian artist was not indebted to Christianity for his materials. In fact, the beliefs of the Egyptians in miraculous births date back many thousands of years before Christianity was ever thought of. The myth of Horus conclusively proves the truth of this.

The only conclusion we can arrive at is that the unknown authors of our gospels, attributed to Matthew and Luke, simply reproduce old religious myths in order to enhance the importance of Jesus and to excite the interest of the reader. To-day, it is no longer a question of debating whether Jesus had a miraculous birth or not. It is simply a question, as Mr. Chapman Cohen aptly puts it, of "understanding the frame of mind to which these stories seemed true, and the social medium that gave such a frame of mind a vogue." Once we understand the origin of these beliefs we hold the key to the secret. All these beliefs in supernatural phenomena can now be accounted for by defective and morbid functions of the brain. The belief in a virgin birth, like other religious beliefs, will in time take its proper place as an interesting chapter in psychology.

A final word, and this is addressed to Christians. Your story of the virgin birth of Jesus is a monstrous insult to mankind. An insult, because you insinuate that the manner in which your god ordained us to commence our career in this world is impure and sinful.

LEONARD MASON.

HAMLET.

SIR,—I gather from your issue of December 28 that the play with the above title was Mr. Hands' favourite, but by the end of his article he has thrown it through the window. Wilde had evidently given some thought to this phenomena when he wrote:—

Yet each man kills the thing he loves,

But to cut the cackle and come to the hosses we will venture a diagnosis of your valued contributor's dislike of a play that has thrown up mountains of books, and, like other studies which many of us have had to take up against our will, it has given jobs to needy professors, and brought fame to actors, although it is full of quotations.

"Hamlet" is a play. It is necessary to state this, as, on hearing discussions about his madness, many exponents have hypnotized themselves into thinking that the Dane really lived. Mr. Hands enjoys a burlesque of this play; this is a sign that the reality of the real thing failed to pass the barrier of his common-sense. That he does not like it is a foregone conclusion after carefully following his writings and noting his objectives. What is a Freethinker always dealing with? Spooks, ghosts, goblins, and witches dressed up in words. What time is he always dealing with? The present. Our opponent's attempts to catch the present are something like an effort to grind steam. There is a lot of theoretical tentativeness in "Hamlet." In religion it is never jam to-day; in "Hamlet" the deed is always going to be done to-morrow. And your contributor, who has completely grasped the significance of "now" is out of patience with the long-drawn-out suspense of "Hamlet." The other factors, on the length of the play, etc., may be found in text-books; the time taken may be explained by more leisure being available in the Elizabethan days, but Mr. Hands, in raising "Hamlet's" ghost at Christmas has shown us his bent; let him not despair. It is a pleasant exercise in contemplation, action, and inhibition; Hamlet only needed

the Queen on his side to cut down five acts to two. In popular language she would have said, "Do it now," marry Ophelia, and don't forget your poor old mother. But Shakespeare had his living to get.

WILLIAM REPTON.

DEFINITION OF "MIND."

SIR,—I always welcome well-meant and intelligent criticism. Any heat on my part is not due to malice but to a congenital pugnacity. I accept "Javali's" explanation, and apologise if I mistook his entrance into the arena as evidence of a desire to "queer my pitch" without adequate cause.

My definition of "mind" does not apparently strike either "Javali" or "Keridon" as being intelligible; and yet—although I am far more concerned with the phenomenon itself than the terminology employed in defining it—I assert that my definition, *rightly comprehended*, covers the entire evolution of mental phenomena from incipency to complexity.

The two definitions quoted by "Keridon" can be shown by logical analysis to be identical, viz., Two factors—Reaction. But I must point out here that we should probably differ as to what this reaction *really* is. "Javali's" interpretation of mind defined as "the reaction of a particular form of matter to environmental stimuli" may be different to my interpretation of it. Much turns on this: for the only interpretation different to my own that I can give to it is that it expresses *the action resulting from impressions*, which, obviously, *presupposes the existence of mind*.

"Keridon" says he cannot guess what I mean by "reaction of environment"; neither can anyone else when it is rendered thus. It would be equally unintelligible to speak of the "reaction of a particular form of matter"; for by thus isolating one factor and ascribing a "reaction" to it he is destroying the conditions that render the term reaction intelligible.

I do not apologise for the brevity of my present treatment of this important subject, as I do not wish to occupy too much valuable space with an elaboration until the necessity for it arises. My present object is to show that I adhere to my definition—indeed, I happen to be in excellent company when I employ it—and have not used it without due thought.

The age-old conflict between Realism and Metaphysics is still with us; but fortunately the slow and tortuous process of separating the essential from the non-essential is making inevitably for the elimination of the latter—together with the bad legacies from the past.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

Obituary.

We have with great regret to record the death of another old stalwart of Freethought in the person of Mr. Charles Harwood, who was interred on January 2 at Tottenham Cemetery. Mr. Harwood was aged sixty-five, and for over forty years he had been connected with the movement, in his younger days being a very active worker. His wishes for a Secular funeral were carried out, the ceremony being performed by Mr. G. Whitehead. We tender the deepest sympathy of the whole movement to the relatives and friends of the deceased.—G. W.

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LONDON.

INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (160 Great Portland Street, W.): 7.30, A Special General Meeting, Financial Members only. The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 at "The Castle," Shouldham Street, W.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7, Debate—"Is Republicanism a Vital Issue To-day?" Affirmative, Dr. Arthur Lynch; Negative, Mr. T. F. Palmer.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham Road): 7, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, "Where Are We?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. Harry Snell, "Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar* and the Ethics of Revolution."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit., "Reform and Revolution."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street, Birmingham): 7, Mr. G. Whitehead, "Christianity, Socialism, or Secularism?" Questions and discussion invited.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. F. Hale, "Macbeth." Questions and Discussion. (Silver Collection.) On Saturday, January 17, a Social Evening in the "D" and "F" Rooms, High Street, Glasgow, from 7 till 11. Tickets 2s. 6d. each.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin, "Christianity Sun-Worship" (Lantern Illustrations).

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, 120 Rusholme Road, All Saints, Manchester): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "The Moral Breakdown of Christianity,"; 6.30, "What is the use of a Future Life?"

PERSONAL.

DEATH.—December 27, Joseph Hands, of Malvern, Worcestershire (father of the undersigned), in his fifty-eighth year.

BIRTH.—December 31, to Mr. and Mrs. Vincent J. Hands, 42 Springfield Place, Leeds, a son.—VINCENT J. HANDS.

LADY Collaborator Wanted by Free Lance for series of Secular and Church essays. One with some knowledge of R.C. Religion preferred. Home work. Honorarium paid.—Write W., c/o Freethinker Office, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

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The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are :—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

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