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Views and Opinions.

Roadmakers.

The *Roadmaker Series* is the title given by a firm of publishers, Mr. Leonard Parsons, to a new series of biographies. I like the name. If I may paraphrase the most stupid form of the design argument, every road implies a roadmaker, but unfortunately the real roadmakers are seldom known, and less seldom honoured. It is the road user who somehow or the other gets into the limelight. How many know the names of the men who first cut a trail through some virgin land? But presently, when the rough and dangerous work of pioneering has been done, someone comes along and lays down a good, hard, showy road, and he is rewarded in hard cash, with a title, and perhaps with a monument. If possible this is even truer in matters of the mind, particularly when what was required was the cutting of a road through an established and powerful superstition. The men who do the work here, those who blaze the trail, who prepare the way for those who will in due time reap honours and wealth, are seldom known. They incurred the odium of established respectability while they lived, and when they are dead outraged error, forced to give ground, takes its revenge by denying to its real conquerors the credit that is theirs. In the world of religion and of sociology the work done by men such as Paine, and Owen, and Carlyle, and Hetherington, and Holyoake, and Bradlaugh, and Foote is but little known. Their respectable contemporaries ignore or belittle them. And when they are dead the established channels of education and publicity do not care to offend respectability by mentioning their names. Credit is given to some name that has a good standing. One writer follows another, and the young student who turns to the orthodox books of reference grows up in ignorance of them. The real roadmakers are forgotten. Others demand credit for merely using the road that someone else has made.

* * *

A New Life of Paine.

The last *Roadmaker* selected by Mr. Parsons is a name that all Freethinkers hold in honour—that of Thomas Paine. And the writing of the work is entrusted to the capable hands of Mr. F. J. Gould.¹

¹ *Thomas Paine.* By F. J. Gould. 4s. 6d.

Mr. Gould, as usual, writes with charming simplicity and directness, and while his work does not pretend to enter into competition with the monumental one of Moncure D. Conway, it is one that all Freethinkers will be glad to possess, and it cannot but open the eyes of any Christian who cares to read it. All the main facts of Paine's life are there—his work in connection with the American Revolution, and in France; his efforts to achieve a sane and sensible form of government in England, his liberalizing influence in religion, and, indeed, in whatever he touched, is well brought out. We congratulate both author and publisher on the work. Very many of the things for which Paine fought are now either accomplished or regarded as commonplaces of reform movements. But when he flashed them on the world they were startling and dangerous doctrines, and many paid for propagating them with their liberty and their lives—and that barely a century ago. They who complain of the slowness of progress would do well to contrast the state of things in Paine's time and in ours. Paine was the first to write in America against negro slavery, the first to write the phrase the Free and Independent States of America, and his dashing pen did more than any other single thing to make it an accomplished fact; he was the first to write of the United States of Europe—of which our League of Nations is but a poor echo; the first to draw up a scheme of old age pensions, and to lay down principles of political life which, if acted on, would have made such a disaster as the late war an impossibility. In England, France, and America he was the fiery apostle of liberty and justice, the apostle of the Rights of Man, the Herald of the Age of Reason.

* * *

Pious Slanders.

It says something for the malignant quality of Christian hatred that this man who wrote simple, forceful, and direct English, who battled wherever he went for truth and justice, should for many years have passed into the general estimation as a drunken, dirty, dissolute creature, writing in vulgar words of "sacred" things, and who died shocking his pious hearers with his drunken cries for forgiveness from the God he had insulted. I still have, among others about Paine, a pamphlet which professes to tell his life, the covers adorned with the picture of a shock-headed, dirty, leering individual, holding in front of him a huge brandy bottle. The inside is worthy of the cover. Every now and then this kind of tract is met with in the wilds of Cornwall, or Wales, where Christian liars feel they are safe in circulating their scandalous rubbish, and never once can I recall a single instance of a Christian clergyman protesting against this lying for the glory of God. If they did not tell the lie themselves they were always ready to reap whatever advantage might come from the telling. It took nearly a century of hard work to drag the figure of Paine from beneath the filth which Christian malignity had heaped upon him; and if one wishes a crucial example of the evil effects of Christian belief upon character one could not cite a better instance

than the Christian treatment of Thomas Paine, the world reformer.

* * *

A "Life" That Is Wanted.

All the same, and the saying of it takes nothing from what has already been written, there remains a life of Paine yet to be written. This will only be done when someone is prepared to finance the necessary lengthy work of research required. Paine's influence on his contemporaries has often enough been referred to, but it has never been fully traced. Our writers and publishers are, as a rule, a timid lot, and when a man has been branded by respectable orthodoxy as vulgar, or ignorant, or violent, or undesirable, it takes more courage than the average historian appears to possess to set forth the real man who excited the storm. It is very easy to bury the heretic as soon as he is dead. One writer follows another, the respectables receive the credit, the timid advances they make are hailed as epoch-marking, while the genuine road-makers are forgotten. So what we should like to see is a work that would show clearly how great Paine's influence was on contemporary thought and life. We know that all over England, Ireland, and Scotland there were numerous Corresponding Societies and similar institutions formed for the purpose of discussing and disseminating Paine's works. There were hundreds of these and they did much to make it possible for timid heretics to say a little without risking much. But for the real reformers these were times that—in Paine's words—tried men's souls. Men met to read the *Rights of Man* and the *Age of Reason* with sentinels stationed outside the house to warn them of the approach of soldiers sent to arrest them. It was dangerous to let it be known that one had Paine's works, still more so to lend them to others. Robert Burns entrusted the works of Paine to a blacksmith friend to be kept safe and secret. In one celebrated trial, a Scotch lawyer of standing, Mr. Muir, was sentenced to transportation for life for the crime of advising someone to read Paine. Richard Carlile spent over nine years in prison for selling Paine's works. At one time there were about a score of people in prison for this offence. It would take many years of labour to hunt up the pamphlets and papers necessary to write *this* life of Paine. But I should like to see it done. It would show how much we of to-day owe to that heroic and lonely figure.

* * *

The Paine Centenary.

There is just one word of criticism which we have to offer on Mr. Gould's otherwise pleasant and admirable book. It is in the nature of a correction of what is probably an oversight. The centenary of the death of Thomas Paine occurred on June 8, 1909. To celebrate the occasion a meeting was held in the Great St. James's Hall. The meeting was a remarkable one. The great hall was filled, and the meeting was enthusiastic from start to finish. From some cause or other, Mr. Gould mentions but two of the speakers, both of whom made fine speeches, but neither of whom were responsible for the meeting being called, nor directly concerned with it. Mr. Gould mentions Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner and Mr. Herbert Burrows, but he does not mention the name of one who towered above all others in point of oratorical ability and in sheer mental power—I mean the late editor of this journal, G. W. Foote. Moreover it was a National Secular Society meeting, called and paid for by that Society, and I venture to say that no other Society in London could have got together so large an audience, on a summer evening, to do honour to the memory of Thomas Paine. The omission is the more remarkable since it is no less than the truth to say that Christian bigotry might have succeeded

in burning the real Paine had it not been for the work of militant Freethinkers during the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century. Then, as now, respectable and highly-placed Freethinkers were far more concerned with obtaining the good opinions of Christians than with seeing that the works of Paine were kept to the front. Militant Freethought kept Paine alive, and it is, after all, the only Freethought worth bothering about. It is the real roadmaker. It is quite safe to praise Paine now. It was a very different thing then. Thomas Paine set the world a glorious example in fearlessness and love of justice and of truth. These are qualities for which a man must always pay the price. But those who have the courage to pay it never regret the cost.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Easter.

EASTER is once more close at hand, and the Church will be celebrating it as usual as the holiest and most solemnly glorious festival of the year. Nelson's Encyclopædia supplies a fairly accurate definition of it as "a religious festival of great antiquity, occurring at or about the vernal equinox. It marked the dawn of a new year, the end of the reign of winter and the advent of increasing light and heat, and the vivifying influences of spring." Sir James Frazer, in his invaluable work, *The Golden Bough*, has established the accuracy of that view of Easter beyond the possibility of honest doubt. The Christian festival is, therefore, indisputably an imitation or adaptation of a much older Pagan one. And yet, despite this well-attested fact, ordinary Christians and the majority of their professional theologians deny that there is any connection whatever between their festival and any other in the world. Professor Fisher, in his *History of the Church*, simply observes that "the first yearly festival generally observed was Easter, standing in the room of the ancient Passover" (p. 64); but, either through ignorance or prejudice, he makes no reference to the close coincidence between this festival and the older Pagan one. The same thing is true of Dr. Green's *Handbook of Church History* (p. 181); but both works agree in admitting that no sooner had the observance of the festival began than there arose serious disputes as to the proper date on which it should be kept. There were two rival parties on this point in the primitive Church. One party argued that if the death of Christ occurred on March 25, his resurrection must have taken place on March 27. The other party maintained that Christ died on March 23 and rose again on March 25. The controversy between the two factions was long and often extremely bitter. Really the difference between the Eastern and Western parties was exceedingly small and trivial; but why did the Western view prevail? The preachers assure us that the date of Easter was fixed by the Nicean Council in 325. That is doubtless true; but the divines overlook the fact that during those early centuries there was a terrific struggle taking place between Christianity and the older Oriental religions. Indeed, so severe and continuous was the conflict that it was frequently extremely doubtful which religion would ultimately gain the supremacy. As Sir James Frazer puts it in the *Golden Bough* (p. 361):—

It appears from the testimony of an anonymous Christian, who wrote in the fourth century of our era, that Christians and Pagans were struck by the remarkable coincidence between the death and resurrection of their respective deities, and that the coincidence formed a theme of bitter controversy between the adherents of the rival religions, the Pagans

contending that the resurrection of Christ was a spurious imitation of the resurrection of Attis, and the Christians asserting with equal warmth that the resurrection of Attis was a diabolical counterfeit of the resurrection of Christ. In these unseemly bickerings the Heathen took what to a superficial observer might seem strong ground by arguing that their God was the older and therefore presumably the original, not the counterfeit, since as a rule an original is older than a copy. This feeble argument the Christians easily rebutted. They admitted, indeed, that in point of time Christ was the junior deity, but they triumphantly demonstrated his real seniority by falling back on the subtlety of Satan, who on so important an occasion had surpassed himself by inverting the usual order of Nature.

The satire in the closing sentence is exquisitely fine, and shows most clearly what Sir James thinks of early Christians as reasoners in defence of their faith. As apologists they were but children. Sir James proceeds thus on the same page:—

Taken altogether, the coincidences of the Christian with the Heathen festivals are too close and too numerous to be accidental. They mark the compromise which the Church in the hour of its triumph was compelled to make with its vanquished yet dangerous rivals. The inflexible Protestantism of the primitive missionaries, with their fiery denunciations of Heathendom, had been exchanged for the supple policy, the easy tolerance, the comprehensive charity of shrewd ecclesiastics, who clearly perceived that if Christianity was to conquer the world it could do so only by relaxing the too rigid principles of its Founder, by widening a little the narrow gate which leads to salvation.

That change of policy could easily be traced a good deal further, which would reflect no credit on the Church; but that is not the object of the present article.

We now pass on to the Christian observance of Easter. Take Good Friday, which is a day of sadness and mourning. This day, it is alleged, is the anniversary of Christ's crucifixion and burial. We learn, on the testimony of an anonymous writer that in the Greek churches a waxen effigy of the dead Christ is exposed to view from morning till night, and that it is covered with fervent kisses by the multitudes who attend, "while the whole Church rings with melancholy, monotonous dirges"; and the lamentations were at first accompanied by a rigorous fast. In the Anglican Church fasting is recommended during the whole of Lent. In the Catholic Church on Good Friday an eucharistic service is held in which the elements were consecrated the day before; and this service is called the Mass of the Pre-sanctified. The vestments worn by the officiating clergy are black, while all linen and ornaments are removed from the altars. The lamentations indulged in on Good Friday are supposed to last till midnight on Saturday.

Easter Sunday, however, is a day of rejoicing. The priest joyously exclaims, "He is risen," and the people smilingly reply, "He is risen indeed." Lively hymns are sung, optimistic prayers are addressed to heaven, and listening to these and sometimes to sermons pitched in the same major key, one would naturally imagine that the Millennium had already dawned upon the world. The truth is that the emotions of the worshippers have been skillfully played upon by specially trained priests during the forty days of Lent, so that by Easter Sunday they have reached the zenith of their strength which produces ecstasy, and everybody knows that ecstasy is a species of disease. We by no means charge those who rise or fall into that excessively happy condition with insincerity. As a matter of fact, they are as sincere as they can possibly

be, but sincerity is neither a proof of sanity, nor an evidence of the truth of the so-called facts upon which the enchanting experience rests. If it were it would demonstrate the truth of the great Oriental religions. Adonis and Attis were both gods who were believed to have died and risen again for the redemption of mankind, and their worshippers were quite as genuinely grieved over their death and equally overjoyed at their resurrection as the Christians were and are over the death and resurrection of Christ. Now, the question is, what evidence can be adduced to show that the experience of those Pagan worshippers was founded upon falsehood, while it is claimed that the experience of Christian worshippers is rooted and grounded in truth? All Christians are convinced that Adonis, Attis, and all other Pagan Gods, were wholly mythical beings, and we heartily admit that their judgment is literally true; but, after all, who can convince us that the Christian God is one whit less mythical? Nobody *knows* anything at all about him, though multitudes *believe* many things, but they are incapable of verifying their beliefs. It is a truism now that belief is not a synonym for knowledge. Our conviction is that Christianity belongs to the same category as all Heathen religions do. Not one of your supernatural beliefs is susceptible of verification. Neither the death nor the resurrection of Jesus is an established fact, nor can the belief in them prove anything except its own sincerity. Many theologians to-day frankly admit that they cannot evince the truth of Christianity intellectually, but in their desperation they fall back upon religious experience as the only unshakable evidence. They forget, however, that the religious experience of Mohammedans, Hindus, and of all other non-Christian believers in the supernatural, is at least an equal proof of the truth of those religions.

In the *Church Times* of March 20 there was a short article entitled "The Challenge of Good Friday," which is itself but "part of an article by the Bishop of Swansea and Brecon that will appear in the April *Magazine* of the C.E.M.S." It begins thus:—

"It will not bear thinking about." That is certainly the truth if we apply the words to the present manner in which this Christian country marks Good Friday. Football matches, excursions, golf competitions, cinemas, concerts—these things constitute for a vast number of people their present observance of the day on which Christ died for them. Verily these things persist solely because people will not suffer themselves to think. Two minutes' thought would reveal the inconsistency and discordancy of such methods of "keeping Good Friday." I ask you, therefore, to reflect for a few minutes upon the principle which should govern our treatment of the day of our Redeemer's dying.

A few hundred years ago it was a most perilous thing to gainsay the words of a Bishop, but the world has moved on a bit since then, and now a Bishop is regarded as but a mere man like all others, whose words must be judged on their merit or demerit. The Bishop of Swansea and Brecon is entirely mistaken on several points. It is not lack of thought that leads such a vast number of people to devote Good Friday to various forms of play. Of course he would like them to go to church or chapel to listen to old-fashioned prayers and ineffably dull sermons in buildings stuffy and badly ventilated, but they are persuaded that, inasmuch as they spend all days except Sunday and public holidays indoors or under ground, it is incalculably better for their health and spirits that they spend one day a week and every public holiday enjoying themselves in their chosen ways in the open air. Among them are not a few Freethinkers to whom, as to the Apostle Paul, all days are alike. They do not recognize the sanctity of Sunday, Christ-

mas, and Good Friday. To them the health-giving open air is infinitely more beneficial than church or chapel. In any case, Easter, spring, is a time to rejoice at the approach of better weather and the renewal of life upon the earth. J. T. LLOYD.

The Garden of the Gods.

The sea of faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd;
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating to the breath
Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

—Matthew Arnold.

AN amusing story is told of George Jacob Holyoake, the Freethought leader. An officer, on service in India, sent the famous Freethinker a Hindoo idol as a present. With the gift was a note saying that the writer, knowing that Holyoake was an Atheist, sent the deity along so that the recipient should not feel lonely surrounded by Christians. Holyoake replied facetiously that he had a statue of Buddha in his room, that this gift made a second object of adoration, but he was still behind his Christian neighbours because they worshipped three gods, and he possessed only two.

To the Secularist three deities are three too many, but the world is not yet composed of high-brow Freethinkers. How could it be so when the Hindoo Pantheon, for example, numbers thousands of gods, each with its own cult of worship, and each representing some form of religion. The supreme Hindoo deities are Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver, and Siva, the destroyer. Through all the bewildering mazes of Hindooism, with its multiplication of gods and goddesses for public and private adoration these remain the basis of the Hindoo faith. Thousands of years of Hindooism have resulted in minor gods or idols for every conceivable occasion or event in communal life. Every Indian village has its temples or shrines dedicated to the particular gods who are alleged to watch over the fortunes of the varied industries or protect it from the vicissitudes which those industries may engender. So expansive is Hindoo theism that it seems almost capable of deifying a local railway company, a gas works' directorate, or a pickle factory.

It is a peculiarity, pathetic enough in its wider aspect, of low caste communities that they regard themselves as so inferior in the social scale that they may not even worship the higher deities. Siva, Vishnu, and Brahma, they declare, are for the higher castes alone, so they fashion for themselves humbler gods and goddesses whom they can worship without fear and trembling. And when the demand is great the kind-hearted Christian manufacturers of Birmingham, and elsewhere, come to the rescue and make gods and goddesses by the gross for the use of the benighted heathen, for whom missionaries are afterwards sent out so that they may be converted to the Christian faith. And so the game goes merrily on, to the discomfiture of the philosopher and the aggrandisement of the priests, both Hindoo and Christian.

Custom makes cowards of most men, and the religious habits of centuries has conferred on these multitudinous deities a legal status which may be fought for and vindicated in the law courts, and even carried, if necessary, to the highest tribunal of the Empire, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, to which body the Earl of Oxford is so distinguished a member. Recently, this august legal body actually debated in

solemn conclave the right of one Hindoo gentleman to remove a god from the back yard of another coloured gentleman and enshrine it in his own garden.

Another legal case, heard a year ago, shows to what extent and to what heights of respectability superstition has attained in India. A wealthy Hindoo, of Madras, built a temple and enshrined in it a deity with an unpronounceable name, who was alleged to have conferred on him, many favours, including the gifts of prophecy and tergiversation.

This temple became popular, possibly on account of its size and beauty, and its revenues were attractive. The problem which the pundits of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council had to solve, after prolonged litigation, was whether this particular temple was the private property of the descendants of the founder, or whether it had become a public religious trust. The Judicial Committee displayed a truly British love of compromise in the final settlement. They declared the temple a public religious trust, but decreed that the descendants of the founder should have the management of it.

Such a case as this must bring home to many Englishmen the growth and change of ideas. In spite of the nonsense written of "the unchanging East," knowledge is widening in many ways undreamed of in the philosophy of Oriental religions. New tones are growing into human sentiment. All the lights and shadows of life are shifting, and its whole surface is being dyed in different colours. In this country, even with the three gods and one goddess of the Christian Superstition, we are progressing far beyond the Hindoo with his Pantheon of thirty thousand gods and goddesses. And, here, in England, some of us are further progressing beyond the reach of the Christian ideals. They voice sixth century views in the twentieth century, and modern men and women cannot respond to them truthfully. They come like the "horns of Elfland faintly blowing," and people realize that they were meant for other ears than ours, and are but an echo from the far-off days of the Ages of Faith, when ignorance went hand in hand with bigotry, and Humanity was crucified between the two thieves of Priestcraft and Kingcraft. The conscience of the race is rising above dogmas, especially dogmas with the dust of centuries upon them. A new impulse is at hand to make men join hands and hearts. This impulse is Secularism, which disregarding all the gods in the Pantheon, marches to certain victory under the glorious banners of Liberty and Fraternity.

MIMNERMUS.

Science and Mysticism.

RELIGIOUS Mysticism is defined as "A belief by spiritual apprehension of truths beyond the reach of the understanding." Mysticism repudiates all connection with science, or even with reason; it depends upon intuition. It asserts that the soul apprehends spiritual truths unattainable by the powers of the mind, that as the intellect can only apprehend material things, so the soul can only apprehend spiritual things.

The mystic does not attempt to prove the existence of God by the weapons of carnal reason, such as the argument from design, he claims to have an immediate knowledge of, and the power of approaching God without the intervention of minister or priest, usually by visions, trances, ecstasy, or rapture.

But although the mystic disowns reason and repudiates science, yet he cannot escape from science.

Though he ascends into heaven, by his ecstasies and raptures, or makes his bed in hell, he cannot evade the analytical powers of modern science. In this connection there has just been published—by Messrs. Kegan Paul, in their "International Library of Psychology, Philosophy, and Scientific Method," at the price of 15s.—a valuable work by Professor James H. Leuba, entitled *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism*. Professor Leuba is a professor of psychology at Bryn Mawr College, U.S.A., and will be familiar to many of our readers as the author of other equally valuable works, notably, *The Belief in God and Immortality* and *A Psychological Study of Religion*, all written from the rationalistic standpoint. This new work of Prof. Leuba's still further emphasizes the gulf which divides the intellectual upper class in America from the masses who are ministered to by preachers of the Billy Sunday type.

Prof. Leuba commences with a description of the effect of certain drugs and stimulants upon the mind, and cites the experiences of Mr. Havelock Ellis, who experimented with the drug mescol, which produced sensations of:—

The "trailing clouds of glory," the tendency to invest the very simplest things with an atmosphere of beauty, a "light that never was on sea or land," the new vision of even "the simplest flower that blows," all the special traits of Wordsworth's peculiar poetic vision correspond as exactly as possible to the actual and effortless experience of the subject of mescol. Similar sensory phenomena will be noted in connection with Christian religious experiences. We shall see in particular that a glorious freshness and brightness of visual sensation may be observed after intense moral crises, as Christian conversion, or after certain nervous disorders, as on recovering from a fever.¹

All the sensations recorded by the mystics in their periods of illumination; the sense of joy, the feeling of a vast extension of knowledge and intellectual range, the visions of bright or startling colours, the feeling of lightness or levitation, can all be paralleled by the experiences recorded by those while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

In reading the lives of the Mystics, we find that their illumination, or conversion, was usually preceded by a period—varying in length with different individuals—of deep depression. They are filled with unsatisfied cravings, painful doubts and fears and an intolerable weariness and disgust of life. The distinguished psychiatrist, Pierre Janet calls the sufferers from this mental disease, or failing, *Psythasthéniques*. They require some excitement or stimulus to enable them to "carry on." They seek for the energy they lack, and Janet tells how patients of this type come to him, more or less regularly, because a new influx of life seems to proceed from his personality. Others fly to drugs or alcohol, while many seek the revivifying force in the excitement of love affairs. Of these pathological cases Janet observes:—

If they find this excitement in alcohol or in morphine, they become drunkards or morphine habitués; if they find it in divine love, they become delirious religious mystics; but if they find what they need in a human being, they become lovers. If the lover abandons them, they suffer from mental and physical disorders similar to those of the morphine victim when deprived of his hypodermic syringes.²

Janet cites the case of a woman, married to a very commonplace husband, who does not satisfy her emotional cravings, or provide her with any food for thought; she finds in a lover the tonic she needed.

¹ Leuba. *Psychology of Religious Mysticism*, pp. 26-27.

² Cited by Leuba, p. 35.

Previously "this woman had passed through a period of religious exaltation during which she had found in divine communion the stimulant later furnished by her lover." Leuba has a good deal to say upon the subject of sex in relation to Mysticism, but this will come as no surprise to those who have read Mr. Chapman Cohen's book, *Religion and Sex*. We are rather surprised to find no mention of Mr. Cohen's book in Leuba's work, for it is, we believe, the only work in English devoted to the subject, although, of course, it is touched upon incidentally in many works.

The upshot of it all is, that science does not deny the ecstatic experiences of the Mystic, it explains them and traces them to their origin in morbid physiological conditions of the body and mind. There is not the slightest doubt that if the female Mystics dealt with in this book had been happily married, with children to care for, they would have bestowed their love upon their own family, where it would be naturally due, and not upon Christ where it was utterly wasted. As Leuba observes, psychological knowledge takes the place both of the physician and the religious director of the soul. The psychiatrist arrests waste and generates energy by physiological means:—

There is neither rashness nor impiety in affirming of mystics such as Suzo, St. Theresa, St. Catherine of Genoa, Mme. Goyon and St. Marguerite Marie, that the best psychotherapy of to-day would have saved them a great deal of physical and spiritual suffering, and that it would have led them along natural ways to an earlier self-fulfilment and to a degree of perfection in no way inferior, ethically or otherwise, to the one which they attained during the active phases of their lives, p. 322.

Of what use have these divine hallucinations, raptures and ecstasies of the Mystics been to mankind? They have revealed nothing of any use. The only revelations of use to man are those made by the patient students of Nature.

W. MANN.

God or Chance?

SOME time ago there appeared in the religious column of the *Times* an article on the subject of ascribing to God or to Chance all events that happen, written apparently with the object of inducing the reader to believe that nothing happens by chance, but that everything is ordained by God.

I was reminded of this when, walking along a country road one day last autumn, I saw a beautifully-marked green and yellow frog lying dead, right in the wheel-marks of the motor traffic. Evidently it had been run over and killed by a passing vehicle. Stopping to contemplate the beauty of the unfortunate little animal, and feeling pity for the sad and tragic ending of its innocent life, I noticed that close beside its crushed body lay a mass of frog-spawn. Evidently, therefore, it was a female frog.

I fell to moralizing on this pitiable spectacle. I thought of what Jesus Christ is reported to have said, that not a sparrow falls to the ground but God, the Heavenly Father, knows all about it. Did he then, this poor little female frog's creator and Heavenly Father, know about its being run over? Did he ordain its tragic ending, or was it just Chance? If God knew all about it, why did he not guide the frog's steps, or hops, to escape the wheels that crushed it?

Then another thought occurred to my mind; that it would have been all the same if, instead of a frog, a pregnant female of the human species had happened to be in the way.

Passing along the same road one morning after a heavy thunderstorm had occurred during the night, I saw two cows lying dead in a field, near some trees; they had been struck by lightning and killed. Poor innocent creatures! Did God, their creator and Heavenly

Father, know about it, and did he ordain them to be killed by lightning, or was it a matter of chance?

Quite recently, a man crossing a street in Leicester, was knocked down by collision with a heavy motor lorry, the wheels of which ran over his head and crushed it, killing him on the spot. Was this an act of God, or was it Chance?

Evidently, in the laws of Nature and the happenings of Chance, man is of no more account than any other animal.

Sparrows, frogs, cows, men; it is all the same.

A. W. MALCOLMSON.

Acid Drops.

Mr. Hannen Swaffer is writing his experiences of Spiritualism, and it is on the level of most of the stuff poured out that is written on the assumption that the question is either one of fraud or communication with spirits. A sample is contained in the following, which caught our eye in glancing down the article. It seemed that the spirit of Albert Chevalier "came through." It was quite convincing to find that he called someone "Old Dutch," bearing in mind that this was one of his most famous songs. On leaving the spirit said that he would come again on Saturday. "What is Saturday?" he was asked. "Birthday," was the reply. This, says Mr. Swaffer, "was valuable, evidentially." Considering the impossibility of anyone knowing the date of Albert Chevalier's birthday, the proof is overwhelming. We wonder what Mr. Swaffer would say if the spirit of Queen Victoria told a spiritualistic circle how many children she had, the date of her birth, death, and funeral. He would expect every sceptic to be silenced for ever.

To be quite serious in circumstances that make it rather difficult, we may say we have a fairly strong conviction that more good has been done to Spiritualism than harm by the constant harping on fraud as being the only alternative to an acceptance of a spirit world. This was the easier line of attack because it required no elaborate or thorough knowledge of subjects which really gave a scientific study of what took place in connection with Spiritualism, and it was the kind of argument which the man in the street could easily follow. We should be surprised if this conviction of fraud ever converted a genuine Spiritualist, or if it prevented very many believing in it who examined Spiritualism in the absence of a knowledge of a scientific psychology in both its normal and abnormal aspects. It has been playing into the hands of Spiritualists to tell them that things which occurred in their own homes, with members of their own family, and often with themselves, were all fraud. And even the detection of a medium in an act of fraud does not of necessity prove fraud on the part of the medium in her normal state. A not very deep study of the very numerous cases of multiple personality is enough to prove this. The finest example of satisfied ignorance of which we know is that of the man who says he is going to examine Spiritualism and who thinks all he has to do is to look out for tricks on the part of the medium. In that way Spiritualists are made. In these people Spiritualists find some of their best friends.

We are not, of course, denying there is fraud, and plenty of it. But it does not require a disbeliever in Spiritualism to assert that. Spiritualists themselves will put you on your guard against fraud. Tricksters will get to work where the field is promising, and the credulity of Spiritualists makes the task easy. We only desire to drive home the moral that the worst of all preparations for an examination of Spiritualism is the reading of books exposing the tricks of mediums, and then proceeding to "investigate" without any other equipment. If one can imagine oneself back at the stage when devils were believed to be responsible for

epilepsy and an investigator examining a number of cases under the impression that it was either devils or fraud on the part of the patient, one will have a fair notion of the position of some of these investigators of Spiritualism. Half the time they are playing into the hands of Spiritualists. Hence the published conversion of so many journalists, etc. An understanding of the nature of the thing they were to investigate would have saved many of them from conversion. It seems a simple lesson that an investigation of anything, if it is to be profitable, implies some preliminary study of what is to be investigated, and yet it is a lesson most frequently ignored.

A new film depicting the life of Christ has been produced, and an exhibition of it was given before an audience which included Prebendary Carlile, and eight senior officials of the Church Army. It was in a private cinema theatre, and at the close of the show they "broke into prayer," and Prebendary Carlile asked the Almighty to bless the film. Now this is hardly cricket. It is unfair to the rest of film producers if God Almighty is to bless one film to the exclusion of others. They should all start from the same mark. And one can visualize Charlie Chaplain and Fatty Arbuckle calling upon the Lord to bless their film, and when one of these gentlemen throw a cream tart at someone, asking that the Lord will truthfully direct their aim. Moreover, one can see some rather curious questions arising out of this praying for films. How does Prebendary Carlile know that God Almighty has seen the film? Or is he to take it on the Prebendary's word that it is worth blessing? If not, would the heading, "God Almighty at the pictures be considered blasphemous? At any rate we do not think it is more ridiculous than these comical clergymen asking God Almighty to come and see the pictures or calling his special attention to it in order to bless it. We should not blame the producers if they advertised, "Come and see this film, blessed by God Almighty and Prebendary Carlile"—or should it be the other way about?

Miss Owen, who was once private secretary to the late Lord Northcliffe, says she has received a message from him that "Christ's message was to warn us that if we did not listen destruction would follow." Now did we really need a messenger from the dead to tell us this? Some eighty thousand parsons are telling us this yarn every week, and quite as many laymen follow suit. We should have thought that even though Lord Northcliffe had experienced the inevitable demoralization which overcomes everyone who enters the "summer land" he might have managed something more original than this.

By the way, some fifty years ago, there was not very much of this Christ gush about spiritualistic messages. This has only developed of late years, since there has been a direct attempt to make Spiritualism "respectable" and to capture a few parsons. There is always a fashion in these things.

Exaggeration and misstatement seems inseparable from a clergyman's speeches. Probably it is due to three factors. First, to be accurate in thought and speech forms no part of his training. Second, in the pulpit no one is allowed to talk back. Third, the traditional licence of the clergy to talk at random against anything they dislike. At any rate the fact is there, whether our explanation of it be correct or not. Here, for example, is the Bishop of Lichfield, who referring to recent notorious cases, says, "To do the old Pagans justice, they seldom descended to such infamies as those of which we have lately heard." Now that is pure rubbish. There were as grave scandals among the Pagans as among Christians, and to picture the pagans as being so much better than ourselves, is only reversing the common Christian trick of painting them as being perfect monuments of vice. It is a sound rule never to trust anything that a parson may say without carefully verifying it.

When will Christian preachers manage to cultivate a proper spirit of decency in relation to their opponents? We have often asked this question, still more often thought about it, and the correct answer is probably when they cease to be Christian ministers. Anyway, here is the Bishop of Manchester, Dr. Temple, who, at a confirmation service at Whalley (Lancs), came out with the following in his address: "During your day's work you will probably come into contact with people who do not profess to follow Christ at all, and who were always encouraging young people to do that which was wrong." Now that is quite a nice start for a number of young people! Their Bishop sends them out into the world with a lie and a slander to start with, and with what if he thinks about what he is saying, he must know is a lie and a slander. He tells them that those who do not profess to follow Christ are *always* trying to get young people to do that which is wrong. He knows that is a lie, and that is all there is to be said about it—save that a man who pursued this course with his opponents would be kicked out of any office in the country, except that of the Church. There they make him a bishop.

Here is one other sample of the same kind from a recent address by the Vicar of Leeds: "The Atheist is a person who denies all spiritual values. And the person who denies all spiritual values denies beauty and truth. He has got something the matter with him. Therefore I say Atheism is not justifiable." It appears that the higher they are in the Church the sillier they are. There is no wonder that men of intelligence turn their backs on the Church.

The Rev. T. Thomson, of Hampstead, recently declared that "a little religion was a dangerous thing." Truly one hears the truth from the most unexpected quarters. But, although the press report from which we cull this gem does not say so, we fear the reverend gentleman meant to imply that what was needed was a large dose of his particular narcotic. On the principle, perhaps, that the stomach will often turn against a large dose of poison and reject it, whereas a smaller dose is not vomited out, and kills the sufferer. We have certainly noticed that fervent Freethinkers are often those who had theology thoroughly well ground into them in their early days; whilst the average person who describes himself vaguely as "Church of England," usually knows mighty little of Christianity beyond, perhaps, some fragments of the Lord's Prayer. And these are the people whom it is most difficult to convert to Atheism. Their reply to arguments is usually a half apologetic, "I don't bother about religion, you know, but there must be a God." And against mere sentimental assertion even logic is useless.

La Croix, the chief organ of the Roman Catholic Church in France, has stated quite clearly that:—

Religion leaves to everybody the choice between Republicanism, Royalism, and Imperialism, because these different forms of government can exist along with religion; it does not leave anyone free to be a Socialist, a Communist or an Anarchist, for these three sects are condemned both by reason and the Church.

In view of this and the Pope's recent pronouncements against Socialism, the *Daily Herald* invited Mr. John Wheatley, M.P., who is, of course, one of the best known Roman Catholic members of the Labour Party, to explain his position. In the course of a fairly lengthy article, he maintains that a British Catholic can support a Conservative, Liberal, or Socialist party according to his political predilection, without being untrue to his religion. He remarks that:—

There are, and always will be, individuals who will try to bolster up their particular political views by harnessing religious prejudices to their support. But nowadays such partisans exert very little influence on the political thought of British Catholics.

In the paragraph which immediately follows this, he adds:—

This is largely due to the well-known fact that the Socialist Party in Britain does not adopt the anti-Christian course which has been pursued in many parts of the Continent.

Mr. Wheatley is an able man, but on this occasion, at least, he does not display much consistency in thinking. For the Socialist parties of the country to tolerate Christianity is no less partisan than for the Continental parties to oppose it. But what chiefly concerns us now, is this. There is in the last paragraph we quoted, the implication that it is good policy for English Socialists, whatever their philosophic views may be, to refrain from denouncing Christianity. Meantime, apparently, the Christians in the movement are to be permitted to talk as much sentimental Christian Socialism as they like, and to identify Christianity and Socialism on every possible occasion. It is, we suggest, neither a wise nor an honourable proposal. To those well meaning members of the Labour Party who contend that religion has nothing to do with politics, we would suggest that it always has, and so long as it remains, always will have a great deal to do with it. What man and woman think about the universe in which they live, whether they believe it is subject to natural laws, which can be discovered by patient searching, and human life made happier by bringing it into accordance with those laws, or whether they believe it is ruled by a personality, subject, as every personality must be, to caprice, is going to be reflected in their ideas about this life and social matters. Every religion has taught something about man's life on earth and their adherents' views about social justice and ideals have necessarily been affected thereby. And of all religions perhaps Christianity is that which has least in common with the fundamental teachings of Socialism. The latter with its insistence upon the need for co-operation among men for the betterment of all in this world, can have nothing in common with the anarchism of the New Testament, which has wrecked more than one civilization, and would wreck ours were it practised.

There is trouble in Staffordshire. It is proposed to hold a concert at the Theatre Royal, Hanley, on Easter Sunday in aid of the funds of the North Staffordshire Infirmary. And, of course, the clergy, high and low, broad and narrow, are against it. A local Archdeacon calls in the name of Voltaire, whom he ignorantly calls an Atheist, to frighten the people as to what will occur if the Christian Sunday goes. The Churches have all passed resolutions which remind one of a grocer passing a resolution that no one ought to deal at any other shop but his. The Rev. Sadler Reece is unconsciously funny when he says that the hospitals will not suffer if the Sunday is maintained, for "will not Jesus Christ walk among the sick?" though what that is going to do to pay the costs of the hospital is not easily seen. But the clerical joker is at his best when he protests against the notion that Sunday is a dull day because there is a beautiful hymn on the Sabbath which runs:—

Oh, day of rest of gladness
Oh, day of joy and light,

and asks whether anyone ever sung that way of a charabanc ride. If Mr. Reece will only black his face and tour the sands with that kind of thing he ought to make a fortune during the coming summer. The best of the situation is that they have had concerts at the Parish Church on Sunday. But the profit of that went to the Church, and that makes a considerable difference. For a mixture of stupidity and cunning the present-day clergy are IT.

By a majority of 238 to 109 compulsory church attendance in the Army was decided upon in the House of Commons. In the Army and the Navy the power of the priest dovetails with the power of authority; in civil life the Church is reduced to the level of commercialism and forced to adver-

tise—we had almost written, its wares. We see the Church in the light of Bully and Pandar with its thousands of apologists word spinning; what is lacking in sense must be made up with sound. Jack's spiritual welfare must be insured with the Prussian heel.

The Vicar of Maidstone declined to perform the burial service over the body of a sixteen-year-old girl on the ground that she had never been baptized. Some hard things have been said about the vicar, but we presume he was acting in a strictly Christian manner. After all it is hard on the Christian who really believes in the magical ceremony to be called names by other Christians because he has been quite honest about the ceremony. There is no reason for assuming that the vicar was any worse natured than other people. What he did, and the distress he caused the relatives of the dead girl, was entirely the result of his Christianity. If people will profess belief in these silly ceremonies—a direct product of primitive initiation ceremonies—they must not be surprised if here and there someone takes them seriously. After all, not all Christians are humbugs, although, strange to say, Christians seem very much surprised when they find this is the case.

Mr. Oscar Seyd, of the London Press Exchange, gives in the *Advertiser's Weekly*, some quite disinterested advice to the churches on the question of advertising. He says the churches must advertise and there is plenty of money behind religion in this country to enable them to do it. There is a Church Advertising Committee in existence, and he specially directs his observations to them. He admits that the sensational methods of America would not do here, but something ought to be done to attract attention to Churches. May we suggest that a revival of an old Salvation Army advertisement: "Why pay extravagant prices for mutton, when you can get the Lamb of God for nothing," might do. Or, "Stick to the bread of life and break the millers' monopoly," might be a telling line. There are endless possibilities here, although one cannot expect in an English Church such things as occurred in the United States where a minister took a monkey in the pulpit with him in order to denounce Darwinism. The congregation knew which was which because the minister wore the usual clerical collar.

It seems that a great many teachers have been dismissed from their posts in certain parts of America as a consequence of their belief in Darwinism. Now the Governor of Tennessee has just put his signature to a measure passed by the State Legislature which makes it "unlawful for any teacher in any of the Universities, normal schools, and all other public schools in the State which are supported wholly or in part by the school funds of the State to teach any theory that denies the story of the divine creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man is descended from a lower order of animals." After reading that one wonders whether the gap between the intellectual calibre of the authors of this Bill and some of the lower animals is too great to permit retrogression. At any rate, it is a startling comment upon the amount of religious ignorance which exists in the United States, and the open way in which it expresses itself.

The *Daily News* Saturday philosopher, Dr. T. R. Glover, writes at length on this, and spends a column and a half without coming anywhere near the essence of the subject. Being a Christian he could hardly afford to do that. Dr. Glover is a Christian who does not believe in the genuinely Christian theory of the Bible. The Tennessee legislators are Christians who do. That is the difference between the two, and while we admit that on the score of scholarship Dr. Glover has the advantage of the anti-Darwinists; on the score of genuine Christianity they have the advantage of him. These people are what they are because of their Christian belief and because of the influence of Christian tradition. They have been brought up to believe that anything

that contradicts the Bible must be wrong. I am not quite sure that Dr. Glover would say quite frankly that this position is wrong—it might get him into a row with other Christians. I expect he would say that the Bible is right, but it does not mean what other Christians have thought it meant. At any rate it is the influence of the Christian tradition to which we owe the existence of W. J. Bryan and his fellow ignoramuses.

One other consideration is worth noting. It is only in connection with religion that a man would say a thing must be wrong if it contradicts what he has always believed. In anything else he would be ashamed publicly to make such a statement. He would recognize at least the possibility of being mistaken, and also the right of others to hold and to teach different views. It is religion alone, and none more than Christianity which gives ignorance and bigotry a position of authority, and clothes it with a robe of morality. In science and in politics a man may manifest bigotry, but at least he tries to conceal it, and has the decency to be ashamed of it. In religion he is proud of it. He is ashamed of the qualities he ought to be proud to have, and proud of those he should be ashamed to manifest. Perhaps Dr. Glover will devote one of his Saturday articles to this aspect of Christian influence? But we have our doubts. It might make his religious readers think. And that would be very dangerous indeed. The behest of the Bible is it is blessed to believe. It says very little about understanding. Heaven is reserved for the *sheep*.

In Fairmont, West Virginia, thirty-three miners have lost their lives in an explosion. The sympathy of all good men goes out to their dependants in their affliction, and, coming a little nearer home, if our representatives of the miners could see straight, they would ask the Bishop of Durham if a similar number of his fellow workers are ever taken away in this manner whilst following their occupation.

The Rev. Dr. A. J. Carlyle, lecturer at University College, Oxford, speaking as an old friend of Dean Inge, said that the gloomy one knew nothing about history and nothing of political science. However, he added, no one could dispute the Dean's qualification to speak with authority on everything pertaining to the soul. And, we might add, anyone with no qualifications at all could speak on this subject until the cows came home. It must have been this subject that Schopenhauer had in mind when he described religion as "the metaphysics of the people."

How to Help.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The National Secular Society.

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

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

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

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

To Correspondents.

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

R. H. YELDHAM.—We are gratified by your appreciation of the *Freethinker*. We can only say we make it as good as we can. It has always had our best, and always will have.

R. ALDERTON.—There is no such thing as a religious instinct. The use of this term by writers is quite unscientific in about nine cases out of ten. It appears to save the trouble of thinking with most people.

S. MAYNE.—The facts are dead against you. Here is what one of the speakers at the recent Free Church Assembly said: "The volume of unbelief is being continuously and progressively increased by the influx of a thousand tributaries which rise in the immediate environment of a Christian community. The steady deflection of young life from the Churches gains in volume every year—a steady recruitment from our Sunday schools and Bible classes to the ranks of scepticism and ultimately of unbelief." Divested of all "trimmings" what this means is that the forces of civilized life is eating away the foundations of religion. And that is what we have always said.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—J. Rateliff (Victoria), £10 7s.; J. Latham (S.A.), £1.

T. O.—Sorry, but we cannot space the space for lengthy poems, particularly when they have no reference to the special purpose for which this paper exists.

We are obliged to hold over several letters this week, and for the usual reason—lack of space. Some letters we have been obliged to decline altogether on account of length, or unsuitability. We must again ask correspondents to observe the virtue of brevity, and also to bear in mind that we cannot accept lengthy discussions on Socialism *versus* Capitalism in these columns, particularly when the pretext for such is a mere illustration used by some writers. The *Freethinker* has a distinct, and distinctive, purpose to serve, and we must keep to that.

MR. J. W. K. LEIPER writes: "The *Freethinker* is great! I agree with your straight hitting at the centre of superstition. It saves a lot of useless marching, manœuvring, posing, and prating. And, after all, it is the correct military procedure." We are glad to have our policy thus approved. The *Freethinker* who is always wondering what Christians will think of him, or always fearful of giving offence to this one or to that one, should retire into quietude. Generally he only manages to get in the way of those who are anxious to get on with the work.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (April 5) Mr. Cohen lectures twice in the Balmoral Room, Metropole, West Street, Hull. The lectures will be at 3 and 7. As visitors are expected from a distance, arrangements are being made to provide tea, but notice should be sent to the Secretary, Mrs. I. Bell, of 1 Mafeking Grove, Seymour Street, Hull. Judging from the interest shown in Mr. Cohen's lectures on his previous visit there should be good meetings.

By some means or other a paragraph which we had written concerning the very successful Social held under the auspices of the N.S.S. on March 16 was omitted. It is only necessary to say now that it was one of the most successful Socials yet held, and everyone appeared to enjoy themselves thoroughly. The musical programme was excellent, and a very old visitor at these gatherings, Mr. Will Edwards, received a very warm welcome from those present. One extremely interesting feature of the evening was a fine exhibition of Indian club swinging and knife swinging by Sergeant-Major Crittenham. The skill and grace of the display charmed all. A few words from the President was all the speaking inflicted upon the guests. Mr. Rateliff acted as M.C. Next season the Executive has in view a regular series of these social evenings if suitable premises can be obtained.

Branch Secretaries are particularly requested to note that all notices of motion for the Conference Agenda should reach the General Secretary, at the N.S.S. Offices, 62 Farringdon Street, not later than April 28. Business meetings for the preparation of these and other Conference matters should be called immediately.

The New York *Medical Guide and Critic* publishes, with due acknowledgment, a lengthy quotation from Mr. Cohen's *Religion and Sex*, on the use of drugs in religion. We are glad to see it in such a quarter; it may lead some medical men to pay more attention to this aspect of the history of religion than they have hitherto done. They will not, of course, find anything with which they are not acquainted in the effects of drugs, and abnormal states of mind, but it is surprising how few have brought to bear their daily experience on religious phenomena.

The Manchester Branch holds its annual general meeting on Saturday (April 4), in the Engineers' Hall, Rusholme Road, at 2.30. There is some important business to be done, and all members are requested to be present. We hope they will take the hint. We are glad to learn from the Secretary that some friends have taken our advice about contributing to the Branch funds, which sadly needs replenishing. The Secretary is Mr. H. Bayford, 16 Arnside Street, Rusholme, Manchester.

Strengthen me by sympathizing with my strength, not my weakness.—Bronson Alcott.

Ethics.

A DISCOURSE FOR NURSES AND CHILDREN—Continued.

IX.

WE have already dealt, nurse, with those phases of conjugal union known as marriage by capture, marriage by purchase, and marriage by servitude, all of which were practices common in primitive times. But each was regulated by social customs and usages that were as binding as any legal bond. If ever there was a time when unbridled promiscuity existed there is no record of it. Even among the animals and birds this is by no means universal, as we find among them the same variations of conjugal union as exist in human societies. I told you, nurse, of the faithfulness of the old bear mentioned by Seton Thompson, and there are certain kinds of birds that are not only monogamous, but actually live in the same domicile with the same mate all their lives. Indeed we find cases of sentimental courtship of the female in the animal world, and even feelings akin to the human sentiments of modesty and delicacy in reference to the act of copulation.

One of the marriage customs which appears a little repellant to us, but which has been prevalent in many countries, notably in Thibet, India, Ceylon, and Malabar, is what is known as Polyandry. Instead of a husband having a plurality of wives, as in polygamy, this is a case where the wife has a plurality of husbands. Under this system the wife is not so much the slave of the husband, as under polygamy, as she has the privilege of choice in the acceptance of her conjugal partners. This, as I have said, appears repellant to our notions of sexual relationship, but really the difference between having five husbands concurrently, and having five husbands successively, does not seem to be of much moral significance. What jars most upon our feelings in the case of such unions is that paternal responsibility cannot be definitely fixed, as in the case of monogamy. But this difficulty is provided for in many curious ways, which it would take too long to explain in detail. A few weeks ago there was a case before the English Law Courts, in which it appeared that a high-born lady of society had been cohabiting with three men, her husband and two others. But we must not confound a case of this kind with the primitive custom of polyandry. It is really a case of moral depravity, where the bonds of matrimony are repudiated in defiance of the prevailing social morality. Primitive peoples do not sin in this manner outside their social customs. A gentleman who had been some time in Zululand assured a friend of mine that the only immorality which existed in that country was to be found in and around the missionary kraals. For a native to have relations with a woman against the accepted code of morals, meant death; and if anyone so far committed himself he was obliged to fly to the missionaries for protection to save his skin. These new "converts" who were no doubt duly baptized into the Christian faith, were the moral reprobates of a country where the severity of the penalties for sexual misdemeanour kept the morals up to the native standard.

Connected with polyandry was the maternal family group, as it is called, in distinction from the paternal or patriarchal household; and here again many curious customs arose out of the woman's position.

The most universal of the marriage customs has, of course, been polygamy; and it is rather remarkable, considering the position accorded to the Bible in Western civilization, that the polygamous nature of the historical records of the Old Testament, has not been realized to any extent by its readers.

The anachronistic story of monogamy with which the Bible opens misleads the passive mind in its reading of the later polygamous incidents, and the deception is further aided by the influence of the monogamic ideas of modern times, which fails to interpret them in relation to the general customs of the period. The sexual morality of the chosen people of God was neither better nor worse than that prevailing among the surrounding heathen nations. Brigham Young used to remind his audiences that when they got to heaven they would find all the biblical worthies they expected to meet there were all polygamists of the deepest dye. Polygamy in early social communities simply meant the absolute possession by right of capture or right of purchase of a number of females; and while these may have served man's sexual needs in the first place, there was also economic considerations connected with the custom. Where a man's wealth consisted of flocks and herds, the women had most of the manual labour to perform. But as time went on, instead of treating all his wives as mere beasts of burden, it came about that man developed a preference for a particular female, or females, or some good-looking beauty managed to worm herself into his affections and place herself in an advantageous position. Thus there came to be one or more principal wives, while the others remained in a subordinate, servile state. This distinction is known as the Concubinate, and was the form of polygamy obtaining in patriarchal times. Hagar, who bore Ishmael to Abraham, was only a secondary wife, while Sarah was his principal wife and mistress of his household. Solomon is said to have had so many wives, and so many concubines. The number that a man had was really the measure of his social position, and although monogamy was not unknown among some inferior races, it was owing to poverty rather than inclination. The concubines, while not possessing the privileges of a principal wife, had a definite position in the household with a blameless moral character. The Concubinate, which formed a kind of link between polygamy and monogamy, was recognized as a needful institution, and was everywhere accorded a social sanction, while in Rome it was even given a legal one.

Concubinage is a lower form of this institution, under which the woman has no rights whatever. It has existed wherever monogamy has been adopted, but the position of woman under this system is very much worse than under polygamy and the Concubinate. The newspapers some time ago reported a case of this kind where a man had cohabited with a woman for years, and then wished to throw her over, contrary to the woman's wish. A meeting was arranged at a solicitor's office, and this interpreter of the law intimated to the woman that his client was under no moral obligation to her. She turned to the man to ask if he endorsed that statement, and on receiving a reply in the affirmative, she whipped out a revolver and shot him dead. This occurred in Christian England; but the morals of this man were lower than those of the lowest savage. To take the best years of a woman's life, and then seek to turn her adrift upon a pitiless world, is perhaps the worst crime a man could be guilty of, and one that has no parallel in polygamous societies. To assert that such a connection carries with it no moral obligation, is to deny any right to woman and reduce her to the level of chattel slavery.

We will leave the ideal of monogamy, nurse, for another time.

JOSEPH BRUCE.

The more I study the world, the more am I convinced of the inability of brute force to create anything durable.
--Napoleon Bonaparte.

The Idol of Scotland: His Religion and His Message.

It has been finely and truly said that Robert Burns gave Scotland her soul—not Christ, or John Knox, "Wattie Scott and Tannahill," but Robbie Burns. Amid toil and penury and obscurity this peasant lad found the true sweets of life and exhibited them to the world in simple, unmistakable, undying language. His philosophy, homely and restricted compared with Shakespeare's, but shining very brightly in its rustic setting, perhaps more humanly, comes directly to the heart and head. "Why is it," asks Ingersoll, "that Scotland when the roll of nations is called can stand up proudly and answer 'Here' ? Because Robert Burns has lived." That is the outstanding fact of Scottish history, the most momentous epoch in the religious life of the country. For the first time, it might be said, the sun of humanity and common-sense burst through the Calvinistic clouds that shrouded a sourly religious and metaphysical peasantry. Mark Rutherford, in his all too brief autobiography, recalling his own tedious and painful pilgrimage from faith to fact, speaks of the effect of Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* on his groping mind: In them he says:—

God is nowhere finally deposed. Wordsworth would have been the last man to say he had lost faith in the God of his fathers. But his real God is not the God of the Church, but the God of the hills, the abstraction Nature, and to this my reverence was transferred. Instead of an object of worship that was altogether remote, never coming into genuine contact with me, I had now one which I thought to be real, and in which I could literally live, move, and have my being, an active fact present before my eyes. God was brought from that heaven of books and dwelt on the downs in the far distances and in every cloud-shadow which wandered across the valley. Wordsworth unconsciously did for me what every religious reformer has done—he recreated my Supreme Divinity; substituting a new and living spirit for the old deity, once alive, but gradually hardening into an idol.

All of which, we say in passing, would seem to show that in all the best minds the God idea is wearing very thin, a name only now, a name for the sweets, truths, beauties, veracities of life and nature, which, in themselves, like the rose, are sweet without the name. But our point is that Burns, also had recreated the Supreme Deity of Scotland, and in the process used such fine materials that the ultimate result has little to distinguish it from the purely Humanist conception of the Freethinker, or Rutherford's "cloud-shadow which wandered across the valleys." But it must be noted and emphasized that Burns had, deeply permeating his manhood, a very beautiful conception of and reverent regard for what he called Religion. It was just this refinement of his nature that kindled into a scorching flame this native wit and satire against the crude religion of his day. Considering those merciless attacks on the Holy Willies of his time, it has been well said that the present adulatory attitude of the clergy towards the priest-skelping Burns of the past is about the best example one could imagine of "turning the cheek to the smiter." But Burns, while a great doubter, denier, slayer, or refiner of concrete dogma, was yet religious—just as Wordsworth was religious; just as unscientifically and unwarrantably; just as in Pope's example:—

Lo, the poor Indian, whose untutored mind
Sees God in clouds and hears him in the wind.

Where else could they, or we, or "Poor Lo," find
him if not in these clouds and skies and sunsets?

These are the "Intimations" of his hiding place, where he frowns or smiles, thunders or is silent, rides on the wings of the wind—all in the childish poetic fancy of those pious Peter Pans who refuse to grow up. It is curious, and interesting, and eternally puzzling to reflect when and how the gods were first taken from the skies and placed in a book, and there embrowed to threaten and command, in text and dogma, as though their original laws of nature were not already sternly exacting and inexorable; and, further, when and how they were restored to their native skies, leaving their dread *fiat* in the Book of Books below! Or if the gods came not and vanished again, what wily, prehistoric priest first professed himself their amanuensis and awed the trembling savage with revelations from the gods? Why, the whole process, imposture, and misconception, dawns upon us as we write, as we reflect, as we gaze upon the face of nature, realizing its inevitable and determined course; on its clouds and skies, now almost purged of their saving and destroying gods; as we read the holy books with their impossible and ridiculous ascription, finally discredited by the work of men like Thomas Paine (another epoch-making writer) being carried to a triumphant conclusion by modern science and research, by the growing intelligence and humanity of the race. All of which may seem very trite and palpable, but our work, while long past the "cock-crowing," is not yet done. Superstition is anciently and deeply rooted in the human mind and with all their intensive culture of reason and intelligence the ancient growths will yet inevitably survive, woven into the fibre of the new, often exalting and beautifying, as poetry and romance will, our drab, utilitarian existence, but in too many cases sapping and retarding it like the clustering ivy round the forest oak. It may even be said that to Burns, to many more, perhaps to all, a world wholly rationalized would be intolerable, but a world given over to mystics, metaphysicians, and mystifiers is the greater of two evils. Reason must be the basis and starting point of all our speculations. However high the head may soar the feet must not leave the earth. Freethought implies freedom to "believe" as well as to disbelieve, but it must apply equally: Freedom to him who would read, write, speak, think; freedom only limited by the equal freedom of others. Again, how trite; but what would you? It is over just such simple matters the profundist and the obscurantist would befog themselves and us. Let us allow, then, for the "vague deism" of Robert Burns; it is easily accounted for, it was harmless and natural and seldom dimmed his native wit and fire: it was his own manhood and nobility reflecting, or focussing, an excellence which he did not live long enough, or late enough to disassociate from his early but outgrown theology: a fine poetic fancy, never frenzy, never a forced or false conformity, an exalted if irrational reverie, a legacy or acquirement or necessity of a common and not unlovely type of mind, rooted in nature, of the earth earthy; the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley; loving smile of sister kind; and beyond or within all this creating and sustaining, some august beneficence which the poet called God. Even so is the brightest, purest, gentlest intellect willingly deceived, not always to its undoing or the world's hurt. From the mind of Burns all the crude phantasmagoria of "revealed religion" had inevitably faded, leaving him to sense and sympathy and love of man and woman, moving him to indignant scorn of all that was foul or foolish in life and religion. So much religion was left the poet—how little comforts a Christian! that the clergy of to-day—while Voltaire, Payne, and Ingersoll leave them cold—are eager to gather round the shrine of

Burns, to mouth all the platitudes, and, with true Christian humility, turn the cheek to the smiter. Alas, poor poet! one fears you are not flattered in your admirers: Every emotional idiot, every drunken sot, every "devil of a fellow," every superfine supernaturalist must deem himself your interpreter: you, the Proteus of their talents, or their lack of them; their virtues and their vices; the atoning partaker of all their follies and weaknesses; a vile reproach; for, surely, you were something above and beyond, and quite different from the sots and slaves and cowards who call upon your immortal name! But one must hasten to absolve the enlightened and judicious many who in word and thought and act do the poet justice and honour. These are the Freethinkers of the Burns' religion, by whom only the poet was truly flattered, and his niche in the pantheon proved worthy and assured. For these others, the undiscerning mass of his countrymen, Burns, like other great poets, has written in vain. In popular estimation Burns is famous, or infamous, as the case may be, for two things in particular—the Lassies and the Glasses. With regard to either aberration, most of his accusers, especially the Unco' Guid, were not fit to tie his shoelaces, even in the matters of sobriety and chastity. Anyway he was not the outstanding drunken Scot—or Englishman—of his time, but perhaps one of the soberest men of a deep-drinking age. Neither was he the Don Juan among the women we are acquainted with to-day, nor so familiar and cynical in his love affairs. He was married by law to a bonnie lass, but admired, nay worshipped many more by a higher and older law, the law of nature. Perhaps woman's greatest attraction for the normal best of us is as the "kind connubial dear" of wedded life. If woman, in her courting days but realized her power of sex man would be her still more abject slave—as Burns was—and cavalier and passionate adorer. Sex power allied to beauty hidden, beauty seen—terrible beauty—"he that is without 'sin' let him throw the first stone." He that is "sinful" let him avoid injustice and excess, even as did Robert Burns! If space permitted one might deal with the poetry of Burns but that may keep for another article. Let it suffice at the moment to say how pleasant it is to recall Wordsworth's admiration for, and not occasional imitation of the Scottish poet. Both poets wrote an "Epitaph," the later modelled on the earlier verses. Those of Burns, a lyrical lament and self-accusing epitaph on himself. That of Wordsworth, prouder, more disdainful, more philosophical than *The Bard's Epitaph* of Burns, breathing a lofty and noble scorn of all but real worth. Notable in contrast to the English poet's care was the "carelessness" of Burns in his loves as in his poesies. The best of the latter were spontaneous, written at once, or burned into his brain in the heat of inspiration, laboriously polished afterwards in the taste and leisure of the scholar, with what superb results we know. Here were "Intimations of immortality," but the poet was careless still, often hopeless of enduring fame. Not for any "sake" these things were made, and fashioned so finely, but for the present joy of them and the faintest hope of future "glory," and, without which, reward in money was of small account. Careless in his love, passionate and wild; careless who knew of it, crying it as from the housetops, full of remorse, in calmer moments, for real or fancied wrongs done; generous, magnanimous ever, willing to share whatever calamity he had caused, never deserting the ship he had run upon the rocks, but willing to go down with it or save it if he could.

Just the other night, in the twilight of a gloomy day, and in the gloom of his world outlook, a friend

of ours was inspired to quote these lines of the *Elegy*:—

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys and destiny obscure,
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor.

Ah! he said, that "destiny obscure," that "disdainful smile." What is grandeur? that barbarous "greatness," of king, noble, legislator, which, when destiny obscure has built itself a home, a happiness, a philosophy, swoops down upon all with a bloody war, and when barbarism has once more spent itself, the surviving heroes are offered the consolations of religion, the glory of a flag, with a meagre and mean subsistence till the next glorious war. Burns had but one ambition, the highest and best a man could have, to sing the songs of his country, recreate and inspire its soul; and in spite of his many misinterpreters who shall say he has not succeeded beyond his most sanguine dreams? It's comin' yet for a' that—blythe and bold and inspiring prophesy—when the man of independent mind will be king in his own right as man, or stand unabashed, unbending, before a king, looking down, not up, upon those vacuous, blasé, bored simulacrum of Society and State, those shadows, not substantial things. The ambition of this obscure farmworker did not mock his useful toil but exalted him and it, and, with Thomas Paine and the Revolutionists, excited in the dullest minds the grand idea of the Rights of Man.

ANDREW MILLAR.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON MARCH 26, 1925.

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Corrigan, Moss, Neate, Rosetti, Samuels, and Silverstein, Mrs. Quinton, Miss Kough, and the Secretary.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The monthly financial statement was presented and adopted.

New members were received for Birmingham, Hull, Manchester, South London, and the Parent Society.

The President presented the verbatim report of the recent police court proceedings in the case of Mr. Guy Aldred.

Replies to the circular *re* the Conference were received, and Birmingham, London, and Manchester were suggested.

Instructions were given for enquiries to be made for suitable halls in London.

It was reported that in consequence of the indisposition of Mr. Corrigan, Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe had made a most satisfactory visit to Birmingham on March 8.

It was further reported that a highly successful Social Evening had been held on March 16 at the Bijou Theatre, Bedford Street, Strand. Agreed that future meetings should be arranged if a larger hall could be found.

It was resolved that Branch Secretaries should be requested to prepare notices of motion for the Conference Agenda, to reach the office not later than April 28.

The meeting then closed.

E. M. VANCE,
General Secretary.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.

An interesting address was delivered last Sunday by the leader of the Ahmadiya Movement in England, Mr. Dard. Mr. Dard has expressed his willingness to affirm the existence of God on some future occasion, in debate, and we hope to be able to include this in the programme for our next session. Tonight Mr. Graham Peace will open a discussion on "The War Now On." Mr. Peace is a forcible and convincing speaker, and we hope he will have a good audience.—K.

The Way of the World.

HELL, FILMED.

Mr. Fox has attempted to film the *Inferno*.....Much money has obviously been spent in constructing a material hell and peopling it with naked men and women. They pose in a series of gently animated *tableau vivants*, intended to be impressive, but despite their profusion only twice succeeding even in giving the eye a moment's pleasure. In order to render Dante acceptable, these pitiable glimpses of hell have been used as a moral text set in one of the most inept of stories ever conceived: there is a millionaire who kicks his dog, illtreats his invalid wife and grinds the faces of the poor. Visions of the *Inferno* are vouched to him, followed by glimpses of his own future progress thither. He hurriedly pats the dog, kisses his wife and succours a bankrupt business associate. Mr. Fox invites detours for daring to insult at once the general intelligence and the spirit of one of the world's greatest poets.—*The Spectator*.

ROUSSEAU THE SOPHIST.

Rousseau is extremely consistent in his inconsistency; he always professes public good when he means his own profit, talks of humanity and means Rousseau, assumes that the ego is more important than all the rest of the world. He is the greatest master of sophistry in every degree—of ideas, of emotion, of principle, of practice—who has existed since the worse was first made to appear the better cause. If Rousseau is to be read critically and with profit, it is necessary to be perpetually on guard against his wonderful charm of manner and expression, and always look for the sophistry. Exactly this sort of sophistry—self-deception perhaps—is apparent throughout Rousseau's conduct of his life as it is expressed in these letters.—*Times Literary Supplement*.

VOLTAIRE THE HUMANIST.

As in so many other things, he (Voltaire) anticipated his age in sympathy for animals: "The dumb creatures, our brethren, deserve a little more attention than we give them.....I wish we might discover preventives for the contagious maladies of animals, when they are in health, so that we might apply them when they are diseased." And his sympathy for the sufferings of men was far more intense. Wrong, injustice, cruelty irritated him—infuriated him—and he protested against them with all the ardour of his heart and his pen.—*Gamaliel Bradford*, "Bare Souls."

BRANDES ON SWINBURNE.

There is scarcely a more pathetic and heart-taking and melodious dirge than this. [Swinburne's poem, "In Memory of Barry Cornwall."] Swinburne must have himself felt at the time that he had created a little masterpiece as he sent a revised copy of it to Denmark, where he scarcely sent anything. He knew a critic there would recognize the beauty of this *marche funebre*, in which is heard the steady beat of the funeral drum and simultaneously the pipings, as it were, of birds rejoicing in life.

[The critic in Denmark was Brandes himself.]

—Brandes, "Creative Spirits of the Nineteenth Century."

"ATHEISTIC HUMANITARIANISM."

The greatest English poet of our day, Swinburne, is a passionate heathen with a rich poetic vein, and he conceives Christianity to be a denial of nature, the enemy with whom he must do combat. In Italy, the greatest poet of the land, Leopardi, became absorbed in a sort of sublime metaphysical pessimism, which found vent in stoic resignation. Carducci, the foremost of Italy's living poetic thinkers, is quite as modern and even more polemic than he. In Germany, the most prominent poets, as Gottfried Keller, Paul Heyse, Fr. Spielhagen, have displayed in their works a soul-felt atheistic humanitarianism—Brandes, "Creative Spirits of the Nineteenth Century."

WHY DON'T THEY?

A genuine mind reader would not be under the necessity of seeking affluence or a doubtful livelihood through the admission fees of uncertain and variable audiences! Even as a gambler a genuine mind-reader could quickly make a fortune. He could sit back serenely behind his cards and, by reading the thoughts of his opponents, by, in fact, looking into his hands, win nearly always. He would never go broke on three aces against a full hand at poker. What an aid it would be in business, when a man could penetrate the minds of those with whom he dealt with and be certain of buying at the lowest and selling at the highest prices obtainable! What an easy task a barrister would have with witnesses! What marvellous opportunities the stock markets would offer to him who could read the minds of great financiers.—*Carl Hertz*, "A Modern Mystery Merchant."

Correspondence.

PAPINI'S CHRIST.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I trust I may be permitted to reply to the letters of Mr. Mann and Mr. Felgate Stone in your last issue; and to do so I must briefly sketch my own position with regard to the teaching of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, as one gathers from the complete teaching of Christ, is that state of society which is governed by the purest biological economy. Teachers from Confucius, Gautama Buddha, and Plato to modern times, agree with the main points of the teaching of Christ, and the moral laws recognized in the statutes and philosophies of mankind find their fullest expression in the gospels. Human beings are not animals; as Winwood Reade puts it in *The Martyrdom of Man*: "We have the aspirations of creators and the propensities of the quadrupeds; there can be but one explanation of this. We are passing from the animal into a higher form." The perfect human society will be far removed from the animal existence; this society Jesus called the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. He believed in the realization of this ideal society, and saw that it could only be formed with the added qualities of exact knowledge, the "Spirit of Truth," and an intense and unselfish love of life. He taught in symbolical language, and his so-called followers have for the most part held up the symbols in front of the realities—which is like an inventor who drew a plan of his machine but refused to allow the machine to be constructed. The Kingdom of Heaven denotes a social unity to be constructed by mankind.

Of the other kingdom, the super-terrestrial one by which theologians are obsessed, I may refer to the recent work of Sir Oliver Lodge in regard to the ether, which is acclaimed by scientists as a work of the first importance. The world is radiating energy, or "running down" like a clock, and in a recent lecture Sir Oliver indicated a way by which it might "wind up" again, or phenomena might re-form elsewhere in space. As the scientific journal, *Nature*, remarks in its issue for March 21, this conception gives "the promise of an immortality not only in the future but also in the past." In view of these authoritative utterances it is the duty of thinking men neither to affirm nor deny the Kingdom of Heaven to which Christ believed he was returning when he was crucified. It was this kingdom which he asserted certain people should see before they died, and I think Freethinkers should not be led to assume the folly of this belief merely because the weak-minded have confounded the two conceptions in a superstitious manner.

Mr. Mann asserts that Christ did not condemn slavery. If a command to love one's neighbours as one's self and to regard every man's body as "the temple of the living god" is not an utter and final condemnation of any exploitation of human life, words have simply no meaning whatever. Mr. Mann asks if I believe that the Kingdom of God on earth was to be established *after* the judgment day. Surely it is obvious that if the kingdom

were once established there could be no judgment day. What would there be to judge? In answer to Mr. Felgate Stone I must refer to my contention in my first letter that two statements have been confounded by writers or copyists, in support of which I appeal to the long list of events, "wars and rumours of war," etc., referred to in the very chapter which he quotes. The poetic language was culled from the psalms and elsewhere.

Now, I may have one or two weak points in my argument, but in the main I have a case worthy of the deepest consideration, I believe, and I would add that while a rational interpretation of the teaching of Jesus remains, it is of practical moment to mankind, and Freethinkers should examine it without bias but with a rational degree of faith.

HUBERT C. KNAPP-FISHER.

EVOLUTION.

SIR,—Brevity must be the keynote of my reply to Mr. Harry Partington, who takes exception to the statement that Jacob was acquainted with any of the facts upon which the modern theory of Evolution is based. If I understand the theory aright, it may be summarily stated as follows: The belief in pre-Darwinian days is perhaps summed up in the phrase, the immutability of species; that the influences governing conception and reproduction were as definitely fixed as the creation of the different species at the beginning. But Darwin showed that all these had resulted from a series of changes, due to climate, selection, environment, and other circumstances. It is well known that much of the data upon which Darwin relied was gathered from breeders of stock; and it may well be Jacob might have supplied him with many interesting facts. Without discussing the truth of the story, or insisting upon the accuracy of the results of Jacob's experiment, the very relation of the story brings it into harmony with modern ideas. It is often stated, I suppose with truth, that the germ of all these ideas is to be found in ancient Greek writers; so that there is nothing very remarkable in finding glimpses of them in other ancient writings. The Hebrews, in the midst of a number of polytheistic notions, evolved the idea of monotheism, and this idea has dominated the Western world. I am not claiming for Jacob any greater insight into nature's secrets than is usually accredited to the Greek writers. Perhaps if Mr. Partington had read my article with a little humorous altitude, he would have perceived that it was not my intention to insist upon the literal accuracy of the story.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

LABOUR PRESS.

SIR,—I notice that a correspondent in your issue of March 8 states that "the *Daily Herald* and the *New Leader* have surrendered their independence and have become the mere mouthpiece of the Labour caucus. I am at a loss to understand what this means. There has been no change whatever in the policy of the *New Leader* or in its relationship to the Labour Party, which is one of complete independence.

H. N. BRAILSFORD.

CHRISTIANITY IN THE EAST.

SIR,—As one who served for more than thirty years in "the East," may I be allowed to correct some misconceptions which appeared in the *Freethinker* of March 29? In "Views and Opinions," you imply that the Afghans were carrying out *biblical teachings* when they recently stoned a heretical mullah. Their conduct was certainly *not* guided, in this instance, by the Bible, but by the Quran. I think I am right in saying that the Bible is practically unknown in Afghanistan, for the simple reason that the life of any Christian missionary who attempted to expound the Gospel in such a fanatically Mahomedan realm would be in extreme peril. Christian missions to Afghanistan, with the possible exception of a small medical mission in Kabul, allowed by the Amir, are, for this reason, or were in my day, forbidden by the Indian Government.

Mr. A. E. Maddock, in his second article, under the title of "The Moral Bane of the East," seems to suggest that caste is a ubiquitous socio-religious institution in "The East." As a matter of fact *caste* properly so-called

is confined to one comparatively small corner of the vast continent of Asia—namely, India, and is there only exhibited among those who embrace the Hindu religion. There is no *caste* among the millions of mussulmans in India.

H. MAGRATH.

[We did not say that the Afghans accepted the Bible in name, but that inasmuch as they were applying the biblical command to stone to death heretics, they were carrying out biblical teachings.—Ed.]

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7, Mr. J. W. Graham-Peace, "The War Now On."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham Road): 7, Mr. J. H. Van Biene, "Is the Potentiality of Matter sufficient to account for Consciousness?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. W. Kent, "The London Shakespeare Knew."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): Mr. Arthur Greenwood, "Education: A Broad View."

OUTDOOR.

FINSBURY PARK.—3.30, Mr. Kellard, "Christianity and Reform."

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. Sunday, April 5, at the Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street, at 7, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, "An Evening with the Golden Bough." Questions and Discussion cordially invited.

HULL BRANCH N.S.S. (Balmoral Room, Metropole, West Street, Hull): Mr. Chapman Cohen will lecture at 3 and 7.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Norman Angell, a Lecture.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, 120 Rusholme Road, All Saints', Manchester): Saturday, April 4, at 2.30, Annual General Business Meeting. All members invited.

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