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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>Christianity and Sex.—The Editor</i> - - - - -	257
<i>Progress.—J. T. Lloyd</i> - - - - -	258
<i>Landor's Literary Legacy.—Mimmermus</i> - - - - -	259
<i>Ethics.—Joseph Bryce</i> - - - - -	260
<i>The Supremacy of Reason</i> - - - - -	266
<i>In Japan To-day.—Yoshira Oyama</i> - - - - -	268
<i>Drama and Dramatists.—W. Repton</i> - - - - -	268
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

Christianity and Sex.

The other day a Philadelphian nun was graciously released by the Pope from her vows of celibacy. She had fallen in love with a mere man, and the Pope had given her permission to marry. Archbishop Keating, of Liverpool, in an interview with a newspaper correspondent, said there was nothing unusual in this "provided that she had not taken the final vows of chastity." That expression is worth noting because it gives in a few words the profound uncleanness of mind which lies at the root of so much that the world has known as Christianity, and which is, indeed, real Christianity. It will be observed that as the vows of "chastity" had not been taken marriage might be permitted to a Catholic at the good will of the Pope. Chastity is thus something that is opposed to marriage; marriage is something that is at the opposite poles of chastity. That, I admit, is sound Christian teaching. In the mass of savagery from which Christianity springs the fact of sex is surrounded to the savage mind with mysterious and dangerous influences against which a man can only be protected by the intervention of the priest. Christianity retained the original notion of the dangerous nature of woman so far as man's spiritual welfare is concerned, but as time passed the influence of social developments transformed this into the quasi-ethical conception of chastity. The married woman is only "chaste" when compared with a prostitute. The ideal, the "pure" woman is the one who has never entered into sexual relations with man. But with man, says the Archbishop, the vow of celibacy is final. There is no escape from that. It may not unreasonably be suggested that as sexual irregularities have more obvious consequences with women than with men, the rigidity of the Church where men are concerned is open to an easy explanation. But there is small wonder that with this conception dominating the European mind for so long the subject of sex has become so tainted that it is difficult to discuss it with that freedom from unclean suggestion which might otherwise have been the case.

Religion and the Home.

"Thirteen years in a convent," remarked the Archbishop, "is not a good preparation for a wife." With that we can quite agree. And one might well ask

whether convent or monastic life is a good preparation for anything at all? In the case of criminals it has for many years been realized by the clearest minds that if we regard the criminal as an anti-social character it is hopeless to expect his reform so long as while in prison he is withdrawn from any kind of socializing influence. The celibate life of convent and monastery has no preparation in it of the slightest social value. It is egotistical in the highest degree. It shuts man and woman off from the refining and humanising influence of the other sex, and from the civilizing influence of home and family. It casts a slur upon the best feelings of which we are capable, and centres all thought upon the salvation of one's own soul, and so manages to secure the surest kind of terrestrial damnation. It strikes a blow at the roots of social well being. I do not say this because the monastic life attracts only the brutal, the coarse, the lower types of men and women. If it did this the Christian Church would have unconsciously done the race a real service. What it did was to appeal to the men and women who had they not come under the influence of Christianity, might have become worthy parents. It doomed them to sterility, it left the perpetuation of the race to the coarser and harder natures, and no one can appreciate the coarseness, the brutality, the sexual licence of the Dark and Middle Ages, who leaves out this consideration. The phrase "Christian home" is a satire. There is no such thing. There is a home which has persisted in spite of Christianity. There are sexual feelings which Christianity had to recognize because they could not be altogether suppressed. But it admitted the home under protest. There was always the "higher" life of the celibate, which meant the unclean mind of the priest tainting what he could not altogether destroy. Archbishop Keating with his unclean opposition of the "vow of chastity" to the married condition is proof positive of this.

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Christianity As It Is.

All Christians will resent this way of looking at Christianity. But it is really only seeing Christianity as it is freed from the misleading influence of special pleadings and dishonest phrases. And if one could only get Christians to do this once in a while the task of the Freethinker would be an easy one. As it is there is nothing which rouses so much resentment as a plain presentation of Christian beliefs. Thus, a recent issue of the *Christian World* contains some editorial notes which express the writer's disgust at the form of Christianity presented to the world by the American Fundamentalists. A leading Baptist clergyman in Toronto asks the question: "Does God control Tornadoes and Earthquakes?" and answers the question with an emphatic yes. Comparing the ruined war areas in France with the effects of earthquakes and the recent tornado in the United States, he says:—

T.N.T. and all the other high explosives are like a child's fire-crackers compared with the forces which

God has in his armoury.....In one place they uncovered a schoolhouse. There were 250 children there, and they had taken out eighty bodies at this time. There were no parents to enquire where the children were, for they, too, were either dead or buried. Not a week, not a day, not an hour, but just one awful, irresistible stroke from the Almighty, and nothing left.

The *Christian World* calls this "sheer theological dementia," and describes it as an "ugly Satanic projection of the preacher's own darkened imagination and warped and perverted intellect." If that be really the case it is worth pointing out that it is the faith of millions, and was the faith of Christendom for many centuries. It is at least an admission that the Christian teaching has served to darken the intellect and prevent the imagination of many millions for many generations. Freethinkers have said this often, and have been contradicted by Christians for saying it. It is something to have it admitted that the Freethinker was all the time in the right.

* * *

God and the World.

When in the eighteenth century the Deists repudiated the God of the Bible on the ground that he was cruel, brutal, and revengeful, Bishop Butler retorted that if the Bible was to be accepted as true the God of the Bible and the God of nature must be identical, and one ought to find the same characteristics in both. And he proceeded to show that this was actually the case. The God of nature was as brutal, as indifferent to individual welfare as the God of the Bible was alleged to be. Deism received a shattering blow, and Christians rejoiced. They admitted the misery caused by the providence of God, but it was, they said, all for our ultimate good, and must be judged in the light of the larger purpose. This argument is still to be met with, and is indeed the only possible reply to anyone who believes the world to be governed by a God. And if that is believed, the Toronto preacher is logically justified in what he says, and the *Christian World* is logically wrong. Earthquakes and tornadoes must be either the work of God or they must happen without his consent or connivance. And if they happen without him, why not other things? If the unpleasant things that occur are not due to his action how do we know that he has anything to do with the production of the pleasant ones? The *Christian World* objects to the Toronto preacher's God because it is not the God of our Lord Jesus Christ who "feeds his flock like a shepherd." But that is not argument, it is unreasoning rhetoric. Does the *Christian World* really believe that Jesus would have declined to believe that God had nothing to do with earthquakes? Would one who was ignorant enough to believe that all disease was the work of demons, that the dead could be raised by an appeal to God, that insanity could be cured by a call on "my name," have held that God had nothing to do with earthquakes? And even were it so, the statement that God feeds us as a shepherd does his sheep is just a lie, and it remains a lie whether Jesus or the editor of the *Christian World* is responsible for its existence. In law, which, however feebly, does in a rough and ready way embody our notions of justice and common sense, a person is held to be responsible for the consequences of his actions. The only escape from this is if it can be proved that the person charged is insane. Will the *Christian World* please inform us why this reasoning may not be applied to God? The Christian must believe that God made the world, and he called into existence the forces that are operating around us, and is therefore responsible for what they do. He kills hundreds of children in a tornado with the same indifference that he wipes out snakes.

There is, in sober truth, not a single brutality of which man is capable that is not committed on a larger scale by nature, and, inferentially, by the God of nature. To say "I believe in a God who looks after us as a shepherd does his sheep," is to defend an illogical belief with a stupidity. The facts are against it. If there is a God he is responsible for all that takes place. Legally, he is accountable for all that follows his actions. There are only two legal, and logical, defences that may be set up. The one is that God did not create these natural forces, and the charge is brought against the wrong person. The other is a plea of insanity. God did make the world but he is not responsible for his actions. I wonder which form of defence the *Christian World* would be inclined to adopt? Probably it would prefer the blather about the loving father, the shepherd and his sheep. It is certainly fitting that believers should be so persistently likened to sheep. There is something mentally suggestive in the figure.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Progress.

At the National Free Church Council Assembly at Leeds one of the subjects discussed was "The Church and Progress," and the *Christian World Pulpit* of May 16 supplies us with the address on it delivered by the Rev. Thomas Phillips, B.A., minister for twenty years of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, London. Mr. Phillips is a Welshman, and his words are usually winged with the fervour so common among his countrymen. The speech now before us is characterized by a vast amount of fiery zeal, but lacks any calmly reasoned out conception of either Church or Progress. He admits that "Church life after the war has been very much like driving a weary horse; it ambles along, but the reins hang loose and limp in your hands." He assures us that "it is not the rectification of the past but the pull of the future that is going to federate all the forces that make for righteousness"; but we have no ground for thinking that the pull of the future will be more powerful than was that of the past when the past was still future. Mr. Phillips ignores the facts that Christianity has been in the world for two thousand years, and that the biggest and most disastrous of all wars began in the year of our Lord 1914. No wonder the reverend gentleman disapproves of the proneness to look back. Instead of asking, "What happened in 1662?" he prefers to put the question, "What is going to happen in 1962?" Preachers generally make very bad prophets. At a meeting of the Free Church Council held in Newcastle-on-Tyne nearly twenty years ago, the Rev. Dr. F. B. Meyer prophesied that the greatest religious revival the world had ever experienced would take place in a few months' time. That prediction, made with absolute assurance, has remained unfulfilled to this day. We are quite sure that Mr. Phillips has no valid reason for imagining that anything exceptionally remarkable will occur in 1962; nor has he any justification for saying that "if John Wesley returned, it is almost certain he would not be a Wesleyan." The truth is, however, that after two thousand years of Christianity, Tennyson's taunt is still horribly applicable:—

Is it well that while we range with Science, glorying in the
Time,
City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city slime?
There among the glooming alleys Progress halts on palsied
feet,
Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousand on the
street.
There the master scrimps his haggard sempstress of her daily
bread,
There a single sordid attic holds the living and the dead.

Now, in this country alone there are at least a hundred thousand men and women who, directly or indirectly, teach Christianity to their fellow beings. There is what Mr. Phillips ventures to call the "mystic tide," and he proceeds thus:—

Men everywhere feel the need of God. The thinker in his search for unity, the business man in his pathetic search for security, and the politician in his search for an ultimate, compelling authority for the League of Nations—all in their way hunger for God. Now, when stripped of all accessories the only thing we can give the world is God.

In that brief extract the reverend gentleman is guilty of two serious errors. It is utterly false to state that "men everywhere feel the need of God." If that were true, there would be no use for the clergy. It is their first and chief business to convince men that they do need God, and that he is prepared to enter their hearts and control their lives, if they will only let him. Mr. Phillips himself says that "how to give God to the world is the crux, the baffling perplexing problem of a minister's life." If the reverend gentleman's God actually exists, the question naturally arises, why does he not give himself to the world? If he can and does give himself to a certain number why does he not do so to all mankind? That is a question which no clergyman can answer. Why did God make himself known to Canon Liddon, Spurgeon, and Parker, and hide himself from Charles Darwin, John Tyndall, and Thomas Huxley? Does it not logically follow that the very existence of such a Deity is absolutely unbelievable? Such is the conclusion to which many thousands of people in this country have of necessity been driven. Surely the minister of Bloomsbury Chapel is aware of that fact. He knows quite well that the Church is not prospering, for he says, "We could advance if only we knew how to give God to men." Then comes the following wild outburst:—

To put a whole paragraph into one sentence; the only God for me is Jesus. I have honestly tried all the seekers from Plotinus to Steiner and I am helpless in the presence of the Absolute, and for all practical purposes Martin Luther was right, Jesus Christ is the only God for man. If there was no Jesus of evangelical Christianity the need of the world is urgent enough to create him.

That is an extremely foolish utterance, being in complete contradiction to numerous sayings attributed to the Gospel Jesus. He invariably speaks of God as an other than himself, calling himself his son. He classed himself with his disciples, affectionately assuring them that his Father was theirs also. But, then, many Christian scholars of to-day regard the Gospel Jesus as largely a legendary being whose real history cannot be written from any documents in our possession, and certainly to call such a person the only God for man is the very height of absurdity.

Mr. Phillips is, of course, a Nonconformist, and his conception of the Church differs widely from that cherished by the Anglicans. He says: "The Anglican asks, are you ordained, and the Nonconformist, are you popular? Do you fetch the crowds? It is the *Ecclēsia* touch and not the *Koinonia* note." The reverend gentleman declares that "it is not crowds and orders the open jagged wounds of the world call for, but a practical brotherhood, a healing fellowship." But where is that ideal to be found in active operation? Mr. Phillips offers the following answer:—

When I drop my ecclesiastical differences and try to be human and truly Catholic, I see that the Church is God's object-lesson in brotherhood to a broken and disgruntled world. Nation suspects nation, politician spikes politician, class hates class, labour is embattled against capital, and capital bristles against labour. Will not God create a

society that is a model and standard of unity? Yes, he says, look at that little church in Leeds. It is made up of men of different tastes and dispositions, of varied grades of society, and varied degrees of education. See how they pull together. If all the people of Europe were to behave like these Yorkshire saints, all the problems of the world would be solved. That is what we are for—to be fellowship binders, and if we fail here our light is extinguished and our salt has lost its savour. Don't talk to me of the validity of your orders, or the popularity of your services, have you the validity of the human touch and the brotherly grip?

Ministers have been talking like that and making those high claims ever since the Church was first organized. It was in that tone that the Apostle Paul addressed his converts in different parts of the world. He proudly told them that it was their mission to judge the world. "Know ye not," he said to the Corinthians, "that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?" The fact is that the Christians have always been in every age since, the most self-righteous people on earth, and Mr. Phillips illustrates the truth of this statement in his address at the national Free Church Council Assembly at Leeds. Paul's glowing prophecy as to the stupendous triumphs the Cross would achieve have been entirely falsified in history, and Mr. Phillips' high talk at Leeds will share the same fate. For many centuries the Church was the sworn enemy of progress. It closed all its doors and windows against the light of Secular knowledge. The Ages of Faith are universally known as Dark Ages. Most of the progress the world has ever made was realized in spite of the bitter opposition of the Church, and it is a certainty that progress will continue to halt on palsied feet until the Church as a supernatural institution has ceased to be.

J. T. LLOYD.

Landor's Literary Legacy.

The stormy sophist with his mouth of thunder,
Clothed with loud words and mantled in the might
Of darkness and magnificence of night.

—Swinburne.

THACKERAY, in the beginning of his famous essays on *The Four Georges*, makes mention of an old friend whose life extended back into the eighteenth century. "I often thought," he says, "as I took my kind old friend's hand, how, with it, I held on to the old society." Even such a link with the past is Walter Savage Landor, whose choice writings bridge the gulf between great Freethinkers at the beginning and the end of the nineteenth century.

Think of it! Shelley, who died whilst the century was yet young, was a warm admirer of Landor; and Swinburne, the most golden-voiced of all our recent poets, sat at old Landor's feet and found inspiration in his wisdom. How lovingly Swinburne refers to the elder singer:—

I found him whom I shall not find
Till all grief end,
In holiest age our mightiest mind,
Father and friend.

Nor was this a mere outpouring of affection. Landor cast the spell of genius upon all who came near him. Robert Southey, who had so many opportunities of judging, has left a magnificent tribute to his memory. De Quincey, Dickens, Emerson, and Charles Lamb have all combined in their various ways to render affectionate tribute to that "deep-mouthed Boetian,"

as Byron called him. Robert Browning dedicated his *Luria* to Landor. It is given to few to inspire such love among friends, or fear among enemies. Carlyle, visiting Landor in old age, found him "stirring company; a proud, irascible, trenchant, yet generous, veracious, and very dignified old man; quite a ducal or royal man in the temper of him."

Landor made his mark deep on the pages of literature. His literary activity extended over seventy years, and was unabated to the very end. He was a poet embodying revolutionary aspirations in classic language. In addition, he was a literary dramatist of great power, and, above all, he was a critic in the widest sense of that much-abused word. The *Imaginary Conversations*, on which competent judges have bestowed unstinted praise, is his masterpiece. There is nothing like it in the whole range of English literature, a literature which, be it remembered, extends over a thousand years and which includes some of the proudest names in the realm of authorship. The *Imaginary Conversations* is a great panorama of historic personalities, and ranges from Plato, in far-off Greece, to our own Porson; Hannibal, in old-world Cathage, to David Hume in Edinboro' town; from Seneca to Robert Southey. Landor has painted them all with masterly skill; kings, and greater than kings, statesmen and fair ladies; philosophers and prelates, writers and scientists, of all ages and all types. Epicurus discusses philosophy in his garden; Montaigne smiles at the worthy Scaliger; Melanethon reproves Calvin; so many great men and women "revisit the glimpses of the moon."

How perfectly, too, has Landor caught the relation of the French Court and the Roman Catholic Church in the ironic conversation between Louis XIV. and Pere La Chaise, when the monarch confesses the most heinous crimes and the courtly and obsequious confessor imposes the most trifling penances. In the *Imaginary Conversations* scene succeeds scene, each richer and fuller than its predecessor, supplementing one another, all combining to make a magnificent picture of what Shelley calls "life, like a dome of many-coloured glass."

When Landor is at his best, he is a great artist. There are few things more pathetic than his vignette of the unhappy Anne Boleyn. He represents "Blue-beard" Henry coming disguised to see Anne in the condemned cell, and the nauseating hypocrisy of the "Defender of the Faith." Very touchingly does he express Anne's womanly desire to see her child, "Could I but kiss her once again, it would comfort my heart or break it."

Landor's work is "caviare to the general." This is to be regretted, because Landor was a real and remarkable genius. In nearly every page of his writing there is high thinking and rare eloquence. Indeed, a well-edited selection of his works would be one of the most beautiful books in the language. Although Landor addressed a small audience while he lived, he knew his worth. "I shall dine late," he said proudly, "but the drawing-room will be well lighted, the guests few and select."

The chief of Landor's other books is undoubtedly *Pericles and Aspasia*. Another of his works, *The Citation of William Shakespeare for Deer Stealing* evoked Charles Lamb's happy epigram that it could only have been written by "the man who did write it, or he of whom it was written." Landor's poetry is exquisite. Slight in quantity, few poets have won great recognition with such a small nosegay of verse. The beautiful lines on *Rose Aylmer* have found their way into many anthologies and many hearts, while the sympathetic lines on the death of Lamb are an exquisite tribute to a genius who was also a hero. The single stanza, in his own inimitable manner, pre-

fixed to one of his last books, epitomises his life and aims in four lines:—

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife.
Nature I loved; and next to Nature, Art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

For those who care for artistry in literature, Landor's works are full of delights. Landor has been called a grand old Pagan, and his sympathies were always secular rather than religious. The eternal arrogance of priests always roused his opposition, and he never forgot Milton's wise remark that "Presbyter is but priest writ large." There are sufficient sceptical passages in his writings to make a calendar, and it would be worth printing in letters of gold.

One of his "conversations" closes with the magnificent words: "There is nothing on earth divine besides humanity." That was the keynote of Landor's writings from the time when at college he was dubbed "a mad Jacobin," until his death, when he had made an imperishable name for himself. A Warwickshire man, he was cradled in the same county as Shakespeare, and there was always a Shakespearean touch in Landor's rare genius. Carlyle said, finely, of one of Landor's best literary efforts, published when the "old lion" was over eighty years of age. "The sound of it is like the ring of Roman swords on the helmets of barbarians. The unsubduable old Roman!"

The last years of Landor's stormy life were spent in peace. On reading of Swinburne's visit to the old poet shortly before his death, one is reminded of Turner's supreme picture, "The Fighting Temeraire," where the old battleship is being towed to her last berth, and transfigured by the last glance of day's expiring glory. The symbolism of that great painting is exalted in the harmony between the memories of brave old Landor and his abiding quiet, for whom for ever, "all winds are quiet as the sun, all waters as the shore."

MIMNERMUS.

Ethics.

A DISCOURSE FOR NURSES AND CHILDREN—Continued.

XI.

THE form of marriage, nurse, that has come to be adopted by modern Western nations is that known by the name of monogamy. Of course, the ancient Britons, like the majority of other nations, were polygamous, and the Christianization of these islands did not bring about much change in their social habits. It was not until the twelfth century that monogamy came to be the recognized and legal form of marriage. Some time prior to this an exceptional change had taken place in the position of the Saxon women of England, but as Letourneau says, this progress was "quite local, and operated spontaneously, quite independently of Christian influence." Indeed, with regard to the claim that Christianity has elevated woman, he says that "it only emancipated her spiritually, and that its real influence on marriage has been injurious.

Much of the confusion surrounding the modern marriage problem appears to arise from confounding the different human instincts. You will remember, nurse, that I am dealing with human nature from the standpoint of desire, and that I have classified these different desires into groups, those belonging to our animal nature, as well as those higher aspirations arising out of our social and moral nature. And I want to observe that all these desires act independently, no one desire taking any account of the satisfaction of any other desire. Many a person's downfall is due to the domination of one desire; though in all other respects

they may be normal moral citizens. These moral lapses are more easily understood when we realize the independent nature of the various desires. Such sentiments as love, affection, and tenderness, which are usually associated with the sex instinct and marriage really spring from the sympathetic desires of our nature, and not our animal instincts. If it should be said that it is natural for a man to love the object of his desire, the answer is that the whole history of marriage in the past proves quite the contrary. Herbert Spencer quotes a traveller as saying:—

The negro knows neither love, affection, nor jealousy. During the many years I have spent in Africa, I have never seen a negro manifest the least tenderness to a woman—put his arms around her, give or receive a caress, denoting some degree of affection on one side or the other.....They have no word in their language to signify love or affection.

You may have noticed too, nurse, in reading your Bible, that in all the stories relating to the relations of the sexes, there is a good deal of "sex" but very little sentiment. All the transactions are reduced to the lowest mercenary and sensual basis. Even the picture of the virtuous woman given at the end of Proverbs, which is frequently quoted, as Letourneau says, "by those who are still hypnotized by the prestige of so-called holy books" is little more than the portrait of a laborious servant. Among the ancient Hebrews, or peoples like the African negroes, such idyllic pictures as Romeo and Juliet, or even Darby and Joan, with their idealization of romantic affection, would appeal as little to their understanding as a masterpiece of art does to the appreciation of the uninitiated in the ideals of beauty and perfection. In such stages of culture marriage is regarded in its true sexual significance as being a union of the sexes in accordance with nature's demands. And much of the disappointment in connection with modern marriage is caused by the young not being taught its proper function, and being led to expect the fulfilment of sentimental ideals that are not necessarily connected with the sex instinct. The insistence of Christianity that marriage is some kind of "mystic union," has tended to obscure its real and natural meaning. The sex impulse is the expression of a physiological need, quite apart from any considerations of sentiment or sympathetic and beautiful ideals. The ideal marriage is, doubtless, a worthy conception, but it does not help its attainment to confuse in thought things that are essentially different, as sex and sentiment, and which belong to different instincts of our nature. I once met a friend, nurse, who had been married a few months, and in a confidential moment he informed me that he had been awfully disappointed in his wife. Poor fellow. Instead of getting an angel, or a woman who corresponded to his ideal, he found he had married a drab, uninteresting female. He wondered why I laughed. "My dear boy," I said, "if it is any consolation to you, think of the numberless brotherhood of similarly afflicted ones that you have to bear you company." In the same way a man often marries a woman expecting that she has money, and when he finds out that her only fortune is her face he is sore at the disappointment. These are cases of trying to kill two birds with one stone, where the chances of making a lucky hit are a million to one. The marriage vow to "love and honour" a person, of whom in the majority of cases the contracting party knows very little, is as absurd as to ask us to worship a deity of whom we know nothing.

A Christian minister some little time ago, commenting on the modern demand for cutting down the length of the sermon and the curtailment of religious services, lamented that there would soon be little left for them to officiate at but marriages and funerals.

And one can only hope that the time is not far distant when even marriages will pass out of their grasp. The Christian clergy very early took marriage under their wing, and made a "sacrament" of it, and, instead of it being simply the union of a man and woman in order to produce children, it became the symbol of the union of Christ with his church. "From its origin," says Letourneau, "Christianity, abandoning the modest reality, lost anchor from the first, and was drowned in a sea of dreams."

Perhaps there is no greater difference between Christianity and Buddhism than that which is to be found in their respective attitudes to this marriage question. Fielding Hall, in *The Soul of a People*, says:—

If you were to ask a Burman "What is the position of woman in Burma?" he would reply that he did not know what you meant. Women have no position, no fixed relation towards men beyond that fixed by the fact that women are women, and men are men. They differ a great deal in many ways, a Burman would say, men are better in some things; women are better in others; if they have a position, their relative superiority in certain things determines it. How else should it be determined?

If you say by religion, he laughs, and asks what religion has to do with such things? Religion is a culture of the soul; it is not concerned with the relationships of men and women. If you say by law, he says that law has no more to do with it than religion. In the eye of the law both are alike.

With regard to divorce, he says:—

An unbreakable marriage appears to them as a fetter, a bond. Something hateful and hate inspiring. You see, they are a people who love to be free: they hate bonds and dogmas of every description. It is always religion that has made a bond of marriage, and here religion has not interfered. There is a religion of free men and free women.

And yet with all their freedom we are assured that Burmese women are very particular in their conduct; that they are not free from restrictions; but they are restrictions which are merely rules founded upon experience. And although the facilities for divorce make it quite easy to obtain, it is quite uncommon. In the villages and amongst respectable Burmans in all classes of life it is a great exception to divorce or to be divorced. Incidentally, Fielding Hall throws a little light upon the inestimable blessings of our superior civilization. He says:—

The only class among whom divorce is at all common is the class of hangers-on to our Administration, the clerks and policemen, and so on. I fear there is little good to be said of many of them. It is terrible to see how demoralising our contact is to all sorts and conditions of men.

I heard of a Christian minister some time ago who was most enthusiastic at a public meeting in his praises of *The Soul of a People*. It must have been instructive to him to read of a monogamic civilization corrupting and demoralizing a polygamous one. Perhaps, also, he learned something of the superior results of a marriage system in which religion and clerical interference has no part. The difference between Buddhism and Christianity is further emphasized in this, that though it has exerted a greater ethical influence in the East than ever Christianity has done in the West, it has never sought to dominate either legally or ceremoniously the social life of any people who have accepted it. The strength of Christianity to-day lies not in its dogmas—the pulpit is a dead letter in modern life—but in the strangle-hold it has been able to maintain on social functions. The strong opposition of the Church to divorce, or to any questions relating to marriage or sex, is only an attempt to retain the power which its dominance in these

matters has given it. And to popularize a sane view of the sex question is one of the surest ways to undermine the Church's influence.

Whatever may be said in favour of monogamy, to assume that in itself it is necessarily the mark of a high civilization is to make a grievous mistake. I have already mentioned that it has been practised by some inferior nations, and where it has been adopted by peoples highly civilized, it has not brought about any appreciable difference in the position of women. Any improvement that has been effected has been due to other causes. "In many civilizations," says Letourneau, "both dead and living, legal monogamy has for its chief object the regulation of succession and the division of property It is to money alone, and not to the moralizing influence of monogamy, that woman in barbarous countries owes the power of attaining a certain independence, for the two peoples who have granted it to her, the Egyptians in antiquity and the Touaregs of our own day, lived or live under a legislation which authorises polygamy."

Joseph McCabe in his *Religion of Woman* appears to attribute the inferiority of women among the Hebrews to the practice of polygamy, the enormity of which, he says, they did not perceive until long after its rejection by the Greeks and Romans. But upon similar lines of argument, that because two things existed side by side, therefore one was the cause of the other—a strong indictment might be made out against monogamy. We will let Mr. McCabe himself describe the position of women after monogamy became legally established in England. He says:—

Woman's position in law became worse than it had been in any civilized nation for many a century. The fundamental principle of Church, or Canon law (which dominated the Common law) was the inferiority of woman. She was deprived of the control of her person and property, deprived of the resources of legal testimony, and made morally and economically dependant upon her husband. It is unnecessary to say more of the disabilities which are still fresh in the memory of women.

It is not a little remarkable that it should have taken the Christian Church a thousand years to perceive the "enormity" of polygamy; but it does not surprise us to learn that the position of woman under monogamy became worse than before. The fact is that no particular form of marriage can claim the credit of whatever improvement has taken place in the position of woman. The ideal of monogamy has simply blinded people as to its actual results.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

Once upon a time the earth was a paradise. The folly of man brought upon it the curse of the gods. So preach the preachers.....Once upon a time this earth was a barren place. Human effort, human sacrifice and human thought not only made the inhospitable earth habitable, but they may yet succeed in converting it into a home for the good, the true and the beautiful. Of the two messages, the one sacred, the other secular, which is the more inspiring?—*M. M. Mangasarian.*

Pray not; the darkness will not brighten!
Ask not from the silence, for it cannot speak!
Vex not your mournful minds with pious pains;
Ah, brothers, sisters, seek
Naught from the helpless gods by gift and hymn.
Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with fruit and cakes;
Within yourselves deliverance must be sought.

—*Edwin Arnold.*

Acid Drops.

At the Annual Conference of the National Union of Teachers a resolution was passed protesting against a religious test for teachers as an element in any settlement of the Education question. This is all very well, so far as it goes, but it does not really amount to much. So long as there is any religious teaching at all in the schools religious tests for teachers will exist, if not openly, then in disguise. Can any teacher conceive a school authority on which there are a number of Christians appointing an avowed Freethinker if a Christian could be secured? And every teacher knows that an avowal of Atheism is a bar to promotion. That is why there is so much concealment on the part of teachers as to their real opinions with regard to religion. If the N.U.T. wishes to abolish all religious tests it will go in for a straightforward policy of Secular education. The Union is quite safe in protesting against open religious tests. They are not likely to be imposed. Such a resolution only serves the purpose of gaining for the Union the reputation of standing for the freedom of the teacher, without incurring the trouble of fighting for it.

And, after all, it is not the teacher with which we ought to be concerned, but the child. He is the essential thing in the question and he is generally left out of consideration. The rights of the parent, the freedom of the teacher, and the claims of others are put forward, but few trouble about the rights of the child. The essential point to be faced is the monstrous injustice done to the child by giving it as solid truth teachings which every educated man or woman in the country knows to be of a highly questionable nature. Religious instruction is not really education at all. It is merely stuffing the head of the child with a number of prepared doctrines, best part of which it will have to get rid of when it reaches maturity. It has not even the saving feature of giving the child an exercise in mental gymnastics. It is entirely a cowardly attack upon the mental integrity of the child. We seriously commend that point of view to the National Union of Teachers. It does not appear to have occurred to any of its leaders.

At the opening session of the Conference the new President, Mr. C. T. Wing, stated that "The non-provided schools, financed exactly in the same way as the publicly-provided schools, still remain under the effective control of a religious denomination, and this system of dual control has hindered educational progress in England more than any other single factor....." We welcome this very frank condemnation of the denominational schools. Unfortunately too many of those who know what a deadening influence they exert over our education are loathe to speak out plainly, for various reasons. And yet it is obvious that here is one of the chief battlegrounds of the future. Those who have the moulding of the child mind, make the future citizens; and the work of the Freethinker is made as hard and difficult as it is in persuading others to examine religious ideas frankly, largely through the influence of religion inculcated in the impressionable years of childhood. We hope that many other public men and women who can speak with the same knowledge of facts and the same influence as the President of the National Union of Teachers, will direct public attention to this particular matter.

The Rev. R. O. Thompson, Vicar of Boston (Lines), says that anyone who does not make a Communion at Easter cuts himself off from the Church. He adds that ninety-five out of every hundred people in Boston do not take the Communion. It is clear that the Bostonians are in a bad way, and that the ancient town will be well represented in the nether regions, while the poor vicar will be minus a congregation in heaven.

But we would bring to the vicar's notice the case of Mrs. Attwood, of Stony Stratford, aged seventy. She

was driving to Holy Communion on Easter Day when her car collided with another. Mrs. Attwood was killed. Now clearly it was not Mrs. Attwood's fault that she did not get the Communion, and it is rather hard on her if she is not only to be killed suddenly, but is booked for hell in consequence. The Lord might pay attention to the faithful few that are left to him.

Referring to the death of J. S. Sargent, the well-known painter, the *Daily Express* says concerning his last moments, "It looked as though he had been reading and had dropped off to sleep. There was a volume of Voltaire on his bed." We do not know anyone in whose company it would be better to die. It would have shown a much poorer character had his last reading been some volume concerning the welfare of his immortal soul. But souls that are really worth saving never trouble whether they will be damned or not.

The Ecclesiastical Commissioners own or manage more than 240,000 acres of agricultural land in England, was a statement made by Major Birchall in Parliamentary debate recently. An account of how these followers of the meek and lowly Nazarene, who had not where to lay his head, obtained possession of these acres would make decidedly interesting reading. Some day perhaps the people of this country will see to it that this land reverts to those from whom it has been "acquired" by, to say the least of it, dubious methods.

"I've been twenty-five years in the army, and no one will give me a job, so I've joined the Church Army, board and lodging and 3s. a week for chopping wood," said a prisoner charged at Willesden. How far this statement is the truth, we cannot of course say, but it is notorious that a good deal of organized Christian "charity" is of this kind—"reclaiming" social derelicts by virtually converting them into chattel slaves, to work for their food and lodging.

At an inquest held recently at Bournemouth on three workmen who were buried and suffocated by a fall of cliff near Boscombe Pier, the coroner said that the accident was what he would describe as an act of God. The deity, if he exists, must often find the attentions of his own supporters decidedly embarrassing. And unfortunately for him there is no law of libel to protect him against this kind of defamation.

In the Oban Sheriff Court recently a lady of the United Free Church Manse, Craigmure, Island of Mull, Argyll-shire, was sentenced to three months' imprisonment on a charge of assaulting a girl, aged sixteen, who had been in her employment. It was stated that among other things the mistress had broken a walking-stick across the girl's back. All for the greater glory of God presumably. Such incidents might not be worth special note in the *Freethinker* but for the hypocritical attitude that so many Christians take up of talking as though all forms of brutality and all inhuman conduct were a direct result of Atheism. Frequently, indeed, one hears some Christian apologist dubbing this or that disgraceful conduct as "practical Atheism." It is useful, therefore, to draw attention to the fact that a good many of these reprehensible acts are committed by people who cannot by any stretch of the imagination be dubbed anything but Christian.

The truth of the matter is, of course, that in such cases religion has little direct influence upon the action, just as Freethought has nothing to do with it. But the civilization which is still so frequently disgraced by brutal attacks of this character is permeated through and through with Christian religious ideas, and to that extent Christianity can justly be said to be the cause of brutal behaviour. At the same time even a cursory study of the history of our civilization reveals very plainly that as religion has declined among us so have humani-

tarian feelings strengthened. Witness the bull-baiting and bear-baiting, and the hanging for paltry thefts of the eighteenth century—a far more Christian age than the present one. Or the not infrequent cases of the lynching of negroes in the Southern States of America, where Christianity has a much firmer hold than it has in England. But still an incident, such as that upon which we are commenting, often produces more effect upon a man or woman than a more or less abstract condemnation of religion as a brutalizing force, and it is for that reason we give it prominence.

Mr. A. J. Darnell, a solicitor, of Northampton, has thought fit to take seriously an attack from the Bishop of Peterborough. Trade being rather bad in his own profession, the Bishop has been basking in the lime-light of publicity by declaring that footballers are bought and sold like slaves. There is, my lord, a significance in the collar and uniform that adorns the person of your black-coated workers, as Thorstein Veblen, in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, points out, but we never thought that business was so bad that you are reduced to butting into a question of kicking leather about a field. So bad as all that! Angels and ministers of grace defend us!—you will be heading a campaign soon to prevent little boys from collecting cigarette cards.

New York is in America. And America, in the matter of theology, is content with this article dished up from the year 1400 A.D., or thereabouts. At the Waldorf Astoria, Mathew Brush, the banker host of a freak dinner, has apparently outfreaked the freakiest. As the guests entered they suddenly found themselves lost in a grove of palm trees with monkeys swinging on the branches. Arabs on horseback dashed in and gave a performance which was concluded with a procession of camels, elephants, and other animals. We trust that Mathew Brush is aware of the honour he extends to Noah for his foresight, and, America, as represented by the banker and the fundamentalists, would seem to bear out Nietzsche's diagnosis of "mob at top and mob below."

At the first breath of reality even Sir Oliver Lodge can talk sense, which puts him in an awkward position after hearing his positive views on Spiritualism. At Salisbury, he stated that the next war would be a sort of massacre. This is true, and at the same time a terrible indictment of Christianity which with its vast organization can do nothing but unveil war memorials and trail red herrings. If, according to Sir Oliver, there is no such thing as death why does he trouble about physical extinction? His loyalty to his own species is betrayed in his concern about them if our rulers are determined to have war, and, as a scientist, he is capable of seeing the truth about the next war that is denied to the readers of picture papers and similar rubbish pushed into the hands of the public to enrich our brand new nobility. The logic of facts for him is stronger than the musings of fancy that may be an inheritance from our ancestors, and in this respect he joins issue with those who let the next life take care of itself and are determined to make the best of the one they know.

The unscrupulous treatment that may be expected from Christians when using the word Atheism is as assured as night following day. Canon Donaldson has been letting off a few damp squibs in Westminster Abbey, and, as it would be bad for his own business to admit failure, this Jesuit of words relieved himself as follows:—

We regarded our unemployed tragedy as a tiresome economic difficulty, rather than as an outrage on the Kingdom of God, and regarded war as inevitable, instead of as a denial of God and as practical Atheism.

From this statement, the Canon would not pass a school boy's examination in history. He has even forgotten the unmitigated cant that was uttered during the last war by his colleagues on all fronts. "God mit uns" was on the belts of the Germans. The Kaiser was a friend of God. English Army Chaplains with a licence to put it strong to civilians in khaki, added their quota of pious

guff to the hell broth of war. The Catholic Church had many children in the Austrian and Italian armies, and one can only suppose that the Canon's congregation was composed of deaf mutes. If the Canon can, by any mis-carriage of providence be logical, let him go and take down all the flags in St. Paul's Cathedral as they are, according to his reasoning, evidences of practical Atheism. The newspaper giving the report heads the column "Christians who are Hypocrites." It was entirely unnecessary, as according to Achille Tournier, "the greatest miracle of any religion is a priest who believes in it."

Mr. William Barclay Squire, writing from the Royal Music Room, British Museum, has found among the manuscripts of the Duke of Rutland a letter written by Roger Herbert to the Duke on October 14, 1693. We give an extract as showing the particular virtues of bargain driving by those with one foot in the field of Royalty and the other in the precincts of the Church. It must be remembered that the "Merchant of Venice" was a popular play at that time:—.....

This German is a Roman Catholic, His name is Alberrix, his father was master of the Chapell at Whitehall to King Charles the Second, and he has had very great salarys but will—if your Lordship be pleased to grant it him—serve you for twenty pounds a year. The doctor and Mr. Heming and I brought him downe to this salary, if your Lordship would approve of it, for I told him you gave but 15*l*. a year. But I must beg leave to tell your Lordship if you can dispence with his religion, the parts of the man are worth a hundred pounds a year.

Alberrix, the German, was thus being negotiated for as his Lordship's organist. Mr. Squire is anxious to know who Alberrix was. And this is the sort of thing that interests the old men in the correspondence columns of the *Times Literary Supplement*. A.D., 1925.

It is a fond illusion that human life can always and for ever be guided by the light of a commercial creed such as Protestantism. The Bishop of Swansea and Brecon instituted a "procession of witness" as a protest against the growing Secular observance of Good Friday, and, doubtless to make up in sound what was lacking in sense, the procession was headed by the Salvation Army. Misfortune makes strange bedfellows. We trust that the Bishop's numerous brothers will be compelled to follow suit, when rational society will be able to see the anomaly of medical thought trying to rule the roost at a time when a boy of thirteen can construct a wireless set.

The Argentine Socialist Party is to demand the separation of Church and State. There is a practical severance of diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the Argentine Government, and the State subvention to the Catholic Church this year reaches the figure of £40,000. It may be that, in common with other countries, the problem of living is becoming a real one, thus leaving nothing over for the welfare of souls, and the Catholic Church is regarded as a superfluous luxury.

Cardinal Bourne has opened a new Roman Catholic Church at Mansfield, which cost £20,000. "Blessed are the poor, for they shall be comforted."

We are indebted to the *Daily Mail* or any other paper for the information that Lord Balfour, author of *Philosophic Doubt*, has received a rebuff in Palestine. With the political side of the question in this paper we have not the slightest concern, but, the fact that it was considered wise that he should not read the lesson out of the New Testament in Jerusalem of all places is a curious commentary on the gospel of brotherly love. The unity of Christian teaching is seen in all its nudity; this is the creed that was to make all the world one, but after two thousand years of bungling and botching from its inception, it is not safe to utter it in the land of its birth.

We are informed that the Labour Government in Mexico has put the Army to roadmaking. As a suggestion worth consideration why not put our Great Black Army to something equally useful.

Emerson has given the world among his other gifts a fine contribution in the form of an essay on Compensation. The variability of fortune, the uncertainty of fame, the ever changing face of events are facts too well known to deny, and this mutability sometimes brings about answers to questions that are deemed unanswerable. The spirit of falsehood finicks with truth; the spirit of Puck lightly touches the scene and revelation follows. The British public were recently invited to believe that Russia, as far as its marriage morals were concerned, was a sink of iniquity. Comes swiftly on the track of this, some yards—or is it miles?—of reports on a law case which ought to make our English journalists chew their pen-nibs. We are by implication and assertion a Christian country. And Dean Inge, the journalist, and others might look a little nearer home in their anxiety to make capital out of reports from a country that has given the order of the boot to those who once gave the order of the knout.

Forgetfulness of self, says the Bishop of Manchester, is one of the highest tests of the Christian. To that we can only reply, briefly and bluntly, gammon. Why Christianity is one long appeal to self interest. What are all the pleas for the salvation of one's own soul but an appeal to self? What is the meaning of the criticism that if there be no future life the reason for morality disappears, but an appeal to self? Of course, Christianity does not say openly, "Look after yourself, and never mind other people"; that would be a form of mental honesty that goes ill with Christian traditions. But it appeals to self under the guise of something better, and so manages to gratify the lower under guise of the higher. And one can always get a fairly good response by that method.

Henri Barbusse, the famous author of *Under Fire*, has written another novel entitled *Les Enchainements*, in which he asks, "When is the real history of man going to begin?" The answer is not difficult. It will begin when God is banished from the skies, when people speak the truth, and when the throne is not in the shadow of the priest. God and the priest are the blurred windows through which man has been watching for centuries; it may occur to him to poke a stick through them, let in the fresh air, and have done with two of the biggest illusions that have cursed the human race.

America appears to have caught the war fever badly, and the plain citizen is going to be mesmerised into panic by an elaborate display in Chicago. We are informed that:—

A big military show to be presented by cavalry, infantry, aircraft, and the tank corps branches of the army, will be staged in Grant Park stadium on May 22-24. The affair will be in charge of the 65th Cavalry Division Association.

The exposition is to be used to arouse civilian interest in national defence.

There will be battles in the air at night between dirigibles and air-planes.

Columbus, the Pilgrim Fathers, and William Penn must be turning in their graves. Looking at the size of America and its potentiality for self-support and development, one feels like saying to "Uncle Sam," "Don't be silly!" but that would only be common sense and not diplomacy.

Turning on the tap of popular guff a writer, in the *Times Literary Supplement*, April 9, tells us that "Good Friday records the fact that God Almighty died." This is a statement that is twenty-two carat theology, and in charity we must assume that the office-boy of the Salvation Army, Headquarters was let loose for the occasion.

The National Secular Society.

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

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

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

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

To Correspondents.

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

R. BROWN.—We have read with interest your letter to the B.B.C. on the subject of broadcasting Sunday sermons. Many hundreds of letters have been sent, but the parsons hang on. Probably the B.B.C. is trusting to the usual policy of waiting for the persistence of objectors to weaken, and then the half-hour's mixture of attitude, latitude, platitude, and sheer stupidity will be taken as a matter of course.

A. MILLAR.—We share your appreciation of Mr. Hand's writing. We hope to see his name figure in these columns for many years.

A. RUSSELL.—Sorry we were unable to publish your letter. Had it been alone, we might have published it, but we had a number of lengthy letters, the main purpose of which appeared to discuss the pros and cons of the Russian Revolution, and we had to close all. The task of selection would have been too great.

F. J. FINLAY.—Thanks for report. But we do not see material in it for a detailed criticism. It seems to be a domestic quarrel between the Theosophist and the Christian, and we are not called upon to decide which is the more foolish of the two. Dr. Black's remark that Christ taught we were to do good because good is good apart from any reward, is only a customary Christian falsification. There is no hint of any such teaching in the whole of the New Testament, least of all in the teachings attributed to Christ. And comparing Jesus with Buddha is like comparing a Salvation Army preacher with a philosopher.

DR. S. SENHOUSE (Dominica).—The second volume of *Crimes of Christianity* was never issued.

ONE of our readers is anxious to collect instances of the custom of cutting slices from a living animal for the purposes of food. Perhaps some of our readers may oblige with the information.

W. K. BAZELL.—Write to Bishop Montgomery Brown, Brownella Cottage, Calion, Ohio, U.S.A.

J. HANDS.—Your letter reached us too late for last week's issue. Glad to know that you are all well.

MORGAN WALTERS.—Quite naturally the Labour candidate who plays to the religious gallery is not unlikely to get more support than the one who avows himself a Freethinker. The quality of the support is another question altogether. But in politics it is quantity, not quality, that counts. The address of the New York *Truthseeker* is 49 Vesey Street, New York, U.S.A.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—P. T. Lamble (Hong Kong), 7s. 6d.; F. T. Knott (Hong Kong), 15s.

OUR shop manager reports the receipt of 3s. 8d. from someone—we think from Nigeria—ordering pamphlets to be sent on. Unfortunately neither name nor address is given, and in their absence we can only trust to this paragraph eliciting the desired information.

F. G. PORTER.—We are obliged for the information which we have passed on to the proper quarter.

B. BOTT.—Thanks for cuttings. Very useful.

R. W. CRACKLOW.—Your remittance came to hand about March 20, and was acknowledged in the *Freethinker* for

March 29. Yes, there are quite a lot of people about whose chief desire appears to be to show the orthodox world that they do not differ from it *very* much. But mental courage is always rare and one must recognize the fact and hope for the best.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Now that Easter is over it is time for Branches and members of the N.S.S. to think seriously about the Annual Conference. This will be held on Whit Sunday, as usual, and all resolutions for the Agenda must be in the Secretary's hands not later than April 28. We are hoping to see a good muster of friends on that occasion. The place of the Conference is not yet definitely fixed, but will be announced as soon as the papers are returned from the Branches.

The Bill for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, introduced by Mr. George Lansbury, and backed by Mr. Harry Snell and others, is down for its second reading on April 28. Notices of motion for its rejection have been handed in by Messrs. Macpherson, Sir Murdoch Macdonald, Major Sir Archibald Sinclair, and Mr. Stuart, who are, apparently, quite convinced that the Lord still needs the protecting arm of a policeman. One day we may assume people will outgrow the primitive state of mind which makes opposition to such a measure possible. But if people can believe in Christianity, one ought not, perhaps to be surprised at them believing or doing anything.

There is another Bill which is down for second reading on the same date. This is the Seditious and Blasphemous Teaching to Children Bill. There is to be objections raised to that, so that there is no likelihood of its going any further. We do not imagine any harm could be done to children by teaching them what is called blasphemy or sedition, although for our part we would much prefer to see less anxiety shown by grown-ups for turning out children as small editions of themselves, with all their existing prejudices and ignorances. If we would be content to teach children how to think, instead of stuffing their heads full of what we think, the outlook for the future would be much more promising than it is.

The North London Branch brings its session to a close to-day (April 26) with an address from Mr. Van Biene on "Not Wanted, Education." Mr. Van Biene is speaking on a subject on which he is entitled to rank as "one who knows," and we hope that Freethinkers and others in North London will take full advantage of the opportunity to be present. Fuller information will be found in our "Lecture Guide."

The Supremacy of Reason.

II.

(Concluded from page 237.)

TURN now to the field of life, the science of biology. In this domain the actual shouts of the conflict that struck the fetters from the human mind were heard by some among us. Indeed, to-day, there are still those—witness the Fundamentalists—who would re-engage in the struggle to enslave the human spirit. In place of the Biblical, supernatural explanation of the origin of species, Darwin gave us the natural one. No one who claims to be a rationalist, will hold that knowledge ended with Darwin. By no means. Indeed, Darwin's most noteworthy achievement is not the discovery of the origin of species but the liberation of the human mind in a new field of intellectual adventure. He opened the whole territory of biological investigation to enquiry by naturalistic methods. If time permitted, a brief reference to some of the results of the investigations of men like Burbank, Lionel Huxley, Loeb, to say nothing of those who have revolutionized medicine and agriculture, would make even the blind to see. These discoveries were made possible by the men who, in the face of the howls and abuse of obscurantists, followed the light that burned in their hearts. How many of the lesser spirits bent before the storm? Haeckel tells us: "My beliefs are substantially the beliefs of my colleagues in science everywhere, as I know from private conversations; but they, unlike myself, are not free to speak the full truth as I see it. I myself would not be tolerated elsewhere, as I am well aware. Had I desired to remain in Berlin, for example, I must have kept silent. But here in Jena one is free."

If we turn to two fields of more recent exploration, sociology and psychology, we can gain some idea of the immeasurable superiority of reason over mere faith, of the scientific over the supernatural method of explaining our world and the nature of our existence. We can also realize more clearly the odium cast by the traditionalists on those who dare to introduce scientific method into the social sciences.

The forces in the world are physical, biotic and psychic. What is the precise relation of these forces to one another science is not as yet able to say. But the evidence for continuity in their development increases day by day. If we glance at sociology, the science of social groups, we see first the general background of social life depicted by science. In the briefest and most general terms science shows that the whole solar system moves according to laws that man has discovered; that for many æons the earth existed devoid of organic matter. Later in the process of development the organic appeared and gradually developing reached its highest form in man. We now find that in addition to the physical environment the organization of society rests on the operation of different types of forces. First, the forces that lead to the preservation of the individual, pleasure-seeking and pain-avoiding tendencies, especially hunger and thirst. Second, forces that lead to the preservation of the group, the reproductive and parental forces. Third, the forces that subserve progress, the forces of race evolution. It is on these that the development of the emotional, moral and intellectual life of a people are based. Among these reason must be king if there is to be progress.

With the coming of scientific sociology we realize that the conditions of human society are what they are, not because of certain dispensations of providence, but because we are a certain type of people and have organized ourselves in our own ways. The evils in the world come from two main sources: physical

causes; storm, earthquake, flood, drought, fire, plague, man's anti-social relations to his fellows, man's inhumanity to man: war, hunger, poverty, unemployment, cruelty, vice, crime. In the field of the former intellect has achieved most striking successes; it has harnessed the flood, watered the desert and controlled the pestilence. In the field of social relations our progress is slower mainly because supernatural explanations still find a resting-place and hence prejudice lingers longer. We must learn to bring the scientific spirit to our investigations in social science. Man must solve these problems of human organization, national and international, or perish. The first step to their solution is the resolute facing of the facts, a knowledge of the great phenomena of social life freed from all prejudices, of class, nation and religion. It is not unanimity of opinion we desire but unanimity of spirit, a spirit that will enable us to rise superior to the prejudices of the past and liberate us for the service of the future. What is necessary for the social world in travail to-day is more of the enquiring spirit of Bruno and less of the intolerance that sent him to the stake.

Psychology, the youngest of the sciences, has now shown this development most clearly. From being as its name implies, the study of the soul, it has become the science of behaviour. We have passed from the demand of Descartes for a unitary organ in the brain through which the spiritual unity of the soul could manifest itself, to the view that there is no independent entity called a soul, that the spiritual or mental powers are manifestations of the human personality, body-mind. As long as the older notion held sway so long was it considered futile, or even sacrilegious, to experiment in the sacred realm of the soul. But nothing is too sacred to be understood or to be improved and men began to find that by means of experiment it was possible to widen and purify our views of the nature of mental processes. If time allowed it would be easy to show that in fields where scientific methods were used there had been progress, where its use had been withheld there had been stagnation. Researches in biology and pathology have thrown great light on the problems of mind. We know now how important for mental life is the operation of the automatic nervous system and the endocrine glands that are connected with it. Cannon has clearly demonstrated the physiological basis of anger and fear: the injection into the blood-stream by the adrenal glands of the special medical substance of their manufacture, adrenalin. Freud has opened to us new depths of mind, the unconscious. These discoveries have made for ever impossible the supernaturalistic interpretation in the field, and already education and the science of social relations are the better for the change. To frighten children with hell-fire is now known to be not only bad theology but bad physiology and bad psychology.

Advances in psychology have made clearer the importance of the rational forces; they are beginning to play their part as directors of the great psychic streams. At the present stage a very large part of man's action is not rational, is not decided on the estimation of the weight of evidence. Man follows his desires and then pays tribute to the growing powers of reason by rationalizing them. The reign of reason is so far advanced, however, that all men hope to make their desires seem rational. The new psychological knowledge itself will enable the real seeker after truth to be more careful in investigating the bases of his beliefs and actions. Knowledge here, as elsewhere, will drive out deceit, humbug and superstition. Especially will it provide a sound basis for humanistic ethics, devoid of any supernatural sanctions whatever.

Perhaps in no other field, paradoxical as it may

seem, is the principle I am endeavouring to illustrate (the supremacy of reason) more plainly seen than is the religious sphere itself. On all sides we hear of the decay of religion. A general survey of the field shows that the tables have been turned; mankind has passed from the time when it believed that "God made man in His own image," to the time when an ever-increasing number of the human race realizes that "man makes God in his own image." "Thus men," says Blake, "forgot that all deities reside in the human breast," and Carlyle reminds the people, "Ye are the Gods if ye did but realize it." It may be said that religion is the ark of the covenant and we must not lay profane hands upon it, but the scope of season cannot be limited. Starbuck, writing at the beginning of this century, said: "Science has conquered one field after another, until now it is entering the most complex, the most inaccessible, and, of all, the most sacred domain—that of religion. The psychology of religion has for its task to carry the well-established methods of science into the analysis and organization of the facts of the religious consciousness, and to ascertain the laws which determine its growth and character."

I said that science has developed on the basis of natural causation. We can see how this is closely connected with the diminishing strength of the supernatural interpretation. Leuba tells us that there are three types of behaviour: the mechanical based on energy and causation, the coercive based on magic and the anthropopathic based on the idea of supernatural powers. His illustration will make his meaning clear. "A stoker in the hold of a ship, throwing coal into the furnace, represents one of them. His purpose is to produce propelling energy. The amount of coal he shovels in, together with the air draught, the condition of the boiler, and other factors of the same sort, determines, as he understands the matter, the velocity of the ship. The same man, playing cards of an evening and having lost uninterruptedly for a long time, might get up and walk round the table backwards in order to change his luck. He would then illustrate a second mode of behaviour. If a storm threatens to sink the ship, our stoker might be seen falling on his knees, lifting his hands to heaven, and addressing in passionate terms an invisible being." McDougall holds that in society religion has provided the conservative spirit. Gradually the former has been driven by the latter out of field after field. Society now seems capable of stability without the conserving power of religion. "The spirit of enquiry has broken all its bonds and soared gloriously until now the conception of natural causation predominates in every field." Veblen believes that machine production has made the idea of causation familiar to the working man and ousted the supernatural view. No doubt many factors are at work, but it is clear that the great majority of the people who classify themselves as religious to-day are very far from the position of those who really believed in supernatural powers. To-day, by far the greater proportion of church-goers even think themselves into the supernatural view only with difficulty and on special occasions. Why then does supernaturalism remain in the minds of the people? In addition to business and social reasons that lead many people to remain attached to a church there is only the fact of education and tradition—the religious social heritage. The church fathers were wise men in their day and generation. Modern psychology has shown that emotional shocks give rise to "complexes" that exercise a lasting influence on character and belief. When the emotions of a person are stirred, ceremonies have a more lasting effect. Did you ever reflect that the main church ceremonies are

connected with the great emotional periods of life: birth, adolescence, marriage, death. Is it any wonder then that the influence of the church persists even though its real spirit languishes?

What then must we do? We must use our best efforts to purge our social heritage of all superstition and to see that it is brought into line with what reason demands. In the past certain spheres have been set apart as sacred and removed from all criticism. It has become customary for criticism in these fields to be regarded as sacreligious. We should use our strongest endeavours to develop the demand that the coming generation shall be educated in such a way as will leave it free to judge truth for itself and not to shut out criticism and enquiry. Tolstoy, who in the best sense of the term was an intensely religious man, expressed this opinion in his celebrated *Appeal to the Clergy*: If these stories, both from the Old and New Testaments, were taught as a series of fairy tales, even then hardly any teacher would decide to tell them to children or adults he desired to enlighten. But these tales are imparted to people unable to reason, as though they were the most trustworthy description of the world and its laws, as if they gave the truest information about the lives of those who lived in former times, of what should be considered good and evil, of the existence and nature of God and of the duties of man. People talk of harmful books. But is there in Christendom a book that has done more harm than this terrible book called *Scripture History from the Old and New Testaments*. And all the men and women of Christendom have to pass through a course of this scripture history during their childhood, and this same history is taught to ignorant adults as the first and most essential foundation of knowledge—as the one, eternal truth of God.

For a man to whose mind has been introduced as sacred truths a belief in the creation of the world out of nothing 6,000 years ago; in the Flood of Noah's Ark, which accommodated all the animals; in an immaculate conception; in Christ's miracles; and in the salvation of men by the sacrifice of his death, for such a man the demands of reason are no longer obligatory, and such a man cannot be sure of any truth. If the Trinity and an immaculate conception, and the salvation of mankind by the blood of Jesus are possible—then anything is possible, and the demands of reason are not obligatory." There is the evil and the remedy—more freedom. Those who believe they are on the side of truth do not fear the light of noonday. All that they ask is freedom, a fair field and no favour. Under fair conditions truth will rout error, as Milton long ago affirmed in his forceful way.

"Though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licensing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and falsehood grapple; who ever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?.....She needs no policies, nor stratagem, nor licensings to make her victorious; these are the shafts and defences that error uses against her power; give her room, and do not bind her when she sleeps."

Man is rational, but man also is animal. Let us ever remember this. Behind these fine and subtle developments of the brain of civilized man lies the great mass that subserved the functions of the Java Ape man, the mammals and the lower beasts. Is it likely that this will be conquered and directed, it cannot be eliminated in a brief period? Remember the long ages in the wilderness of magic and superstition. We must be careful of our social heritage. We must strive to understand the mind and its barbaric tendencies; we must work to cover them with a humanism that will never wear off. The task of reason is to plan this campaign, and as James reminds us in the case of war: "It is going to be no

holiday excursion or camping party." Whenever you see the dread of thought and investigation there is primitive man; whenever there is persecution for opinion the beast and the cave-man are making their power felt. The primitive man hates change. He is a creature of custom and tradition, not of enquiry and reflection. He is not intelligent enough to adapt himself to new conditions; he therefore fears them and comes to fear investigation or any real thinking. But we must not go back to the herd and the pack; increase in intellectual freedom and in the spirit of toleration are the surest signs of progress. Train your minds to doubt and your hearts to toleration.

In Japan To-day.

In the course of a personal letter and a public communication, our good friend, Yoshira Oyama, writes from Sendai, that he finds the *Freethinker*, sent him weekly, a great comfort and encouragement. He has of late been confined to a sick bed. It is very cold, he says, in Sendai, and not a good place for one in poor health. He thinks of removing to Tokyo or its vicinity. Sendai is called the centre of study, of learning, etc., but is as yet much too formal and bureaucratic to admit of true progress. The college allows Roman Catholic priests to preach there, and our friends, Mr. Oyama adds, are busy fighting them. He is to lecture, he says, at Fukushima—three and a half hours' journey from Sendai—and also at Marioka. He finds this a little tiring in his present state of health, but bravely reflects that we often have to do things which are tiring! He intends to continue in the work as long as possible, as he likes to fight against religion, remaining always a rationalist, "anti-Christ" thinker. The weather, he remarks, is very unpleasant just now (March 24); he has not seen the sun for a very long time, and feels its absence all the more as he belongs to sunny Yokohama! However, he concludes, the worst of the winter is past and brighter days may be expected.

THE future of philosophy is far from hopeless. It is the sun of an ever-widening and ripening Freethought. Philosophy inspires Japan to discard old and new superstitions, and the night of ignorance, but her philosophers seem as yet blind and deaf, and failing to realize the immensity and importance of the task before them, and us. Doubt is of practical benefit to science, and philosophy: in the first, if doubt had not been allowed to enter, we might still be rolling and heaving the stones for the pyramids of some old king. Philosophy grounded on science is also the child of doubt, just as doubt is the first stroke of the hour of the death-knell of religion. Nietzsche was born of doubt. Rightly understood his "Superman" doubted, and denied, the right of one man to rule the many in thought or action. Our scholars hesitate to doubt—at least fear to express their honest and intellectual doubts. They imitate, but fear to create. To understand, even to sympathize with, every man's point of view is not to agree with him as to what he sees from that point of view, but rather, just to accompany him, provisionally, take him to a higher mountain and show him "all the kingdoms of the earth," to create in him a wider and grander conception of the universe of mind and matter. The people of Japan, like most other peoples, are all too easily deceived by the outer show and ritual of religion, mere appearances. They have not realized that Roman Catholicism stands, in one word, for the ignorance of the past against the knowledge of the present. So much deceived, perhaps, are the great majority that even a known and palpable lie seems sanctified; which enormously adds to the difficulty truth has in getting a look in; and shows with what subtlety, and certainty, the Catholic Church can calculate on the success of its pious hypnotism and legerdemain. But our philosophers support this religion, and induce, even compel, the people to do it homage. Surely our scholars are men of tears. In this life we must laugh between showers of tears, as the sun shines between showers of rain!

It is to the disgrace of civilization that Secular science, the arts and crafts, build, equip and staff colleges, while religion monopolizes and controls them for its own narrow and sectarian uses, regardless of the clamant

needs of humanity at large. Our philosophers adopt a theistic garb, also for their own particular benefit. They talk of the "return to nature," "supernature," "will to believe," "will to power," etc., all in a very confused and confusing way, and the whole is called religion. It is a false philosophy, yet Japan will not abandon such misleading teaching. The philosophy our philosophers adopt is no improvement on other philosophies or religions, but stripped of all pretension, is but primitive superstition disguised, as philosophy is, in a word, religion—a religion of the worse not the better kind, a calculated "pose" in which the professors can claim to be, at once, very "advanced," and primitively pious. The philosophy of Japan is, then, not pure philosophy, or religion, but a nauseous mixture of both, or, in other words, morality encased in superstition. False philosophy and religion, twin superstitions, each separately dealt the mortal blow, have coalesced to ward off for a time the inevitable end. We, as Freethinkers, have no use for one superstition in place of another, or for a dilution of both: mental sanitation and material progress demand that we shall get rid of all obscurantism, and so make way for the beneficent activities of science, reason, and common sense, which, given free scope at last, will harness, but not harass, the potentialities of mind and matter, resulting at length in a new world and a golden age.

The Pope still boasts himself the earthly representative of the Almighty and seems eager to enter into our politics—not we may be sure for the sake of Japan, but for the only "reason" known to it, the aggrandisement of the Holy Roman Church. Naval and military men, nobles and statesmen, are all too prone to favour such an alliance—force, and guile, and superstition—flattered by Papal deference, ignorant of Papal design, or unscrupulous for power; so Rome would smooth the way to dominion in the East, as in all other points of the compass: so we must direct the way to her downfall.

But, *Les religions se perdant!* It is time for Freethinkers in the Orient to get to work. *Les religions, toutes les religions se perdant! Au point de une moral, elle, étaient inutiles.* Time is on our side, the intellect is with us, and Freethought. YOSHIRA OYAMA.

Drama and Dramatists.

BLAKE, with his extraordinary vision, depicted Fear as existing in the abdomen. On that part of Job's body we can see the Devil dancing. If the abdomen be the seat of fear (and our own war experience bears it out), we cannot look for courage in that direction. It must exist either in the heart or in the head. Students of psycho-analysis (a science which may be the philosopher's stone) approach the subconscious with curiosity and not a little speculation. In a strictly rational sense, the knowledge gained in this field of research may prove to be the raising of devils from the hitherto unknown—to multiply the enemies of light. If we were asked for an example of this we should point to the character of "Macbeth" as what would appear to be a "Marriage of Heaven and Hell."

Frankly, we cannot hate this creation of Shakespeare; does our particular view of it decide whether we are believers in Free-will or Determinism? As a rough and ready test we think it does, without ploughing up all that Aquinas, Dante or Spinoza have said on the subject. If we incline to the former view our judgment of the Thane of Cawdor will be as vindictive and severe as that of Dante, who pictured hell as the geometrical centre of this earth. If the latter is our choice, we look on Macbeth as a creature acting in the way he did because he *must*, and we can say with Omar:—

They sneer at me for leaning all awry:

What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?

or with Heine that "God would forgive him because it was his business."

There was not a little of the heroic element in Macbeth's physical and mental torture *previous* to the murder of Duncan. He was a man with whom thought preceded action. Spenser in his writings on Irish affairs pointed out that the reverse to this was true of the typical Englishman. Macbeth's imagination was the

cause of his own sufferings—he was penalized for possessing it—he suffered agonies before the crime. We believe that Shakespeare's strength in this play lies in this fact alone—he reverses the emotional feelings of, say, a Dr. Faustus, giving his character highly imaginative power. The modern operatic "Faust" is wild oats set to music, and the whole story could be put into the play of "Macbeth" and then not be noticed.

We are disarmed at once if we want to condemn Macbeth; is he not a valiant soldier? Does he not value approval as distinct from praise? But in seeking to gratify his ambition, he goes down to the powers of darkness. As Wilde has said, "A thing done in secret will be shouted from the housetops." Duncan dead was more potent for disaster than alive. The feminine support of Lady Macbeth rather substantiates Schopenhauer's view, that woman thinks for to-day, rather than for to-morrow—this is true of Lady Macbeth, but the day after to-morrow—the murder of Banquo, of Macduff's wife and children—this wading in blood was all a sealed book to him who was suffering under the urge of ambition from a woman who looked on life with one eye.

I dare do all that may become a man,
Who dares do more is none.

These are brave words, and in truth, spoken by a brave man. It is this evidence of Macbeth's bravery that retains a grip on our sympathy—and in this respect we disagree with Dowden, who is satisfied to read in this play the usual poetic justice.

We hear of Macbeth as a brave man before the deed; we see that he is no coward after it—like "a bear tied to a stake" in his last struggle against his fate, he prevents us from getting a clear cut and definite abhorrence of him such as that generated by Iago. Macbeth's better nature became entangled with the forces of ambition. What wise man desires power? Yet Macbeth, a soldier, not a philosopher, seems unaware of the terrible chain of consequences, not knowing, that force must keep that which is taken by force.

The character of Macbeth as depicted on the stage varies with each actor. Sir Frank Benson, whom we witnessed in this part at the King's Theatre, Hammer-smith, gave it the feminine cast of weakness, of pliability, with a facial premonition of disaster as a capitulation to the unsexed Queen. The breaking in of his wife during his soliloquy in Act I., Sc. VII., shows us the King as seeing the light of the setting sun departing from the last day of his peace. His double trust to Duncan who had "borne his faculties so meek," is cancelled—these thoughts were gaining the mastery until the entry of the Queen. We see Macbeth squirm:—

We will proceed no further in this business,
but what is this to the setting on arguments of his vicious spouse? The clatter of her tongue sends the horses of reason galloping away from the unhappy King; the reins henceforth are in her hands. This was a fine scene, excellently played by the veteran Shakespearean and Miss Genevieve Townsend, whose rendering of the Queen was a masterly display of effective restraint.

It may be, that, as Dowden suggests, the sins of past centuries taint the atmosphere of to-day." Take away the religious connotation of the word "sins" and substitute "imperfections" from the sociological point of view and we agree. It may be no wild theory to consider that the dead affect the living. Macbeth was a manifestation of a weak virtue destroyed by a strong passion, and although this question is only projected on the stage, it is one that exists so long as hearts beat, and human beings have an ounce of reason to a pound of passion.

As there is nothing new under the sun, and as "all ages are equal, only genius is above its age," we will draw a bow at a venture by stating that Macbeth is Shakespeare's best subject for modern psycho-analysts on which to try their metaphysical teeth. He is not "beyond good and evil," he is not a "free spirit"—he may be, to those who do not view him as a bloody-minded King, a warning to those who seek for knowledge in strange places. Gods and Devils have their birth in the imagination; a correct understanding of this play would ensure both being still-born, and an end to the multiplication of man's oppressors. W. REPTON.

Correspondence.

EVOLUTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Another correspondent, Henry Spence, takes me to task for, as he says, "bolstering up the bad biology of the Bible and using the name of Darwin to support it." The question at issue is, whether conception in its results can be influenced by external circumstances, a theory which Mr. Spence says is "too silly for severe criticism." Candidly, I do not see how Evolution is possible upon any other supposition; it was the very accumulation of evidence upon this point that gave Evolution its strength in the philosophic world. It was a truth first glimpsed among moderns by Dr. Darwin, Charles Darwin's grandfather, and Lamarck. In the first chapter of the *Origin of Species*, Darwin says:—

As far as I am able to judge, after long attending to the subject, the conditions of life appear to act in two ways directly on the whole organism or on certain parts alone, and indirectly by affecting the reproduction system.

He further says:—

It is certain that several of our eminent breeders have, within a single life, modified to a large extent breeds of cattle and sheep.....Breeders habitually speak of an animal's organization as something plastic, which they can model as they please.

This plasticity of living organisms is seen in the domesticated animals, where man, for his own use, has developed functions that were not in use in their natural state. How these changes or variations are brought about may not be a matter of definite knowledge, but there is no question as to the fact.

Professor Huxley says:—

The cause of the production of variations is a matter not at all understood at present. Whether variation depends upon some intricate machinery—if I may use the phrase—of the organism itself, or whether it arises from the influences of conditions upon that form, is not certain, and the question may for the present be left open."

In conversation recently with a gentleman who had a wide experience in horse-breeding, he told me of an incident where they put a gentle mare to a very vicious horse, but without result. Another season they put her to a mild horse, but the offspring turned out to be a most vicious beast. He also told me of a woman who before her marriage had had relations with an Oriental, and the whole of her subsequent family showed distinct signs of an Oriental trait. I asked this gentleman his opinion of the incident of the ring-staked cattle in the Book of Genesis, and he replied that he did not think it was either impossible or improbable. I was told by another friend, of a dog-breeder who, if a bitch got astray and went with a strange dog, he would immediately have her destroyed, because he knew the subsequent strain would be tainted. Whether these results have a physiological or a psychological basis may, as Prof. Huxley says, be an open question, but of the results themselves there is no doubt.

The remarks of Mr. Spence on the embryo are interesting, but they do not affect the larger issue. I have not used any such phrase as "maternal impressions"; and the failure of Darwin to probe the mystery of "abnormal structure" does not in the least invalidate the many important truths he did establish.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

"POISONOUS" IVY.

SIR,—Why does "Mimmermus" use this term? (*Freethinker*, p. 244). Hasn't he ever seen how fond cattle are of its leaves, which they greedily devour? Has he never seen a tree covered with it in full bloom, with hundreds of bees a-humming in its blossoms? Or the blackbirds and thrushes enjoying its fruit? Bees and birds and animals do not enjoy poison! It clothes old ruins and renders them beautiful: its shelter is much appreciated by birds: its wood burns freely to give us warmth: even that ugly thing, "a brick box with a slate lid," called a house, it robs of its ugliness. "Poisonous." Never!

J. R. HOLMES.

EVIDENCE OF THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

SIR,—You, your illiterate contributors, and your abandoned readers ought to spend Easter week in Rome as I did and you would become convinced of the verity of Christianity. There is proof enough here to convince the most hardened scoffer. You may tell that heretic Bishop of Birmingham, too, that if he came here he would see the *original* manger in which Christ was born, he would see the clothes he wore, and everything which carries absolute conviction of the truth of the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, and every recorded and unrecorded miracle.

In pre-Christian days Rome was inhabited by a godless host of worthless philosophers, such as that scoundrel, Marcus Aurelius (whose statue seems to have escaped destruction) and a lot of pleasure-loving sculptors and artists, whose work can still be seen here and there grinning through from under the overlaying, far nobler, and more inspiring Christian art. Those ancient Romans did everything to make life pleasant and enjoyable. But how wonderful are the Christian saintly scenes and groups! You see Christ bleeding on the Cross, and it makes you go without your dinner; in fact, it inspires self-denial. Or you see a lot of bearded old men kneeling before a baby. What inspiration! The ancients built some wonderfully grand arches, columns, tombs, the Coliseum, but what good were they until pious Christians turned them to some use. On the top of the columns of Hadrian and Trajan you will now see statues of haloed saints. The tomb of Hadrian was converted into prisons where the Inquisition saved many a soul for Christ. You can see the torture chambers and prisons (in a small cell of which that fiend, Giordano Bruno, was confined before he was burnt, Hallilujah!). Cardinal Firnese, later Paul III., built a fortress on this tomb, where the Popes defended themselves. It is a pleasure to see everywhere the godless inscriptions and monuments of ancient Rome, broken, defaced, or turned into decent Christian Churches, where good people make pilgrimage led by holy priests.

It you could only see the Vatican and the 350 churches and cathedrals, and the devotion of the multitudes, some crawling along on their knees, others kissing bits of stones in the pavement, you could not help but do it yourself. It is wonderfully inspiring, particularly to see the ecstasy sculptured of visions of saints! I confess that I came here a wicked Atheist and am returning to join the Salvation Army. I hope this is the end of the *Freethinker* and the beginning of the *War Cry*. Let me tell you that fasting and prayer make men grow fat here; it is undoubtedly a miracle, but the priests here proved it, whereas you Freethinkers in spite of your excessive indulgence, bear a lean and hungry look.

“JOHN'S GRANDPA.”

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

SIR,—In the *Freethinker* of March 8, p. 148, “Mimmermus” states that Florence Nightingale was a heretic. As this lady is so often claimed by Christians (the old, old story) as being one of them, I shall be glad if you, or “Mimmermus,” will give me sufficient reliable information to refute this claim—or tell me where I can find it. Amongst all my pamphlets, etc., I do not seem to have anything about Florence Nightingale!

I. W. WILLIS.

HOW THOUGHT AND FREEDOM IS GROWING.

SIR,—I yesterday attended a Brotherhood meeting here in Manchester—the occasion being a farewell to the Rev. Dr. Roberts, of Union Chapel—who is removing to Glasgow. Several excellent speeches were made expressive of appreciation of the tolerant spirit of the Brotherhood and of Dr. Roberts. To my great surprise and pleasure two of the speeches were from gentleman—one who said he did not believe the things Dr. Roberts seemed to believe—and another gentleman said, “I am an Atheist, but I like the Brotherhood meeting.” I wonder if you agree with men of advanced thought attending such gatherings; these have many intellectual and social attractions. I did not speak there.

ANOTHER AGNOSTIC.

North London Branch N.S.S.

An excellent debate between Mr. Ratcliffe and Mr. Everett last Sunday brought a good audience and a fine discussion. To-day (April 26), we hold the last indoor meeting of the session. Mr. Van Biene is the lecturer and the subject is “Not Wanted Education.”—K.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7, Mr. Joseph H. Van Biene, “Not Wanted—Education.”

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham Road): 7, Mr. F. Shaller, “Romish Church Opposition to Science.”

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Rennie Smith, “Capital Punishment.”

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Right Hon. J. M. Robertson, “The Religion of Shakespeare.”

OUTDOOR.

FINSBURY PARK.—11.15, a Lecture.

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

PERSONAL.

MR. VINCENT J. HANDS desires his friends and correspondents to note the following change of address:—“The Poplars,” Rufford Park, Yeadon, Yorkshire.

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