

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions.

### Propaganda.

I do not think that any propagandist need apologise for being guilty of reiteration. That is, after all, one of the secrets of successful work. A new idea is by most people resented because it is new, an old one is accepted because it is old. The latter falls easily and naturally into place with the general set of ideas that is held, the former jars and disturbs. That is one reason why the preacher of established ideas has so great an initial advantage over the one who attacks them. The reaction in the one case is easy, and encounters no disturbing cross-currents. In the other there is set up a number of conflicting and jarring emotions that induce antagonism to the disturbing element. Mill remarked how great was the advantage, in such a matter as the controversy over Determinism, the man who announced himself in favour of Freewill had over the one who championed Necessity. Everybody likes to be on the side of "Freedom," and none like to advocate compulsion, with the result that a heavy bias is set up in favour of the more attractive, but quite irrelevant word. And in politics one need only note how easily an average audience responds to such cries as "Freedom," "Patriotism," "Devotion to country," "Homeland," etc. All the reactions here are ready made and established. Few ask themselves precisely what is meant by them in particular instances, or whether the conclusions which the speaker is asking his hearers to draw may not involve injury to country or the home, and may lead to slavery rather than to Freedom. Great issues are often decided—for the time being—by plausible battle cries. Crowd psychology craves for a good "slogan," leaving cool reason for later use.

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### A Clear Note.

That must be my apology—if any be needed—for returning this week to a point which I have often stressed. And I do so because I find it emphasized by some remarks of Dr. Chalmers Mitchell, the eminent biologist, at the recent R.P.A. dinner. Speaking of Professor Huxley, he said:—

Unfortunately, however, in the course of time he made the words "Freethought and "Agnosticism" respectable, and the moment that phrases of that

kind, which have been battle cries, so to speak, become respectable, their validity and value in the world cease. I think we have to carry things a little further. We have got no longer to be content with being told that we may be quite good fellows; for being reminded about the faith in honest doubt, for being reminded that free enquiry is an admirable thing so long as it is done in a reverent spirit.....I believe we have got to carry the battle further, and to protest that the Christian religion in its central rite is an intellectual outrage—a mere conventionalized cannibalism. We have to say that the Christian religion in its central dogma is hopelessly immoral in its conception of vicarious atonement, in its idea that sin has got to be paid for, that a jealous God has to be appeased; we must carry the war right into the country of the enemy, and protest and say that from the beginning to end this old superstitious dogmatic Christianity is poisoning and corrupting the simple mind of mankind.

Now that is a good, straightforward, honest expression of opinion. And it needed saying. There is, of course, nothing new in it to readers of the *Freethinker*. I have said much the same year in and year out, but it is cheering to find one scientist of standing in this country who is not afraid to say plainly what he means, and not hedge himself round with false and dishonest phrases, about a reverent scepticism, homage to the personality of Christ, false, as opposed to true Christianity, a reverent Agnosticism, and the numerous half-hearted expressions with which a timid heresy tries to disguise its existence from the common enemy. As I have so often said, Freethought in this country naturally expects the attacks of its enemies, but it suffers chiefly from the timidity of its friends.

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### On Pleasing the Enemy.

Personally, I cannot share in the gratitude expressed towards Huxley for his invention of "Agnosticism" in relation to the idea of God. It was quite unnecessary, and wholly misleading. It was unnecessary because the word "Atheism" was already there and expressed all that Huxley meant. Nor can one resist the suspicion that it was precisely because "Atheism" had not a respectable standing that the new word was invented. And ever since, there can be no question, that in many thousands of cases it has been preferred precisely because it served to disguise from the Christian world how much the user had departed from the established faith. It was irrelevant because Agnosticism in philosophy—where the word has relevance—has no reference to God, but only to the nature of ultimate existence. And so its use in theology served only to confuse the issue, and to sanction the timidity of public men and women where timidity was already sufficiently strong. Half-hearted expressions are never of value in keen controversy. If we wish people to think clearly, we must get them to use clear cut words. Above all, we must refrain from hunting for expressions which the enemy finds less objectionable. The fight for Freethought is not a diplomatic convention in which each party

seeks to placate the other by a series of mutual compromises. It is not our business to find expressions that Christians think almost unobjectionable. If that does happen it is a proof that we need others. When a Christian meets Freethought sword in hand we fight him, but can respect him. When he meets us half way it is time we began to suspect—either him or ourselves. Either we have not understood him, or he has not understood us. And the sooner the misunderstanding is cleared away the better.

#### Christian Egotism. \* \* \*

If I may again say as much—for the thousandth time, I regard it as a piece of downright impertinence to be told that often the Freethinker is a quite decent fellow, that God will not punish a man for honest doubt, that the Christian does not protest against "reverent" doubt. All this means is that the Christian will not object to a measure of doubt which does not seriously injure him. But if his religion is true it is doubt that will damn a man, whether it is honest or otherwise does not enter into the question. And I am never impressed with the assumed compliment that I may be as good as a Christian. The degree of excellence indicated by that term has never struck me as being so lofty that one need spend much time or thought in trying to acquire it. It is all part of the established impudence, and the way to kill impudence is not to pander to it, and take its expression towards oneself as a compliment, but to kill it. Personally whenever a Christian tells me that he thinks I am as good as a Christian I have a passing feeling of humiliation. I feel as though I have been caught doing something I ought not to have done. Christian intolerance lives on Christian egotism, and it should be the aim of genuine Freethinkers to kill that as speedily as possible.

#### Christian Savages. \* \* \*

I am only annotating Dr. Chalmers Mitchell's excellent speech—and my own past speeches and writings—when I say that the right line of attack is to deal with Christianity as an intellectual outrage on a society that considers itself civilized. While we continue to allow Christian apologists to deal with such savage doctrines as divine incarnations, god-cating, etc., in terms of some vague symbolism, and to find therein some high ethical truths, we are not merely letting them ride off on a false issue, but we are actually assisting them to mislead the rank and file of believers. We must insist that all this apologising, and explaining, and re-reading is so much evasion of the central truth that Christian doctrines have their origin in the ignorance of savages and have no claim whatever for consideration at the hands of educated and civilized people. More even than that, we must insist that what is true of such things as eating the god, or sacrificing a human victim to placate an angry deity is equally true of the idea of deity as a whole. There is no other and no better basis for the belief in God or a soul than there is for believing that a man or woman can absorb a part of the deity by eating a consecrated wafer. These beliefs are identical in their origin, and they must be treated as such. Let us drive that lesson home, constantly, hard, and without equivocation, and we shall soon make many Christians ashamed of holding beliefs that honest and intellectual men hold in contempt. Religion, Freethinkers are fond of saying, is to-day very largely a fashion. And there is truth in that. Our fault is that we have permitted Christians to set the fashion, and are so often afraid to depart too widely from it. Suppose all Freethinkers in this country were to treat Christian doctrines in the way they deserve; suppose we were to insist, on all

occasions where insistence was possible and proper, on the hopelessly uncivilized character of Christian doctrines; suppose we were to insist on the hopelessly immoral nature of Christian teachings; suppose we were to set up a fashion of our own instead of following—more or less heartily—that set by Christians? How long would it be before the arrogance of Christians would undergo a marked change for the better? If all the public men who believe with Dr. Chalmers Mitchell were to speak out in the same uncompromising manner, how long would it be before vast numbers of ordinary folk would follow suit? Suppose that instead of when a man gives up Christianity and avows it with expressions of regret, or makes the generally lying confession that he looked back on the beliefs of his childhood with affection, he were to say, what is the truth, that he looked back with shame at having ever entertained such crude, ignorant and savage beliefs, and that he was far happier without them than with them, how long would it be before large numbers of Christians would realize the way in which they have been deceived by their spiritual leaders? The intellectual fight against Christianity has been practically won. It is the fight against social prestige, against the "respectability of position" that has to be decided.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## Ancient and Modern Portraits of God.

A SERMON, entitled "Rogationtide," appears in the *Guardian* of May 22, which had been preached on the previous Sunday morning in St. Paul's Cathedral by the Rev. R. W. Odell, Vicar of St. John's, Enfield. This discourse is based on two fundamentally contradictory texts, the first being Amos iv., 7: "I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city," and the second Matthew v., 45: "Your Father which is in heaven sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Mr. Odell opens his sermon by quoting the first article in the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in one God," an article, he admits, which Christians are accustomed to speak or sing whenever they approach the "Holy Mysteries," but the difficulty of believing they set aside for later consideration. He alludes to the commandment to serve God with all our mind and characterizes it as being ever "the hardest to obey." He realizes, however, that the supreme obstacle to belief lies in those opening words of the Creed, "I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth." After mentioning the doubtful position which God occupies in scientific and philosophical conceptions, Mr. Odell remarks:—

Human life, with its manifold injustices and multitudinous uncertainties would lead us, had we regard to one dreary and formidable stream of facts alone, to the conclusion of the poet of pessimism:—

The Sire of Heaven would seem less just  
Than many a faulty son on earth.

Small wonder that many, conscious or unconscious heretics, relegate God to the sacristy and the world to the Devil; that others ascribe to God, the invisible King, a domain of limited sovereignty, incompatible with our Christian Creed.

Mr. Odell is a liberal theologian, who does not believe in the verbal or theological inerrancy of the Bible, who is completely out of touch with the American Fundamentalists, the most narrow-minded and absurdly conceited people on earth, and who is convinced that the world is governed by natural laws. Even Amos himself was for his time (760-

746 B.C.), an exceedingly advanced thinker, who believed that the shedding of blood was not essential to salvation, that all God required of a man for acceptance with Heaven was a life of love and service, and that the ever growing sacerdotalism of the day was an abomination in his sight. Amos represents Jehovah as saying:—

I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment flow down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream (v. 21-24).

Curiously enough, the God who angrily rejected sacrifices and all sorts of propitiatory offerings Amos describes as giving and withholding rain at his own whim or pleasure. Mr. Odell claims that "we know more than the Prophet did of the manner of God's working," and at the same time he courageously admits that we owe this superior knowledge not to ourselves but to great scientists into whose labours it is our privilege to have entered. According to the Enfield vicar, "we seek God not in the extraordinary but in the ordinary, not in signs and wonders, but in tranquil operation of his perpetual providence. Physical law, moral law, these dominate the universe. In these, and not in capricious interventions, we find the one God." So far, so good; but, unfortunately, Mr. Odell, like most other theologians, is not self-consistent. Immediately after declaring the supremacy of natural law in the universe he refers to the greatest of all miracles, namely, the tabernacling of Eternal Truth amongst men. By that, of course, he means the Incarnation, than which no mightier and more impossible miracle has ever been recorded in any Sacred Writings. If such a miracle ever occurred, it is not true that "physical law—that and not miracle as commonly understood—is God's ordinance for the world." By no natural law did the Jesus of the Gospels and the creeds come into the world. From beginning to end he is a thoroughly miraculous personality. Mr. Odell tells us that "science reveals to us a world where in God is at most a reconciling hypothesis, a primal mystery, a great perhaps"; but we should get the name of a first-class man of science who is responsible for that teaching. Men of science are either pronounced Atheists or firm Agnostics, and practically both Atheists and Agnostics are absolutely without God in the world. Darwin's study of Nature, in the varied manifestations of life, eventually drove the belief in God entirely out of his mind, so that before he died he was an openly avowed Atheist. The vicar, while admitting that physical law dominates the universe, has the audacity to proceed thus:—

But within that law there is freedom. The mind and spirit of man measure the stars and weigh the earth, change the face of continents and the destinies of human life, and conquer Nature by obeying her. And above that law there is a greater, given to man of all created things. The moral law, self-acting and eternal, determines the use Man shall make of his ever-increasing knowledge. On the degree of its observance will depend whether the progressive knowledge of God's secrets will prove a blessing or a curse. And the moral law is no exterior, soulless code, but the personal knowledge of Jesus Christ our Saviour and our God, the sender forth of the Spirit, the giver of all Grace.

That extract is, to say the least, an extraordinarily strange mixture of which the vicar, if he examines it carefully, cannot feel proud. Natural law is an experimental reality, but there is not, never has been,

and never will be, a moral law. Innumerable attempts have been made by the intuitional school of morals, to establish such a law, but they have all ended in total failure. There is no moral law, "self-acting and eternal," which determines what use a man shall make of his ever-increasing knowledge. Much of it is utterly useless so far as the conduct of life is concerned. Even vicar Odell never penned a more silly and untrue sentence than the following: "And the moral law is no exterior, soulless code, but the personal knowledge of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our God." It is really a meaningless statement. Even to believing Christians it can convey no message whatever. No theologian before, to our knowledge, has attributed such virtue to a non-existing moral law. Besides, neither Jesus Christ as theologically conceived, nor God, is an object of knowledge, but of blind belief. Indeed, Mr. Odell's teaching, when logically and ethically examined, leads to nothing but sheer Atheism.

At this point Mr. Odell endeavours to harmonize natural law and prayer:—

One thousand four hundred years ago, a bishop in France, horror struck by earthquakes which had desolated his diocese, instituted the services of rogationtide, to decrease God's wrath, and to entreat him to bless the kindly fruits of the earth. We admire his piety, but his theology was rather that of Amos than of our Lord's; and we are forced to ask, if we have any care for reality in religion, whether any useful purpose is served by continuing a custom, ancient indeed but repellent to the modern thought of God. The weather is as yet beyond the modification, though not quite beyond the prediction of man. Soon perhaps in the march of science it will be largely in man's power; but in any event it lies within the range of physical law. When and if ever we can so discover its secrets as to control them, it needs but little imagination to see how fertile a cause of discontents and even of war such a power would be unless the moral law of service and unselfishness determines the use of such an increase of human power to control the seasons. Would it bring health and healing as the X-rays have done, or a curse and brooding menace like the power to fly?

That is not the usual type of pulpit talk, and in the present case it only leads the preacher into a slough of despond out of which extrication is supremely difficult, if not impossible. Wherever natural law is admittedly all powerful prayer is not only futile but a laughable absurdity. Mr. Odell is aware of the stupendous difficulty that confronts him, but being professionally a man of God, he has some vital duty to discharge. "We should pray," he says, "that we to whom it is given to be God's vicegerents to replenish the earth and subdue it, may not be negligent, or lazy, or stupid." What an utterly baseless sense of self-importance, to be sure, clergymen do so assiduously cultivate! But if the Christian God really exists he has no need of vicegerents. He would make himself known to every man, woman, and child without the instrumentality of self-appointed vicegerents. The very existence of ministers of the Gospel is one of the strongest and most convincing arguments for the non-existence of the Christian deity. If he were here he would not hide himself, nor remain silent and inactive when the world seems to be rushing headlong to wreck and ruin.

The truth is that all portraits of God have been drawn exclusively from the imagination, not from any original being who actually lived, moved, and had his being as the Maker and Ruler of the Universe, the fact being that he has never been seen, heard, or felt by anyone in the unlimited activities of the world, and the only rational conclusion to

which we can come is that there is no evidence whatever of his existence, and that if the world is ever to be set right it must be done by men and women who are prepared to love and serve their fellow-beings to the utmost of their capacity.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Stevenson and Some Others.

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.—Keats.

Thou in our wonder and astonishment  
Hast built thyself a life-long monument.

—Milton.

A REPRINT of the principal works of Robert Louis Stevenson is announced by the house of Dent in their famous "Everyman Library." This tribute, following so soon after an *Edition de Luxe* of Stevenson's collected writings, is a real index of the popularity of a fine artist who gave the reading public of English-speaking countries so much unmixed delight.

Stevenson was a little master. From the time he invited us to search for *Treasure Island* to the chivalrous defence of the much-abused Father Damien how many pages were read with eager pleasure. A stylist to the finger tips, Stevenson raised the standard of literary excellence among popular writers. After the florid incontinence of so many novelists, we owe something to the man who restrained our noble mother tongue to its lawful store, and found the well of English undefiled large enough for the greatest thoughts. It is curious how often small ideas are clothed in ponderous adjectives, whereas thoughts as great as humanity can be expressed in a few words, as, for instance, Shakespeare's "Conscience is born of love"—the quintessence of ethics in a breath. To require simplicity is to ask for the greatest, and also to demand appreciation in the audience.

To what extent the works of certain authors should be regarded as the outgrowth of their personality, and to what extent it should be regarded as the effect of their environment, is an interesting and permissible question. There are qualities in every genuine author which we feel are characteristic, and there are other qualities which pertain to his surroundings. Shakespeare could not have been the greatest dramatist if he had not lived in the greatest age of the English drama. In the present age, where the drama is not, and the novel is, paramount, he would not have been a dramatist, he would have been a novelist. If Byron were alive to-day, he would probably be the poet he was, his vitality was so intense, but he would hardly write a *Corsair* or *Bride of Abydos*, since few would care to read them. Stevenson, of course, was not an elemental genius such as Shakespeare or Byron, but he was a genuine artist, and he excelled in so many directions.

*The Child's Garden of Verse* and *Underwoods* are evidence of a poet's heart and an artist's expression. True, there is little passion, but there is distinction. The quiet dignity of Matthew Arnold is often paralleled in Stevenson's verse. The exquisite sense of sound and sequence of such a crescendo as "I, on the lintel of this cot, inscribe the name of a strong tower" is possible only to a master. *The Requiem*, with almost every word the only one for its place, and the whole as frank and as fresh as a Border ballad, is the work of a real poet. So, again, the most beautiful thing that he ever wrote was his epitaph, "Under the wide and starry sky."

When first published Stevenson's poems were "cavaire to the general," but since then there has been a steady rise in public appreciation. To the reading public he was then better known as the

author of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Treasure Island*, and to a large section as the writer of *Virginibus Puerisque* and *Memoirs and Portraits*. To the select few the fabulist of the *New Arabian Nights* and *Island Nights' Entertainments*, and the romancer who gave us *A Lodging for the Night* and *The Pavilion on the Links*, those perfect little stories, proved that the oldest of the arts was still in the hands of a master.

A recent critic of Stevenson complains that chronic ill-health exerted a malign influence on his work. Lombroso went much further, for he held that all genius is a form of disease, either of body or mind. It is highly probable that the man of genius is often produced from abnormal stocks, but the highest form of genius is not necessarily abnormal. Shakespeare is sanity itself, and the Homeric poems are compact of sweet reasonableness. Dante is more questionable, but that he had his imagination well in leash is not open to dispute for a moment.

Scientists, like propagandists, sometimes ride their theories too far. Some time back an American temperance editor cited Algernon Swinburne as an awful example. Swinburne lived to over seventy years of age, so his habits, whatever they were, did not shorten his life to any serious extent. It is not by any means certain that the great poet might have produced more and better work had it not been for alcohol. On tea he could scarcely have bettered the superb choruses of *Atalanta in Calydon*; on lemonade he could hardly have chanted the praises of *Dolores* or *Faustine* more musically; on ginger ale *The Songs before Sunrise* could barely have been more splendidly sonorous. However well balanced, virtuous, and temperate Swinburne might have been, he could have done no more than write his name forever beside Shelley and Keats, and the glorious company of England's greatest singers. Such as he was, Swinburne gave us what we keep of him. It is an open question whether another kind of Swinburne would have given us the like manifestation of genius.

There lies the quandary. Shall we all be very healthy and very dull, or shall we go on producing geniuses under abnormal conditions? For many of us life is made tolerable only by the existence of men of genius. It is their work that makes life worth living; it is they who cover our intellectual nakedness with the robes of their splendour. It is they who fill our empty coffers with their riches and pour into our cups the magical wine of their genius. The style is the man, and we cannot have our Stevensons or Swinburnes in any other guise. Instead of grumbling because they wear so curious and unusual coats, in which some find it hard to embrace them, the best is to be grateful that we had a Stevenson and a Swinburne at all.

MIMNERMUS.

When I seriously believe a thing, I say so in a few words, leaving the reader to determine what my belief is worth. But I do not choose to temper down every expression of personal opinion into courteous generalities. Let us learn to speak plainly and intelligibly first, if it may be, gracefully afterwards.—John Ruskin.

It is the slave who makes the tyrant, and then murmurs at the master whom he has himself instituted.—Henry Grattan.

Guided by the pole star of evolution, Spencer sailed out alone on the ocean of speculation and discovered a new empire of law, founded without bloodshed or the suppression of liberty or the waste of wealth, where any man may dwell without fear or shame.—George Jacob Holyoake.

## N.S.S. Conference.

### Executive's Annual Report.

By THE PRESIDENT.

THE Executive's Report this year will be brief. Nothing of a spectacular character has occurred during the period covered by this report, and the performance of the routine work of propaganda, while of first importance to the purpose for which this Society exists, does not call for lengthy writing. Our work goes on steadily from year to year, and its necessity and its justification is shown on the one hand by the great prevalence of the grossest superstitions among the general public and by the growth of liberal ideas in relation to the specific doctrines held by the churches and other religious organizations in this country. Opposed as these two things may seem to be at first glance, they are really two sides of the same phenomenon. It is the gradual withdrawal of the better brains of the country from the support of established beliefs which provides opportunity for the ranker growths in the religious world to flourish.

In considering the propaganda carried on by the Society and its Branches attention has again to be called to the increased cost of hall maintenance, advertising, and other incidental expenses. These impose a much heavier burden upon Branches, and also upon the Executive, which has again been compelled to assist local efforts to a very considerable extent. No complaint of this is being made, it is noted merely, and it is a fact which our friends should note also. The difficulty of securing suitable halls for lectures has not diminished during the year, and so far as the general public is concerned, it is a very important matter. Good halls are themselves an advertisement, and where a little known one only is available there is a greater difficulty in getting the public to attend. Given suitable conditions and there is indeed no great difficulty in getting good audiences to Freethought lectures. In connection with some of the meetings held—Hull, Birmingham, and elsewhere, the Executive tried the experiment of giving a hand with the advertising, and with considerable success. There is a purely business side to arranging lectures and this fact should never be overlooked.

Although there is room for great improvement the lecture platform has been well maintained. Two special meetings held in London, one in the Parkhurst Theatre and one in the Stratford Town Hall, were conspicuously successful. Both of these were addressed by the President. Mr. Rosetti and other lecturers have also been busy. As indicated in the last report, the Executive again arranged for Mr. Whitehead's services in the open air during the summer season. Mr. Whitehead has proved himself to be a very hard and very capable worker in the open, his lectures are "acceptable," the audiences are usually large, attentive, and interested. Nothing more could be asked for. Mr. Whitehead's parish covers a very large field, and any group of Freethinkers in any part of the country who wish to avail themselves of his services during the summer need only write to headquarters stating their desires.

On the financial side, it will be observed that the balance-sheet which is before the Conference, is of a satisfactory nature. This is due to a grant of £200 from the Secular Society, Limited, and a legacy of £418 from the late Miss Day, of Ilford. It may also be noted that intimations of other wills drawn in favour of the National Secular Society have been received. This, while pleasing enough, should not lead to any relaxation of effort to meet current expenditure out of current income wherever possible. The calls upon the Society's funds are now heavier than they ever were, and there is always room for expansion when funds warrant new experiments being tried. The membership fees are only nominal, and these must be added to if expenses are to be met out of current income.

There has been the usual influx of new members during the past year, but there is always room for more. It is not the primary aim of the Society to build up a large membership merely, and so establish another Church with a different ritual: organization is valuable only as

an instrument to be used in our warfare with superstition, not as a test of the success of our fighting. Still, the larger the membership the better position we are in to conduct our campaign, and it is hoped that during the coming year special attention will be given to bringing Freethinkers into closer touch with this organization.

Apart from considerations of numbers the Society has every reason to congratulate itself on the extent to which its principles are making headway with the public at large. Many of the religious beliefs against which this Society warred under its illustrious first President, Charles Bradlaugh, are now openly denounced by very many of the leading Christian preachers in this country, and if they do not generally acknowledge the names of their teachers, that is only the usual fortune of pioneers. It is enough for them to know that willingly or unwillingly, by open avowal or by tacit admission, the opposition has been forced to admit that our views were the correct ones, and that established error has been forced to yield to insistent truth.

This, however, is but one side of the picture, and should serve but as an incentive to renewed effort. Although we seek inspiration in the past, our work lies in the future, and it would be foolish in counting over what has been gained to lose sight of the tremendous hold that gross superstition still has on very large numbers of the people in all classes of society. The vogue of such semi-fraudulent movements as the Hickson healing mission, with its endorsement by highly placed ministers in the churches, the revivalistic frenzies that break out from time to time, the vogue of non-Christian superstitions, with the reported growth, and certain growing influence of the Roman Catholic Church, all should serve to remind Freethinkers of how much there is yet to be done. There have been grave set-backs before in the history of civilization, and these have been chiefly assisted by the presence of the same set of conditions, namely, the existence of a minority of liberated minds, grown careless of the strength of the darker social forces, and priding themselves on the security gained, only to find when too late the latent superstition of the people manifesting itself in a burst of temporarily unconquerable ferocity. An illustration of this may be taken from so advanced a country in America, where there is going on, in the name of the discredited mythology of Genesis, a very widespread revolt against the theory of evolution, and where one State has actually made it a legal offence for a teacher to impart such a generally accepted scientific teaching to his pupils. We are inclined to smile at this kind of thing, but we must not forget that there are very large numbers of Christians in this country in the same mental condition, and that the leaders of Christianity only sanction genuinely enlightened teaching under protest. It is hard to say when a specific superstition is so weakened as to be beyond the possibility of recovery. The only safe religion is a dead one.

In this connection the Executive feels it to be its duty to call attention to the grave danger to social progress of the policy of political leaders—quite irrespective of party—to secure the support of religious organizations by playing to this or that section of the Christian world. Religious organizations have their own sectarian interests to serve, and exist for no other purpose. They place these interests before all else, and experience proves that so long as these interests may be served all others will be ignored. The standing illustration of this is the way in which the injustice of the inculcation of religious doctrines in State supported schools has been perpetuated by Nonconformists turning their backs upon their professed principles for the sake of gaining a purely sectarian advantage. To that sacrifice we owe the many years of obstruction to genuine educational progress. And it is quite certain that if our hand-to-mouth politicians purchase the support of church and chapel, that support will only be given at the price of the sacrifice of either some measure of the freedom our predecessors fought so hard to get, or the prevention of further freedom being obtained. Freethinkers in all political and social organizations should at least protest against these being diverted from their legitimate aims. They should bear in mind that the greatest Church of all—the Roman Church—has not abated its claim to secular supremacy,

and it is only lack of union that prevents the other Christian Churches putting forward the same claims.

Again it is pleasing to be able to call attention to the fact that Freethinkers are more alive than ever to the advisability of availing themselves of the privileges that are now theirs by legal enactment. There is a growing number of enquiries received at headquarters with regard to secular ceremonies at marriage, at death, with regard to affirmation, etc., and the importance of this cannot be well over-estimated. It is a public affirmation of one's position, and in its way a most effective form of propaganda. It need only be added that headquarters is always pleased to give whatever advice it can to Freethinkers, whether members or non-members, on any matter which affects their legal rights.

With regard to the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws the Executive is unable to report any progress beyond an educational one. A new Bill has been prepared by the Society for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws—on the Committee of which your President, Secretary, Mr. Clifton, and Miss Kough sit, and this Bill has been introduced by Mr. George Lansbury, backed by Mr. H. Snell and others. So far as progress in Parliament is concerned only an accident would permit it to come up for a second reading, as the Government is hardly likely to grant facilities for this being done. But the passing of such a measure may be made the more certain by Freethinkers continuing their educational work outside Parliament. There is no question but that the average member of Parliament and candidates for Parliamentary honours are both dreadfully ignorant on this matter, and it is only the education of public opinion in this direction that will ensure the wiping of this relic of medieval barbarism from the law of the country.

With regard to Secular education there is every indication that the question may at any moment become a pressing political one. Churchmen have been for some time making strenuous efforts to come to some compromise with Nonconformists on this matter, and, as usual, Christian interests only have been considered. It cannot be said that these Conferences have yet met with any marked measure of success, but, on the other hand, it is unlikely that the religious section of the Conservative party will permit the present Government to pass away without trying to saddle the nation with the upkeep of Church schools, and modify the existing law so as to admit more definite religious instruction in the State schools. Nor must we lose sight of the fact that although for the moment Nonconformists and Churchmen have not been able to agree on a method of planting religion on the rates that shall be satisfactory to both parties, the necessity of keeping a hold on the child, a necessity that becomes ever greater in the face of the growth of Freethought, may soon drive them into agreement. Here again the only safeguard is to go on making Freethinkers as rapidly as possible. The continued disintegration of religious ideas is the only ultimate guarantee that we Freethinkers can have of the reign of justice, reason, and common sense in social life.

With this and other things in view, the Executive has thought it advisable to place on the agenda paper of to-day's Conference a motion calling the attention of all to what is the main purpose of this Society. This Society takes no part and no sides in political movements, and for obvious reasons. Our aim is to bring together for a common work men and women of all shades of political and social opinion, but who are yet at one on the question of believing that the prevalence of superstition, whether of the organized form which meets us in the various churches, or the unorganized forms which confront us in daily life, are a fatal hindrance to the orderly and profitable development of a common social life. Our message is thus definite, and our standpoint is distinctive. And it is the considered opinion of the Executive that we should be weakening the force of our message and our strength as an organization if we depart from this rule. We are not strong enough either to take a definite part in political movements—except temporarily, and so far as we are aiming at realizing the avowed objects of our Association, or to permit our distinctive character to be lost in movements with which some of us may sympathize, or of which we may even be warm supporters. We have a duty to our mem-

bers in this respect, we have a work to do which no other organization is doing, and we shall be well advised to keep our energies for this specific work. The Executive has ventured to call the attention of all to this cardinal principle of the Society's work, fully recognizing that in the various reform movements in the country Freethinkers are among the most ardent workers and the most fearless pioneers. It is with our work as an organized body that the Executive is concerned.

Without conceit or exaggeration we may say there is no movement in the country of greater importance than is the one we represent. The existence of a body of men and women with no sectarian aggrandisement in view, with no party ends to serve, and which appeals only to the love of truth and justice and the desire for human betterment, must be of enormous value to Society as a whole. Let us therefore realize exactly what our purpose and our place is and pursue it. Of necessity the work of the pioneer appeals but to the few. In this it is eternally true that many are called but few are chosen—or at least the few remain ardent, constant workers in the greatest cause that has ever enlisted the energies of men. The work of devoted men and women, not merely of those who stand forward prominently as leaders, but of the many hundreds of the rank and file of Freethought, who have freely given their time, their labour, and their substance to the work, has won many notable triumphs; but we have many more heavy battles to fight. We are still surrounded by an amount of uncivilized and semi-civilized thinking that embodies a threat to civilization. It is to the task of rationalizing, and humanizing life that this Society calls its supporters. It is the greatest of all tasks, because its is an unending one. We cannot, it is well to believe, place a term to the development of the human race. The end recedes with every success achieved. But it is something to contribute our mite to the liberation of the intellect from the fears which the past has bequeathed to it, and so make more certain the continuity of progress.

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## Acid Drops.

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The agitation in favour of Sunday freedom goes on, and gains ground. One after another towns come into line, and it is probable that some of us may live long enough to see the Sabbatarianism which once ruled this country treated as a pathological phenomenon. West Ham has just decided by a vote of 32 to 20 to allow bowls and tennis on Sundays in the public parks. As usual there was the usual opposition from the churches, and a deputation was received from the Free Churches which informed the Council that if these games were permitted on Sunday, their own places of business would suffer. It was not put exactly in this way, but it was exactly what was meant, because if playing bowls on Sunday helped to fill the churches we should have every parson pronouncing a blessing on each "wood" as it left the player's hand. That is fact which should never be lost sight of. The interest of the clergy in the prevention of Sunday amusements is a purely professional one. All the rest of the talk is blather and bunkum intended to impose upon the simple layman.

There were some excellent speeches made in support of the motion which was moved by Councillor Allison, well known to many East End readers of this journal. Councillor Price also put up a plain and straightforward speech in defence of the measure. The majority of the Labour members voted in its support. West Ham has now both its picture palaces and playing grounds open on Sunday, and it is quite probable that the wave of common sense may overflow into neighbouring districts. We warn the poor clergy of the danger to which they are exposed from this quarter.

The same subject was also under discussion some hundreds of miles away in Kilmarnock. The Council had permitted the holding of Sunday concerts in order to

assist the unemployed, and a deputation of ministers "insisted" on being heard in protest. All the usual arguments were forthcoming to prove that nothing should be allowed to compete with the trade of these gentlemen in black, but in the end, we are glad to say, the magistrates were firm, and the concerts are going on. But we want specially to note that fact that these men "insisted" on being heard. The arrogance of the parsons is so well established, and people are generally so used to it, that it passes without much comment. It is an illustration of the truth that until the rest of the community put these blackcoats in their place, and make them realize that they are, after all, only the vendors of a superstition that is not a bit more intellectually respectable than those for which other folk are imprisoned as rogues and vagabonds for practising they will continue to interfere in the harmless and healthy entertainment of the public.

The Chairman of the North Eastern Railway Company is also an Elder of the Church of Scotland, and in his dual capacity he contrives to run business and religion together in a manner that is characteristically Christian. Addressing the General Assembly at Edinburgh, he told them it was the business of the Church to see that no public demand arose for the running of Sunday trains. If there were the railways would run them. Which interpreted appears to mean that if the Christian directors of railway companies found Sunday trains a paying proposition the trains would be run—Church or no Church. And the only way to prevent this was to see that no such demand arose. Therefore, we may expect the usual game to be played. The Church will browbeat all it can into remaining quiet, and will at the same time get together all those who do not want to travel to induce the railway companies to prevent those who do wish to travel from doing so. The trouble with the Sabbatarian is that he is not content to be miserable alone; he is only happily miserable when he is able to make others share in his gloom. From some points of view Christianity is the funniest religion the world has ever seen.

In a review of Sir Arthur Keith's latest book, *The Religion of a Darwinist*, the *Daily Herald* refers to an outburst made in London lately by Professor George McCready, an American, who is reputed to have said, "Confident I am that in this year 1925 sufficient scientific facts are available to settle this long-debated problem (i.e. the problem of creation and man's ancestry), in a way entirely satisfactory to the believer in the literal truthfulness of the first chapter of Genesis." The reviewer remarks that "Americans don't like evolution; it wounds the conceit of those who are accustomed to congratulate themselves on being degenerate angels, to find that they are only promoted apes, and, taking their usual short way with inconvenient truths, they have in Tennessee forbidden the teaching of evolution."

We suggest that this light and casual way of referring to the deliberate attempt that is being made in America to suppress freedom of thought and scientific investigation, made by a responsible London newspaper is hardly creditable to those responsible for its policy. The *Herald*, claiming as it does, to stand for social progress and humanitarian ideals, should be the first to denounce such endeavours to suppress the truth, and to persecute scientific workers. It is a fact that without freedom of thought, and freedom to express opinions, and to discuss every topic freely, there can be no effective political or social freedom. But probably the *Herald* reviewer realized this quite as clearly as we do. It is simply that it is prepared to pander to English Christians in precisely the same way that every other paper in this country does. Nevertheless, it is rather disappointing to find that in the case of a newspaper which claims to be different to other English newspapers, which is not run primarily for profit, or as an adjunct to Big Business, there is either not the perception of the need or the courage to defend the principles of free speech and free thought in the case of theology and science.

Amiens Cathedral appears to be following in the footsteps of St. Paul's—if such an expression can legitimately be applied to cathedrals. Anyhow, a few days ago the people of that town had a shock, when startled by a noise, they rushed to the spot, and found that the ground in front of the cathedral had given way, forming a hole twenty-four feet deep, and fifty feet in diameter. This was soon filled up by torrential rains, which filtered into the foundations of the building. According to the Central News, steps are being taken to safeguard the place.

Really we think it is time that some of our prophetic Christians began to interpret these mysterious signs for us. Winchester Cathedral has recently had its foundations restored; and Lincoln, Wakefield, and St. Paul's are all in need of extensive repairs if disaster is to be prevented. Perhaps this is an omen that the second advent is close at hand—unless it is merely a sign that the Christian contractors of old were not adverse to swindling Mother Church by putting in rotten foundations. Anyhow, it is time the deity woke up to the fact that his dwelling-places are as much in need of repair as some of the mundane tenements.

A spook has been discovered at Ashley Grange, a house near Folkestone. The ghost, which is in the form of a middle-aged woman, dressed in black, has been seen by a local Civil Servant and a builder who (says the newspaper report), are interested in the property. The house is about one hundred and fifty years old, and it is said that a man murdered his wife there about a hundred years ago. The old house is being demolished, and a modern residence erected in its place. Perhaps the spook objects to these innovations, being of a conservative type. In any case, we can quite believe that the Civil servant and the builder are not averse to the house being advertized by these tales of haunting. Even ghosts can serve a useful purpose in these utilitarian, materialistic days.

"Fiction written by young decadents has a tremendous vogue at present," said Dr. R. W. MacKenna, at a dinner of the Associated Booksellers of Great Britain, at Liverpool recently. Dr. MacKenna, himself a novelist and a physician, told his audience:—

A doctor may not prescribe an infinitesimal grain of morphia for a patient dying of cancer without observing a hundred and one irksome regulations, but you booksellers are allowed to sell as much moral poison as you like, with nobody to say you nay....The sad thing is that men who started by writing clean wholesome books have discovered that it pays to write stuff of this kind. Reviewers, many of whom are young men with equally decadent minds, acclaim this rubbish as the authentic voice of genius, when it is really only the gruntings of a pig wallowing in its own mire.

The Doctor is probably taking an extreme view. But in so far as his denunciation is justified, the Christian churches and the professional purveyors of Christian ethics bear the chief responsibility for the state of things that he deplures. A civilization permeated with the unhealthy sex ethics of Christianity can scarcely be expected to look askance at decadent literature. It is a pity that some of our would-be moralists are content to limit themselves to wholesale denunciation, without specifying the cause of the things they denounce. If some of the periodic jeremiads uttered against modern literature, drama, art, and morals, were directed against the Christian superstitions which largely produce the evils that our modern prophets cry out against, some progress towards a healthier, cleaner civilization might be made. As it is, everyone agrees with the denunciations in the abstract, without bothering particularly to question the ethical system which co-exists with such social evils.

We see that the Oxford Press has issued Southey's *Life of Wesley*, in two volumes, 7s. Wesley's parents, Southey tells us, had nineteen children, only six of

whom survived childhood. This he calls a "fruitful marriage." The application of such a term to a marriage which resulted in the loss of thirteen children, with all that it implies of ignorance and bigotry, throws a startling light upon the Christian religion, and the ineffably vile influence that it has had upon human well-being and morality. For Wesley's parents were a "God-fearing" couple. Indeed, so seriously did his father take his religion that when his wife refused to say Amen to a prayer for the health of King William, he mounted his horse, and rode off, and refused to cohabit with her again until the death of the king released him from his vow.

How utterly unfitted the Wesleys were for the duties of parenthood are strikingly shown by the manner in which they educated the six survivors. At the age of five the children were made to learn the alphabet in one day: on the next day they were made to spell and to read one line; and then a verse, never leaving it until they were perfect in their lesson. One can understand how in such an environment John Wesley developed the austerity, fervour, and nervous asceticism which he showed in later life. The unnatural childhood, largely produced by the religious bigotry and lack of sympathy of his parents, produced the religious zealot, a little priggish, and altogether unbalanced.

"An At Home With a Ghost." That was not the heading, but it might have been, for the advertisement simply announced that Lord Northcliffe invited his old colleagues to come and hear his message. The author of the invitation appears to have been Mr. Vale Owen, and he, one assumes, was the mouthpiece. And all these people—those who issue the invitation and they who accept it seriously—have votes!

From the Commission of Inquiry into church income and expenditure we take the following facts. To-day there are 13,412 living in England, with an income of £5,490, 649. These are held by 12,870 vicars or rectors, some holding two livings. There are 4,000 livings with a net income of £300 and under; 6,400 with an income between £500 and £300; 1,700 with an income between £500 and £700; and 1,100 with over £700. There are 4,400 assistant clergy or curates, who receive annually £946,137, which averages out at £225 10s. for each. Of the bishops eight have gross incomes of £5,000. And this is only the tally for one of the many religious organizations in this country! Well over 15,000 men doing no useful or productive work, and drawing from the community between them well over five and a half million pounds. And then there are those who say lightly that the Church and Christianity are back numbers and we are wasting our time dealing with them.

Commander Willingham, an R.A.F. medical officer, who was recently presented with the Chadwick gold medal for research work, says that he has never carried out a day's work without praying for help, and on every occasion he has seen better and thought more clearly as a result. All that this means is that Dr. Willingham is a religious man and is in the habit of praying. And all it proves to us is the fatal effect of religious belief on exact thinking. For it is certain that if the Doctor had brought no clearer thinking to his research than he has done to his religion he would have earned a ticket for an asylum rather than a medal for good work. For example, he might have compared the quality of his own work along with that of other men who did not pray every day for help. Or he might have reflected that as he prayed every day he was not able to say what effect it would have had if he had never prayed at all, or if he had omitted to pray on some days. The paucity of thinking involved in such a statement as that of Dr. Willingham's is appalling. It only serves to demonstrate the paralysing influence of religious belief on the better aspects of mental life.

Before the Stage finally takes the place of the Church there will be a few spasmodic kicks—ecclesiastical mummery may seek to prolong its life on the boards and one such apparent attempt appears to be the play of the "Marvellous History of Saint Bernard." This play has nothing to do with the life of Mr. George Bernard Shaw. From a report of the performance we are informed that in many respects the play is crude, and prayer and Church ritual have been freely introduced but always with profound reverence and sympathy. The only addition that the critic need have made to this description is that the plate was taken round by a programme seller.

Fifty cripples were among the pilgrims going to Lourdes on Tuesday, May 19, 1925. A hymn was sung, "Look down, O Mother Mary," before they left Victoria Station. The newspaper that gave publicity to this information could aspire no higher in its leading article than telling us that Smith and Asquith had no quarrels or differences even if their politics were the same, which is hardly a secret to an intelligent schoolboy.

Lady Astor and Mr. Kirkwood have had a biblical passage of arms in the House of Commons. Her ladyship has been invited to sell all she has and give to the poor, and the chances that she will do it are as remote of those of a tortoise winning the Derby. That Christianity can be subscribed to and accepted by the over-rich ought to set Labour members thinking; that it can be used and be used by every class in the social scale is an evidence of its chameleon nature, and a sign that there is something wrong when it can produce a Liverpool Cathedral on the one hand, and on the other it cannot conjure a few houses for the poor—it is too busy looking after the bald head of St. Paul's.

It is possible that the appearance in England of a rare bird may be marked by the fact that nobody will want to shoot it. But the discussion over the bird sanctuary in Hyde Park causes us to say that in time the country itself may be one vast sanctuary for birds. The growth of kindness towards the animal kingdom is a phenomenon that should be welcomed by all who do not arrogantly assume that man only is a special creation, with a special vaporous section to be saved or damned. Mr. Baldwin at the opening ceremony stated that the world had need of sanctuaries, for flowers, wild birds, and Prime Ministers; we agree, and trust that he will extend the same sentiments towards the use of policemen who are called in to protect the particular Christian God.

The spirit of affinity has evidently induced Mr. G. K. Chesterton to write an introduction to the autobiography of Mr. James Lloyd, ex-bareback rider and circus proprietor, entitled *My Circus Life*. In the circus of Mr. G. K. Chesterton's literary world, there is no doubt as to whom is the riding-master, and although the journalistic acrobat has, with Christian arrogance, attempted to belittle Hardy, there appears to be one paper hoop through which the famous author is not prepared to jump at the crack of a theological whip.

A story which illustrates in an obscure manner the crumbling away of ancient and fish-like ideas bequeathed by the churches comes from the report of an inquest. A little boy, aged eleven, was asked by the coroner:—

Do you know what will happen to you if you tell lies?  
Witness: No.  
Coroner: Neither do I.

Now this is peculiarly negative and characteristic of Christian ethics. The hell idea preached with the assurance of one just descended from Sinai was as needful as fresh air, our Bible thumpers have been wasting their time on heaven and hell. We have pleasure in handing an honest coroner a small Freethought bouquet for he is on the right track.

### 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.

OWING to the holidays several letters for insertion, together with a number of replies to correspondents, have been held over till next week.

J. THACKRAY.—Congratulations on your eighty-first birthday. As you have taken every copy of the paper, except the first issued, it can hardly be said to have an unhealthy influence. Thanks for what you have done in your time to introduce the paper to new readers.

J. BRYCE.—Received, and contents noted. We shall be glad to hear from you at any time.

J. G. BURDON.—Next week.

W. JAMESON.—What do you mean by asking whether we admit the possibility of Atheism being wrong. There is the same chance here of one being wrong that there is in one being wrong on many other subjects. The question is which view looks more like being right? As to "unnatural" we object to the term because it is usually one which an obscurantist uses to cover his own unreasoning opposition to a particular thing.

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.

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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.

There can be no question of the success of the 1925 National Secular Society's Conference. Branches were well represented, although distance and other considerations prevented some being there who would otherwise have been present. And there were a goodly number of individual members, with, as usual, a good sprinkling of ladies. The discussions were all marked with good humour, and a cheerful spirit of optimism, which augured well for our future, and one could not resist feeling there was present in the experience and sustained enthusiasm of the older members, and the energy and keenness of the younger ones, a force that, properly directed, promised the churches in this country a continuation of the bad times they have been experiencing.

The papers in the afternoon by Mr. McLaren and Mr. Rosetti were both extremely interesting, and the latter's paper led to an interesting discussion that was only

ended by the time of the Conference having more than expired. Mr. Rosetti's paper was on the attitude of Freethinkers with regard to inoculation, and, as one might have expected, there was no lack of opinions for and against. There was not so much discussion on Mr. McLaren's paper on "Ideals True and False," but that was, we think, because the loftiness of its ideas and gracefulness of its phrasing was appreciated by all and commanded the assent of all. Readers will have a chance of judging it in our next issue. In a way one paper served as a foil to the other. They showed the capacity of a Freethought audience to thoroughly appreciate a paper of the calibre of Mr. McLaren's and to intelligently discuss one of the fighting qualities of Mr. Rosetti's. One would like to add one word on the value of a speech from Mr. Bayford, of Manchester (anti), which well phrased and convincingly delivered, but which came at the very end. It drew from the President the comment that Mr. Bayford deserved a vote of censure for not having spoken earlier.

Mr. Cohen was again elected President—this makes the eleventh year of his Presidency—and Miss Vance was re-elected Secretary. During this year of office the President is hoping to record a very substantial increase in the number of members enrolled, and on that head he hopes to say something next week. There is too much to do this week, with the time broken into by Whit Monday—which affects the printers, not the writers—to say it now. But the N.S.S. has nothing like the membership it ought to have, and we must see to it that this is remedied.

The evening meeting at the Scala Theatre came as a fitting close to the day. The Scala is one of the handsomest theatres in London, and there was a fine audience when the President, accompanied by the other speakers, came on the platform. There were eight speakers, without counting the President, and they presented a sufficient variety to make each one interesting. Mr. Moss, who was in the Freethought movement before any other on the platform, led off with a speech that drew applause from his listeners, and showed that the passing of the years had done nothing to damp his enthusiasm in the Cause; Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe was humorous, but to the point in his appeal for sustained effort; Mr. Bedborough was witty and wise; Miss Rout—a newcomer to Conference meetings—impressed upon all the power of Freethought in clearing the social atmosphere and making the discussion of tabooed subjects possible and even fashionable. She particularly resented the fashion of writers blaming "Man" for certain evils. Man is all right, she said, it is the man of God who is wrong. Mr. Whitehead told the audience a parable, the point of which was not far to seek, and there was warm welcome to Mr. Lloyd, who emerged from his enforced retirement to deliver a speech that was greatly appreciated by all. Mr. Rosetti, as usual, provided his listeners with some very thoughtful comments on the religious situation, and Mr. Clifford Williams was both witty and eloquent in his summing up of the position of the world in relation to Freethought and religion. The concluding speech was delivered by the President, and his address was freely punctuated with laughter and applause. It had the effect of sending the large audience home delighted, and, we hope, inspired to do something in the future for the greatest of all causes. We may be pardoned for saying that we know of no other platform in London that could attract and keep to the very end the interest and attention of a large audience for two hours on a summer's evening.

We have to thank Mr. J. R. Holmes for a beautiful basket of flowers, representing the Bradlaugh colours, which decorated the President's table. It was a thoughtful act, complimentary to those present, and a tribute to one of the greatest of fighting Freethinkers. A report of the Conference business meetings and of the evening demonstration will appear in next week's issue.

## The John Street Institute.

### A Few More Random Notes.

SOME few weeks ago I gave some personal recollections of this useful institution. I have very little more to add. The bulk of the audiences at the Sunday lectures were the followers of Robert Owen, most of whom were Freethinkers; but there was a considerable sprinkling of foreigners from the immediate neighbourhood, and likewise many tradespeople from Oxford Street and vicinity. Oxford Street at that time was a very different street to what is it now. Business people lived over their shops, and what villas then were available were situated at Camberwell or Brixton, which was almost in the country. I remember a noted Oxford Street jeweller taking the chair at one of the lectures, and on another occasion Mr. John Brinsmead presided at one of Thomas Cooper's discourses. The Apollonic Society was a great attraction, as there were no Sunday concerts nor cinemas. In the summer we had excursions by vans to Hampton-Court and Epping Forest, where we sang our part songs to admiring rustics under the greenwood trees. On one occasion a monster excursion was organized to Loughton by special train, and people of all shades of opinion, with their wives and families, came from all parts of London. It was the longest train I have ever seen, and two engines had quite a struggle to get us there.

Arriving we alighted on the countryside like a swarm of locusts, and devoured everything that was eatable in a three or four mile radius. I am afraid that many went back hungry. The return journey was made quickly, as the long train was divided into four sections. At Christmas and Easter we had dances and social meetings and children's parties. There was an organ in the building, and the organist used to practice a little after the audience had dispersed, and I occasionally assisted by blowing the bellows, not a very artistic matter, but a very necessary part of the performance. One Christmas Day, when we were rendering the "Hallelujah Chorus," a little girl in the body of the hall sang with us, but, having no music, she forgot the impressive silent bar near the end, and in her childish treble put in an extra Hallelujah. We were so amused that we could hardly finish, but the organist came to the rescue with his loudest stop.

One of the class teachers was a Spiritualist. We will call him Mr. H. He invited my father to a seance at his house in Marylebone. My father went, and a singular thing happened. Table-turning and rapping were all the vogue then. The alphabet was produced, and the table rapped out letter by letter, Charles H. Mr. H. jumped up very much disturbed, and said, "Dear me, that is my brother. He has passed away, and I did not know it. Excuse me leaving you; I will go and see the widow." He puts on his hat, and made his way to North London. Arriving at his brother's house he found him alive and kicking, sitting down to supper with his wife and family. Of course, some of us wanted to know the meaning of all this, and we were told that it must have been the work of a tricky spirit. So it seems that when we get over there we shall have to beware of practical jokers. Robert Owen was a Spiritualist just before he died, but he was so old that he could not investigate the matter properly. I might mention with regard to Owen that one day a few years ago a gentleman entered my business premises, and, introducing himself as Mr. Frank Podmore told me that he was going to write a life of the great philanthropist, and he understood that I had some documents that might help him.

I could not find much—only some volumes of *The New Moral World* and a few pamphlets, and a framed print taken when Owen was in the prime of life. He seemed pleased to get these, and asked what I wanted for them. I said that he was quite welcome to them, but if he liked to send me the book when it was published I should be very pleased to accept it. He did so, and the two handsome volumes I prize very much. It is published by Hutchinson and Co., and is fully illustrated. One of the illustrations is of the John Street Institute.

To any one interested it is, I believe, the most complete life that has been written. Mr. Frank Podmore met with a sad fate according to an account in the papers a few years ago. He was staying with some friends at Malvern, and one evening he went out for a stroll, and a violent thunderstorm came on. It is supposed that he became dazed with the lightning, and walked into a pond, for his body was found the next morning in the water.

My father often spoke of the old brigade—Hetherington, Paterson, Southwell, and Mrs. Emma Martin. They were all before my time, except a Mr. Watson, whom I have heard speak. My father in his younger days was a very religious man, and belonged to a rather narrow sect, called the Strict, or Particular, Baptists. They believed in Predestination and all that it implied. A certain number of the elect would be saved, and all the rest would be condemned.

For some years my father was one of the deacons of the chapel, but on disagreeing with the financial management he left them, and wandered forth into the carnal world, as they were pleased to call it. In his rambles he was attracted by a bill announcing lectures by Thomas Cooper and others. Stepping into the John Street Institute he found himself in congenial surroundings. He read all the literature available for and against the Christian faith. His old chapel friends did not speak as they passed by, and evidently the wrath of God was upon him. In those days it did not do to be too outspoken from a business point of view.

Nevertheless, I nearly put my foot in it on one occasion. I had just joined the Sunday League, and knew Mr. Morell, the energetic secretary very well, and one day I displayed a window bill announcing a lecture by Professor Huxley at St. George's Hall. There were other bills in the window, but to my surprise the next morning the clergyman's wife from the vicarage, who was a customer, came running in. "Mr. Clarke," she said, "you have a very horrid bill in your window." "Have I?" I said. "What's the matter with it?" "Well, lectures, and on a Sunday, too; and this Sunday League is not going to any good. We don't want a Continental Sunday in this country."

I thought I had better be candid, and put forth the usual arguments in favour of Sunday opening. I pointed out that there were hundreds like myself tied down from morning until night, with no chance to go anywhere except on Sundays and holidays.

As for Professor Huxley, he was an eminent man that I should like to hear, and his subject was a purely scientific one. I said that I was not unfair, for I showed all sorts of bills of sermons and missions, etc., and I have one of yours in the window at the present moment. I succeeded in pacifying the good lady, and did not lose her custom. Another lady that came in occasionally, principally for a chat, believed thoroughly in the Devil, horns and tail and all. She thought all the evil in the world was worked by this personage. I ventured to doubt his existence, and quoted Robinson Crusoe to her.

Robinson Crusoe is talking to Friday about God and the Devil, and Friday says to him, "If God is

stronger than the Devil, why no God kill the Devil, so make him no more wicked."

"Well," said the lady, "God's ways are not ours, and, depend upon it, the Devil is sent to try us."

I replied that I thought it was not quite fair. We had to pay our rent, taxes, and fire insurance, which unfortunately did not cover the fires of hell, and we were quite handicapped enough without having to dodge the Devil.

She laughed and changed the subject. An epidemic of fever broke out on one occasion, and a neighbour, who was a very religious man, came in and said to my father: "This is very serious; depend upon it, it has been sent by God because of our sins."

My father didn't say as he might have done, "Speak for yourself," but he did venture to remark that there was something wrong with the drains, and that a little whitewash would do good. "Ah!" said our neighbour, "whitewash is all very well, but give me the saving power of prayer." Eventually a compromise was effected, Prayer and Whitewash.

The authorities came along, and soon stopped the fever, and I don't think that they used much prayer over the job.

My father, although a convinced Freethinker, did not wish to force his opinions on me, so I read my Bible and even sermons, and heard many more, which makes another story, and if the Editor permits, perhaps, another chapter.

ANDREW CLARKE.

### More About Mind.

Mind must be based on facts instead of metaphysical dreams. The continuity of Nature is the fundamental truth of all our reasoning. Psychology cannot be a science until it is based on physics and chemistry as well as on biology.....Nature is one continuous whole. It is all of a kind. There are no breaks, no gaps, no chasms, no missing links—although men in their classifications of the facts of Nature have mistaken their own distinctions for differences of kind. To understand the complex facts one must study the simple. Mind comes last, not first. —Professor Jackson Boyd, "The Human Situation in Nature."

In writing my article, "A Materialist Conception of Mind," my greatest difficulty was the one common to all expositors of new ideas—to employ language which would render the thesis intelligible to readers unacquainted with my viewpoint and preoccupied with old formulæ and older schools of thought. There was the further difficulty of reducing to simple language suited to the general reader a thesis which requires, and in a measure presupposes the existence of, a preparatory specialist study. Hence it came about that most of the opinions I have received on the article in question either condemn it from the old standpoint, or intimate that I have got a bee in my bonnet! One friend—whose opinion I always value—on the other hand, describes it as "masterly" (a flattering unctio I would fain lay to my bosom!), and says he cannot imagine how certain scientists still preserve "that proclivity for hazy thinking usually confined to Goditis."

A friend in Canada raises the objection already advanced by "Keridon," and quotes Professor Tyndall as saying: "Between a change in consciousness and our consciousness never has bridged and never can bridge." I should say that I have been unable to verify the above quotation, but the same idea is expressed in the following (taken from Tyndall's *Fragments of Science*):—

You cannot satisfy the human understanding in its demand for logical continuity between molecular processes and the phenomena of consciousness. This is a rock on which Materialism must inevitably split

whenever it pretends to be a complete philosophy of life.

I do not know in what sense the term *Materialism* is used here, but in any case all we have is a mere declaration which might, or might not, be true, but in support of which no evidence is offered. It carries no more weight than the Theist's taunt to the Atheist that the latter will never convince *him* (the Theist) that the universe we behold is the outcome of the battling of unconscious forces. What, prithee, is a "change of consciousness" *apart from* a "consciousness of change"? The error (the *common* error: we will not do Professor Tyndall the possible injustice of assuming the literal accuracy of the first quotation) lies in assuming that a change of consciousness and a consciousness of the change are two distinct things instead of two aspects (objective and subjective) of one and the same phenomenon. What seems to be implied is that we cannot express a psychological experience in terms of physics or chemism. This is perfectly true. If we had been able to deal with psychological phenomena in terms of physics or chemistry the need for a further category would not have arisen. But to assume on this account that the further category is quite distinct, utterly foreign as it were, from the others is to overlook the fact that the classification is one we have made purely for human convenience, and does not represent a difference of kind. The three categories are *as categories* ultimate, but this does not prevent us from explaining all three as an expression, of varying degrees of complexity, of the same fundamental energy. If there be any who assert a difference of kind, I can only retort that the assertion is a complete denial of all scientific theory and practice; and, if true, renders a monistic philosophy—nay, even knowledge itself—impossible.

My Canadian correspondent also quotes Martineau, who exhibits the same confusion in a more palpable form by asking: "What degree of the thermometer can be the equivalent of a stanza of *In Memoriam*? How many grains of the protoids or the fats are tantamount to a penitential psalm, or to the agony of Gethsemane?" This is the sort of question that makes one look around for an old boot! And yet I doubt not that at the time of its delivery it kept many timid souls in the paths of grace, and gave them that comfortable feeling of superiority the spiritually-minded always feel over the "blatant Materialist." I have long realized that chronic stupidity must be the prime qualification of anyone who would gain fame by refuting Materialism. Was ever a penitential psalm written in the *absence* of protoids? And, bearing in mind Shakespeare's reference to *lean* men, it is possible that Jesus would not have agonized in Gethsemane had he possessed a greater abundance of adipose tissue. Really, nurse, no self-respecting Glaxo baby would carry on so!

It must be remembered in all speculations concerning mind and matter that modern physics has taught us much concerning the constitution of matter that was not known in the days of Tyndall and Huxley. Matter is seen to be more wonderful; richer in its potentialities than was ever dreamed by pre-twentieth century humanity. It is time the theological and metaphysical contempt for matter was swept away. I once debated with a Theosophist, who poured great contempt on my Materialism, and who asserted that I was "raking a muck-heap" for a jewel that I should only discover by "looking upward." I replied quietly that I could not understand my friend's contempt for what he described as muck, seeing that God was presumably its Creator, and even on my friend's hypothesis it came in very useful for reincarnation purposes. Well does Jackson Boyd say:—

It makes no difference from what point of view we

look at matter, we see that not until the twentieth century did mankind have any conception of what it really is, and to base our fundamental system of philosophy on a classification of matter that was made when its real nature was utterly unknown is unthinkable to any mind that wishes to arrive at the facts and not some bewildering theory.

It is precisely because the old classifications still dominate the minds of the majority of us that my original article met with such an unenthusiastic reception, even in quarters where I thought it would be likely to evoke an intelligent if not sympathetic response.

There remains the "bee in the bonnet" objection. Here my reply is the definite one: Not Guilty! I have long since outgrown the stage where one imagines oneself to be the mouthpiece of a new evangel. Heaven forbid that I should ever become that most detestable of persons—a man with a mission. If I speak sense I do not expect the world to be convinced, seeing that we live in an age when *anything* will find a ready acceptance—providing it be sufficiently incredible. I do not even fancy myself, as has been suggested (really I must cross these "candid friends" off my visiting list!) as a giant killer. Truth to say, the subject interests me but slightly; it is not half so funny as Harold Lloyd, and of considerably less importance to me than the price of my wife's latest hat. But like Rosa Dartle, "I want to know." I am a mere infant in these matters; not an infant prodigy withal, but a child with a receptive mind and an insatiable curiosity; and when I encounter in a scientific work something that is put in to arrest thought instead of promoting it, and when I find an example of Shadforth Hodgson's dictum: "Whatever you know nothing at all about, assert to be the explanation of everything else," I grow restive, and turn aside in the course of a busy life (I am writing this at 1 a.m.) to point out, even to specialists, the logical inferences to be drawn from their own researches. The scientific specialist has this in common with the theologian: his subject becomes "sacred," it must be discussed reverently and without heat—an attitude he seldom adopts himself towards the views of his opponents—and he repels with hauteur any familiarity on the part of intellects of the lower orders. My apology then for meddling—in my own clumsy, headstrong fashion—with sacred matters is that to me they are not sacred; and such is the depravity of my nature that I prefer turning the searchlight of criticism on the dark places of philosophy to burning candles before the favourite shrines of those having authority.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

## "A New Life and Vindication of Robert Burns."

SUCH is the title of a new book on Burns by one James Mackenzie, F.S.A.S. (W. F. Henderson, Edinburgh, 10s.). The book, well printed, with good engravings, but loose and slovenly in arrangement and platitudinous in phrase and expression, is, on the face of it, a work of supererogation and respectable inanity, one that will please the illiterate, and that more hopeless class, the "literary illiterate." A keynote to this fatuous "vindication" of Burns has a page all to itself—it is Stevenson's:—

There's so much good in the worst of us,  
And so much wrong in the best of us,  
That it ill becomes any of us  
To talk about the rest of us.

But why? This from Stevenson in a slovenly moment of his philosophy would abolish all standards of judgment and leave mankind, as the Christian ethic does, a confused mass of indistinguishable mud; so

the book, to the scientific and really critical mind, is damned at the outset. What is good in it is obvious and inescapable (with a few less well-known incidents), and has been reiterated for a hundred years, but the whitewashing still goes on, which—if the original genius and manhood of the subject had not been so distinct and powerful—would result in making the poet a paragon of morals and a plaster of Paris saint—no rebel, no pacifist, no friend of revolution, no lover of the social glass, or occasional raver in his cups; nothing that he was, that he knew he was, that the world knows he was, that the world loves him for, if only for company, in the hermitage of the solitary soul of the anguished and despairing "best of us"! Welcome! profligate poet, your loves, humanities, and all your resplendent enthusiasm, even if occasionally drowned in drink, wasted in the awe of lugubrious faith, in morbid melancholies and self-reproachings; we want you just as you were, as you are, as you will be, in spite of all the illiterate literary varnishers, milliners, and tailors, past and to come; you are eternally vindicated by the legacy you have left us, a fragmentary but precious quartz, the baser metal that conserves and conceals the purer ores, with, naked, shining in the suns of time, for all to lift who may, who understand, perceive, and dare, nuggets, ingots, of refined gold! Shall the heavy-handed and the leaden-brained presume to vindicate this shining example of "sense and worth ower a' the earth," that the poet may be fit company for the dull respectability that annually, and at intermediate intervals, erects and canonizes what in him seems worthy of so much honour? And why, anyhow, exalt extravagantly the writer of verses, even of a Burns; the composer, the player of music; the maker, the singer of songs; the writer, the reader of prose; the painter, etc., above the other labourers of the earth? Is it not a mere variation of God worship, king worship, etc., or a mere conceit, as who should say: Ah! here at last is something I can admire, someone like me, someone who thinks and feels as I do, a specialist in wisdom, as I am, who expresses his heart and mind, as I would mine, if only I were articulate? In his search for heavens (satisfactions) here and elsewhere, man plays some fantastic tricks with himself and others; in all sobriety he is now a king, now a god; now, in the other extreme of Christian humility, an abased nonentity: the golden mean, of course, is to:

Be neither saint nor sophist led,  
But be a man.

Burns—with all the greatest—was no more than that. He who is more is nobody. Had the Christ of pious imagination been a real historical person, and a man the world might have taken hold of him, concretely and spiritually, as it has Burns and Shakespeare. Instead of allowing him to dissolve in some invisible, ineffectual atmosphere called a "Presence that fills the world," but which bids fair to empty the world of all sanity and moral significance. We must save Burns from the fate and futility of Christ, which is threatened in "Vindications" like that of Mr. Mackenzie's. Not that our poet should not be criticised, but we must come to grips with the essentials of the matter, the priceless product, the original strength, inspiration, and character of the man, even his moral character, which, in ninety-nine cases in a hundred, was superior to that of his "vindicators." Those "failings" of Burns, of inevitable, damnable iteration in the muddled minds and mealy mouths of his vindicators and condemners become almost as irritating as the perfections of Jesus Christ in the mouths of innumerable preachers.

The writer of the book referred to bases his case on the not too sure foundation of what he considers the slanders of Burns' first biographer, Dr. Currie, which

he counters with some plausible and some otherwise contemporary and local tradition about the last days of the poet exciseman in Dumfries. Burns met with an accident outside the "Globe Tavern"—the very spot is marked with an arrow in the engraving where he fell!—after having a single glass with a single friend from Ayrshire; or his habitual potations with a number of cronies bereft him of the use of his legs and senses. In due sobriety he slipped on the frozen causeway outside the tavern, and was laid there unconscious till found in the morning; or he had supped too deeply to find his way home; in either case contracting his fatal illness. What seems certain is that the poet suffered a night's exposure that might have killed a stronger man. The immediate cause of the disaster may be left to conjecture, or the likelier event may appeal to those who are capable of analysing the temperament of the too social and generous Burns; and this without in the least diminishing their estimation for and pride in Scotland's, and saving Shakespeare, the world's greatest son. To say, what cannot be said too often, his best work is his true vindication. No saint, if he is human, is always a saint. Poetry, as claimed by Shelley, and especially in the case of Burns, is the product of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds. We transcend ourselves at times, we sink far below our highest level, but in the race of life the highest watermark must remain the criterion. So dull respectability may spare its solicitude for those now sitting where it cannot soar, up there in the eternal sunshine of worthy and enduring fame. It is a great comfort to those conventional critics and vindicators that Burns was confessedly religious, that his heretical sallies were all directed against what Emerson (et tu Brute!) called the "false theology" of his time; that he said he would rather be an Atheist than a religious hypocrite; that he could burst out thus in praise of "true theology":—

All hail, Religion, Maid Divine,  
Who in her rough, imperfect line  
Pardon a Muse *sae* mean as mine,  
Thus dares to name thee;  
To stigmatise false friends of thine  
Can ne'er defame thee.

But none but the utterly stupid, vicious, and abandoned could entertain any other sentiment for what Burns conceived to be religion, *i.e.*, the source and inspiration of all that was best in thought and action; the right lined path of rectitude in the wilderness of life guiding all men in the way of their greatest good and happiness; the narrow but straight and safe and satisfying way running through the desert of the country and the greater desert of the wicked city (this might be found in Freethought), an ever-ready and reclaiming road and refuge for erring souls, waiting to the last the greatest sinner's return—the road-maker perhaps personified, deified, through early imbibed piety; and even when the "gods grow dim," the ineffable shadow of the holy name directs the way and receives the pilgrim at the end. In fear or love, loyalty or remorse, Burns calls on "God," and says, *senorously*, with the saintliest: "'Tis great Jehovah's will, and be his will obeyed." Or, in another place: "Here firm I rest, they must be best, because they are thy will." How much of this is poetry, how much piety, or just "morality touched with emotion," we may not know, but even this is the "religion" of millions of simple, noble folk to-day, even if "morality encased in superstition," it is a very present, even if imaginary, help in time of trouble. Our life is largely, perhaps necessarily, illusion; he is a happy man, and a harmless man, who has no worse than this. Good sense we know, good deeds have often been superimposed upon religion—religion getting all the credit—but we as Freethinkers, I imagine, need

not deplore the fact that Burns was not a scientific student of religious origins; the poet pleases us more than the professor, though the one and the other becomes wedded to his art and finds his joy in this or that; all else is extraneous and negligible. We are not concerned, then, whether or not Burns was religious, sober, moral, chaste, etc. Such questions are the mere "impertinence of scribblers," the solicitude of the unco guid and the ultra-respectable.

We Freethinkers will take our poet as Nature made and left him; as she has inexorably moulded all her lesser works; as she has made gods and religions; first and last mistress of all that is. In the words of James Thomson (B.V.), making Robert Burns:—

Proud and fiery and swift and bold,  
Wine of life from heart of gold,  
The tide of his heathen manhood rolled  
Full billowed through his veins.

A. MILLAR.

## The Way of the World.

### THE KAISERS OF FINANCE.

The statement that Mr. Lloyd George made about the Dawes pact apropos of Germany exactly describes what is happening, or is going to happen, throughout Europe:—

Agreement would never have been reached without the brusque and brutal intervention of international bankers. They swept statesmen, politicians, jurists, and journalists all on one side, and issued their orders with the imperiousness of absolute monarchs who knew that there was no appeal from their ruthless decrees. This settlement is the joint ukase of King Dollar and King Sterling.—*The New Age.*

The Earl of Oxford, speaking at Glasgow, said:—

We must not be left helpless against the stratagems, manœuvres, and raids of the banditti of international finance.

### HUXLEY'S METHOD WITH FOOLS.

He (Huxley) did not suffer fools gladly, and he was much pestered by them all his life. Yet there are compensations even in this, for, as he exclaimed, "Of the few innocent pleasures left to men past middle life, the jamming common sense down the throats of fools is perhaps the keenest."—*Leonard Huxley, in the Centenary Commemoration of his Father. Supplement to "Nature," May 9.*

### DRUNKARD, BUT NOT AN INFIDEL!

On his (Huxley's) lack of orthodoxy, according to a story of youthful domestic experience which he told my wife, he was never rebuked so forcibly as in the early years of his married life by an intoxicated cook. After Mrs. Huxley had tried in vain to dislodge the cook from the kitchen floor, Huxley descended to the kitchen, and with full assurance of masculine supremacy, said: "Bridget, get up and go to your room; you ought to be ashamed of yourself." Whereupon Bridget gave a kick and replied: "I am not ashamed of myself; I am a good Christian woman; I am not an infidel like you."—*Prof. H. F. Osborn, "Nature," May 9.*

### THE GOOD SHIP "JESUS" CARRIES SLAVES.

It is not without regret that we must remember John Hawkins as the first Englishman to have a hand in this buying and selling of human beings.....Queen Elizabeth secretly encouraged him. She lent him one of her own ships, the "Jesus," and with three other small vessels Master Hawkins again set out on a similar venture.—*Sir Philip Gibbs, "The Romance of Empire."*

### VAIN-GLORIOUS MAN.

Man has always cherished the egotistical assumption that he was not only lord of creation, but outside of it;

that God or nature had bestowed upon him an eternal reprieve from the laws that govern other living things. In his egotism he has imagined that while other animals may have had to run the gauntlet of evolution, he was designed for an eternal biological joy-ride. In order to satisfy this comforting theory of his self-importance, he has supposed that at some immortal moment in the past God "implanted a spirit," a special intelligence, in his cranium much as a farmer implants beans in a specially prepared hill. Unluckily, this theory holds some inherent contradictions.—A. E. Wiggam, "The New Decalogue of Science."

#### ENGLAND AND ROME.

There is an age-long feud between England and Rome, which, so far as we can see at present, can only be ended by the victory of one or other of the combatants. The church rightly regards us as her worst enemy in so far as we act as the most efficient bulwarks against the spread of her principles and the growth of her power. If only she could "subdue our proud and imperial race" (to borrow Manning's much-quoted phrase), the rest, many Catholics think, would be easy. Dr. Leighton Parks, leader of the Modernists party in America and one of the finest preachers in New York, told us four years ago that the Catholic hierarchy over there desired nothing more than to bring about war between this country and the United States; and he did not mince matters when discussing the dangers of the situation.—Hugh E. M. Stutfield, "Mysticism and Catholicism."

#### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc

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

##### LONDON. INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. Harry Snell, "The Captive City of God."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "The American Outlook."

##### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 6.15, Mr. Burke, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK BRANCH N.S.S. (Finsbury Park): 11.15, a Lecture.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): Every evening at 8; every Sunday at 3. Speakers: Mrs. Tring, Messrs. Brayton, Ryan, Burns, Keeling, Vickers, and Baker.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6, H. B. Samuels, "The Source of England's Greatness."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3.30, Mr. E. Grant, a Lecture; 6.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, a Lecture.

##### COUNTRY. OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (The Bull Ring).—Mr George Whitehead. Nightly.

BOLTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Hall Steps). 7, Messrs. Addison, Partington, and Will Sisson, "Mental Freedom a necessity before Economic Freedom can be won by the people."

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor, near North Road entrance): 7, Discussion between Mr. R. Atkinson and Mr. Ames, "Did Christianity Abolish Slavery?"

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