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Views and Opinions.

An Old Game.

No one plays the game of "Heads I win, tails you lose" more assiduously and, on the whole, more successfully than defenders of Christianity. If it is a question of improvements effected in the world we are told in glowing language that we are witnessing the influence of Christianity. We had a glaring example of this when our very Christian, but political leg-pulling Home Secretary, informed a missionary meeting that all the improvements in modern society were due to churches, chapels, and missions, a statement which might lead one to the conclusion that it would be a good thing to close Parliament altogether. On the other hand, if it is the existing evils of Society that is the subject, the plea is that Christianity has never yet been tried. There has never been but one Christian, and he was crucified. Ever since, Christianity has been trying to get itself adopted, but without success. So at one moment Christianity is presented to us as the triumph of the ages, and at the next as the most conspicuous, and the most glaring failure the world has ever seen. And good Christians, with a capacity for absorbing absurdities that would be incredible if there were not so many daily and hourly examples of it, swallow both statements. It is, as Johnson said, an instance of the truth that while contradictory ideas cannot both be true, they may both inhere in the same mind. And, after all, faith in what is clearly true is of small religious value. It is faith in the incredible that is a sure indication of the profoundly religious mind.

God as Educator. * * *

Two items from the religious press set me writing the above. The first was an article in the *Christian World* advising people how to read the Bible. According to this there is a difficulty in getting people to read the Bible in the right way. They will read it as some book that was directly inspired by the Deity, containing infallible information on all sorts of subjects, on the belief in which depends their eternal salvation. And, as a result of this view, and as it is impossible for everyone to pass through life without acquiring some amount of information and developing a certain amount of common sense (it is not at all impossible with a very large number of folk) these people sooner or later discover that the Bible will not fit in

with their knowledge of the world. Then comes disbelief and rejection, and they are lost to the churches. So it appears people must be taught the modern approach to the Bible. And the modern approach is to see in the Bible the history of a people who were undergoing a special course of education at the hands of the Deity which was to lead them eventually to believe in Jesus Christ. (Bearing in mind that the people who were specially subjected to this divine education have been the most persistent of the rejectors of Christ, and are alleged to have crucified him when he came, the capacity of God Almighty as an educator does not appear to be overwhelming.) The old conception of God offended alike "the modern intellect and the modern conscience," and it must be cleared out. Apparently God meant well, but he was a shockingly bad performer.

* * *

The Artful Dodgers.

A visitor from another world would on the face of this and similar articles assume that the Christian Church was engaged in fighting a view of the Bible which a non-Christian or anti-Christian world was trying to force on it. And that is decidedly not the case. Where did the view of the Bible which the *Christian World* now declares to be a false one, come from? It came from the Christian Church. It established it; it suppressed by methods of brutal force any attempt to criticize this teaching. It established it in schools; it spent huge sums of money on teaching people to regard it as the most unquestionable of truths. Not more than a hundred years ago it sent men and women to prison for daring to publish writings attacking the "sacred" character of the Bible. And to-day the majority of the rank and file of Christians still accept the traditional view of the Bible with slight modifications. It is these people that the more astute ones are now trying to educate to another point of view. Not, they confess with charming frankness, because they are vitally interested in the truth, as such, but, they explain, because year by year a growing number of people are finding out what an absurd teaching it is, and unless the churches are careful they may throw Christianity altogether overboard. The whole tone of the article before me, the whole motive of the plea, is that people can no longer with safety be told the old story, and some new one must be found—a different message, but masked with the old name so as to conserve the vested interests that have grown up with the Christian Church. If these men were really and intelligently honest, they would tell the people that for centuries the Christian Churches have been teaching the world, and forcing the acceptance of, a lie. They would point out that but for the Christian Church the monstrous absurdity of an inspired Bible would never have dominated the Christian world; that but for the Church men would never have been placed in prison, tortured and maimed, slandered and ostracized for trying to tell the world the truth about the Bible. They would confess that of all the institutions for the cultivation of falsehood and for the suppression of

truth, none can compete with the Christian Church for the past sixteen hundred years. It is from the Christian Church that the world got this monstrous falsehood, and it is the Christian Church that is now seeking to replace it with another of the same kind, that it is hoped may serve the same purpose until that too takes its place with the mountain heap of discredited Christian teachings.

* * *

Will They Tell the Truth?

The article is headed "What the Bible Is," and that is just the one thing the article does not tell. It is the same old game, governed by the same general rules, but with a slightly different wording. There is still the same stupid cant of God's dealing with a special people for a special purpose. They are not told that there is no more reason for regarding the Bible as inspired—whether in a general or a special sense—than there is for regarding as inspired the religious legends of the ancient Aztecs, or the religious writings of the ancient Egyptians. They are not told that precisely the same stories of the creation of men and women, the fall, the virgin birth, the saviour god, the various stories of miraculous healing, etc., are found with uncivilized peoples in all parts of the world. These peoples all have the same tales to tell, they have the same conviction that their particular Joss was specially interested in them, and to one who knows the facts these stories are all of the same kind, and have precisely the same origin. How many of these smug preachers of "Christian truth"—one needs to particularise it, for it is not by nature allied to truth as ordinarily understood—how many of these teachers will have the candour to advise their hearers to consult a work such as Frazer's *Folk-Lore of the Old Testament*, where they will find the Biblical stories placed side by side with similar stories taken from all sorts of uncivilized and semi-civilized peoples? I have never come across one who has done so. What they tell the people is the minimum of truth, distorted and mis-stated, so as to enable them to accept at the same time the maximum of the historic Christian falsehood.

* * *

Christian Controversy.

The other passage that set me writing these notes also came from a religious paper—this time it was the *Church Times*. Said the editor, "Men have no right to misrepresent facts in controversial interests." That is quite golden counsel, and one can believe that at the time of writing the editor felt what he said, for he was dealing with some misrepresentations of his own position by certain other bodies of Christians. But that advice from a Christian advocate! Satan reproving sin is pale at the side of it. What has the whole history of Christianity been but one long falsification of history in controversial interests? Consider the way in which the state of the ancient world has been presented by Christian writers in order to favour the pretensions of the Christian Church. Or the number of deliberately fabricated gospels, documents, interpolations in ancient writings, etc., in order to bolster up Christian claims. Who is there who can trust a Roman Catholic when he is writing of Protestants? Or what sane person will trust a Protestant when he is writing of the Roman Church? What of the manufactured stories of death beds, etc.? In what direction is it possible to trust any Christian to tell the truth when it is to the interests of his religious beliefs to tell a lie? In sober truth there is no class of educated persons in the whole of the community with whom the standard of intellectual rectitude is so low as it is with the clergy. No politician who habitually manufactured, or circulated falsehoods about his

opponents in the way in which the clergy have done, and do, would maintain his position in public life for a year. No business man would find himself free from a lawsuit for a month. And the significant thing is that when the clergy are brought into contact with these other departments of life, they naturally conform to their codes of conduct. It is not, therefore, that the clergy are worse as men than are others, it is simply that the standard of intellectual integrity is lower with the Christian Church than it is with either the business, the literary, or the political world. One can therefore enjoy the *Church Times* admonishing other Christians that they must not misrepresent facts in the interest of controversy. It is a wise counsel, it is a good counsel, but it is not Christian. In fact, if it were adopted in a thorough-going manner it might well prove fatal to the Christian Church. And if I might offer a word of advice to the *Church Times* it would be that if it values its religion, let it not on any account counsel its teachers to speak the truth concerning it. That is the one thing that no religion the world has seen has ever been able to stand.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Christopher Marlowe.

THIS famous man flourished in the latter half of the sixteenth century (1564-1593). Born at Canterbury and educated at the King's School there, and also at Benet College, Cambridge, where he took his degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1583, and that of Master of Arts four years later. He had no wealth at his back, for his father, John Marlowe, only pursued the honourable but unremunerative trade of a shoemaker; but he had a vast and brilliant brain, which stood him in splendid stead. When his education was completed he was twenty-three years old. He had already produced and published what Swinburne calls "the first tragedy worthy of that name in our language, and called into existence that highest and most difficult of all its other than lyrical forms of verse, which alone has proved worthy of acceptance among his countrymen as the fit and adequate instrument of tragic drama." He was the greatest English dramatist before Shakespear. His first tragedy, *Tamburlaine the Great*, caused a stupendous sensation in the poetical world of that day. *Tamburlaine* was a Scythian peasant, who became a mighty monarch, "until at last, drunk, with the blood of his enemies and his own insatiable ambition, he was smitten with sickness by the Gods." This tragedy was followed by *Doctor Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta*, *Edward the Second*, and *The Massacre of Paris*. We have no space to expatiate on the merits and demerits of these tragic dramas; but we feel obliged to quote Swinburne's following estimate of *Doctor Faustus*:—

Few masterpieces of any age in any language can stand beside this tragic poem—it has hardly the structure of a play—for the qualities of terror and splendour, for intensity of purpose and sublimity of note. In the vision of Helen, for example, the intense perception of loveliness gives actual sublimity to the sweetness and radiance of mere beauty in the passionate and spontaneous selection of words the most choice and perfect; and in like manner the sublimity of simplicity in Marlowe's conception and expression of the agonies endured by Faustus under the immediate imminence of his doom gives the highest note of beauty, the quality of absolute fitness and propriety, to the sheer straightforwardness of speech in which his agonizing horror finds vent ever more and more terrible from the first to the last equally beautiful and fearful verse of that tremendous monologue which has no parallel in all the range of tragedy.

Of Christopher Marlowe's brief life very little is definitely known, and that little we owe almost exclusively to his enemies, in whose estimation he was "a filthy play-maker," and "a prophane wretch." Of course, we know from his plays that he was an unbeliever in Christianity, if not an out-and-out Atheist. To his fanatical opponents he was a wicked Atheist. They were blind to his greatness. They did not realize that he was the first, and, up to his day, greatest English dramatist, who was destined to exert an enormous influence on his own age and on generations yet to come. As Swinburne well puts it:—

The place and the value of Christopher Marlowe as a leader among English poets it would be almost impossible for historical criticism to overestimate. To none of them all, perhaps, have so many of the greatest among them been so deeply and so directly indebted. Nor was ever any great writer's influence upon his fellows more utterly and unmingledly an influence for good. He first, and he alone, guided Shakespeare into the right way of work; his music, in which there is no echo of any man's before him, found its own echo in the more prolonged but hardly more exalted harmony of Milton's. He is the greatest discoverer, the more daring and inspired pioneer, in all our poetic literature. Before him there was neither genuine blank verse nor a genuine tragedy in our language. After his arrival the way was prepared, the paths were made straight, for Shakespeare.

And yet contemporary and later writers describe him as living in debauchery and shame, and as dying through a brawl in a low tavern. Thomas Beard, a fanatic of the very worst type, writing four years after the poet's death, stated that "the Atheistical Marlowe had met a deserved end":—

But see what a hooke the Lord put in the nostrils of this barking dogge: It so fell out, that in London streets as hee purposed to stab one whome hee ought a grudge unto with his dagger, the other perceiving so avoided the stroke, that withall catching hold of his wrest, he stabbed his own dagger into his own head in such sort, that notwithstanding all the meanes of surgerie that could be wrought, hee shortly after died thereof. The manner of his death being so terrible (for hee even cursed and blasphemed to his last gaspe, and together with his breath an oath flew out of his mouth) that it was not only a manifest sign of God's judgement, but also an horrible and fearfull terrour to all that beheld him.

Thomas Beard ought to have known better, but his hatred of Marlowe was so fierce that to tell lies about him was a most delightful occupation. And there were many after him who thoroughly enjoyed playing the same nefarious game. Nearly a hundred years later Anthony à Wood wrote thus:—

For it so fell out, that he being deeply in love with a certain Woman, had for his Rival a bawdy serving-man, one rather fit to be a Pimp than an ingenious Amoretto, as Marlowe conceived himself to be.

Even Taine, the French literary historian, who wrote a history of English literature, gives the following account of Marlowe:—

He turned actor; but having broken his leg in a scene of debauchery, he remained lame, and could no longer appear on the boards. He openly avowed his infidelity, and a prosecution was begun which, if time had not failed, would probably have brought him to the stake. He made love to a drab, and in trying to stab his rival, his hand was turned, so that his own blade entered his eye and his brain, and he died, cursing and blaspheming. He was only thirty years old.

And yet there were a few who were truly his friends and admirers. One of them was Michael Drayton,

who, in his *Epistles of Poets and Poesy* (1627), spoke of him thus:—

Neat Marlowe, bathed in the Thespian springs,
Had in him those brave translunary things
That the first poets had: his raptures were
All air and fire which made his verses clear;
For that fair madness still he did retain
Which rightly should possess a poet's brain.

Now, fortunately, we are in a position to give the lie direct to the pious Thomas Beard's account of Atheistical Marlowe's death. Quite recently Dr. Leslie Hotson, of Harvard University, accidentally discovered in the Records Office references to the death of Christopher Marlowe, which he carefully examined, translated into English, and published in a small book, entitled *The Death of Christopher Marlowe*. The story told by the three witnesses of his death is found here, and we supply the summary of it as given in the *Times Literary Supplement* of May 21:—

On May 30, 1593, at about ten o'clock in the morning, Christopher Marlowe and the three men, Ingram Friser, Robert Poley, and Nicholas Skeres, all "of London," met at the house of Eleanor Bull, widow, in Deptford Strand. Here they dined, and remained all day, conversing "in quiet sort" and strolling in the garden adjoining. About six o'clock in the evening they returned to the house to sup; and there a sharp quarrel between Marlowe and Friser, anent the reckoning, terminated in the death of Marlowe, the aggressor, from a dagger-thrust of two inches depth, over the right eye. This is the tale that the law accepted. And, before the month of June was out, Friser had obtained a conditional pardon for slaying Christopher Marlowe in self-defence. These are the main facts that Dr. Hotson discloses almost without comment. It all reads very legally and neatly, and it may prove to be the final settlement of the case.

Thus we have got rid of the certain woman with whom Marlowe was said to be deeply in love, and his rival, "a bawdy serving-man, one rather fit to be a Pimp, than an ingenious Amoretto," disappears from the scene. Friser may not not have been a good man, he may have been the doer of things that deserved no better name than swindles, but he was certainly not "a bawdy serving-man," and the quarrel between him and the poet was not about a prostitute, but about money. That such a man and Marlowe could have been on terms of friendship with each other is an inexplicable wonder. They may have been brought together through their mutual connection with Sir Francis Walsingham, the Puritan. The only thing of real importance, however, is the fact that Dr. Hotson's discoveries have completely cleared Marlowe's character of the utterly groundless charges with which the Christians did their utmost to blacken it for all time.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Doctor's Diversion.

That same gentle spirit from whose pen
Large streams of honey and sweet nectar flow.

—Spenser.

He could songs make, and well endyte.—Chaucer.

In the chequered history of the Laureateship the name of Robert Bridges will be one of the titles to regard. His succession to Alfred Austin, facetiously known as "Alfred the Little," restored distinction to the post, for the present Laureate is the one classical singer we have. Though at times formal in style, his work has had great influence by its purity and delicacy, yet strength of expression. It may be that he is a poet's poet, and that the man in the street does not read him, but it is rash to apply such tests. For the author of "The Fireman's Wedding," and other strange literary idols are worshipped in the market place.

Robert Bridges's voice is individual. His lyrics do not suggest those of any other poet. His blank verse is not Tennysonian; his sonnets do not recall the masterpieces of Rossetti; his lyrics are totally unlike those of Swinburne.

The outstanding quality in the Laureate's work is the purely English character of the poems. Bridges has held the mirror up to nature. He is, perhaps, better at the small and quiet than at the broad and moving, for in the pictorial vein his scenery has none of the glorious movement of George Meredith's view. Few poets, however, have surpassed Robert Bridges at the purely native quality of his art. Shelley's wonderful verse bears a wild orchid fragrance; Keats' the perfume of a musk-rose; Wordsworth's the essence of mountain loneliness. The lyrics of Bridges are fresh with the blossoms of the English countryside. Here, for example, is a description of the north wind in October:—

In the golden glade the chestnuts are fallen all;
From the sacred boughs of the oak the acorns fall;
The beech scatters her ruddy fire;
The lime has stripped to the cold,
And standeth naked above her yellow attire,
The larch thinneth her spire
To lay the ways of the wood with cloth of gold.

The nightingale has been hymned by countless poets, and it is to the credit of Bridges that he conveys an original note:—

Alone, aloud in the raptured ear of men
We pour our dark nocturnal secret; and then,
As night is withdrawn
From these sweet springing meads and bursting boughs of
may,
Dream while the innumerable choir of day
Welcome the dawn.

The Laureate has other notes. For a contrast compare that magnificent poem, "A Passer By":—

Whither, O splendid ship, thy white sails crowding,
Leaning across the bosom of the urgent West,
That fearest not sea rising nor sky clouding,
Whither away, fair rover, and what thy quest?
Ah! soon when winter has all our vales opprest,
When skies are cold and misty, and hail is hurling,
Wilt thou glide on the blue Pacific, or rest
In a summer haven asleep, thy white sails furling?

Although "caviare to the general," Robert Bridges has written some very appealing verse beside "A Passer By." The stanzas, "On a Dead Child," haunt the memory and pierce the reader, as Newman said of old-world Horace, "with their sad earnestness and vivid exactness." They are written in unusual, but singularly effective, rhythm:—

Perfect little body, without fault or stain on thee,
With promise of strength and manhood full and fair!
Though cold and stark and bare,
The bloom and the charm of life doth awhile remain on thee.
Thy mother's treasure wert thou; alas! no longer
To visit her heart with wondrous joy; to be
Thy father's pride; ah, he
Must gather his faith together, and his strength make
stronger.

So I lay thee there, thy sunken eyelids closing—
Go lie thou there in thy coffin, thy last little bed!—
Propping thy wise, sad head,
Thy firm, pale hands across thy chest disposing.

So quiet! Doth the change content thee? Death, whither
hath he taken thee?
To a world, do I think, that rights the disaster of this?
The vision of which I miss,
Who weep for the body and wish but to warm thee and
awaken thee.

Ah! little at best can all our hopes avail us
To lift this sorrow, or cheer us, when in the dark,
Unwilling, alone we embark,
And the things we have seen, and have known, and have
heard of, fail us.

The Poet Laureate has other notes. In the writing of odes he has been very successful. The following

is from that written for the bicentenary of Henry Purcell, the famous musician:—

The sea with melancholy roar
Moateth about our castled shore;
His world-wide elemental moan
Girdeth our lives with tragic zone.

There is rare art, too, in the ode on "A Lady Whom Grief for Her Beloved Killed":—

Assemble, all ye maidens, at the door,
And all ye lovers, assemble; far and wide
Proclaim the bridal, that proclaimed before
Has been deferred to this late eventide;
For on this night the bride,
The days of her betrothal over,
Leaves the parental hearth for evermore,
To-night the bride goes forth to meet her lover.

Born eighty years ago in Kent, Robert Bridges is a man of many parts and of varied experiences. At Oxford University he distinguished himself as a scholar, cricketer, and oarsman. Then he travelled on the Continent and in the East, and on returning home studied medicine at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, took up practice, and filled several hospital appointments. Since the "early eighties" of the last century he has devoted himself to literature, and Lord Oxford, when Premier, did the right thing in appointing him to the Laureateship, an honour which drew attention to a fine but then neglected poet. Bridges' output has not been bulky, and few poets have challenged the critical public with so small a nosegay of verse. It is really difficult to believe that his early poems appeared fifty years ago, and that until his appointment as Laureate the ordinary reading public had never heard his name.

Careless of applause, he has had his reward. The little band of "Georgian" poets dedicated an anthology of their works to Robert Bridges, presumably, as the most distinguished of living English poets. It was well and happily done, for discriminating critics have always hailed Bridges as the singer who has carried on worthily the splendid tradition of English poetry, a tradition that has lasted a thousand years, and which includes some of the noblest names in the world of literature. MIMNERMUS.

The Progress of Freethought.

II.

(Concluded from page 326.)

UPON the subject of religion, as upon that of science and philosophy, Bertrand Russell is commendably outspoken. After observing that "Fear is the basis of religious dogma" (p. 19), he goes on to remark that religion has dignified certain kinds of fear, and made people think them not disgraceful. The fear of death, for instance:—

In this it has done mankind a great disservice: all fear is bad, and ought to be overcome, not by fairy tales, but by courage and rational reflection. I believe that when I die I shall rot, and nothing of my ego will survive. I am not young, and I love life. But I should scorn to shiver with terror at the thought of annihilation. Happiness is none the less true happiness, because it must come to an end, nor do thought and love lose their value because they are not everlasting. Many a man has borne himself proudly on the scaffold; surely the same pride should teach us to think about man's place in the world. Even if the open windows of science at first makes us shiver after the cosy indoor warmth of traditional humanizing myths, in the end the fresh air brings vigour, and the great spaces have a splendour of their own (Bertrand Russell, *What I Believe*, pp. 21-22).

Man has flattered himself that the world and all it contains was created for his especial benefit. Modern science emphatically rejects this view: "In the philosophy of nature," says Bertrand Russell, "we are subordinated to nature, the outcome of natural laws, and their victims in the long run." As he further points out:—

The earth is merely one of the smaller planets of the Milky Way. It would be ridiculous to warp the philosophy of nature in order to bring out results that are pleasing to the tiny parasites of this insignificant planet (p. 23).

The great world is neither good nor bad, "and is not concerned to make us either happy or unhappy. All such philosophies spring from self-importance, and are best corrected by a little astronomy."

Upon the subject of morality he is equally drastic: "Current morality is a curious blend of utilitarianism and superstition, but the superstitious part has the stronger hold." The idea that morality consists of obeying Divine commands, and that sin is something displeasing to God, must be discarded: "A man with a scientific outlook on life cannot let himself be intimidated by texts of scripture or by the teaching of the Church." He will inquire of each act if it really is harmful. For instance, if it is harmful to play on Sundays. If he does this:—

He will find that, especially in what concerns sex our current morality contains a very great deal of which the origin is purely superstitious. He will find also that this superstition, like that of the Aztecs, involves needless cruelty, and would be swept away if people were actuated by kindly feelings towards their neighbours. But the defenders of traditional morality are seldom people with warm hearts, as may be seen from the love of militarism displayed by Church dignitaries. One is tempted to think that they value morals as affording a legitimate outlet for their desire to inflict pain: the sinner is fair game, and therefore away with tolerance! (pp. 49-50).

Take the population question, for example. We find the clergy, with one or two exceptions, of all the churches, are the strongest opponents of birth control. A labourer may have a larger family than his wages can support; there will be poverty, underfeeding, overcrowding, misery, and wretchedness:—

Yet the great majority of moralists agree that the parents had better not know how to prevent this misery by preventing conception. To please these moralists a life of torture is inflicted upon millions of human beings who ought never to have existed, merely because it is supposed that sexual intercourse is wicked unless accompanied by desire for offspring, but not wicked when this desire is present, even though the offspring is humanly certain to be wretched. To be killed suddenly and then eaten, which was the fate of the Aztecs' victims, is a far less degree of suffering than is inflicted upon a child born in miserable surroundings and tainted with venereal disease. Yet it is the greater suffering which is deliberately inflicted by bishops and politicians in the name of morality. If they had even the smallest spark of love or pity for children they could not adhere to a moral code involving this fiendish cruelty (p. 51).

The great Frenchman, Gambetta, declared: "Clericalism—there is the enemy," and Bertrand Russell is of the same opinion. Clergymen, he says, fail in two ways as teachers: "They condemn acts which do no harm, and they condone acts which do great harm." For example:—

None of them condemn the brutality of a husband who causes his wife to die of too frequent pregnancies. I knew a fashionable clergyman whose wife had nine children in nine years. The doctors told

him that if she had another she would die. Next year she had another, and died. No one condemned him; he retained his benefice, and married again. So long as clergymen continue to condone cruelty and condemn innocent pleasure they can only do harm as guardians of the morals of the young (*What I Believe*, p. 55).

At the best the clergy are a useless and unproductive burden upon society. At the worst they are an active force for evil, and determined opponents of all that makes for liberty, progress, and humanitarianism.

Sir Arthur Keith's book, *The Religion of a Darwinist*, which consists of the Conway Memorial lecture for 1925, and is published by the R.P.A. at two shillings and a shilling, is more concerned with the results of his anatomical and anthropological researches; but his conclusions, as to their bearing upon religion, are quite as drastic as those of Bertrand Russell's. He describes the modern seeker after truth as refusing "to accept any explanation which involves the action of a supernatural agent, even as a last resort." And further observes:—

The ancient seeker, to explain the kingdom of life, with man as its Regent, had to call in the miracle of creation. The modern seeker finds that, although life has the appearance of the miraculous, yet all its manifestations can be studied and measured and that there is a machinery at work in every living thing which shapes, evolves, and creates. His inquiries have led him to replace the miracle of creation by the laws of evolution. Whichever department of the realm of Nature the man of science has chosen for investigation, the result has always been the same; the supernatural has given place to the natural; superstition is succeeded by reason. The world has never had such armies of truth seekers as it now has. Those equipped with ladders of science have so scaled the walls which surround cities of ignorance that they march forward in the sure faith that none of Nature's battlements are impregnable (*The Religion of a Darwinist*, pp. 63-64).

It is a pity that Professor Keith could not find a better title for his book. Why should he declare his "religious" belief, when he has no religious belief, in any true and natural meaning of the term? It smacks too much of the theological sharp practice, of twisting words to suit other meanings than those they really represent, and is quite incompatible with the spirit of truthfulness inculcated in the work itself. The enemy, we may be sure, will make the most of this quite unnecessary concession, and claim him as having *some* religion.

Nor is it only in England that the leaders of thought are speaking out. We have heard much of the condemnation of evolution by some of the colleges in America. But there is another side to this pessimistic picture, as the following extract from a work just published by those highly respectable, we might even say pious—if the editing of their well-known "Everyman Library" is anything to go by—publishers, Messrs. Dent and Co. It runs as follows:—

Dr. Irwin Edman, of Columbia University, one of the most brilliant of the rising generation of pragmatists, boldly, or perhaps I should say bravely, teaches his students that "man is a mere accident"—the most interesting and self-interested accident, no doubt, which has yet happened to matter, but, nevertheless, an accident; that immortality is a sheer illusion," and that "there is practically no evidence for the existence of God." Indeed, God, heaven, immortality, as John Smith thinks of them, and as he and his family worship, sing, pray, and build churches to them, are wellnigh eliminated from modern scientific thinking or critical philosophy.

Everett Dean Martin, Director of Cooper Union in New York City, who conducts the largest class in philosophy in the world....informs his students.... that "religion is primarily a defence mechanism,"

which man has built up subjectively.....all, not with a view of finding reality, but of continually "keeping up his courage with a picture of a universe run in his private interest—a universe as he would like to have it".....an effort of man to create a purely imaginary world, which will furnish him an escape from the hard realities of life.

We hear Professor John Broadus Watson, of John's Hopkins, leader of the behaviourist school of psychology, telling his students that "freedom of the will has been knocked into a cocked hat," and that such things as the soul, consciousness, God and immortality are merely mistakes of the older psychology (A. E. Wiggam, *The New Decalogue of Science*, pp. 234-5-6).

The same writer concludes that probably "a majority of all biologists, psychologists, physicists, and chemists, and critical thinkers generally, are either thorough-going mechanists," or have adopted some form of philosophy, "which finds little or no place for the old homely supernaturalism which has comforted Smith for ages." Listen to the tolling of the passing bell, for the dying Gods, soon to be followed by the *Dies Iraes* of their burial. W. MANN.

A Little Egotism and a Little Philosophy.

In the *Freethinker* some weeks ago the Editor expressed the opinion that Freethinkers suffer from an excess of modesty. This is only too true, especially so of individual Freethinkers when among the Philistines. As individuals we are apt to give our opponents credit for possessing the same amount of sincerity as ourselves; that is, as being earnest seekers after Truth, which, in a world of conventions and shams, of chaotic thinking, mob-thinking, and mental inertia, is a fatal mistake.

Yet as a class we may without egotism assert that we possess, and have possessed, the cream of the intellectuals—the salt of the earth. Turn to the Dictionary of Freethinkers, and see the grand array of names before which such human anachronisms as kings, popes, millionaire financiers, and the whole tag-rag and bobtail of the aristocracy of wealth and position pale into insignificance. *Real* men and women, whose brains have undergone the travail of consecutive thinking, so that might be born ideas that have altered for the better the whole outlook of the human race: the pioneers of progress.

Apart from the intellectual giants, however, I boldly assert that the average Freethinker is a greater social asset than his creed-ridden or indifferentist brother. In his search after Truth he is willing, eager, having no religious axe to grind, to make an unbiased and dispassionate examination of both sides of any question. His interest is awakened in the sciences, the arts, and life generally. As his knowledge increases so does the realization of his own ignorance; hence the appearance of a *true* modesty before the colossal ignorance of many of his bigoted and dogmatic opponents. As regards the bored, indifferent, what-does-it-matter-anyway type of person—well, he would be much more useful dead.

Incidentally, who was it but Freethinkers that forced Christians to tone down both in theory and in practice the raw savagery of their creed, and adopt a moral and ethical code, which they still insist upon miscalling Christianity, and which the majority signally fail to live up to?

Now the Freethinker's philosophy is one that should appeal to every right-thinking man. He looks upon the chaos and ugliness of modern society, the fierce and vindictive competition, the unscrupulous indi-

vidual striving after wealth and position, which, even by those who attain them, bring only a perverted idea of what real happiness should be, and he asks the mass of mankind to demand a fuller life. True happiness, he insists, can be obtained only by free mental activity. The great unrest among men, the subconscious feeling of unhappiness, so vague that they know not why they are unhappy, and—what is infinitely worse—sometimes even fail to realize their own lack of understanding, is caused only or mainly by the frustrated desire for free self-expression. And the baleful influence of repression behind it all is superstition.

To the Freethinker the only Utopia worth striving for is one where the attainment of ultimate perfection is realized as being impossible, but where ever increasing perspectives of individual self-expression open out to infinity.

Above all, in the words of Carlyle, he counsels "Where thou findest a Lie that is oppressing thee, extinguish it. Lies exist there only to be extinguished; they wait and cry earnestly for extinction. Think well, meanwhile, in what spirit thou wilt do it; not with hatred, with headlong selfish violence; but in clearness of heart, with holy zeal, gently, almost with pity. Thou wouldst not *replace* such extinct Lie by a new Lie, which a new Injustice of thy own were; the parent of still other Lies?"

Those who lie to the glory of God, please note.

W. THOMPSON.

Acid Drops.

Our Home Secretary has been distinguishing himself lately with addresses at various religious gatherings. His latest one is an address to the London City Mission. He said there had been a great improvement in the lives of the people of this country, and he believed this was due to the work of the Churches, chapels, and gospel missions. There is no limit to the nonsense a politician will talk when he goes round angling for the support of organized religious bodies. Otherwise Sir William Joynson Hicks might have reflected that churches and chapels are not new things. They have always been with us, and that being the case it looks rather curious that things should have been as bad as they have been or even as they are. The efforts of churches, chapels, and gospel missions to make people better is just about as effective as taking a cup of water from the Thames and purifying it would have on cleansing the river. If Sir William's theology is an index of the intelligence he brings to bear on social matters, the sooner he retires from Parliament the better.

Really, and seriously, this endeavour of politicians of every party to exploit religious organizations is one of the most dangerous features of our present political life. We do not think for a moment that these men usually believe what they say. One cannot readily assume them to be quite so silly as that would imply. But politicians want the support of these organized religious bodies, and they know that on the whole they represent, *en masse*, the least intelligent vote in the community. And so from the extreme Socialist on the one side to the extreme Conservative on the other we find them all at it. It is a game to catch votes, and if this kind of thing develops the possession of the vote may well prove itself to be one of the most dangerous instruments yet devised for the deterioration of the people. The value of the vote lies in the intelligence behind it. And its power for harm is exactly equal to its power for good. We agree with George Eliot that we are so impressed by the power of knowledge that we completely overlook the tremendous power of ignorance.

A rumour was current recently that Mr. George Bernard Shaw was about to join the Roman Catholic Church.

Mr. Shaw said he was interested in hearing the news—for the first time. Converting men after they are dead is an old trick with Christians, and it is much safer than converting them while they are alive. The corpse cannot speak for itself; the living man or woman can. All the same, becoming a Roman Catholic is the kind of joke that G. B. S. might be capable of, and if he did perpetrate it one might be quite certain that Christians, with their traditional lack of humour, would take it quite seriously.

A trial is about to take place in Tennessee, bringing to a head the controversy which has so long raged between the Modernists and the Fundamentalists. The victim selected by the Public Prosecutor is Mr. J. T. Scopes, a biologist; and his offence consists in having taught the theory of evolution in defiance of a law recently enacted by the Tennessee Legislature, which forbade the exposition in any educational institution receiving support from public funds of theories holding that man is descended from the lower animals. The persecution is supported by most of the religious organizations in Tennessee, where Baptists and Methodists are particularly numerous. William Jennings Bryan, who is at the head of the militant Fundamentalists, announced in Philadelphia that he had volunteered his services as associate counsel in support of the State. Speaking to a conference of Fundamentalists he declared that the scientists of America were dishonest scoundrels, afraid to tell their beliefs, burrowing below the ground, and stealing away the faith of their children. Mr. Bryan was formerly U.S.A. Secretary of State.

The American Civil Liberties Union, which is supporting Scopes, rightly declares that the Tennessee law stifles free speech, free thought, and freedom of religious opinion. It would be very useful, we believe, if the facts of this prosecution were widely advertised in this country. Here, fortunately, the religious bigots are neither so numerous nor so powerful as they are in the United States, with the result that we have more freedom of speech in this country. But this persecution of a science teacher in Tennessee proves one thing for which we have often contended in this journal. The Christian spirit of persecution and intolerance of opinions that clash with its own metaphysics is as vicious to-day as it was in the dark ages. Christians, where they have the power, are as ready as ever they were to suppress non-Christians and the spirit of free inquiry by brute force. Only, unlike America, in England Secularism has so permeated our public life that the Christians no longer dare openly to attempt by legal processes to suppress Freethought and scientific investigations. In America they have the numerical strength to do that, and they have, as this trial shows, no qualms about using their power. We hope that after this latest example of Christian intolerance those well-meaning people who ascribe the hideous persecutions carried through by the various Christian organizations in the past as being the product of rude ages and not of "true Christianity" will reconsider the matter. Here, in a State as civilized and modern as our own, Christians are in real power. And they abuse their power to persecute a man who is teaching what the whole educated world has long ago accepted as scientific truth. Surely it must be plain to the most amiable person that the persecuting spirit of Christianity arises not from imperfections of human nature, not from a rough and primitive civilization, but from its own nature. Whenever and wherever Christianity has had the power to suppress any truth inimical to itself, it has ruthlessly used that power. And the only way to establish real freedom of thought is to abolish the Christian religion.

We see that Mr. W. Jennings Bryan has been engaged to defend the action of the anti-evolutionists. Mr. Bryan, who probably has a great liking for the simian world, has always resented its being saddled with the responsibility for the existence of American Christians, and he is therefore a fit man for the job. Mr. Bryan says that of the students who enter American colleges 15 per cent. have no religious faith, and by the time

they have finished their course the percentage has trebled itself. On the facts, therefore, Mr. Bryan is warranted in demanding that all genuine knowledge be withheld from these students. If they are to keep Christian something must be done, and Mr. Bryan and his friends are going the right and honest way of doing it. He should have the support of every Christian in America. Their battle cry should be "Let us be ignorant and Holy, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

A friend of Mr. Bryan has turned up in this country. Miss Owen, a Spiritualist medium, told a Memorial Hall audience that she had had messages from a number of well-known men, and, among others, from Charles Darwin. He was full of remorse because he had left out the Divinity. That settles it. And we are quite sure that for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle it will be conclusive.

In Russia, since the death of Lenin, an attempt was being made to substitute a creed of Leninism for Christianity, said Mr. Stephen Graham, the well-known writer, in an address recently to ministers and delegates to the Assembly of the Congregational Union of England and Wales at the Memorial Hall. "Holy corners," he said, were now dedicated in the name of Lenin instead of Christ, and people were supposed to take off their hats in these "holy corners" as if they were in the presence of God. With all due respect to Mr. Graham, we suggest that he is talking hysterical nonsense, created by two factors—his hatred of the present social system in Russia, and his desire to ingratiate himself with his clerical audience. And, after all, it is a good deal more reasonable for admirers of Lenin to raise their hats reverently before memorials to their late leader than it is for Christians to uncover "in the presence of God." There is no question about Lenin's existence—there is, to say the least of it, considerable question as to whether Christ actually existed, or whether there is a God. And although we have no desire to associate ourselves with Lenin's social theories, we think it must be admitted that he exerted an enormous influence upon European affairs, and was in that sense a "great man." At any rate, if his disciples desire to pay a tribute to one whom they respect, instead of paying it to an abstraction called God, we suggest that it is, at the very least, impertinent for a foreigner like Mr. Graham to denounce them. If Mr. Graham cares to stand opposite the Cenotaph any day for a few minutes he will see plenty of his countrymen who show their respect for those who died in the Great War by raising their hats.

Mr. George Bernard Shaw, in a letter to the *Times*, is of the opinion that the house shortage may cause an outbreak of smallpox. At some distant date we may have the pleasure of being informed by some Right Reverend that the visitation of this scourge is the "Will of God." Here in practical form is the conflict of science and religion.

Following on the report of the *Daily Express* regarding the death of the late Mr. Whale, we may now read that the Rev. Charles Brown, Vicar of Ramsay St. Mary, near Peterborough, was discovered dead in the vicarage gardens with a rifle by his side. We do not expect a silk purse from the *Daily Express*, but, if its regard for fair play equalled its printed regard for the Christian deity, it would give the above report the same prominence. The consolations of religion are not much in evidence in this case, and it is for the professional or Press Christians to explain this phenomenon as it endeavoured the other. And when this is done someone ought to be called in to explain the explanation.

The Bishop of Durham, evidently gravelled for matter in his own immediate business, vigorously relieved himself of his opinions on scandalous suits in the Divorce Court. Says he:—

The constant publication of all such moral sewage is defiling, making society worse than it would otherwise be.

Now this is a Christian country, we have no lack of professional and lay guardians of morals, and we suggest that the quickest way to adjust matters is to put the professional Christians on half-pay until public morals show an improvement. We strongly recommend payment by results, and more efficient work with the shepherd's crook.

Sir Richard Gregory, D.Sc., F.R.A.S., in his *Daily Herald* article, "Religion and Science: An Appeal to the Churches," evidently does not attach much value to the mentality of his readers. From second-rate evangelical verbosity we take this bulk sample:—

Only by this means, and the regard for truth which guided Huxley's life, can the more intelligent members of a Christian congregation be kept within the fold.

Huxley, with his respect for truth, as an ally of the Church, is distinctly funny, and when his works are as popular as the Sunday Press more people will see the joke.

A new Bill is being brought forward in Parliament by Mr. Edward Wood, dealing with the subject of Tithes. The object of the Bill is to fix the tithe as at present, but for the future the clergy are to be freed from payment of rates on these. This, if it becomes law, is only one more illustration of the manner in which religion in this country is subsidised by the State. Already the freedom from rates and taxes which the churches and chapels enjoy throws a burden of millions every year upon the rest of the community. And yet we pride ourselves that we are not priest-ridden.

Last Sunday was celebrated at Wembley as Empire Day. This is the only occasion on which the clergy will permit Wembley to be opened on Sunday. When it is a question of the people enjoying themselves they say it shall not be opened. When it is a matter of their religious business getting a gigantic advertisement no objection is raised, although there is the same objection to its being opened on Sunday as there is to its being opened on any other day. Decidedly, we are not priest-ridden! Let an Englishman sing "Britons never shall be slaves," and you may load him with chains an inch thick. So long as the priests allow him to say that England is not priest-ridden they can do just as they please.

We have often remarked on the character of our present newspaper press, and two of our "great" men have enlightened us as to what their ideals have been in that direction. One of these "great" men, the late Lord Northcliffe, is said to have avowed his intention of producing a paper that should satisfy servant girls. By this he meant that he would run a paper that would make its appeal to the lowest intelligence in the community, rather than to the higher. Now another one of these giants, Lord Beaverbrook, explains that he follows Lord Northcliffe in working to gain the good will of the great drapery stores. He explains, in the *Daily Express*, that it has been "a long and uphill struggle" to attain his ideal, but he has got there. One feels that one ought to sympathize with these "great" men and the strain on their gigantic intellects to see that their newspapers fall into line with the ideals of a drapery store. For getting the goodwill of the draper means getting editors and writers who will say nothing that will offend the drapery store proprietor. It is the draper who really runs the papers, Lord Beaverbrook and his kind only carry out his unwritten instructions. And Lord Northcliffe and Lord Beaverbrook are two of our great men. Were they not raised to the peerage? Was not Lord Northcliffe buried in Westminster Abbey? Above all have they not made money? And what better testimony of greatness could one offer in a Christian country? All the same, one suspects that in a society where intellectual ability was genuinely honoured these men would be very small beer indeed.

For the fourth time the magistrates of Littlehampton have refused to allow picture palaces to be open on Sunday. There appears to be a majority of the residents who are in favour of the places being opened, but the whole of the clergy of the town are against it, and instructed a solicitor to fight the matter on their behalf. The whole of the Town Council are also in favour of their being opened. But the parsons will not have it, and one may assume that they have managed to get the magistrates on their side. We should very much like to know what chapels or churches these magistrates attend. We again suggest to the cinema proprietors that they should just go ahead and open their places, and tell the parsons and their friends to go to the devil. We feel certain that if someone only had the courage to do this the opposition would have to give way. And the cinema proprietors represent a body with plenty of money behind it to fight the case if a test one were tried.

Mrs. Patrick Maylie, of Backworth, Northumberland, has recovered her voice after "practically losing her voice" for some years. She says it is all due to the prayers of some nuns, and now she says she has had their prayers answered. Of course, we believe it, but there are one or two points about which we are curious. The first is the time it has taken. Did it take a year for the Lord to make up his mind about Mrs. Maylie's case, or has he only just heard about it? Or did nuns pester him into giving way? Women are very persistent, we know, and it certainly looks as though in this respect even the deity has to surrender to the same force before which many a man gives way. And what does the "practical" loss of voice mean? It looks as though Mrs. Maylie may have had some slight nervous affection, and never really lost her voice at all. In that case the miracle is not much, and she is only making the deity look ridiculous.

We have been accused of sarcasm when we said that according to Christian Socialists Christ came from heaven and was crucified in order to institute a system of municipal tramways and a scheme of main drainage. And yet in all seriousness F. J. Bucknall writes in *Lansbury's Weekly* that the Kingdom of God meant to Christ an International Worker's Commonwealth. So here we have in cold blood what we said in a spirit of gentle satire. What a pity it is that these people are not blessed with some little sense of humour!

One of the States in America has made it illegal for any teacher to instruct his pupils in the hypothesis of evolution. In South Africa a local paper, *Die Outdshoorn Courant*, writes that something must be done to protect the "virtue" of children in the schools, and everyone should work to pass a law that would make it unlawful for teachers to be appointed who "deseccate our Sabbath, despise our Bible, and who dethrone our Saviour." There is not really much difference between Christians wherever one comes across them. Their ultimate argument is force in one form or another. And we should be the last to declare them to be in the wrong. All history proves that once the protecting arm of the policeman is withdrawn, Christianity begins to fall to pieces. It must prevent the truth about religion reaching the people by some means or other, and any means that does this is only force disguised or openly applied.

A woman recently complained to a magistrate that she had been called a Sunday School teacher. We quite sympathize with her feelings on being called such. But we have had much the same experience with some would-be amiable people who have told us they thought we were as good as a Christian. Ye Gods! And they thought they were paying us a compliment! We could only feel as David Hume did when someone resented his being called St. David. Never mind, said he, there's many a better man than we been called a saint. And it is distressing to think of the many good men who have been called Christians by careless or wicked people.

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.

F. S. T.—Certainly, sentence should read as amended.

S. F. ELLIS.—Some people are mentally hopeless. They simply go on repeating the same thing, quite oblivious of all that has been and may be said against it. Why not try to wake up the movement in Belfast. We would do anything we could to help, and the whole of Ireland sadly needs active Freethought work.

B. SMEDLEY.—The confusion lies with man as an individual and man as a member of and representing the race. Individually there is no evidence of progress on the part of the individual for thousands of years. But socially and collectively the man of to-day has greater knowledge and greater power than he ever had in the past. Progress is a social phenomenon, not an individual one.

L. TAYLOR.—Thanks. Perhaps if someone were to deluge the place with copies of the *Freethinker* that might have a salutary effect on the bigots. We would send copies of the paper if you could arrange for their distribution.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (May 31) the National Secular Society holds its annual Conference in London. The morning and afternoon meetings—10.30 and 2.30—will be held in the Palm Court of the Grafton Hotel, Tottenham Court Road. This will be for members only, and we hope to see a good muster of them from both London and the Provinces. Admission will be by member's card. On Saturday evening the President, Secretary, and members of the Executive will be at the Grafton Hotel to meet friends at 7.30. Sunday, with its three meetings, gives but little time for friendly intercourse, it is well for Freethinkers to meet each other on other than a business or propagandist footing.

The evening meeting will be, as usual, a public one, full particulars of which will be found on the back page of this issue. There is a good list of speakers, and we hope to see a good muster of London Freethinkers and their friends. It is not often that Londoners have the chance of listening to so many Freethought speakers in the course of a single evening, and they should make the most of the opportunity. The demonstration will be held in the Scala Theatre, Charlotte Street, Tottenham Court Road, a spot easily accessible by tram, 'bus, and train from every part of London. In spite of the fine weather, the meeting should be a record one.

We have had promises from several of our readers to act as advertising agents for the *Freethinker* in their localities. We are confident that if each one will take up the work of making the *Freethinker* better known than it is, we shall feel very soon the beneficial results of what they are doing. It is the only kind of advertising that at present we can afford.

Mr. George Whitehead has just issued a new booklet entitled *Birth Control and Race Culture: the Social Aspects of Sex*. It is a suggestive and informative essay, dealing largely with Eugenics, and emphasizing the social aspect of the question. Mr. Whitehead writes without heat or extravagance, and his work is the better and the more readable on that account. The book is published at 1s., and can be obtained either direct from the author at 24 Holly Park Road, London, N., or from our publishing office.

Our readers will, we feel sure, regret with us that calls in other directions will prevent Mr. J. Bryce continuing his series of articles on Ethics, which have been running through these columns. Although each article was complete in itself, they yet formed connected essays on a highly important subject, treated in a fresh and suggestive manner. We shall welcome Mr. Bryce's reappearance in these columns.

To the mass of people nothing is so costly as thought. The fact that, taking the world over, ninety-nine people out of a hundred accept the creed to which they were born exemplifies their mental attitude toward things at large. Nearly all of them pursue mechanically the routine to which they have been accustomed, and are not only blind to its defects, but will not recognize them as defects when they are pointed out.—*Herbert Spencer*.

Rationalism leads men on all occasions to subordinate dogmatic theology to the dictates of reason and conscience. It predisposes men, in history, to attribute all kinds of phenomena to natural rather than miraculous causes, and in ethics to regard as duties only those which conscience reveals to be such.—*William Edward Hartpole Lecky*.

Religion in Schools.

WITH the important and immediate problem of what teachers' salaries and conditions should be, the subject of what they should teach has been gradually forced into the background.

So far as the teaching of religion in schools is concerned, county and local authorities have, I think, adopted a fairly rational and sensible course.

It is not, however, to the county and local authorities that we must look in order to find the cause by which children of to-day are having their minds poisoned by religious nonsense.

If we wish to uproot the cause; if we wish to abolish the religious sentimentality and superstition from the minds of men and women of to-morrow, we must concentrate on those Roman Catholic schools and convents where the teaching is wholly carried out by "Brothers" and "Sisters."

The class-rooms of these schools are, more often than not, unsuitable for teaching; the walls are literally covered with pictures of saints already on their way to Heaven, or in that state of glorious martyrdom which leads to the celestial regions.

Then there are miniature altars to Jesus or Mary or Joseph. These altars, placed symmetrically and conspicuously, are decorated with flowers and candles bought with the pennies, halfpennies, and even farthings which children are exhorted to bring, and which they have proudly collected for this purpose.

When November comes round prayers for the poor souls in Purgatory are said, and the parents of children are approached with a view to obtaining money for masses. The price of these masses coincides with the price of food, and may vary from about 15s. to a modest half-crown. This is considered cheap, however, as a soul (and sometimes more) is freed out of the depths every time a mass is performed. The natural result of this practice is that a spirit of favouritism is set up amongst the holy teachers and their frequent contributors. Those children whose parents cannot afford to pay, or do not care to pay, are often neglected and held to scorn and derision by the rest of the school. A list of those who give is kept that each may know what others have put forward. This is profitable, because a keen competition ensues between children to see who, at the end of the month, tops the list!

But this is by the way. It merely illustrates the type of feeling which is primarily created among pupils who, as a result, care more about what they have given for "the good cause" than for the result of an examination which they have had in other subjects.

Little else than Church history is taught in these schools, and this comprises what is called the Catechism and Scripture History. The Bible is not given to pupils, and the text-books in other subjects are all carefully prepared and edited by a Catholic writer and Press. The time devoted to non-religious subjects in these convents and schools is negligible, and the children, in the space of one lesson to another forget what they have previously learnt.

This renders the outlook of the elder children narrow and restricted; the love of art and literature is stifled. If the boy or girl who leaves school has not begun to think for himself or herself, they will be totally unfit for the struggle which is awaiting them.

There are people who think that the moral character of their children is specially cultivated in these religious schools.

This is hardly possible, first, because the children are being taught a subject which they are forced into, and which they dislike; and, secondly, because in the whole period of their schooling they never

understand, in fact, it is preposterous they should understand, what they are taught.

The Catechism and Scripture History (which form the whole of the "moral teaching") are learnt mechanically and are answered mechanically. The words are memorized, but the meaning is neither understood nor inquired into. And it is, perhaps, better that the children should not understand. It is better that they should not know what they mean when they say that the Son of God was made man by the power of the Holy Ghost born of the Virgin Mary . . . , etc., etc.

It is unfair, of course, to class these convents and schools as being all alike, and a word must be said of the integrity and resource of some of these religious teachers. The majority are certainly well fitted to teach so far as the narrow scope of their subjects is concerned, and there are those who are broadminded enough to give only that amount of religious teaching which is absolutely enforced.

One must consider, however, that although kindness is usually shown to children, especially in their first years of school, this is more than eclipsed by the horror and fear which is constantly being instilled in their minds by stories of a monstrous omnipotent God and of his rather more gruesome but courageous enemy, the demon.

Again, as I have remarked, little is taught except this tomfoolery, and, officially, the showing of pupils from these schools in the large public examination bodies is extremely poor, and even the result of that few leaves little to be hoped for.

All this nonsense must be rooted out. We must see that children are taught things that are moral, beautiful, and interesting, and not those things that horrify and stay their talent at its birth.

The only remedy is to see that children are put into schools which have a better type of education to offer, or to enforce periodical examinations in non-religious subjects by a local authority. G. B.

"I Do Not Speak as a Christian."

A stout, fluffy-wigged negroid woman stood at a gloomy doorway, and looked up the street, where children, clad in rags and spotted with sores, tumbled and laughed and yelled—far happier for the moment, at any rate, than I, who silently uttered damnation on the social conditions of Bristol slums. Haggard women held babies who had been born, one might say, into disease and, even as infants, were about to be crucified on the cross of poverty; and cracked walls and broken windows glared bitterly at the scene of human wreck. A wretched lane was named "Hampton Court," as if it was misery's grin at the elegant water-side gardens and palace-bowers of kings and queens. A dirty glass door was plastered with the announcement of a Bible Class. At a street corner I beheld an inscription directing the plague-stricken inhabitants "To the Tabernacle," and I walked down the infernal thoroughfare, and saw the House of God, whose dull, stuccoed front grimaced at the accursed dens in which humanity died its living death. On the front appeared the date—"1753." I suppose that in 1753 the Tabernacle pulpit promised salvation to Bristol, and, in May, 1925, the Tabernacle smiled its idiot smile amid the slums, and Bristol Christians were cheerily singing A. C. Ainger's hymn:—

God is working his purpose out as year succeeds to year;
 God is working his purpose out and the time is drawing near;
 Nearer and nearer draws the time, the time that shall surely
 be,
 When the earth shall be filled with the glory of God as the
 waters cover the sea.

And the unemployed of Bristol city trudged by, keeping melancholy step to the sweet tune of God and God's Englishmen.

"Christ, the Lord of All Life"—so ran the motto of the Crusade Mission (Anglican and Free Church) held in the city at the time of my visit. As the slums expressed a kind of life, Christ was its Lord; and the slums in no wise sapped, by their foul influence, the faith of the Crusaders; for the merry song of God's glory which I have just quoted was included in their *Illustrated Handbook* (S.P.C.K., 8 Park Street, Bristol, 2d.). I will, however, gladly acknowledge that in this handbook the Rev. G. A. Studdert Kennedy frankly confesses the failure of the parsons:—

The Church has had a great multitude of these men in black coats running round in the slums and filthy alleys of our great cities, and no one will ever know how much they have done, and how they have comforted and helped those who were almost broken by life's battle.....There have been saints; but the Church ought to do more. It must do more. It must show that Christ has something more to give, something more to do with these evils than these pitiful patches on a rotten old garment.

Now, those words of Kennedy's were spoken in a good spirit. And when I heard that certain Crusader priests would publicly meet the challenge of certain Labour advocates, I made my way to the Colston Hall, and found an immense crowd awaiting the debate.

For Labour, rose up R. Neft. He affirmed that Socialists had revealed and described the Class Struggle, not created it; and they wanted to end it by placing the wealth produced by the community at the general service of the community, and by abolishing both poverty and the riches enjoyed by a minority alone. He would not be put off with mere Gospel assurances. "Show me," he exclaimed, "the party which, in the Gospel's name, is prepared to offer the country a policy—a practical economic policy—as a remedy for the shame of unemployment and poverty." What particularly struck me in Neft's speech was his plain and blunt utterance: "I do not speak as a Christian." I thought of the struggling Trade Unionists and Chartists and Owenites of several generations ago, and of the contumely poured upon them by the Church dignitaries. Those proletarian fathers would have been gratified to see Neft—Labour man and non-Christian—coolly facing, amid the approbation of a multitude, the representatives of the Gospel.

To Neft replied, quite honestly and straightforwardly, the Rev. A. J. Wade-Gery, who even stated that he was a Socialist—Christian Socialist. As, point by point, he coincided with Neft's attack on social evils, and agreed that the Churches had fallen dreadfully short of their duty on the side of economics, I waited, with peculiar interest, for his final revelation of the theological Socialist's mind. The *Bristol Times*, whose account agrees with my own notes, thus reports the amiable priest's closing sentences:—

He did not know that it was really fair to say that the Socialist Party, of which he humbly included himself as a member (Socialist cheers), only came in to do their job because the Church had failed. He thought it was right to say that if the Church had never preached the principles of Christ's Gospel the Socialist Party would never have come into being. He did not think that the Church should turn out of the Church all the people who did not agree with the Labour policy. He believed that no progress would ever be made except by the power of God working through men, and if they believed in the grace and power of God he did not see how they could find a more practical endeavour towards solving the problem. They felt that they were working at the root of it. Many people had no idea of the tremendous revolution that had taken place in the Church during their lifetime with regard to the

question of the social order, and there was real hope for the future.

In effect, then, Mr. Wade-Gery's rejoinder amounted to a dual assertion—(1) That Christian ethics prepared the way for the Socialist ethics; and (2) That Christian ethics can save civilization from the evils which civilization endures, and only the Christian ethics can really do it.

I believe a great many critics of orthodoxy would spend a large part of their debating time in contesting the first part of the assertion as to the preparatory value of the Gospel. Such a method, though perfectly allowable on grounds of free inquiry, does not attract me. With Auguste Comte I "hold all phases of the past in honour," and I recognize in all forms of religion a contributory merit in the unfolding of civilization, just as I recognize merit in the political parties whose programmes I do not support. This aspect of the debate, however, I will not stress. I prefer to pass to the second, and to emphasize a point which might possibly be unnoticed.

The point is this: The Church has not made its claim to social overlordship good until, besides offering a noble ethics, it offers a practical plan of reform and reorganization on the economic and material basis. In order to make my contention still clearer, I will also say that a similar challenge applies to every form of non-Christian ethics. I think the world is very much overloaded with moral preaching, whether Christian or non-Christian.¹ In a certain quite valid sense the human race is moral enough at heart; but what it needs is an intelligent, shrewd, and scientific policy for the realization of its morality in daily life and institutions—in a competent supply of food, housing, clothing, education, and recreation for every citizen in every community.

"In that case," some orthodox reader may comment, "all reformers, Christian or non-Christian, are in the same boat, and the reproach of the slums lies against all alike."

It does truly lie against us all, I freely admit. I am not a Christian; and every time I pass stinking dens, such as I see in Bristol (and in Whitehaven, Dundee, Glasgow, Liverpool, and the rest), I damn myself for not more effectively aiding the liberation. But the reproach does not lie against all alike. In an incomparable degree, it lies most heavily upon the Churches, which claim the All-seeing and Almighty God as their Patron and Leader, their universal Dictator and infinite Official—in short, their irresistible Agent for translating moral values into social and political realities. Please let me repeat this central doctrine—the Churches give us to understand that God is "their irresistible Agent for translating moral values into social and political realities." I cannot let even a Positivist or an Atheist pass unrebuked if he utters moral maxims, and neglects a material and economic programme; and yet he claims no wisdom or skill but what is simply human. Is it, therefore, common-sense to let the Christian pass without a tremendously larger rebuke, when this Christian tells us he is allied with the God of Creation, Heaven, Earth, Past, Present, Future, Destiny, Wrath and Thunder, Life and Death, Evolution and Dissolution? What! God can make a nebular system, and ride the skies in a chariot of glory, and yet cannot frame a workable proposal (through his mouthpiece, the Church) for cleaning out the slums of Bristol? What! God can administer the affairs of innumerable flaming suns, and order the utmost reaches of Space and Time, and

¹ This remark may astonish various friends who know that for many years I have been concerned with ethical education; but it would be out of place to enter here on an explanation of a statement which, nevertheless, I make in all seriousness.

yet cannot whisper to his dear Churches and Christian Ethicists a business plan for providing every man on earth with proper meals and a happy dwelling? What! God can design Eternities, and cannot produce a design for a better Bristol? F. J. GOULD.

The Epochs of God.

To my present reflection they are three in number—the Fall, the Flood, the Atonement; failures all, surely foredoomed to failure, for his worshippers have so embarrassed God with “attributes” that he cannot be a mere experimenter. But the great mass of simpler, let us say, primitive Christians still believe that Eden, the Ark, and the Messiah, are historical facts. It may seem incredible, but get down to the average Christian and you will quickly see where he, and you, are. The mountain is high, the gulf is wide that separates, and just so our little faith, out little freethought, divides us one from another. You argue, you get eager, angry, indignant; you smile at last, and relax your grasp on the braining instrument, and reflect, “I might have known” you had been driven back a thousand times from the stronghold of holy ignorance; pious intelligence you had found almost as hopeless for it had abandoned belief in those epochs of God but feared to announce, or even to feel, the epoch of man. My neighbour had run out of something to read—a thing that, I fear, will never happen to me—something to amuse rather than instruct, so I did not give him strong meat; besides I felt sure he must be at least semi-empowered, so merely added a casual copy of the *Freethinker*. On his returning the provender I asked had he read the *Freethinker*? Yes, he said, but I did not like it; and by the same token I knew the sword was keen as ever, the skull as invulnerable. These epochs of God I told my friend were all in vain, any saving of the world, any progress we had made was not owing to them; were the same world started *de novo* the same inexorable natural law of cause and effect would obtain with the same results. But, he said, “we are told,” “we are supposed to believe” so-and-so, and so-and-so. But why be “told” and why be “supposed,” I called to him on his departure, why not think for yourself? Is not my thinking, for instance, as virtuous and as intelligent as that of those who know no more than I or you do about those things you have been told and supposed to believe, and by those who have been “told” and “supposed” in their turn, back to primeval ignorance, the source of all our “advanced” religions of to-day?” Which brings me to:—

THE EPOCH OF MAN.

Like a missionary to the Heathen—how grateful and comforting was the message—of a fellow townsman of mine, an extremely well-grounded Freethinker, with a robust and ready genial wit, and who, by the way, is this year's President of the Scottish Esperanto Congress, to be held at Largs on June 6, and when asked to fill a gap on the local I.L.P. platform, chose for his subject, “Freethought and Poetry.”

From the very outset our friend did not mince matters and yet was well received. Reciting significant passages from *Queen Mab*, he referred to the youthful Shelley's wonderful grasp of scientific fact in that amazing phantasy of a boy of eighteen. Dealing with historic epochs, leading on to Freethought and the critical spirit as we know it to-day, Mr. Stevenson, with the veracity and modesty of the scholar, acknowledged his indebtedness to the work

of the Right Honourable J. M. Robertson (born at Shiskine, Arran), *i.e.* *A Short History of Freethought*, and gave a brief and brilliant summary of that very able work. Beginning with one of the earliest recorded freethought poets, the noble Roman, Lucretius, the lecturer referred to the rise and fall of ancient civilizations and the great philosophers of those ancient cultures, the incursion of barbarism, the rise of Christianity, the Dark Ages, Constantine, and Gibbon, the Renaissance and the critical spirit—reflected gleams of ancient learning—the Deistic movements, the rising intelligence of the race, dissatisfied with even that, the scientific Atheism of men like Spencer, Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, and a host of others, up to philosophers like Foote and Bradlaugh—epochs of man, of epoch-making men, establishing firmly and fully at last the critical spirit, in the light of which the theological epochs of God take their proper place with the fairy tales which even children do not believe.

It just occurs to me (at the end of this brief article) that in lieu of the climax, or peroration, the writer with an “ear for music” always seeks, one might do worse than commend Robertson's *History of Freethought* as a useful companion to the lecturer who may be for the moment short of a subject for the Secular platform. Such a book will “keep him on the rails” with what he knows already, and be, for speaker and hearer alike, one of the best examples of the historical method and the critical spirit; even Mr. Robertson's “cold reason” which has lately chilled a lukewarm scribe of the *Daily Herald*.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Books and Life.

SPECULATIONS on the unknown are not quite the same as speculations on what is known to a few, yet unknown to the many. There are many men who believe they are just about to discover the secret of perpetual motion, but a wise providence has carefully concealed it, in the same way that it will not hand over the management of the weather to the newspapers. Men have barked their intellectual shins over the question—not the problem—of immortality, and this summer will see the death of millions of moths who have been unable to inherit a knowledge of the fact that the flame of a candle is anti-social to the pretty little blossoms of colour that find work for tailors. At a time when mankind is in a valley, and peers have descended to writing journalese for Sunday papers, and culture must be whispered in corners, Mr. E. S. P. Haynes has revised a second edition of his book, entitled *The Belief in Personal Immortality*,¹ and, in his introduction, he sounds a note on a question that is ever present in the minds of all good men who believe in the aristocracy of their own species. Giving a practical value to this question he states: “If, therefore, increasing doubt as to the reality of a future life in any respect reinforces the efforts of men and women who are working to save the human race from the wholesale suicide of another war, my labour may to this limited extent be not altogether wasted.”

Most of the arguments and reasoning against the possibility of the continuity of existence are familiar to our readers. People who do not meddle with eternity can see their sure and certain immortality in the faces and forms of their children, and, relatively, the present numbers constituting mankind must be living in paradise as compared with that of our illustrious ancestors, who had to catch their dinner. Mr. Haynes has made a careful and thorough examination of his subject, his book is nicely indexed, enabling the reader to get a good idea of the

¹ *The Belief in Personal Immortality*. 7s. 6d. net. Grant Richards, Ltd., 8 St. Martin's Street, W.C.2.

opinions of the giants of history, yet we think he gives too much space to what Father Maher thinks on the subject. Men of his type have a *professional* interest in the subject, and with casuistry, question begging, and unconscious leg-pulling can set more nonsensical hares going than are worth intellectual powder and shot. Who, in the twentieth century would seriously tackle an assertion such as this: "As for the souls of the wicked, they can continue for all eternity to glorify by their punishment the offended majesty and justice of God." This is the language of the pulpit at a diseased mass intellect that has been rendered so by generations of the teaching of "original sin," and it does not rise to the level of a discussion. It is, as Comte would have it, fictitious—or theological, and, in a sense, the same as a nagging mother's treatment of a child with a series of "dont's" instead of taking the trouble to tell the youngster what it must do. We wish the author good luck with the sale of his book; at a time when we are now feeling the full shock of the last Great War there are plenty of muddled intellects, encouraged by the bog lights of discredited Christianity, and to these Mr. Haynes makes a popular, and what we hope will be a successful appeal. To live as though a future life did not, and could not, exist is to live heroically, and one is not surprised that this cannot penetrate the tinselled skulls of those who retreat from life. A cutting is before us where we see that Miss Laura Winthrop, 8 Marlborough Street, Bath, has, in her will, left £2,500 to Roman Catholic institutions. We leave this to the reader's judgment to discover the connection between it and this brief review. Under this announcement is a report that at Christchurch, Bournemouth Guardians had before them a case in which it was stated that a man, his wife, and five children were living in one room. After the baby died its body had to be kept in the room in which the family had to eat and sleep. Other families were living in the same house. When the gospel of man has been preached with the same fervour and to the same extent as the Gospel of the Bible it may be possible to agree that there is no end to arguments about the unknowable. If Mr. Haynes hastens this day mansions on earth will be available, and no one will deny the misleaders of mankind mansions in the sky as quickly as possible.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Society News.

Mr. Whitehead's mission in South London during the week ending May 24 was very successful from all points of view. The week-night meetings were all well attended and it was a striking testimony to the force of the lecturer's arguments that no opponents could be induced to mount the platform, although the audiences were at first decidedly hostile to the opinions expressed. It was noticed that very few members of the local Branch were present, which is regrettable, as much useful work can be done at meetings of this description by intelligent Freethinkers who are prepared to quietly argue among the knots of enquirers who invariably gather around after the lecture is over. The concluding meeting in Brockwell Park on Sunday evening was somewhat adversely affected by the weather, but those who attended were well compensated for their hardihood in braving the elements. Altogether, it is felt that interest in the Cause locally has been greatly stimulated by the week's work, in connection with which Messrs. Coles and Burton are thanked for their valuable help, which largely contributed to the success of the meetings.—A HEATH, Hon. Sec.

Thereupon one of the Egyptian priests who was of a very great age, said, O Solon, Solon, you Greeks are but children, and there never was an old man who was a Greek. I mean to say, that in mind you are all young; there is no old opinion handed down among you by ancient tradition; nor any science which is hoary with age.—Plato.

Correspondence.

PIOUS SLANDERS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your "Views and Opinions" of April 5, on the subject of the *Roadmaker Series* biographies of Mr. Leonard Parsons, and specially referring to the "Pious Slanders" uttered by devout but untruthful Christians about Thomas Paine, you say, much to the purpose, that "never can I recall a single instance of a Christian clergyman protesting against this lying for the glory of God." Permit me to emphasize your experience of clerical tacit approval of untruthfulness "for the glory of God," by observing that they are quite consistent, and that their conduct is quite up to pattern in that respect, which I will demonstrate by quoting from their own Book of books the following words of one of their most revered authorities, to wit, the Apostle Paul: "Nevertheless being crafty, I caught you with guile" (2 Corinthians, 12-16).

"For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why yet am I also judged a sinner? Let us do evil that good may come" (3 Romans, 7-8).

With such an example before them the up-to-date Christian "divine" is only doing his job to order.

Dominica, B.W.I.

F. STERNS FADELLE.

PATRIOTISM AND POETRY.

SIR,—As one (among many) of your readers who look forward with eager anticipation every week to reading with pleasure (plus profit) the literary articles contributed by your learned and brilliant writer, "Mimmermus," may I be allowed to enter an emphatic protest against the article by "Mimmermus" in your current issue. On seeing the headline: "A Poet who Lived Poetry," at last, I thought, our friend is paying his tribute, long overdue, to Oscar Wilde. But no! instead of soaring to sublime heights he has fallen, stirred up muddy waters, and deluged us with patriotic piffle about a young verse-writer who had shown some promise, but who "when the war broke out took his place as a soldier," and "now lies in a soldier's grave," having left behind a sickly sort of sonnet about his island home. I rubbed my eyes, surely I must have picked up the *Daily Hail* or some other organ of the Yellow Press! One has the right to expect intellectual fare—a feast of good things—the fair flowers and fruits of Reason in the *Freethinker*. It is too pitiful—too painful for words that so talented a writer should prostitute his great gifts to penning paltry eulogies of pernicious nationalism—the curse of all countries—one of the causes of all wars. It was with intense relief I turned to page 326, to Veblen's analytical criticism of the said loathsome blight of nationalism. One's thoughts turned to some words in the early writings of Thomas Paine:—

The soul of an islander, in his native state, seems bounded by the foggy confines of the waters' edge and all beyond affords to him matters only for profit or curiosity, not for friendship; his island is to him his world.—*Crisis*, 1780.

The curse in all countries of what is termed "Patriotism" has caused more death, destruction, devastation, and desolation than tongue or pen can tell. In Cosmic consciousness (or Internationalism) lies the hope of humanity. What Thomas Paine wrote of himself each and every lover of the race re-echoes: "The world is my country, to do good my religion." And so lived "the greatest Commoner of Mankind, founder of the Republic of the world and emancipator of the human mind and heart."

ELIANA TWYMAN.

CHRIST AND MIRACLES.

SIR,—Your correspondent, Mr. J. G. Burdon, misquotes me as saying that "the quintessence of sanity is aspiring to the image of a god whom man has made." My exact words were aspiring "to create man in the image and likeness of the God in whom Christ believed." The God in whom Christ believed was not man-made any more than the power of electricity is man-made. Just

as men are enabled to use electricity through the research work, experiment, and engineering efforts of men, so can the vision of Christ's "just man made perfect" be realized through the moral and intellectual efforts of men. In both cases an external force makes the achievement possible, and both are essential aspects of the fact of evolution. If this seems fantastic, I would ask any Freethinker to explain evolution on another basis.

Mere adaptation to environment does not explain progress from the simple to the complex, and no explanation can be found save by accepting the fact that a fresh vital element is being constantly and consistently introduced. Is evolution to stop short at modern man? If the question were not absurd on the face of it, an intelligent view of modern man should supply a negative answer. I do not suggest an acceptance of "God's creative scheme by evolution." Christ's vision rested upon the absolute values which are as impersonal as electricity; and his life and activities constitute a proof that man can advance on the lines he laid down and on no other. The superstitious, man-made god who partakes of human imperfections has nothing whatever to do with Christ's vision of the Perfect Being. I cast my vote on the side of Christ because his vision provides a rational and a natural aim for men, and because without the discovery and maintenance of such an aim, Freethought is impossible.

Your correspondent, Mr. Harold C. Wood, questions my method of thinking. Space forbids a full reply, but I will throw out a few suggestions which may show I am not so unscientific as he seems to imagine. Mr. Wood says that in accepting the miracles of Jesus I believe in a man "who could alter the laws of nature at will," and that therefore I should believe in every irrational dogma of mysticism. Now, a man who catches a ball arrests the law of nature; and from this point of view one could define evolution as the increasing power of living things to arrest the forces of the universe so as to bring them into ever greater economy. Remembering this, and remembering that mind undeniably has some power over matter, why should it be thought incredible that one man should heal another of disease by the power of mind? Along these lines I convinced myself that the so-called miracles were not incredible; and by studying the reactions of the human characters who appear in the gospel stories I became convinced that no story-teller could invent them. You can always tell a "wonder story" by the incredible actions of the people concerned, and in the miracles of Jesus you have a thousand natural acts, thoughts, and words recorded of the people concerned. If the story of Jesus had been a mere wonder tale it would have been a vast deal more wonderful, and would have long ago been forgotten or confined to some backward eastern country.

HUBERT C. KNAPP-FISHER.

DID HUXLEY RECANT.

SIR,—I attended a midday service in the Central Hall, Manchester to-day. The preacher announced for the occasion was the Rev. S. W. Hughes, of Westbourne Park Church. This attracted me as being the colleague and successor of the late respected Dr. John Clifford. I expected, and was not disappointed, in hearing what was an old sermon, but a finely eloquent delivery. The sermon was based upon doubt of the Resurrection of Jesus among his own disciples. The preacher said a lot of proud things about believers in the story—and he rather kindly patronized us who do not believe this fable. He claimed unbelief as being merely a phase of the mind seeking for truth. This is, of course, flagrantly erroneous. Among other instances he cited a statement of Huxley's of 1880; then he cited a statement made in 1901, claiming, and leaving the impression, that Huxley moderated his attitude and grew to belief. I make no charge of lying against the Rev. S. W. Hughes. Whatever can he mean? Where is the justification for the insinuation?

AGNOSTIC.

Toleration has never been the cause of civil war; while, on the contrary, persecution has covered the earth with blood and carnage.—*Voltaire*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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LONDON.

INDOOR.

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