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Views and Opinions.

The Benefits of Humour.

I have often remarked that a keen sense of humour would probably kill a large part of the superstitions with which we are beset. That saying, however, requires some qualification. For there is no denying the fact that some folk who really have a good sense of humour continue to harbour superstitions that are enough to cause a wrinkle on the face of a hippopotamus. So what we ought to say is, a sense of humour that is allowed to play with every subject under the sun. But that is a thing that few people will permit. By common consent they appear to mark off certain subjects from which the play of humour is excluded. It will not be admitted by them that humour is the healthiest of all things that can accompany the consideration of any subject. It prevents our over-exaggerating its value, or its importance, or its strangeness, it prevents morbidity, it tones down selfishness, it curbs fanaticism, and it places a subject in its proper place in our everyday world. But that, I repeat, seldom happens. Any politician can see the wisdom of stressing the humorous side of his opponent's case, but will demur if his own is not treated with becoming gravity. Ridicule, he will say, is not argument; which is not true. It is the most testing form of argument—which is why the lawlers of shams and the dealers in half-digested ideas do not like it. A Christian can easily see the good of ridiculing the belief that a Mohammedan has in the divine mission of Mohammed, or a negro in praying to his Mumbo-Jumbo to send rain, but let a Freethinker use exactly the same amount of ridicule concerning the divinity of Jesus, or about his prayers for rain or sunshine and he at once complains of ribaldry connected with "sacred" subjects, and may invoke the protection of the Blasphemy Laws. And that is the most humorous aspect of all. You cannot really shut humour out of life; the most you can do is solemnly to warn people of the inadvisability of seeing it. And then, if the person admonished has a sense of humour he will be provided with something to laugh at.

* * *

The Absurdities of Immortality.

Two articles caught my eye the other day in a daily paper. The one was by a lady dealing with the

subject of Spiritualism. She quite properly emphasized the poor quality of the mentality of spirits once they have got on the "other side." Great thinkers emit the twaddle of a Methodist preacher, erstwhile big men in the newspaper world talk like inexperienced office boys, able writers are often unable to construct a clear-cut sentence. Somehow or the other the men who spent their lives in investigating nature, and who did make some important discoveries while on earth, never in the spirit world discover anything beyond a few moral commonplaces. No great piece of music comes from the other world, and no great work of art. Even the late William Archer—whose posthumous communications concerning the way in which he was impressed by Spiritualism is a standing example of a man expressing an opinion on a subject with which he is altogether incompetent to deal, cites as one of the ways in which he received help from the spirit world, that piece of very cheap melodrama, the *Green Goddess*. All the evidence produced goes to show that existence in the "summerland" never makes a fool here talk sensibly there, but usually does make one who was sensible here talk like a fool there. Perhaps it is the influence of environment, perhaps it is, as some spiritualists explain, due to the quality of the instrument through which the disembodied spirit has to talk. But the fact is there. One need not wonder that so many of the spirits who return to earth are religious. Heaven is clearly a place in which mental demoralization sets in with marked rapidity.

* * *

Vestigial Ideas.

But the lady writer who can easily perceive the absurdity of the spiritualistic theory of a life hereafter, quite solemnly and seriously affirms her own belief in a future life, without evidencing the slightest perception of the fact that if she only allowed her fancy to play in the same manner about that belief she would find the one quite as ridiculous as the other. If I were to suggest to this lady that she should discard her usual dress, wear a waistband of feathers, paint her face with streaks of red or yellow, and wear a huge ring through her nose, she would look on me as insane. But she apparently sees no incongruity in going round wearing the mental ornaments of a savage while ostentatiously discarding his bodily adornments. There is really nothing more absurd about the spiritualistic notion of the future life than there is about the whole idea of a future life. What the Spiritualist does is to make the idea of a future life concrete—as concrete as the savage made it. The after life is to him a replica of this one, and so far as it goes that is a tolerably sensible conclusion. In a primitive environment that is the dominant conception of the next world. It becomes ridiculous in a modern civilized environment because the general conditions have made it supremely ridiculous. The Christian does not readily perceive the ridiculous nature of his own beliefs because he never permits himself to look at them fairly and squarely. He exists—religiously—in a world of vague phrases

and half-formulated ideas. So when the Spiritualist comes along and exhibits his ideas of the next world in all their naked absurdity he laughs. And all the outsider can say is, "O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us——"

* * *

This World and the Next.

How can *I* exist elsewhere unless it is the same *I* that exists now? And if it is really *me* that exists elsewhere how can that *me* persist in the absence of an environment to which it is fitted? It is only elementary science, which is elementary common-sense, to say that every detail of *Me*, bodily or mental, has a close and indestructible relation to the environment in which my organism has developed, and which has no less served as the formative influence in my mental life. The weight of my body, which involves the muscular development of the animal frame, has a direct relation to the mass of the planet on which I live. The existence of lungs implies the existence of air, while physical and chemical forces determine the movements of the whole organism. Love of family implies the existence of family life, of husband and wife, of children, of begetting and of dying. Without death birth has no meaning and no necessity. All the social qualities fall to pieces in the absence of social life. It is impossible to think of a single quality of the human brain, or a single feature of the human organism coming into existence, or having any value, or of even being able to function save in an environment such as the one in which we live. And if the next world is so much like this one that the same organism can function, the same mental qualities find expression and satisfaction, will anyone be good enough to say whence comes the necessity for the change? Might we not just as well stay where we are as remove somewhere else where we are situated exactly as we are at present? If there is no death in the next world then there can be no birth; and if there is no birth what becomes of the love of man for woman, and of woman for man, and of both for children? The words husband and wife, child and parent cease to have significance. And what would a human society be like in which terms such as these had no meaning? Even immortal spirits might find their development checked if all they could feed upon were the inspiring amusements of speaking through trumpets in dark rooms, or tickling expectant ghost-finders in the back of the neck.

* * *

Our Father of the Stone Age.

Of course, the spiritualistic conception of a future life is absurd. The Christian sees it is so, and lets his sense of humour play round it. But is it less absurd than his own? Decidedly not; and if he took up the same mental attitude towards his own belief as he does towards the belief of others he would be equally ready to laugh at both. On the same date on which the article referred to appeared the same paper published the views of a number of people as to whether animals have souls. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle says, Yes, because he has heard the barking of dogs in the seance room. The only reason, one may take it, why Sir Arthur did not hear the lowing of cows, the braying of asses, the swishing of a fish's tail, or the chirrup of a cockroach, is because men do not make pets of these things. It is astonishing how easily some men create a universe just as they wish it to be, and then call the world to witness what a marvellous discovery they have made. Lady Grey, who is fond of both horses and dogs, sees no reason why both should not exist in the next world. Dr. Hadwen, who is opposed to vivisection, would have an immortality for all animals. But why should the line be drawn at dogs and horses? Why

not cats and mice? Cats, if they are really to enjoy themselves, must have something to hunt. Why not rats, and fleas, with the whole of the animal world, big and little, large and small? You cannot draw fanciful lines in the modern universe. Existence to the genuinely scientific thinker is not a series of detached events between any two of which a clear line may be drawn, but a stream of being in which gaps exist only as an expression of our ignorance, or are created for our own convenience. Here, again the savage occupies what is relatively a more logical attitude. The same causes that led him to attribute a "double" to man led him also to give a "soul" to everything that exists both animate and inanimate. He is, when all is said and done, the most reasonable of all believers. His is the creative, the constructive age of theology. After him all religion is subject to a process of modification and retractation. It narrows its claims and restricts its empire. The most striking phenomena of Spiritualism appear in the dark; the most convincing observations of theology are made in a fog. Clear sunlight is fatal to the germs of most diseases—that of theology included.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"If Christ Had Not Come."

SUCH is the title of a sermon by the Rev. John Kelman, D.D., D.Litt., preached in Oxford Place Church, Leeds, on Tuesday evening, March 10, before the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches. Dr. Kelman is one of the most prominent Presbyterian ministers, who has held important pastorates in Edinburgh and New York, and is now in charge of a London Church. The sermon which he delivered at Leeds is published in the *Christian World Pulpit* for March 12, and the text is in John xv., 22, "If I had not come." Of course, to Dr. Kelman, as to most Christians, Christ is still a living person. His complaint is that by the majority of people to-day Christ is taken for granted, which, according to him, "is the one thing Christ cannot bear. He would rather be crucified than be taken for granted." How the reverend gentleman knows that he omits to tell us. As a matter of fact, he does not know it, and his saying it is only a piece of pulpit arrogance, so commonly indulged in. Then he says:—

The coming of Christ was indeed a touchstone which revealed the secrets of the human heart. It showed the power of Jesus to bring out the best, and also the worst, of human nature. There is no doubt that a huge amount of sin would have been avoided if Christ had not come. All great personalities have this double influence, and while they make congenial spirits better, they irretrievably damage the base and mean with whom they come in contact. When we think of the bitter and worse than Pagan animosities with which theological disputes about Christ have been conducted, when we think of the blasphemies, both of word and deed, uttered by those who have seen the Son of God and hated him, we see something of the damage to fools and knaves which the coming of Christ has caused.

That is, surely, an extremely heterodox, though true, utterance to drop from the lips of a Christian minister. We were always taught to believe that the purpose of Christ's coming was that he should become the saviour of the world, so that bad men might be made good, and the biggest sinners be saved for time and eternity. Dr. Kelman, however, is convinced, and tries hard to convince others, that Christ came to make the good better, and the bad worse.

Naturally, Dr. Kelman holds a brief for Christ and Christianity. It is his profession to exalt them both

to the highest possible point. Yet, it must be admitted that even in doing this he is governed to a certain extent by the law of truth and justice. Unlike many of his brethren, he deems it "a poor and shabby fashion to magnify Jesus Christ by belittling other religions and other teachers." He claims that "the Stoics, the Epicureans, and the many moralists and philosophers of the ancient classical world, stood for a very real and indeed an invaluable element in the progress of human thought." So far as these quotations are concerned we are in comparative agreement with the divine; but in the following extract we part company with him:—

Yet with all gratitude and appreciation, put to yourself the plain question, Would you exchange their message for his? Would you exchange the highest of their philosophies for the lessons that the smallest child in your Sunday-school will repeat to his teacher next Sunday? Would you have the world that they were able to create instead of this world in which we live to-day, with all its difficulties and all its faults? Truly, he who would make such an exchange knows little of the real history of ancient or of modern times.

Dr. Kelman's question and his own answer to it were doubtless highly acceptable to his congregation of evangelical believers, but, after all, the question is extremely ridiculous, and so is the answer. No one in his senses would wish to go back to the third or fourth century, but most educated and thoughtful people are of opinion that it would have been the best thing for the world had the supernatural religions which were at that time struggling for supremacy in the Roman Empire utterly perished together and left the field open to Paganism, which was then being slowly tinged with and modified by scientific discoveries. When Christianity won the day by the pure accident of the semi-conversion of the Emperor, Constantine the Great, it ceased to be a persecuted, and soon developed into the most violently persecuting religion ever known in history. We therefore conclude that the difference which Christ has made to the religious thought of the world has been for the worse rather than for the better.

Dr. Kelman dwells next on the difference to social morality which Christ has made. On this point he betrays gross ignorance or inveterate prejudice, or both combined. He says that the Roman Empire "was fast, disintegrating, and bearing downward in its fall all that remained of the beautiful and sweet influences of ancient Greece." But that is a gigantic falsehood. It is true that during the first century of its history the Empire was guilty of enormous vices, such as ostentation, prodigality, cruelty, and profligacy; but the late Professor Dill assures us that even before the end of the first century, "a softer tone, a modern note of pity for the miserable and succour for the helpless makes itself heard in literature." He also informs us that "the great Stoic doctrine of the brotherhood and equality of men as members of a world-wide commonwealth, which was destined to inspire legislation in the Antonine age, was openly preached in the reigns of Caligula and Nero." These two quotations are taken from page 3 of Dill's authoritative work, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, a book we strongly recommend Dr. Kelman to study carefully before he again speaks on the subject. Dr. Dill also declares that before Christianity began to exert any influence whatever upon Roman life the Empire entered upon a period "of almost unexampled peace and prosperity, a period of upright and benevolent administration and of high public virtue." The late Emile Reich was an orthodox and somewhat narrow-minded Christian, who vehemently opposed all Biblical criticism, and yet he was sufficiently well read in history to do jus-

tice to the cruelly maligned Romans. In his *History of Civilization* he controverts the popular view in the most biting and scathing language. On page 371 occur the following statements:—

It would be the easiest thing in the world to accumulate examples of the most tender charity practised by these immoral Romans; for instance, the charitable institutions of the Emperors Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian, which embraced all the orphans and the minor children of the vast Empire. Numberless are the cases of the most magnanimous individuals. Justice in imperial Rome, in this rotten and diseased Rome, was administered in the most perfect way.....These rotten Romans protected everybody and persecuted nobody.

Dr. Kelman disregards his own rule laid down in this discourse by actually indulging in the poor and shabby fashion of magnifying Christianity at the expense of belittling Paganism. This base fashion seems to be in great favour among Nonconformist preachers, at any rate since the appearance of the late Principal Fairbairn's book, *Religion in History and Modern Life*, in which (p. 204) is found this assertion: "You know not how destitute of true and generous action the Roman world was."

Having described the sad and rapid downfall of the Roman Empire, Dr. Kelman proceeds thus:—

Into this world Christ suddenly brought the kingdom of God and set it up in men's hearts. In the field of national life he planted, one by one, the seeds of those great consciences which have grown to-day into the strong trees of Christian institutions and demands. Substituting for the mere lust of empire or the blind impetuosity of rebellion the conception of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood not of men but of nations, he brought to the world "new chances, impulses, and guarantees of civilized life; he brought into society a morality serious and powerful, and one which would wear and last and would withstand the shocks of time."

That is a beautiful and eloquent passage, but as fallacious and misleading as it can be, as we hope to prove conclusively next week. J. T. LLOYD.

Hardy the Humanist.

Song is not Truth, not Wisdom, but the rose
Upon Truth's lips, the light in Wisdom's eyes.

—Walton.

Without fears, without desires, without ceremonies, he has used sheer reason, and played the philosopher.—
Voltaire on Confucius.

It is pleasant to find the selected poems of Thomas Hardy among the volumes of the popular Golden Treasury Series, published by the famous publishing house of Macmillan. Among modern English writers whose fame is assured Mr. Hardy occupies the foremost place, and his only serious rivals are Mr. Bernard Shaw and Mr. George Moore, and it is interesting to recall that all three of these writers are "intellectuals." The genius of the author of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure*, *The Dynasts*, and a shelf full of other masterpieces, is beyond question. It is a further proof of his rare talents that Mr. Hardy has achieved success in poetry no less than in prose; and as he gets older he turns more readily to the muses, and writes with the zest of a bright young poet beginning his radiant career instead of a veteran singer who has enriched the literature of his own country for two whole generations.

To read Mr. Hardy's poems is to be confronted with verse of singular personality and real power. Rarely has anyone among contemporary writers combined with such high gifts the keen and subtle intel-

lect of the philosopher. His highest poetry combines the power of vision and the power of understanding; and it is these qualities that makes not only *The Dynasts* a wonderful transcript of life, but lends illumination to individual lyrics. And Mr. Hardy, with the audacity of real and unmistakable genius, belongs to the gallant division who leaps first over the parapet. Take, for example, that fine and imaginative poem, "God's Funeral." The author pictures a slow procession moving across a plain at twilight, and bearing a strange form, that seems now appearing man-like, and then seeming cloud-like. He listens to the pathetic lament of the mourners for the being they have themselves created, and whom they cannot any longer keep alive:—

Framing him jealous, fierce, at first,
We gave him justice as the ages rolled,
Will to bless those by circumstance accurst,
And long suffering and mercies manifold.

"Sadder than those who wept in Babylon" follow the mourners slowly, and some of them even refuse to believe that all is over, and that "the rest is silence." It is a daring piece of work, comparable to Heinrich Heine's sardonic vision of a dying deity having the last sacraments of the Holy Roman Catholic Church administered to him.

Contemporary literature is so sugary, so full of whitewash and romantic imaginings that such writings bring a sense of largeness. There are poems, too, that are very realistic, that bleach the colour from romance, and even cause the optimistic faith that is in one to go out in darkness like a blown candle-flame. Let me quote in illustration the powerful verses, entitled: *On the Portrait of a Woman about to be Hanged*:—

Fair and capable one of our race,
Posing there in your gown of grace,
Plain yet becoming;
Could subtlest breast
Ever have guessed
What was beside that innocent face,
Drumming, drumming!

Would that your Causer, ere knoll your knell
For this riot of passion, might deign to tell
Why, since it made you
Good in the germ,
It sent a worm
To madden Its handiwork, when It might well
Not have assayed you.

Not have implanted, to your deep rue,
The Clytaemnsstra spirit in you,
And with purblind vision
Sowed a tare
In a garden fair,
And a thing of symmetry to the view
Brought to derision!

This is very notable writing, and a reminder of the great winds and waters and wide horizons of the West Country, where men and women know how to live and die, not submissively like sheep, but fiercely like the Old Guard, which died but never surrendered. Modern drawing-room readers are a little nervous of Mr. Hardy's plainness of speech, his probity, and his emphatic gestures. But others there are who perceive the truth which underlies his verses, and understand the distinction conferred on English literature by the writings of a rare genius. Mr. Hardy's message is to face the facts of life and to trust humanity:—

The fact of life with dependence placed
On the human heart's resource alone,
In brotherhood bonded close, and graced
With loving kindness fully blown,
And visioned help unsought, unknown.

No reader can take up the poems of Thomas Hardy without gaining a further knowledge of one of the most thoughtful and keenest analysts of contemporary life, or one of our most distinguished literary craftsmen. For the thoughts set down are not only strik-

ing, but they are impressed with extraordinary imagination, and their form is that of serene grandeur.

It is highly significant that only your Freethinking poets write with real conviction and passionate intensity about the claims of humanity. It is Shelley, Swinburne, Meredith, Davidson, Hardy, and others of that noble brotherhood, who do this. But then their faith is set upon the rock of reason, their vision undimmed by dogma. Thomas Hardy may truly be credited with a passion for Liberty, he is a humanitarian in the widest sense, and he is always preoccupied with noble and lofty thoughts. Noble thinking always means noble writing. All else is ephemeral as ocean foam.

MIMNERMUS.

Ethics.

A DISCOURSE FOR NURSES AND CHILDREN—Continued. VIII.

WE are coming now, nurse, into deep water. For while food, clothing, and habitation may be said to be merely the auxiliaries of life, the sex instinct is life itself. It is Life seeking expression and expansion. Nothing pleases a fond parent more than to be told that his offspring is his very image. Parents may be truly said to live again in their children, who are bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. But this is not a biological treatise, nurse; it is merely an attempt to point out the domination of the sex instinct, and the aggressive part it plays in individual and social life, and to note the ruination and mess men have made in seeking the satisfaction of this sex need. Even then I am beginning to think that it is too delicate a subject to discuss with a lady like you, especially as you have such an innocent-looking face. What, you have had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband! Well, of all the deceiving little—! But there, who ever understood the secret ways of a woman. And you think it would be like teaching your grandmother to suck eggs to tell you anything new regarding the sex impulse! Still, there are many ways of looking at the subject, both from a moral and a social point of view; and the confusion arising out of conflicting views shows the need there is of some attempt to put it on a healthy and sane basis. Someone has said:—

There's nothing half so sweet in life as love's young dream.

Now, candidly, nurse, among the five husbands you have had, did you ever attain to anything approaching the realization of your maidenly dreams? No. I thought not. Your first husband, you say, drank himself to death. The second ran away with a young girl, and died abroad—at least you think so. And the third was imprisoned on a bigamy charge. No, don't tell me what became of the other two blighters; if they are dead, let their souls rest in peace; but it does seem to me as if "love's young dream" has failed to keep his appointment with you. Oh, you have had compensations—the ideal was very nearly realized in him whom thou now hast, but who is not thy husband! Do you know, nurse, I have often observed the same phenomenon myself. If you put a matrimonial halter round a man's neck he very often finds it cumbersome and irksome, and flaps his wings against the prison bars. Indeed, the monogamic marriage bond is only one of the messes man has made in seeking to regulate this sex instinct. Seton Thompson, the naturalist, tells of an old bear who was as faithful to a young female as any husband could be to his wife; and when she was captured he prowled about her prison house for weeks, and ultimately died of a broken heart. Now, the chances

are that if this old bear had been "properly married," the young female's capture would have come as a kind of relief, and he would soon have consoled himself with another young female of the species. The increasing number of divorces, both in high and low life, are all indications of the mess monogamic marriage has made.

Did it ever strike you, nurse, that the story of Adam and Eve was an anachronism. All the old patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and David, and Solomon, were all polygamists, especially Solomon. Indeed, the polygamous record of Solomon beats into a cocked hat the most notorious of the Popes of Rome. Well, the story of a Adam and Eve is a picture of monogamy, and as such a practice did not come into vogue until later on in man's history, this story must have been penned long after the polygamie exploits of the patriarchs.

When we scan the history of woman from the earliest times, or note her position in many parts of the world to-day in regard to her sexual relationships, the statement that marriage is a divine institution reads like an irony. The first plan of securing a mate adopted by man, seems to have been the method known in sociological books as "marriage by capture." It was a simple method, and dispensed with the weariness of long-drawn courtships. When early man wanted a mate to cook his food and wash his linen, he used to take an evening stroll and lie in wait behind a hedge for some bonnie lassie coming thro' the rye, and then he used to jump up and knock her senseless with his club and drag her by the hair of the head to his lair, which was often miles and miles away. This was a "capture" right enough, but where the marriage part comes in is not quite so apparent. When the captured maiden came to her senses, she had more sense than to kick up a row for not being wooed in the way modern maidens like to be. There were no nagging women in those days; the club was a most effective instrument for knocking any nonsense of that kind out of their silly heads. If the domestic and other work became too much for one woman, or one of those little incidents occurred that are said to happen in the best regulated families, and the man thought he was not getting sufficient personal attention, he simply took his club and went out and knocked another maiden on the head, and brought her home in like manner to help with the household duties. If occasion arose when he needed a third, the same process was repeated. You will see, therefore, that polygamy, which came to be the almost universal practice, had its roots, not so much in lust as it had in economic causes. And we have got to take this fact into account when we seek to judge the morals of ancient peoples, or of those nations where polygamy is still practised.

But this method of securing wives, marriage by capture, as it is called, did not always prove satisfactory. It sometimes happened that the captured maiden turned out to be some other man's "wife," and then you may be sure there was trouble. There were no pistols in those days, or even gloves, but the horse-play with the clubs that followed these little incidents was just as exciting as any fight in the modern ring. If one of the combatants was killed, of course, the wives and all the belongings of the vanquished passed to the victor. And thus arose a numerous "household," which was the nucleus of the future clan or tribe. But what put a stop to this method of obtaining a wife, more than anything else, was the realization by the father who had daughters, that they might be turned to pecuniary advantage. They came to be regarded as "property," only to be disposed of by the father's consent. So marriage by capture gave place to marriage by

purchase. And so, instead of running the risks that were attendant upon forcible seizure, the suitor found it safer to call round and have a confidential chat with the old man and find out the price for which he would dispose of a comely daughter. This method, as I have said, dispensed with any unpleasant risks, besides being of economic advantage to the girl's parents. Of course, the purchase price was always paid in goods of exchange value; it might be sheep, or oxen, or palm oil, or monkey nuts, according to the seller's needs. And if a suitor got a big strapping wench, mistress and maid in one, in exchange for a pound of monkey nuts, he no doubt thought he had got a bargain. Of course, this was before the rise of the Jewish race, or before a Scotsman was heard tell of, otherwise you may be sure the price would have been two pounds of monkey nuts. This practice of selling daughters became an almost universal custom, and has continued up to the present day, not being yet extinct even in Christian England.

Another phase of this sale of female flesh is what is known as marriage by servitude. That is to say, when a man had not the necessary cash to pay for a wife, he sometimes bought her on the credit system, and agreed to serve his prospective father-in-law for a given period, receiving in lieu of wages the daughter he coveted. A well-known instance of this marriage by servitude occurs in the story of Jacob in the Old Testament, where his parents sent him to procure a wife of his own kith and kin in their own home-land. Isaac and Rebekah do not seem to have given the poor lad even his train fare, and he had a long, long tramp before he reached his uncle's home in Padan-Aram. You may remember that he met his cousin Rachel at the well before he arrived, where she was watering her father's flocks, and took a violent fancy to her. And having about as much in his pocket as Dick Whittington when he heard those famous bells, and Laban's price for Rachel being somewhat stiff, he was obliged to put in seven long years' service at tending the cattle and mucking out the cow-houses, before she was handed over to him. You may remember, too, the scurvy trick Laban played on him at the end of the seven years, by secreting his elder daughter, Leah, into the bedroom on the marriage night. And in the morning when Jacob discovered the treachery and expostulated, Laban excused himself on the ground that it was not the custom in that part of the country to give away the younger daughter before the elder. He then exacted another seven years' service before he would part with Rachel; but as a concession agreed to let his son-in-law have certain ring-staked cattle that might be born among the herds. But in the end Jacob outwitted his father-in-law. By a knowledge of those facts of Evolution in reference to breeding, upon which Darwin based his theory, Jacob was able to produce such a multitude of ring-staked cattle that when ultimately he left his uncle's house he was by far the richer man of the two. I know it is usual to regard Jacob as being a wily and crafty person, but I must say that all my sympathies are with the injured youth. To come between a man and his dinner is bad enough, but to come between a man and his affectionate desires is worse still. And to impose a fourteen-years' restraint upon an ardent, love-sick youth, is putting a strain upon human nature that it is ill-adapted to bear. If anyone has any sympathy with old Laban in being thus tricked by Jacob, all I can say is, it served him damn well right. Instances of this marriage by servitude are found among many inferior races; it also existed in India, and was quite a common practice among the highly civilized peoples of the American continent. And strange as it may seem, it had the effect of alter-

ing and raising the social status of women. The advantages that accrued to her as the result of the custom I can best describe in the words of Letaurneau:—

It had for its result the placing of the husband in a subordinate position towards the woman, or at least towards the family of the woman in which he had so long been treated as a servant. Marriage by servitude has, therefore, in fact, a moral side; it lessened the subjection, always hard and sometimes cruel, to which woman is liable in nearly all savage or barbarous societies.

We have still to mention, nurse, such institutions as the Matriarchate, the Concubinate, Polyandry, Polygamy, and Monogamy; and with these we will bring the vital desires to a close.

JOSEPH BRUCE.

A Forgotten Institution.

I SOMETIMES wonder if any of your old readers remember the old John Street Institute. It was situated in a street at the back of the Whitfield Chapel in the Tottenham Court Road. The street is now re-named Whitfield Street. The building is still there, and is used, I believe, as a furniture repository. My earliest recollections are of this place. As a boy with a good alto voice I used to sing in the Apollonic Society before and after the lectures on Sunday evenings. A Mr. Jennings was our conductor. He was a good musician and had a nice bass voice. When the Institute closed he became Chairman and part proprietor of the old Oxford Music-hall.

My father was a member of the Institute and served on the Committee and occasionally took the chair at the lectures.

I remember Robert Owen. I must have been about eight years old at the time. They used to celebrate his birthday by a tea-fight and a public meeting after, and if he was well enough he used to come and address us. He must have been eighty-five or eighty-six when I last saw him. When the audience saw his venerable and picturesque figure they all stood up and cheered until he had taken his seat at the table where the cubes and diagrams were placed to illustrate his social policy.

Another interesting event was the tea and public meeting on the anniversary of Thomas Paine's birthday. I think the present-day Freethinkers would do well if they did the same, at any rate, have the public meeting. It would do the movement good, I believe, for Paine was a truly great man and ought not to be forgotten.

At the risk of being called garrulous I think I ought to mention that there were classes attached to the Institution that did a lot of good to young people: singing, elocution, dancing, French, writing, and arithmetic. There was likewise a large coffee-room where debates were sometimes held and chess and draughts available.

The Apollonic Society used to have a concert on Christmas morning to a crowded audience. We were sometimes criticized by some Freethinkers for, in addition to part songs, we sang choruses from the oratorios, and after a Freethought lecture it seemed strange to hear "Hallelujah" or "Thanks be to God." I have been haunted all my life with these sacred themes.

For over thirty years I was in the Royal Choral Society, and, of course, we had to sing these things whether we believed them or not, and it was quite a nice change to sing in Hiawatha and works of that character.

I enclose two or three handbills of the John Street Institute. One is the last that was printed before the removal to new premises in Cleveland Street, Fitzroy Square. Most of the speakers at this last meeting were lecturers at the Institute, and I have heard nearly all of them. Thomas Cooper used to draw large audiences. He took for his subjects History and Biography. He was never very militant, so I was not very surprised when he became a Baptist. Henry Tyrrel was a fine

elocutionist and lectured on the poets and dramatists. I recollect one Sunday evening he recited the whole of "Macbeth," and the choir sang Lock's music with echo effects behind a curtain. Dr. Sexton dealt with scientific matters, and Ernest Jones was a fiery orator.

"Iconoclast" was, of course, Charles Bradlaugh, and I well remember the spell he threw on the audience when he spoke.

I knew Mr. G. J. Holyoake and his brother Austin very well. Austin Holyoake was one of the most amiable of men and a very fine character, and it was a great loss to the society when he died at an early age. Mr. Moss, your contributor, gave some interesting and instructing reminiscences in the *Freethinker* a short time ago, so I will say no more; perhaps I have said too much already.

ANDREW CLARKE.

Acid Drops.

It is almost impossible to make Christians appreciate the meaning of justice where their religion is concerned. In England they are not content unless they are allowed to impose their will on others through Sunday laws and the like. And in France the Catholic Church is issuing manifestoes against the Government because it is proceeding with its work of the complete secularization of the schools. The Bishops are organizing a strike against the Government, and there is all the usual talk of tyranny, because the Church may not be allowed to have its religion thrust down the necks of children at the public expense. The French Government is, we are glad to see, standing firm, and in the long run the French public will support it. The following manifesto has been issued by the Radical and Radical-Socialist groups in the Chamber:—

It is an appeal for a revolt against the law, an appeal to civil war. By its insolent challenge to right, reason, and modern thought, this manifesto of the Bishops is akin to the Syllabus of Pius IX. Like it, it condemns all our educational laws, as well as liberty of conscience and the rights of the State; like it, it is the antithesis of the declaration of the rights of man. All laws demand the respect and obedience of all Frenchmen. The "laicity laws" are laws like any others, and we call the country to witness that they interfere in no way with liberty of conscience. The Cardinals' manifesto, on the other hand, is its very negation.

Repeating the odious accusation which was levelled before the war against the secular schools, the Cardinals declare that the educational law "deceives the child's intelligence, perverts its will, and destroys its conscience." That is a libel on the great majority of our citizens and, in particular, on the soldiers who, with their masters, did honour on the field of battle to the system of education of our Republican State.

We urge the Government to reply to this provocation by applying the Republican and secular laws without flinching. We urge Republicans to take up this challenge, to unite and organize, in order to protect the rights and liberties of the people which are threatened to-day by the narrowest spirit of intolerance and fanaticism which has been seen in France for fifty years.

According to the last statistics issued for British India there are in that area about four and a half millions of Christians out of a total population of 316 millions. That does not appear much considering the millions of money sent out to convert the natives, the thousands of missionaries at work, the fact that the Christian religion is the creed of the governing class, and that bribes of all sorts, from free medical attention to doles of various kinds, are dispensed. Anyone may calculate how long it will take to convert India at that rate. And then it would leave out of account the growth of Freethinking in India, and the fact that the newer generation of the peoples have developed a very strong movement against Christianity. Educated Hindoos are not blind to the inroads that modern knowledge have made in all forms of religious belief, and in Christianity in particular. Still, we are not expecting the missionaries to give up. It is too profitable a business for many for that to happen.

Addresses made and papers read at the Conference of the Student Christian Movement, held early this year, have been published in a half-crown volume under the title of the *World Task of the Christian Church*. In the address delivered by the chairman (Dr. Temple, Bishop of Manchester), he points out many of the causes of social friction that exists to-day—national suspicions, class antagonisms, and the attitude of the white races to the coloured peoples of the world. He proceeds:—

These are some of the leading problems of the world of our time. And while many forces are working the other way, such as the League of Nations, yet there are forces at work which make it possible to anticipate a time in the not far distant future when a class war will break out in some half-dozen European nations; the other nations will take advantage of their helpless state to reduce them to a struggling vassalage; and, while Europe is thus distracted by a double internal conflict, great racial risings will throw all European culture except its scientific apparatus out of Asia and Africa, and then turn upon Europe itself, so that throughout the world civilization perishes in a weltering chaos. Such an issue may not be probable; but it is not impossible and would not be undeserved.

The bishop having thus stated the problem, offers his solution. As one would naturally expect, it is to "seek in Jesus Christ, the Lord and Saviour of all men, Himself the truly representative Man, the grounds of mutual understanding and sympathy with all those whom we find to be divided from ourselves by any barrier of temperament, or social outlook, or national tradition, or racial inheritance." But we would remind Dr. Temple that in every war for the last fifteen hundred years that has been waged between Christian nations, both sets of combatants have invoked divine help in their "just war," and had no difficulty in demonstrating, to their own satisfaction, at least, that their waging war on their fellow Christians is a profoundly Christian duty. Christianity has provoked many wars, but it has never averted them.

The same thing is true of class antagonism. Both trade union leaders and "captains of industry" can be found prepared to prove from the Bible that they are little short of the angels in their rectitude, and that their attempt to advantage their class at the expense of the other is justifiable on the basis of Christian morality. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of English working men never dream of going to church, and bother very little at all about religion. So that Christianity is scarcely likely to make them more tolerant or kindly—even supposing it possessed those soporific qualities. As a matter of fact history can provide examples in which religious differences have merely exacerbated class differences. Such was the case in this country during the Roundhead and Cavalier period. The former, largely representative of the small yeoman farmer and the rising merchant and manufacturing class, and the latter more representative of the ancient landed aristocracy, were already antagonised by their different economic desires and ideals. On top of this came a religious difference, the former being, of course, of the staid Puritan type, that has reached its efflorescence in certain of the American big business men of to-day; whilst the latter, conservative in religion as all else, remained Anglicans and lovers of un-Christian amusements. And without doubt a good deal of the bitterness of the civil war proceeded from these religious differences.

Christianity, for all its talk about the brotherhood of man, has been an equal failure where the coloured races are concerned. Before the abolition of negro slavery priests in plenty could be found to justify the treating of their coloured brothers in Christ as chattels. And to-day we have not noticed any Christian movement which has done anything to diminish the antagonisms that come from contact of white and coloured races. In brief, as a force making for social welfare, Christianity is a proven failure.

Says the *Christian World*, "The chasm between science and theology.....scarcely seems to yawn nowadays." This is because Sir Oliver Lodge thinks we may have ethereal bodies as well as material ones, and Canon Peter Green says he believes there will be a resurrection of the body and a real bodily life, with all its sensations and feelings, though the spiritual body in heaven would be very different from the material body in Manchester. But that does not seem very much after all. For, as Sir Oliver Lodge believes ether to be a form of matter, the distinction between a material body and an ethereal one does not seem very great. And one wonders whether Canon Peter Green can see that if things are different they cannot be the same? If he can see this, his statement becomes nonsense. If he cannot, then he will go on believing. But for the sake of others we may point out that if the body we have in heaven is very different from the one we have here, and if we no longer have the same feelings and sensations that we have, then it will not be us at all, and the resurrection does not amount to much. After all, if in some future state I no longer look the same, think the same, or feel the same as I do now, then it is not me at all. I die and someone else is resurrected. Identity and difference are not the same on earth, and if they are in heaven then the absurdities of the Christian creed will at length have found a suitable environment.

The Bishop of Exeter is gravely concerned over the number of homeless poor who wander from casual ward to casual ward, and he has addressed a circular letter to the Devonshire Board of Guardians on their behalf. He suggests that something should be done to provide for spiritual ministrations for them on Sunday, since in its absence their conversation is apt to lead to their "speaking very bitterly about the present condition of society and their well-to-do neighbours." We are rather puzzled as to how the payments of parsons to attend to the spiritual needs(?) of the casuals will do much to alleviate their condition. True, if they are sufficiently dosed with genuine Christianity they may become reconciled to their lot. We believe that some wicked people have compared Christianity to a "dope" before now. We commend the Bishop of Exeter's solicitude about the religious conditions of the casuals to the pious Mr. Philip Snowden and all others whom it may concern.

It is reported that the legislature of Tennessee, a State well known for the Christian love it shows to negroes, has passed a law prohibiting the teaching of evolution in any State school, and also the teaching on any account of creation other than that given in Genesis. Another Bill is before the same legislature making it incumbent upon all teachers to profess a belief in the deity of Jesus Christ before they can draw a salary. And yet we are in the habit of speaking of the progress of the human race! Why, there are many, many millions that have not yet emerged from the Stone Age, and one feels quite sure that if the owner of the skull recently discovered in South Africa could be brought back to earth he would feel quite at home in Tennessee, and in many of the Christian conventions in this country.

One of the cases reported from Lourdes was recently examined by doctors from the Hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth, St. John's Wood. Father Woodcock, who led a number of English pilgrims to the shrine, reported that a girl who had suffered from a septic hand, bathed her wrist in the waters, when the wrist healed and the fingers which had been bent, straightened. The doctors reported the case as not proven. This is what one might have expected, but it says something for the boasted culture of our time that it should need a committee of medical men to pronounce on such a case. A large part of the population seem but a trifle removed from savages, and when this is the case with religion, its reaction on politics and sociology may well account for much that occurs.

Quite seriously we commend this point of view to the consideration of those of the political leaders—of all parties—who are always claiming they have the good of the people at heart. The solution of many, if not all, of our political and social troubles ultimately turns upon the capacity of the vote-using man and woman for clear thinking. And if men's minds are retained in a state of childish inefficiency in one direction they are not unlikely to act childishly in others. People who imagine they may be saved politically by meaningless formulas about the example of Jesus, or the uncritical following of legendary records, are well prepared to be fooled by political formulas that are not of greater value than the religion that is held up for their admiration. There is a contagious quality in mental habits to which the genuine reformer cannot pay too great attention.

The Rev. Dr. O'Doherty, Bishop of Galway and Kilmacduagh, in his Lenten pastoral letter, has forbidden every Roman Catholic in his diocese to organize or take part in Saturday night dancing. It would be interesting to know exactly how many dances of this kind the bishop has visited, and just exactly what is his objection to people amusing themselves by a form of recreation that is vastly older than his religion. There appears to be a general consensus of opinion among medical men that dancing is a healthy exercise; and certainly it is a popular form of amusement to-day. Probably the bishop's prohibition is only one more example of the unhealthy attitude the Christian churches take in all matters relating to sex. Because dancing brings men and women into promiscuous acquaintance one with another, and because dancing is a form of enjoyment in which they must participate together, therefore it must be banned. If men and women dance together, and play tennis together, and generally come to share their amusements, a really healthy relationship between the sexes might be established, and the half-veiled, indecent attitude inculcated by Christianity destroyed. The churches—and particularly the Catholic Church, have keen noses for any movement, great or small, that may weaken their hold on the community.

But the really curious thing is that even the Roman Church, which claims to be one and indivisible, and in brief the only genuine article, is divided in this matter. In London we know of Catholic Churches which organize dances and socials for their own members! But the Roman Church has never lacked this accommodating ability. Catholics in London are probably more broad-minded in virtue of their environment, than are their brethren in the villages and towns of Galway. And so they quite naturally demand dancing, and will go elsewhere to gratify that desire if the church refuses to supply the requisite opportunity. And so Roman Catholic priests in London cater for those members of their congregations who enjoy modern dancing. One sometimes wonders whether there is any limit to this divinely-inspired organization's capacity to adapt itself, chameleon-like, to local conditions, spite all its heady talk about dogmas and revelation.

The Dean of Manchester has discovered that cinemas have reduced drunkenness. Also he has discovered that in the pictures generally "virtue triumphs and vice gets the worst of it." Perhaps now, seeing that many millions of people never dream of attending divine service on Sunday, the dean will press upon his fellow clerics the desirability of opening places of amusement on that day. In many of our slum districts it is scarcely to be wondered at that the man is only too eager to get out of the one-room tenement mockingly called "home," when he is at leisure. And since this type of man never gives a moment's thought to churches (except so far as marriages and deaths are concerned), he drifts into one of those dreadful little public-houses, that one may pass in the poorest quarters of our great cities—appalling places that reek of the stale fumes of alcohol and smoke. It is in giving him an alternative place of amusement, and a place moreover to which he can take his wife and kiddies, that the cinema has undoubtedly done much to diminish drunkenness. If the bishop is really sin-

cere, therefore, in his desire to "uplift" the masses, he should, as we have said, press for the opening of cinemas on Sundays. It will, we can assure him, do little harm to the congregations of urban churches. For the people who would go to picture palaces on Sunday would never be coaxed into a church.

Lord Sands, who was one of the speakers at the annual meeting of the National Bible Society in Edinburgh, wishes that his fellow Christians should cheapen the Bible "so as to place it for a small coin in the hands of the people." But he warns them not to "cheapen and vulgarise its language." That, so far as many passages in Holy Writ are concerned, would scarcely be possible. But then more nonsense is talked about the literary qualities of the Bible than any other dozen well known works of literature taken together.

On the other hand we see that the Bishop of Manchester—daring soul!—has led the crusade against the Sunday opening of cinemas in his district. This bold warrior has had the support of the Free Churches, and all other licensed Sunday traders of a similar kind, who find their monopoly threatened. These people are not to be persuaded by the example of other places where Sunday opening is permitted, and the younger people are the better for it. Their one invincible argument is that it keeps people away from Church. And how can one expect people to go to Church if there is anywhere else open for them. After all, the performance in a Church, with the Bishop of Manchester giving a watered down representation of the High Priest of Wallapoo conjuring rain out of a cloudless sky is not in with what can be done by film experts. True one can see the Bishop's performance without paying for a seat, but it does not cost much to go to a cinema, and the difference in the quality of the performers is well worth it.

On the gentle art of having it both ways the exponents of Christianity are the best conscious or unconscious examples. The Rev. W. Cass, of Blyth, Northumberland, declares that there are housing conditions in the north which would be a disgrace to the jungle. May we suggest that a creed with injunctions to take no thought for the morrow finds its logical conclusions in the conditions complained of, and if parsons all expend a little more time and thought on affairs in this life, the next will take care of itself.

In a notice of a book entitled *The Menace of Colour*, by J. W. Gregory, F.R.S., D.Sc., the reviewer makes the following significant mention:—

The average Englishman's faith in the inborn superiority of the white race over the coloured races of the world differs in degree rather than in kind from his belief in his own individual and national superiority over all sorts and conditions of foreigners. The Christian churches of this country no doubt have their searchings of heart over the colour question in the many lands to which their missionary activities extend; and they cannot quite forget that, in the human shape which Christ assumed, He himself was, as it would now be termed, "of Asiatic descent."

When it is possible to dispose finally of all the imbecilities and aberrations following on the imposition of Christianity, the races may reach that point attained by Booker Washington, a negro, who hoped to see the white and coloured races "as united in work as the palm of the hand, and as separated in social relations as the fingers." But Booker Washington's kingdom was not in heaven.

We notice that the Rev. Mr. Maguire, of Western Ireland, has been taken to task by Mr. P. B. MacMorrhough who is interested in a scheme to give practical help in the real tragedy of want in Donegal. The reverend gentleman does not want any outside interference, and one need not be a Sherlock Holmes to see the reason. His flock might discover that there are many people in the world who do not look on human beings through the eyes of the Pope.

To Correspondents.

SINE CERE.—Next week. Pleased to hear from you.

T. M. MOSLEY.—Sorry to hear such news of our old friend. Am writing.

E. CARSON.—The copy of the paper was sent you with letter regretting our inability to send the information you required.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (March 22) Mr. Cohen will lecture twice in the Town Hall, Pendleton. In the afternoon, at 3, his subject will be "Plain Talk to Christians." In the evening, at 7, he will lecture on "The Logic of Faith and the Logic of Fact." Pendleton usually provides good audiences, and we have no reason to anticipate any departure from this rule. Cars from Manchester pass the door of the hall.

Apropos of this Pendleton visit a local friend sends us a manifesto issued by a Major Jones, who was one of the candidates at the last municipal elections. One of the reasons why this individual considers he had a claim upon the electors was that he "led the attack" against the proposal to place the *Freethinker*, a filthy and disgusting anti-Christian paper, upon the tables of the public reading-rooms. The manifesto is accompanied by a portrait of Major Jones, and if his face is any index to his character, we should say that he is much more powerful about the jaw than about the upper part of the head. We do not care to defend the *Freethinker* against the charges of being filthy and disgusting; they are the kind of lies that men of the type of Major Jones feel they can tell with safety, because they know they will appeal to a certain type of religionist with votes. Whether Major Jones was elected to the Salford Council or not we do not know, but we offer our sincere sympathy to any public body that has to put up with men of this peculiarly slanderous and unscrupulous type. On the whole we are glad he is a champion of Christianity. He justifies the worst that its greatest enemies have said against it.

How these bigots do hate the *Freethinker*. Reply to it they cannot. That would require rather more intelligence than the average bigot possesses. So they go on hating it, for it is the one paper in this country that asks for no mercy, and makes no compromise. For over forty years it has been a thorn in their sides, and the greatest compliment to its work is the hatred of those who oppose it. A friend of ours who has done a deal of propagandist work connected with all sorts of movements, said to us the other day that the opposition he had met with in other directions was nothing compared with the opposition he had met since he set out

to attack Christianity, and particularly since he had made it his business to push the *Freethinker*. We could quite believe him. The *Freethinker* is the one journal the enemies of progress hate, because it is the one that goes to the root of all our ills. In the absence of clear thinking reforms are most difficult to get, and even when obtained, do but little good in the absence of this one condition.

The Moncure Conway Memorial lecture this year will be delivered by Sir Arthur Keith, who will take for his subject, "The Religion of a Darwinist." The address is certain to be interesting, but the less genuine religion it has about it the more instructive it is likely to be. The Right Hon. J. M. Robertson will take the chair, and the lecture will commence at 7. The place of meeting is South Place Institute. Admission is free.

On Tuesday, March 10, at Marlborough Street Police Court, Mr. Guy Aldred was fined £2 for having used insulting words in Hyde Park on February 15. The result of the case came to hand after our last week's issue was made up. Mr. Aldred was charged under the Police Act of 1839—an Act which, by the way, could never have been intended to apply to public meetings—with having said, in the course of a speech, "Poor God, he wants the police here to be archangels, to work miracles to keep the crowd in order, and to do his work for him." "That flag (the Union Jack) stands for all that is rotten. All they want under that flag is to keep you poor and ignorant and you working men fodder for the cannon," and when the National Anthem was sung at another meeting, "Fancy anyone taking off his hat to such rubbish." Someone called out, "You ought to be locked up," whereupon a policeman arrested Mr. Aldred. The magistrate decided to ignore the remark about the deity as not being insulting, but fined him £2 for the other expressions, as calculated to cause a breach of the peace.

This is one of many cases that have occurred in Hyde Park, and it is clear that in that quarter the police have marked out certain meetings for their attention, and in that case nothing is easier than for them to get what they want. Actual disorder is not proved; it is apparently enough for someone to call out that a speaker ought to be shot or locked up, the kind of interruption that might occur at any meeting, whether held in the open air or otherwise, for a magistrate to convict. This means, in effect, that the right of public meeting is at the mercy of any single individual, providing his interruption favours a particular side. And the Marlborough Street magistrate might have put to himself the question why is it that this kind of case is so common in Hyde Park, and so uncommon in other parts of London. Either there is a much lower class attending Hyde Park meetings, or the police are offensively officious, and so foment disorder instead of preventing it. Perhaps, if the opposite plan were tried of arresting one or two for disturbing public meetings, beneficial results might follow. Those who stand and listen to public speakers should be prepared for things with which they disagree, and if they cannot bear to hear them they should stay away. One would also like to know how it comes that the police are so ready at certain meetings and so unready at others. There is certainly no lack of material at Christian Evidence and other meetings if the police are genuinely concerned with the maintenance of public order rather than the carrying on of a vendetta against certain speakers or platforms.

Meanwhile, if we may venture on a word of advice, it is that speakers, knowing that the police are awaiting opportunities, should studiously avoid giving them the chance for action. This can very easily be done by anyone who has the least skill in addressing audiences. It is not a matter of great difficulty to use language that will be perfectly clear, that will fully express one's meaning, and which will not give a chance to anyone whose purpose it is to create disorder. Above all the policy of bandying words with other meetings that are going on in proximity is inadvisable

from every point of view, and should be carefully avoided. Mr. Aldred conducted his own case. It should be added, in answer to an enquiry, that the National Secular Society was not consulted in any way by Mr. Aldred, and that neither assistance nor advice was asked for by him.

Publication of the complimentary letter addressed to us from Weston-super-Mare appears to have moved another Christian into action. He writes to us complaining of our "blasted blasphemous and scurrilous rag" with which someone has been bothering him. Evidently, and even if we are not eloquent ourselves, we are the cause of eloquence in others. We have no power to stop anyone sending this kind Christian the *Freethinker*, but it may console him somewhat that if he gets our "blasted blasphemous" publication, we receive plenty of idiotic essays in Christian divinity that would disgrace a community of Swift's Yahoos. We sympathize with our Leamington correspondent, but we are evidently fellow sufferers in a world where the best of us are exposed to annoyance. We can only offer him the consolation that as we pride ourselves on being too intelligent to be affected by any of the tracts we receive, so our correspondent may be too stupid to have his faith disturbed by anything he reads in these columns. So that no real harm will be done to either of us.

Christianity and Sex

We have often thought of the works we should like to see on our shelves, but which have not yet been written. For instance, *The History of the Conflict between Christianity and Science*. It is true that Draper and White have written upon the subject, but they by no means exhausted it, with the additional drawback that they were both Theists—White fervently so—and although their works contain much valuable material, the really definite work will have to be done by an Atheist.

The same may be said of Lange's *History of Materialism*. Lange was not an Atheist, and his work was written over fifty years ago. Another work would be *The History of the "Dark Ages" of Christianity, the Ages of Faith*. And another *The Conflict of Christianity with Humanitarianism*. Also *Christianity and War*. And *Christianity and Progress*. A very large volume would be required to record *The History of Christian Persecution*. And, however much one feels urged to undertake the work, in the absence of someone better qualified, still one feels that it is not worth while taking the time and trouble required by such an undertaking, which, when finished, you are unable to find a publisher for.

Another valuable work would be *The Warfare of Christianity with the Sexual Instinct*, with its resulting degradation of woman and deterioration of the race. The last-named work suggested itself after reading Ettie Rout's excellent little book, *Sexual Health and Birth Control*, just published by the Pioneer Press, a book that every Freethinker, every humanitarian, and every lover of progress and betterment should obtain and circulate.

Miss Rout is not an armchair reformer, detached from practical working life. Sir Bryan Donkin, the distinguished physician, who contributes a "Foreword" to the book, tells of the good work she did among our armies in France, and adds: "I have since had numerous opportunities of knowing of her untiring efforts to do all that is possible for the cause of minimizing the disastrous results of the venereal poison among civil populations generally." To which may be added the testimonials of Sir W. Arbuthnot Lane, Consulting Surgeon to Guy's Hospital, Professor Bickerton, Dr. Barbara Crawford, and

Dr. C. V. Drysdale, which appeared in our columns of March 1 and 8.

The harm inflicted by the Christian system of belief, by its opposition to science and progress, by its crusades and persecutions, by its opposition to humanitarianism and betterment of this life as opposed to the interests of the future life, have been very great and entailed untold suffering upon the human race, but it is questionable if all these things have caused so much misery, deterioration and degradation as that caused by the Christian teaching regarding sex. Not only has it been the cause of a Niagara of suffering in the past, but it is causing endless suffering and degradation to-day by its stubborn opposition to the application of available scientific knowledge to the vital and pressing problems of venereal disease and birth control. Upon this point Ettie Rout speaks out with refreshing force and courage. After dealing with the problems raised by the War, and the need for a revision of moral standards, for which the Church was quite unfitted, for the reason as she truthfully observes:—

It is Christianity which is responsible for the peculiarly false and wicked idea that there is something essentially horrid and sinful about Sex. The great Freethinkers have always been essentially clean-minded about the sexual problems of the day: the great dignitaries of the Church have always had their minds cluttered up with religious filth: marriage according to the Church Service being only slightly less obnoxious than prostitution.

Professor Huxley once said that when he set out to explore certain provinces of natural knowledge, he had not proceeded far in any direction before he came up against a comminatory notice-board, "No Thoroughfare. By order. Moses." The same experience has befallen the social and humanitarian reformers. Always there appears the sinister figure of the ecclesiastic, barring the path to reform, turning the pioneers back, and setting the crowd to howl them down. When Sir James Simpson advocated the use of chloroform for the relief of pain during childbirth, he was denounced from pulpit after pulpit, the clergy declaring that to use chloroform in such cases was "to avoid one part of the primeval curse on woman" imposed on woman by God in the Garden of Eden. But the clergy are like the Bourbons; they learn nothing and forget nothing; they are still pursuing their obstructive tactics as of old. As Miss Rout points out:—

The principal sexual diseases are syphilis and gonorrhœa. They are both preventible diseases, and they are not being prevented. It is the religious people, not the irreligious people, who are spreading sexual disease in England. The religious people are deliberately preventing the prevention of sexual disease, simply because it is sexual. They are afraid that if there is no sexual disease there might be more sexual intercourse, and they hate sexual intercourse, and therefore they endeavour to maintain, not to abolish, the risk of infection. The result of these religious efforts is a vast flood of misery and disablement and death, and an actual increase of immorality, as I shall later show.

The pious are afraid that if the knowledge of how to prevent venereal disease became known, it would enable men to be immoral without suffering for it. They know that the wicked are doomed to suffer in hell for their sins hereafter, but they want them to suffer hell on earth as well.

Theoretically, Christianity is the religion of love, but in practice it always works out as the religion of hate. And all the while the innocent children, who have not sinned, born with the germs of syphilis in them, are maimed, crippled, disfigured, blinded, damaged in all sorts of horrible ways. All through the operation of this diabolical religion!

An experienced Australian medical officer, cited by Miss Rout, declares that, with the scientific knowledge we now possess, "probably syphilis would be entirely extirpated from the civilized world in a single generation." And he declares it to be a crime not to make the method of prevention publicly known. Few people are aware—I was not myself until I read Miss Rout's book—that the Venereal Diseases Act of 1917, definitely prohibits chemists from selling venereal preventives as such. Any chemist doing so commits a crime punishable by a heavy fine and a term of imprisonment for two years! As Miss Rout observes:—

It is actually a legal crime in England to prevent syphilis in the only practical ways in which it can be prevented, namely, by spreading a knowledge of, and providing the things that prevent syphilis.

It would require the pen of a Swift or a Voltaire to do justice to this state of things. Much more might be said upon this subject, but we have the second part of the book to deal with yet, namely, Birth Control.

Here again we find the Church blocking the path. The Roman Catholic Church absolutely forbids the use of contraceptives, and although one or two exceptional men like Dean Inge, the most intellectual man in the established church to-day, rising superior to their religion and the workings of Providence, have uttered a warning as to the dangers of unlimited propagation, yet the great mass of the clergy range themselves under the banner of the Bishop of London in opposing birth control. The action of the Bishop of London is particularly despicable. Here is a man unmarried, well housed, well clothed, and well fed, preaching to the poor struggling labourer the wickedness of artificial methods of birth control. Why doesn't he set the example and have a family of his own? Why don't all the clergy? The married clergy take care not to have large families and, at the same time, denounce the use of preventatives! What hypocrisy.

In conclusion, we must pay tribute not only to the outstanding ability and literary quality of Miss Rout's book, but to the greater quality of courage that was required to write it. Every Freethinker should obtain a copy and circulate it.

W. MANN.

The Moral Bane of the East

It is perhaps quite right and proper that exponents of "Militant Freethought" in Europe and America should direct their polemics more especially against that body of religious belief which ostensibly prevails in those two continents. But this attitude seems very often to blind them to the absurdities, falsities and cruelties of the great oriental religious systems, and to suggest comparisons between these systems and Christianity greatly to the disadvantage of the latter. In the columns of the *Freethinker* one sometimes meets with opinions which seem to suggest that Christianity is quite the worse of all possible religions, and that Hinduism and Buddhism are deserving of more respect and consideration from the modern Rationalist because of their supposed freedom from the spirit of intolerance and oppression. They are described as "non-persecuting" religions, and hence their ethical qualities are held up to our admiration as being superior to those of the so-called Religion of Love. While disavowing any preference or sympathy for Christianity over these other religions, I propose to examine this view in a spirit of impartiality naturally arising from an equal distaste for all of them.

In discussing the great religious systems of the East as compared with Christianity, too little consideration seems to have been given to that most pernicious of human superstitions, the institution of Caste. This is so intimately bound up with Oriental religious ideas, and is so closely associated with the religious spirit of the East that it should be regarded as essentially a religious system, and not a mere social system as Western minds are usually accustomed to regard it. The Indian Caste system is fundamentally based on and derives all its invincible strength and persistence from religious sanctions, and hence the ethic of Hinduism cannot be justly appraised, except in relation to Caste. And looked at in this relation, the ethic of the cults of Brahma, Siva, and Vishnu assumes a dark and sinister aspect indeed. The intolerances, oppressions and cruelties of Christianity were, at their worst, directed against individuals on certain specified grounds such as heresy, witchcraft, or blasphemy, but the Caste intolerances, oppressions, and cruelties of Hindu religion, less atrocious indeed, but more enduring, have lain for ages and still lie as a dead weight of suffering on entire communities innocent of any wrong, even in the eyes of their oppressors, and have no conceivable grounds in reason of morality, but are based on conceptions of pure mysticism.

Even the most atrocious persecutions of the Middle Ages in Europe had some sort of logical excuse, for if it were true, as the persecutors firmly believed, that the denial of certain religious doctrines would entail the penalty of eternal damnation, the existence of unbelievers and heretics would be such an appalling menace to the welfare of humanity that no measures for their extermination and for warning society against their teaching or example would be too strong. But the oppressions due to Caste cannot claim even such a hypothetical justification as this, for they are based on neither justice nor expediency, are directed against neither speech nor action, but are incurred through the mere accident of birth. Moreover, while the spirit of Christian persecution was but a passing episode of Western social evolution, and darkened but a limited period of European history, the spirit of Caste has persisted in the East from century to century, from age to age, and still broods unchanged in its inexorable severity over millions of human beings, deadening all the natural impulses of justice and poisoning all the springs of kindness and humanity. Such a system must inevitably affect the entire social life in its political, moral, and intellectual aspects, and to form a just estimate of its influence it will be convenient briefly to consider these.

The bearing of Caste on the political institutions of oriental peoples is of particular interest at the present time in view of the demands of Indian agitators for democratic government and "swaraj." The efficient use of a democratic franchise demands a somewhat higher standard of intellectual and moral enlightenment than can be expected to exist under the blighting influence of Caste. It demands a deep sense of the fundamental unity and solidarity of the State and a strong conviction of social duty and responsibility. It demands that the State be regarded, not as a mere collection of individuals possessing individual rights and pursuing individual interests, but as an organized and corporate whole in which the rights of each are always subordinate to the rights of all. No oriental race dominated by the Caste idea—however socially and intellectually "civilized" it might be—would have evolved the theory of democracy for itself. It is purely a product of Western civilization—a product of a different line of social evolution from that of the East and the expression of an entirely different social spirit. And to this social spirit the terrible superstition of Caste is abso-

lutely alien. It is an absolute negation of the very foundations of social and political life in free and self-governing communities. How can the spirit of democracy exist in communities where members of certain classes are outcasts from the moment of their birth and must remain so until death relieves them of their degradation? Where to such classes all rights are denied, where all intercourse is contamination, where the falling of a shadow can pollute, and where a touch can defile for ever?

This horrible idea is quite incomprehensible to the European mind. English democracy, with all its imperfections, shows nothing of this atrocious spirit. In the wildest political meeting, with uproar and fist-cuffs on the floor of the hall and missiles flying at the speaker's head, there is yet beneath it all the basic idea that all are rightfully members of one common social organism. Ignorant and stupid though such a crowd may be I would rather trust my social and political interests to it than a crowd of refined, intelligent, and self-righteous Brahmans or Sivites who would refuse to save the life of a drowning Sudra lest they be polluted by his touch.

And to all appearances this monstrous perversion of the oriental mind and conscience is incurable. The two commonest arguments against the granting of democratic institutions to such communities as those of India and Ceylon are, first that their educational progress is not yet sufficiently developed, and second that their racial and national antagonisms are too strong to admit of their properly exercising the privileges of self-government. Both these are undoubtedly strong arguments, but the objections on which they are based are not, in the nature of things, insuperable. It is conceivable that a system of general education, widely diffused, liberal in spirit, and properly adopted to the character and genius of the people might in course of time fit them for a popular form of government. And it is also conceivable that, under the influence of such an education, national and racial barriers may eventually be broken down to an extent sufficient to admit of a sense of social unity and to allow scope for a true spirit of democracy.

A. E. MADDOCK.

(To be Concluded.)

Correspondence.

WEMBLEY AND SABBATARIANISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—On questioning a candidate at the recent L.C.C. Elections with reference to the opening of places of recreation on Sundays, I was informed that he was not in favour because (1) there was no public demand; (2) that Sunday was a divinely appointed day of rest. To my surprise most of the audience applauded this ridiculous statement.

Now this is one of the principle arguments put forward by Christians in support of their opposition to the opening of the Empire Exhibition on Sunday, viz., that the "day of rest" is a divine institution, founded by God, and dating from the origin of the earth. Like most of the arguments based upon the legends contained in the Bible, the argument that the Sabbath is of divine origin has no foundation whatever. The Jews' Sabbath or the Christian Sunday, like all other feasts and festivals, had a purely human origin, and was originally a pagan festival. No mention whatever of it is to be found in the early books of the Bible; but from the time of the legendary Antediluvians, up to the Exodus of the Jews out of Egypt, we do not find any mention of Sabbath observance. It is first mentioned in Exodus xvi. where it appears as one of the earliest commands issued by Moses to the "Children of Israel" soon after they had quitted Egypt. Now Egypt, as is well known, was the cradle of all the mysteries of Paganism. Astronomy,

under the guise of astrology, was a very important branch of knowledge, and as the Egyptians believed that the planets exerted an influence upon mundane affairs, they naturally paid great attention to the movements of heavenly bodies, and like the Hindoos, Chaldeans, and Eastern nations generally, believed that each day of the week was under the special patronage of one or another of the planets. According to Herodotus, the Egyptians were the first to name the days of the week in honour of the several planets that were then known (according to their system of the world the sun was considered as one of them). They accordingly divided the week, naming each day after the planet which they supposed presided over it. As the sun was the most conspicuous they placed it first, and gave to each planet a day.

The seventh day of the week was presided over by Saturn, and was observed as a day of rest, it being considered by them as such an inauspicious day that no work, journeys, or marriages, etc., were to take place.

Owing to their long sojourn in Egypt the Jews were of course acquainted with this custom, hence upon their arrival in the wilderness, Moses—whom we are told was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians—proclaimed the same day as a day of rest, not, however, in honour to Saturn, but to the "Lord their God."

It does not appear to have struck the average Christian that if the week is of divine origin, as they maintain, no nomenclature for the days is to be found in the Bible. God is represented as giving the most minute instructions to the Jews and yet never mentions the days of the week. Christians have thus been compelled to borrow pagan names for a division of time assumed by them to be of divine origin.

That the Egyptians dedicated the seventh day of the week to Saturn is beyond dispute, and as no mention of the Sabbath observance is mentioned in the Bible until the Jews had quitted Egypt, we may safely assume that they borrowed the custom from the Egyptians. Thus we see that the origin of the "day of rest" is not of divine origin, but an astronomical, or, to be more precise, an astrological one.

Such being the origin of the Sabbath, it is difficult to see how this old Mosaic Law can have any binding effect on us in the twentieth century. This law was given as a compromise and to prevent the Jews from worshipping Saturn, which in all probability they would have done had there not been a law to prevent it.

No doubt many of the advanced clergy, whom our daily press are fond of calling "deep and daring thinkers," know this. What is their real objection, then, to the opening of places of recreation on Sundays? To say it will increase Sunday labour is sheer humbug; conducting services in the churches, chapels, Sunday-schools, and other religious meetings involves Sunday labour. The answer is obvious. The Empire Exhibition is a rival exhibition. The clergy know full well that they cannot successfully compete with the Exhibition, and therefore they say to their congregations: "Sunday enjoyment is an enemy to your immortal soul; keep away from it lest ye forget God, and—the collection." In plain language, religion is purely artificial, and requires artificial nutrition. Pleasures cannot nourish it, while laughter and enjoyment at a place of amusement acts upon it like a virulent poison. Pleasure creates a distinct dislike for church-going, and that is the whole secret of the Christian prejudice against it. We can only overcome this by making ourselves heard, and following the advice given in this journal a few weeks back: "It is only when they who are in opposition to Christianity make their power felt that they can be assured of approximately fair play. And the sooner Freethinkers get this truth into their heads—and act upon it—the better."

LEONARD MASON.

PAPINI'S CHRIST.

SIR,—I much regret that your contributor, Mr. Mann, so far misunderstands me as to assume that I am any kind of orthodox Christian upholding any dogmatic interpretation of the life of Christ. I am a Freethinker differing from Mr. Mann in this respect, in that I have a deep and genuine regard for the founder of Christianity. A fair experience of many Christian sects and a great deal of reading and thought have led me to

the conviction that Jesus cannot be so easily thrust aside and his teaching so quickly condemned as many Freethinkers seem to imagine. I am no Bible apologist, and the opinions of Peter, James, and Paul command my respect as much as those of Bernard Shaw, Mrs. Eddy, and Mr. Mann himself. That is to say, these opinions are to be judged comparatively, according to the rules of ideal logic and the laws of our common everyday experience.

I must therefore point out that Mr. Mann bases his assertion that Jesus predicted the end of the world as about to occur in his own generation upon such phrases as (Luke ix., 27), "But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Kingdom of God," and (Matthew xvi., 28), "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." I would ask Mr. Mann to point out to me any connection between such phrases and a prediction regarding the end of the world. I confess I cannot see the connection myself. These utterances of Jesus deal with a certain kingdom about which Mr. Mann has nothing to say except that "it has nothing to do with the state of society which Socialists and modern reformers look forward to establishing." In the face of such a tangle of thoughts I am mildly surprised that Mr. Mann considers a charge of "muddle-headedness" to be mere vituperation.

In saying that the early Christians aided and abetted the barbarians in the overthrow of the Roman Empire, I must refer to Mr. Mann's erroneous contention that the Empire was a peaceful and contented one. I do not appeal to the opinions of historians in this issue, but to the facts of history. The mock republic of Rome was based upon a system of slavery of which the revolt of the slaves under Spartacus in 73 B.C. is only a sample of the conditions of the internal Empire. One might recall that on that occasion six thousand captured Spartacists were crucified along the Appian Way. The peace and contentment of the Roman Empire was the peace and contentment of warriors who beat slaves to their will, and of rich patricians who extorted labour and land and life itself from their own countrymen in the name of the Republic. If it was against this way of life that the early Christians threw their weight I am inspired to a greater respect for the founder of their creed, and feel tolerant towards those creed-bound followers of his who waste their spirits in vituperation and invective.

HUBERT C. KNAPP-FISHER.

"ETHICS."

SIR,—In the course of his interesting series of articles on "Ethics," Mr. Bryce suggests (March 8 issue) that the reason why the wild men of Communism are floundering about in a tempestuous, uncharted sea, a danger to themselves and everyone they come into contact with, is because they have cut away the sheet anchor of patriotism, to drift heaven knows where. That they are floundering or a real danger is open to question. It is not unusual for floundering agitators to have a clearly defined programme, and to be in downright, matter-of-fact earnest in pressing it forward. The danger arises from the absence of mere floundering. Their ideas may be considered wrong, but that is another matter. The diabolical policy of Communist prosecution has yet to be proved, and an off-hand phrase or two is not proof. As for patriotism, it cannot be denied that the Red Army has defended the Russian people on many fronts, or that the Soviet Government is anxious to conserve and develop Communism in Russia as well as in other countries. That surely means protecting the homeland. The Keir Hardie incident scarcely fits, as his attitude, unlike that of the Communists, was sentimental, leaving him helpless.

As for Karl Marx being a visionary, it is strange that he should be considered a strong Materialist. Evidently, to appeal to the world's workers to unite means that they should carefully avoid taking action in separate countries. Patriotism, like Religion, is inoculated into children's minds in such a way as to render escape difficult, and in both cases it is difficult to say that the seeming instincts are natural. "Home, sweet home" does not appeal to an enlightened slum dweller, or an

evicted tenant whose furniture is pinded. The links of the British Empire and the Colonies are wonderful. Read about industrial conditions in India and Egypt.

All that is worthy in love of home and country can very well look after itself with slight explanation, easily assimilated.

ALFRED RUSSELL.

DEAN INGE AND THE CEASELESS INTRIGUES OF A POWERFUL CHURCH.

SIR,—Some weeks ago Dean Inge delivered an address at Horsham in support of a proposal to found a University College in Sussex. One passage in the address struck me forcibly. It was omitted in the various reports of the speeches I read, except that in the *Sunday Observer*, while, as it appeared to me, it certainly was worthy of comment. It read as follows:—

Religious wars had half ruined some countries in the past, and we still had to reckon with the ceaseless intrigues of a powerful church as a disruptive agency. If the true story of these intrigues were written, as they probably never would be, it would be one of the blackest pages of modern history.

Now the Dean would not have made this statement without data, and I submit that, having said so much, he should, in the interest of truth, have said more. So far, I have seen no indication that he has yet done so.

During, and especially since the War, many interesting personal experiences have come my way, bearing on international questions. I have been driven to form theories, which I have rigidly tested, paying a great price for knowledge so gained, and some months ago I sent to certain competent persons in this and other countries, with whom I have points of contact, the following suggestion, which I now pass on to readers of the *Freethinker*, who may be interested. The suggestion is—That people with first-class brains, scientific training, and, above all, intellectual honesty, the courage to follow truth wherever it may lead, would find in the following a subject worthy of careful study:—

The activities in various countries of international Clericalism—the Black International—since the War, what time the various sections of the working-class International have been at each others' throats.

M. BRIDGES ADAMS.

CLERICAL SCHOOLS IN RURAL AREAS.

SIR,—I am sorry if I did not understand Mr. Cutner's first letter, but it certainly appeared to me that his expression "All the religion we used to get was a hymn, a prayer, and a little story from the Bible, the whole thing taking at most fifteen minutes a day," did convey that, in his opinion, it was not worthy of much effort to endeavour to abolish it.

I also went to a school which was religious, but if we take into consideration the two mornings each week when the vicar took us in hand for an hour and a half and the numerous holy days when we were marched to church, the religious instruction averaged more than fifteen minutes a day. However, in my opinion, it is not the amount of it, it is the manner in which it is administered which is so harmful.

I am pleased that Mrs. Adams and Mr. Cutner frankly avow in favour of Secular education; that to me seems to be the root of the whole matter; once this is achieved, and the main work of the teacher recognised to be that of encouraging the child to develop and to use all its powers of reasoning, which I suggest is a corollary, it won't much matter what the religious denomination may do out of school hours, especially if we can force them to keep their hands off the infants. I contend that if Christianity can stand the application of reason, then it deserves to stand. Similarly, the question of higher education will, I think, tend to solve itself, a nation taught as children to reason and to probe, instead of to accept, will not for long tolerate the present system with its glaring inequalities.

When Mr. Cutner states that we prefer the class war he is a long way astray. For my part, it is no question of "preferring" the class war; it is simply a matter of recognizing the existence of the fact, and I would suggest that the letters of Mr. Cutner do nothing whatever to veil this fact. Even his parable of the char-

woman and the bank clerk seems to breathe of it, and if it correctly mirrors motive, then I can say that I know many Socialists whose advocacy of Birth Control is much more worthy.

With the statement "that it is simply preposterous—in fact criminal—for the Labour Party not to insist on the absolute necessity for Birth Control," I am in agreement, and if I was unfair to accuse Mr. Cutner of political bias, may I plead in extenuation that I had not noticed the bold and outspoken advocacy of Birth Control on the part of the Capitalist Parties.

T. DRAGE.

SIR,—Will Mr. Cutner tell us why "it is simply preposterous—in fact criminal—for the Labour Party not to insist on the absolute necessity for Birth Control among its members" any more than for the Conservative Party or the Liberal Party? Is he not showing a tendency to rave on this subject of his objections to Labour Party policy, and would he not do better to air his objections in a political, instead of in a non-political, paper?

J. HUTCHISON.

P.S.—Despite your disclaimer to me in "Answers to Correspondents," I still fail to understand why the Labour Party is continually, unnecessarily, dragged into your columns. For instance, on page 169 you express the opinion that "the leaders of the Labour Party might take their courage in both hands and also stand out for an enlightened day of rest....." But why the Labour Party any more than any of the other political parties? Or is it that you really favour the Labour Party, and consider it, with suitable adjustments, the one and only political party likely, ultimately, to act as a medium for Freethought propaganda?—J. H.

[We have made special reference to the Labour Party in this connection because they claim to be specially concerned with the welfare of the people, and because they claim to stand for justice all round, irrespective of sect or creed. Parties and people are apt to be judged in the light of what they profess to as well as on account of what they actually perform.—E.D.]

North London Branch N.S.S.

Though we could find nobody bold enough to affirm that Emigration was a Solution of our Population Problem, the question evoked an animated and interesting discussion last Sunday, opened by Mr. R. B. Kerr in his usual stimulating style. To-day (March 22) Mr. P. Marsden, of the Socialist Labour League, will talk to us about "Revolution and the Absurdity of Insurrection," and Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe will occupy the chair.—K.

Obituary.

One by one we have to bemoan the passing of the Old Guard. On March 7, after a very short illness, Mr. Louis Trevillion, aged seventy, died of internal trouble, and was cremated at Golders Green on March 12, the ceremony being conducted by the undersigned. Mr. Trevillion was associated with Charles Bradlaugh from his earliest boyhood, and his father and his brothers and sisters all attended the Hall of Science. The deceased was extremely popular and his many friends had no notion that his end was so imminent. We extend the sympathy of the movement to his wife and other relatives.—G. W.

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LONDON.

INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (160 Great Portland Street, W.): 8, Mr. Crabtree, "Intolerance." The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 at "The Castle," Shouldham Street, Edgware Road, W.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7, Mr. P. Marsden, "Revolution: The Absurdity of Insurrection."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham Road): 7, Mr. E. C. Saphin, "Devil."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. Harry Snell, "Why Does Civilization Fail?"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Right Hon. J. M. Robertson, "Persecution: Religious and Anti-Religious."

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): 7, Mr. C. Melton, "From Protoplasm to Man." Questions and Discussion cordially invited.

BOLTON SECULAR SOCIETY (Socialist Club, 16 Wood Street): 2.30, Mr. Harold Kay, "A Freethinker in Florence," illustrated by views and photographs; also consideration of outside propaganda.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. David Currie, "Dreams of Utopia." Questions and Discussion. (Silver Collection.)

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Right Hon. John M. Robertson, a Lecture.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Pendleton Town Hall, Broad Street, Pendleton): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "A Plain Talk to Christians"; 7, "The Logic of Faith and the Logic of Fact."

MONCURE CONWAY MEMORIAL LECTURE.

The Sixteenth Lecture will be delivered by SIR ARTHUR KEITH on Thursday, March 26, at South Place Institute, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2. The title of the Lecture will be "The Religion of a Darwinist." The Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson will take the chair at 7 p.m. Admission Free. Reserved seats, 1s. each, to be had at the Institute, or at Nos. 4-6 Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, E.C.4.

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