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Views and Opinions.

God and Man.

It is not customary to talk of what God owes to man. In Christian circles it would probably be thought decidedly blasphemous, for the true believer likes to take his burdens kneeling and to measure his piety by the degree of his personal abasement. We do read of some primitive folk who have the habit of standing up to their gods and when they do not act as they are expected to act, promptly flog them or throw them out and get to themselves deities of a more servicable character. And there are cases on record, even in the Christian Church, where the saints who did not protect the people from certain ills have been publicly paraded in chains as a reminder that they must do better in future. But such exhibitions of man's manliness towards his deities are very rare in the history of the Christian Church. The favourite attitude with the true Christian is on his knees with his eyes shut and his mouth open—the attitude of unquestioning obedience and helpless credulity. The Christian Church in the course of its history has often used men, but it does not create them. It takes them ready made when it can, and then emasculates their manliness so far as it may. So we are not surprised that the Christian never talks of God's debt to man. The expression would imply a sense of equality which is inconsistent with Christian tradition and teaching. Man is a worm, a beggar, a speck of dust in the sight of God, etc. The deeper the abasement the greater the piety. The typical Christian of the typically Christian ages was one who grovelled his way to glory, and fitted himself to associate with the angels in heaven by making himself more or less unfit to mix with decent men and women on earth.

* * *

Civilizing God.

So we, an Atheist, ask the question which the theist ought properly to ask. What does God owe to man? Well, in the first place, he owes to man his existence. There may be a doubt as to whether God made man; there is none that man made God. The Gods of the world are shapen in the likeness of man, and reflect his many qualities, good and bad, with the faithfulness of a looking-glass. While man is a savage his god is a savage also. As he becomes civilized his gods also show an improvement. God is never better than the best man, but he often falls below the highest standard set by his creator. The

tribal God, with no concern for what lies beyond the boundaries of the tribe is man in his tribal state writ large. The God of Paul who uses man as the potter does his clay, making one vessel good and the other bad, is man living under an Oriental autocracy. The God of a later date governing according to set laws is man with a partly developed scientific sense, who has politically reached the stage of conceiving constitutional government. And the god of to-day, more ready to save than to damn, more concerned with human life here than on the other side of the grave, thinking more of practice than of belief, is man humanized, conscious of his strength and possibilities. The gods are made by man, they improve as man improves, and a decent God would at least feel thankful to man for having raised him so far above the state and station in which the world first knew him.

* * *

Parent and Child.

God's debt to man is not less if we assume with the orthodox theology that he made man. The debt simply assumes another form. The old theologians assured us that God made man for his own glory. Presumably, even the deity found perfection a bit of a bore with no one to contemplate it or to tell him about it, so man was made that he might tell God all about himself. But whether that assumption be sound or otherwise, man having been created, has a distinct claim for consideration and to fair treatment. Most of us have got beyond the Christian stage which taught that between parents and children the rights were all on the side of the parent. The relationship between parent and child was created by the parent. The child had nothing whatever to do with it, and while the relationship between the two clearly saddles the parent with certain duties, it quite as clearly gives the child certain rights. The rights are here almost wholly on the one side and the duties almost wholly on the other. Is the situation any different between God and man? It is identical. Were it conceivable that all men could be consulted as to whether they would be created or not, it is certain that with a knowledge of what was before them they would decline the adventure. But being thrust into the world unconsulted man has at least this claim against God—that he should be given the same chance as every decent parent would give his child had he the powers which God is assumed to possess.

* * *

Facts versus Theory.

What are the facts? Instead of the child of this heavenly parent finding himself guided, warned, and protected, the "heavenly father" appears to have exhausted every possibility in laying pitfalls—mental, moral, and physical—for his undoing. It is true that ultimately man may learn to avoid these traps, but how many suffer before this knowledge is gained? And even then it is not they who suffer that benefit. Often it is the onlooker, the one who has watched the struggle from afar off, who benefits. Success is

set in a background of failure, happiness in a background of misery, life is framed in death. It is not merely the failures that show how ill God discharges his debt to man, the successes, the way in which they are gained, do this not less thoroughly. It is true the race grows better, but the claim on God is by every individual. An inconsiderate egoism leads us to excuse the process because we reap benefit from it. We are an improvement, we flatter ourselves, on what has gone before. But it is this "before" that convicts God. For each one who made up that "before" had exactly the same claim for consideration as we have. The knowledge that we have would have saved them; the comforts that we have would have made their lives happier. God excuses his lack of care for some because he shows a moderate amount of care for others. It is sometimes said that we cannot perform ill-deeds without reaping the consequences. The plea does not fit the facts. Not the most extravagant bigot can argue that the suffering in the world is all disciplinary, and is all for our education. Man may be punished for a good deed as surely as though he were performing a bad one. While we write news comes of a man who has died an agonising death, after losing one arm, and the fingers of his other hand, in learning the uses of radium for healing purposes. What moral connection is there here between action and consequence? A man who gets wet through may contract tuberculosis just as surely if the cold is caught while on an errand of goodness as on a burglarious expedition. God not only punishes the good with the bad, he rewards the bad with the good. When he is offended with one of his children he knocks the whole family about. He acts like a drunken bully who gives his wife a beating because another man has offended him. That a parent owes a duty to his children, and that he may be properly punished if he fails to discharge it, is part of the legal procedure of the country in which we are living. What would happen if we applied the same rule of common-sense and justice to God and his children?

Moving to Freedom. * * *

Have it one way or another. Either God discharges his obligations to man badly, or the whole thing is an illusion. You can save the character of God at the price of his existence, but you simply cannot have it both ways. Perhaps it is best to treat the whole thing as an illusion. When an old lady was told for the first time about the sufferings of Jesus, she remarked, "Ah, well, it was a long time ago, let's hope it isn't true." Let's hope that this story about a heavenly father isn't true. It is bad enough to fight nature single-handed, and to try to mould it nearer the heart's desire. But to believe that there is at the back of nature some almighty intelligence that designed the whole drama, is enough to make one mad with the horror and the brutality of it all. Perhaps it isn't true. Perhaps the whole antithesis of God and man is a fictional one, and the real antithesis is man as he is and man as he was; man savage and man partly civilized. Man may not really be improving a God, he may be only improving himself, and in the Gods that block his path he is seeing only the uncivilized humanity from which he has sprung. Man is a slave to his past in many ways, but the most disastrous of the slaveries from which he suffers is this bondage to the gods and ghosts of primitive mankind. And from this servitude deliverance can come only by recognition of the nature of the facts before him. As in so many other cases ignorance is the condition of servitude, knowledge the condition of freedom. The greatest enemy that man has to conquer is himself. Once that enemy is vanquished all the rest can comfortably be taken in detail.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"The Old Year and the New."

SUCH is the title of a sermon by Bishop Suffragan of Dover, which appears in the *Church Times* of January 2. The text is peculiar, and reads thus: "As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone" (1 Kings xx., 40). It has to be taken out of its context altogether before it can serve the Bishop's purpose at all. As Dr. Bilbrough says, "the text is taken from a parable spoken by a prophet to a king, to bring home to him his failure with regard to a trust given to him by God. But to-night I want to take the words away from their original application of long ago, and apply them to the life of to-day." In its contextual setting the text implies a soldier in battle, to whom was entrusted the safe-keeping of a prisoner, who had, through sheer carelessness, broken his trust, and gives as his excuse for the failure the fact that he had been engaged in other duties here and there. His fault, as the Bishop puts it, "was not that he slept when he should have watched, nor that he deliberately refused to rise to his responsibility (like the man in the parable who hid his one talent in the ground), but that he was 'busy here and there,' busy with other things which he considered important, but which were not the important things, and that therefore that to which he should have given his special attention was neglected, was lost and gone."

The Bishop's first point is that we should consider "our trust as members of the nation to which we belong." He says:—

We have been entrusted with an Empire, the greatest in all history, containing between a quarter and one third of the inhabitants of the world, with the 300 millions and more in India, with the peoples of many races and tongues in Africa, and in the islands of the Southern Seas and elsewhere. They have been entrusted to us by God in order that we may teach them the way of salvation, that we may reveal to them the Love of God.

To speak plainly, that passage is a piece of pious nonsense, or of wicked lying to the glory of God. The Empire, upon which the sun never sets, has not been entrusted to us by God, but is composed of different countries practically all of which we have violently and unjustly snatched, by force of arms, from their aborigines. Take India, Transvaal, Orange Free State, Bechuanaland, Matebeland, and other African territories, can we honestly say of a single one of them that it was entrusted to the British people by God? To those who verily believe in a God of justice and love such a suggestion would be unforgivable blasphemy. "Have we carried out our trust?" Dr. Bilbrough asks. Those countries did not become a trust from God to those who took possession of them by stormy conquest, but were looked upon as sources of increased strength and glory to the Empire. The Bishop must know something, surely, of the means and manner of its growth and development, and we solemnly ask him how, with that knowledge in his mind, he has the audacity to treat it as a trust from the Christian God? He repeats: "The Empire is entrusted to us by God that we may bring the knowledge of Jesus Christ to the peoples in it; they ask us to give it to them." Do they? We are told that thirteen years ago a wonderful meeting was held in Liverpool, at which a nameless missionary who had spent three years in the Madras district is reported to have stated, "I do not remember a single day in the last three years when I did not receive a request from some native village to send them a teacher, to teach them of Jesus Christ." We seriously doubt the accuracy of that statement. All Indians have religions of their own to which they are passionately

attached and from which they dread the very idea of being divorced. The same thing is true of China and Japan, and particularly of Africa. During a residence of twenty-years in South Africa we came into close touch with not a few converted natives, some of whom were fully ordained clergymen, and learned that in their hearts there rankled a deep sense of resentment against their white rulers because of their treatment of the coloured races. The truth is that the whites are not generally held in high esteem by the aborigines either in India or in Africa, with the result that Christianity is regarded as anything but a good religion. Even the Bishop seems to think that those who are forced to join our Empire are inferior to him and his friends, for this is his last question: "Have we failed in our trust of taking our part in bringing God's blessings to the people whom God has committed to our care in our Empire?"

The Bishop's second point is the importance of vicarious service which God has imposed upon mankind as a holy trust. But the right reverend gentleman forgets that mutual service is a law of life. It is true that anti-social instincts exist in ants and bees; but the law of natural selection brings about the destruction of those in whom such instincts bear sway. The late Prince Kropotkin studied this subject very carefully and published a most valuable book entitled *Mutual Aid*. He says:—

If we take an ants' nest, we not only see that every description of work—rearing of progeny, foraging, building, rearing of aphides, and so on—is performed according to the principles of voluntary mutual aid; we must also recognize with Forel, that the chief, the fundamental feature of the life of many species of ants is the fact and the obligation for every ant of sharing its food, already swallowed and partly digested, with every member of the community which may apply for it. Two ants belonging to two different species, or to two hostile nests, when they occasionally meet together, will avoid each other. But two ants belonging to the same nest or to the same colony of nests will approach each other, exchange a few movements with their antennæ, and "if one of them is hungry or thirsty, and especially if the other has its cropful.....it immediately asks for food." The individual thus requested never refuses; it sets apart its mandibles, takes a proper position, and regurgitates a drop of transparent fluid which is licked up by the hungry ant. Regurgitating food for other ants is so prominent a feature in the life of ants (at liberty), and it so constantly recurs both for feeding hungry comrades and for feeding larvæ, that Forel considers the digestive tube of the ants as consisting of two different parts, one of which, the posterior, is for the special use of the individual, and the other, the anterior part, is chiefly for the use of the community. If an ant which has its crop full has been selfish enough to refuse feeding a comrade, it will be treated as an enemy, or even worse (*Mutual Aid*, pp. 12, 13).

Kropotkin traces the evolution of mutual aid from the lowest stages of life to the very highest, and finds it fully as general as the struggle for life. Now with this great law universally in operation how utterly absurd it is to hold that the service of our fellow-men is a duty laid upon us by God. It is nothing of the kind, and every human being is aware that social service has been a law of life from the beginning, and that God has had absolutely nothing to do with it at any point.

Bishop Billbrough talks fluently and minutely about many things of which he knows positively nothing. For example, he calmly informs us that "we have been made in the image of God to grow after his likeness, to become more like the perfect example of Jesus Christ"; but this is a theory, not a fact, a matter of blind faith, not of demonstrated knowledge.

No God is known to us, not even the mere fact of his existence. Therefore we do not recognize his image, nor possess the least conception of his likeness, after which we are ignorantly invited to grow. How stupidly foolish it, therefore, is to deliberately ask, "Are those who know you nearer to God *because* they know you?" Nearness to God is a thoroughly meaningless phrase when we are assured by no less great a theologian than St. Augustine that the whole of God is universally present at one and the same time. There is much appropriateness in the next question: "Is the world a little the better because you have been alive in it through 1924?" The answer no doubt is that it is a little the better or a little the worse because we were in it throughout 1924, and that the same will be true of us at the end of 1925, unless we resolve to serve one another more firmly and lovingly than ever before, in which case the world will be ever so much improved a year hence.

J. T. LLOYD.

Seeing Shelley Plain.

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

—R. Browning.

The drowning of Shelley was in all probability the heaviest loss that English literature has ever sustained.

—G. W. Foote.

It is a singular circumstance that more nonsense has been written concerning Percy Bysshe Shelley than any other poet, excepting only William Shakespeare, the prince of poets. This is rendered the more striking because Shelley did not outlive his thirtieth year, and during his lifetime was very unpopular. Indeed, the publication of his masterpiece, *Prometheus Unbound*, provoked Theodore Hook's cruel jest that the book was likely to remain unbound. This ill-fortune dogged Shelley's posthumous reputation. The so-called standard biography of the poet is a record of the incompetence of the biographer instead of being a life of the poet. And Professor Dowden was not the only biographer who failed to understand his subject. One publication, entitled *The Real Shelley*, written by Cordy Jefferson, is as venomous as Dowden's book is stupid. Shelley's own cousin, Captain Medwin, in his little work, failed to do justice to the poet through sheer literary incompetence. And so the tale goes on.

The critics were as much at sea as the biographers. Matthew Arnold, who ought to have known better, was very unhappy in his strictures on the poet, and voiced Victorian prejudice instead of sane criticism. He dubbed Shelley "a beautiful and ineffectual angel," and, if there is one solitary thing true concerning Shelley, it is that he was not by any means ineffectual. The mere size and continuous growth of Shelleyan literature proves this beyond all shadow of a doubt.

Generations of critics have written their facile criticisms without troubling to read Shelley's works. They complained, testily, that the poet's verse was all clouds and sunshine, overlooking the stern realism of such a masterpiece as *The Cenci*. They insisted, with uplifted hands, that Shelley had no sense of humour, ignoring the poet's correspondence, his playful parodies, and the rhymed letter to Maria Gisborne, to mention but a few examples. They shouted that Shelley was unquotable, and the poet's verses were in every anthology to confute them. They pretended that Shelley was a poet "with a bee in his bonnet," forgetting that more hard thinking went to the making of Shelley's verse than to that of any poet since Shakespeare.

It is high time that this Niagara of misrepresentation and insult was stopped, or, at least, stemmed. For this reason we welcome the publication of Mr. H. S. Salt's *Percy Bysshe Shelley, Poet and Pioneer* (Allen and Unwin), a book which gives a convincing account of the poet, free from nonsense and lies. Splendid as Shelley's poetry was, he, the man, was greater and rarer. To the world he presented the spectacle of a man born a hundred years too soon; indeed, to many he appeared as strange as a visitor from another planet. We know now that he was a man passionate for truth, and unreservedly obedient to the right as he saw it. He might have lived a life of ease and indulgence. The narrow, aristocratic circle into which he was born would have honoured him for it, but he thought continually of other and nobler matters. His antagonisms towards tyranny, religion, and hidebound custom, seemed to them the merest midsummer madness in the son of a wealthy nobleman possessed of many acres. Society denounced him, for it had long agreed that all reform was only slightly removed from actual criminality. In such cases, indeed:—

Were it not better done as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neera's hair.

Mr. Salt insists on the fact that Shelley was a worker, and a hard one. He shows us a poet, it is true, but a poet who was as practical as any pioneer could desire. Shelley wished to know something of science, and so he learned chemistry. He wished to render aid to the poor, so he attended a London hospital to gain medical knowledge. He wanted Catholic emancipation, and he distributed pamphlets in the streets of Dublin. He hated persecution, and he wrote a defence of a poor Freethinker who had been imprisoned. He was opposed to political tyranny, and so he attacked Peterloo and the politicians.

Mr. Salt, who is himself a famous reformer, has a most congenial task in showing that Shelley was a humanitarian. To help the needy and to relieve the sick seemed to Shelley a simple duty, which he carried out cheerfully. At Marlow he suffered from an acute ophthalmia, contracted whilst visiting afflicted lace-makers in their cottages. Leigh Hunt has told us that Shelley, finding a woman ill on Hampstead Heath, carried her from door to door in the vain hopes of meeting with a person as kind-hearted as himself, until he had to lodge the poor creature with some personal friends. Shelley's purse was always open to his friends, and he paid thousands of pounds in helping Godwin, Peacock, and others of his acquaintance. When his cousin, Captain Medwin, was ill for six weeks, Shelley was by his bedside the whole time, applying leeches, administering medicines, and tending him like a brother. Without a murmur, without ostentation, this young Aristocrat illustrated by his own conduct those principles of Freethought and Democracy, which formed his ethical and political creed. Byron, who held King Charles the Second's cynical view of mankind, acknowledged Shelley to be the best and purest-minded man he had ever met. Captain Trelawney, who knew Shelley very intimately in his later life, admitted that the Atheist poet "loved everything better than himself."

Mr. Salt does not mince matters. He says plainly that Shelley was a Freethinker, a Democrat, and a Humanitarian. Bernard Shaw told the members of the Shelley Society the same thing thirty years ago, and, as he humorously expressed it, "nearly broke up the society on the spot." Mr. Salt is now addressing a vastly larger audience, and every Freethinker will wish him every success in his praiseworthy effort to help people to see Shelley as he really was. For

Shelley in his short life made good the splendid boast of a brother-poet concerning Liberty:—

I am the trumpet at thy lips, thy clarion,
Full of thy cry, sonorous with thy breath;
The graves of souls born worms, and creeds grown carrion,
Thy blast of judgment fills with fires of death.
Thou art the player whose organ-keys are thunders,
And I beneath thy foot the pedal prest;
Thou are the ray whereat the rent night sunders,
And I the cloudlet borne upon thy breast.
I shall burn up before thee, pass and perish,
As haze in sunrise on the red sea-line,
But thou from dawn to sunset shall cherish
The thoughts that led and souls that lighted mine.

MIMNERMUS.

Fatalism.

AMONG the many stereotyped phrases used by the bright young journalists of Fleet Street—and by the elder ones too, for that matter—is the well-worn one, "the fatalism of the Turk." The connection of any philosophy with the Turk is enough to damn it without any further consideration, and therefore save the trouble of any further examination whatever. For how could anything good come from the Turk, who is popularly supposed to keep a harem in his back yard full of wives. Whereas the truth is, that the average Turk is so poverty-stricken that it takes him all his time to support one wife, and even among the wealthy and educated Turks it is now considered bad form to possess more than one wife.

But why especially single out the Turk, as the awful example of Fatalism? Why not instance the fatalism of the ancient Greeks? For it is well-known that they believed that fate ruled over the destinies of both Gods and men. We would go further still, and declare that the popular faith of this country, the religious belief of the masses—in so far as their general indifference permits them any religious belief—is really fatalism.

The present writer can remember perfectly well, when he was a boy, taking many foolish and dangerous risks, in climbing and on the river, which I should not have ventured to do, but for the firm belief that God had already determined the day of my death and nothing I could do would alter it. My position was quite logical. I was told that God knew everything, without any limitation whatever. He not only knew everything that had happened, everything that was now happening, but he knew everything that was going to happen in the future. Therefore it naturally followed that he knew the day of my death; it was settled and unalterable by anything I could do. I have no doubt that many accidents to life and limb are due to this superstition.

It is a belief much more widely spread than most people imagine, and among all ranks of society. In reading the *Reminiscences* of Prof. the Rev. A. H. Sayce, the orientalist, we came across the following confession:—

There was one conviction, however, which was more deeply rooted than any other, and is still as strong as it was in the dawn of my life. I knew, as I knew nothing else, that everything is determined beforehand, and that whatever happens—at all events to oneself—is in accordance with the decree of an inexorable and passionless fate. The conviction has stood me in good stead in my later years; I have never hesitated about carrying out a plan for fear of the personal consequences; when what the Oriental terms "the day" arrives, we must die whatever we may be doing or wherever we may be; before that day arrives we are destined to live.¹

¹ A. H. Sayce. *Reminiscences*, p. 18.

How the professor reconciles this fatalism with his belief as a clergyman of the Church of England—or if he reconciles it at all—he does not say. For, if the day of our death is unalterably registered, what is the use of offering prayers for the recovery of the sick, or for those in danger on the sea, as the Prayer Book prescribes?

The theological answer to this ancient conundrum is, that everything happens by the will of God, but God has endowed man with freewill, by means of which he is capable of choosing between the evil and the good, and that if he prays earnestly to God, God will enable him to choose the good and reject the evil. He will also listen to prayers for the sick, and, in fact, for any good object, and grant them if he thinks fit.

If you enquire how the doctrine of God's knowledge of the appointed day for a man's death, can be reconciled with the alleged fact that the day can be postponed in answer to prayers, you will probably be told that God foresaw that he would grant it. Or more likely you will be told that it is a mystery which our poor finite faculties are unable to comprehend. Whenever a theologian comes up against a contradiction in terms he calls it a mystery.

According to the theological explanation God may have decided that a certain person should die at the age, say, of twenty, then his friends get together during the preliminary illness and pray him off, and they might pray him off several times like this, which is grossly unfair to those who have lost, or quarrelled with all their relatives. However, it is pretty well recognized that it is not much use praying when the person prayed for is over eighty. We have said that the religion of the mass of the people, where they profess any, is just fatalism. Upon this point we have the best of evidence.

When the young manhood of the nation was being swept into our armies in France, like sheep to the abattoir, a committee was formed by the clergy to ascertain the spiritual condition and beliefs of the soldiers in the rank and file. In this case the religious beliefs of the nation, for they were drawn from all grades and conditions of life. The result of the investigation was published in 1919, under the title, *The Army and Religion*, in a stout volume of over 450 pages. Among other revelations we find the following:—

TRENCH FATALISM.

Reference has already been made in the last section to the widely prevalent fatalism of the soldier. The sudden appearance of this among men who had never given any indication in their civilian life of any tendency in that direction, is one of the most interesting and remarkable of all the minor phenomena of the war. We shall take a few extracts illustrating the nature of this belief.

From a Y.M.C.A. worker of experience in France: "Nearly all the men are fatalists—'if there is one for you, you'll get it.' 'If your number is on it,' etc."

From a private in a North Country regiment: "Most of the men are fatalists or materialists in so far as they believe that if it is their fate to get shot they will be shot. They do their duty and put their faith in luck."

Many witnesses might be quoted to a similar effect, some of them saying that practically all the men are fatalists. (p. 160.)

It will be noticed that the writer speaks of the "sudden appearance" of this belief, of which there had been no indication in civilian life. He seems to think that these millions suddenly scrapped all their previous beliefs and adopted a fresh set on the spur of the moment. How did he know what their beliefs were in civilian life? Certainly he would not find the belief in fatalism expressed by the ex-

remely limited number of young men who attended the churches before the war; but these did not represent the nation, or any large part of it; and he was not in a position to know the beliefs of the rest. As a matter of fact, the religion, or rather the philosophy, of the average working man is Luck; some men are born lucky, they buy the winning ticket in the draw, they are dealt good hands at cards, etc. Other men are unlucky, luck is against them, and there is no means of commanding luck; it does not favour the good in preference to the bad. Among sailors it is considered bad luck to have a parson on board. But what luck is in itself no man can explain. You are either lucky or unlucky, but no one can explain why. I have heard men say, "Just my luck," when they have been disappointed. If asked what they meant by that, they would reply, with a look of surprise, "Well, what would you call it?" Of course, I am speaking of the average working man; many working men to-day are well read and above such superstition.

It is clear that the men who joined up, took this superstition of luck with them, and it appeared to their spiritual pastors and masters under the guise of fatalism, and in fact there seems to be no clearly defined line, in this crude philosophy, as to where luck ends and fate begins. Luck seems to preside over games of chance and minor circumstances, and fate over matters of life and death. But where men have no clear and definite conceptions upon the subject they cannot be expected to give a clear and connected account of their beliefs.

W. MANN.

The Schools of a Revolution.

(Continued from page 22.)

III.

AMONG the ten Commissions named by the Commune on March 29 for the administration of the public services, was one for education, which took the place of the Ministry of Education of the *ancien régime*. Its mandate ran as follows:—

The Commission of Education.....will occupy itself with educational reforms. It shall also prepare a motion for gratuitous, compulsory, and exclusively secular education. The number of scholarships at the colleges is to be augmented.²

The Commission comprised eight members: two medical men—Dr. Edmond Goupil and Dr. J. E. Robinet; two teachers—Augustin Verdure and Raoul Urgain; three literary men—Ernest Lefèvre, Jules Vallès, and Albert Leroy; and an *artiste industriel*—Antoine Demay.³ Two of these, Robinet and Leroy, resigned immediately, being out of sympathy with the principles of the Commune. The secession of Robinet was a loss. He was one of the leading disciples of Comte, and saw "eye to eye" with the Commune in educational matters. However, the vacancies were filled by revolutionaries like Jules Miot and J. B. Clément.⁴ Before proceeding further, let us see who these "Commissioners" were, since the

² The communard idea that education should be "gratuitous and compulsory" was considered so Utopian that it became the theme for the cartoonists.

³ This is the list according to the *Journal Officiel* (Mars 30), and most of the histories. Vésinier (*Hist. of the Commune*) and the *Cri du Peuple* add a man named Blanchet, who had been a teacher in a monastic seminary.

⁴ The *J.O.* (Mars 31) says that Miot was omitted from the original Commission through error. Clément's name appears on April 2.

world has been led to look upon the officials and administrators of the Commune as "the rabble, miscreants, scoundrels, and robbers." Dr. Goupil was nominated "Delegate for Education" on April 1. He was to have charge of the administration in the same way as the Minister of old.⁵ Goupil (1838-) was a "distinguished savant," say Larousse, whose ardent Republicanism led him into the revolt of October, 1870, for which he was sentenced to imprisonment. Verdure (1825-73) had been a teacher in the provinces, but, coming to Paris, he became interested in the Co-operative movement, and joined the "International," writing for some time on Rochefort's *Marseillaise*. During the Prussian siege he served as an officer in the National Guard. Urbain (1837-) had been a director of an *école primaire* and was a man of ability in his vocational sphere. Vallès (1833-85) was one of the most famous of the revolutionary *littérateurs*, whose classic *Réfractaires* is such a favourite in the Latin Quarter. Miot (1810-83) was a chemist by profession, and an old rebel of '48, having sat in the Assembly. At the *coup d'état* he was transported. Returning in 1859 he collaborated with Blanqui, and got three years' imprisonment for his writings. Clément (1837-) was a well-known poet and journalist.

Trouble arose with the Commission during the first week owing to the resignation of the delegate Dr. Goupil and a commissioner Lefèvre. Further, the confusion which reigned at the Ministry of Education owing to the desertion of the chief officials, hampered all efforts at reorganization. Many of the schools, both municipal and church, were closed, especially in the "West End," where the teachers (mainly of the church schools) had deserted their posts. The Commission advertised for teaching immediately,⁶ so as to proceed with the reopening of the schools, and it notified the *arrondissements* to apply to the Commission if they were in need.⁷

On April 17 the directors of primary and infant schools, as well as the *Chaptal*, *Turgot*, *Colbert*, and other colleges supported by the State, were instructed to render the Commission without delay, full details of their teaching staff, the state of their establishments, the number of pupils, together with a statement of the "wants of the school and propositions to that effect," together with "observations which they consider useful to both teachers and pupils." These were the solitary efforts which the Commission had made for education in a month, and no educational scheme, as demanded by the Commune and asked for by the *Société de l'Éducation nouvelle*, had yet been prepared, or at least, issued. What was the reason for this apparent inactivity? Unfortunately, the multitudinous duties which crowded upon the Commissioners, made it almost impossible for them to do justice to their mandate. Not only had they to attend the daily sittings of the Commune, but they were also held responsible for the administration of their respective *arrondissements*, besides sitting on several sub-commissions, and being charged as delegates for special purposes. Clearly the system had to be remedied.

IV.

In spite of the palpable inaction of the Commission of Education, Communard Paris was by no means at a standstill in matters of education. The *Société de l'Éducation Nouvelle* held conferences twice a week at the *Ecole Turgot*, to which teachers, professors, and parents were invited for the consideration of "studies and practical resolutions upon the reforms to be made in the programmes, methods, and rules of

education."⁸ The schools, too, although many were closed through teachers deserting their posts,⁹ were showing much activity. This was due to the fact that the *arrondissements*, asserting the old communal right to manage their own affairs, were busy looking after the schools without reference to the Commission, and were issuing educational programmes on their own responsibility.

One of the first to do this was the 17th *arrondissement*, where the famous heroine of the revolution, Louise Michel, was a teacher. Here are a few thoughts from its official circular dated April 8, issued by J. Rama, the *arrondissement* delegate for Education, and one of the delegates to the *Société de l'Éducation nouvelle*.¹ All educational institutions, says Rama, which are supported out of the taxes, should be open to the children of all who pay them, without exception. All advanced nations and the philosophies of all schools have common principles of goodness and morality.....without distinction of race, nationality, creed, social position, sex, or age. These principles are distinct from all worship, religion, or philosophic system, and so, religious and dogmatic instruction should be banished from the schools, and left entirely to the direction of the family. Liberty of conscience to be real, should be assured equally and entirely to all. Liberty of conscience neglected is liberty of conscience violated. The world has too long imposed on the ignorance and innocence of the child to inoculate it, either by example, practice, or compulsion, with superstitions, prejudices, prepossessions, and sentiments, which are demoralizing and perverting, and lead ultimately to the greatest disasters. Therefore, said Rama, the teachers in the public schools of the 17th *arrondissement* will be invited to conform with the following instructions:—

A method of education, exclusively scientific and experimental, will be employed, which always starts from the observation of facts, whatever may be their nature, *physical, moral and intellectual*.

Moral teaching will be both practical and theoretical, free from all religious or dogmatic principles, so that it can be given to all without injury to any. It will be equally kept free from the spirit of domination and of servitude.

Neither prayers, nor dogmas, nor anything which is reserved for the individual conscience, shall be taught or practised.

The Communal schools and infant schools shall not contain in places exposed to the view of the pupils or the public any object of worship or religious image.

The pupil shall not have the use of any book, nor anything at all which might in any way be contrary to the scientific method, and to the sentiments of concord, which are the objects of this circular.

The public teachers who cannot agree to the vigorous application of the principles of freedom of conscience, are requested to be good enough to hand over, before the end of the month, the buildings and appurtenances for education, which they hold under the public services, and to inform us the date which they desire to discontinue their engagement, in order to avoid any interruption in the studies, which would be prejudicial to the children.

Outside the Communal schools and infant schools, any institution may exist as a private or free establishment under the surveillance and responsibility of parents, but under the conditions of the common right.

HENRY GEORGE FARMER.

(To be Continued.)

⁵ J.O., April 6.

⁶ J.O., April 27.

¹ J.O., April 12.

⁵ J.O., April 2.

⁶ J.O., April 6.

⁷ J.O., April 15.

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

Acid Drops.

We wonder what those bishops who have been exploiting the fakir, Hickson, will think of a paragraph in the *Daily News* of the other day. It appears that miracles of healing have been worked in Russia round the tomb of Lenin. We are not surprised, and are quite prepared to believe that given the right kind of complaint and a sufficiently strong faith, contact with the tomb of Lenin the Atheist will be as effective as the power of Jesus. As we have said before, it does not matter what one has faith in—bread pills, Jesus, Lenin, magnetic belts, or stale potatoes carried in the trousers pocket. The great thing is faith—and the right kind of complaint.

The *Daily News* is quite shocked at the state of religion in the United States, where a number of preachers are denouncing evolution and all its works, and insisting on taking the Bible as a literal guide in faith and morals. We are quite as disgusted with these people as is the *Daily News*, but all the same it remains true that it is these people who are genuine Christians, and their opponents only make-believes. There is nothing more ignorant in the attitude of the Fundamentalists than is to be found in the Bible and the creeds, nor is their theology substantially different from that of evangelists like Gipsy Smith. And we wonder why the *Daily News* does not denounce men of his stamp? Is it because if it did so it would be running up against religious interests here? The United States is a long way off, and the circulation does not depend upon America. Perhaps that is it. And we would call the attention of our pious contemporary to the fact that the ignorance of these men is, after all, based upon historic Christianity, nor is their ignorance more profound than that of the Jesus Christ of the New Testament.

Miss Jane Harrison, the well-known lecturer and writer on Greek art, etc., has been writing her reminiscences in the *Nation*. In the concluding instalment she records that travelling through Greece with a male companion she stayed overnight at a monastery. In the morning there was a terrible row. It appeared that her companion, unable to sleep owing to the unlicensed sharers in his bed, had arisen early and had gone to the monastery pump for a wash. But his wash had partaken of the nature of a shower bath, and that a man should wash the whole of his body scandalized the monks. Pacification was reached by Miss Harrison explaining that her companion was very young, and very ignorant, and in his own country genuine Christian habits were unknown. Would the chief priest explain to the young man how far he might wash himself without danger to his soul? This the priest obligingly did by pointing to a spot about an inch above his wrist, and the English "lord" promised by the heads of his fathers that he would never again exceed these limits. And this was in a country which before it was Christian prided itself upon the grace and beauty of the human form.

There is one other passage in Miss Harrison's article which we may give almost without comment. Speaking of death, she says:—

At the close of one's reminiscences it is fitting that one should say something as to how life looks at the approach of Death. As to Death, when I was young a personal immortality seemed to me axiomatic. The mere thought of Death made me furious. I was so intensely alive I felt I could defy anyone, anything—God, or demon, or Fate herself—to put me out. All that is changed now. If I think of Death at all it is merely as a negation of life, a close, a last and necessary chord. What I dread is disease, that is, bad, disordered life, not Death. And disease, so far, I have escaped. I have no hope whatever of personal immortality, no desire even for a future life. My consciousness began in very humble fashion with my body; with my body, very quietly, I hope, it will end.

One may put this at the side of the cowardly Christian snivel about the fear of death and the need for consolation at its approach.

On his new offices at Dearborn, U.S.A., Mr. Henry Ford will have engraved the names of those whom he considers the world's greatest men and women. They are:—

Luther Burbank (seedless orange), Edison, John Burroughs (naturalist), Darwin, Da Vinci, Fulton (steamship), Bell (telephone), Wright (aeroplane), Diesel (gas engine), Curie (radium), Newton, Pasteur, Ampere (electricity), Franklin (Benjamin), Whitney (soil chemistry), Marconi, Kirby (entomologist), Faraday, Otto (gas engine), Dunlop (rubber tyres), Galileo.

One would naturally expect a manufacturer to produce some such list as this when asked to name the world's greatest men. They are practically all men of scientific distinction who have added to our control of natural forces, and made possible that civilization which permits Henry Ford to produce and market huge quantities of standardized cars. For the great poets, writers, painters, and sculptors of the world Mr. Ford has no use; for those men and women who have fought and suffered for freedom, he seems to entertain no high opinion; in fact his choice indicates a curiously atrophied intellectual and emotional development.

The *Daily Herald*, with one eye on its religious readers possibly, remonstrates with Ford on his narrow choice of great men. Having made some common-sense remarks about the limited value of such achievements as the manufacturer admires, it adds:—

Without the teaching of Christ and Socrates and St. Francis of Assisi, without the creations of Shakespeare, without picture-galleries, without music, we could not exist as men and women. We should be animals..... Man does not live by bread alone—even less by mechanical transport and electrical devices—but "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"; which means: by all that is noble and beautiful, that lifts us instead of pinning us to earth, that stirs our imagination and directs it towards things lovely and of good report.

This comment is particularly vicious because of the truth which it contains. Admittedly man does not live by bread alone: no one would deny that a life in which the purely physical requirements were amply satisfied, whilst the intellectual and emotional faculties were starved, would be scarce worth the living. But that most certainly is not the same as saying that man lives "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." When the theologian uses that phrase he does not intend it to connote "all that is noble and beautiful" in mankind, and the editor of the *Herald* knows that perfectly well. The theologian means by it a dark and gloomy superstition, with its roots in the past; a system of thought inherited from ignorant and often half crazy men, which has always opposed human progress, and always will do so. It is fashionable just now to seek to identify the God (or Gods, perhaps), of the Bible, with their very anthropomorphic traits, with the "consciousness of the human race," or "the common mind of humanity," or some such other rather metaphysical abstraction, which on analysis usually turns out to be nothing more than what ordinary people mean by the word humanity. H. G. Wells seems to have been driving at that in his *God the Invisible King*, and other publicists have coquetted with the idea. This symbolizing of humanity may be safe enough so far as highly educated, if rather hysterical people are concerned; but for the editor of a popular newspaper, which aims at taking part in the education of a social democracy, to use such misleading forms of thought, is to invite disaster to his movement. God, and the word of God, and all the other mediæval theological words and phrases mean what they say to the average man and woman. They have not been refined for them, to mean something quite natural and human. And in dealing with his public we suggest that the editor of the *Herald* would be wise to avoid misleading phrases, and should either cut out religion altogether from his leading articles or else frankly avow himself a Christian—i.e. one who believes in the mass of legends that we call the Bible.

The Bishop of Gloucester is seriously perturbed. Indeed, he is so seriously perturbed that he has been airing his views in the columns of the *Times*. Chiefly it is our declining birth-rate which bothers our Reverend Father in God. Unless, says the bishop gloomily, it can be "corrected," it "must ultimately mean the failure of Empire." Finally, if the fit stock fails "the Empire will fail, and we shall have to give way to others who are willing to increase and multiply, and to work with their hands, replenishing the earth." The dear bishop must be dreadfully depressed, judging by his ambiguous style of writing. However, Jesus Christ was a bachelor, as were most of the saints. And the bishop? Oh, he has a salary of £4,300 a year, and no children, we understand!

We should be very sorry indeed to see anything happen to St. Paul's Cathedral. It is a magnificent building, in our opinion, superior to St. Peter's, at Rome, and one day it may well be put to a more reasonable use than it is at present. But it is noticeable the trouble has arisen because the contractor who filled the inside of the piers used rubbish instead of good stuff, and this has now crumbled to powder. That and the drainage caused by various excavations are said to be responsible for the trouble. But what was the Lord thinking of? The cathedral was built for his glory, and he should have afflicted the contractor with blindness, or paralysis, or have shown his displeasure in some way. Instead of that he kept still and the contractor doubtless died the death of a good Christian. Gods nowadays are poor things. Anyone can do as he likes and they take no notice whatever.

A correspondent in the *Times Literary Supplement* is asking for aid in collecting poems and references on the Devil, Hell, Limbo, Purgatory, Punishment, Penance, Sacrifice, Indulgence, the Avenging God, Conscience, Inner Strife, Feeling of Weakness. The dustbin of theology is a wonderful receptacle, and although the collector's requirements are a trifle mixed, the orgy of religion in the past should yield him enough material to fill the British Museum.

Mr. H. L. Wellington, formerly the official lecturer at the National Gallery, addressing the Educational Associations at University College, London, said: "There are so many people who cannot stand pictures of saints and ugly old people with beards." This is welcome news at a time when the pillars of St. Paul's need propping up.

"What will people 150 years hence think of people of 1925?" asked the Rev. H. Underhill, preaching at Christchurch, Oxford, recently. "They will wonder at our blindness," he continued, "at our national hardness towards one another, at our intolerance, and at our indifference to suffering." And, most of all, we suggest, they will wonder at the audacity of professional theologians like Mr. Underhill daring to continue their advocacy of Christianity after making such a damning indictment of its utter failure after nearly two thousand years to get rid of the unwelcome human traits he denounces.

Some interesting pieces of scientific apparatus were recently demonstrated at Leeds University at the twenty-fifth annual meeting of the Science Masters' Association. They included thermionic valves and the "Aladdin Lamp" of the wireless receiver. It is used in the ultra-micro-meter to help to measure changes in length to one-twenty-millionth part of an inch. One turns from such achievements of modern science to the old theology that is still taught weekly by thousands of priests all over the country with almost a sense of bewilderment or unreality that the same civilization can permit the existence on the one hand of precise thinking, such as makes science possible, and the acceptance of absurd beliefs that affront even the common-sense, far less the knowledge of the scientific investigator.

According to Merlin Moore Taylor, who accompanied a Government patrol on an expedition into Papua, and describes his experiences in a volume just published by Geoffrey Bles (*Where the Cannibals Roam*, 16s.), the most powerful man among the natives of those parts before the arrival of the white man was the sorcerer, "the dealer in magic and spells." Even to-day his power is not seriously curtailed. His power, we are told, is due to the superstitions and ignorance of his clients, which he exploits with the help of a considerable knowledge, often hereditary, of savage psychology, of herbs and drugs, and especially of the powers of hypnotism and suggestion. Charms and incantations, together with a judicious use of poisons and the proper atmosphere of mystery, are powerful aids. Altogether it appears that our own medicine men could not teach their Papuan colleagues much.

If people, with good motives, and writers would transpose their meaning into terms of comprehension, the benefit would be shared with readers. The thesis of a book entitled *The Faith of a Teacher*, by Fanny Street, is, we are told, "the individual is not to be educated for the requirements of the existing industrial system, nor for the citizenship of the existing State, but for the City of God." Her two negatives we can understand, they are quite clear. But for the positive third, we are in the dreary region of a theological vocabulary. The lady has taken refuge in words, and we suggest that if she will translate it into understandable language, she probably means nothing more or less than that her faith is an appeal to the best instincts of the inheritors of humanity's legacy.

Anyone interested in jig-saw puzzles must take the late Anatole France's view of History from Penguin Island, together with Mr. W. J. Pennel's conclusion, that the chief events in the annals of mankind cannot have originated with man, or matter or chance, but must be the work of God. We believe it is possible to get a quart into a pint pot, provided that the latter is filled with sawdust first, and this appears to be what is required to believe the findings of those with their noses in the past—which leaves an uninteresting part of the body in the present.

Another lady writer, differing from Fanny Street, offers a suggestion which is equally ineffective. "If we are to find a lasting solution of the social problems with which we are faced to-day, we must, I believe, seek for it in a more scientific interpretation of the Christian doctrine of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ." We do not wish to discourage this lady in the lists as social problems are real, but we suggest in all humility that a banishing of this jargon would at least make for clarity. In other words, if she will take off her blue spectacles, she will see the problems as others see them who do not expect the housing question to be settled by an interpretation of a ritual, remote, unfriendly, melancholy, and slow, having nothing to do with the beat of a human heart.

"J. X. N.," of the *Daily Herald*, has much to learn about Atheism and its abuse by backwoodsmen, obscurantists, and all who put their thinking out to priests. He writes that, "it came as a surprise to learn that 'Atheism' is still worth using as a term of abuse at election times." No one asks for a definition of Atheism from those who cannot agree about the definition of their God, and to use the term in an abusive sense fits in splendidly with press propaganda with daily fare not rising to the level of a boy scout's intelligence.

Battledore and Shuttlecock is nothing in comparison with the game that can be played with words. We notice that the French author, Pierre Loti, is described as a Protestant Atheist. Dean Inge may go down to posterity as a Christian Agnostic who had a foot in both camps but his head in neither.

The National Secular Society.

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

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

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

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

To Correspondents.

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

F. H. DELL.—We note the case reported in the *Daily Herald* of the soldier who is being punished for not attending a religious service. The only way to end this ridiculous state of affairs is for the authorities to get into the way of treating soldiers like grown-up men, instead of as irresponsible children. When they do that they will leave it entirely to the men themselves to go to Church or to stay away. But we imagine the *Daily Herald* would not care to go in for the abolition of religious services in the army. It might expose it to the charge of heresy.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—R. A. Thompson, 5s.; F. W. Theobalds, 5s.; "The Holy Trinity (Buenos Aires), £3; Mrs. F. A. White, 5s.

MRS. F. A. WHITE.—We have a very lively appreciation of your late husband's appreciation of the value of the Freethought Cause, and welcome your own loyalty to it. It is a cause that deserves—and usually gets—the best that is in one.

MR. J. STANTON.—Thanks. The matter will keep till next week. If parsons had more critical audiences they would be less careless in what they say.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (January 18) Mr. Cohen visits Glasgow. He will lecture in the City Hall (Saloon) in the morning at 11.30 and in the evening at 6.30. As the meetings there are invariably good ones, we see no reason why this time they should not be quite up to expectations. Friends can help by getting enquiring believers to attend. They are the ones we specially like to see.

Manchester was more fortunate than London on Sunday last in the matter of weather, and Mr. Cohen had two capital audiences as a consequence. The hall was comfortably filled in the afternoon, and quite full in the evening, some standing. The lectures were followed with the keenest appreciation, and there were a number of questions asked. Mr. Minks occupied the chair in the afternoon and Mr. Black in the evening. Both made strong appeals for greater support from Manchester Freethinkers, and we hope they will get it. The Branch is holding a children's party on the last Saturday in this month, to be followed by a social and dance in the evening. Local friends will please note.

Mr. George Whitehead will lecture in the Palace Theatre, Boulevard, Weston-super-Mare, to-day (January 18), at 3 and 7. This is Mr. Whitehead's first visit to Weston, and we hope he will have the audiences he deserves. In the afternoon he will speak on "Was Jesus Christ a Socialist?" and in the evening on "The Belief in a Future Life." Mr. Whitehead lectured at Birmingham on Sunday last, and we are pleased to learn that his meetings were good ones. There was an animated discussion, and the members were delighted with so good a "send off" for the work of the session.

We are glad to see a very well written article in the *Ayrshire Post* from Mr. W. Allan on "Has the Christian Religion Made our Civilization?" Mr. Allan has little difficulty in showing that it has not, and his article will make some Christians sit up and take notice. To find an article of this kind in a Scottish newspaper is an indication of the rapid spread of Freethinking ideas among the general public.

We are asked to announce that there will be a meeting of members of the Hull Branch N.S.S., to which sympathisers are invited, in the Albany Room, Metropole, to-day (January 18) at 7.30. It is hoped there will be a good attendance as important matters are to be discussed.

We note from a lengthy three-column report of the proceedings in the *Grimby News* that our old and valued friends, Mr. and Mrs. Guy I. Alward, have just celebrated their golden wedding, and our congratulations, if late, will not be the least sincere of those they have received. The Mayor of the town paid Mr. Alward some very high compliments, in a lengthy speech, and we are sure the compliments were deserved. Mr. Alward was a staunch supporter of Bradlaugh during the days when the fighting was of a more strenuous kind than it is at present, and has never lost his interest in the cause. Our congratulations to an admirable couple.

Her witchcraft consisted chiefly in common-sense—a faculty so rare that it invariably dazzles the majority, who have it not.—Eden Phillpotts, "The Treasures of Typhon."

The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it.—John Stuart Mill.

Ethics.

A DISCOURSE FOR NURSES AND CHILDREN.

FROM my earliest years I have taken a deep interest in the important subject of ethics. Indeed, as soon as I was born, and was lying on the nurse's lap while she did the needful, I somewhat astonished that good lady by asking her if she knew aught of this great subject. After she had recovered from the shock which such an early exhibition of the faculty of speech had given her, she asked if ethics was the name of a new food or an improved stove polish. (And this, mark you, after all the millions that have been mulcted out of the pocket of the British tax-payer in the interests of so-called education.) I hastened to assure her that ethics had nothing to do with such material things as pots and pans, but had reference only to certain deductions we made as to the nature of voluntary human actions, and according as these were found to tend to human happiness and well-being, or the reverse, so we classified them as good or bad actions; and then endeavoured by precept and example to encourage the practice of the good acts, and suppress the bad. This is the sum and substance of the problem of ethics, over which the philosophers have bamboozled themselves and their disciples since the days of Aristotle. I ought to explain, nurse, that in a previous birth, after wasting years in the study of their barren nonsense, and coming to the conclusion that all their so-called systems lacked the essentials of a sound and coherent philosophy, I determined that when I was re-born I would put all these philosophers through their drills. And just now, while I was waiting for you, nurse, and you were waiting for me, it came to me like an inspiration that my mission in the present life was to clear up the mess these fellows had made, and to treat the subject in such simple terms that the meanest intellect could understand it.

You will observe that putting them "through their drills," is what is called a military metaphor; and if you have read your New Testament you will have noticed how often the Apostle Paul makes use of this kind of illustration. Perhaps you may ask what the Apostle Paul has to do with the subject of ethics. Well, seeing that our friend, Arthur Lynch, in his *Ethics*, gives him two whole pages to himself, and that he is there found in company with Aristotle and Plato, and Kant and Hegel, and Jeremy Bentham and Hobbes, and a host of others, one must suppose that he is "one of us," seeing that a man is usually known by the company he keeps. (What a lively place the philosophers' quarter in heaven must have been since all these good fellows met!) The Apostle Paul must feel himself highly honoured by such distinctive recognition, especially when his great master, reputed to be the greatest ethical teacher of all ages, is passed by as of no account, and never mentioned.

Perhaps I had better, in the first place, nurse, give you an example of what is termed an ethical maxim; which is a precept embodying some general principle intended to serve as a guide to our social conduct. We will take the one that has been acclaimed as the highest ideal, and which we have been assured if put into practice would cure all the world's industrial and social ills, and establish the millennium right here and now. It is usually expressed in this form: If a neighbour comes to borrow your print-gown, let her have your flannel petticoat as well; and if she asks for the loan of your musquash coat, give her your whole wardrobe. This maxim has the benefit of having a religious sanction; and if anything has a religious sanction you may be sure it will attain to

a hoary old age before its decease. But, like a lot of other accepted maxims, its practical value is not all that the philosophers' fancy has painted it. Because, if a lady began to give away her flannel petticoats indiscriminately, she would soon have nothing left but the primitive kind of dress the Zulu ladies are said to wear; and in a climate like ours where the cold and rain are apt to put out the fire of life, the chances are that her husband would soon be a widower. And then the other lady, when she found she could get her flannel petticoats for the asking, without labour or payment on her part, would soon develop into a professional beggar, and you would have turned a worthy citizen into a lazy vagabond. So you see, nurse, how careful one ought to be in accepting these universal maxims as sound philosophy. Sympathy is no doubt the finest flower that grows in the whole human garden, but as a guide to ethics it is insufficient. Mere sentiment may lead us to commit acts that in their tendency may prove to be immoral.

Ethics, then, has to do with human conduct. The philosopher's stone and the elixir of life have nothing to do with ethics. There are doubtless many interesting problems in life, but they are not all of an ethical nature. In my previous birth, I remember, one of the propositions that had exercised the ingenuity of the philosophers for ages was this: Why does a hen walk across the road on a rainy day? It is interesting to note that one of these philosophers wrote a work of seven hundred and fifty pages on the question, and that by some strange oversight he omitted all mention of the three principal factors of the problem, viz., the hen, the other side of the road, and the rainy day. Another, after a searching and comprehensive analysis of all the possible, and impossible, motives that could have induced the hen to migrate from one side of the road to the other, gives it as his profound conviction that the hen crossed the road to give a cock-bird at the other side the glad-eye. Another suggests that it probably went over in search of a lost chick. These solutions might be probable, only there is no evidence to show that there was any cock bird in sight, or that the hen ever had any chicks. Of course, the only party who could have solved this interesting problem would have been the hen herself, but as she has long since been gathered to her fathers, her motives must remain among the buried things of time. So you see if these philosophers cannot settle a simple question as to why a hen crossed the road, it is little wonder that they are all at sea when they come to deal with a subject like ethics.

The latest philosopher to butt in on this subject, to make confusion worse confounded, is one, Andrew Millar, who has probably been fed upon the mystifications of Sir William Hamilton or Dugald Stewart. He went for a lonely walk, he tells us in the *Freethinker* of December 28, in rustic lanes between wild hedgerows, leafless or brown with remnants of summer's finery, brown bracken, green fern in nooks and grottoes, pallid tangles of long grasses by the noisy burn tumbling and gushing among mossy boulders, etc." (O, these wordy philosophers!) And in his walk he came across two village rustics to whom he expounded the light—that failed. After instructing them in such subjects as politics, philosophy, and religion, he assured them that "selfishness was the foundation of morality." Now, see nurse, not only is selfishness *not* the foundation of morality, but it is the very purpose and aim of ethics to eliminate selfishness from human action. If, as good moralists, we seek to uproot selfishness, and selfishness be the basis of morality, we thus seek to destroy morality itself. If

our friend had said that selfishness was the foundation of immorality, one could have read some kind of sense into the statement. The two village ancients in affirming that "selfishness was the cause of the world's social ills," undoubtedly showed themselves to be wiser in their generation than the apostle of wisdom and light. Their view, certainly, was supported by the oft-quoted saying of Burns:—

Man's inhumanity to man (caused in the main by selfishness) makes countless thousands mourn.

Another thing, nurse, to talk about a "foundation" of morality is itself misleading. Arthur Lynch devotes a whole chapter to this heading; and the way philosophers talk about the "basis of ethics" you would think they had the naval base of Singapore in their mind's eye. They are really using a metaphorical term, but to what it can refer in the domain of ethics or the world of thought I have never been able to discover. But more of this later.

You will note that "morals" and "ethics" are often used interchangeably; but while ethics is applied to human conduct generally, we limit the word morals to actions we consider as being good actions.

But, after all, I think it will be found that theories of ethics have very little influence in the matter of human conduct generally. JOSEPH BRYCE.

Bolingbroke.

MORE than a century has elapsed since Burke put his famous question, "Who now reads Bolingbroke?" The query was rather premature, since there is ample evidence that a good many people were even then reading this much-abused author, although it is only to be expected that the majority of readers would be in no hurry to avow their partiality for such a notorious heretic. Still, if Burke were alive to-day and put the same question, I might answer: "I do; and find no little entertainment and instruction in the reading." And I am evidently not singular in this respect. Second-hand booksellers—or, at least, such as know the value of books—continue to ask a fair, although not a fancy, price for Bolingbroke's writings; and that is certainly one indication of whether an author is read or not. Dr. Churton Collins, a critic of no mean value, has written in high praise of him, and quite recently there has appeared a fresh edition of some of the more valuable of his writings, upon which fact we may safely ground the assumption that publishers would not produce unless there was at least a probable market.

My own re-reading of Bolingbroke is due to more or less of an accident. It was while hunting round some second-hand bookstalls—an occupation which your true book-hunter pursues with a supreme disregard for dignity and dust—that I came across "*The Works of the late Right Honourable Henry St. John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke*." In five volumes complete. Published by David Mallet, Esquire. London; 1754." It is sincerely to be hoped that the price asked by the owner of the stall was no real indication of the value of the writings of the "late Right Honourable," etc. Four shilling for five calf-bound volumes, in excellent condition, each one measuring about twelve inches by nine, and weighing a good three pounds, was surely not an extravagant sum to ask. At any rate, the exchange was soon effected; and, as I lugged home my fifteen or sixteen pounds of literature, I realized that Bolingbroke was certainly a *weighty* author; and, averaging the price of the books per pound, I was irresistibly reminded of the old bookseller in *Liberty Hall* who objected to take fourpence for *The Last of*

the Mohicans, on the ground that it wasn't a "'apenny a Mohican."

Probably it was the size of the volumes that operated as a determining factor in fixing the price. Folios, while objects of desire at one time of life, may easily become anathema at another period. A single man may lug home huge books with pride and impunity; a married man finds many reasons—some spatial, some financial—in the way of the gratification of such a taste. One cannot smuggle a folio into the house with the intention of dropping it undetected on the hall-stand, until such time as it may be placed on the shelves, and lost amid the multitude of its fellows. Books 15 by 10 or 20 by 12 refuse to be coerced into a handbag, or ignominiously hidden under one's coat. They enter in full view of her who keeps guard over the household gods and hath a watchful eye on the accumulation of "lumber." So it was in all likelihood the size of the volumes that had something to do with fixing the price of Johnson's "hungry Scotchman's" edition of Bolingbroke's writings.

There can be no question that Bolingbroke has been hardly treated by the generations that have followed his decease. He has been denounced as a libertine without any proof that he was worse in character than the people around him, while in many respects it might be shown that he was distinctly their superior. The story of his having run naked through Hyde Park as the outcome of a drunken wager rests upon no better evidence than a statement of Goldsmith, who avows that he "heard" it from someone else. The latter portion of his life certainly showed him capable of strong domestic virtues. At any rate, the first half of the eighteenth century was not remarkable for the spotless character of its prominent men, whether they were divines or politicians, and there is a sad want of equipoise in writers who drag a man out of his natural environment in order to test him by the standards of a later generation. It is fairly just in the case of Bolingbroke to vary the defence imputed to Charles II., and say that in general his faults were those of his age, his virtues the outcome of his innate ability.

But posterity—unless it be that portion which delights in scandal—is far more deeply interested in a man's work than in his personality, and rightly so. The one is permanent, the other evanescent. A man's life is never, perhaps, without its interest, but it is the value of a man's thoughts and deeds which marks him as helpful or injurious to the race. That Bolingbroke bit pretty deeply into his times is shown both by his numerous admirers and the virulence of his equally numerous enemies. His influence was great in both political and literary circles. In the former department, although Mr. Leslie Stephen's half sneer that he was neither a Comte nor a Montesquieu may have some justification, yet his knowledge of men and things was correct enough to make much of his writing on European affairs rich in common sense and shrewd observations. Mr. Stephen apparently thinks lightly of Bolingbroke's theory that the only method of maintaining a European peace is by balancing the forces of the various European powers. But, as a matter of fact, it is, at the present day, the only method by which peace is maintained, and even within a nation the balancing of different class interests does secure a far more workable policy, and bestows a greater measure of justice upon all than any quantity of abstract theorising. And, in the larger field of historical philosophy, no less an authority than Buckle declared that, before Gibbon, he was "the only Englishman who took a comprehensive view of history."

His literary merits deserve, and have obtained, great praise. Pope, it is well known, idolized him. Pope's principal work, the *Essay on Man*, is only Bolingbroke

versified. Critics like Swift, Chesterfield, and Pitt showered compliments upon him. Voltaire was another of his admirers, and said that Bolingbroke could give him lessons in French. Some modern writers have complained of his treatment of his opponents. But his was an age when the amenities of literary warfare were not too nicely studied, and there are few of Bolingbroke's enemies who could deal a stroke with as much severity and civility. One suspects that his phrases were objected to not because they offended the taste of the time, but because they went home. His description of the House of Commons as a place where people "grow, like hounds, fond of the man who shows them game, and by whose halloo they are used to be encouraged," is worthy of Swift, and shows no little ability for using the lash.

His real offence—or, at least, his lasting offence—consisted in the publication of his writings on philosophy and theology. These were bequeathed in MS., with a substantial legacy, to his friend Mallet. A large bribe was offered to Mallet to avoid publication, but was refused. It is this edition—1754—which lies before me as I write. These writings were all penned during his exile in France, and, although rather diffuse, are marked by much shrewdness and, of course, grace. They went the usual way of heretical books in that day—that is, declared by a grand jury as subversive of religion, morality, and government, and burned by the common hangman. Walpole, his greatest political enemy, and glad as he was to see Bolingbroke degraded, was yet quick enough to point out that those "to whom he was a hero, a patriot, a philosopher, and the greatest genius of his age; the moment his 'Craftsman' against Moses and St. Paul are published, have discovered that he was the worst man and the worst writer in the world."

An avowed Deist, he attacks with equal and impartial energy metaphysicians and theologians. They were all so many "pneumatical madmen," cking out a scanty knowledge of facts with an extravagance of theory. "What these wild or dreaming philosophers could not do by any hypothesis about body, they attempted to do by the hypothesis of a soul," and in thus acting they are "just as mad as the architect would be who should undertake to build the roof of the house on the ground and to lay the foundations in the air." They are simply "building a world with categories."

Most of the "inspired" writers fare badly at his hands, St. Paul worst of all. He is "a loose paraphraser, a cabalistical commentator"; he "rather doubles mystery than simplifies it, and adds everywhere a mystery of words to a mystery of things." His whole teaching formed "an intricate and dark system, with here and there an intelligible phrase that casts no light on the rest, but is rather lost in the gloom of the whole. By faith I may believe, but by faith I cannot understand. A proposition, the terms of which are unintelligible, is an absolute mystery; to say that we are bound to believe mysteries in this sense is itself nonsense; to say that we do believe them is a lie." And the final result of all such teachings is that "The Church has been in every age an hydra, such a monster as the poets feign with many heads. All these heads hissed and barked and tore one another with fury. As fast as some were cut off others sprouted out, and all the art and all the violence employed to create an apparent could never create a real uniformity. The scene of Christianity has been always a scene of dissension, of hatred, of persecution, and of blood."

It may have been a love of ease that prevented Bolingbroke publishing these writings during his lifetime. They were published, however, and played their part in the history of Freethought. To-day their

attack has lost much of its force owing to the modifications Christianity has undergone. But Bolingbroke will still repay reading, particularly when Mallet's quartos can be picked up at a trifle under tenpence per volume.

SIMON SIMPLE.

Hell.

The following thoughts were suggested by Mrs. H. B. Bonnor's admirable work on the nature and history of the doctrines about Hell, which I cordially recommend to every reader of these lines. It is full of valuable information, most judiciously selected, and presented in a very agreeable style.

A TRAINER of performing animals acts on the principle of rewards and punishments when he gives his dog a lump of sugar for jumping clean through the hoop, and a cuff for tripping over it; but the penalties should not be too severe; and, to be effective, they, like the prizes, should be given immediately upon the conduct occasioning their distribution. If the dog bungles his leap, and the trainer nails him next day by the paws to the table, the case is one for the S.P.C.A. Rewards and punishments are only rational, so long as they have power to shape the activity of a subject in the sense required that is to make the dog jump clean and to deter him from tripping up. If it were possible by punishing the dog to get other dogs to avoid what he should have avoided, it would still not be just to punish him more than he deserved in order to frighten them from doing what he had done.

If a dog be no more capable of jumping, or not permitted to jump, the trainer may still give him as much sugar as he thinks fit, but it will be a free gift and not a reward; whilst upon the other hand the very fact of the dog being incapable of jumping, or restrained from jumping, makes it impossible that the trainer with any show of reason should punish him for not jumping.

If the trainer is determined that the dog shall jump, and do nothing but jump, and if the dog cannot, or will not jump, then the only rational course for the former is to get rid of the latter the moment his inability becomes obvious. If, however, instead of doing this the trainer puts the dog into a cellar, and torments him with red-hot pins, and barbed wire, night and day, because of his past inefficiency, the Society above referred to had better take up the matter at their earliest convenience. If there be "a moral economy" with "a moral governor," the only rational purpose of the institution is the production of moral conduct by moral beings; which means that the beings in question must be trained to avoid what is hypothetically wrong, and to do what is hypothetically right. To get them to act thus, a providential scheme of rewards and punishments might be brought into operation, but only on condition that the latter were limited by the nature and the circumstances of the subjects, and that they were inflicted no longer than the end in view appeared attainable, for it is quite evident that the means used in the realization of a moral economy must themselves be strictly moral, since otherwise the economy itself is morally imperfect, which involves a contradiction. Again, although a moral economy does not necessarily imply a future life, yet, nevertheless, supposing such a system were held to be continued in a subsequent state of being, its purpose would have to be regarded as the same as at present, namely, the production of moral conduct, and, therefore, it could not have any affinity with the *régime* of hell. Of course, the only perfect moral economy would be that which should ensure the ultimate perfection of all its members, but there

would be no injustice in a system which should provide for the natural extinction of beings unfit to serve their end.

What has hitherto been said concerns the ethical side of the question, but the religious side also presents several interesting points, and among these there is one of the greatest importance. In all religions, conduct opposed to the alleged commands of God is called sinful, and therefore sin is the opposition of the created will to the divine will. If the sinner in hell, be he man or devil, curses and blasphemes as most of the learned authorities cited by Mrs. Bonnor expressly declare, then, being rebellious to the will of God, he commits sin; and if he does this to eternity, sin is eternally unsubdued. But, if on the contrary, he admits the justice of his doom, and becomes fully assigned to the will of God, then, he ceases to be a sinner; and, by entering into union with God, attains what must be a state of blessedness.

Thus in the former case God is unable to subdue sin, however much he may plague the sinner; whilst in the latter case hell is filled with beatified people. But even this is not all, for, if the theologians are right in saying that God cannot remit the penalty of past sin to the inmates of hell, then it follows that if they submitted themselves wholly to his will, and yielded him the service of their hearts throughout eternity in that dismal place of torment, they would give him a proof of devotion such as the saints before his throne could never hope to equal. Thus, again, hell is either a den of those who everlastingly defy the Lord, or else a school of sanctity superior even to that of heaven.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

Books and Life.

A BOOK-CASE and a carpenter's tool-bag may not appear to have much in common. Yet, if we are book readers and not merely book-buyers we may come to look on a book-case as our tool-bag, which, by the magic of thought, we can always carry over our shoulder for use. The rip-saw will be wanted on your journey; you will have long pieces of rough wood to saw up, so don't forget Lucian, Landor, Erasmus, and Ingersoll. And your hammer—that must be made of all the steel of common-sense you have gathered. You had better have the shaft made of oak supplied by Cobbett. Then there will be the set-square. Here, we think you will find Spinoza, Aristotle and Voltaire useful. And your spirit level? That, we think, may be furnished by Spencer. There will be mallet, chisels, brace and bits, and—well, if we have conveyed the idea of books as tools the existence of this paragraph has been justified. The navy takes a pride in his shovel, the bricklayer in his trowel, the architect in his compasses, and tractors; if you can stand in a plough-field with a north-east wind blowing, and the dried atoms of earth dancing over the furrows, and contemplate your own likeness and bigness you have your tool-bag over your shoulder. We've forgotten the glue-pot? Oh, very well, here's Marcus Aurelius.

When the thunder had turned the milk sour, a little girl friend of ours said, "The thunder has frightened the milk." As a workman hurried past us one morning he muttered to his mate "Got yer grub?" A young man seeing the funnel of a tug pulled down on the Thames said, "The funnel's drunk." Emerson in one of his essays on the "Farmer," wrote, "The sunstroke which knocks him down brings his corn up." Socrates said, "Know thyself." Richard Jefferies stated that all the books in the world could be bought for ten pounds. Charles Dickens, in *Bleak House*, described legal documents as "mountains of costly nonsense." Brevity will lighten our bag, and we shall not need to carry those nine volumes by the eminent professor who explained in them why ice melts in spring.

Casting about in the waters of Blake is an exciting effort, for he had not a little view of the world and all that is therein and nearly all that is without. With his terrific energy—of which Pater is his opposite—he never let go of the intensely human side of life, although he cannot always be followed in his flights in the Prophetic Books. Look at the arms of his women in the engravings to Blair's Grave. They are big, strong, firm, and beautiful. Should not the cradle of the world possess these qualities? His lines in drawing give an indication of the character of the artist who could in his poetry use the sickle, the plough and the sword in such a manner that it is impossible to misunderstand his meaning. When our eyes are inwardly dim with the sight of struggle in war by people whose span is seventy years and the seventy years as a grain of sand in comparison with eternity, there is no need to question one of those sublime truths of Blake, who was a friend in need to Thomas Paine.

The Sword sang on the barren heath,
The Sickle in the fruitful field:
The Sword he sang a song of death,
But could not make the Sickle yield.

Snobs, super-snobs, "arty" people who are above speaking of a magnificent sunrise or sunset, imitators of Pater, who carefully examine words as a child examines beads for a necklace, exponents of "good form" from which the spirit and the matter have departed—these the world has in abundance. The naked branches of our rose-trees have all within them to bring in summer those blooms on which our eyes may rest and never tire. The roots must be nourished with good soil; our superior legions, if they ascend so high, will become paper roses, and they will be eventually divorced from the heart of humanity. Reading the sonnets of Keats, we are not left in doubt that he had the world at his elbow as he wrote. The sonnet entitled, "To my Brother George" is a landscape painting until we reach the last two lines:—

But what, without the social thoughts of thee
Would be the wonders of the sky and sea?

Our horizon should take in the five continents with their diverse splendour, with a smile for the different races emerging from the cocoon of religions, but we shall not forget the singing kettle on the hob, the clasp of a friend's hand, the bread-board with its border of wheat-ears, and all those simple acts and things that have no connection with the chaff of words in the desert of theology.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Correspondence.

ARTHUR LYNCH'S "ETHICS."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Will you kindly allow me to say that owing to a press of work, including, alas! work for the Press, I am not able this week to send adequate replies to the points raised by Mr. Vincent Hands and Mr. Panton, and to the questions asked by "Javali."

Next week will find me not free—have I not said that it was little for me to go to prison, for this world is already a prison?—but less engaged. But, after all, can we not draw the other fellows? Let us try.

ARTHUR LYNCH.

"HAMLET."

SIR,—Mr. William Repton shrewdly analyses my emotions, and attributes my heresy to temperamental impatience. Perhaps he is right. Although I always endeavour to extend towards all creatures a "bounteous friendly feeling," I confess that—despite the cultivation of philosophy—I have never quite been able to act up to the letter of the apostolic injunction: *Suffer fools gladly*. This I say, not in extenuation, but merely by way of explanation. But probably Mr. Repton has already divined my chronic inability in this direction!

VINCENT J. HANDS.

The Way of the World.

JAZZ BANDS IN HEAVEN.

He (Mr. Dennis Bradley) told how.....At a sitting towards the end of September invisible hands beat the drum-sticks on a drum, keeping time with a jazz tune played on a record which Mr. Bradley had put on his gramophone. For a sitting on October 11 Mr. Bradley brought cymbals, sirens, and slave-bells into the room, and he asserted that the spirit played these in perfect time.—*Daily News*.

[This, as Professor Huxley remarked, "adds another terror to death."]

GUS HARRIS AND GOD.

When at the height of his fame as a comedian at Drury Lane, under the Augustus Harris reign, Harry Nicholls told me that he one day found his children quarrelling over some home-made theatricals they were playing, the characters being God and Gus Harris, and each wanted to be Gus Harris, regarding that as the "lead."—*Lincoln Springfield*, "Some Piquant People."

IN GOD'S OWN COUNTRY."

America is essentially a country of pious peasants, like Russia. The peasants in America control the Government but delegate much of their power to certain very rich men, on condition that these men pose as the champions of religion and morality, which they are only too willing to do. It is obvious that, in such a community, intellectual freedom can only exist *sub rosa*.The tyranny of boards of trustees is part of the power of Capitalism, and is therefore attacked by Socialists.....obviously it is a bad system to make learned men dependent for their livelihood upon a collection of ignorant and bigoted business men.....In the South and in some parts of the Middle West, Protestantism is as fierce as in Belfast, and the whole intellectual atmosphere is reminiscent of the seventeenth century. Since the taxpayer's money supports the State Universities, he feels that these institutions ought to magnify his ego by teaching what he believes, not what is believed by those who have taken the trouble to form a rational opinion. Hence the all but successful attempts to make it illegal to teach evolution in certain States. In the East, in some States, the Catholics are sufficiently powerful to enforce an Inquisition on State teachers. This atmosphere of theological persecution makes many State Universities quite as destitute of freedom as those that depend upon private endowments.—*Bertrand Russell*, "The Nation."

AN IMPENITENT CRIMINAL.

Other Churches have repented of their past.....The Roman Catholic Church alone still maintains the right to persecute, still asserts her intention to exercise that right should she regain the power of which she has been deprived. She has never repudiated the past, and has never expressed the least contrition for all the agony which was inflicted in her name. *Arnold Lunn*, "Roman Converts."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.

The fog no doubt played havoc with many meetings on Sunday last, and under the circumstances I suppose North London must congratulate itself upon having held a meeting, however small. We had hoped for an overflow to hear the debate between Dr. Arthur Lynch and Mr. T. F. Palmer, and those who were brave enough to venture out certainly had a most enjoyable evening. To-night, Mr. C. H. Keeling, of the Metropolitan Secular Society, and Mr. G. H. J. Coldwell, of the Catholic Truth Society, debate whether or no Mankind would benefit by the destruction of Theistical Religion. We hope that North Londoners will see to it that there is a good audience.—K.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7, Debate—"Would Mankind benefit by the destruction of Theistical Religion?" Affirmative, Mr. C. H. Keeling; Negative, Mr. G. H. J. Coldwell.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham Road): 7, Mr. Grout, B.Sc., "Social Aspects of Heredity Theories."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. Joseph McCabe, "Bertrand Russell's 'Icarus.'"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit., "The Economic Obstacles to Freedom."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (Saloon Hall): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 11.30, "The Moral Breakdown of Christianity"; 6.30, "What is the Use of a Future Life?"

HULL BRANCH N.S.S. (Metropole, Albany Room, West Street): 7.30, Meeting of members and sympathisers. Very important business.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Dr. Marion Phillips, "The Basis of International Co-operation."

A MIGHTY PAIN TO LOVE; it is, and 'tis a pain that pain to miss. Yes, and it would most severely pain us to serve a Freethinker and fail to give that Freethinker complete satisfaction. That's why we guarantee you satisfaction if you will ask us to-day for any of the following:—*Gents' A A to H Book, suits from 46s.*; *Gents' I to N Book, suits from 99s*; *Gents' Overcoat Book, prices from 48s. 6d.*; or *Ladies' Coat and Costume Book, coats from 46s., costumes from 60s.* The business whose aim is pleasing you.—**MACCONNELL & MABE**, New Street, Bakewell, Derbyshire.

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