

The

FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN · · · EDITOR · 1881-1915 · G.W. FOOTE

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper

VOL. XLV.—No. 15

SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 1925

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
God and the Mining Disaster.—The Editor - - -	225
"A Christianity for the Age."—J. T. Lloyd - - -	226
Sweeping Back the Ocean.—Mimnermus - - -	227
Ethics.—Joseph Bryce - - -	228
A Comparison Between Shaw's "Candida" and Ibsen's "Doll's House."—W. Thompson. - - -	230
Seeing Life.—Vincent J. Hands - - -	234
Bolshevik Atrocities.—W. Mann - - -	235
The Supremacy of Reason - - -	236
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

God and the Mining Disaster.

Everyone will have read with the deepest pain the account of the Tyneside mine disaster with its toll of thirty-eight lives. Whatever our differences on religious or political matters may be, it is one of those events which break down the barriers of sect or party and lays bare whatever of decent humanity each one possesses. Thirty-eight men and boys slowly drowning in the rising water, or being slowly asphyxiated by poisonous gases, and with not even the comfort of being able to let their glazing eyes rest for the last time on a human face! And, above all, the anguish-stricken crowd, the mothers and fathers, sons, daughters, and wives, hoping against hope until the last moment, and then in sad despair home to face a vacancy that can never be filled. It is a tale of cumulative sorrow to which no pen can do justice. The miner's occupation is at best a dirty and a dangerous one. In the best of circumstances one cannot imagine men following it with the same pleasure that a carpenter, for example, can get out of his work. The joy of the skilled craftsman can hardly be his. It is unpleasant labour at best; it is a highly dangerous one all the time. If we had a better sense of social values we should cease to prate quite so much of the cheap, spectacular courage of the soldier, and pay more attention—particularly so far as the education of the young is concerned—to the unnoticed heroism that accompanies our modern social life.

Man and God.

Quite a number of clergymen assembled round the pithead during the time the people were anxiously watching events. I mention the fact without the slightest desire to sneer at their presence or belittle their services. They were men before they were parsons, and one prefers to believe that they were there as men and not as priests—or at least that they would have been ready to give what help they could had they never worn a clerical garb. But, being there, there officiated as parsons. During the whole of the night, says one of the newspapers, ministers of all denominations were leading the whole township in prayers for intercession on behalf of the trapped men. Prayers to whom? With whom were they interceding? Obviously they were praying to their God

and asking him to intercede on behalf of the men and boys who were slowly dying beneath their feet. Poor things! There was not a man or woman in the whole of the town who would have needed the asking could they have brought those men and boys alive to the surface. Men and women were there without the asking, all ready, even to risking their own lives, to help in the work of rescue. Among these, Samuel Evans, overman, stands out as one of the heroes of the occasion. When he saw the rush of water into the pit he told the men near him to make for the shaft. "Where are you going?" they asked. "I must try to save my men," he replied. He did collect more than a score of men and sent them to the shaft, but he remained imprisoned himself. The overman needed neither prayers nor intercessions to get him to do what he could to help. The overgod remained silent and inert. If there is a God he may well be proud of Samuel Evans. If there is a God Samuel Evans may well be ashamed of him. On critical occasions man not unusually shows himself superior to his gods.

Folly or Fraud? * * *

The agonized men and women were led in their prayers by the clergy of all denominations. Did they expect that God would listen and stop the flow of water in time to save the men? If we are to trust Christian preachers he has done things far more wonderful than that. But, as usual, he did nothing. Did they know that in natural affairs the gods do nothing, that nature drowns men with the same carelessness that it may drown a rat? If they did, what excuse have they for misleading the people? And what are we to think of a body of men who so callously take advantage of the ignorance and despair of the people around them? One of two things. Either the clergy must explain why it is that their God did nothing to help the men and boys in the pit, in spite of the prayers offered to him hour after hour by the people, or they must explain their own attitude in encouraging the people to place faith in a plan which they knew quite well would be useless. They cannot have it both ways. Either they convict themselves of duplicity, or their God of callousness. Of course, I do not expect them to answer either charge. The same confidence in their dupes which leads them to organize useless prayer on such occasion, will lead them to trust to their followers not reasoning the matter out. And when the bodies are brought to the surface we shall see these same clergy insulting the dead and the living by commending the "souls" of these men to the "loving mercy of God," and thanking the deity to whom they prayed in vain, whom they believe could do so much, but who did—just nothing. Human folly and knavery can hardly go further than is summarized in such an experience.

The Burden of God.

When the Freethinker asks why God does not do this or that the reply is made that God does not

interfere with the working of natural laws. It is left for human wisdom to so act that natural forces work for their well-being. Will they tell us, will they tell the people whom they encouraged and led in their prayers for "intercession," that it was all a farce, that all the time they were praying for God to save the men they knew perfectly well that nothing of the kind would happen, that if they were to be saved it would be by human skill and daring? To tell the people that much would stamp the clergy as conscious frauds. They must believe that God could save these people if he would. Why then did he not do so? We may be told that the fault lay with men and not with God; that if proper precautions had been taken the accident need not have occurred; that men will learn from their experience to do better in future. How will that benefit the men and lads who are now dead? Labour Members of Parliament told the House of Commons that the accident was due to the mineowners not spending what they should spend on live-saving devices. Suppose that were so. Human justice would, if it could, see that those responsible for the evil suffered from it. Divine justice kills a parcel of human beings in order to teach the other people, whom it does not harm, better. It kills A, that B may learn a lesson! We are sometimes told by believers what a horrible thing it is to think of the world as being without a "presiding mind." But that is certainly not nearly so horrible as to think of the world as designed, controlled, governed by an almighty intelligence with the power to prevent such catastrophes as this, but who does nothing. To the Atheist the world presents a problem to be solved; it is neither malevolent nor benevolent. It does not kill a score in slow agonies to teach someone else something. It is not consciously cruel, and all the bitterness that comes from the contemplation of conscious cruelty is absent. But the theist presents us with a world which shows us to be in the grip of an almighty monster, someone who can paralyze our best endeavours, who delights to have us kneel in supplication to him, only to laugh at our petitions and to regard our sufferings with indifference. The best that any humane person can hope is that God does not exist. We might at least divest the universe of that terror.

Impeaching God. * * *

But, after all, the pit disaster is only a special example of what occurs throughout nature. It did not need the deaths of these thirty-eight men and boys to prove the folly of religious teaching. It is not even a scoop for "Providence" to get thirty-eight at once and down them below ground. In America North and South it has just killed about 2,000 people and injured a much larger number. It has so designed the world that half the animals in existence can only live by destroying others. It made man ignorant instead of wise, and so made him pass through thousands of generations of suffering and cruelty to learn some of the simplest lessons of decent living. Numbers in this respect really do not matter. There is not *more* suffering when a boatload of people go down than there is when one is drowned. There is not more suffering when a tornado wipes out thousands than there is when a single person falls victim to some natural catastrophe. There are more individuals suffer, that is all. But if there had been only one man killed in that Tyneside mine there would have been the same cutting short of a life, the same taking away of the head of a family, the same sorrow with those who were left. It is not the mere number of the victims that furnishes an indictment of theism, it is the kind of suffering that exists, its unmerited character, and the utter purposelessness of it. What

man can do to mitigate this suffering he does, and at any rate all the alleviation there is comes from his efforts. God, as Carlyle lamented long ago, does nothing. Worse than nothing, he gets in the way of those who would do something. The thirty-eight men and boys who lie dead, hundreds of feet below ground, are thirty-eight counts in an indictment against either the wisdom, the power, or the goodness of the Christian's God.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"A Christianity for the Age."

THE Bishop of Birmingham is a Doctor of Science, and for some years has been well known as a repudiator of the Biblical story of the creation and fall of man. His rejection of the belief in the doctrine of the Fall involves not only his renunciation of the infallibility of the Bible but also his lack of confidence in the theology of the Apostle Paul. To many of us the wonder is that Dr. Barnes continues to be a Christian believer at all, but the truth is that he is not only a believer in, but an ordained teacher of the Christian faith, while not accepting what the Apostle Paul and the orthodox Church regard as the fundamental need for it. And yet, strangely enough, whilst Christianity has been in the world for two thousand years, the Bishop admits in a sermon published in the *Christian World Pulpit* of April 2, that "throughout Europe there continues to be moral disorder, and there is also deep-seated mental and spiritual disquiet." If that statement is true, does it not prove that religion has hitherto been absolutely powerless for good in the world? Dr. Barnes says:—

We have been within a hair's breadth of the bankruptcy of civilization, and the mental and spiritual upset that threatens catastrophe is still with us. Loss of faith in the goodness of God our Father, recrudescence of superstition, greed of pleasure; we may be unconscious of the origin of these manifestations of spiritual disorder, but they are the signs of deep-seated psychological distress of which the war was the cause, and the war was produced by, and has spread what has been well called the spirit of anti-Christ—envy, hatred, jealousy, fear, selfishness between nations and peoples and classes and individuals.

All that is doubtless true enough, but what it demonstrates is the utter uselessness of religion. Of course, the Bishop is "personally quite sure that true religion, the Christian religion, is neither powerless nor effete," but he seems to be equally convinced that the churches are both powerless and effete because they do not put the principles of Christ in the forefront of their teachings and works. But is he not aware that apart from the churches there never has been any Christianity at all? Christianity is the creation of the Church, and the Church is powerless to regenerate the world because the religion it inculcates is of a fraudulent character and of necessity impotent.

The Bishop's description of the civilization of the nineteenth century is excessively laudatory. "The earth had never seen its like before. All the nations had become interdependent; their trade, commerce, and finance were parts of a single whole. Bankers had devised a marvellously intricate and delicate machine which adjusted throughout practically the whole world the balance and supply of food and manufactured articles." Assuming the entire truth of that statement the high state of civilization achieved was by no means an unmixed benefit to the world. Indeed the Bishop admits that "under the stimulus of this ingenious adjustment the population of Europe

trebled in a century," and surely this was about the worst thing that could have happened. Even the Bishop is convinced that the population "became in fact dangerously large." And yet the Church keeps on advocating the production of large families, the larger the better, so as to secure the protection of the country to which the advocates may belong in case of war; and when asked for its authority it quotes a few favourable passages to be found in different parts of the Bible, such as the following in Psalm cxxvii. :—

Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so are the children of youth. Blessed is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate.

Those words were written from a purely military point of view, and it is undeniable that the Bible generally takes the occurrence of war for granted.

Bishop Barnes affirms that "religion and economics, ethics, and politics are closely interrelated. For instance, if a man cannot live decently he cannot be religious; if he can only live in destitution, physical misery will destroy his spiritual faculties." From a historical point of view the Bishop is totally mistaken. The greatest saints canonized were men and women who loved misery and dirt, who retired from the world and spent their lives in sandy deserts, exposed to all the cruel severities of the weather, and finding their chief delight in punishing their bodies in the most humiliating and painful ways. Simeon Stylitis, a Syrian saint of the fifth century, spent thirty years on the top of a pillar, between seventy and eighty feet high and four feet square. The pillar was erected, at his own request, outside the city of Antioch, on the top of which he could meditate, pray, and preach to the enormous crowds that flocked to hear him. Catherine of Siena was a famous saint of the fourteenth century. As a very young child it was her habit on going upstairs to kneel at each step to the Virgin and to flog herself regularly. She went through her life constantly inflicting all sorts of suffering upon her body. There were the scars of wounds on her hands and feet in imitation of those borne by Jesus and caused by the nails which fastened him to the cross. Catherine's life lacked brightness and ordinary human happiness. Her object was, through self-inflicted suffering and sorrow in this world, to prepare for endless bliss in the world to come.

We will not follow the Bishop into his disquisition on Capital and Labour, and it is but fair to observe that he throws no new light whatever on the subject. Further on in the sermon he says:—

I confess I see no hope of moral progress save in a religious revival, which shall fire men with simple and sincere enthusiasm for the teaching of Jesus. It is high time that the Churches in general and the Church of England in particular, should justify faith in Jesus just by showing the world's need of his principles. Of what use are sacramental superstitions and liturgical frivolities in our present distress? Of what use is the religious obscurantism which sets religious prejudice against modern knowledge? We cannot make a new world by presenting men with old clothes. Jesus to-day stands out of the pages of history as a Modern of the moderns because he had a message for all time, a message therefore of vital importance to our own age. If we preach that message we preach the Christ. If we half bury it under an elaboration of ritual and ecclesiasticism we leave men free to doubt whether we really believe the Gospel of the Son of Man.

Dr. Barnes seems incapable of preaching a single sermon without making an attack upon the Catholic party in the Church, or without airing his scientific

knowledge; but he is fundamentally wrong when he speaks of the principles of Jesus. The Gospel Jesus introduced no new principles whatever, nor was there any new message in any of his recorded sermons. Dr. Barnes asks "of what use are sacramental superstitions and liturgical frivolities in our present distress"? And we ask with equal seriousness, of what use is any form of supernatural religion? The preacher himself admits that moral disorder prevails throughout Europe at the present time, and nothing is more certain than the fact that Christianity is incapable of putting an end to it. He assures us that Jesus had a message for all time, but he omits to tell us what that message is, or how the knowledge of Jesus is all we need. He says that "as the years go by I for one am increasingly impressed by the greatness of our Lord," but he neglects to inform us in what direction that greatness manifests itself. Is Christendom morally superior to Heathendom? Some years ago Principal L. P. Jacks answered that question in the negative in a remarkable article in *Hibbert Journal*, and we are strongly inclined to agree with him. Dr. Barnes complains thus: "Effete theology, impossible pretensions, blindness to new truth, old superstitions, these are too often with us." That is a condemnation of the Anglo-Catholic party in his own Church; but so far as we are concerned, the words are equally applicable to himself and his party, for theology is an exploded science, whether it be that of Bishop Gore or that of Bishop Barnes.

Dr. Barnes draws his sermon to a close in these words: "The Devil may seem to rule the world, but in fact Christ reigns, and the Kingdom of God is here and now among you, within you." The truth is that neither the Devil nor Christ rules the world. The world is governed by weak, selfish, and fallible men and women. Supernatural beings and forces are conspicuous only by their absence and inactivity.

J. T. LLOYD.

Sweeping Back the Ocean.

'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
Oh life, not death, for which we pant,
More life, and fuller, that we want.

—Tennyson.

A CORRESPONDENT has sent to me a newspaper cutting of an old article by Mr. Arthur Machen, the well-known journalist, which deals with Freethinkers and their attitude towards religion. My informant says that it is the best piece of Christian Evidence that he knows of, and requests a rejoinder to the points raised.

I do so with pleasure, because the small but fierce tribe of Christian Evidence exponents have so little to say that is not already flat, stale, and unprofitable. And, I must add that Mr. Machen differs from so many defenders of Omnipotence in many ways. He may be a crusader, but he wears his rue with a difference. Like that placid dachshund of a sportsman who was taking it out to hunt wild elephants, he lacks bitterness. He also lacks other things—the ability to murder the English language, and the power of talking very loudly in the open air.

Nevertheless, I find myself in a rebellious humour. For, in spite of Mr. Machen's culture, there is an irritating air of dilettantism in his propaganda, and a note of patronage. There is also an echo of the Oxford University manner, which has been described jocosely as the attitude of Almighty God addressing a lodging-house bug. Mr. Machen's propaganda will be acceptable to those sentimentalists who still cling to the name of Christian, but I imagine it will irritate rather than satisfy other readers of more virile intelligence.

Mr. Machen's arguments are very different from the

Old Baily methods of Christian Evidence lecturers. He is more like the Nonconformist clergymen who used to wail that Charles Bradlaugh was a Christian all his life without realizing the soft impeachment. Mr. Machen says that the fault of Freethinkers, or rather their misfortune, for they are born that way, is that they lack the religious sense. The poor, demented Freethinker, he tells us, resembles the unhappy folk who are tone-deaf, and colour-blind, and who cannot discriminate between the writings of Shakespeare and of the Bishop of London. "He is not able to relish a good dinner; so he finds out all kinds of reasons to prove that dinner is nonsense, and poisonous nonsense at that." Mr. Machen is a tender-hearted philanthropist, and, naturally, is sorry for the afflicted Freethinker, and a little heated in his efforts to defend Omniscience. "Freethought," he points out with some asperity, "is found to some extent in all minds save in the two extremes of saints and simpletons." And, since the best of journalists are never, by any chance, saints, it is really terrible to reflect to which group Mr. Machen himself belongs.

Mr. Machen's simile of the dinner is beautiful and ineffectual nonsense. Freethinkers are as able to relish a good dinner as the most credulous clergyman "with good capon lined"; but they are not so green as to mistake a menu for a banquet. The Christian menu has no correspondence with the meal that follows, and the price charged is much too high. A bird in the hand is worth any number in the bush. A million-to-one chance of profit in an alleged subsequent existence does not compensate for mental slavery in this life. An honest man, with a sense of human dignity, would hesitate to play fast and loose with his intellect, and accept a creed because it appeals to his selfish hopes and fears. Living by faith is an easy profession, as the clergy well know but never divulge. Living on faith, however, is a hazardous and precarious occupation. The prophet Elijah is said to have subsisted on food brought to him by kind-hearted ravens, and 50,000 clergymen to-day in this country alone subsist on the offerings of the pious. Whenever an Indian famine takes place, the starving Hindoos ask a thousand gods to give them their daily bread, and the answer is that they die. If there were no other indictment of gods, the awful sufferings of mankind would condemn them everlastingly.

Accordingly to Mr. Machen, the religious sense is but a common faculty, and Christians have little reason to plume themselves as members of God's own aristocracy. The senses of beauty and wonder, and, indeed, the love of æsthetics, are not necessarily religions, but are perfectly natural. How, then, can there be anything "spiritual" in their combinations? Is it reasonable to gibe at the Freethinker as a man "utterly incapable" of relishing the exquisite savours of *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, and as one who prefers the *Sporting Times* before Shakespeare when one remembers that Shakespeare and Keats were both Freethinkers. Mr. Machen is obsessed with a gross illusion. Christians have no monopoly of the finer feelings. It is very doubtful if the average hymn of to-day has any more claim to be considered as real literature than the usual music-hall song. And the glaring lithographs of Sacred subjects framed in so many Christian homes suggests that colour-blindness is not by any means confined to the heterodox.

As a defender of the Faith delivered to the saints, Mr. Machen is no greater success than King Henry the Eighth. One of his ruses has been to misrepresent and slander heretics. The way he does it is as follows:—

But the man who is convinced that the early martyrs were designing and crafty rogues is, often

for some obscure reason, anxious to proclaim his conviction to the world, whereby he becomes a burden and a bore.

This phenomenon is not peculiar to Freethinkers. Thousands of Christians no sooner "find Jesus" than they hasten to the nearest street corner, with a harmonium and a dozen lady friends, to proclaim "the tidings of great joy." Mr. Machen has laid on the flattery with a trowel in dealing with Freethinkers. Being an instructed citizen of an educated nation, he ought to know better. There is always something exhilarating in the infatuation of an heroic ignoramus, but this holy innocence of Mr. Machen's is overdone. Conceivably, on reflection, and after consultation of Paine, Renan, and Strauss, to mention no others, he will recognize that sobriety of statement is not precisely the quality in which his great talents shine.

Mr. Machen is not really so childlike and bland as he appears to be. He follows the beaten track of theology at the last in talking of mysteries, which is but a subterfuge to cover the retreat of a defender of the faith. Here are his words:—

The truth is that, whether we like it or not, we live, if we live well, in and by and through mysteries.

Mysteries, forsooth! And Mr. Machen has not illuminated them with his farthing candle which he pretends was lighted by God. Wishing to keep the religious instinct in mystery, or obscurity, he objects to explanations. He cannot tolerate that men should talk of these things too enquiringly. He is as eager to burke all enquiry as the priests who guard the Holy Fire at Jerusalem, or the others who impose on the simplicity of laymen by the pretended liquification of St. Januarius' blood at Naples.

When the Sultan of Zanzibar sent a second-hand tramp steamer to sink the British Fleet, a hearty laugh rang through the civilized world. Mr. Machen's acting the part of Saint George attacking the dragon of Freethought is equally exhilarating. "Is it reasonable," asks the amusing Mr. Machen, "to spend time in reading about Mr. Pickwick, who never existed?" Christians, it might be retorted, worship a three-headed god who never existed, and employ fifty thousand priests in this country alone to perpetrate the comedy. There is a world of difference between the Freethinker, who labours for rational progress, and the journalist, who turns theologian for half an hour to bolster up the delusions of a faith of which he believes little and knows less. Christians are surrounded by the rising waters of Freethought, and stand a bad chance of drowning. And the matter will not be prolonged unduly because a smart journalist essays the part of Mrs. Partington, the courageous woman who sought to sweep back the Atlantic Ocean with a mop.

MIMNERMUS.

Ethics.

A DISCOURSE FOR NURSES AND CHILDREN—Continued. X.

ALL the little interesting items that I have given you previously, nurse, in relation to the various marriage customs of the world, are taken almost wholly from Letourneau's *Evolution of Marriage*, a work of monumental labour which must have cost its author years of research. It was from Letourneau that I learned of those naughty fathers who used to sell their pretty daughters for a handful of monkey nuts. In modern times they have been known to sell them for the sake of empty titles; but if I had any daughters to sell, and the choice of payment lay between a title and

monkey nuts, I think I would prefer the monkey nuts. At least you would get something for your money; but a mere title is of no earthly value, unless, of course, you want to float a limited liability company. The many curious customs connected with the sexual relationship in love, courtship, and marriage, which our author brings into the limelight, all tend to confirm the pitman's remark that, "Ther's now't se queer as folk." If I were to tell you of a very singular custom known as the Couvade, where when a woman gives birth to a child the father takes to his bed, simulating child-birth by suitable cries and contortions, and is tended and waited upon as an invalid in place of his wife, you would probably think I was pulling your leg. And yet M. Letourneau shows from reliable evidence that this practice of the husband "lying-in" has existed in America, in Asia, and in Europe. It is still practised in the Baltic provinces, and was recently discovered in use in the little island of Marken, in the Zuydersee.

Another curious custom is that known as the Levirate, which made it obligatory, if a man died without issue, for his brother to marry his widow, any children born of the union being accounted as his brother's. In Deut. xxv., 5-6, we read:—

If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no son, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger; her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to wife, and perform the duty of the husband's brother unto her, and it shall be that the first-born whom she beareth, shall succeed in the name of his brother, which is dead, that his name be not blotted out in Israel.

This practice was long thought to be a custom peculiar to the Hebrews, but it has been found to exist in many parts of the world. It had for its object the keeping up of the name or family of the deceased, and all that belonged to it. And even in Abyssinia at the present day, it is in force even during a man's lifetime, if by any reason he should be rendered unfit for marital duties. Among the Hebrews the obligation was rather a moral than a legal one, but failure to comply with it incurred public censure and contempt.

The old Bible, nurse, is rather an interesting sort of book, when you know how to read it and interpret the practices and customs it records in the light of man's evolutionary progress. Take, for example, that story of Abraham's visit to Egypt, where out of fear of what would happen to himself if his wife found favour in the eyes of the notables, he passed her off as his sister. When the King of Egypt found out that she was his wife, he reproached Abraham for his deception; and the reply of the patriarch is rather significant. He said: "For indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, *but not the daughter of my mother*, and she became my wife." This paternal relationship among the Hebrews, and among many other peoples, was not considered a barrier to marriage. We find that Nahor, Abraham's brother, married his paternal niece, Gen. ii., 26, 29; while the father of Moses married his paternal aunt, Exod. vi., 20. These relationships may appear to us objectionable, but when we remember the controversy that was waged for years in this country over the Deceased Wife's Sister's Bill, it is apparent that even under Christian civilization, with the help of revelation and divine guidance, man has not yet been able to definitely settle the rights and morals of his sexual relationships.

I have spoken of the stealthy seizure of women for mates, called marriage by capture, but there is a collective or wholesale aspect of this practice which is worthy of note. Capture in war has been largely practised by all nations throughout the world; and

women have been regarded as legitimate booty, and seized along with the cattle and other things. An old Irish poem speaks of three hundred women carried off by the Picts from the Gauls. The negroes of Africa, the Hottentots, the Patagonians, and the Tartars all make wives of the prisoners they capture in war. The Indian tribes of America made a regular practice of raiding each other's territory for the purpose of securing females. And often this practice has been accompanied by the most ferocious and savage brutality. An instance of this is recorded in the thirty-third chapter of Numbers. The Israelites having vanquished the Midianites, killed all the men, according to the Semetic custom, and took away the cattle, the children, and the women. But Moses, the mouthpiece of the Lord, ordered them to *slaughter the women*, and even the male children, but to keep the young girls and virgins. The number of these maidens is given as sixteen thousand, and were divided among the victors along with the sheep, the oxen, and the asses. Instances of similar cruelty are recorded in the Book of Judges, chapter 21. After the twelve tribes had settled in the land of Canaan, and they had also settled the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Hivites, the Amorites, the Perrizites, and the Amalekites, they found they had no one left with whom to pick a quarrel; and so they began to fight among themselves. Eleven of the tribes went up against the little tribe of Benjamin, and nearly settled it as well. All that was left of it were a few hundred fighting men who were swifter of foot than the others, and who fled to the hills. But after the war fever had subsided the Israelites became concerned at the thought of losing one of their tribes; but as they had massacred all their women, and also made a vow not to give the Benjaminites any of their own daughters, they were in a dilemma. They solved the difficulty by going to war with the men of Jabesh Gilead and slaughtering all the inhabitants with the exception of four hundred young virgins whom they distributed among the Benjaminites for purposes of procreation. This number, however, was found to be insufficient to meet the demand; and as they had to have females by hook or by crook, both for personal and national reasons, they had recourse to a piece of strategy.

There was a yearly feast at a place called Shiloh, of which one of the features was the native dances performed by the maidens, similar to those of the South Sea savages. Here the Benjaminites lay in wait, and when the maidens came out to dance upon the greensward, they rushed upon them, each man catching the first maiden he could lay hands on, and whipping her on to horseback, flew, swifter than the Sheik of Araby to their retreat among the hills. And it was in this manner that a tribe was saved in Israel.

Another not uncommon custom has been the practice of lending out a wife or a daughter, to a guest or friend, as a mark of hospitality. This practice has not been confined to barbarous nations, but has existed among some that were highly civilized. It also appears to have existed among the ancient Hebrews, as in Judges, chapter xix., there is an instance where a man offers to lend his daughter and a concubine to a lot of ruffians who wished to molest a guest who was sojourning with him. We have also cases where men have exchanged their women for a given period as a sign of friendship and goodwill.

There is another practice which I used to think was only a malicious slander, but it is fully confirmed from many sources. It is that of the priest claiming marital privileges from a bride. It appears, first of all, to have been a kingly privilege. Among the Kaffirs the chiefs have the choice of the women for many leagues round. In other places, after having

purchased a girl from her parents, a man was obliged to submit her to the seignorial rights of the priest. This custom also has existed in civilized countries. Let me read to you the following paragraph from Letaurneau:—

Under the feudal system in Europe this right of prelibation has been in use in many fiefs, and until a very recent period. Almost in our own day certain lords of the Netherlands, of Prussia, and of Germany still claimed it. In a French title-deed of 1507 we read that the Count d'Eu has the right of prelibation in the said place when anyone marries. More than this, ecclesiastics, and even bishops have been known to claim the right in their quality of feudal lords.

"I have seen," says Boetius, "at the Court of Bourges, before the metropolitan, an appeal by a certain parish priest, who pretended to claim the first night of young brides, according to ancient usage."

The foregoing customs and usages, which have been associated at various periods of man's history with his attempts to meet the needs of his sex nature—and they do not by any means exhaust the list—will serve to show the bewilderment of his ideas upon a subject so vital to his happiness. We can only understand the present by reference to the past; and there can be no question that modern society to-day, in its efforts to conform to the monogamic ideal is severely handicapped by those polygamic instincts which man has inherited from countless generations of ancestors in the past. Society imposes upon man a legal monogamic union; only to find that it is more honoured in the breach than in the observance. The monogamic ideal may be commendable, but we hope to show, in a later article, that in seeking to enforce it upon human nature, society has paid a terribly heavy penalty in the shape of appalling, widespread prostitution and illegitimacy, and all their attendant vices of hypocrisy, disease, and crime.

JOSEPH BRUCE.

A Comparison Between Shaw's "Candida" and Ibsen's "Doll's House."

On making a comparison between between these two plays so similar in construction, their respective dates of composition must not be overlooked. Ibsen's play was produced at the beginning of the Feminist Movement, and is an early pioneer advocacy of women's emancipation from the "Doll's House," whereas Saaw's play was produced much later, when feminism had made great advances. Hence it is noticeable that whilst Nora long hesitates on her course of future procedure, Candida is confident and self-assured. So much so that she can assert her freedom by accepting the responsibilities of marriage.

The fundamental idea, or theme, on which both "The Doll's House" and "Candida" are built is the same. In both cases the husband in his self-sufficiency, clever, and glorying in his ability, fails to realize that the wife stands between him and the petty worries and annoyances of life. He fails to take into account that his wife is a reasoning human being; and when the catastrophe occurs is amazed to find his wife has not only brains but also a strength of character far beyond his own.

Although similar in theme, the plays are considerably different in treatment, and each creates an entirely different impression on the reader. (It must be emphasized that I refer throughout to the written and not the acted plays.) The difference is difficult to describe. It seems that the atmosphere of each as

a whole is directly opposed to the other. "Candida," with its conventional happy conclusion, leaves one with a sense of the unconventional and an impending tragedy. One feels that Morell, robbed of his complacent self-esteem, must ever appear a man of straw to such a woman as Candida. Though perhaps one cannot imagine Candida acting otherwise than as she does.

On the other hand, in "The Doll's House," with its conclusion of the door shutting behind Nora, tragic as it may appear for a wife to desert her husband and children at a moment's notice, still one hopes that some day Nora will return and Helmer will be worthy of her love. Did Ibsen intend to create this impression?

Put briefly, Shaw, with his sparking dialogue, smart repartee, general tone of jollity and happy conclusion, nevertheless leaves one dissatisfied with that conclusion. Ibsen, although the tone of his play is tragic, with very little humorous relief and a sad ending, gives one an impression of hope of a happy reconciliation.

"CANDIDA."

Although, as W. H. Hudson points out in his analysis of the drama, the playwright is not bound by any strict rules as to his method of working out his plot, there are certain conditions necessary to his art to neglect which would be fatal. In "Candida" these conditions are religiously observed. Brevity is the soul of wit: it is also the soul of Shaw's witty dialogue—with rare exceptions. One cannot help but admire the masterly manner in which the characters are introduced, the skill in which the explanatory matter is managed, the initial incident leading without apparent effort to the rising action, and the plot progressing all the time. It may be said with perfect truth that in "Candida" every word is made to tell. It is a condensation brought to a fine art.

The introduction of Burgess is a fine piece of satire and shows Morell in greater contrast. Morell likes "a man to be true to himself," and lectures Burgess to that effect. Yet Burgess, despite his vulgarity and cockney accent, appears more of a man than does Morell. Burgess and Marchbanks—as the latter informs Morell in the first act—do not take Morell at his own estimation; whereas whole crowds of admirers (spoken of), among whom Proserpine and Lexy are introduced as types, do.

"Candida," I think, may be included amongst those plays wherein the playwright has extended the rising action, the climax coming, I should say, a little beyond the middle of the third act, where Candida has to choose between her husband and Marchbanks. Then follows a hasty *dénouement* and the conclusion.

It is a purely psychological play. From the conflict of ideals which it portrays, the conclusion at which one arrives is that the person with ideals and imaginativeness must inevitably meet with trouble in this prosaic world; and although ideals may perhaps increase one's sensibility, to be of any practical use they must be combined with wisdom.

"THE DOLL'S HOUSE."

Compared with "Candida," this play seems to lack the felicity of diction and wealth of paradox that relieve Shaw's dialogue however protracted the argument may be. Not that the dialogue is deficient in brevity or pointedness, but there seems a monotonous sameness about it and no variety in speech between the different characters.

Probably this is due simply to the work having been translated. Not that I wish to disparage the translator, who has no doubt done his work as well as another. The difficulty is inseparable from any

translated work, and one has only to read, say, *Pickwick Papers* in French to note how, in translating the idioms, colloquialisms and vulgarisms, the whole Dickensian atmosphere is entirely altered, if not lost.

As in "Candida," the rising action is protracted far into the third act, the climax occurring where Helmer discovers the letter. By far the most interesting part of the play is the *dénouement* and the conclusion. The point where Nora dances the Tarantella is finely contrasted, and probably very effective from a spectacular point of view, the audience being aware of the tragedy behind her simulated gaiety. In the late Mr. William Archer's consideration, the conclusion, or rather, climax where Nora and Helmer, seated opposite one another at the table, have their final understanding, is the most dramatic incident in the play. There is one character who seems to me to be rather inartistically embodied in the play. To my mind his presence merely complicates the plot unnecessarily without adding lucidity to the exposition. Helmer, Nora, Mrs. Linde, and Krogstad should be able to express to the audience all that is necessary without the introduction of Dr. Rank. True, by the fact that he is in love with Nora, he helps to stir her self-assertion and rouse her self-confidence. Nevertheless, without a wholesale alteration in the plot, he could not possibly help her in any other way. Except for the fact that the warning of his imminent dissolution accelerates the discovery of the fatal letter by a few hours, the only other purpose served by his introduction into the play seems to be that he comes in very useful to distract Helmer Torvald's attention when convenient to the progress of the plot.

W. THOMPSON.

Acid Drops.

Speaking in London recently Dr. Marie Stopes remarked that the attitude of unmarried Bishops on the subject of birth control was insolent. She would, she added, make it impossible for them to say the things they say. Their unnatural and unhealthy attitude towards sex should be swept away. With that aim we can fully sympathise, but we should like Dr. Marie Stopes to explain what she meant by her other utterance that she was out "to smash the tradition of organized Christianity and to unthroned Christ's own tradition of wholesome, healthy natural love towards sex life." Christianity has always adopted a disgusting and unnatural attitude towards all matters relating to sex. But so, too, did the founder of that faith, Christ, who both lived a celibate life himself (according to the Gospel stories), and never said a single word about the value of family life, or gave any useful advice on sexual problems. So far as the sketchy accounts given in the Bible carry us, he appears to have been one of those religious mystics who deliberately shunned all things relating to sex. Certainly he taught nothing "wholesome, healthy, and natural" about love and sex life. Rather he preached an anarchistic creed, which tended to persuade hysterical men and women to leave wife, or husband, and children, to follow him, that thereby they might save their own miserable souls.

If Christ's subversive teaching did not wreck many homes and lives during his lifetime, it did incalculable damage after his death when Paul developed the Christian theological system, and summed up his own delicate feelings on this particular matter in the pleasant phrase, "Better to marry than to burn." And, after all, Paul and the Apostles and the Christians of the first century must have had a far better notion of what Christ's teaching on sex was than Dr. Marie Stopes can have nineteen hundred years later. The whole history of primitive Christianity reads like a nightmare, wherein men and women lived unnatural lives, seeking to suppress one of the greatest fundamental impulses of life, and often

going crazy as a result. Celibacy was the greatest of all Christian virtues according to the Fathers of the Church. In his *History of European Morals* Lecky says that if an impartial person were to glance over the writings of the fourth and fifth centuries, he would answer that the cardinal virtue of the religious type was not love, but chastity, and this chastity, which was regarded as the ideal state, was not the purity of an undefiled marriage. It was the absolute suppression of the whole sensual side of our nature. The chief form of virtue, the central conception of the saintly life, was a perpetual struggle against all carnal impulses by men who altogether refused the compromise of marriage. And the Christians of that period were genuine in their faith. They held to their religion with a fanatical tenacity which is not to be found anywhere to-day. In fact, whenever Christianity has possessed real vitality (e.g. during the Puritan period in this country), an unnatural attitude towards sex has developed. Dr. Marie Stopes would be well-advised to attempt no compromise with the religion which has always degraded her sex, and always opposed a blind hatred of the sexual act to any attempt to regulate sexual life.

Mrs. Berry is announced to deliver a lecture on "The Value of Pain" at a branch of the Theosophical Society, Mortimer Street, W.1. With the best of intentions no doubt. We notice that a tornado has swept five towns in the province of Santa Fé, Argentine. Many deaths are reported. In Missouri, Indiana, and South Illinois, a tornado has caused the injury of 2,100, and 400 killed. We trust that the lady will not overlook these details in the course of her lecture.

The rags of respectability worn by our native brand of religion are beginning to reveal the skeleton underneath. A newspaper correspondent in Looe, Cornwall, has evidently come face to face with the gospel spinners of brotherly love, and attributes the decay of Christianity to the fact that it has become commercialised. We do not challenge his diagnosis although he would have been nearer to the truth if he had stated that modern invention and the utility of natural forces are steadily pushing in the background, fakirs, word jugglers, backwoodsmen, other-worldsmen, and the needy knife grinders of a worn-out theology. This correspondent gives an instance of the vicar's solicitude for his flock, and the letter gives the impression that a roadsweeper performs a useful service in comparison with members of the black army who dare not go on strike:—

An old parishioner died in a village near here a fortnight since.

He was well respected, but, alas! very poor. The vicar was asked to depart from his usual rule and bury him on Sunday. "I bury no one on Sunday. Why do you want to bury him on Sunday?" He was told, "Because the men cannot afford to lose half a day's work in the week to carry him."

"Why can't you bring him up on a cart?"

The other incident was in another village quite near here. I was remarking to the vicar's wife on the small congregation the previous Sunday. She made this reply:—

"Oh, the Canon doesn't mind if no one comes to church. He gets his stipend all the same!"

The Secretary for War gave figures showing that 1,001 animals were destroyed as the result of experiments with poison gas. We are a Christian country, but one wonders if the nation's soul that has to be protected in this manner is worth the saving. Why not try a little fresh air of common-sense before it is too late?

Thieves entered Broad Street Congregational Church, Reading, recently, and rifled the alms boxes. We have noticed a good many reports of thefts from churches of late, and we cannot help wondering how such reports affect genuine Christians. Either, it seems to us, God doesn't care a rap about the sanctity of his holy house and the credit of his own name, or he is impotent to prevent his churches being rifled. Either conclusion

must be exceedingly distasteful to the believer, and yet we can see no other explanation. But Christians, happily for the prosperity of the clerical profession, are not often given to careful and logical thinking—especially in matters relating to their creed.

The *Times* Riga correspondent reports that the Soviet Government has appointed a special commission to investigate the new religious movement among the people connected with the "miraculous renovation of the old ikons" in several parts of White Russia. Various villages claim that the old ikons have been restored to their former brilliance, and ascribe this restoration to supernatural powers. As a result these villages have been proclaimed as "holy" by the people. Their "sacred" influence is said to extend on an average fifty miles, and multitudes of pilgrims are visiting them. The commission has reported that these movements are due to "mass religious psychosis"; but in certain Soviet quarters it is believed that the aim of the movement is to influence the elections, and to cause the electorate to "elect candidates whom God loves." It will be interesting to watch developments. When one considers how credulity has been exploited for political ends in the past by clerics, it does not seem improbable that in this case the disgruntled Russian priests are making another attempt to undermine the authority of a government which they detest, as being much too tainted with Materialism and Atheism. It is significant too, that these miracles are taking place in the agricultural districts, where the ignorant peasantry are still largely under the domination of the priesthood, and not in the industrial centres where there is a more enlightened working class.

We note that the *Daily News*, while against the death penalty being inflicted by the Army in times of peace, supports it during times of war. That seems curiously awry reasoning. During times of peace one may assume a man to be normal, and if the death penalty is justifiable it is surely then. But to support the death penalty because a man's nerves gives way under the strain of modern war is to inflict the supreme penalty for what is a purely organic affection. One might as reasonably shoot a soldier for becoming deaf, or blind, or insane. What it really amounts to is playing on the fears of the soldier in the hope that he will count the risk of being killed by the enemy as less than that of being sentenced to death by his own officers. Even that may not be true, because many of these cases of "cowardice in the face of the enemy" are due to sheer nervous breakdown, and the case is one for a doctor rather than for a firing squad.

Mr. Wickham Steed, editor of the *Review of Reviews*, has raised a strong protest against the influence of the syndicated press in moulding public opinion. The public by this method is only permitted to know what the proprietors wish them to know, and we may point out further that just as it destroys the existence of an independent public opinion, so it destroys the independent editor. The editor simply becomes one who must do what he is ordered to do, and if he will not do it he must go. In this way the modern newspaper sinks lower and lower.

Mr. Steed said there was a need for a number of independent newspapers. With that we agree, but a paper that is the servant of a party or a syndicate is never that. In either case, and in accordance with existing usages, news is either suppressed, or exaggerated, or otherwise distorted, and they who depend upon it are to that extent misled. It is only papers such as the *Freethinker* which does not exist to make a profit, which will not sacrifice its independence in the hopes of making a profit, and will express its own opinions that can be said to be really independent. Although it may sound conceited, we feel inclined to say that the *Freethinker* is about the only paper in London of which it can be truly said that it has never inserted an article merely to please the writer or someone else, or suppressed one because it felt someone would be offended and a supporter

lost. And, as a consequence, *Freethinker* readers generally recognize the policy of the paper to be just and sound, and while they may often disagree with things which appear in its columns, they see that it cannot be otherwise without the paper losing its distinctive features. The *Freethinker* has remained the *Freethinker* right through the piece, and that is a fact of which we—and we think its readers—are very proud.

According to the *Church Times* there are about 85,000 ministers in this country. We did not think the number was quite so high, but it is a subject on which our contemporary should be better informed than are we. What we would like to point out is that there is no other profession in the country in which so large a body of men occupying so public a position, and demanding so much support, confer so small an amount of good on the community. If the whole 85,000 disappeared to-morrow there is nothing they do that could not be equally well done by others. When one comes to think of the priests of all ages, of the tremendous amount that has been given to their maintenance, and that as priests they have never advanced human knowledge or human happiness to the smallest extent, there is no denying that the priesthood represents the most parasitic class that has ever preyed upon human society.

Religion of our special type receives compliments from many and various quarters. A labourer was committed for trial on a charge of burglary and asked leave to give the court a recitation. After this was granted he led off in this style:—

God made the bees,
And the bees made the honey;
This man does the dirty work,
And that one gets the money!

The court roared with laughter and the magistrate (Mr. Samuel Pope) said to the prisoner: "You might have done good work as a preacher if you had taken it up earlier. You have got hold of the wrong rails—the dock rails." At this, there was more laughter. The representatives of religion may accept this as a bouquet or otherwise.

The sacrifice of a girl to the goddess Kali, revealed in a trial which was recently concluded at Jubbulpore, in the Central Provinces of India, will probably serve our evangelical Christians as a text when making their next appeal for funds for missionary work. The favourite son of a former government servant was taken ill, and the family, believing him to be possessed of an evil spirit, decided that a human sacrifice was the only means to cure him. Accordingly a girl was sacrificed, and her blood, put on bread, and taken to a place occupied by a holy man. For this crime the father and two of his sons were sentenced to death, and a woman relative to transportation for life. Yet the ideas which prompted this ghastly business are almost identical with those upon which a good deal of the Christian theology and ritual are based. There is, after all, very little difference between the belief that the blood of a human being shed this year has power to save, and the belief that the blood of someone shed nineteen hundred years ago has that magic property. The frame of mind of these Hindoos and the hysterical condition of the Salvationist as he enlarges upon the extraordinary results that will follow from an immersion in "the blood of the Lamb" is fundamentally the same. And yet, as we say, we have very little doubt that this gruesome incident will provide useful propaganda for our evangelic Christians.

Mr. George Bernard Shaw sent a message of approval to a birth control conference which has opened in New York. Birth control, he declared, should be advocated on the general ground that the difference between voluntary, rational, and controlled activity, and any sort of involuntary, irrational, and uncontrolled activity is the difference between a man and an amoeba. "If we really believe that the more highly evolved creature is the better, we may as well act accordingly. As the amoeba does not understand control he cannot abuse it."

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.

L. E. HESSE.—Thanks. Hope to publish next week. We note what you say about the *Freethinker*, but the paper has never aimed at stooping to the lowest intelligence, but rather to lifting it on to a higher stage. We have no desire, nor, we feel sure, has its friends, to see the *Freethinker* turned into a sort of sensational, catchy journal with the sole aim of tickling the palates of the unthinking.

S. DOBSON.—Glad to hear that Mr. Rosetti's lectures at Birmingham were so much appreciated.

A. RADLEY.—Certainly it would be quite possible to get a school book giving a fair account of what happened in ancient Rome in relation to Christianity, but it would be impossible to get it introduced into schools. When you think of the ignoramuses and bigots on Councils with whom the choice of school books rest, you will realize that it is hopeless expecting them to put into the hands of teachers books which will tell the truth about Christianity. The only sound plan is to go on making Freethinkers.

H. BAYFORD.—Sorry the report of your Branch's Annual Meeting has to be held over till next week. It came to hand just as we had closed this issue.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

On Sunday last Mr. Cohen held two very successful meetings in Hull. The audiences were not quite so large as it had been hoped they would be, but the meetings were good ones, and those present keenly interested. The new Branch is working well, and has a number of members who appear to be determined to make their efforts felt. This is certain to be the case if they are persistent enough. Common sense is catching with most, even though there may be some who display a considerable degree of immunity. Mr. Youngman occupied the chair at both the afternoon and evening meetings, and made a very strong appeal for local support on behalf of the Branch.

The new Bill of the Society for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws will be introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. George Lansbury. It will be backed by Mr. Harry Snell, Mr. Thurtell, Mr. Dunnico, Dr. Salter, Captain Wedgwood Benn, Mr. Scurr, and Mr. Wallhead. So far that is all that can be done for the moment—except to go on educating public opinion with regard to the question of religious equality.

With reference to a paragraph in last week's "Views

and Opinions," in which we pointed out that Mr. Gould in his account of the St. James's Hall Paine Centenary Meeting, omitted all mention of the fact that it was a National Secular Society meeting, chiefly manned by N.S.S. speakers, including G. W. Foote. Mr. Gould writes:—

In your friendly notice of my book on Thomas Paine, you ask why I did not refer to the presence of Mr. G. W. Foote at the National Secular Society's Commemoration assembly at St. James's Hall, June 8, 1909. I was out of London (being at Leicester) at that period, and had no personal recollection of the meeting; so I turned to an article in the *Positivist Review*, July, 1909, by the late Philip Thomas, and from that took a few details. But though Thomas was quite in sympathy with the Commemoration, he happened to omit mention of the National Secular Society and of Mr. Foote; and so I am sorry that, in innocence, I also omitted these references.

At the time of writing we felt sure that there would be some satisfactory reason for Mr. Gould's omission, and for many reasons we are pleased to find that we had not misjudged him. The fault lies, apparently, with the late Mr. Thomas, and one cannot get his reasons for the omission. Mr. Gould says he happens not to have mentioned the fact of its being an N.S.S. meeting. Unfortunately there have been too many of these "happenings"—most of which we pass by unnoticed, but one is moved to "kick" sometimes. The full list of the speakers were G. W. Foote, A. B. Moss, Harry Snell, F. A. Davies, C. Cohen, Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner, and Herbert Burrows. Now it is certainly curious that a journalist noting the meeting "happened" to leave out all the N.S.S. speakers, including G. W. Foote, whose presence on the platform could hardly have passed unnoticed by anyone who was at the meeting. The other speakers may not have mattered, but G. W. Foote!! We have been at many demonstrations with him, and we never attended one at which he did not tower head and shoulders above every other speaker there. Things do "happen" in a curious way in this curious world of ours.

For the rest Mr. Gould's omission illustrates what we said as to the way in which the names of genuine "Road-makers" are buried, and the ease with which it is done. Mr. Gould finds a reference to a meeting which, either from timidity or some other cause, suppresses material facts in connection therewith, and quite innocently builds on that. He is misled himself and so cannot help but mislead others. And this attitude of Mr. Thomas is quite characteristic of outside treatment of the National Secular Society and its work. We venture to say that during the last sixty years there is not a single movement in the country that can compare with the influence of the National Secular Society in the direction of promoting genuine Freethought. Every other movement has followed in its trail, reaping some of the products of its sowing. It has made it possible for Freethinkers who do not like to stand alone, and who certainly do not like to have the brand of not being respectable placed upon them, to do public homage to a man like Thomas Paine—even though that homage may be accompanied by unnecessary concessions as to his alleged coarseness and lack of scholarship. But the N.S.S. has never striven to be "respectable," it has only tried to be honest and straightforward. One day justice will be done the militant Freethought movement as Paine has lived down the slanders and calumnies heaped upon him—thanks entirely to the work of militant Freethinkers. Meanwhile it keeps on, knowing that it is doing the work that really counts, making the timid less timid, the "respectables" a shade less timid of social censure, and Christians less certain of the value of their miserable superstitions.

We do not know how many of our readers may be Esperantists, but such of them as are—and also others—will be interested to know that a Freethought journal is published in that language entitled *Liberpensulo*. The publishing office is Mariannenstrasse 22, Leipzig-Neustadt, Germany.

Seeing Life.

It is the natural aptitude that we all possess of vibrating in unison with others in the presence of an external situation, for refracting external impressions in a fashion identical with that of our fellows, that.....is the happy point of contact which unites all humanity in the same joys and the same sorrows, associates it, under whatever latitude and whatever epoch we consider it in the same enthusiasms, the same sympathies, and the same aversions.—Prof. J. Luys, "The Brain and Its Functions."

ANATOLE FRANCE has somewhere placed it on record that he liked life; smelly life; and divers other adjectives that would hardly appeal to a disciple of the Higher Aesthetics—I don't know whether there is such a thing as the H.A., but I shouldn't be surprised to learn of its existence. This declaration of Monsieur France's always reminds me of a military colleague with whom, in the stormy days of 1916, I often "watched the twinkling stars at play." In the intervals between fire-step duty we snuggled up together in a hole in the trench side, the while my companion regaled me with various anecdotes of a more or less sordid character concerning his past life. At the conclusion of each experience he would suck contentedly at his old briar, turn his bleary eyes in my direction, and say in deeply impressive tones, "I've seen life, I 'ave, an' I've lived up ter life!" In a lesser degree I felt that it was true of me also.

With all due deference to Voltaire—who said that the only compensation for living was to be able to speak one's mind—I think life is well worth while even from the contemplative point of view, providing one has economic stability and a sense of humour—two things that are mutually dependent. At any rate, if one endeavours to see life clearly and see it whole, however pessimistic one's philosophy may be as the result of it, the human comedy—or drama, as you will—is wonderfully stimulating. There are "sermons in stones"; and even if we fail to find "good in everything"—and one would have to be pretty well intoxicated to see *that*—everything is grist to the philosopher's mill.

I am writing this in a hotel overlooking the sea at Blackpool, having just returned (whisper it not in Leeds) from a fancy dress ball at the Tower. I should say in extenuation that before proceeding to the Tower I tossed up whether I should trip with light fantastic toe or go to hear a lecturer of the Theosophical Society (it is simply wonderful the way Blackpool caters for all comers). The responsibility is thus clearly thrown upon my spirit guide, and I am too old a dabbler in occultism to accept the decrees of the astral plane in any spirit other than one of quiet submission. I might, of course, have wandered meditatively by the sad sea waves: induced a state of profound melancholy, and returned to bed and shed tears on the hot-water bottle; but the sea—except at the bathing season—is so tiresomely uninteresting, and, after all, one doesn't go to *Blackpool* to see the sea.

I'm afraid I haven't the passion for inanimate nature that characterized Richard Jefferies. A beautiful landscape without a human accompaniment leaves me cold (I am trying hard to recall some appropriate lines by Keats, recently quoted by Mr. William Repton, but without success). It is ever the *human* element that entrances me. With Anatole France, I like life—even "smelly life."

A few nights ago I accompanied a fellow-student of life to a dingy dock-side "pub" at Liverpool. The liquor was vile, but the company delightful. An old seafarer was holding forth on the hardships of the good old days, and divers other topics of a nautical nature. Being well in his cups, the ancient mariner

recurred again and again to an incident—real or imaginary—that occurred between him and Jellicoe. His recital was followed with interest (more apparent than real, however) by two ladies who were imbibing at his expense, and whose "port of origin" was considerably more doubtful than their destination. The nautical one confessed that he wasn't "much of a one for follerin' missions," and I certainly didn't envy the task of the *Mission to Sailors* if all the material was of so unpromising a nature. I asked my friend—an ardent Communist—what he would do with them under Socialism! His answer was an expressive shrug of the shoulders.

If one is to arrive at an intelligent understanding of life one can only do so by setting aside as worse than useless the conventional moral standards and religious ideas that figure so largely in the educational upbringing of the vast majority of us; and only a Freethinker is capable of taking the detached, impartial view of life that is thus demanded. Strange, indeed, that Colonel Lynch—who has seen life at first hand if anyone has—should write so transcendently on ethics—which reminds me of my friend, Joseph Bryce, whose recent *ex cathedra* utterances on ethics have interested me considerably. (No! I am in a reflective not an argumentative mood).

J. B. and I have had many walks and many talks together (he recently, with the embarrassing candour of an old friend, described my article on "Mind" as "damned nonsense"!) and, if we have one thing more than another in common it is an intense hatred of the cant and hypocrisy of conventional morality. In the presence of Mrs. Grundy we present a united front. Morality! what infamies have been committed in thy name. Was there ever an abuse that has not sheltered itself, or sought justification, in the name of morality? All the persecutions, petty or great, that mar and maim our social life are done in the name of religion and morality. It was Nietzsche who shrewdly said that in England whenever a man makes the slightest deviation from orthodoxy he feels bound to make up for it by an excess of moral zeal. Hence we get Ethical Societies which, having taken morality away from religion, make a religion of morality and deify the Nonconformist conscience. "An ounce of civit, good apothecary—!"

I recollect when I was a youth of some seventeen years going to a country fair, and visiting a sideshow to see a posing lady—the reader will pardon the indiscretion in one so young. I did not disguise the motive from myself, which was frankly one of sex curiosity. Not the least interesting feature of the show was the appearance of a gentleman, the "husband" of the lady, who, between the various poses, expatiated on the glories of Greek art! So eloquently, and in such a convincing manner, did the showman tell his story that I doubt not that we all came away quite convinced that we were all models of virtue, and that we had attended from the sheer love of art for art's sake! When the showman explained, at the conclusion of one rather daring pose, "the laws of your country" (he came from Brummagem)) "do not perimit us to show more," we all swelled our bosoms with righteous indignation, as who should say, "A plague on the houses of they who thus pruriently interfere with the legitimate pursuits of true lovers of art." I have often since thought how typical the incident was of our orthodox morality.

One final reminiscence. At the theatre last night I heard again Miss Gertie Gitana sing her old favourite song, "Nellie Dean." Her voice is a naturally sweet one, due probably to the fact that she never had it "trained," and the song is eminently suited to her voice—albeit it is not a "classic." Coming

away from the theatre I was humming softly to myself the haunting refrain:—

Down the old mill by the stream, Nellie Dean;

and was musing happily on the tenderness of love's young dream, when life is young and hopes are high; when I was interrupted in my musing by the hoarse shouts of the newsboys: "Verdict in the Thorne Trial." In a twinkling the happy thoughts were replaced by sad ones, and the night air seemed oppressive with a sense of tragedy.

Only to-day a gentleman in the commercial room assured me quite definitely that he was going to live for ever. I did not contradict him, for a traveller in ladies' millinery and underwear is naturally an authority on such a matter. A gentleman in the hardware trade on the other hand sighed for the millennium to come. For my part I am well content; for, as Emerson says: "Here or nowhere is the eternal fact," and Anatole France in the richness of his wisdom epitomises the history of mankind in the phrase, "They were born, they suffered, and they died." Be the future what it may, if we have loved and hated; sorrowed and comforted, wept and laughed—if, in short, we have experienced the whole gamut of human emotions—then have we lived the ultimate life of humanity, and beyond it we cannot go. The freethought philosophy enables us to view life tolerantly and judge it generously, free from the insolent assumption of superiority that characterises the Christian. Human nature is so transparently egoistic whatever be its disguise—whether the scene be a Bethel or a brothel—that the philosopher cannot repress a smile. But in the passions of the mob he sees the image of himself, and his smile is tinged with pity.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

Bolshevic Atrocities.

It is often said that history repeats itself, which is only another way of saying that similar causes give rise to similar results.

At the last election the decisive factor seems to have been the fear of Bolshevism, caused by the forged letter, sprung upon the electors at the last moment. Which reminds one of the panic of reaction caused in this country by the French Revolution of 1793, which threw back all reform and advanced movements for fifty years. The accounts circulated about the horrors of the revolution frightened the upper class, who ruthlessly put down all working class agitation for improving the wretched conditions of the masses. Atheism especially came under the ban: it was said that the perpetrators of the "horrors" were Atheists; a grotesque untruth, for many Atheists perished in their attempts to stay the bloodshed, in opposition to the fanatically religious Robespierre, who established the worship of the Supreme Being.

To-day we find the same misrepresentation. Again we are told from the pulpit that the bloodshed during the Russian Revolution was the direct result of Atheistic rule, and an agitation has been started to prevent the teaching of Atheism in Socialist Sunday schools.

Let us consider this question a little more closely and see who really was responsible for the atrocities committed. That atrocities did take place, during and after the revolution, is unquestionable; but that is not peculiar to the Russian Revolution. Exactly similar atrocities marked the rising of the peasants at the time of Luther's Reformation in Germany, and that was a distinctly religious as well as an economic rising. There was no sign or vestige of Atheism there; yet the landowners and nobles were murdered, the houses plundered and fired, under exactly the

same conditions as occurred in Russia. Revolutions are not affairs of rose-water and kid gloves, at least, not when the people have risen against intolerable wrongs and oppressions.

Who were the men who committed the atrocities we have heard so much about? We have found some light thrown upon this subject in the very interesting work, *Man and Mystery in Asia*, by Dr. Ferdinand Ossendowski, which we think it worth while to place before our readers.

Dr. Ossendowski then, is an eminent scientist, a native of Poland. He is a geologist and chemist; an expert in prospecting for the mineral treasures of the earth, such as coal, iron, gold, oil, etc., and was employed by the Government of the late Czar in this capacity, to investigate and report upon the mineral resources of Siberia and the island of Sakhalin; his book is a record of his experiences and adventures while carrying out this commission. The scientific results are not recorded here, they were sent to the government, and some to various scientific journals, geographical, geological, and chemical.

In spite of being in the employment of the autocratic Russian Government, Dr. Ossendowski, like many others, belonged to the Intelligentsia, and held liberal ideas. In fact, he was President during the last days of 1905 of the Far Eastern Revolutionary Government, with its headquarters at Harbin. A movement to split off eastern Siberia from Russia, which lasted a short sixty days and ended with the crumbling of the 1905 Revolution in St. Petersburg, when an unarmed crowd of strikers were shot down by the military while on the way to the Winter Palace to present a petition. For his share in the revolution Dr. Ossendowski was tried and sentenced to death, but through the intervention of Count Witte, who appreciated his scientific attainments, the sentence was commuted to two years' imprisonment; during which he was incarcerated alternately in the Russian prisons of Harbin, Habarovsk, Nikolaievsk, Vladivostok, and finally, in the fortress of Peter and Paul in St. Petersburg.

However, the present work has nothing to do with all this; it is a record of his experiences in Siberia and Sakhalin; and a grim record it is, in parts. During his travels in Sakhalin before the great war and the revolution while the country was still in the autocratic grip of the Czar's Government he had opportunities of seeing the convict establishments. The system in force seems to have been nothing more or less than a deliberately organized scheme of slow murder by cruelty.

To begin with, during the sea passage to Sakhalin, says Dr. Ossendowski:—

These chained men and women shut up in iron cages recalled the most terrible scenes of Dante's *Inferno*. Storms at sea, heat under the tropics, cold in the North Pacific, dirt surpassing anything the most vivid imagination could picture, persecution of these helpless victims—all this took toll of their ranks by hundreds, a result considered desirable from the Government standpoint, as it diminished costs and saved trouble (p. 190).

Arrived at the island of Sakhalin, no proper harbour or landing-place had been provided by the Russian Government, and if the prisoners, being chained in pairs, stumbled and fell overboard during the landing, nobody troubled much about rescuing them. After their distribution among the various mines and prisons on the island their lot was scarcely improved. So horrible were the cruelties inflicted, that Dr. Ossendowski declares that the prisoners "either had to escape or face death or madness." They worked in chains of thirty pounds in weight, often being chained to a cart or a barrow. The doctor proceeds:

The terrible conditions of life and work, the in-

describably wearing influence of the rigorous climate, the madness of longing and hopelessness goaded the prisoners to rebellion or flight. In both cases the administration employed special troops from a battalion to which were sent the worst and most unmanageable soldiers from all Siberia, and even from European Russia. This criminal battalion was a sort of military *katorga*¹, as the discipline and regulations were so terrible and severe that the soldiers often committed suicide. But the majority did their best to get away as soon as possible from the accursed island, and consequently used every effort to gain the favour of their officers and of the prison administration. The best policy for these soldiers was a relentless severity and cruelty to the prisoners, a cruelty that surpassed all human imagination, especially when it was a question of punishing recaptured convicts or of smothering a revolution in the mines or in the prisons (pp. 191-192).

Men guilty of rebellion, or recaptured, were punished by increased work and other severities, but first of all they were whipped, and they often died under the infliction. They were turned over to the chastiser-executioner: these men formed a special caste, hated by everybody. They were chosen from among the most debased of the prisoners and were placed in separate quarters, or they would have been torn to pieces by the other prisoners, who loathed them:—

The condemned received from fifteen to three hundred strokes with willow rods boiled before use in sea water. The fifteenth stroke was supposed always to cut the skin and draw blood. If no blood appeared the official overseeing the execution accused the executioner of indulgence and sentenced him to a beating. The sticks lacerated and tore the skin and flesh from the backs and feet of the victim as he lay stretched on a bench. When he fainted he was taken to the hospital, where his wounds were allowed to heal a little, and, if he had not received the number of strokes to which he was sentenced, the whipping was finished in a second instalment during which death often ensued. The cruelty and persecution of the prisoners surpassed the most vivid and morbid imagination p. 193).

Owing to the large number of escapes—for many of the prisoners were employed in road-making and other out-door work—a whole caste of Cossacks existed for the purpose of hunting them down. "They arrested them or simply killed them, earning in this way their ten roubles per head." "But," it will be asked what has all this to do with the Bolshevik atrocities?" It has everything to do with them, as Dr. Ossendowski proves beyond dispute.

This frightful system lasted until the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. Then the Russian Government, fearing that the Japanese would capture the island and mobilize the prisoners into dangerous avenging bands and let them loose on the mainland, transferred them from the island to other prisons. But during the war nearly all these prisoners who had been through the Sakhalin hell escaped, and it was these men, brutalized and degraded, filled with a deadly hatred of society and a burning desire for revenge, who were the leaders in the Bolshevik atrocities, as Dr. Ossendowski proves, and as we shall show in our next article.

W. MANN.

(To be Concluded.)

The theory of evolution offers an enormous obstacle to the theory of survival. If man is to outlive his bodily frame, how can he deny the same privilege to the dog, the bee, the oyster—to say nothing of more ignoble organisms?—William Archer.

¹ *Katorga*—a place of forced hard labour, like the mines and prisons of Sakhalin.

The Supremacy of Reason.

[The following address by Professor C. A. Hunter (Professor of Psychology in Wellington College, New Zealand) is interesting, both as regards its subject matter, and the fact of its contrast to the shilly shallying timidity of so many of our public men. Religion retains its position in public life mainly because those public men who know the truth are afraid to speak out, or pander to public ignorance for fear of injuring their positions.]

I AM aware that it is possible to give such meanings to "God" and "religion" as to rob them of all supernatural implications—many philosophers do so—but for the man in our streets, with his social heritage, this is but to darken counsel. When, therefore, I affirm the supremacy of reason, I am in no way supporting the dogma of the infallibility of reason, but merely stating that reason is the best light man has and that, as he progresses and develops, he comes to realize, within one field after another, that deliverance is not from without but from within. "We must no longer," said the late Professor Moore, "expect to be saved by some fatherly and athletic personage from without; we are at the mercy of our own intelligence." While the slogan of the clerics is: Believe or be damned, the cry of the scientific investigator is: understand or perish. The blood on the altars of the ignorant is the blood of the ignorant. There is a wealth of meaning in this distinction; there is an impassable gulf between these two positions.

It is, of course, impossible in one lecture to do more than show the very diverse lines of evidence that lead inevitably to the conclusion of the rationalist and that demonstrates the necessity of the dominance of this attitude of mind if the human race, or any working majority of it, is to make the progress for which it pines. Perhaps a word of explanation on the difference between knowledge and belief will enable you to grasp my point more easily and more clearly. All belief is not knowledge, although knowledge implies belief. Knowledge implies more than mere belief; it implies that the assurance can be justified by evidence other than itself. It is this difference that makes losing causes fear discussion; they cannot justify themselves and hence, silence is, in a measure at least, a kind of reprieve. Further belief is individual while knowledge is universal; because knowledge is supported by evidence it can compel belief. It has, therefore, been held that the scientific thinker must have three characteristics that mark him off from the upholder of tradition. First, his nature must be one that vibrates in unison with that of which he is in search; he must be truthful with the truthfulness of nature. Secondly, he must be alert of mind, not dogmatically fixed by prejudice. Nature is for ever making signs to us, whispering to us the beginnings of her secrets, if we will but keep the windows of our minds open. Thirdly, he must have courage; he must be prepared to follow the truth whither soever it leads. Two things keep the mass of mankind back: indolence and fear. "It is not error that opposes the progress of truth," says Turgot, "it is indolence, obstinacy, the spirit routine, everything that favours inaction." "It is fear," says Bertrand Russell, "that keeps men back—fear lest their cherished beliefs should prove delusions, fear lest the institutions by which they live should prove harmful, fear lest they themselves should prove less worthy of respect than they have supposed themselves to be."

A common method of attempting to decide the question of the natural *versus* the supernatural method of explanation is by an appeal to authorities. But in a question that has such a long history it is possible to quote on either side names that carry respect. It

is, however, impossible to equate the opinion of an earlier age with that of a later and we have become so much accustomed to the appeal to authority that we are inclined to look to the past that has been associated with ancient doctrines. We even speak of the wisdom of the ancients. But the doctrine of evolution has shown that this is to stand experience on its head. We, with all the accumulated wisdom embodied in our social heritage, we are the real ancients. Just a century ago in a most illuminating article, reviewing Bentham's *Book of Fallacies*, Sydney Smith hit this point off in his inimitable way: "All this cant, then, about our ancestors is merely an abuse of words, by transferring phrases true of contemporary men to succeeding ages. Whereas of living men the oldest has the most experience; of generations, the oldest has least experience. Our ancestors up to the time of the Conquest were children in arms; chubby boys in the time of Edward I.; striplings under Elizabeth; men in the reign of Queen Anne; and we only are the white-bearded, silver-headed ancients, who have treasured up and are prepared to profit by all the experience that human life can supply." We then are the ancients, we carry the social heritage and should have learned, and be learning, to throw away the husk and retain the kernel.

My method of approach is to take some departments of human experience, and see if their histories throw any light on our problem. Do they show that man is depending more on the natural or the supernatural interpretation of the world? Do we find that progress is associated with the natural or the supernatural explanation? Let us glance very briefly at physical science, biology, sociology, psychology, and religion.

In the last half century our knowledge of the methods of primitive races has been greatly extended. We now know that what marks off the thinking of the savage from that of the modern man of science is that the former believes in magical and the supernatural powers, the latter does not, he rigidly confines himself to the natural. To the savage all the manifestations of nature are explained as the outcome of magical forces and supernatural powers. He finds them everywhere.

Primitive man thinks and tries to explain but in a haphazard and disconnected way. He confounds signs and their meanings, realities and their symbols. And with this ignorance goes fear. The Basutos fear to allow their shadows to fall on the water for if they did the crocodile might get them; some Indian tribes boil crickets and drink the water to improve their voices; other primitive folk eat pulverised mummy so that they may live long. Books like Frazer's *Golden Bough* and Tyler's *Primitive Culture* are a mine of information on these subjects. The natural and supernaturalistic interpretations have come down to us through the ages; not the wisdom of the ages but the foolishness thereof; casting lots, trial by combat, auguries, etc. The social heritage is so impressive that a very large number of people in civilized communities to-day are superstitious—they think there may be something in it, witness their respect for lucky and unlucky numbers, the new moon, a white horse, and the horseshoe. There is a lot of the primitive in most of us; man is having a hard struggle to become rational. Well might Moore write: "We need a new saviour—one that will deliver us from the chains that are put upon us in the cradle. We need a new declaration of independence, one that will emphasize the superiority of reason over inheritance as a means of acquiring new ideas. We need to form a habit of making out a new inventory every little while, and see how much of what we are doing and believing are really worth while and how much is pure mimicry. It took us thousands of years to realize the wrong of

human slavery; I suppose it will take us thousands of years more to see the iniquity of other errors just as great which we are hanging on to to-day with such tick-like tenacity."

As long as magic and supernaturalism dominated man's mind he made little if any advance. When man came to realize even in a dim and hesitating fashion, that changes in nature were connected with prior changes, he rose to a higher level of life. Realising the fact of the sequence of events he was enabled to plan for the future: he could sow for his harvest, he could set his traps for his game.

As we know, it was only slowly that he escaped from the shackles of superstition. But as the sun of reason rose the mists of superstition were dissipated. The sun is still rising with ever increasing velocity. Man's ideas have a history. Comte said that man's explanations passed through three stages: the religious, the metaphysical, the scientific; others have suggested the magical, the supernatural and the scientific. Naturally the institutions based on the superstitions and those who controlled them and benefited by them: priest, fakir, medicine-man, shaman, tohunga, did not allow their power to depart without protest. The echoes of the shouts of the combatants in this struggle come to us through the ages. This is a real conflict between light and darkness, a conflict that can never end till within the whole realm of knowledge reason is free. But we must remember that, judged by the time standards of civilization, it was but yesterday that the right of free enquiry in the physical domain was won; the echoes of the struggle in which Bruno, Kepler, and Galileo played such an heroic part, is still ringing in our ears. If you wish to see whether the upholders of the supernatural or the natural interpretation of the movements of the earth were right, read your children's books on physical geography or visit the "Field of Flowers," and, on the spot where three hundred years ago Bruno was burned for seeing more clearly than those in authority. We breathe the air of freedom he died to give; mankind has chosen the naturalistic interpretation. What is the result? Under tradition and supernaturalism existed the dark ages. To-day hardly a day passes without its contribution to man's knowledge and to the extension of his powers in the immemorial contest he wages with nature. In these fields it has been recognized that every attempt to shackle thought, every movement against experiment, is but riveting on mankind the chains of those deadly twins—ignorance and impotence.

(To be Continued.)

Correspondence.

EVOLUTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It is a surprise to see Mr. Bryce bolstering up the bad biology of the Bible and bringing in the name of Darwin to support his case.

The facts point all the other way.

Long before Darwin the belief in "maternal impressions" was regarded as silly and unscientific.

Let us consider the facts.

The growing embryo obtains its nutrition from the mother's blood, filtered through one or more layers of cells, which are part of the foetus.

A point of importance is that the two bloods never intermingle.

Not only are the two circulations quite distinct, so that not a drop of mother's blood circulates in the foetus or *vice versa*; but there is absolutely no nervous connection between the two.

If this is so, how could a mental impression on the mother's brain be impressed on the body of her child?

If Mr. Bryce will look at Darwin's *Animals and Plants Under Domestication*, vol. ii., p. 251, 2nd edition, he will find that the great Darwin did not believe in so-called "maternal impressions."

Darwin states that Dr. William Hunter told his father that during many years every woman in a large London lying-in hospital was asked, before her confinement, whether anything had especially affected her mind, and the answer was written down, and it so happened that in no one instance could a coincidence be detected between the woman's answer and any abnormal structure, but when she knew the nature of the structure she frequently suggested some fresh cause.

So much for Mr. Bryce and Darwin. Really the whole theory is too silly for serious criticism; but it is of interest as throwing light upon the psychological processes of the innumerable readers of the Bible who believe in such stories.

HENRY SPENCE.

THE LABOUR PRESS.

SIR,—With reference to Mr. H. N. Brailsford's letter, I was wrong in coupling the *Daily Herald* and the *New Leader* together as mere mouthpieces of the Labour caucus. I unhesitatingly accept Mr. Brailsford's claim for the *New Leader* that its policy is one of complete independence.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

PAPIN'S CHRIST.

SIR,—The only relevant portion of Mr. Knapp-Fisher's communication is the argument—if it can be called such—that when Christ commanded us to love one's neighbour as one's self, that he condemned slavery! As Prof. Francis Newman observed, the most grasping slave-owner would ask nothing more of the abolitionist than to be left with full authority over his slaves and advised to use his power righteously and mercifully.

The rest of the letter I can only compare to the inky fluid emitted by the cuttlefish, under cover of which it escapes from its pursuer.

W. MANN.

Society News.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.

The Branch held its Annual Dinner and Concert at the Falstaff "Restaurant" on Saturday, April 4, and although only a small number were present, a very enjoyable evening was spent.

Toasts for the N.S.S. and President, moved by the President of our local Branch, Mr. O. Melton, and responded to by Mr. R. H. Rosetti (in your absence), and one for the Birmingham Branch and our lecturers, Messrs. Willis, Williams, and Melton, were moved by Mr. Terry and responded to by Mr. E. C. Williams; also one to Mr. R. H. Rosetti, our guest. I had the honour of making all arrangements for the dinner, and afterwards we had a fine programme of artists, who added to our enjoyment. We had a good meeting on Sunday to hear Mr. Rosetti (in spite of heavy rain), who was in excellent form and many questions were asked and answered by him. Thus ended our session with two very fine evenings.—S. DONSON, *Secretary*.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.

Last Sunday Mr. Graham Peace gave us one of his forceful and interesting addresses on the Land Question, entitled "The War Now On." An exceedingly interesting discussion, preceded by many questions, followed. Today, being Easter Sunday, no meeting will be held as so many of our friends will be away for the holiday. The following Sunday (April 19), we hope to have a debate between Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe and Mr. Everett.—K.

Fatally powerful as religious systems have been, human nature is stronger and wider, and though dogmas may hamper they cannot absolutely repress its growth.—George Eliot.

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.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

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

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—No meeting.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—No meeting.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—No Meeting.

OUTDOOR.

FINSEBURY PARK.—3.30, a Lecture.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Annual General Meeting. Members are requested to attend.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY.—No Meeting.

ALL Freethinkers invited to write for new illustrated list of Boots, Drapery, and Ladies' Wear. Suit lengths (3¼ yds.), 21s., or Suit to measure, 50s., patterns free.—S. GOTT, 219 Hall Lane, Bradford.

THE DESPOTISM OF CUSTOM is everywhere the standing hindrance to human advancement. That is an appalling indictment. It has become your hardened custom to steadily ignore these weekly appeals. Smash it to-day by requesting any of the following emancipators:—*Gents' A to H Book, suits from 56s.; Gents' I to N Book, suits from 99s.; or Ladies' Radiant New Book, costumes from 60s., frocks from 41s.* By your new custom we'll end old despotisms.—MACCONNELL & MABE, New Street, Bakewell, Derbyshire.

WANTED.—Out-of-print Freethought pamphlets and books. Chiefly interested in pamphlets. Communicate in detail with "ADVERTISER," 114 West 118th Street, New York City, U.S.A.

UNWANTED CHILDREN

In a Civilized Community there should be ^{no} UNWANTED Children.

For List of Birth-Control Requisites send 1jd. stamp to
J. R. HOLMES, East Hanney, Wantage, Berkshire.
(Established nearly Forty Years.)

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, Ltd.*Company Limited by Guarantee.*

Registered Office : 62 Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.
 Secretary : MISS E. M. VANCE.

THIS Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are :—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up.

All who join the Society participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are eligible for re-election.

Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords *in re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

A Form of Bequest.—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators :—

I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £— free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy.

It is advisable, but not necessary, that the Secretary should be formally notified of such bequests, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid. A form of membership, with full particulars, will be sent on application to the Secretary, Miss E. M. VANCE, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Four Great Freethinkers.

GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE, by JOSEPH MCCABE. The Life and Work of one of the Pioneers of the Secular and Co-operative movements in Great Britain. With four plates. In Paper Covers, 2s. (postage 2d.). Cloth Bound, 3s. 6d. (postage 2½d.).

CHARLES BRADLAUGH, by THE RIGHT HON. J. M. ROBERTSON. An Authoritative Life of one of the greatest Reformers of the Nineteenth Century, and the only one now obtainable. With four portraits. Cloth Bound, 3s. 6d. (postage 2½d.).

VOLTAIRE, by THE RIGHT HON. J. M. ROBERTSON. In Paper Covers, 2s. (postage 2d.). Cloth Bound, 3s. 6d. (postage 2½d.).

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL, by C. T. GORHAM. A Biographical Sketch of America's greatest Freethought Advocate. With four plates. In Paper Covers, 2s. (postage 2d.) Cloth Bound, 3s. 6d. (postage 2½d.).

BOOK BARGAINS

BODY AND WILL, by HENRY MAUDSLEY, M.D. Published at 12s. Price 4s. 6d., postage 6d.

THE ETHIC OF FREETHOUGHT, by KARL PEARSON, F.R.S. Price 5s. 6d., postage 6d.

A CANDID EXAMINATION OF THEISM, by "PHYSICUS" (G. J. ROMANES). Price 3s. 6d., postage 4d.

LIFE AND EVOLUTION, by F. W. HEADLEY. Price 4s. 6d., postage 6d.

KAFIR SOCIALISM AND THE DAWN OF INDIVIDUALISM, by DUDLEY KIDD. Price 3s., postage 6d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

PIONEER PRESS PUBLICATIONS**MODERN MATERIALISM.***A Candid Examination.*

By WALTER MANN.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Limited.)

Contents : Chapter I.—Modern Materialism. Chapter II.—Darwinian Evolution. Chapter III.—Auguste Comte and Positivism. Chapter IV.—Herbert Spencer and the Synthetic Philosophy. Chapter V.—The Contribution of Kant. Chapter VI.—Huxley, Tyndall, and Clifford open the Campaign. Chapter VII.—Buechner's "Force and Matter." Chapter VIII.—Atoms and the Ether. Chapter IX.—The Origin of Life. Chapter X.—Atheism and Agnosticism. Chapter XI.—The French Revolution and the Great War. Chapter XII.—The Advance of Materialism.

A careful and exhaustive examination of the meaning of Materialism and its present standing, together with its bearing on various aspects of life. A much-needed work.

176 pages. Price 1s. 6d., in neat Paper Cover, postage 2d.; or strongly bound in Cloth 2s. 6d., postage 3d.

HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN RELIGION AND SCIENCE.

By J. W. DRAPER, M.D., LL.D.

(Author of "History of the Intellectual Development of Europe," etc.)

Price 3s. 6d., postage 4½d.

COMMUNISM AND CHRISTIANISM.

By BISHOP W. MONTGOMERY BROWN, D.D.

A book that is quite outspoken in its attacks on Christianity and on fundamental religious ideas. It is an unsparing criticism of Christianity from the point of view of Darwinism and of Sociology from the point of view of Marxism. 204 pp.

Price 1s., post free.

*Special terms for quantities.***THE BIBLE HANDBOOK.***For Freethinkers and Enquiring Christians.*

By G. W. FOOTE and W. P. BALL.

NEW EDITION.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Limited)

Contents : Part I.—Bible Contradictions. Part II.—Bible Absurdities. Part III.—Bible Atrocities. Part IV.—Bible Immoralities, Indecencies, Obscenities, Broken Promises, and Unfulfilled Prophecies.

Cloth Bound. Price 2s. 6d., postage 2½d.

One of the most useful books ever published. Invaluable to Freethinkers answering Christians.

*The Egyptian Origin of Christianity.***THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND MYTHICAL CHRIST.**

By GERALD MASSEY.

A Demonstration of the Egyptian Origin of the Christian Myth. Should be in the hands of every Freethinker. With Introduction by Chapman Cohen.

Price 6d., postage 1d.

*A Book with a Bite.***BIBLE ROMANCES.**

(FOURTH EDITION.)

By G. W. FOOTE.

A Drastic Criticism of the Old and New Testament Narratives, full of Wit, Wisdom, and Learning. Contains some of the best and wittiest of the work of G. W. Foote.

In Cloth, 224 pp. Price 2s. 6d., postage 3d.

CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILIZATION.

A Chapter from

The History of the Intellectual Development of Europe.

By JOHN WILLIAM DRAPER, M.D., LL.D.

Price 2d., postage ½d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

JUST PUBLISHED

A BOOK FOR ALL

Sexual Health & Birth Control

BY

ETTIE A. ROUT

Author of "Safe Marriage," "Sex and Exercise" (A Study of the Physiological Value of Native Dances), "Two Years in Paris," etc.

With Foreword by Sir Bryan Donkin, M.D.

Price **ONE SHILLING.** By post 1s. 1d.

MEDICAL AND PRESS OPINIONS

"I feel I cannot exaggerate my appreciation of the magnificent work you have done, and are doing....."—
SIR W. ARBUTHNOT LANE, Consulting Surgeon, Guy's Hospital.

"The publication and dissemination of such pamphlets.....is a crying need; a necessity in the immediate future."—C. LANE ROBERTS, Obstetric Surgeon to Out-patients, Queen Charlotte's Hospital.

"Sexual Health and Birth Control are two of the greatest needs of the human race, and all true humanitarians will be grateful to you for your book and for the great help you have given to these two great causes."—
—DR. C. V. DRYSDALE to the author.

"This book should be placarded all over the country. Its contents are a thousand times more important to public health and welfare than the contents of any book that is likely to be published this year. Its arguments seem to me absolutely incontrovertible."—E. P. HAYNES, late Scholar of Baliol College.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

WATTS & CO.'S PUBLICATIONS

LECTURES AND ESSAYS. By R. G. INGERSOLL. First Series. Paper cover, 1s. net, by post 1s. 2½d.

Second Series. Paper cover, 1s. net, by post 1s. 2½d.

Third Series. Paper cover, 1s. net, by post 1s. 2½d.

The Three Series, as above, elegantly bound in one volume, in imitation half-calf, with gilt top, 4s. 6d. net, by post 5s.; paper cover, 2s. 6d. net, by post 3s.

THE RISE AND INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT OF RATIONALISM IN EUROPE. By W. E. H. LECKY. Cloth, 3s. 6d. net, by post 4s.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD. By JOSEPH McCABE. Cloth, 1s. 6d. net, by post 1s. 9d.; paper cover, 9d. net, by post 11d.

SAVAGE SURVIVALS. By J. HOWARD MOORE. Cloth, 2s. 6d. net, by post 2s. 9d.; paper cover 1s. 6d. net, by post 1s. 8d.

THE RIGHTS OF MAN. By THOMAS PAINE. Edited by HYPATIA BRADLAUGH BONNER. Paper cover, 1s. net, by post 1s. 2½d.

SHAKEN CREEDS: THE VIRGIN BIRTH DOCTRINE. By JOCELYN RHYS. A Study of its Origin. Cloth, 7s. 6d. net, by post 8s.

LIFE, MIND, AND KNOWLEDGE. By J. C. THOMAS, B.Sc. ("Keridon"). New and enlarged edition, with lengthy Prologue. Cloth, 3s. 6d. net, by post 3s. 10d. The Prologue may be had separately, 1s. net, by post 1s. 1d.

THE JESUS PROBLEM: A Re-statement of the Myth Theory. By the Right Hon. JOHN M. ROBERTSON. Cloth, 3s. 6d. net, by post 4s.; paper cover, 2s. 6d. net, by post 3s.

THE CHURCHES AND MODERN THOUGHT. By P. VIVIAN. An Inquiry into the Grounds of Unbelief and an Appeal for Candour. Cheap edition, cloth, 3s. 6d. net, by post 3s. 10d.; paper cover, 1s. net, by post 1s. 4d.

EXPLORATIONS. By The Right Hon. JOHN M. ROBERTSON. Cloth, 7s. 6d. net, by post 8s.

A SHORT HISTORY OF FREETHOUGHT, ANCIENT AND MODERN. By The Right. Hon. JOHN M. ROBERTSON. Third edition, much revised, and considerably enlarged. Two vols., 10s. net the two vols., inland carriage 1s.

THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY. By T. WHITTAKER. Third edition, with lengthy Prologue. Paper cover, 1s. 6d. net, by post 1s. 10d.

CHRISTIANIZING THE HEATHEN: First-hand Evidence Concerning Overseas Missions. By HYPATIA BRADLAUGH BONNER. Cloth, 4s. 6d. net, by post 4s. 11d.; paper cover, 3s. 6d. net, by post 3s. 10d.

CHRISTIANITY AND CONDUCT; or, The Influence of Religious Beliefs on Morals. By HYPATIA BRADLAUGH BONNER. With Foreword by ADAM GOWANS WHYTE. Cloth, 1s. 9d. net, by post 2s.; paper cover, 1s. net, by post 1s. 2d.

THE RELIGION OF THE OPEN MIND. By ADAM GOWANS WHYTE. With Preface by EDEN PHILLIPOTS. Cheap edition, cloth, 1s. net, by post 1s. 3d.

THE MEDIEVAL INQUISITION. By CHARLES T. GORHAM. Cloth, 2s. 6d. net, by post 2s. 9d.; paper cover, 1s. 6d. net, by post 1s. 8d.

HISTORY OF EUROPEAN MORALS. By W. E. H. LECKY. Cloth, 4s. 6d. net, by post 5s.; paper cover, 2s. 6d. net, by post, 2s. 11d.

Can be ordered through

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGDON STREET, E.C.4.