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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

Views and Opinions.

A Ranting Bishop.

The Bishop of Chelmsford has made a successful speech. I do not mean by this that his speech was strikingly intelligent or useful. One does not expect bishops to make intelligent speeches, and if one did one would only be disappointed. What I mean is that the speech was of the kind that is getting him talked about in the Press, and that is probably what was aimed at. And to get talked about in the Press one need not say anything that is either useful or sensible. It is enough if what one says is of the kind that forms good "copy." If it is something such as whether all women are immodest, or whether one child out of every six should be sent to a lethal chamber, some of our newspapers are certain to take it up, and work it for all it is worth. Of course, if it were a really useful and sensible suggestion they would be more careful because the chances then are that it would strike at some of our cherished institutions, and it might be dangerous. So it would be left alone. And certainly the clergy are not blind to the advertising value of saying something that while it means nothing in particular and does not threaten anything of importance, will attract attention. That, one may assume, is the bottom reason why every now and again one parson will declare that women are growing more immoral, or that certain London streets or parks are reeking with immorality, or that family life is disappearing. These are all "safe" subjects. They do not really hurt anyone, a clergyman who sets out on this tack bids fair to get himself talked about, and he earns the reputation of being keenly interested in social reform, which in days when people are losing interest in theology, is something. It keeps the parson in the limelight. And anything that will do this is useful—to the parson.

* * *

Life and Religion.

The other day there was a Clerical Conference held in Islington, and in the course of the proceedings there were two speeches made, one by the Bishop of Chelmsford, the other by Prebendary Sharpe. All that is reported in the general press of the latter's speech is concerned with the decline of clerical influence. He said that in the diocese of London there had been about 40,000 lapsed communicants during the year, while there was a marked deficiency of young men in the ministry. "There were," he said, "few ministers under thirty-five, while the average age of those on the active list was fifty-two." One must assume the statement to be correct, although from a lengthy experience of clerical statements it would not surprise me to see the same gentleman at some other meeting rejoicing in the brilliant outlook before the Church and dwelling upon the hold Christianity has on the people. I daresay, too, that Prebendary Sharpe will have some curious reasons why so many men fight shy of the pulpit, and why so many leave the Church. But there is only one reason that is adequate, which is that people are ceasing to believe. Any other reason given is either superficial or false. It means that life is too strong for the Church. So long as Christianity bore some sort of relation to contemporary life and thought it could maintain its numbers. Not merely that, it could draw upon the intelligence of the nation. But the growth of knowledge that cut right across Christian claims could not but have its effect. Men with a sense of personal dignity and blessed with a keen intelligence could not bring themselves to adopt a profession which involved the holding of some of the most ignorant superstitions that the human mind has ever entertained. In past days the Churches did get some share of the intellectual strength of the nation. To-day other professions have first pick, and the Churches must be content with what is left. Christianity is getting something of what it deserves. When it gets all it deserves it will be placed in a museum of religions alongside other products of the uncivilized mind.

* * *

The Christian Failure.

The speech that provided the newspapers with good copy and large headlines was made by the Bishop of Chelmsford. He said there are strikes, a girl goes to a dance and commits suicide afterwards, and a great politician had laughed at ideals. There is "immorality, immersion in pleasure, and callous materialism." In short, "we are faced with a recrudescence of Paganism.....The Pagan gods are fighting for their own again, and they seem to be fighting with the odds in their favour." That is quite a Christian speech, and has all the customary accompaniments. What "callous materialism" is I do not exactly know, nor does the Bishop either. And why Paganism should be identified with people committing suicide, and general demoralization I do not know either. It is, however, quite Christian first of all to give us a catalogue of evils, and then proceed to use these as the equivalents of something else that is opposed to Christianity. But in this the Bishop overlooks one very important consideration, although knowing his audience he is probably safe in assuming that the very last thing his hearers will do is to think about what is said to them. Still, this society in which all these evils are said to exist, is a society which for generations has been under the influence of the Christian Church. During a large part of that time

the power of the Christian Church has been nearer absolute than any other power has been. It has taken charge of people from the moment they were born until they died. It has had unlimited funds, and unending social prestige. It could, and did, burn men and women who dared to question its teaching. And, as a result of it all we have a picture of a society in which corruption is rife, and in which the "Pagan gods" are again coming into power. Well, if anyone can imagine a more complete condemnation of Christianity than this I should much like to see it put to paper. How much longer than eighteen centuries—how many more than fifty generations does the Bishop require to test his system? If Christianity has left the world rotten after all this time, is it not high time we tried some other plan?

* * *

Pagan or Christian?

Is the world dropping the Christian ideal for the Pagan one? For my own part I hope it is doing so. For that would be a very substantial gain. What was the Pagan ideal? If by Paganism we mean only the gods of Paganism the reply is that these have always been with us. The saviour God is pagan, the Mother god is pagan, the cross is pagan, the innumerable saints of Christendom are only the pagan gods masquerading under other names. Religiously there is nothing in Christianity that is not pagan. For the most part the Christian Church took them over, and as in so many other instances debased what it took. But if by Paganism is meant the social, ethical and intellectual teaching of the Roman and Greek world, then the sooner that replaces the Christian teaching the better for the world. Paganism had the most liberal toleration of all forms of religious belief. Christianity replaced that by the most ferocious intolerance the world has ever seen. The ancients taught that death was a natural fact, and that men should take their farewell of life with courage and dignity, as one ending a journey, with thanks to the gods for the good fortune that had been experienced. Christianity taught men that death was a supernatural infliction, in the presence of which they cringed and whined, until it became almost impossible for a Christian to face death without some assurance of protection against the horrors which his religion had introduced. Paganism rested its ethics on a social basis, it taught that all men were members of a social organism, that its health might be improved by wisdom and good feeling, and whatever faults there were in its teachings it provided the means for their rectification. Christianity taught that all morality was of supernatural origin, that natural morality was as bad as vice, that there was no reason for good behaviour at all apart from the hope of reward, or the fear of punishment in some future life. Pagan Rome taught the dignity of marriage, Christianity taught the obscene virtue of celibacy, that marriage belonged to a low stage of excellence, only to be tolerated because it prevented a greater evil. The pagan ideal was that of a sane mind in a healthy body. Christianity gave us as an ideal the emaciated, half insane monk feeding upon the visions conjured up by his self-inflicted penances. The keynote of pagan teaching was the strength, and beauty, and dignity of human nature in itself. The Christian ideal that of a human nature helpless to save itself, and only to be redeemed in some other world by depending upon the fiction of a crucified god, whose death was in itself a symbol of the frightful savagery which formed the basis of the Christian creed. If the world had to choose between the ideals of historic Christiaity and of ancient Paganism it would indeed be well for it if it definitely decided upon the latter.

Man and His Gods.

But as a sober matter of fact we need not seriously concern ourselves with the extravagances of these sensation-seeking bishops. They know the world will not listen to them with much attention if they speak on their religion; they hope to gain attention by horrifying us with stories of this or that disaster which fronts us. We need not bother ourselves with such men as the Bishop of Chelmsford, because the world is not worse than it was. There are not more people committing suicide, now than there used to be, people are not more immoral, they are not plunged deeper than they were in a "callous materialism," they are not less mindful of their social duties. People are not worse than they were, they are simply less Christian than they were. That is what is the matter with the Bishop. He sees his altars being neglected, his offertory boxes lighter than they were, his doctrines becoming the subject of burlesque, or of deliberate rejection, and he does not like it. And on another occasion, one where it will suit his purpose to prove the world is much better than it was, we may expect the Bishop to sing a quite different song from the Islington one. He knows that no one expects a bishop to be consistent, and no one is upset at his extravagance. The world is better than it was because it is less Christian than it was, and it has become better in proportion as it has departed from Christian teaching and from Christian tradition. It has rejected the Christian teaching of witchcraft, the Christian sanction of chattel slavery, the Christian doctrine of the essential evil of woman, the Christian doctrine of turning one cheek when the other is smitten, that there is a heavenly father who will guard us, that disease is due to demons, that heretics should be burned, that the wrong-doer will go to hell, that morality cannot rest upon the basis of human nature. These and many other teachings the world is outgrowing, and the bishop does not like it. So he fumes, and raves, and rants, and makes himself a greater laughing-stock to men of intelligence than he would be otherwise. Poor Bishop? Poor, helpless deity to see his own creatures outgrowing him. Poor Christian Church, which has neither the strength to live honestly, nor the courage to die with dignity and courage. Poor things all; but their helplessness is an indication of the growing strength of mankind. The gods are pleased when man is on his knees, helpless and terrified. It is man erect, "ready to give the monsters gaze for gaze they do not like." So said Lucretius nearly two thousand years ago, and it is as true now as it was then. CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Is Preaching Worth While?"

SUCH is the title of an interesting article by the Rev. Professor George Jackson, D.D., in the *British Weekly* of January 15, which is a review of a remarkable book, *In Quest of Reality*, which is composed of the Wanack Lectures on Preaching by the Rev. James Reid, Presbyterian minister at Eastbourne. Mr. Reid we know well as a preacher of superior excellence, whose ministry in Eastbourne is what that of Dr. J. D. Jones is in Bournemouth. Dr. Jackson himself is a man of learning and culture, being a Wesleyan minister who has held pastorates in Canada, Edinburgh, and other places. He has always been regarded as an excellent preacher, and is now one of the trainers of young ministers. Now, it must be delightful to learn what such a gentleman really thinks about preaching. Listen to him:—

> After all, is preaching worth while? Mr. Reid faces the question in his opening lecture, and in a sense it underlies his whole discussion. We all know

in what an atmosphere of devastating cynicism the question is often asked and answered to-day. Think, men say, of the tens of thousands of sermons which, in this island alone, are poured forth every week; and what comes of it all? How much better are they on whom this ceaseless rain of words is for ever falling than they who manage to escape it all? In all this sublunary world is anything more evanescent than the word of the preacher?—

> Like the snow falls in the river,
> A moment white—then melts for ever.

And even of sermons that attain the fleeting glory of the printed page there is little more to be said. In the eight hundred odd volumes which make up *Everyman's Library* you may count on the fingers of one hand all the volumes of sermons which have been counted worthy of a place.

Such utterances have their origin, we are assured, in an "atmosphere of devastating cynicism," and yet Dr. Jackson has not the hardihood to condemn them as untrue. As a matter of fact, he knows only too well how very true they are. Being himself an enthusiastic lover of preaching any tendency to depreciate it hurts him tremendously. He finds, unhappily, that the Church itself has sometimes been foolish enough to join in this chorus of depreciation:—

> John Henry Newman is, without doubt, one of the chief glories of the English pulpit; but the movement at Oxford with which his name will always be associated, while on the other hand, by its steadfast subordination of the prophet to the priest, has weakened immeasurably the influence of the pulpit in the land. We of the Free Churches, with our different history and traditions, have for the most part been in little danger from that direction, our troubles have come from aonther quarter, yet even among ourselves the voice of folly has sometimes been lifted up in our streets to belittle the calling of the preacher. And, of course, these things have not been without their natural results. Probably our explanation among many of the shortage of candidates for the ministry, from which all the Churches are suffering, is the suspicion which we ourselves, alas, have sometimes helped to foster that the Christian ministry is no longer a real man's job.

Naturally both Mr. Reid and Dr. Jackson deplore the position taken up by the devastating cynicism of the age, and being both Nonconformists they are no less distressed by the depreciation of preaching by certain parties in the Anglican Church. But the real question at issue is, What is the genuine defence of preaching? or can it be defended on any ground of reason whatever? In Paul's estimation the preaching of the Christian Gospel was essential to salvation and the preacher was a man divinely sent for the sole purpose of winning converts to Christ. One definition of preaching is that it is "the truth mediated through personality"; but what is the truth? Truth according to the Catholic priest is a fundamentally different thing from truth mediated through the personality of a Modernist or a Unitarian. Surely both cannot possibly be the truth, from which undeniable fact the enquiry naturally arises, is there such a thing as the truth about God? Phillips Brooks tells us that in his opinion the day of preaching was not past, saying: "Let a man be a true preacher, really uttering the truth through his own personality, and it is strange how men will gather to listen to him.....and all the streets are full of men crowding to hear him, just exactly as were the streets of Constantinople when Chrysostom was going to preach in the Church of the Apostles, or the streets of London when Latimer was bravely telling his truth at St. Paul's." Let us look the facts in the face and not allow ourselves to be misled by special pleaders. Why were the streets of Constantinople crowded with people eager to hear Chrysostom when he was going to preach? Simply because he was the most eloquent man of his day. He was a famous rhetorician before he became a preacher. His master of rhetoric had resolved to make him his successor, and no doubt he would have been every bit as popular as rhetorician as he became as Christian preacher. Upwards of fifty years ago the present writer knew and often heard an American man of genius who specialized on history and developed into a public lecturer on his pet theme. He went up and down the country, and, in 1873 or 1874 he spent a week in New York lecturing every day in the largest available hall, which he filled to its utmost capacity on every occasion. He was a born orator, and the streets were crowded with people whose greatest treat it was to hear him. Henry Ward Beecker was another born orator who, far from orthodox and towards the end of his life almost a wholehearted Freethinker, drew enormous crowds to Plymouth Church. In philosophy he was a Spencerian, and he delivered a course of lectures on Evolution which overcrowded the large church. John Bright was another speaker whose charms were such that no one ever tired of listening to him. We heard him forty-two years ago in some town hall not far from Manchester. He was acting as chairman to the late Joseph Chamberlain, who was then, we think, on the Board of Trade. Bright began to speak and at once threw a spell over the vast audience. We were all enchanted, mesmerized, and the sense of time was lost. After he had been talking, as we imagined, for a few minutes, to our great disappointment he sat down amid deafening cheers. We were amazed to discover that by the clock he had addressed us for an hour and five minutes. Our point is that even in the pulpit it is men and women of large gifts and who have studied and mastered the art of preaching, that become successes in their profession. Dull-witted intellectual dwarfs never get on in the pulpit or anywhere else. Now, if the Gospel were true God could give splendid success to the most ignorant and unequipped preacher. As it is, however, success in the pulpit is dependent on the same conditions as in any other calling in life. Then what evidence is there on land or sea that the Gospel is true? None whatever. Take a company of believers and another of non-Christians, carefully compare them, and you will learn that on the average there is very little difference between them either morally or in other directions whatever. Our conclusion, therefore, is that on the whole preaching is not worth while.

J. T. LLOYD.

Satirizing Shakespeare.

> Others abide our question—thou art free.—*Matthew Arnold on Shakespeare.*
>
> Milling millicho. This means mischief.
> —*Shakespeare.*

SINCE poor, mad Delia Bacon fumbled at midnight among the graves at Stratford-on-Avon, there has been no more preposterous theory started concerning the great dramatist than that which is introduced in a play on Shakespeare, written by Messrs. H. F. Rubinstein and Clifford Bax. There are some stupidities so absurd that they can only be attacked by the weapon of ridicule. We deliver ourselves bound hand and foot if we take stupid people seriously. It is not helpful to argue in all seriousness, for it helps them and does not assist us. It is wiser, though not by any means easier, to laugh. This country is full of earnest, stupid persons who ought to be assisted to make themselves ridiculous. Instead of which, we often do our best to make them dignified. It is, after all, best

to fall back on our sense of humour when we hear the cry of the crank or the squeal of the faddist.

The world of culture has long agreed to regard William Shakespeare as the greatest of all writers; as head and shoulders above even Homer and Dante. His writings, which are in every library, prove him to have been among the sanest of men. But Messrs. Rubinstein and Bax, presuming on the fact that they live in a free country, pretend that Shakespeare was a sentimental lunatic, a man of overpowering sensuality. Indeed, so keen are these two writers to make their case good that they go so far as to allege that the poet's light of love was "Rosaline." This charming creature comes, like the poultry, coloured ribbons, and rabbits from a conjurer's hat, from the sonnets, and to give some kind of substance they have dressed up "the dark lady" of those poems with clothes borrowed from the plays. "Rosaline's" character is drawn as that of an accomplished and imperious wanton, who was worshipped by Shakespeare, now in the seventy-seventh heaven of delight, now in the lowest hell of jealousy, rage, and humiliation. With a mind racked by sensuality, Shakespeare becomes an object of pity, and touches the fringes of tragedy.

It will be seen that our writers' language is coloured, not plain, and rivals the brush of the pantomime scene-painter when it is dipped in crimson lake. Indeed, the cultured reader, being an instructed citizen of a highly educated nation, will realize that Messrs. Rubenstein's and Bax's observations, like Rudolphe, in Theophile Gautier's story, lack common-sense, though, like the famous Rudolphe, they make up for the want by most brilliant qualities. Professor Pollard, for instance, who writes the preface for the new play, says plainly that he neither agreed with it when he first read the manuscript, nor did he agree with it on publication, which tribute is one of the quaintest and most delightful of testimonials, solicited or otherwise.

In the seventeenth century cookery books when a recipe for rabbit-pie was given, the instruction started with the words, "First catch your hare." In the new play "the dark lady" of Shakespeare's sonnets is christened "Rosaline." This, however, is simply because the authors wish it so, and even in the initial stages of an enquiry we see clearly the warping of the judgment, and the making of the evidence. Mr. Frank Harris, years ago, identified the "dark lady" with Mary Fitton, the actress, but, unfortunately for him, the portraits of Mary at Arbury show her as possessing a fair complexion, brown hair and green eyes. Mr. Harris was a doughty antagonist, and his second line of defence was the alleged animalism of *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. These two poems, by the way, are not carnal coveting in the sense that the *Song of Solomon* is so. Shakespeare's two verse narratives are elaborated with a cool, steady attention to detail which proves beyond all question that the poet was thinking more of the artistry of his verse than his subject. William Hazlitt, an excellent critic, described these two particular poems as "a couple of icehouses," and the author of the *Liber Amoris* was at least as trustworthy a guide as Frank Harris.

Scandal seldom fails to make itself felt, nor does it often vanish entirely from the memories of men. It is singular that a story of Shakespeare being incriminated in a deer-stealing affair should have survived, and that his alleged association with Mary Fitton and "Rosaline" should never even emerge until three hundred years after the great dramatist's death. It must be remembered that Shakespeare was as well known in his day as Sir Herbert Tree in our's. His career in London was known in Stratford-on-Avon. His marriage and his after life were patent to all. His wife lived with him, and was buried beside him. Scandal has indeed pointed at the poet's will, but the utmost indefiniteness surrounds all the accusations brought against Shakespeare's character.

Shakespeare's bust is one of the most reliable and most interesting of the poet's memorials. The face is full, ample, rounded and healthy-looking. It is bland, cheerful, ripe, massive, and English. Haydon, the painter, and Chantrey, the sculptor, both agree in saying that the bust appears to have been done from a cast taken after death. Yet, in an instant, as if at the touch of an enchanter's wand, this great man is to be transformed into a very Caliban, and his works turned into a terrible treatise on corruption, a sickening and repellant Psychopathia Sexualis. The life of William Shakespeare, forsooth, is to be regarded as a story of lust and morbid deviations. John Calvin was a Merry Andrew compared to the author of such a preposterous theory, and Calvin's light-hearted idea was that the human heart is evil, happiness a temptaton, and the flesh a snare of Satan.

In his devotion to an obsession Mr. Harris, indeed, would have us all believe that William Shakespeare was an erotic maniac, and that the master-mind which created *Hamlet, King Lear, The Tempest,* and other glories of the world's literature, was a continuous prey to sexual impulses. The comic spirit comes to our aid, and instantly the burden of the accusation falls from our shoulders. The mind's eye roves down the ages, and sees the forms of the Kings of thought, and of the man who was the most knightly of them all. "Oh, justice, thou are fled to brute beasts, and men have lost their reason" if the greatest that our country ever produced is but a satyr and a moral degenerate.

Shakespeare's humour is one manifestation of his veracity, and who that looks honestly at the world can help seeing its absurdities? Shakespeare saw them, as he saw so much else, but even he could scarce have imagined that anyone would have thought that he was a poor artist bewildered by his ambitions and ruined by his passions. It is too amazing. It is Lucifer, star of the morning, hurled from heaven, and nuzzling with ignoble and superb stupidity among the litter and abominations of the gutter.

Mimnermus.

The Schools of a Revolution.

IV.

(*Continued from page* 38.)

Here is the circular of the 10th *arrondissement*, signed Léroudier, President of the Commission of the *arrondissement*:—[2]

> The public is notified that the Communal school for boys at 157 Faubourg Saint-Martin is confided to the direction of lay teachers, offering every guarantee of instruction and *moralité* to be desired.
>
> The education, exclusively rational, will comprise *reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic, metric system, elements of geometry, geography, history of France, rational ethics, vocal music,* and *drawing,* both artistic and industrial.
>
> Pupils who have already attended the schools will not require a new card of admission.
>
> Opening of classes, Monday, April 24, at 8 o'clock.
>
> Public courses on rational ethics and political rights, every evening at 8 o'clock, by Citizen Ch. Poirson, Licentiate in Law, the director of the school.
>
> The director will receive parents of pupils at 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., Sundays and Thursdays excepted.

[2] *J.O.*, April 22.

Another circular, characteristic of the sentiments of the Commune, is one issued by the 3rd *arrondissement*.[3] It is signed by all the members of the Commune of this *arrondissement*, including Demay, a member of the Commission of Education :—

> CITIZENS,
>
> That which you claimed with us for so long, and that which the men of September 4 refused us, viz., *purely Secular education*, is now an accomplished fact in our *arrondissement*. By our solicitude, and by the attention of the Commission of Education, the direction of the three Church schools of the Rues Ferdinand Berthoud, Neuve Bourg l'Abbé, and Béarn, is confided to lay teachers. For the future of our country we hope that these teachers will create citizens instructed in their rights in, and their duties towards the Republic.

On April 28, this *arrondissement* notified the citizens, that "*everything necessary for education*" was absolutely free, and teachers were forbidden, under any pretext, to accept payment for same.[4] Towards the end of the Commune, this *arrondissement* opened an orphanage for its children. The official responsible for education in this district was Léon Jacob.[5]

There is also a fine circular which was issued by the 4th *arrondissement*, and it is such a noble plea for the child's "liberty of conscience" that it is worthy of quotation. Two of the Communal members of this district were educationalists : Arthur Arnould, a man of letters, and formerly an official at the Ministry of Education, and Gustave Léfrançais, formerly a teacher. Here is its circular on "Free Schools" :[6]

> The sum of human knowledge is a common fund from which each generation has a right to draw, under the sole condition that it shall add to the scientific capital accumulated by the ages preceding, for the benefit of ages to come.
>
> Education is therefore the absolute right of the child, and its distribution the absolute duty of the family, or, in default, of society.
>
> Education alone renders the child, when grown up, really responsible for its actions towards its fellows. How, for instance, can the observation of the law be exacted, when the citizen cannot even read its text? Education, we repeat, is the first duty of the family, or, if this is unable to provide it, then it is the duty of society.
>
> Moved by these obvious principles, the Commune of Paris will organize public education on the widest possible bases. But it should see that in future the conscience of the child is respected, by rejecting from education anything which may violate it. The school is a neutral territory upon which all who aspire to learning ought to meet in a friendly spirit. Above all else in the school.....philosophic conceptions should be submitted to the examination of reason and knowledge. The Commune does not intend to clash with any religious belief, but its strict duty is to take care that the child shall not be in its turn, forced by affirmations which its ignorance does not permit it to control or accept freely. We have therefore excluded from the public schools of the *arrondissement*, all the members of the various religious bodies who, contrary to the principles of liberty of conscience and worship, affirmed by the French Revolution, have been, up to now, invested with the right to teach.
>
> For the future, these schools will be directed exclusively by lay teachers, and we will be scrupulously careful, by means of frequent inspections, that all religious teaching without exception, shall be completely banished.
>
> To teach the child to love and respect its fellows, to inspire in it the love of justice, to teach it equality, and that it should instruct itself in the interests of all, such are the moral principles upon which Communal education will be based from henceforth. It is for you to help us with your co-operation, as you may count on ours in the accomplishment of this useful and fruitful task. *Vive la République*! *Vive la Commune*!"

Some of the best conducted schools were those of the 8th, 11th and 18th *arrondissements*, under the respective control of Jules Allix, Augustin Verdure, and J. B. Clément. All three were members of the Commune, the two latter being members of the Commission of Education, and the two former being ex-teachers. At the fall of the Commune, even the Courts Martial were compelled to testify to the labours of Verdure in the administration of his district, and his schools especially.[7] Jules Allix (1818-72) had been engaged with education all his life, and had invented several "methods." He had suffered both banishment and imprisonment for his political opinions. His administration of the schools in his district during the Commune reveal much energy and ability, and two reports may be found in the *Journal Officiel*.

In his first report (April 27)[8] Allix points out that although there were fourteen schools (lay and church) in the *arrondissement*, there was insufficient accommodation for the number of children. There were 6,000 children and the schools could only accommodate 3,000.[9] This, said Allix, must be remedied, "in order to avoid leaving the children on the streets." Attendance at school was made compulsory between the ages of five and twelve years of age. Although one of the girls' schools and three church schools for boys were closed owing to the desertion of the teachers, yet Allix managed to open two of the latter, and was able to report that all the Communal schools were "in activity" with two exceptions.

Having got the existing schools working normally as far as possible, Allix proposed to open the other two idle schools, under his personal supervision, where his own educational methods and the reforms of *l'éducation nouvelle* could be put into practice. This is what he says concerning these new schools :—

> The girls' school in the Rue de la Bienfaissance will be the first of these new schools, from which we hope to see reforms proceed. With this end in view, we propose to contribute to the practical education ourselves, and we have chosen as head mistress, Mme. Génevieve Vivien, a teacher of great merit, and one of my pupils, who knows better than anyone else the importance of *l'éducation nouvelle*. When the preparatory arrangements have been completed, the programme will be published. Children will be admitted from the age of three, so that they may begin with the system in infancy.....As the Communal schools are not permitted by the regulations to receive children under the age of seven, there is, consequently, in the reforms, an entirely new system of education to be established. The courses of this school will be published as soon as they are arranged, in order that parents and professors can assist at their discretion.

In regard to *écoles normales*, Allix said that he had already established a normal gymnastic school, and in a few days he hoped to have gymnastics as a regular course in all the schools. He promised the same for music and drawing. "Finally," said Allix, "we make an urgent appeal to the conscience and intelligence of all to support us in this work, the dream of our life—' the scientific and at the same time the

[3] *J.O.*, April 23. See also the *Bulletin de Jour*, May 22.
[4] *J.O.*, April 29.
[5] *J.O.*, May 18.
[6] *J.O.*, May 12.
[7] *Gazette des Tribunaux*. Jules Clere : *Les Hommes de la Commune*. See also the *Cri du Peuple* for an article "*Les enfants de la Commune*.
[8] *J.O.*, April 30.
[9] The figures in the *J.O.*, however, appear to be wrong.

practical reform of the education of children,' which, we hope, some day, to see flourishing."

Despite all his efforts, Allix found the task of inaugurating the schools for *l'éducation nouvelle* a far greater undertaking than he had contemplated. On May 5 he issued another report on his schools, which said :—

> Actual statistics, and the visits that have been made this week to parents, have shown that we have many more children to teach in our *arrondissement* than our first rough estimate led us to suppose. It will therefore become urgent to take prompt measures for the formation of several new schools. The new girls' school in the Rue de la Bienfaissance must undergo adaptation. Considering the urgency, however, it will be opened meanwhile in its present state, from Monday next (May 8). Children will be admitted from the ages of 5 to 7; 7 to 9; and 9 to 12. Of the new courses, seven will commence on Monday, May 15 .....according to the programmes which will be sent to the pupils direct.....The premises for the infant school, for children of 3 to 5 years, are not at present ready for use. This week, special new schools will be opened for both sexes, who must be admitted as soon as possible. The drawing classes held at the Rue de la Bienfaissance will be transferred to 24 Rue de Monceau. The Church Institute at 34 Rue de Courcelles, will be reorganized for the system of *l'éducation nouvelle* for boys. Citizen Lévêque is at present in charge..... The premises assigned to the society—*La Commune Sociale de Paris*, at 24, Rue de Monceau, will be turned into a workshop for girls and at the same time a school-asylum for orphans and young people without employment. This workshop is already established and work will commence this week..... Numerous temporary classes will be formed in every quarter where they may be useful, according to the number of pupils to be instructed, as a means of preparing all children for admission to the regular schools. These classes are destined eventually to be amalgamated so as to form new regular schools.[10]

I have quoted from these circulars of the *arrondissements* at length with an object of showing not merely how well and conscientiously these revolutionary educationists of the Commune worked during their brief spell of power, but also to demonstrate what their precise educational ideals were. Yet one of the most recent historians of the Commune, Thomas March, has the temerity to refer to the " superficial hand of ignorance " which the Commune displayed in its handling of the schools.[11] The foregoing pages are a sufficient answer to this charge. Yet apart from this, we have the favourable testimony of two clergymen, who were not likely to concede much to the atheistic Commune of 1871. One, an Anglican vicar, says :—[12]

> In Paris.....I found the schools all doubly active; education was one of the whims of the Commune, and they worked very hard at it; poor fellows! If they had meant to succeed (in the social revolution) they should have thrown that, and everything else overboard, and simply gone in for crushing their relentless enemies.

Another clergyman, a Wesleyan,[13] speaks in praise of the " increased facilities for the instruction of children," and of many of the educational efforts of the Commune which were " admirable."

Henry George Farmer.

(To be Continued.)

[10] *J.O.*, May 8.
[11] March : *History of the Paris Commune.*
[12] *Fraser's Magazine*, August, 1871.
[13] Gibson : *Paris Under the Commune.*

Drama and Dramatists.

In a more critical spirit we again went to see " The Wandering Jew," now being played at the New Theatre. Many admirers of Mr. Matheson Lang departed when they were told that his part was being taken by another actor. The age of hero-worship has not come to an end. As it was not the immortal Jew they had come to see, but only a man with a name, there was more comfort for our knees, and we could watch a succession of four civilizations without cramp.

All the trouble starts in Jerusalem with milk and honey blest, and the fact that man has only an ounce of reason to a pound of passion will ensure that place of immortality in the museum of the world's history. Judith (Miss Hutin Britton), the wife of Matathias, was an unconscionable long time in dying in Phase 1. Her repeated questions of " What wrong has he done?" forced us to the conclusion that if Jesus had not been crucified, it is just possible that England's legacy from ancient Greece might have come to us some centuries sooner. In the street was the procession to Calvary, the cross was duly dipped as it passed the window of her chamber, and the voices of the multitude were in fine form. Matathias returns to find his Judith dead and in a fit of desperation tries to kill himself with a dagger, but it cannot be done—he was cursed, and the curtain is lowered on the scene. The thunder and darkness which Gibbon could not find mentioned by historians was produced magnificently; as Judith had left her lawful husband Reuben to live with Matathias, she was the cause of his presence in that place, and thus, as in " Penguin Island," the opposite sex was again to blame in the troubles that followed.

Phase 2, showing a tourney outside the Walls of Antioch, reminded us of Wembley, where advanced people, not from Bethnal Green, paid good sums of money to see a cow thrown on its back. In Antioch, however, which had not progressed, the fair ladies were assembled to see two men on horseback run at each other, and give a practical demonstration of a movable force meeting another movable force. The impact (off) was a triumph of art on the stage, and through this clanging of armour, together with a glance from the eyes of the Black Knight, the heart of Joanne de Beaudricourt was fluttered, to be followed by an assignation with her lightning lover in his tent. She appears, but when the Knight is really beginning to warm to his occupation of love, a leper passing with his bell makes him crumple up like a burning Guy Fawkes, or if this simile is not strictly correct we had better write concertina. The villain is foiled; another woman gives him his marching orders and he resumes his wandering.

In Phase 3 we see the Jew married, in Palermo, and what is denied him has been granted to his little son. There is a padre in the background who is interested in his wife, Gianella Bottadio, and once again a woman crosses him off her visiting list and she departs to a convent with his consent. Phase 4 brings us to sunny Spain in the middle ages. The sun appears to be about the only sunny object in that page of history when a theological argument could be enforced with hot iron or pincers. Matteos Bottadios, who has been rejected successively by good women, is about to be redeemed by a bad one. He is found guilty of heresy, and as he was triumphantly burned in the market place, we conclude that Christ had come again. There is magic properties in fire so we are told by Rosicrucians; as ordinary folk, we know it commands respect, and it is also the teacher of little children. Only a mentality tainted with volumes of wordy nonsense could think of fiendish

torture through the agency of fire. The bon-fire, after a succession of semi-colons, put a full-stop to the Jew's wanderings. The see-saw of spitting and the Inquisition's concern for his spiritual welfare culminated in the same manner as the sea-fight mentioned by Swift. The admiral, in the act of treachery with his fleet, won a great victory.

Mr. Temple Thurston has a fine sense of romantic history, and, with this theme, he had an excellent opportunity for better results. A dramatist has no difficulty in getting his characters on the stage, but their exit is a different matter. In Phase 4, the Jew's wife, portrayed splendidly by Miss Jessie Winter, gives as a reason for leaving him, one of those statements as full of fuzz as a puff-ball picked up in a field. "The light of God has fallen on my soul," she says; this to a Jew whose God of Abraham had no concern with such things—the soul being unknown to his autocratic vocabulary. It is also a statement that is better than the curate's egg; it is good in all parts for those who like to prepare fallacies and those who like to guzzle them. Light has fallen from someone unknown to rest on something also unknown—but, it is a useful cue for the departure of Gianello Bottadio.

The Jew's speech before the Inquisition is disappointing. He knows that he cannot die. The dramatist at this point could have stirred the fringe of that great drama still to be written. Civilizations have come and gone before the Jew's eyes. What could he not have told the vultures—and told this dispensation? That mild deist, Voltaire, could have put some words in his mouth: "I pray you, let me hear no more of this man Jesus." He could have left the Tribunal Chamber as a living historian who had been present on the spot at great events, and thus have saved our choice historians the necessity of fiction. He could also tell in the future, how the Russians did not come through England, and how the story of the Mons angels originated in a London pub. He could also have recited how, through persecution and massacre, the uplifting character of Christianity had been proved and established. This for the dramatic side. For comedy, he could have told his judges that such things as them were always crawling out of this Dutch cheese called the earth, and because they were in and on the earth they knew, with several years of theological training, more about the beyond than Old Moore's Almanac. But, there is none of this. Like Sir Martin Harvey, in "The Only Way," the Jew goes to do a far, far better thing.

A word of praise is due to Mr. Philip Cathie for his music. All the melodies that have stirred the hearts since a string was stretched across a sea-shell appear to flow and mingle in sweetness in his compositions for this story of the ages. There is the far-away romantic sound of trumpets; there is the delicate embroidery of the reed instruments that stir our imagination towards woods and streams, when our illustrious ancestors peopled the lovely vesture of earth with fairies and nymphs; these the pale Galilean shall not take. His music has caught the spirit of the play that Mr. Temple Thurston has missed through being tied by one leg to the tree of theology. The theologians have crucified man, their tomes and expositions have crucified printers, readers and writers; they have yelped through the dusty history of man in a minor and murderous key. Dante, who should know, wrote that "the fat bellies of the monks are become a proverb in Europe; every people itch with the vermin." Upton Sinclair, who also should know, makes his figure of Christ get back to his place in the stained glass window; America was not worth saving—but saving from what or whom he does not tell us. The five acts of the "Wandering Jew" at least are vocal history and define the consequences of a rumpus in Palestine that ignored the millions of years preceding it and the thousands of years succeeding it, and incidentally supplied to priests a ruling vocabulary that has no relation to fact though grounded in fear.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Acid Drops.

The determination of the teachers to get rid of religious tests is anything but dead, says the *Schoolmaster*, the organ of the National Union of Teachers, in a warning in a recent issue, on attempts lately made to impose such tests. "As we understand the denominationalists," the article proceeds, "they would like the local authority to have the power to set up a school of one denomination here, and another there, and so forth." That, of course, is quite in keeping with the spirit of Christianity. In spite of all the nonsense that has been talked about the Christian conception of the brotherhood of man, there is probably no single institution or set of ideas which in the whole history of mankind has done more to divide men and women into embittered factions. And for that reason the sooner we get rid of Christianity altogether from our schools, the better it will be for us. The world to-day has been so closely knit by scientific developments, that we are practically faced with the alternatives of world unity, and the destruction of civilization through another great war. And in times such as these anything which like religion tends to divide mankind into little warring groups is a deadly menace not merely to human happiness and progress, but to civilization itself.

The Catholics, as ever, are alive to the importance of "catching 'em young." Speaking at the Annual Conference of the Catholic Teachers' Federation at Cardiff, the Archbishop of Cardiff said he anticipated further severe fights in the future on the vital question of religious teaching. They would fight as one man against the worsening of the existing position, and for their ideal of Catholic instruction by Catholic teachers in schools under Catholic control. In that the Catholics are wise, for it is pretty clear that no normal, educated Englishman or Englishwoman would be converted to the Catholic faith. If therefore it is to maintain or increase its power in this country it has got to have control of the impressionable minds of children. Here, it seems to us, we might take a lesson from the Russian Bolsheviks. In certain respects the régime they have established may be autocratic—political liberty may be as limited almost as it was under the old Czardom. But in the vastly more important field of education there seems to be more liberty than we have in this country, since it is a penal offence to teach religion of any sort to children under the age of eighteen in schools. Surely there is no greater tyranny than that which consists in telling a child that the dogmas and superstitions which one may *believe* to be true, *are* true in the same sense that it is true that two and two make four, or that water is a compound of hydrogen and oxygen. The child, looking up to its teacher as somebody who is profoundly wiser than itself, is usually prepared to accept both type of statements as having equal validity. And so it grows to maturity with its mind permanently biassed, and either never frees itself from this intellectual thraldom, or only does so after severe intellectual and emotional struggles. The basis of every form of institutional freedom—political and social—is an intellectual determination to face the truth squarely and to be guided by it, together with a freedom from prejudice such as the early teaching of *any* religious or political doctrines inculcates. And if all the controversial religious and political questions that in the past and at the present divide mankind into bitterly opposed camps, were shunned in juvenile education, instead of being as much part of the curriculum of most schools as is science and literature, and the general fund of ideas upon which there is universal agreement, we

might, as a nation, have a livelier regard for truth and liberty, and be less liable to be deceived by charlatans, both political and religious.

This Acid Drop must be a bullseye. Mr. Way-of-the-World, in the *Daily Herald,* has neatly connected the state of St. Paul's with the eminent preacher who holds forth inside it :—

> The secret is out. Dean Inge has been arguing all this time from unsound premises.

But, no matter; whatever the state of St. Paul's, there is always the *Evening Standard* and the *Morning Post* for the good shepherd with the crook.

The vapourings of the Bishop of London, from which we gather he would make a useful addition to the Police Force, at least serve one useful purpose. By contrast we get a definite pronouncement from Professor Soddy that :—

> He would rather bury his knowledge than give it to the world if he thought science was to be used in the future as it had been in the past for the purpose of exploiting the common people.

As it is possible that the scientist believed in one world at a time, this may account for the difference of the public utterances of two men who are divided in thought by some five hundred years.

Mr. Ambrose Pomeroy, J.P., told a South Norwood Brotherhood meeting it was a "hopeful sign" that Hobbs, the cricketer, and another prominent member of the Surrey team, were both followers of Christ. That is a most convincing piece of Christian evidence. The connection between good cricket and the belief in the resurrection is so clear and convincing. But Mr. Ambrose Pomeroy need not stop with these two cricketers. If he goes through the Newgate Calendar he will find quite a number of gentlemen, all very eminent in their particular professions who were also followers of Christ. There is not the slightest need for one to compile a list of two cricketers only.

Cardinal Bourne says that the Roman Catholic Church is prepared to tolerate all sorts of political opinions, but if any party adopted proposals that were contrary to the Church he would have to leave it at once. That reminds one of Ford's statement when he first started selling his cars. He said the purchaser might have one any colour he pleased—so long as it was black. So Cardinal Bourne says that a Catholic may have any political opinions he pleases—so long as those opinions agree with the Church. A lively sense of humour would kill half the religions of the world.

In the press recently there appeared the report of a curious incident, which shows how deeply superstition is ingrained in even persons who are not "religious." A revue skit on Queen Nefrit-iti, Tutankhamen's mother-in-law, has been cancelled because the company is afraid of disaster. Apparently the basis of this fear lies in the fact that while the skit was being rehearsed the principal comedian fell ill, and the musician engaged to write the music for a song failed, through a series of misfortunes, to meet the producer, and also lost her baggage. And so the company decided to go no further with their performance lest worse should befall them. An entirely illogical proceeding, of course, but one which is a natural product of a civilization that is still permeated with gross Christian superstition. After all, if gentlemen may receive incomes ranging into four and five figures for preaching the extraordinary superstitions that go to make up the orthodox religion, why should not other folk really believe that the spirit of a lady who lived a few thousand years ago can still be irate with those who poke fun at her, and can interfere with nature's laws for the purpose of venting her spleen on them? The one is as "logical" or "religious" as the other.

Two soldiers at Woolwich are in confinement awaiting promulgation of a court martial for not attending divine service. They did not parade, but remained in the porch of the Church with their caps removed during the service, and rejoined for the march past afterwards. A correspondent to one of the newspapers declares that the service in this particular case is nothing but a religious mockery. During the service the time is passed, he alleges, in the perusal of newspapers, in whispered discussions on sports results, and instead of the words of hymns being sung indecent corruptions are sometimes substituted. That, we think, is the general experience of anyone who has attended a Church parade in the army. Some day, maybe, the authorities will treat soldiers as men, fit to judge for themselves whether they should go to a religious service or not, instead of marching them like a lot of school children to a Church, and marching them back to barracks again to lively military tunes, that are scarcely in accord with the pacifist spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. Meanwhile, as ever, those who happen to be rather more than usually conscientious, have to suffer.

The remark of Mr. R. E. Harlow that "The Church demands her pound of flesh.....Tithes had to be paid," I myself know to be only too painfully true. I have never owned an inch of ground in my life, but because I rent my back garden, which happens to form part of a five-acre field, the mouthpiece of English justice at the local County Court threatened me with imprisonment if I did not pay about £10 to the Court by monthly instalments for tithe. Formerly they distrained on my garden, pulling up rose trees, etc., because I refused to pay tithe on this same five acres of other people's ground. The present iniquitous Tithe Acts should either be wiped off the Statute Book or amended so as to read intelligibly.

Apropos of the above we see the papers report that Mr. Horatio Bottomley is becoming more and more interested in religion. He borrows many books from the prison library on theology. We said when sentence was pronounced that when he came out again the religious convert game was still before him. It looks as though the remark was prophetic. And, really, worse men than Horatio Bottomley have filled that place with conspicuous success.

The Rev. H. Haigh, of Exmouth, says there is much in the New Testament that might be construed as a defence of slavery, but no Christian to-day regards the abolition of negro slavery as anything but a Christ-like thing. Of course! That is the usual plan. First, an abuse is supported because it is held to be Christian, and then when secular common-sense removes it, it is discovered to be un-Christian. Mr. Haigh says that God abolished slavery when man was ready to co-operate with him in its abolition. And when men declare that war shall not exist any more, God will then abolish war. That is really kind of God. He does a thing when men do it without him. But if men can do it, what on earth do they want God to do it also. It looks as though God is a good politician and always agrees with the man with the biggest stick. What a fortunate thing it is for parsons that congregations never think about the sermons that are preached to them.

Apropos of the Bishop of Chelmsford on Paganism, with which we deal with elsewhere, we are glad to see the following from Mr. C. W. R. Nevinson :—

> Since Paganism was one of the finest periods in human history, I only wish that the Bishop's remarks were true, but unfortunately we have slowly sunk to something infinitely worse. Paganism was responsible for the whole of the greatness of the Greek period, and certainly part of the Roman. Do names like Homer, Plato, Praxiteles, Socrates and Demosthenes mean nothing?

Nothing means much to a Bishop so long as it fails to bring grist to the Ecclesiastical mill. And when it does he and his kind will favour and father anything.

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.

R. K. NOYES (Boston).—Thanks for report of Houdini's exposure of spiritualistic tricks. But the hardest thing in the world is to kill a superstition. Perhaps it is because it requires far more mental alertness to see through it than to believe it.

R. MAYSTON.—Copies of the *Freethinker* are being sent. Thanks.

F. F. STONE.—P.O. was received safely and the paper should have been received. Another copy of current issue is being sent.

H. DAWSON.—Glad to know that you and your family enjoyed the Annual Dinner so much. We agree as to the advisibility of these social functions, but do not know whether one could be arranged in connection with the Annual Conference. Still, the suggestion is worth bearing in mind.

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

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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.

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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.

On January 1 we called attention to the fact that all membership subscriptions to the National Secular Society fell due at the beginning of the year. We are glad to learn that the subscriptions have been coming in very well, but, naturally, all are not yet to hand. We beg to remind those who have not remitted that there is still time to get them in before the end of the month. We also mentioned at the time that subscriptions are welcomed from those who are not members, but who are desirous of helping. Some have taken the hint and sent on their donations. Perhaps others would care to follow suit before January closes. The N.S.S. can do with all the funds it can get.

The National Secular Society's Annual Dinner on January 13 was a pronounced success. The number was rather in excess of last year's gathering, and many more would have been present had they not delayed sending for tickets until the evening, and even the morning before the dinner. We regret that we had to refuse these applications. We had been impressing upon all concerned that they must make early application, and they were given until the 10th to do so. But it is impossible to accommodate a large number at the last moment without disarranging everything with resulting dissatisfaction to all present. We are very sorry that anyone should have been refused, but they have only themselves to blame. As it was the arrangements went smoothly and comfortably from first to last. We have not heard a single note of dissatisfaction, and none will be more pleased at that than Miss Vance and Miss Keogh, who both worked hard for a success, and deserved it when it came.

The speeches were all on a very high level, and met with evident appreciation. After a brief address from the President, Mr. Harry Snell, M.P., proposed the toast of the National Secular Society, and paid a very high tribute to the Society and its influence on the country at large. Mr. Lloyd and Mr. A. B. Moss responded in a manner that was greatly appreciated by all. Both have earned the title of veterans on the platform, and it was good to note that their enthusiasm was as keen as ever for the cause of Justice and Humanity. Mr. George Bedborough gave the toast of "The Visitors" in a delightfully good-humoured speech, and Dr. Arthur Lynch, and Mrs. Seaton-Tiedeman, Secretary of the Divorce Law Reform Union, responded. Both the lady and the gentleman were newcomers at this function, and both declared themselves very much at home, in spirit as well as in body, with the National Secular Society, and paid eloquent tribute to its work on behalf of freedom of thought and speech. We do not remember an occasion on which every speech was so sincerely welcomed by all who listened.

We do not know whether we ought to say that the speeches were interspersed with songs and music, or the other way about. But they were there, and a better musical programme was never provided. Mr. Frederic Arthour presided at the piano, Miss Muriel Farquhar and Mr. Milton Stanley delighted with their finished singing, Mr. Will Gardner "raised the roof" with his stories, songs and impersonations, and Mr. George Royle gave two very telling recitations, each of which formed a good background for the other. At the end of nearly four hours it looked as though most would have liked to continue till the early hours of the morning, but trains had to be caught, and farewells said, and the company brought the proceedings to a close by the signing of "Auld Lang Syne." A good finish to a well-spent evening.

Looking round the room it was pleasant to see so many of the old workers in the movement present, and not less pleasing to see the number of younger men and young ladies. Some would have been with us but for illness, and we were sorry to learn that this caused the absence of an old officer of the Society, Mr. S. Samuela. But to give precedence to age, we were able to just exchange a word with Mr. W. Heaford, Mr. T. Thurlow, Mr. E. Wilson, and Mr. Guy Alward, of Grimsby, the latter of whom has just celebrated his diamond wedding, and all of whose term of service goes back well into the Bradlaugh days. There were also present Mr. and Mrs. Rosetti, Mr. and Mrs. Quinton—senior and junior, Mr. and Mrs. Repton, Mr. and Mrs. Cutner, Mr. and Mrs. Bedborough, Mr. and Miss Clifton, Mr. and Mrs. G. Wood, Mr. and Mrs. G. Royle, Mr. and Mrs. Fincken, with many members of their family, Mr. and Mrs. Dawson, Mr. and Mrs. Collette Jones, Mr. and Mrs. Neate, with others whose names are more or less known to Freethinkers all over the country. It was a representative and a delightful gathering, and if next year they who wish to attend will write in good time there will be removed the only feature with the slightest sign of unpleasantness.

Mr. Cohen had two fine meetings at Glasgow on Sunday last. In the morning the hall was comfortably filled, and the evening—to many of those present—it must have been uncomfortably so. Every inch of space was packed, in spite of extra accommodation being arranged for. Both lectures were followed with appreciation, and Mr. Hale, who occupied the chair on both occasions, made a strong appeal for support. There was also, we understand, a good business done at the literature stall.

On Saturday evening the Branch held its Annual Social, and Mr. Cohen arrived in Glasgow in time to spend a couple of hours with the members. A very gratifying feature of the assembly was the large proportion of young men and women who were present. Indeed, one of the striking features of Freethought meetings all over the country is the number of young people who are attracted by them. Glasgow certainly has no complaint on this head. We were also glad to hear that the Committee of the Branch is working very unitedly and well in the interests of the Cause.

Mr. George Whitehead paid his first visit to Weston-super-Mare on Sunday last, and had two very good meetings. It seems that some attempt was made to get a demonstration of Christians outside the Palace Theatre in order to awaken Christians to the enormity of permitting a Freethought meeting in a place so religiously backward as Weston-super-Mare. Happily there were enough Christians with sufficient common-sense to pour cold water on so ridiculous an idea. It is difficult for any town to stand out for ever against the inroads of common-sense.

Mr. F. P. Corrigan will lecture to-day (January 25) in the Engineers' Hall, Rusholme Road, Manchester, at 3 and 6.30. The afternoon subject will be "Rome or Reason?" The evening one, "Catholic Truth." We hope to hear of good meetings.

We are asked to announce that Mr. W. Sissons will speak at the Socialist Club, Wood Street, Bolton, to-day (January 25) at 2.30, on "Christianity, its Cause and Cure." Bolton friends will please note.

Only Thirty

MILLIONS set out on the journey. Millions died on the way—drowned in the sea; frozen on hill-tops; burned by the sun; eaten by jackals and tigers; maddened with thirst; emaciated by hunger. It is said that, at last, only thirty succeeded in reaching the goal, and even they were reduced to mere skin and bone and hollowed-eyed wastrels.

As the reader will feel puzzled to discover what historical event I am alluding to, it will be proper to explain that I allude to the thirty birds who, led by the beautifully-crested and white-and-black-feathered hoopoe, did at length meet God.

Even now, I fear my statement may be as baffling as the fashionable "Cross-word" game. So, not to keep the patient reader any longer in suspense, I had better say at once that I refer to a poem, written in the twelfth century by Farid-ud-din-Attar, and portraying, in a parable of the birds, the long and difficult search of mankind after the supposed Divine Truth and Being. The poet, Attar, was a member of the Sufi faith. Sufi-ism (which still flourishes among certain groups in Persia, Arabia, and India), rises above ordinary creeds about God, but nevertheless teaches that, by long and painful labour and self-discipline, the human soul may attain the goal, and melt into divinity. And because this religious method proceeds by inward effort rather than by outward rites, and confession of beliefs, it is usually classed as Mysticism. Attar's poem uses birds to represent human beings on the great spiritual pilgrimage. He tells how the birds met, conferred, argued, wondered, and hesitated, and how they elected the magnificently-crested and intelligent hoopoe as their leader; and how the hoopoe recited stories to them, both to enlighten their understandings and to help them on their weary travels.[1] Right at the beginning, she warned her companions that the path to the Creator, or Simurg, was strewn with obstacles, for the Simurg was near in essence, but far off in attainability. Once, said the hoopoe, the Creative Bird (the Simurg) flew over China, and dropped a feather; and multitudes of people desired to make a picture of this divine feather, but the very attempt to portray it dazed and bewildered each and all. Yet this story only made the birds more eager to pursue the search after God.[2] When many of them admitted to their crested leader that they loved the material goods of this life, she told them this anecdote:—

A pilgrim who journeyed on the road to God met an angel. On the angel's enquiring whither he was bound, the pilgrim declared he was on his way to the Royal and Divine Presence. Thereupon the angel advised him that he would never get to God while carrying a bundle of valuables. The pilgrim threw aside his jewels and other treasures, and retained but a simple blanket to protect himself from wind and weather. Again the angel met him, and questioned him, and assured him that he still carried too much wealth; and the traveller burned the blanket, and marched on naked. A third time the angel accosted him, and then revealed that the pilgrim need now do nothing but stand and wait; for God would surely come to the soul that had stripped itself of all earthly bonds and incumbrances.

Another, and singularly brief story recited by the hoopoe narrated how Moses asked Iblis (Satan) to disclose to him a secret. The Evil One replied: "Never say *I*; for this sin caused me to sink to what I am." That is to say, a man should not exalt himself in individual pride, but try rather to become one with God; for individual pride is the worst of all evils.

Very many other parables are provided by the ingenious and picturesque Attar; but it is not my business to report the whole of the Birds' Conference. As already intimated, a vast number of pilgrims perished on the way. The thirty who staggered into the presence of the Simurg were featherless skeletons, and they collapsed into dust when the Divine All-knowledge reminded them of their sins. This crisis, however (if we may believe so careful a reporter as Attar), was their salvation; for, in thus losing their I (Self, or ego), they found God, and were merged, in immortal glory, into the being of the infinite Simurg.

On the mystical poem thus very rapidly sketched, I venture to make two comments:—

1. If we handle this allegory without any pretence at accepting its Oriental theology, we may observe certain values in it. It is certainly true that the road from the Worse to the Better, from Weakness to Power, from Barbarism to Civilization and a yet higher Civilization, is a tedious and often agonized road. It matters not, in this regard, whether you are theological with Saint Augustine and John Bunyan, or a Freethinker with Bradlaugh or Ingersoll; you have to recognize that pain is often a shadow that haunts progress. Louisa Shore rightly appeals to the Future to remember how much its joy will have been built up on griefs and failures:—

> O perfect race to be! O perfect time!
> Maturity of earth's unhappy youth!
> Race, whose undazzled eyes shall see the truth,
> Made wise by all the errors of your prime!
> O bliss and beauty of the ideal day!
> Forget not, when your march has reached its goal,
> The rich and reckless waste of heart and soul
> You left so far behind you on your way!

And I cheerfully agree with the wise hoopoe when she affirms that the root of evil is the standoffishness

[1] A summary of the poem is given in R. P. Masani's *Conference of Birds: a Sufi Allegory*, published by Milford in 1924. It is a cheap work. 128 pp.

[2] Admirers of Olive Schreiner may recall her parable of the Hunter in the *Story of an African Farm*. The Hunter died in the search after Truth, and a feather fluttered down as he was dying.

and unneighbourliness of the untrained "Self" ("I," "Ego"). For fellowship is marked out by history as the hygiene of human life, and without the linking-up of the individual with a general Companionship, life becomes failure—both to the rigid and ill-tempered Self and to the victims of its narrow and exploiting spirit.

2. I happen to believe that the immense and long-continued endeavours of mankind to arrive at a knowledge of God (Simurg, or whatever you will) were not altogether a waste of energy; just as I happen to believe that the mistakes of early experimenters have not been without beneficial influence on the later results of this or that science. But this estimate of past struggles by no means implies willingness to pursue roads that promise no triumph. Even if I were one of the thirty prize-winners, I think I should give a backward glance, and ask my friend the hoopoe if the Simurg expected us to be indifferent to the fate of the millions lost on the journey. She might say (for I know the hoopoe mind!)—"Oh, in the end, all these so-called failures are as surely merged into the splendour of the Simurg as we thirty." I might reply: "Dear hoopoe! this absorption into the Creator at the end of a pilgrimage which resembles a massacre is a too-clumsy plan of campaign. We had better have stayed at home, and invited the Simurg to absorb himself into us, while we built our houses, harvested our corn, studied nature, painted our pictures and educated our children for the service of the republic."

This may appear to be a jesting evasion; and I would like to add a few reflections.

As I see the world, I do not conceive of Freethought as an instrument which deprives us of the sense of wonder at the unknown in nature. Scientific knowledge, gained in the atmosphere which we call "freedom," has brought innumerable blessings to the human race, when directed by the social sentiment. It was well worth while, at the cost of tremendous distress, to fight the ancient theology in order to attain these blessings (the use of anæsthetics may be taken as one example out of thousands). And, aided by science, I possess a scope of joy in the survey of the facts of nature, human and environmental, far in excess of that possessed by my ancestors. But all this achievement does not hinder my casting glances over the frontier, and making all sorts of guesses at the secrets that lurk there; and I say this as one who has no dealings with Spiritualists, New Thoughtists, Theosophists, and the crowded Halls of Revelation of other such "ists." My real objection to them is, not that they wonder about things over the frontier, but that they are (if I dare say it) a little touched with laziness, and expect to get hold of the knowledge too easily. Personally, I would sooner go with the hoopoe on the somewhat awkward route than affect to reach a Simurg through listening to table-raps or to a Sunday evening course of Higher Thought lectures by Mademoiselle Rosinanta Quixote-Jones. And this brings me to the central point, namely, that the glories of the infinite universe are far more likely to unfold themselves while we are occupied in family, civic, social and educational service than if we set out on a special pilgrimage to the Eternities. I hope I shall not be misunderstood if I say we should invite the Gods to visit us. It is my figurative mode of saying that the great secrets of life flash out upon us, so far as they reach us at all, in the immediate circle of fellowship, social order, social application of art and science, social progress. Suppose, for instance, the forces that we call "civilization" could be directed (and some day they will be) towards making all the homes of mankind beautiful, in every village and every city; and the beauty, of course, will include health and joy. Would not this movement result in a vast expansion of human faculty, and a vast release of human nature from obstructions to lucidity of vision and imagination? Would not man then be more open to whatever may be the messages of the universe rationally communicable to us? Or, to put the question in better terms, would not man then realize far wider and nobler abilities to interpret, to his own heart and reason, the ever-enlarging scene presented to him in the theatre of the world? The great truths, the great music, will evolve for us while we serve in the midst of the hungering, stammering, incomplete, yet lovable humanity of which we are all members. Let the Gods come on pilgrimage to us. Perhaps millions will set out; perhaps thirty will arrive, perhaps less.....I dare not speculate. Meanwhile, let us proceed with the vital agenda of abolishing poverty, slavery, disease, ignorance, and war.

F. J. GOULD.

An Analysis of a Tragic Character.

IN a previous article entitled "What is the Essence of Tragedy?" I ventured to observe of tragedy in the abstract that man was ever striving for perfection; that perfection was unattainable; and that the essence of tragedy lay in the fact that he was for ever striving for what, should he attain it, would inevitably compass his own downfall. Yet should the urge towards perfection be less, the same fate—stagnation and death—would befall him.

An attempt is made here to put the idea in a more concrete form: to carry it from the general to the personal, as it were. And a better example could not be chosen than Lady Macbeth, who is amongst the foremost of Shakespeare's tragic characters.

On attempting to analyse any of the tragic characters in Shakespeare the first thing that becomes apparent is that each and every one labours under some particular obsession. It matters not whether the person obsessed be of a virtuous or a vicious character, the result is the same. (Incidentally, it is a notorious fact that a "good" but misguided person with an obsession can do infinitely more harm than the most vicious of normal miscreants.)

It may be, therefore, that in the mind of the obsessed person, that which he strives to attain appears to his limited view as a state of perfection. I say limited advisedly, as he cannot and does not desire to see any further. To his perverted mind, the accomplishment of the object which obsesses him is the be all and end all of his existence; every other act that is not in furtherance of the obsession must of necessity be subsidiary to it.

In that grander scheme where Nature sees that man is stimulated by the incessant urge towards perfection, she—luckily for the continuance of our species—keeps its attainment well beyond our reach. But where man acts and inter-acts upon his fellows, and the abnormal mind becomes possessed with an obsession which might be called, for want of a better term, the striving for "pseudo-perfection," the individual sometimes attains his end—at a cost. And the cost is generally represented by dire calamity and death.

Lady Macbeth's obsession is the desire for power (the crown). Her courage and strength of will mould the will and bear down the faint resistance of her husband. In fact, her courage appears almost sublime when compared with her husband's moral scruples and timidity.

To further the attainment of her desires, to her, the murder of Duncan does not appear a crime. Her

obsession so distorts her mind that moral distinctions become inverted. To attain her end she exerts her amazing will-power to the uttermost, and succeeds not only in stifling all qualms of conscience but in keeping her imagination in check. She so subjugates her conscience that, instead of recoiling in horror from the deeds she contemplates, she regards them in the light of necessary and simple actions which *must* be accomplished at all hazards. Her mind is so obsessed by the object in view that she thinks she can see her way clear through all the consequences. Religious or moral scruples are not only subdued, for the time her amazing force of will and strength of purpose have entirely altered her nature. She cannot be judged by normal standards. She simply drives onwards towards her goal regardless of every obstacle.

After the goal is attained, she then realizes how petty is the glory after which she has striven. What in her mood of exaltation she regarded as perfection, she now perceives is far from such. Her normal frame of mind returns and she begins to realize the consequences of her actions. It might be said that, whilst her strength of will is paramount, she lacks imagination; but as the need for this strength subsides, so her imagination develops; and the full realization of the horror of her acts and the dishonour and crime through which she has encompassed her object make its attainment appear futile. Disillusionment and despair prey upon her mind. But her will remains strong to the end. She ruthlessly represses her better feelings—and the reaction is consequently all the greater. In the sleep walking scene her repressed guilt breaks out. Whilst Macbeth becomes more bold and bloodthirsty, his lady sickens away.

In extenuation, it may be said that her obsession is not wholly on her own behalf. She stands by her husband to the end with indomitable courage. Knowing that what was done could not be undone, she is of too courageous a nature to voice a contrition which can be of no avail. W. THOMPSON.

How We Brought in the New Year.

A NORTHERN EPISODE.

The year blew out, the year blew in,
With chill and drizzle, storm and din;
Blew out old sorrow, wrong, and sin—
But with new years new woes begin,
Since every child of mortal dust
Is heritor of Nature's "must";
But yet the larger, better life
May still evolve amid the strife.

WHAT with the great wind, the events, the solemn hours, the lifetime lived in a day, or night, it was not an episode only, but an epic. Of course, I know we did not bring in the New Year. It came, as it had come a million years ago, before it was measured on a calendar, when the same stars were in the skies, but different (and indifferent) gods—at least with other names. How remote from that inconceivable beginning and inexorable process of time, how insignificant, seemed the meeting, on Hogmanay (December 31) in the Little Queer Street of our native town, the writer and a casual friend, the latter according to custom asking the former in for a drink, he consenting, yet in the very act inwardly whispering *faux pas*! and looking for a way of escape, or some mitigation of the stern laws of Scottish, or Irish, hospitality. The friend was an Orangeman—how ancient was his "Order"—comparatively?—his guest, a so-called Nothingarian—something that the friend, for the very life of him, could not understand! After all the ages and all the sages we still discussed the Unknowable. Like the greatest men, we knew absolutely nothing about it, our friend could only fall back on "the Book," and his virtuous and patriotic Order founded on that Rock, to him unshakable, but, alas! also unsearchable. Even the brilliant editor of the *Freethinker* knew as little as we did, the only authoritative information available was held by the Salvation Army speaker outside. My friend believed; but that I was an unbeliever was unbelievable; or it shattered all his bulk. Now and then the light of battle shone desperately in his eyes. Egotism dies hard. A friend of my own persuasion came bustling in, pledged with us the coming year, and left dutifully as was his wont:—

To mak' a happy fireside clime.
To weans and wife.

At parting I pressed this maxim on to my other friend as one of the first duties of men of all creeds and no creed. But he heeded not, he was still amazed and incredulous that life could be possible, or tolerable, to a man of my religious complexion. I told him in the end to hold fast to all the faith, etc., that was a comfort or an uplift to him, and just to keep a little charity for others with other comforts.

Next morning, still in the wild, inclement weather, found me in the train, and in the spirit of the exile, *en route* for boyhood's scenes, dear, I believe, alike to Christian and Pagan. I came out at the little station in the valley, by the collier Rows, and through the glen beside the brown, swift, flooded river to the home on the moors of memory—bitter and sweet—sordid and superb! The dear old pathway; sacred soil; in the means not the end lay the gratification of desire. The torrent rushed below, the tempest roared in the lichened alders leaning over it and in the upper woodland. Here the winding way was firm and verdant by the river's brim; there quaggy and boulder-strewn, dusky with driftage caught in rooted clefts—all as I wished it, as I remembered it, as I rejoiced in it, all in the spirit of the pious pilgrim:—

When the glad lips at last have touched
The something called divine.

Returning by train from the higher levels two twelve-year-old or so collier laddies engaged my fancy and sympathy. One was slim and alert with close-cropped hair and some long yellow curls on his brow that kept getting into his bright blue eyes. The other was douce and taciturn, a little suspicious or scornful of the "auld chap's" questions. They were sturdy-limbed, well-nourished sons of toil, freedom, and fresh air. One was already working—chapter three! They chaffed the girls along the train—chapter four was beginning, if only in imitation. How easy to read every human document, with its happy and unhappy ending, all so simple, so monotonously alike, so misinterpreted by the mystery mongers. But I was thinking of another country boy and reflecting and, in the words of the epitaph, might have warned my young companions:—

What you are now, so once was I,
What I am now, so you will be.
Prepare in time to follow me.

But ever there is room for expectations of better things between and better endings—also possibilities of worse—what will our fortune be? or rather what *is* it? for it is settled now: the tale just begun is already told.

The train stopped in the darkness outside a little lonely marshy village, and into our lighted carriage came five country maidens, fresh and fair, from seventeen to twenty-one or so, well-dressed, simple, sparkling, and sweet—what lovely flowers from what sodden fields! of the poorest peasant folk, but princesses every one, pleased and prattling—"The feint a pride, nae pride had they"—for your toast of

"The Lassies" at the Burns' Supper I present you these! Innocent, unsophiscated; what plastic material for vice or virtue; their ingenuous simplicity with its ready instinctive alarms perhaps their surest guard. One was going to my town. The rest joked about her having found a "click," but I knew I should escape at the big station ahead—but not without a sigh for captive chains! Later I saw some ladies of the higher strata, quiet, cultured, refined, reserved, clad in exquisite taste, differing only superficially from the maidens of the hamlet, who are nature's, and my sweetest gentlewomen, whom it seemed a god-like privilege to see, admire, and love, and protect. These were great adventures There was one more on my programme for the day. I had the temerity—while the tempest still raged under ragged, moonlit skies—to call on a great friend of mine and of Freethought, one of the first citizens of the town of A. I found him in his parlour, in the bosom of his family; he bade me be seated as though I had been expected; we talked a little, and he read me an amazing chapter from the book in his hand, Major Pond's *Eccentricities of Genius,* being an account of the Talmage tour in this devoted country; whose reception by Church people, and especially the half-million readers of Baxter's *Christian Herald and Sign of Our Times,* was not less tremendous than that lately accorded to Charlie Chaplin in London. Seeing he was so popular the Talmage "eccentricity" took the practical turn of going back on his original agreement with his agent, Major Pond, who three times had to increase the originally handsome lecture fee. Nemesis arrived, however, and having gone up like a rocket the great American divine came down like a damp squib. His admirers found him too secular and too humorous for their gloomy piety, and Talmage, after a succession of triumphs, departed without ovation and with little notice in the Press—which, to its credit, had never got excited over the great American missionary. Another brief chapter in the book paid a very fine tribute to Colonel Ingersoll as man and orator; but who in all his campaigns was his own agent.

My friend had many interesting things to say, but always to me the man seems greater than his message, all out, as he is, for the veracities, dignities, respecabilities, conventions, even the noble prejudices of public and private life. Tall, upright, and seventy-six, a man of great experience and sound judgment, one to revere, to fear even, in his plain and simple, and not seldom, humorous and sarcastic integrity. Yet I often venture in upon him, wondering what he will think of me; fearing the worst, and getting the best; not encouraged by any

Inspiring, bauld John Barleycorn,

or other foolish stimulation, but by the more potent spirit which one really good man can convey to another. Apologising to him for my want of parlour talk and manner, he replied, absently, that charlatans were the most amiable and eloquent people one could meet with.

Surely the year was well begun. Would we see it, or it see us, through? When would we do our last day's work, write our last article? we could not tell. We have been taught to be "humble and mindful of death," and sometimes it would seem the old Harvester draws nigh and goes away again; not yet; but there should be room for his considerations, if only to check and chasten our little tyrant's little brief importance. A year passes, and a year succeeds, with little "new" about the latest, still it is a solemn thought. When, we find ourselves asking, when will the ripple of individual life be merged in the great silent river? even now we may feel it rising round the heart, whispering in the ear. What selfish selective salvation is going to save, in that greatest flood-time of all, a few worthless believers, while myriads perish in what our mothers called "the awful swelling of Jordan?"

We have just heard of a thoughtful old lady who asked why, if she was going up into the skies, why was she first "put down there?" So we say, why drown us first and save—or damn us—afterwards?

ANDREW MILLAR.

Correspondence.

"ROMAN SOCIETY, A.D. 350-500," BY PROF. S. DILL.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—"The elder Theodosius did not abolish the inhuman spectacle of the gladiatorial shows, when he interdicted the peaceful worship of the pagan temples..... Valentinian indeed forbade Christians to be condemned to the gladiatorial school as a punishment for crime."

The combination of fierce edicts against a rival faith with no edicts at all against cruelty (except cruelty to Christians) is quite characteristic of Christianity in all ages. Pain is good, pleasure is bad. To hurt others is perhaps not exactly a virtue (unless the others are heretics) but it is always a venial sin. True virtue is to refuse all pleasure for yourself, p. 126. Prof. Dill gives some of the extravagant phrases in which St. Jerome, in 414, praises Demetrias for devoting herself to virginity. It is "consolation for Rome in ashes." Alaric had sacked Rome just before. C. HARPUR.

A CURIOUS CONTEMPLATION.

SIR,—As everybody is aware an atom was formerly believed to be the smallest particle of matter, so small that it could not be cut or divided. Everybody is also aware that this is now known to be far from true, for that an atom is a very complicated body, being composed of minute particles called electrons whirling round a central nucleus at similar relative distances to each other as are the planets of our solar system. In fact, an atom is commonly compared to a tiny solar system. Physicists of the future will probably find out that electrons are also, in their turn, very complicated bodies, composed of various materials, and that they are in reality worlds in miniature.

Now, to pursue the idea, size, as we all know, is a purely relative conception and has no independent existence. Things are big or small only as they appear to be so in relation to other things. Except in this relation size is meaningless. The same can be said of our sense of time, or duration, which is relative solely to our own special evolution, *i.e.*, the size and movements of the earth and planets, and the pulsing in consonance therewith of our vital fluid.

It is therefore intelligible that to a being evolved on another sphere of a different size, and with different rates of movement to that of our own earth, such a being's sense of time would not be the same as ours. If electrons are miniature worlds, some of them inhabited by sentient beings, a mere minute of time to us would to them appear an age. Generations of such beings would live and die while one was stirring round in his tea-cup the systems in which they dwelt. If atoms are solar systems, and pieces of matter universes, many amazing inflections arise. The whole stellar universe, as we perceive it, may perhaps be only a chunk of some large kind of matter which somebody formed of the same gross stuff may pick up and put in his pocket as a promising looking bit of quartz. But I have said enough, and will now leave the idea to simmer in the minds of those interested in the subject.

South Africa. J. E. ROOSE.

COMPULSORY CHRISTIANITY FOR CHILDREN.

SIR,—Though you never tire of expatiating on the injustice of compelling us all to pay for the maintenance of a State religion, which at least no one need otherwise support unless he wishes, yet you never say a word

against the far greater and more menacing religious education of all children attending the public elementary schools, which they are practically forced to believe, since it is administered to them as equally true with the other instruction there given and by the same infallible teachers. This inculcation of the State religion in public schools is in every way far more reprehensible than the provision of State churches, entrance to which is optional, since it is forced upon the innocent and receptive minds of helpless little ones who are not even allowed to enquire as to its veracity, but must repeat its hymns, prayers, and texts under pain of punishment, while such children as have parents brave enough to prohibit their attendance at religious instruction are inevitably made a by-word and a butt to the other pupils as well as courting unpopularity or persecution among the teachers.

This is in itself sufficiently tyrannical and cruel, but whereas we must do parsons the charity of presuming that they do actually believe in the truth of what they preach according to their oath on entering the priesthood, our State teachers make no such declaration and may not, and, in many cases, as you admit, do not, themselves believe in the religion which they profess and foist on to the minds of their little pupils, thus proving themselves guilty of contemptible hypocrisy and double dealing, which many of their victims, as they become more critical will recognize as the fraudulent trick it is.

Unfortunately such a small proportion of the public trouble themselves about the innumerable abuses that characterize our public schools, or the influences that affect their children at this impressionable time of their lives (even Miss Humphrey Ward declaring at Croydon that "it really does not matter much how badly children are treated, as they soon forget it," the very reverse of the truth), and it is considered such a heinous offence to criticize an official teacher, that there does not seem to be much more likelihood of this outrage being held up to public obloquy than the others, but it is well that the fact should at least be noticed in your paper.

EVACUSTES A. PHIPSON.

[Our correspondent must be writing sarcastically in the first paragraph of his letter. The evil of forcing religious instruction on children is a constant theme in these columns. —ED.]

Obituary.

It falls to my unhappy lot to write that yet another of the Old Guard has fallen in the person of Mr. Walter Macfarlane, who died at 7 Kelly Street, Greenock, on the 8th inst., aged 79 years and 2 months. He had been ailing, less or more, for over six months, but the end came suddenly after twenty-four hours of pain. Mr. Macfarlane had been a Freethinker for the greater part of his life, and was that rare thing in a Briton, an expert linguist, speaking and writing fluently five European languages, and having a library which included German and French Freethought classics in their original and Cervantes' works in their original Spanish. Living the life of a bachelor, quiet and retiring, Mr. Marfarlane appears to have had no local Freethought friends. He left no funeral instructions, and—his executors informs me—"was buried in keeping with the former members of the family." Meaning, I suppose, with orthodox Scottish religious rites.—DAVID MACCONNELL.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.

The "upper room" at the St. Pancras Reform Club was filled to overflowing on Sunday night when Mr. Keeling, Metropolitan Secular Society, and Mr. Coldwell, Catholic Truth Society, held an excellent and animated debate. A real live debate always evokes great interest and we were pleased to see friends from the South side present. To-night Mr. Cutner and Mr. C. Batchelor, who is an ex-councillor of St. Pancras, hold a debate on Communism. We hope for an even better meeting.—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.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (160 Great Portland Street, W.): 7.30, a Lecture. The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 at "The Castle," Shouldham Street, W.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7, Debate—"Will Communism Benefit the English People?" Affirmative, Mr. C. Batchelor; Negative, Mr. H. Cutner.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham Road): 7, Mr. Hyatt, "The Heavenly Bodies."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. F. J. Gould, "My Visit to Berlin."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Right Hon. J. M. Robertson, "Creative Evolution."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street, Birmingham): 7, Mr. F. E. Willis, "Religion and Labour."

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street, Glasgow): 6.30, Mr. Robert Baker, "Burns and his Biographers." There will be musical interludes. (Silver Collection.)

HULL BRANCH N.S.S.—The Branch meets every Sunday evening in "Albany Room," Metropole. Interesting papers and discussion. New members wanted. All interested apply to Mr. J. Ward, 772 Hessle Road for further particulars. Time 7.30 p.m. prompt.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. George Whitehead, "The Psychological Basis of the 'Penny Dreadful.'"

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, 120 Rusholme Road, All Saints', Manchester): Mr. F. P. Corrigan, 3, "Rome or Reason?" 6.30, "'Catholic' Truth."

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