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Views and Opinions.

Obeying the Bible.

We received the other day a copy of a resolution passed at a meeting held at Harrow condemning the Afghan Government for stoning to death "two more Ahmadis on the ground of difference of (religious) belief." The resolution was signed for public distribution by Dr. R. A. Nicholson, Sir Sidney Lee, Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Colonel Younghusband, and Messrs. H. G. Wells and G. R. S. Mead. I do not know what are the opinions of Dr. Nicholson, but the others are known as heretics of a more or less virulent type, and their disapproval of killing for heresy may be always taken for granted. What is worth noting is that our missionary societies are very actively engaged in spreading the gospel all over India and Afghanistan, and giving these people the benefit of our Holy Bible. And that being so, it is only proper to point out that it would be highly inconsistent for any Christian to condemn the Afghan Government for stoning heretics to death since that happens to be the precise punishment for heresy laid down by God in his revelation to mankind, a book which is the source of England's greatness, without which our civilization would be a sham, which is invaluable to children as an introduction to English literature and history, which has been the bulwark of our liberties, etc. Here are the words of that Blessed Book which has done so much to soften manners, and to breed genuine brotherhood and good feeling:—

He that sacrificeth unto any god, save the Lord only he shall be utterly destroyed.

If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thy own soul, entice thee secretly, saying let us go and serve other gods..... thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him, neither shalt thine eye pity him; neither shalt thou spare him, neither shalt thou conceal him; but thou shalt surely kill him, thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones that he die.

The fault of the Afghan Government is that it is too Christian, too biblical. It believes in the Christian injunction too literally. It is believed by some, particularly by many retired Indian military officers with

a touch of the sun, that the Afghans are descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. If that be so the fault is that they have stuck to the Bible God too loyally. They have not appreciated the fact that Gods, like other things, have their day and pass away.

* * *

Who Are the Savages?

I am quite prepared to find that people of this country will call the Afghans savages for so faithfully sticking to Biblical teachings. And so far I should certainly agree with them. All the same I do not think that Afghanistan should be permitted to claim a monopoly of savagery. Our claim to be the largest Bible exporters in the world decidedly gives us a *prima facie* right to enter into competition with any such claim. Our Government does not, it is true, punish the man who says to another, "Let us go after other Gods," but it does take a particular god under its special protection and may imprison anyone who speaks disrespectfully about him. And the censure of Society (with a capital S) is very severe on the man who asks, "Why not pitch the whole cargo of gods overboard as so much useless lumber? We have a clear right to trace our spiritual ancestry back to the "Thou shalt stone him with stones that he die" generation. Again, here is Mr. James Douglas, writing in the *Sunday Express*, and protesting that it would be impossible to discover a more superstitious age than ours. This is apropos of the rage for mascots, and the belief among many that a curse rests upon all who have anything to do with the unearthing of old King Tut. Mr. Douglas writes oracularly that there is no such thing as a curse, that this sort of thing is a mere superstition. Again I agree, and yet I fancy Mr. Douglas himself professes to believe in the power of prayer to work some kind of alteration in the run of things, and also in some supernatural power that watches over and guides humanity. So that it is just six of one and half a dozen of the other. If there is no supernatural power that can shower curses why should there be one to bestow blessings? If it is quite absurd to pray for a man to have fever, why should it be reasonable to pray for him to be cured of one? Why is the wearing of a mascot more absurd than the common Christian belief that there are certain sacred things, or sacred days, that a Bishop blessing a warship or a Church, or the crops, will make things any different from what they would have been otherwise? After all, the believer in the curse of King Tut, or in the magical power of a two-shilling mascot is in the more logical position. He says he believes in the supernatural, and he acts up to it. Mr. Douglas and his kind have enough religion to make their common-sense useless, and enough common-sense to make their religion ridiculous. They are only neo-Afghans after all.

* * *

Exploiting the Sick.

Another example of the same kind is contained in a speech by the Bishop of Durham. It is likely that the career of the healing fakir, Hickson, is—in this

country at least—nearing its end. Many of the clergy anxious to grasp at anything spectacular that might help them with unthinking people—they know it is not much use their angling after thinking ones—have boomed Hickson and his exploitation of the fears of sick and credulous people. They have fathered his "Mission of Healing," even though they must have known that the claims made were quite unwarranted. Finally, the imposture became so rank that several of the clergy were driven to protest against it. This may be because the professional has always resented the intrusion of the unlicensed practitioner, and also because some were shrewd enough to see that the recoil would do far greater damage than any good that was done in the first instance. The Bishop warned the Durham Diocesan Conference against further patronage of Mr. Hickson, and reminded them that "greater displays of healing miracles had been commonly connected with pious frauds and doctrinal errors." He said Mr. Hickson should remember that

he may do grave and irreparable injury to those who seek his aid.....The healing of disease is the physician's task. It cannot be the duty of the Church deliberately to return to beliefs and methods of a superstitious past, but rather to follow the evident leading of the spirit of truth to support the labour of scientific men.—Thus the neo-Afghan (Bishop Henson) to the pure Afghan (Mr. Hickson).

But how much better is the one than the other. What says the Bishop's own book? There is no mistaking the direct teaching of Jesus that the signs that should follow they who believe were that they might drink deadly things and they should not harm them, that they should cure disease in "My name." Nor the other teaching that the prayer of faith should save the sick and the Lord should make them whole. There is no denying the fact that the Prayer Book of the Bishop's own Church lays it down that the Lord does send all disease and gives the priest power to cure in the name of the Lord. There is no denying that these alleged miracles have been common throughout the whole of Christian history. What then is the matter with Mr. Hickson? He is following out the New Testament and Christian teaching generally. Will the Bishop say openly and honestly that he does not believe the Lord sends disease, he does not believe that the Lord cures disease, and therefore Mr. Hickson is an ignorant fraud? Surely his speech means that if it means anything at all. If he does not mean that why find fault with Hickson? Or why this very gentle rebuke? Is it because it is a "pious fraud"? And will the Bishop please explain in what way a man is justified in working a fraud merely because it happens to be a pious one? I know it is safer and much more profitable. There is less chance of detection, and infinitely less chance of a public exposure if one is found out. We must give Mr. Hickson credit for enough shrewdness to recognize this.

* * *

Clerical Nonsense.

What are the beliefs of a primitive and superstitious past to which the Bishop refers? Surely they cannot be other than the beliefs of the Christian Church and the teachings and examples of Jesus? And what are we to think of a Bishop who draws a salary from that same Church, and holds up the New Testament for our guide, while talking of their teachings as primitive and superstitious. Earlier generations of believers could at least plead in defence that they believed what they were paid to teach and what they did teach. Bishop Henson does not believe. He says it is the duty of the clergy to support the labour of scientific men, that disease is the physician's care? But where does God come in? To

say that God works through scientific men is not very enlightening. If he does, scientific men are not aware of it, and in any case they do not bother about him. When they trace the source of a disease to some obscure bacillus they do not consider whether God is at the back of it or not; they are content with discovering the bacillus, and when it is discovered and they have further discovered how to kill it, they do so and are quite certain that whether there is a God or not will make no difference to their fate. Nor is it the peculiar business of the clergy to further the labours of scientific men. That is, or should be, everybody's business, and of all men the clergy have done the most harm in obstructing scientific labours. Moreover, in this respect, if the Bishop is right, the Christian has not the least advantage over the Atheist. The avenues of scientific knowledge are as open to him as to the Christian. Disease will not more readily attack him than it does the Christian. And if the cure comes, not through appealing to God in prayer, but through the knowledge of the physician, then clearly it does not matter to the value of a brace-button whether there is a god or not. We know no more with him, and we are no worse off without him. It is all so much elaborate foolishness.

* * *

Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

After all, and so far as religion is concerned, the gentlemen in Afghanistan who believe in that portion of the Bible which tells them that the follower of strange gods shall be stoned to death are not substantially more savage than the journalist who writes his nonsense about God and the supernatural, or the Bishop who solemnly performs the "sacred" mummeries of his "holy" Church. The Afghan has a more objectionable and a more unpleasant way of expressing his beliefs than has the Bishop and the journalist, but that is a question of manners, and the well-known French quotation serves here. Other times, other manners. The Bishop has the advantage of living in a society which simply will not permit him to express his religious feelings by heaving half-bricks at a religious competitor. If the Afghan came over here he would behave quite as well as does the Bishop—if not he, then his children. The Bishop has a good living secure, and he does not need to go round healing the sick to gain publicity and a living. Mr. Hickson has not the advantage. And had Bishop Henson lived in an earlier age we can quite picture him, as a convinced officer of the Christian Church forming part of a procession to burn a heretic, or laying on hands to cure a fever. But mentally it is not the kind of God a man believes in that stamps him as being primitive in mind, it is believing in God at all. It is not whether a man believes in the power of curses or the efficacy of mascots that marks the civilized from the uncivilized view of life; it is believing that there is any method of mastering nature save by the way of exact knowledge. We have, as I have so often said, our savages here, and certainly with regard to religion it ill becomes us to heave half a brick at other savages. Only a week or so ago I listened to a portion of an address by Mrs. Booth which, although prettily delivered, and in educated language, was as savage and as barbarous in its mental tone as one could wish. It was all about the blood of Jesus, the power of Jesus to work miracles, etc. Perfectly savage, quite primitive, although the lady would probably feel insulted if she were told that she was talking like the chief of some very primitive African tribe. It is the religious idea itself that is primitive; how it is expressed is another question altogether. I would much rather as a matter of mere neighbourliness live next door to the Bishop of Durham than to the brick-throwing gentry of

Afghanistan. But that is a matter of personal convenience. It would not alter my opinion of the identity of the mental outlook of the two.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"If Christ Had Not Come."

(Concluded from page 179.)

As already stated, Dr. Kelman's claim that Christ suddenly brought the Kingdom of God into the world, "and set it up in men's hearts," has been completely falsified by well-attested facts of history. The reverend gentleman is as grossly in error on this point as on the other, namely, that when Christianity arose the Roman Empire was fast tottering to its fall. Historical students of to-day are in possession of facts which testify most clearly that during the second and third centuries the social morality of the Romans was passing through a process, not of deterioration and decay, but of the most extraordinary revival. If Dr. Kelman will dismount from his high horse of dogmatism for a moment, and read the inscriptions of the period so faithfully transcribed by Dill and Boissier, he cannot help learning that the Romans, on whom he now looks down with such disdain, had not only beautiful intellectual ideals, but also daily practices in which at least some of those ideals found happy incarnation. Equally mistaken is our preacher as to the effect of Christianity upon public morality. Even the disciples of the Gospel Jesus had their little jealousies, each wishing to stand highest in the Master's estimation. The converts of the Apostle Paul were not regarded even by himself as ideal men and women. There were sad divisions amongst them, which gave rise to bickerings and bitterness of spirit; and some of them were guilty of the lowest and most abominable forms of immorality. Before leaving the New Testament let us glance at a strange passage in the Book of the Acts wherein we are supplied with a dramatic account of an alleged experiment in communism. The wealthy were supposed to part with their possessions for the benefit of those who had none. One man who had a field, sold it and laid the money at the Apostle's feet. Another, named Ananias, sold some land and, acting in collusion with his wife, Sapphira, he kept back part of the money, and laid the rest at the Apostle's feet. Peter was so furious that he accused the man of having, at Satan's instigation, lied to the Holy Ghost. Instantly, on hearing the charge, Ananias was supernaturally struck down dead. Three hours later his wife experienced the same frightful doom. Of course, the passage (Acts v., 1-11) may be wholly unhistorical, but at any rate it serves to show that the author was ignorant of any moral change effected by Christ. It represents Peter as approving of that horribly cruel intervention of the Deity.

The truth is that the transformation of social morality said to have been initiated by Christ has never been realized in history. For example, the Gospel Jesus never uttered a word of condemnation of slavery, whereas the Roman Empire denounced it as an evil that must be suppressed at the earliest possible opportunity, and the wall of partition between the master and the slave was already being broken down. Furthermore, it should also be borne in mind that the pagan philosophers condemned slavery not only as an evil, but also as a dreadfully unprofitable evil, an evil almost as hurtful to the master as to the slave. The teaching was that slavery is "against the law of Nature," "against Nature," and that "by Nature all men are equal," and the consequence was that thousands upon thousands of slaves were set

free, the masters themselves finding out that emancipation was profitable as well as just. Now, when Christianity came to power in the fourth century it lacked the sense of the equality by nature of all mankind. Hitherto the Church had failed to lift up its voice against the institution of slavery. From Constantine the Great on all the Emperors of Rome, with the exception of Julian, were Christians, and yet not until the ninth century did either Emperor, Pope, or any other Christian, venture to denounce the institution itself as anti-social in its nature. It ought to have been characterized as essentially anti-Christian as well, but the fact is that throughout the ages the Church defended it, believing it to be of divine origin and the object of divine protection. Even in America as late as the nineteenth century there were several denominations which passed resolutions enthusiastically in favour of its existence in the Southern States, and when its abolition became a fact, it was not brought to pass by the Church, but by a President who was not a Christian but a Freethinker.

Again, piety and high morality do not necessarily go together. By morality we understand the social behaviour and conduct which are calculated to promote the happiness of mankind in this world. What Christianity, on the other hand, endeavours to achieve is not our happiness as citizens of this world, but our eternal blessedness in the world to come. Repenting sinners flee to Christ for refuge from the wrath of God under which they by nature lie. Many of our present-day clergy angrily repudiate the idea that they are teachers of morality, their claim being, "We are not teachers of morality, but preachers of the Gospel of redemption through faith in Christ." That was Paul's view of the preacher's function, and the same idea has persisted to this day. Christian justification is by faith alone, not by works, and Divine forgiveness blots out all sins against heaven. Eternity alone is of supreme importance. Time's value consists entirely in making preparation for eternity. Life on earth is merely an opportunity to win a clear title to mansions in the sky after death. Such has always been the pulpit's message until quite recently, with the absolutely inevitable consequence that the Ages of Faith were darkened by exceptionally black clouds of immorality. It has been pointed out innumerable times in this journal that under Christianity the world morally continued to sink lower and lower until it reached an unspeakable depth of degradation in the tenth century. In Dr. Green's *Handbook of Church History* we read that pope followed pope in quick succession at the end of the ninth century and the early part of the tenth:—

Until the crowning scandal was reached in the accession of Sergius III. through the influence of Adalbert, Marquis of Tuscan, and a noble and wealthy widow named Theodora. This woman, beautiful and depraved, had two daughters, Theodora and Marozia, of like character to herself, and among them they disposed of the Roman See for more than half a century. Sergius III., paramour of Marozia, began the vile succession (904), and, after two of inconsiderable name, was followed by John X. (914), paramour of Theodora the younger (or, as some say, the elder). Marozia, who in the meantime had married Alberic, son of Adalbert, caused this John (who had acquired some military fame by victory over the Saracens) to be imprisoned and put to death in the castle of St. Angelo. After two insignificant Popes, John XI., a son of Marozia, succeeded to the chair (931), but was dethroned by his brother (or half-brother) Alberic the younger, who as "prince and senator of all the Romans," appointed four Popes in succession, subject to his will; and on the death of the last, raised his own son to the pontificate, Octavian, a boy of eighteen, as Pope called John XII....With the ignominious

death of John XII. this dark chapter in the annals of the Papacy, which has been stigmatized as "the Pornocracy (government by harlots)," came to an end (pp. 413-415).

In all its history the Christian world has never been quite so depraved and corrupt as it was in the tenth century. Fancy the Church of Christ being governed for upwards of fifty years by public prostitutes!

Let us now pass on to the thirteenth century, and note the progress which had been made since the tenth. In many respects this century was brilliantly superior to all its predecessors. The late Mr. Cotter Morison, though not a Christian, cherished a boundless veneration for great saints, but this did not blind him to the morality or immorality of any age. In his famous *Service of Man* he writes thus:—

We stop for a moment in the thirteenth century, the age *par excellence* of beautiful things, when chivalry is supposed to have been in its noble prime, when the Church exerted a calm and serene sovereignty over the kneeling nations, when medieval art reached its supreme and chaste perfection, when the philosophy and theology of the Latin Church culminated in works almost as intricate and wonderful as the maze of pinnacles, flying buttresses, arches, and columns which, surviving still in the Cathedrals of Amiens or Chartres, sing us a deceptive siren song of beauty which lures us to their epoch as to a Golden Age. It was very far from a golden age. On the contrary, it was an age of violence, fraud, and impurity, such as can hardly be conceived now. We will take it in its ideal moment—in the reign of St. Louis, the best of kings and perhaps the best man who ever lived (p. 64).

Of St. Louis's saintliness there can be no doubt whatever. He was completely dominated by his piety. He wore the roughest sackcloth next to his skin, and he walked to certain places barefooted. He never laughed on Fridays. As Milman says, "The bleeding shoulders of the king attested his own sincerity, and the singular adulation of his confessor, who knew the king too well not to administer the discipline with unsparing hand." Milman completes his portrait of him thus:—

Even clerks, if not profoundly learned, ought to abstain from controversy with unbelievers; the layman had but one argument, his good sword. If he heard of a man to be an unbeliever, he should not dispute with him, he should at once run that sword into his entrails, and drive it home.....Louis loved all mankind with a boundless love, except Jews, heretics, and infidels, whom he hated with as boundless hatred (*Latin Christianity*, Vol. vi., p. 300).

No wonder the thirteenth century stands out as pre-eminently the age of savage persecution. It was in this period that the wicked Inquisition had its origin. Heresy and unbelief were the most damnable crimes, whilst injustice, theft, and murder often went scot free. Prostitutes were the most popular and flourishing class in any community. They exercised dominion over the clergy.....It is estimated that during the last crusade some three hundred of them were sent out to be at the service of the French soldiers. From the diary of the Archbishop of Rouen we learn that the clergy and the nuns in his own diocese were guilty of all sorts of wickedness. They were drunken, licentious, untrue to their vows, and negligent in their discharge of the duties of their profession.

We conclude without a moment's hesitation that Dr. Kelman's sermon deals not with actual life, but with a dream that has never come true. It utterly ignores the history of Christendom. Piety there has been in great abundance, but morality has often been scarcely perceptible. Dr. Kelman declares that his

indebtedness to Dean Church's *Gifts of Civilization*, in the preparation of his sermon, was profound; but he forgot the late Dean's frank admission that "many of the characteristic phenomena of our time seem to point to great and salutary results, brought about without calling on the religious principle." If that is true there is every probability that the world will still thrive and grow strong even after it has repudiated its belief in the Christian superstition. The real Saviour of the world is scientific knowledge faithfully applied.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Great Social Reformer.

Spirits are not finely touched but to fine issues.

—Shakespeare.

Write me as one who loves his fellow man.—Leigh Hunt, "Abou-ben-Adhem."

A STORY is told of a modest Frenchman, that when the great Napoleon took him familiarly by the ear, and said, "I intend giving you the Legion of Honour," the man answered: "Thank you, sire, but could not your Majesty give it to my father?" In some such spirit we may picture Mr. H. S. Salt's acceptance of praise. His striking talents and his widespread philanthropy have always been united with a modesty which is, in these days of self-advertising, extremely rare.

The life-work of Mr. Henry Stephens Salt places him very definitely among the potent forces of progress. A pioneer among pioneers, he is one of the foremost heralds of a new era. Thinking men and women treasure his volumes, and look with eager eyes for other works from the same wise pen. For he has devoted a lengthy life to the service of his fellows, and his significance in modern literature and thought is very marked.

Born in India in the early "fifties" of the last century, the life of this great social reformer has its touch of romance. Educated at Eton College, he became afterwards one of the house-masters at that ancient seat of learning, whose ideal has ever been brawn and not brains. Cambridge University also claimed him, although he could never have acquiesced completely in the old order of things such as was dominant at that "home of lost causes." For young Mr. Salt, as he then was, was soon reading Shelley's lyrics of Liberty, and was absorbing the intellectual audacities of Henry Thoreau and Walt Whitman. In such company Mr. Salt was bound to look beyond Eton and her old-fashioned ideals, and to scan far horizons and the unalterable stars.

Such a fine spirit as that of Mr. H. S. Salt's was bound, sooner or later, to rebel as being "cribb'd, cabin'd, and confin'd" within the narrow limits of the educational system of Eton, that "nursery of Toryism" as he himself wittily described it. A keen critic, there was no bitterness, however, in his criticism. Though he ploughed a lonely furrow, he has never been morbid. Always "he saw life steadily and saw it whole." Taking all things at their true worth, he has never been surprised by views he could never accept. He has invariably acknowledged politely that they were so entirely different from his own.

So acute a critic as the late George Foote said that Mr. Salt was "without the least fanaticism." This is the more remarkable as he challenged contemporary convention and modern society at so many points. He conceives human society as a great brotherhood; but the underlying unity is not merely economic, not merely the apotheosis of an enlightened selfishness, but an ethical fraternity, where love and mutual service are to be confidently expected:—

Till each man find his own in all men's good,
And all men work in noble brotherhood.

This optimistic faith is not to be limited to one race or species, but extended to the whole world of innocent beings. And herein lies the genesis of the famous Humanitarian League, with which Mr. Salt's name was associated for over a quarter of a century. In a letter written as long ago as 1910 by George Foote, the great Freethought leader, wrote:—

I believe the Humanitarian League has been, is, and I trust will continue to be, one of the noblest and most useful organizations in England. No friend of humanity need despair if he will only look at what the League has done for the real and higher life of England in the face of tremendous odds and with ridiculously small material resources. Yours is veritably the triumph of a great idea.

The world war stopped the activities of the Humanitarian League, but for a whole generation it had been a beacon light in a dark world. The scope of the League's activities may be estimated by recalling that it dealt with such measures as Criminal Law and Prison Reform, Cruel Sports, Humane Diet and Dress, Education of Children, Flogging in the Army and Navy, the Humanising of the Poor Law System and many other much-needed reforms. In brief, the distinctive purpose of the Humanitarian League was to consolidate and co-ordinate the principle of humaneness, which it considers should be an essential part of any intelligible system of society.

Through all the vicissitudes of life Mr. Salt preserved a serene mind, an unconquerable optimism, and an inexhaustible interest in all things human. A great reformer, his life has been devoted to a ceaseless whirl of activities. Under less strenuous conditions he might have made a great name for himself in literature. His sympathetic studies of Shelley, Richard Jefferies, De Quincey, Thoreau, and James Thomson, prove his devotion to literature. His quiet humour is displayed in his delightful volume of verse, *The Consolations of a Faddist*, whilst his ripe scholarship is apparent in his spirited rendering of *The Treasures of Lucretius*, where he has put into English some of the finest work of the noblest of the Roman poets. In another mood, for there are many facets to Mr. Salt's genius, he has emulated George Borrow, and his *On Cambrian and Cumbrian Hills* is a book to be treasured by all who love their native country.

The phase of Mr. Salt's activities which will appeal most widely is his dauntless championship of the Humanitarian movement and of the rights of animals. Artist though he is, he would not have it otherwise, for he has ever loved his fellow men more than he has loved literature. He will always be remembered as the chivalrous knight-errant ever seeking out forlorn, oppressed, or distressed causes and objects, on whose behalf to break a lance, or on whom to lavish his passion of pity, and satisfy his yearning for service. Mr. Salt's whole public and private career is a discourse on the indispensability of reformers, who, more even than the poets, are "the unacknowledged legislators of mankind." Mr. Salt has lived, observed, written, and, above all, helped his fellows. There are few, recalling the work of a tried and true veteran, who will not be proud and grateful for the example of so stalwart a pioneer. When great questions have to be answered by our descendants, may they deal with them with the same fervour and the same steadfastness and integrity as Henry Stephen Salt:—

Who knew the seasons when to take
Occasion by the hand, and make
The bounds of freedom wider.

MIMNERMUS.

To know that you do not know is the beginning of wisdom.—Confucius.

Lent.

WHEN I was a boy I could not understand why our good kind heavenly Father wanted all the poor Christian folk not only to attend Church regularly, but to fast as much as they could, during the whole of Lent, which, according to my dictionary (*The British Empire Universities Modern English Dictionary*) covers a period of forty days (excluding Sundays), Ash Wednesday to Easter Eve. In the early sixties and seventies there was a great deal of unemployment among the working classes, and consequently much poverty and misery, and I, as a young and pious member of the Church of England, thought it was very hard that poor people, who at the best of times found it very difficult to get enough to eat, should be required by a good God to fast as much as possible during the many weeks of Lent.

A few weeks ago I read in a local paper, the *Camberwell and Peckham Times*, an explanation of the matter given by the Rev. T. Reiss, Vicar of St. Jude's, Peckham. He said, "It is, of course, quite wrong to regard Lent merely as a season during which we should come to Church more often than we do at other times. This is to forget that every week day in Lent is a fast day, and that the object of fasting is to teach us the true meaning of Christian sacrifice through which we learn to say no to the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the Devil." Fancy boys and girls of tender years being expected to fast to avoid such terrible temptations! But it appears that to fast does not mean to go altogether without food. For the reverend gentleman says: "This, of course, is impossible for physical reasons. Therefore we are left with the word abstinence. Now everyone can abstain from something, and each individual should choose something he can give up during Lent, having in his mind all the time three things—God's honour, man's need, and his own soul."

God's honour! Apparently man is always doing something to offend God's honour. But the Rev. Mr. Reiss says this can be put right, in some measure, by worship in Church, the more so "if it is accompanied by some real sacrifice of pleasure and rest." Evidently Mr. Reiss's God does not like his children to have too much pleasure—he wants them to be as miserable as possible during Lent. And so the vicar says, "One step that leads to the satisfaction of God's honour, looked at from this point of view would be to come once (or more) to the daily Mass." If this means anything it means fast and pray—or better still, fast and pay, to keep the priest occupied in looking after your precious soul. In the second place the good Christian "must give up something that costs money which we (the priest) can use for the benefit of the Church or the relief of those that need. The third he can benefit "by remembering that his soul is easily stained through contact with this wicked world." It follows that the best way to avoid being stained by sin is to get out of the world as speedily as possible. But the vicar does not wish to impute any of the grosser sins to the members of his congregation, and therefore he lets them down gently and says that "even the best of us fall victims to sins like pride and selfishness, and God's honour goes unsatisfied and man's wants go unsatisfied." Of the latter I think there can be no dispute; of the former much depends upon one's contributions towards the funds of the Church.

But the vicar says that the greatest need is God's forgiveness, and this is only brought about "through the precious blood of Jesus Christ shed on the Cross, but he who died never intended that forgiveness should come to man without the seeking. As we

search the Church shines like a bright star on a dark night and points the way. She tells men that through her ministry he may receive the benefit of absolution for all sins confessed in godly sorrow." So that is the true meaning of the long fast established by the Church called Lent. It is for the Church to get hold of some of the cash of credulous Christians who are willing to deny themselves food for a certain time to get forgiveness from a God whose honour has been outraged by the sins of selfishness and pride on the part of his children. Undoubtedly there are plenty of rich people in the world to whom an occasional fast would be a decided benefit, but, as a rule these are not the persons who attend Church with any degree of regularity either during Lent or at any other time. But what authority has the priest for telling men that they "may receive through the Church the benefit of absolution from all sins confessed in godly sorrow." Where and when did Jesus ever give the priests of any Church such authority? And what is the meaning "of sins confessed in godly sorrow"? Human sorrow we can all understand, but godly sorrow, what does any priest, parson, or layman know about that? And, finally, how can the precious blood of Jesus Christ shed on the Cross nearly two thousand years ago (which is extremely doubtful) wipe away the sins of Christians to-day, if they will only consent to go to Church regularly during Lent and deny themselves some necessary food, or other commodities, for the benefit of the Church, is a question which only a priest or a parson would attempt to explain or justify before an intelligent congregation in any civilized country of the world, in this year of grace nineteen hundred and twenty-five.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Gossamer Wings and Sheen.

It was a happy title that Thomas Hardy chose for his novel, *The Well-Beloved*. In the moonlight of fancy rather than in the world of fact the characters, few in number, move like shadows in the twilight and vague outline of what our author calls "a study of a temperament." The writing of it may have been a rest and recreation for him, for it has none of those strong lines that bite in the memory like those in *Tess* or *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, or *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Like the ironic note of comedy in *Measure for Measure* and just as awkward to define, is the tale of Jocelyn Pierston in *The Well-Beloved*.

None of us can see beauty with the same eyes, but it is a remarkable fact that a difference of opinion in the appreciation of it, is not marked by the acrimony that exists concerning the doubtful and speculative utility of a creed from Palestine. Here is an artist whose virile outlook on life has had no quarter and no use for the moanings and groanings of Christianity. Essentially Greek in his treatment of life and weighted with a tragic note transcending any tragic conception of life which the Christian can have, he has woven a story of beauty of singular sweetness to take us for a few hours into that land where twenty years go by through the turning of a page.

In many protean forms beauty appears to us in all periods of our life. The smell and colour of an apple has an appeal to the young, whilst the ever-shifting pictures in the sky by day or night compel admiration, attention and fascination that last for all time. The changing seasons marked by the frail flower called the snow-drop and seeming to culminate in snow in December contain all colours of the rainbow, and, even the law of harmony in music will find a worshipper in the scientist or mathematician. Beauty would seem to be the first step outside the circle that whirls its victims round and round on the hobby-horse of the appetite for eating, drinking, dressing and gossiping in which the duchess and the servant are on common ground.

Avice Caro was the handsome daughter of parents who lived on the Island of Slingers. Her beauty bewitched her youthful lover, Jocelyn Pierston and they were to be married. By the turning of a hair, the ideal beauty that held him captive was transferred to the daughter of one of his father's trade rivals. From her, by a series of chance, it again takes its departure to a society woman in London, and a brief note which Jocelyn received from home tells him that his first love is dead. He then realizes that she was the only one whom he had ever loved. The story from this point is a melody played on a harp with several strings missing, and it is written in a style of which Mr. J. M. Barrie's is a pale shadow.

Jocelyn leaves London to be in time for her funeral, but he is too late. Musing in the churchyard he sees a figure near the grave who is the image of his beloved Avice. She is her daughter, and by various devices he manages to engage her as a servant, and it is here that the humour becomes bitter-sweet. Her spirit for the quest of the beautiful is as capricious as his own, and he is forestalled by a native lover. She cannot and will not marry the gentleman who deserted her mother, and, after making arrangements for the welfare of his one-time sweetheart's daughter, he leaves again for London and Italy, and eventually returns twenty years later. He then finds that there is another Avice who still bears a close resemblance to his first love, but, after many attempts with the help and connivance of the mother of the third Avice, he is thwarted, and finally settles down at the age of sixty with Marchia, his sweetheart whom he fell in love with on his journey to London after leaving the first Avice.

Such, in brief, is the story of *The Well-Beloved*, told with all the human sympathy of a writer who has looked on the world with open eyes and without those spectacles that only add to our problems.

There is a peculiar charm about the story that has an appeal, not in its sweet and tender atmosphere, but rather as a delicate air played on invisible instruments, emphasizing the change that is continually taking place. Beauty dies and is born again. One part of Plato's trinity is projected in the form of a story; in this form, to men and women it is capable of being understood. Like the spirit of Ariel, Beauty hovers about the form of the three generations of Avice; it seems to be playing a trick with Jocelyn, who, at an age past sixty, gives up the pursuit, and settles down to be interested in an improved water supply for his town.

The beacon lights of humanity, the brave spirits of men who come and go and leave us an heritage of courage, of hope, and good cheer, in works and deeds, are not matters of speculation. Homer, Virgil, Montaigne, Shakespeare, they are ours for all time. Each has paid his due to the earth on which he was born. Each was and is a friend to be with us always—the eternal storytellers, the wise medicine men. They do not claim divine inspiration, they do not call us with a bell, nor threaten us if we do not come. There is no penalty for disbelief, and we need only stay with them as long as we wish and no longer. If we close their books and rise refreshed in spirit, to look on the world with tolerance, and on superstition without fear, their tale has been well told. And Thomas Hardy is one whose name can be added to the list of those who have not sold their birthright for a mess of pottage, and, with many readers and writers is the Well-Beloved himself, who, in this novel, moves with light feet in the quest of Beauty.

WILLIAM REPTON.

A man without the use of the intellectual faculties of a man is, if possible, more undesirable than even a coward, and seems to be mutilated and deformed in a still more essential part of the character of human nature. The more the people are instructed the less liable are they to the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition, which, among ignorant nations frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders. An instructed and intelligent people are more decent and orderly than an ignorant one.—Adam Smith.

Acid Drops.

It might be incorrect to say that there is no other part of the white world in which so many forms of ignorant religious belief exist as is the case in America, but there is certainly no European country in which they flourish so well. This may be because in other countries the more ignorant forms of superstition are kept under control by the official churches, while in America there is less control exercised. Someone has said that America now is the land of liberty, but no license, and the more benighted and less scrupulous forms of religious belief flourish in the United States with rank luxuriance and profit. The fact, however, is there, whatever may be the explanation of it.

To take an instance. We have various forms of the faith-healing dodge in this country, from the person who sells some miraculous remedy, and runs the danger of a police prosecution, to Hickson, who is astute enough to gain the sanction and protection of opportunist or ignorant Bishops and others. But we have nothing quite so brazenly invidious as some of the faith-healing frauds of the United States. I have just had sent to me a journal called *Pisgah*, accompanied by a book of testimonials. *Pisgah* is sent out from Los Angeles, and is issued by an establishment that is apparently run by a Dr. Finis Yoakum. There is no charge made for the paper, but everyone is invited to pray for the institution and send what money they can. The institution is thus kept going by prayer—and other things. Taking his stand on a passage in Acts, which narrates that Paul sent out handkerchiefs and when these were laid on the sick the diseases and the evil spirits went out of them, a roaring trade is done in these “blest handkerchiefs.” *Pisgah* seems to be published to push the sale. It is filled with accounts of cures. One woman wrapped her corns in them and the corns went. Another tried the blest calico and bladder trouble disappeared. A woman was laying at death's door and the handkerchiefs drove eight devils out of her—one more than was driven out of Mary Magdalene, but then America is a bigger place than Palestine. Another woman went to the institution because she was insane, and after a dose of handkerchiefs was cured. I can certainly believe the first part of that statement without sworn evidence. In another case it was tried on a cow that was sick, and the cow “chased me up a tree.” The cow clearly had more sense than the Christian. But the cow was cured—whether from the power of the handkerchief or as a result of the exertion of chasing the man, is it difficult to decide. So runs the record—the underlying *motif* of which is—“buy our handkerchiefs and send along your donations.”

Now these things are quite Christian. It is quite certain that it would have appealed very strongly to the earliest Christians, and no better conception can be gained of the mental quality of primitive Christians than to note the class of people who are to-day taken in by such unutterable rubbish. And, after all, if blest handkerchiefs could do the trick in Paul's day, there is no reason why they should not act in the same way in our own time. But what we desire to draw special attention to is that we have in this class of people who cure cows by rubbing them with a blessed handkerchief, and even banish corns by wrapping a piece of the paper of the cult round them, the raw material out of which religions such as Christianity are made. Normally and with ourselves these rabid manifestations of gross credulity are held in check by the operation of a more civilized common-sense. But when a chance is given, as with these *Pisgahites*, or with the Hickson Mission, or the Evan Roberts or Gypsy Smith Mission evangelists, we have its ugly face breaking through a superficial culture. There is here one of the greatest dangers possible to our civilization, and the growth of the Roman Catholic Church in this country, along with that of numerous crude superstitious, serves only to enforce the warning.

Mr. Dan Griffiths contributes an article on “Labour's

Philosophy” in the first issue of the *Sunday Worker*. By a delightful stroke of irony, Sunday as a day of work is monopolised by the clergy—at least, when they are not officiating at tea fights, Sunday is their busy day. We see that Mr. Griffiths in his *Labour's Philosophy* has no room for these gentry who basked in the smiles of the Nonconformist statesmen of the last Government.

A writer with a tender heart for women sowing potato seeds appears in print with the following:—

And (a little priggishly perhaps) I wondered
If God, as he swept by.....

There's no accounting for these 'ere poet chaps. Perhaps he was thinking of Matthew Arnold's idea of God as a clergyman wearing a big white tie, or perhaps he was thinking of a vacuum cleaner....but, in any case, he should be careful when introducing the deity into the machinery of verse.

The *Church Times* complains that Jews are usually found alien in mind to the community in which they dwell. One does not go to a paper such as the *Church Times* for useful lessons in sociology, or one might point out that in general, and so far as this pertains to Jews, who are also foreigners, there is here no more than will be found with any group of foreigners in England or elsewhere. But it will be sufficient to point out to so Christian a paper that if the question is one apart from the consideration named, it must be the religion of the Jew that is the cause of his separateness. The real cure is to get rid of the religion of the Jew, and so liberate the man that is obscured by it. And that is a medicine which it would also do a Christian good to take. Christian narrowness and bigotry has served to perpetuate Jewish narrowness and bigotry. The one is a reaction to the other. And it is illuminating to find the editor of the *Church Times* dealing with the question in terms of the cause of the trouble of which he complains. The best friend to both Jew and Christian is the one who will free both from the incubus of their religious beliefs.

Scarcely a day now passes without some spokesman for religion attempting to identify Christianity with a zeal for social reform and human well-being. The latest, we see, is Mrs. George Cadbury, who, speaking at the National Free Church Conference, at Leeds, said:—

We ought to send forth a trumpet call to the whole kingdom, announcing that the Church of Christ cannot any longer tolerate the awful slum conditions in all our big cities, and that professing Christians must put this reform in the very forefront of their efforts, and be ready to make sacrifices to remedy the evil.

It is significant that a century ago, in the heyday of the Industrial Revolution, a period which began the creation of our modern slums, there was not this persistent protest from Christians against the social conditions which compelled vast numbers of people to live in appalling hovels. And yet it was a period of evangelical revival, a period when Methodism was thriving and capturing the imaginations and hopes of great hosts of people. Nor have we read of representative Christians protesting during the Dark Ages, when Christianity was triumphant and all powerful, against the entire lack of personal hygiene and sanitation that then existed. But in both those periods there was a living faith and a real interest in theology. People really *believed* in Christianity then. To-day, in the twilight of faith, more people are concerned with wiping out slums, and improving the general standard of living, than with theological matters. And so the Church, spite its immutability and divine inspiration, finds it necessary to talk social reform if it is to retain its membership and command any attention from the general public.

Canon Little, Vicar of Blackpool, in a recent speech, also struck the same note. “Petted poodles and pampered Pekingese are considered more worth consideration than children in city slums,” he said. This again has

nothing whatever to do with Christianity. Christianity, as we are always insisting in these columns, is concerned very little with this life, and that only so far as it is necessary to take cognisance of mundane conditions in the soul's preparation for the future eternal life. It is essentially an anti-social creed, which offers the individual future felicity at the expense of the abrogation of his social duties here. And we fancy many of the prominent Christians who talk as if it were really a kind of sentimental Communism know perfectly well that they are distorting the facts. With them we are not much concerned. The very nature of their profession perforce makes them not over scrupulous where the truth is concerned, and may reduce them to the condition where they scarcely know when they are telling the truth or lying. But we would warn those well-meaning people who are anxious to improve social conditions, and who welcome these religious recruits, and are inclined to accept Christianity at the value that these people put on it. They may some day discover that their particular movement for achieving a better social state has been captured by the religionists, and turned into a mere appanage of organized religion.

General Bramwell Booth, head of the Salvation Army, recently paid a visit to Wandsworth Prison. Replying to a civic welcome, he stated:—

Some time ago he proposed to the Government that it should place a large prison in the care of the Salvation Army, and that while the Government attended to matters relating to the punishment of prisoners the Army should be allowed to manage and control the internal working of the jail.

He would now go further, and ask for a large workhouse, and a large lunatic asylum to be handed over to the Army, to see if it could effect any reform there.

We quite believe that the General would find these institutions a happy hunting ground for his peculiar co-religionists. The crude theology of the Salvation Army, with its fearful threats, and its general hysterical atmosphere, would probably strongly affect the sub-normal persons in the jail and lunatic asylum. Genuine, unadulterated Christianity—and the Salvation Army is probably nearer primitive Christianity than any other body of organized Christians to-day—has had a powerful appeal to the least balanced members of society. That this is true even to-day is abundantly proved by the piety of condemned murderers, and criminals. We very much doubt whether any but religious people could be found in our gaols, and it is notorious, of course, than more of the inmates of our asylums are there through religious mania than from any other cause.

The churches in their somewhat pathetic search for popularity in a world that is fast forgetting them, does some decidedly queer things, that would have made the pious Chadbands of an earlier generation roll their eyes in horror. Thus Jack Jennings, the jockey who rode Filibert de Savoie, second in last year's Gold Cup race at Ascot, has been allowed to preach a sermon in Paris on sport and Christianity. He mounted the pulpit of the English Church at Maisons Laffitte, and in the course of his sermon denounced the devotion of Sunday to amusement unless a person was compelled by conditions of life to do so. Without wishing to emulate the jockey's moral pose, we would like to point out that whereas Sunday amusements merely offend against the mythological injunctions of a very hypothetical deity, and at the same time help make people better both physically and morally than mere loafing through the day could possibly do, racing has, and is, ruining thousands of homes. We have never yet met the man or woman who has been ruined by indulging in Sunday games; those who have been ruined by the "sport" by which the jockey earns his living are legion. And we would therefore remind him of the advice that is given in the Bible concerning the mote and the beam.

Incidentally, as a further indication of the simplicity of the Christian creed which enables its adherents all to interpret the divine injunctions in the same way,

whilst Jennings was denouncing Sunday amusements, Father Vuillermet, a prominent Dominican preacher, was at the Church of St. Ambroise, also in Paris, advocating outdoor life and athletic sports on Sunday afternoons!

The deprecatory review in the *Times Literary Supplement* of Professor Leuba's book, *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism*, proves it to be well worth study. When we have done with plain religions—which is not yet, there will be the fancy ones to be tackled. There are about fifty definitions of mysticism. Croce gently stroked them, when he wrote that they were a loquacious tribe, but Professor Leuba, in the following passage, pushes mysticism to that ground occupied by the old swaggering religions—the region of faith:—

It is regrettable that it has become a widespread habit to speak of the mystic as one in touch with the absolute and eternal, one who has passed out of the finite into the infinite world, and the like, *ad nauseum*. These expressions do not add anything to our knowledge of mysticism, and they betray too clearly a propensity to melodrama and grandiloquence.

Chaucer, in his *Miller's Tale*, in the character of Nicholas, spotted the mystic; a reading of it will demonstrate that mystics, like the clergy, thrive on the ever-present supply of credulity.

Mr. J. Wheatley, M.P., is delightful when he introduces piety into politics. He stands for the mother and his opponents stand for her son, it is true, and if he hopes to bring any reality into politics by this introduction he is mistaken. Mr. Wheatley states that Mr. Baldwin would be a great statesman second only to Gipsy Smith, this, the high comedy note of banter. Landlordism and industrialism had driven out God and the Sermon on the Mount, he asserted, and in this whirl of words we, for our purpose, may note two very important matters. Firstly, Omnipotence has been routed; secondly, what are we to think of Mr. Wheatley's God who has beat a retreat? He is reducing him to the level of an ordinary person—something on the same level of another word spinner, Dr. Glover, in the *Daily News*, who writes on "Enjoying God." We can imagine this flying deity as saying, "Lord, protect me from my friends."

For the preservation of their interests the National Free Church Council at Leeds had a resolution before it demanding that licensed premises should be closed on Sunday in the United Kingdom. A visitor from Mars might ask what that has to do with the preaching of Christ and him crucified. At the same time the substance of the resolution shows what would happen if there was not the steadying influence of rational thought at work. Our Nonconformist brethren have an idea that if they can close public-houses and stop Sunday games the people must come to hear their windy nonsense. This is theological reasoning wearing a halo.

In *Hooley's Confessions* the author, Mr. Ernest Terah Hooley throws a little light on those who extol the blessings of poverty. He writes, that when he was installed in his suite of offices at the Midland Grand Hotel, "Eminent divines of the Church of England would come praying me for money to restore their cathedrals." Everything connected with the Church always appears to be in a bad state of repair, and it seems that a deity that cannot keep a cathedral or an organ in order should be plainly asked the reason why.

The question of questions is, are we going to profit by the blunders of the past? Is the path of progress to be straightened, or is it to be as zig-zag as ever? The woofullest of blunders of man has been that he has taken prejudice rather than knowledge as his guiding principle. This led along ways that ended in bog or precipice; it also filled him with the fury of madness, which drove him to destroy the teachers who brought him light and freedom.—*Keridon*.

To Correspondents.

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

We are obliged to discard several letters from correspondents owing to their extreme, and it seems to us, unnecessary length. Correspondents must bear in mind that the space at our disposal is limited, and should strive to put their points with brevity. That is good exercise in writing, as well as less of a tax on the reader.

J. BRESE.—We agree with you that Miss Rout's book is one that all should read. The gentleman you name has already subscribed. Hope you are well.

D. LEAHY.—Your remarks on "Selfishness v. unselfishness" are interesting, but too lengthy for us to print in full, and we do not like "cutting" contributions. The difference appears to us to turn on a misunderstanding. Every motive to action must be rooted in "self," because a motive or an impulse cannot be operative otherwise. But in ethics we are surely concerned more with the conscious motives for action, and the difference here between a selfish and an unselfish action would be one that was performed with no further conscious aim than that of benefiting self, and one that took within its scope the well-being of others. It is a very old question in ethics, and owes much of its vitality to the common fault that people do not always carefully scrutinize and analyse the terms used.

SINE CERE.—The great probability is that Bishops, and other members of the preaching profession, get into the habit of using a number of phrases without ever asking themselves what they mean, or if they mean anything at all. If you take a score of sermons dealing with the same subjects, you find the same expressions used, in almost the same order, and the same ideas voiced time after time. This serves to dull the mental activity of the preacher, and to lull the critical capacity of the congregations. So the net result is that we have humbug in the pulpit and mental inertia in the pew. Many happy returns. But please don't write as though you are old. It makes us feel a trifle uneasy on our own account.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—C. R. W. Cracklow (Ceylon), £5; J. Petersen (Noumena), £5.

H. BAYFORD.—Thanks. No report of the debate was ever published.

L. W. WILLIS.—Sorry we missed you on Sunday, but it was wise to get rid of the cold if possible. We are not surprised you did not get a satisfactory answer from the B.B.C. The pietists are evidently in control, and it is never to their interest to let the truth about Christianity be known. Telling the truth about their religion has never been the function of any priesthood in any period of the world's history.

S. RENTON.—Sorry, we cannot use your article. The subject has been dealt with several times of late, and you add nothing fresh to the subject. It is attractive to treat an old subject in a new style, but not to treat an old one in an old style.

T. LAYTON.—We never implied that the followers of men like Hickson and other professional evangelists were all frauds. The flats must always outnumber the sharps in every combination.

AMBROSE BARKER.—Like yourself we greatly enjoyed Andrew Clarke's reminiscences of the earlier days of the Secular movement. We do not know whether Mr. Clarke purposes continuing his articles, but he may take this to indicate that very many of our readers would welcome more from his pen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

On Sunday next (April 5) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Balmoral Room, Metropole, West Street, Hull, at 3 and 7. Good audiences are anticipated, and for those coming from any distance there will be a tea between the afternoon and evening meetings. But those who require tea should write as early as possible to Mrs. L. Bell, 1 Mafeking Grove, Seymour Street, so that the proper arrangements may be made.

Mr. Cohen brought the winter session of the Manchester Branch to a close on Sunday last with two very successful meetings in the Pendleton Town Hall. Mr. Rosetti occupied the chair on both occasions, and the lectures were followed by those present with evident appreciation. The Branch has had a very successful season, but unfortunately it has finished up with a deficit instead of a surplus. Still there should be no difficulty in clearing this considering the number of Freethinkers there are around and in Manchester, attached and unattached. We venture to suggest to the latter particularly, that a freewill offering to the Branch would rapidly clear off this deficit and send the Committee forward with a light heart to more conquests. The Secretary's address is H. Bayford, 16 Arnside Street, Rusholme, Manchester.

As one means of diminishing the deficit the Branch is holding an "American Tea" at 3 o'clock on Saturday, March 28, and at 7 there will be a Social and dance. Donations and gifts for sale will be welcomed by the Secretary. We hope to hear that by Saturday evening the deficit is quite cleared. It can easily be done if all do their share.

We see that Sir William Joynson-Hicks, Home Secretary, has promised to consult the Lord Chancellor with a view to circularizing magistrates on their duty with regard to the administration of the law concerning anti-vaccinators. Magistrates sometimes refuse to carry out the law with regard to anti-vaccination because they are themselves in favour of vaccination, and in many cases subject applicants to impertinent lectures on the evil of their policy. It is high time that these gentlemen recognized that it is their duty to administer the law, and not pass comments on those who are asking for their legal rights. But we suggest that the evil is quite as glaring with regard to affirmation. Magistrates and clerks sometimes seem quite ignorant as to the provisions of the Act—we have had ourselves to instruct magistrate's clerks on this point, and in a large number of courts no provision whatever is made for the affirmation of witnesses. Still more frequently quite unauthorised questions are asked. We hope that this will be included in the questions discussed with the Lord Chancellor, and the National Secular Society is approaching the Home Secretary on the matter.

Miss Rout's new book is attracting wide and well deserved attention, as the following from the *Medical Times* for March indicates:—

Another small booklet deserving of a wide publicity is *Sexual Health and Birth Control* (Pioneer Press, 1s. net). Written by Miss Ettie A. Rout, this booklet comprises two lectures on the application of Freethought

to the problems of sexual health and birth control, and is characterized by some very outspoken remarks on these subjects. Attention is very properly directed to the great change in public opinion which has taken place during the past fifty years or so. The author is very emphatic in her condemnation of the attitude of the Christian Church. She is in favour of birth control, and is an earnest advocate of the establishment of Birth Control Clinics. She briefly reviews various practical methods for the prevention of conception. She has ably marshalled facts in support of her contention and has expressed her views courageously and in no uncertain manner. Her booklet ought to appeal to all thoughtful men and women.

The Birmingham Branch of the N.S.S. are holding their Annual Dinner and Concert at the Falstaff Restaurant, Bull Street, on April 4, at 6 p.m. Tickets are 5s. each. Mr. Rosetti will be the guest of the evening. We trust the Branch may have a successful and enjoyable evening.

The Moral Bane of the East.

II.

(Concluded from page 188.)

BUT the Caste barriers of the East seem to be insuperable. They are independent of racial distinctions for they are common to many races. They seem to defy all educative and proselytizing influences, for many a time does one meet intelligent Orientals, highly educated, and even professing Christianity, in whom the Caste idea is still strong. It is ingrained in the very fibre of the people; it breathes in the very spirit of the East. It is drawn in at the mother's breast and inhaled in all the atmosphere of the home. What can education do against such potent influences as these? Centuries of social selection may breed it out of the Oriental's blood, but short of this one knows not what could eradicate it.

The social disabilities imposed by Caste—its strange prohibitions and taboos, unnatural, inhuman, sometimes merely silly and grotesque, but always flagrantly unjust—are the features by which it is best known to the West, and it is perhaps due to this circumstance that Caste is generally regarded by outsiders as a purely social institution, and its deeply rooted religious significance is overlooked. For, though founded on Religion, it is in its social aspect that Caste exhibits its most atrocious features of cruelty and oppression. Want of space forbids any detailed account of these features, nor would it be of much advantage, for without a personal acquaintance with the East it is scarcely possible for the Western mind to imagine the depths of social and moral degradation in which the "Untouchable" must pass his entire life, deprived of the barest rights of humanity, denied all opportunity of bettering his condition, and shunned as an unclean thing by all except his fellow sufferers.

Oriental apologists for Caste sometimes attempt to palliate it on the ground that we of the West have our Castes, too, and thus have no right to condemn it. But this is an utterly false contention. The social distinctions which exist in European countries have nothing comparable with the rigidity, the sacredness, and the religious sanctions of the Eastern Caste system. In Europe and America education, talent, and wealth—especially wealth—often suffice to break down the barriers of class distinction, and hence arise the occasional complaints of the old "blue-blooded" aristocracy that, owing to the democratic tendencies of the times, their lofty circles are being invaded by the "vulgar rich." And after a few generations during which the vulgar rich enjoy the advantages of leisure, refinement, and culture,

their descendants become indistinguishable from the purest specimens of the order of Vere de Vere. But under no conceivable conditions, nor however great may be his natural superiority over his fellows, could a man of low Caste ever attain to a higher one. The mystic status may sometimes be lost, but can never be gained.

The effects of this detestable institution on the intellectual life of the races among which it prevails are as profound and far-reaching as are its political and social results. The complete arrest of progress which has taken place throughout all the great civilizations of the East is one of the most striking phenomena of human history. It is equally manifest in all departments of thought. Oriental science, such as it was—and modern orientals sometimes make extravagant claims for it—came to a standstill centuries ago, and its relics are now of interest only to antiquaries. Oriental literature, mostly of a mythical and religious cast, remains buried in the semi-oblivion of dead languages, and is studied in the East only in monastic seats of learning or in Universities established under European auspices. Oriental architecture, painting, and sculpture no longer exist as living activities, and the mouldering remains of their past achievements—sedulously preserved by Western Governments and methodically studied only by Western antiquaries—awake among the descendants of those who wrought them no response of genius or creative effort, but only a vague feeling of superstitious reverence.

To what cause is this strange arrest and stagnation of Oriental culture due? One is inclined to compare it with the arrest of development along certain lines of organic evolution revealed by Palæontology as, for instance, the reptilian development of the Triassic and Jurassic Periods. And it is probable that both phenomena are results of the same evolutionary principle. Progress, both social and biological, depends on adaptability of the organism to changing conditions, on a facility of response to new impressions, and a plasticity of organization manifesting itself in variability of structure and versatility of function. Any tendency to fixity of structure or immobility of function in face of changing conditions, whether occurring externally or within the organism itself, is detrimental to progress.

This principle furnishes us with a clue to the cause we are seeing. Not only the acquisition of knowledge but its widest possible diffusion is essential to the intellectual progress of a community, and under the Caste system of the East this diffusion was made impossible. The inevitable effect of the Caste system was to confine all learning and culture to a few restricted classes of the community—chief of all the priestly class—while the great mass of the people, in the lower castes, were left from age to age in a state of abject ignorance. That vast and fertile field, the natural genius of the "common people," wherein among the progressive nations of the West rich harvests of intellectual wealth are continually being produced, remained among the ancient nations of the East for ever waste and barren. And when culture is confined to a small, exclusive, and artificially organized class it is bound sooner or later to decay. Any system of thought presented age after age to minds of an unvarying type, as those belonging to a restricted class are bound to be, will continue to evoke an unvarying kind of response, and such a system of thought will inevitably become stereotyped and inflexible, pervaded by an inert and barren formalism. All boldness and originality of conception must disappear under such conditions, and hence there would be no possibility of progress but a constant danger of retrogression. Indeed, whatever in-

tellectual possessions had been acquired might even be lost or other disturbing influences should bring about the decadence or extinction of the priestly class which was its sole repository.

How different might the result have been if the teeming population of those ancient empires had enjoyed equally with the higher Castes all the available opportunities of enlightenment. How many a brilliant genius might have shone out from amongst those outcast millions if knowledge had but been given the opportunity of "unrolling to their eyes her ample page!" Real discoveries in science might have arisen, as they did in the West, to take the place of the grotesque cosmogonies and the semi-magical pseudo science of the priests. Original conceptions in art might have created new schools of technique and blossomed into new forms of beauty. Literature might have struck out fresh paths and freed itself from the deadening influences of religion and mythology. And all this, having been accomplished by the people themselves, would have been the expression of their living genius, destined not to perish and be forgotten but to endure and grow greater from age to age.

Thus we see that Caste—the most cruel and monstrous superstition that has ever darkened the mind of man—has been one of the chief causes that have retarded the advance of Asiatic civilization. It has obstructed, and still obstructs, political development; it has frustrated and warped the moral instincts which are the basis of social life; and it has completely arrested intellectual progress. And since Caste has its chief root in Religion, the religious systems which have engendered, and still support it, must be held accountable for these results. A. E. MADDOCK.

A Fireside Chat about Suspended Judgment.

The question of suspended judgment is really a simple and straightforward one, so much so in fact that the writer almost feels called upon to apologize for escorting it into print.

Yet he has so often seen those who are critical or sceptical concerning Christianity confused by a stereotyped theological gambit, that he has deemed it excusable to clear up a few points in a fireside chat.

There are, roughly, two types of theologian we meet with in this discussion. One is a man who sets up the "divine mystery" as approachable only through faith, and asserts that those without faith must suspend their judgment, because nothing in connection with the whole subject is a matter for reason and nothing therefore for judgment. We cannot profitably argue with such a man, for we are at cross purposes with him all along the line.

The other presents a slightly different front. He argues that approaching the mystery through reason we arrive at the conclusion that judgment cannot but be suspended concerning God.

His argument is simple and superficially plausible. It is, in the main, that our scepticism arises in the first place out of our recognition of the unknown and that we are thus false to the rational basis of our own scepticism when we make any further judgment concerning the unknown than is involved in the mere recognition of it. From that he swiftly passes on to the conclusion that God, while He may be affirmed through faith, can neither be affirmed nor denied through reason.

In this he approximates to the final position in the former case, only he differs in admitting a rational approach to the conclusion. There is a certain air of

plausibility about this which somehow confounds unwary people, perhaps because they give their critical reflection to the generalities as expressed by the theologian, taking a little for granted by the way, and omitting to dissect his terms and their implications. Let us therefore make a brief dissection for ourselves. In the first place, if "God" merely means "the unknown" than to deny or affirm that there is a God is only equivalent to saying that you do or do not know everything. There is not much difficulty in settling a question of that kind, and it certainly does not require faith to assist in its solution.

If "God" means a particular something whose attributes are unknown, the position remains substantially the same until that something is described, and then, of course, its attributes cease to be unknown. As a matter of fact, Christians do describe their God with a high degree of particularity; laying down definite relations which exist between Him and the phenomenal universe and explaining the facts of life in terms of Him. He is a key to their interpretation, a solution, an explanation, and it is sheer nonsense to speak of such a being as out of contact with the known and inaccessible to rational enquiry. To do so is nothing less than to imply that He is known and unknown at the same time.

An explanation purporting to account for facts may justly be tested against those facts and may legitimately be rejected if it is not consistent with them. An explanation of understandable things framed in understandable terms may not be open to the tests of direct demonstration, but it can be reached, for the purpose of enquiry, through inference, and it is folly to say that it belongs to the unknown in the sense that it cannot be dealt with and judged in reason. This brings us to the crux of the discussion. It is *not* the unknown on which Atheists pass a judgment. They all agree that there is an unknown, and the question of judgment concerning its nature simply does not arise.

The judgment concerning "God" is a judgment concerning a solution of the unknown offered by certain people, and, of course, made known in the offering.

Atheists examine the solution in the same way as all intelligent and informed persons examine all theories, and finding that it does not fit the facts it is supposed to explain, they pass an adverse judgment on it, and feel the more confirmed in their judgment when they reflect that they are able to furnish a good explanation of how the other explanation ever came to exist.

In judging that such and such an explanation is *not* a true one, we do not, of course, pass any judgment as to what *is* the true one. Very little logical insight is required to see that; and it is the latter question on which judgment is suspended, the former on which judgment is passed and opinion held. The confusion around suspended judgment in theology is really confusion as to the matter on which judgment is or is not suspended, and I would venture to say that much of the ignorant talk concerning "dogmatic" Atheism is due to a complete failure to appreciate the nature of the judgments involved.

MEDICUS.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.

Mr. P. Marsden's address last Sunday led to an animated and interesting discussion, which we hope to renew on some future occasion. To-night Mr. A. R. Dard, M.A., will explain the principles of the Ahmadian movement, which, we understand, is a branch of the Mahomedan religion. In view of the strides that this belief is taking, it is as well that Freethinkers should make themselves acquainted with all its branches, and we hope for a good attendance.—K.

Correspondence.

THE HYDE PARK CASE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—*Re* your comments in this week's *Freethinker* on my case, it is not correct to imply that I had no need for help in connection with the recent case. I did need and should have received solidarity. The point is that the conditions under which the Secular Society would have helped made it impossible to approach the Executive. Certainly, the condition as to not speaking. That is no ground for implying that I did not need help. It cost me a good deal for the law books, which really means private consultation with the solicitor.

Also, the question of arbitrary and unlawful arrest should be appealed. But I must find one surety of £30 besides myself. And when I look round for this, those who applaud are missing.

It is apathy, this idea that one is doing something for another, instead of liberty, that permits invasion of public liberty.

Your statement about tact is quite unjustified. You have a verbatim report of the case and have no right to fall back upon newspaper talk. My speech and my evidence are both creditable to the movement, and lectures on tact savour too much of Morley to merit Freethought respect.

During my twenty years' platform activity as an Atheist I have never once been accused, even by my opponents, of breach of courtesy. Hence your statement seemed like a surrender to the enemy.

As to tact, many Socialists say it is tactless for me to say in the witness-box, unasked: "I am an Atheist." But I consider it merely honest.

The truth is, in this case, as in the other prosecutions and persecutions, I have not had shown to me that comradeship that should have been extended to one fighting the battle of liberty. However!

GUY A. ALDRED.

[Mr. Aldred's letter calls for a few words of comment:—

(1) The N.S.S. has during the past fifteen years spent many hundreds of pounds in fighting cases, and it has done so on two conditions: (a) that the case was one with which the Society could properly interfere; and (b) that if it did so the conduct of the case must rest in its hands. In both the Boulter and the Gott cases this was the plan followed. It would be impossible for the Society to be dragged into court at the heels of any individual who came into conflict with the authorities. And it is because it considers principles rather than persons that it has laid down this rule.

(2) This applies to the Society's active and public assistance. Advice can be obtained by anyone who cares to ask for it, whether it is a case with which the Society can officially interfere or not. Expense would, we gather from Mr. Aldred's letter, have been saved, had advice been asked, and no man is bound to follow the advice he receives. He either takes it or leaves it.

(3) When we wrote about commenting upon other meetings in the vicinity we had mainly in mind the conduct of meetings in general, and we know that there is a fondness with some to keep up a running comment upon rival meetings that are going on in the neighbourhood. But the report of the case we have does show there were references to other meetings made by Mr. Aldred; we were not being guided by "newspaper talk." We should add that we are not accusing Mr. Aldred of discourtesy in his comments upon other meetings, we refrain from passing any opinion whatever on the point, and in any case we can readily believe that the comments of the political speakers on other platforms left much to be desired. But it is just our point that if we are aiming at defeating the enemy we must adopt a policy that does not play into his hands. The older members of the Freethought party will remember that we are not talking without a lengthy and extensive experience of open-air meetings, and while we have no desire to lecture anyone on tact, we are justified in advising such steps as may lead to the holding of orderly meetings. The minority is always more interested in this being done than is the majority.—*Ed.*]

CHRISTIAN COURTESY.

SIR,—Except as showing the type of mind that the propaganda of your journal has to contend with, and yourself, sir, and other lecturers, the anonymous letter sent in big block letters which you published in last

week's issue, is perhaps not worth notice. It is typical of Christian charity, and is the product of either an ignorant bigot or of an intellectual humbug who preaches to others what he knows to be untrue and does not himself believe.

My own view of the worm that he refers to is that it is infinitely worth more in the economy of nature than he is to the community of which he is a member.

He has forgotten his Master's injunction to offer the other cheek when he is smitten on the one. You may, sir, still have the opportunity of rescuing him from the slough of ignorance or hypocrisy, whichever he may have fallen into, and that I take to be your self-denying mission.

SINE CERE.

[We really have no such hopes. Providence appears to have supplied this kind of being with complete immunity from anything in the shape of intellectual development.—*Ed.*]

SIR,—The Christian communication you received after your recent visit to Weston-super-Mare and given in the *Freethinker* of the 15th inst., reminds one of a similar attack on Ingersoll.

A certain Mrs. Van Cott, a revivalist, in an interview spoke of Ingersoll as "a poor barking dog." On having his attention drawn to it, he sent her the following letter:—

MY DEAR MADAM.—Were you constrained by the love of Christ to call a man who has never injured you "a poor barking dog"? Did you make this remark as a Christian, or as a lady? Did you say these words to illustrate in some faint degree the refining influence upon women of the religion you preach?

What would you think of me if I should retort, using your language, only changing the sex of the last word? I have the honor to remain,

Yours truly,

R. G. INGERSOLL.

That was in 1878. All Freethought lecturers have had similar experience, Bradlaugh, Foote, down to our own time.

A. G. B.

PAPINI'S CHRIST.

SIR,—Mr. Knapp-Fisher still persists in asserting that the second coming of Christ had nothing to do with the end of the world. What then does he make of the 25th chapter of Matthew, from verse 31 to the end, where we are told the Son of Man will come in glory with his angels, and all the nations will be gathered together and the sheep divided from the goats; the sheep to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, and the goats "into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"? Does Mr. Knapp-Fisher believe that the "Kingdom of God on earth" was to be established *after* the Judgment Day? If so, I am not aware of any Christians who hold such a view. However, so far as my argument is concerned, it does not matter. The early Christians lived in daily expectation of the end of the world. Gibbon, in his 25th chapter (sec. 2), says that "in the primitive Church it was universally believed that the end of the world and the kingdom of heaven were at hand." And it was this feverish expectation that distracted their attention from the things of this world, turning them from citizens of earth into candidates for heaven.

Then we are told of the horrors of slavery in the Roman Republic before the time of Christ. It is one of the defects in the moral teachings attributed to Christ that he nowhere condemns slavery, although living in the midst of it. On the other hand, under the pagan Roman Emperors of the first and second centuries, the lot of the slaves was undergoing constant amelioration. The great Roman Stoic moralists pleaded for their better treatment which resulted in numerous laws being passed for their protection. In the time of Augustus, slaves obtained their freedom so easily, and in such numbers, that the more conservative citizens became alarmed lest the freed slaves should outnumber those born free.

In fact, slavery was on the high road to extinction when the fall of the Empire put an end to progress in this direction, and gave to slavery a much longer lease of life. The Christian Bishop said not a word against it. As Lecky says: "Slavery was distinctly and formally recognized by Christianity." He says it lasted for about

eight hundred years after Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, and "the number of men who were subject to it was probably greater than in the Pagan Empire." (*Morals*, vol. 2, pp. 66-70.) The Church itself was one of the largest of slave holders, and was the last to emancipate them.

When at last, mainly owing to economic causes, it merged into serfdom, it was revived in its most diabolical form, when the Spaniards conquered South America; and later on it flourished in the United States, where it was defended, Bible in hand, and was only finally abolished after a bloody civil war.

Mr. Knapp-Fisher claims to be a Freethinker himself. I should not have suspected it. His opinions seem to me suspiciously like those which were instilled into me when I was a child fifty years ago. However, I do not begrudge him the title. I wish more people would adopt it, not only for purposes of debate, but among their relatives and friends. Besides it is always nice to be on the winning side—especially when the hardest of the fighting is over.

In conclusion, I repeat that the "muddle-headedness" is not on my side, and leave the task of judging where it rightly belongs to the readers' judgment.

W. MANN.

SIR,—In reference to the correspondence between Mr. Mann and Mr. Knapp-Fisher, in which is discussed Christ's prediction of the end of the world. In your issue of the 22nd inst., Mr. Knapp-Fisher quotes from the Bible the following texts—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 into his kingdom," following which, Mr. Knapp-Fisher says: "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."

One wonders if Mr. Knapp-Fisher is being serious when he writes like this. Does he really think that Christ did not predict the end of the world in his own generation? If so, what does he make of the following from the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew?—

Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them.....As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be..... Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened: and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.....Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. (Verses 3, 4, 27, 29-30, and 34.)

It is clearly defined by these verses that Christ's disciples asked Him for a sign of the end of the world, and when these things were to be, and Christ's answer is equally clear both as to the signs and the time when they were to occur, viz. "this generation."

G. W. Foote said of the above in his *The Bible Handbook*:—

This prophecy by the Son of God is more specific in point of time than prophecies usually are, and so forms a good test of the reality of Christ's pretensions. Nearly 2,000 years have elapsed, and it is still unfulfilled, although Christ himself most emphatically declared that it should be completely fulfilled within the lifetime of the generation then living. Generation after generation has passed away, and the prophet of Nazareth stands a convicted imposter.

I hope the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew will make the matter more clear to Mr. Knapp-Fisher.

F. FELGATE STONE.

ETHICS OF PATRIOTISM.

SIR,—I am obliged to Mr. Alfred Russell for his criticism, if I may call it so, of my remarks on the developments of Communism. It is always a pleasure to a

writer to find anyone who reads his efforts. I am quite in agreement with Mr. Russell when he says that patriotism is not a natural instinct. But in that sense, neither is love or affection, or any of the moral virtues, and Mr. Russell will scarcely deny that these are any the less powerful as human sentiments on that account. The only "natural" instincts are those arising out of the food and sex desires, upon which life itself is dependent; all the others are acquired or developed instincts, and have arisen out of the necessities of our moral and intellectual nature. Mr. Russell has not shown that the sentiment of patriotism is less strong than I pictured it to be. I do not see that the conditions in India and Egypt, however regrettable they may be, affect the fact of patriotism; and why the reference to Keir Hardie's disillusionment should be considered inappropriate I do not quite understand. I happened to be one of the guarantors of a Socialist club opened by Keir Hardie some time before the war. But the conflict between international and patriotic ideals wrecked the club, all the best and sane members being on the side of patriotism. Mr. Russell is not quite consistent; for while praising the patriotism of the Red Army in Russia, he does not admit it as a motive force in other peoples.

In saying that Communist persecution is not proven, one can only suppose that he has let his sympathies interfere with his critical judgment. It would be possible, if it were convenient, to fill the *Freethinker* with evidence. The testimony of "Red Emma" alone, based upon personal knowledge and investigation, ought to be sufficient to satisfy even a Marxian. While sympathizing with their ideals, she altogether objects to the tyranny and persecution of the Soviet Government. Communism is only one of the movements that have developed the same tendency. Even the Co-operative movement, which may be said to have had a Freethought origin, and began with high ideals, has developed into the most dictatorial and coercive institution in this country, with the possible exception of the despotic organization known as the Salvation Army.

Mr. Russell seems to see some incongruity in Marx being a Materialist and a visionary at the same time. But there is nothing inconsistent in a Materialist having ideals; indeed, it is almost a necessary result of their philosophy. But when these ideals are sought to be forced upon people at the point of the sword, it is the business of the *Freethinker* to object. Mr. Russell says that "the Soviet Government is anxious to develop Communism in other lands"; but the very impertinence of interfering in other people's business, with which they have no rightful concern, shows that they have lost all sense of social integrity, and do not understand the basic principles of Freethought.

Mr. Russell's reference to the appeal to the world's workers to unite has an amusing side. It reminded me of the constant appeals that are being made to the Christian sects to unite, and these surely have as much common ground for collective action as the so-called world's workers. Later, in my articles, I hope to deal with some of these larger ideals in the light of the philosophy of human nature that I am endeavouring to sketch out.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

SIR,—Mr. Bryce says in his article on "Ethics," that Jacob by a knowledge of those facts of Evolution in reference to breeding, upon which Darwin based his theory, 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. Will Mr. Bryce tell us what those facts of Evolution are. The story runs that after making the agreement with Laban, he took him rods of green poplar, of the hazel and chestnut tree, and filed white streaks in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods, and he set the rods which he had filed before the flocks when they came to drink, that they might conceive when they came to drink, etc. And it came to pass (Gen. xxx., 41-42) whosoever the stronger cattle did conceive that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the cattle in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods. But when the cattle were feeble, he put them not in, so the feebler were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's. Does Mr. Bryce believe that, by putting these rods before the cattle, or

by not putting them in, at the moment of conception, he was able to produce the colours he wanted. Darwin mentions in his voyage of the "Beagle" (I have not the book before me, so I am trusting to memory) three different herds of cattle running wild, that were descended from previously domesticated cattle; these herds were all different in colour, but each herd was uniform. These cattle were all roaming the same ground, so that as far as any environmental influence at conception was concerned, the different herds ought to have been all alike in colour, and so they would have been if this simple Bible story were true. Now I should say that when a person knows why these herds were all different in colour, but each herd uniform, and the same applies to all animals, domesticated or not, he is in a fair way to become possessed of a knowledge of just those facts of Evolution in reference to breeding, of which Jacob was entirely ignorant. It's just a Bible story, nothing more.

HARRY PARTINGTON.

CLERICAL SCHOOLS IN RURAL AREAS.

SIR,—Mr. Hutchison wants to know why it is criminal for the Labour Party not to insist on Birth Control among its members, any more than for the Conservative or Liberal Party? Well, most of them practise it where they think it necessary, and those who do not, are adding good stock to the nation and rarely insist on doles or University education for which other people are expected to pay. They are, as a rule, intelligent enough to have only those children they can well keep and bring up.

He also wants to know why I don't "air my objections in a political, instead of a non-political paper"? Well, it was not I, in the first place, who boosted up Mr. Wheatley, class war, and the wonderful things we would get directly we all became Socialists. Mr. Hutchison took good care not to protest to Mrs. Adams simply because he agreed with her. When, however, she was criticised and asked questions which neither she nor he could answer, he coolly objects. My opposition to all the froth and dreams of the Socialists and the Labour Party is based on exactly the same kind of objection which made Freethinkers like Bradlaugh, Ingersoll, and Foote anti-Socialists—and I advise Mr. Hutchison to read them and find out why.

H. CUTNER.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (160 Great Portland Street, W.): 8, Miss Ettie Rout, "Dangerous Marriages." 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. A. R. Dard, M.A., "What is the Ahmadiya Movement?"

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham Road): 7, Mr. A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A., "God."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Miss Elsie Morton, "Prison Reform."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2.): 11, John Russell, M.A., "Back to Emerson: His Suggestions for Education."

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.—The Annual Dinner and Concert will be held at the Falstaff Restaurant, Bull Street, on Saturday, April 4, at 6 p.m. Tickets 5s each. Mr. Rosetti will be the guest of the evening.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. Ben Goldberg, "Crimes of Christianity." Questions and Discussion. (Silver Collection.) The Committee will meet after the Lecture.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Dora Russell, "Birth Control."

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