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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>Kidnapping.—The Editor</i> - - - - -	401
<i>A Spiritual Gift.—J. T. Lloyd</i> - - - - -	402
<i>Fifty Years for Freethought.—Mimnermus</i> - - - - -	403
<i>The Gospel History a Fabrication.—Abracadabra</i> - - - - -	404
<i>Dr. Johnson and Freethought.—E. Royston Pike</i> - - - - -	410
<i>Under the Greenwood Tree.—A. Millar</i> - - - - -	410
<i>Mary-Worship.—C. Clayton Dove</i> - - - - -	411
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

Kidnapping.

Kidnapping as an occupation had nothing originally to do with the capture of children. When in the palmy days of the sixteenth century Christians revived the almost dead slave trade, children were not a very marketable commodity. At a later date, a little more than a hundred years ago, in Christian England, when the factory system made them profitable, they were very useful to their Christian owners, but in the sixteenth century it was adults that were wanted. That, however, is another story. It is in quite recent times that kidnapping—in its most literal, if slangy sense, has become a very live industry in the Christian Church. Christians of every denomination have awakened to the fact that "to capture the kids" is one of the most vital of their needs. One church near London has, I see, even gone to the length of starting a children's church, in which the youngsters have their own special performance run by themselves. That is rather a clever move. Karl Groos has shown very clearly that the play of children is mainly a form of preparation for adult activities, and it is evidently hoped that if children can be brought to play at keeping church, when they grow up the childish pastime will take on a more serious form, and they will combine to keep a full-blown parson in whole-time employment. In many of these things it is habit that does the trick. It is quite certain that if an educated adult saw for the first time the pantomimic performance of a High Church or Roman Catholic ceremony he would hardly be able to keep a straight face. But the most amusing of comedies pall if we see them often enough, and when from childhood we have been used to seeing absurdities, while maintaining the utmost solemnity, our lengthy training is not without its effect.

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A Modern Trade.

There is a complete philosophy of religion locked up in this religious kidnapping. And there is a philosophy of civilization embodied in the lot of those who are fortunate enough to escape the priestly net. To begin with, as I have already noted, the phenomenon is a modern one. If you turn back to the golden age of religion you do not find any special attention paid to children. Of course, chil-

dren as such must always have appealed to men and women of sensitive natures. And even the roughest will often have a soft spot where the kiddies are concerned. Nature does her work thoroughly for this not to be so. But there is no special attention paid to them as religious subjects. There are initiation ceremonies among all primitive peoples, and we have this continued with the confirmation of the Christian Church, but this belongs to adolescence, not to the earlier age. You do not find Christians—until quite modern times—clamouring for a religious atmosphere in which children shall be educated, nor do you find priests and parsons paying any special attention to the religious education of children. And the reason for this is fairly obvious. In earlier times the atmosphere, social and domestic, is itself religious. The home life is saturated with religion, and the priest is more powerful there than the parent. Outside the home it is the same. The mental atmosphere that prevails suggests no doubt as to the truth of religion. There is no need for the clergy to guard the young against the infection of anti-Christian teaching. Society itself is guarantor against that. It sees to it that the child is delivered over to the priest with no mental prepossessions against his teaching. The difficulty then was not to keep people religious, the difficulty was to get them to be non-religious.

* * *

Religion and Environment.

It is a change in the quality of the social environment that introduces religious kidnapping. The development of a saner and sounder knowledge of the world sets up a line of cleavage between inherited religion and contemporary life. Hitherto the influence of social life has tended to confirm religious teaching. From the Renaissance onward it cuts directly across it. The cosmical teachings of the Church are undermined by developing geographical and astronomical knowledge. Chemistry and physics depreciates the belief in magic. Closer attention to social phenomena lifts morals out of the control of religious organizations. A knowledge of the religions of the world destroys the idea that there is anything peculiar or specially valuable about Christian doctrines and beliefs. For centuries the Church had managed to so control the environment as to prevent changes that seriously threatened its dominance. But for the past three hundred years every substantial change in the environment has meant a weakening of religious influence. So far has this gone that to-day the interference of the clergy in social life is not based so much upon an avowed religious mandate as on an alleged concern with social processes and consequences. The standard has thus been completely reversed. We are not asked so frequently to adapt our social life to the demands of religion, as we are urged to review our religious beliefs in the light of social necessities. Modern life, when its tendencies are permitted to express themselves openly and plainly, make for the destruction of

Christian beliefs. And the clergy know it. Religion becomes more and more an artificiality kept alive by methods that are more or less discreditable.

* * *

The Decay of Religion.

It is not difficult to find proofs of what has been said. It is a common complaint with all churches that when their members move into new districts they often cease to attend Church, and sometimes drop their religion altogether. In other ages people took with them their religion as they took their household goods. It was part of their life and could not be shaken off with a change of habitat. The Church did not have to hunt for the man, the man sought the Church. To-day the religionist is often much like a ticket-of-leave man—he will report himself only so long as he feels sure he will be discovered. There is, again, the complaint that the desire for Sunday travel, for games, for amusement is robbing people of the Church-going habit. There is no reason to doubt this being the case, but it is only another way of emphasizing the fact that religion is being pushed into the background, and no longer dominates people as it once did. The growth of the spirit of toleration in religion is only one more illustration of the same truth. Never in the whole history of the world has a people who believed their religion to be of first-rate importance been tolerant of unbelief. It is only when it is accepted as a settled fact that whether a man believes in a God or not is of small consequence at the side of the question whether he discharges his duty as a citizen that toleration begins to show itself. Toleration in religion is only another name for indifference.

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Religion and the Child.

The upshot of all this is that the clergy have been driven to the realization of the truth that if they are to maintain anything of a hold on the adult they must secure a grip on the child. Otherwise they will be powerless against the cumulative influences of an environment that is increasingly anti-religious. In no subject other than religion is there a frantic haste to cram a child; in no other subject is there so much talk of the necessity for a correct atmosphere. In every direction except religion, instructions waits on the growing capacity of a child; in religion it must forestall it. I have never known, and doubt if anyone else has, of a single individual who has managed to escape religious instruction in his youth, and who has become religious after reaching maturity. Clients must be bred for Church or chapel if they are to be obtained. That is the plain truth of the situation. The fight of the churches for the children is a fight for clients and for revenue. Of course, this is putting the matter very brutally, and it is quite possible that large numbers of the clergy deceive themselves by the language they use quite as much as they do other people. And it may well happen that the operation of this particular phase or self-interest is disguised from the majority by the professed concern for the future of the child, the need for a healthy sense of citizenship, etc. And that in spite of the now generally admitted fact that a good character, sound morality, and a healthy sense of citizenship exists apart from any religious belief whatsoever.

* * *

The Secularizing of Life.

The secularization of the schools is, after all, only one phase of the progressive secularization of life, and it is against that the clergy are really fighting. Religion, says one school of anthropologists, springs from the collective life of primitive peoples, and expresses their social ideals. That certainly ex-

presses a truth, if it is not the whole truth. It is clear that in all primitive communities belief in the supernatural so saturates life that all institutions and customs are coloured by it. It thus happens that the established beliefs are enforced by the existing social life. But with the belief in the supernatural there is no real growth, there is only a process of retreat in the face of advancing knowledge. With every change in man's knowledge of the world and in his conception of social duty there is a corresponding reaction on his religious beliefs. But, again, all knowledge is in the one direction. It is away from the supernatural. The medicine man, the priest, the parson, is thus everywhere up against the same problem—how to retain the belief in primitive superstitions in an environment to which they are thoroughly ill-adapted. It is to create an artificial environment that there is in civilized societies so sharp a line of demarcation between the secular and the profane, between the spiritual and the material. The retention of old forms of dress, obsolete turns of speech, old customs, etc., in religious ceremonies are all so many instances of this. The fight for the child is another. It is a move to give the mind of the child an initial bent before the modern environment has seized it. The Secularization of life is going on everywhere around us. The move for the secularization of the schools is only a special example of a general movement. The secularization of the home must follow. It will mean that religion will have to depend upon an appeal to the adult intelligence. And its chance of success in that direction is not likely to fill any Freethinker with serious misgivings.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A Spiritual Gift.

(Continued from page 387.)

WITHOUT a moment's hesitation we declare that the New Testament conception of the Church as the throne on which Jesus sits as Lord for ever is not consistent with reason, low or high. It is a conception of which reason not only entirely disapproves, but which it boldly condemns as absolutely and ruinously false. Mr. Wiseman is so proud of the theological view of the nature and mission of the Church that he constantly thinks of it as occupying a position altogether too exalted for the reason ever to be "able to get there." As a matter of fact, however, reason has actually got there, and no sooner was it there than it discovered the utter emptiness of the very terms employed to describe the Church and Christianity. Reason and faith have always been enemies. Reason is not a supernaturalist. It confines its attention to the things of this world alone and knows nothing of any other. If this is true unutterably absurd is Mr. Wiseman's following statement:—

When a man says to me it must be arrived at by human reason, and if it is not it can have no compulsion, I say I cannot agree with you. First of all, I have to beware of prejudice. Secondly, there is the teaching of the Scripture, that has been confirmed by experience, that the mind of man is si-darkened, somehow or other not at liberty to make its great ventures, utter its great convictions. As I was saying, it is not yet clear what it will be able to arrive at. There is all the evidence which the mind requires to come to a satisfactory conclusion, but because it is so vital it is given to us in advance of that great day of the consummation when you and I are gathered to our fathers. I dare say it may be many generations before the

human unaided mind can come at the great truth with all its implications, but I don't want to wait.

It is perfectly true that human reason has been growing and improving both in quantity and quality all through the ages, but it does not follow that at any time it was unable to show its possessors the way of life. Even Mr. Wiseman reluctantly admits that ultimately it may come unaided at the great truth revealed in the Christian Gospel; but he is not quite sure about it. As for himself he prefers to trust the Pauline way of salvation. We differ from him fundamentally and declare with the utmost assurance that reason will never come at the truth of the Christian Gospel, because from its very nature it has always been and is bound to regard it not as truth, but as falsehood. In the sermon under review, Mr. Wiseman completely ignores that fact. One section of Freethinkers prefer to be known as Rationalists, in order, perhaps, to emphasize the fact that they adopt and seek to advocate the claims of reason, instead of those of faith. Mr. Wiseman, on the contrary, wholeheartedly follows and energetically advocates the claims of faith, which proves that, whatever he may say about it, he is not a friend of reason. And he makes on this and other points the most anti-rational claims conceivable. Take the following sentences:—

So the Spirit is given to us, and enables us to say what is consistent with eternal truth and to arrive by the short process of his own inspiration at the great truth of all the ages which the consummation will declare. It is only that we are before the time. That is the point. We are illuminations, as well as illumined. We have received the Spirit if we say Jesus is Lord.

According to that passage Christianity is not to endure. A time is coming when reason will supplant it, mount to its throne and reign in its place for ever. Is that the view that usually holds sway in Methodism to-day? Is it the new orthodoxy, or can it be found in any of the great John Wesley's sermons? Mr. Wiseman imagines himself preaching to a promiscuous gathering in Hyde Park. If well-known cranks are absent the hearers will go with him a fairly long way. He assumes that when he describes Jesus as a great teacher whose great commandments should be observed by all, his crowd will not be split up. At last he ventures to exclaim: "And, gentlemen, this Jesus is Lord of all." At this point the crowd and he become at loggerhead. They say: "No, we are not ready for that. We can't follow you there. Can't you be content with what we have agreed upon?" and he replies: "No, personally, I can't. I have not got the driving power for the new time. I have not got the confession of allegiance that is going to bring in the kingdom." Mr. Wiseman forgets that Christianity has been in the world for two thousand years, and that during the whole of that time the confession of allegiance was fervently made by countless myriads, but that the promised kingdom never came. Why, the world has never been washed in the blood of the Lamb and made clean. Jesus is also called the Prince of Peace, a name he has never honoured in any part of the world, even for one hundred years. He is the Saviour who has never saved. The world is religiously as wicked and as hopelessly lost to-day as it was when he is supposed to have lived.

Toward the end of his discourse Mr. Wiseman addressed his large congregation in the following terms:—

Am I going to say no one is a Christian who has not received the spirit of Christ? I decline to answer that question. To your own Master you stand or fall. But I am going to say this. If you

have not made to yourself the confession that Jesus is Lord you have fallen short of the best of which you yourself are capable. You have fallen short of God's great purpose in creating you. You have fallen short of the capacity of a full self-realization. It is only in that confession made by the Spirit of God that it comes.

In that short extract several strange ideas find expression. It is surely false to aver that people fall short of the best of which they themselves are capable. Is it not undeniably true that all of us act as we are constitutionally bound to do? If we have fallen short of God's great purpose in creating us, whose fault is that? Surely not ours. It must have been God's fault in not properly creating us, for the purpose in view, and it is he alone who ought to be held responsible for it. If the Genesis story of creation is true, and doubtless Mr. Wiseman so regards it, it inevitably follows that as creator God was a stupendous failure. Man, his alleged masterpiece, stands out as a living witness against him. In the sermon before us a sadder light still is thrown on the Divine character. Realizing his full responsibility for the fallen and miserable condition of mankind God sent his only begotten Son down to earth to achieve their *recreation* through faith in himself as their Elder Brother. As already pointed out, God the Redeemer has not been a greater success than God the Creator.

Now, what remains for sensible people to do? Clearly to throw supernaturalism, in all its forms, entirely overboard as the most degrading and misleading of all our bugbears. The Church has so mis-handled the Bible as to make it the most mischievous and dangerous book in the world. A Christian's only chance lies in getting rid of it, or in learning to read it in the only natural way, and by the time he does that his Christian belief will be a thing of the past. When the supernatural myths and legends are clean gone, and when all things are looked upon as of the earth earthy, life will be so cleansed and exalted as to seem pre-eminently worth living. Then there will be no spiritual gifts from above, but a vast number of physical and mental gains, which will render life a joyous song and a source of blessing to all alike.

J. T. LLOYD.

Fifty Years for Freethought.

Freedom is the one purport, wisely aimed at, or unwisely, of all man's struggles, toilings, and sufferings on this earth.—*Thomas Carlyle.*

You can do nothing much worth doing, in this world, without trouble; you can get nothing much worth having without expense.—*Ruskin.*

Till with sound of trumpet,
Far, far off the daybreak call. —*Walt Whitman.*

"HATS off to the veterans," said George Foote on a memorable occasion, and few Freethinkers will fail to assent to the rare praise of the "Old Guard" as voiced by the famous and courageous leader of British Freethought. The veterans are the link between the present and the past; that past of storm and peril, when the soldiers of Liberty arose almost every day to fight at enormous odds for bare existence. In that time of stress, almost each day brought a new difficulty or a new danger. To be one of the "Old Guard" is in itself an honour; for they never knew defeat or surrender. A few of them still remain amongst us; to shame our weakness, and to stimulate our courage. Of these veterans, few names are better known than that of our old friend and colleague, Mr. Arthur B. Moss, whose entertaining pen has so often written for these

columns, and whose voice has been so familiar on the lecture-platform for two generations.

Born in London over seventy years ago, Mr. Moss joined the Freethought Movement in the "stormy seventies" of the last century. When quite a young man, he saw that in Freethought alone was there any hope for Democracy. No man in the Movement ever set to work more vigorously to qualify himself for teaching his fellows, and few have waged the good fight with more ability and tenacity. Starting life as a clerk, he afterwards became a journalist, and educated himself not only in the world of books, but also in the book of the world. His knowledge of Freethought literature is as remarkable as his power of debate; while his keen sense of humour saves him from any tendency to dullness, and his plain common sense enables him to meet with ease the platitudes of clerical triflers who almost invariably imagine a mere lecturer can be put aside by an assumption of University insolence. As a writer, Mr. Moss's output of books and pamphlets is far from negligible on the Freethought side. Nor has he confined himself to purely propagandist effort, for, now and again, literature and the drama have beckoned him. In several plays he has displayed a playwright's capacity, which under happier conditions, would have secured for him general recognition from the theatrical world.

Mr. Moss's journalistic career has been of immense benefit to him. It brought him into close contact with all phases of life in the greatest city in the world, and the mysteries of modern Babylon are no more secrets to him than they were to Dickens, one of the greatest social reformers who ever lived, and as ardent a radical as William Cobbett. Years ago, Mr. Moss accompanied George R. Sims and Fred Barnard, the artist, in their memorable travels through London's sombre underworld, and helped to prepare the material out of which Sims wrote his famous work, *How the Poor Live*, a book which startled quiet, comfortable folk in sheltered homes, and paved the way for legislative effort. Indeed, there are few phrases of life in a great city with which Mr. Moss is unacquainted, for his duties as an official under the old London School Board gave him unique opportunities for seeing the so-called "homes" of British citizens, which too often were sepulchres without the whitewash.

The outstanding features of Mr. Moss's busy career are his courage and tenacity. His Freethought was not a midsummer madness. He has fought the good fight under three leaders, Bradlaugh, Foote, and Cohen. A tireless worker, he has delivered thousands of lectures, taken part in scores of debates, and written a number of books and pamphlets. And these, be it remembered, have all been undertaken in the scant leisure of a very busy life. Nor has it been "roses all the way." More than once he has come into conflict with the authorities on account of his Freethought opinions. In exercise of his right as an elector, Mr. Moss asked a member of Parliament to support Bradlaugh's Oaths Bill. The member was a sneak as well as a Christian, for he asked the School Board to dismiss Mr. Moss for being a wicked infidel. The result was that the naughty attendance officer was prohibited from lecturing and even advertising his own books. Mr. Moss promptly insisted on a hearing, and won the day after delivering a powerful speech before the Board, which led to the rescinding of the resolution. Nor is this all, for the tireless Freethought advocate carried the war into the enemy's camp by entering municipal life, and as a Councillor defending the principles he loved, and to which he had devoted his long life.

It will be noted that Mr. Moss's courage is not noisy. There is nothing of Donnybrook Fair about it. Physical courage, especially in crowds, is cheap and common enough. Millions of men will fight and die for almost anything or nothing. But moral courage is very rare. Few men are able to stand against a mob; fewer still are able to stand, animated solely by principles, against an enraged and bigoted community. Mr. Arthur Moss is one of that select company. When he stands for what he sees to be truth, he is as steadfast as a hill, and nearly as quiet in his resistance. He has never asked what he will lose by so doing. The satisfaction of his conscience is his sole reward. For fifty years of virile manhood he has never wavered in holding aloft the banner of Freethought. And for this, if for nothing else, let this brave veteran be honoured.

If Freethinkers need any example to stir them on to give themselves in their great cause they will find it in this quiet harvest of a laborious life. There may be men and women among us to-day who are asking, perhaps with a note of complaint, whether they have not done their share, and whether the time has not come for others to take a turn. Such questions are never asked by the men and women who count in the history of Freedom. They go on giving themselves because the spirit of duty and of loyalty is within them. Pre-eminently such is he whom we mention to-day. Arthur Moss has given half a century's work for Freethought. In age men's minds are apt to get indurated against new ideas. Not so with Comrade Moss. His gaze is ever towards the future. A Freethinker from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, and a practical Humanitarian, he is a public benefactor. In that respect we do well to honour him. "Hats off to the veteran."

MIMNERMUS.

The Gospel History a Fabrication.

A CONSIDERABLE time has now elapsed since I first heard of "the passing of Jesus" but in looking around for signs of the event, I can see little to indicate that "the passing" has gone beyond the initial stage: and this small result is due mainly to "Biblical criticism" chiefly from the pens of a few scholars amongst the advanced clergy.

There is a falling off, certainly, in the attendance at places of worship; but the causes which operate in this matter are manifold, and do not, I think, often include the belief that the Gospel "history" is untrue. In the religious press the results of Biblical criticism are minimised or misrepresented, and only one, here and there, studies the subject with an eye to truth. To the vast majority of Christians the New Testament is "the word of God" still, however qualified. They have no idea that the Gospels contain within themselves sufficient evidence to prove to any unprejudiced reader that they are merely a collection of fictitious stories written originally by nobody knows whom. In the present series of papers, I propose simply to make a selection from those narratives, and show, as I have just stated, that they are one and all ancient Christian fabrications.

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY.

By the above heading is meant the deliberate misrepresentations made by the Gospel writers that Jesus Christ was the subject of Old Testament "prophecy." Over and over again, throughout the four Gospels, the teacher Jesus is represented as doing this, that, or the other, in order that "the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith," etc.; and

in every instance, without a single exception, the Old Testament passage which is quoted had no more reference to the Christian Saviour than to the man in the moon. The following are a few examples:—

1. The Virgin Mary, we are told, "was found with child by the Holy Ghost.....that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name "Immanuel" (Matt. i. 18-23).

This quotation is correct so far as it goes, save that the Hebrew word translated "virgin" denotes nothing more than "young woman." Turning now to the Old Testament narrative, we find that when Rezin King of Damascus and Pekah King of Samaria were about to unite their forces against Ahaz King of Judah, Isaiah appeared before the last-named king, and told him to have no fear, for the designs of the two hostile kings would come to naught, after which he gave him a sign. This was: that a "young woman" should conceive, and bear a son, and that before the child should be of an age to discern good from evil, or even to say "my father" and "my mother," the countries ruled over by the allied kings should be over-run by the Assyrians, and the "riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria" should be carried away by the king of Assyria. This child, as the context shows, was the prophet's own son, whose name, upon second thoughts, Yahweh decided should be "speed spoil, hasten prey." "Immanuel" was a pet name for the people of Judah (Isaiah vii. 14-16; viii., 3, 4, 8).

2. Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem because "it was written by the prophet" that out of Bethlehem should come a governor who should rule over Israel (Matt. ii., 6). Just so; and it was further predicted that this ruler—like a second David, "from of old, from ancient days"—should deliver the Israelites of that day from the Assyrians, when the latter invaded Judæa (Micah v. 2-7).

3. The child Jesus was taken by his parents to Egypt "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt did I call my son" (Matt. ii. 14-15). The quotation is taken from Hosea xi. 1, and reads:—

When *Israel* was a child, then I loved him, and called my *son* out of Egypt.

The reference, it is scarcely necessary to say, is to the people of Israel, who when young as a nation, were called by the god, Yahweh, out of the bondage of Egypt.

4. A massacre of babies, it is stated, took place in Bethlehem in fulfilment of "that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she would not be comforted, because they are not" (Matt. ii. 17-18). The quotation is correct, though how "Ramah" could mean "Bethlehem" it would puzzle anyone save a Christian reconciler to say. Turning now to the passage in the Book of Jeremiah, we see that the reference in that book is not to a massacre of infants, but to sons and daughters who had been carried away into captivity. Of this fact the Gospel writer was perfectly aware; for Jeremiah, to comfort the mothers of Israel, goes on to say:—

Thus saith the Lord: Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears;.....they shall come again from the land of the enemy.....thy children shall come again to their own border" (Jer. xxxi. 15-17).

Further examples of these so-called "prophecies" are unnecessary. Similar misrepresentations, numbering perhaps forty or more, are to be found in the Gospels and the Book of the Acts, though in some

three or four cases the same quotations are repeated in a second or third Gospel. In every case these pseudo-prophecies are declared to have received their fulfilment in Jesus Christ, or his apostles, or people in his days; but, needless to say, not one of the whole batch has the smallest reference to Jesus or to his time.

Looking now at the articles just cited, there cannot, I think, be the slightest doubt but that the Gospel writers knew perfectly well that they were perpetrating an atrocious fraud, and did so deliberately. This kind of deceit these pious Christian teachers doubtless believed they could practise with impunity, for very few of the common people had any acquaintance with Greek letters, and fewer still had access to MSS. of the Greek Septuagint. Even if the worst happened, the passages quoted in the Gospels could be found in the book named, so the fraudulent writers had no fear as to the result.

Setting aside, however, for the moment this misrepresentation, the question to be considered is: Are the incidents already noticed historical? Is it a fact of history that a virgin "was found with child" by no other agency than that of the Holy Ghost? Were a number of babies massacred at Bethlehem by order of Herod the Great? And did the parents of Jesus go to Egypt to escape this massacre? Now, if the alleged Gospel events are strictly historical, one might easily imagine the writer selecting certain Old Testament passages, and saying that these were fulfilled by Jesus Christ. But, if the Gospel stories are pure fiction (as they can be shown to be), those stories must have been suggested to the writer by something. Now, what could be more likely to do so than the passages which the Gospel writer had noticed in the Old Testament, and copied out as predictions to be fulfilled in the history of the Christian Saviour? To further illustrate this point I must take another example from the Gospels.

Psalms xxii. was regarded by all the early Christians as referring to Jesus Christ. Verse 18 reads: "They part my garments among them, and upon my vesture do they cast lots." Now this having been predicted of Jesus (from the evangelistic point of view), it is interesting to note that Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in their accounts of the Crucifixion, say of the Roman soldiers, "they parted his garments among them, casting lots." I have no hesitation in saying that this statement would never have appeared in the Gospels but for its presence in Psalm xxii. I will now go a step farther. The two sentences—"They part my garments among them"—"upon my vesture do they cast lots"—form an example of synonymous parallelism peculiar to Hebrew poetry. This consists of two sentences which express the same ideas in slightly different terms. In the present example, the second sentence—"upon my vesture do they cast lots"—is but a repetition in a varied form of the first—"They part my garments among them"—the "vesture" being but another name for the "garments," and the "parting" or division being made by "casting lots."

Now the writer of the Fourth Gospel took the "vesture" to be distinct from the "garments," and the "parting" and "casting lots" to be separate acts. Hence, in accordance with this erroneous view, he completely alters the narrative. He says (John xix. 23-24):—

The soldiers, therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also the coat; now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore one to another, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted

my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

Here, I think, we can safely say, "These things therefore the soldiers did *not*." The other three evangelists took their accounts from an older Gospel, and simply followed their copy, which said nothing of the fulfilment of prophecy in this case. The writer of the Fourth Gospel, however, happened to know the Old Testament source of the "parting of the garments," and he piously fabricated an incident which he considered a better fulfilment of the passage, as he understood it. The giving Jesus a seamless coat that could not be divided was certainly ingenious, as was also the giving his Saviour so many garments. A complete suit in that day comprised but two—an outer garment and an under one. Peter, and probably Jesus also, only wore one (Matt. x. 10; John xxi. 7)—and no shoes.

My theory respecting the origin of a large number of the Gospel narratives does not, of course, in any way affect the fraud of the original Gospel writers, in falsely representing alleged events in the life of Jesus Christ as fulfilling Old Testament prophecies. These systematic frauds are incontrovertible, and show, amongst other matters, the immoral and untrustworthy character of those writers, as well as completely disproving, once for all, the claim so often made for them by ignorant Christian advocates—that of writing their narratives under the influence of the "spirit of God." ABRACADABRA.

Acid Drops.

A discussion on Spiritualism by Sir Arthur Keith and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has been running through the columns of the *Morning Post*. "Discussion" is more of a courtesy title than anything else for the reason that the two never come within hitting distance of each other. Sir Arthur Keith naturally confines himself to the question of whether there is any evidence that can be called scientific in support of Spiritualism, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle brings out his usual stock of cases, oblivious to the fact that the evidence on their behalf is of the weakest possible character, and ready to accept anything and everything that comes to him through the alleged medium of the seance. Over and over again Sir Arthur Keith makes a gallant attempt to bring the other Sir Arthur into the ring and fight, as he expresses it, under Queensberry rules. But one might as well try to fight with one of the ghosts whose existence is the subject matter of the "debate."

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has an infallible faith in the veracity of the senses, when they support the Spiritualistic case, but a very poor faith in human reason when it points out how fallible our senses are, and how suspicious their testimony is when the matter is one in which our feelings are strongly interested. What Sir Arthur Keith asks for is verification under scientific test conditions of the cases cited by Sir Arthur. The other Sir Arthur replies that we must let the spirits do as they please, take what they give, and be thankful. Sir A. K. points out that the finest and the most complete Spiritualists in the world are the Australian aborigines, whose whole life is governed by the presence of the spirit world. Sir A. C. D. takes no notice, and simply repeats that very many eminent men have been satisfied with the genuineness of the phenomena, and takes not the slightest heed of the fact that the different people witnessing the same phenomena come to quite opposite conclusions, and that not even the genuineness of what goes on of necessity proves the truth of the Spiritualistic explanation. The debate reminds one of a duel between two men, armed with daggers,

but at fifty paces. They can see each other and that is about as near as they can get.

From the point of view of the attack Sir Arthur Keith seems to us to illustrate a fault upon which we have often dealt. He would be the first to admit that an examination of any subject, if it is to be profitable, requires something of an equipment. But in the case of Spiritualism the evil is that on both sides, on that of the believer and on that of the unbeliever, it has been fatally easy for anyone to rush in without any special equipment whatever. On the strength of a few experiences the Spiritualist has accepted the explanation of "Spirits" with all the avidity of an Australian aborigine and of one brought up under the influence of a creed such as Christianity. On the other hand, one who had no belief in spirits, has found it also fatally easy to get a few books dealing with the exposure of some grossly fraudulent mediums, and has set himself up as an expert on the other side. Again the simile of the dagger duel at fifty paces is applicable. The Spiritualist was unable to understand what was going on before his eyes, the anti-spiritualist, in his assumption that people believe in Spiritualism as a consequence of the performance of professional mediums, has failed to touch Spiritualistic believers. What was said might be true of the professionals, but it could not touch their own experience in their own homes, and often in their own persons.

Fraud and folly is there in profusion, and the man who sets out to demonstrate their presence has an easy task. The evidence against the probability—even the possibility—of survival after death, based on what we know of the nature of the human organ—is almost overwhelming. But one has to account, not for the professional medium, and for the easy deception of scientific men whose education has not always been along lines that will enable them to detect what is going on before their eyes, but for the residuum that remains when all this has been cleared away. And we find an illustration of the need for this in Sir Arthur Keith's rejection—among other things—of trance talking, automatic writing, and planchette spinning as illusions. It is exactly these automatisms, and what Sir Arthur Conan Doyle calls trance mediumship, which forms the foundation of the belief of ninety-five per cent. of Spiritualists. And the explanation of them in terms of rational science is fairly well known to all whose studies have carried them in the right direction. If we may use an analogy which fits the case fairly well, religion is not created by frauds of priests, the frauds of priests are made possible because of the misunderstandings of natural happenings on which religion is built. If none but those who have had an adequate training in psychology, normal, abnormal, and morbid, were regarded as any authority whatever on such a subject as Spiritualism, there would soon be a change for the better in the character of the controversy. Meanwhile, we venture to suggest to Sir Arthur Keith that the so-called trance is real, automatic writing is real, crystal gazing is real—a beer bottle will do quite as well in the latter case, but they have no more to do with the agency of spirits than has the motion of the planets. And it was never an exposure of the fraudulent nature of witches and wizards that destroyed witchcraft, but a correct understanding of the facts upon which these built up their trade and their reputation.

Scots of a hundred years ago would start if they were able to read the current issues of the *Weekly Scotsman*, which has been publishing some very outspoken letters from its readers on the question of the Scottish Sabbath, that Sabbath which Mr. Ramsay Macdonald assured a religious gathering he would like to restore. A "Fresh Air Girl" writes that the air in a Church is generally stuffy, and she generally comes away limp and tired. Another one describes the Sabbath of his early years as one of misery, and a description with which most Scots will agree, if they speak truthfully.

And we note an outspoken letter from A. Brown, which concludes with the straightforward attack upon the Christian superstition which we quoted in a recent "Views and Opinions." Organized Freethought should be much livelier in Scotland than it is.

The spirit of comedy lurks in most unlikely places, and one would not look for the light comedy of theology in the dull and prosaic pages of a trade paper entitled *The Produce Markets Review*. Slogans are fashionable and now take second place to Limericks. In the report before us we find that Lady Bowden, in the service of the Empire, recommends the eating of apples. In the myth-making of big business our trade contemporary, in a burst of skittishness remodels the old slogan and makes it read: Eat an Empire apple a day and help to keep the dole away, and also suggests that it may have been the apple that originally reduced Man to the state of unemployment. And thus the sacred stories of the Bible get mangled in the jaws of the trade machine. It would be a fascinating study and make an interesting book to compare the relative value of trade and theology as integrating forces in history providing that none of the religious fraternity had a hand in it.

"Alpha of the Plough," in the *Star*, unconsciously wrote a good criticism of Christianity in his article, "The Seventh Lap." He states: "We find that we have often made ourselves uncommonly miserable in the present because of our fears that something would happen which generally did not happen." This neglect of the present goes hand in hand with the continual assertions of pious people about things that cannot be proved. Richard Jefferies in his reveries about bird life wrote one thing that leaves his position unchallenged even by the late W. H. Hudson. In his *Pageant of Summer* there is a passage, which, to read, stamps itself on the memory. He is writing of the indifference of birds during a storm, and, with a flash of insight he gives us:—

If but by reason and will I could reach the godlike calm and courage of what we so thoughtlessly call the timid turtle-dove, I should lead a nearly perfect life.

The black-bats of theology have nothing to be proud of in the exploitation of fear, and in this respect wear laurels that no men covet.

We notice that Messrs. Hodgson & Co., Auctioneers, had for disposal a handsome set of Voltaire, 72 vols., from the library of the late Lord Justice Farwell. Those thoughtless people who slander a mild deist, and at the same time have never read him, might pause to consider his discreet popularity in this connection. Voltaire is not now "caviare to the general," and in time we may find his ideas gaining popular acceptance in the same way that Canon Barnes is unconsciously exploiting the ideas of Thomas Paine. We wish him every success in the propagation of common sense as cathedrals offer a wide field for work of this kind.

The State of Tennessee has adopted a text-book on biology which declares that no animals resembling the human species can be regarded as the source and origin of man. This jack-boot method of treating the matter is the least line of resistance, and involves less mental fatigue than a careful examination of the theories of Haeckel. Have we fallen or risen? The State of Tennessee inclines us to think that its representatives have fallen so far that a return is hopeless—and *Fallen Angels* is now only a subject for the stage and the medieval-minded—and apparently the State of Tennessee, to where, as you will remember, many of our burnt-cork comedians want to "get back" or "be there." *Vive la bagatelle*.

Two or three weeks ago we mentioned a remarkable communication given at a spiritualistic seance by the spirit of Commander Honner to Admiral Henderson.

The striking feature of the communication was that Commander Honner says he is still alive. It now transpires that the occurrence took place at the house of Mr. Dennis Bradley—who appears to be running a competition with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle as to who can believe most. Mr. Bradley now writes to the *Daily News* saying that the voice was quite genuine; he heard it himself, and there was no mistake about the name. But Mr. Bradley does not explain how it is that the spirit of a man who claims to be still living appeared at Mr. Bradley's house. We say "claims" to be still living, and denies that his spirit is wandering about the "summerland." All we can say is that perhaps Commander Honner is mistaken. He is not alive at all. By all the laws and rules of evidential Spiritualism he is dead, and it is not likely that keen-witted examiners such as Mr. Bradley are going to be deceived by a mere mortal who has the impudence—in fact of a "trumpet" voice to say otherwise. If that kind of assertion is to be admitted our hopes of "summerland" are at an end. The Rev. Vale Owen may give up hopes of ever preaching in the Cathedral which has been erected for him in the "summerland," and the psychic bookshop may close its doors.

A very hot discussion is going on in the Irish Free State Senate over the introduction of a measure for the legalization of divorce. The Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, which does not care very much what degree of unhappiness and real immorality exists so long as both run on properly orthodox lines, opposes the granting of any such right. As usual, the Roman Catholic champions appeal to the authority of the Church and the New Testament—the first of which came as near as it could get to destroying family life altogether, and the latter of which takes the lowest possible view of marriage. In this connection, however, a passage from a speech by Dr. W. B. Yeats, delivered in the Senate, is worth citing:—

The ecclesiastics who have spoken upon this question have all quoted a passage in St. Matthew upon divorce and marriage. There is not a scholar of any eminence in the world who considers the Gospels historical documents in the strict sense of those words. Their importance is devotional, not historical. They were written long after the events which they record; probably two generations after, and certainly when there was no living man who had heard the words or seen the events recorded, and they contradict one another on essential points. For an ecclesiastic to ask a statesman to base his legislation upon the assumption that any particular passage possesses historical validity is to appeal to public ignorance.

The statement that an appeal to the New Testament in order to settle controversies of social importance is an appeal to public ignorance is one that has a far wider application than the one it is used to cover. And we wish that some of our Christian Socialists would realize it. But it may be that they do realize it, and also that, as an appeal to ignorance is sure of a wider response than an appeal to knowledge and reflection, prefer it.

In a book entitled *The Race Problem and the Teaching of Jesus Christ*, the author, Mr. John S. Hoyland, argues that racial antagonism can be overcome by giving full activity to the principles of Christianity. This is full-blown optimism, but to maintain such a thesis is sheer obstinacy. Tested on the continent of America, the argument falls to pieces—there is the road for the nigger and the pavement for the white man. Lynch law also makes skittles of this argument, and the author must know, if he knows Old England, that factions and feuds are as common in rural counties as blackberries are in September, in spite of the teachings of Jesus. However, there is nothing like assurance, even if one maintains that the earth is flat, and, as Christianity is said to be a cure-all for everything, the being who split the world into continents and islands and then added a diversity of languages was a genius in jumbledom. That his followers on their principles pretend to straighten out the result only adds to the joke that is never seen by the mob with Christian axes to grind.

What has happened to Dr. Oscar Levy? A new edition of Nietzsche has just been issued, of which Dr. Levy is editor, and concerning which he contributes an article to the *Observer*. Hitherto all sane readers of Nietzsche have taken his anti-Christianity for granted. That was, indeed, inevitable, for his attitude toward Christianity was not only hostile, but contemptuously so. He denounced its "slave morality" and wearied us with none of the vapourings about the deeper truths and lofty ideals embodied in Christianity, with which so many writers seek to disguise their departure from the current creed. He saw that Christianity was intellectually puerile and socially disastrous, and said so.

But according to Dr. Levy, who once said quite correctly, that the first requisite of a great Freethinker was that he should be a great Freethinker and not a little one, this view of Nietzsche—which we understood was once his own, is a mistake. Dr. Levy now discovers that the anti-Christian was a profound Christian, and cites, by reference only, as in support Aphorism 440 in the Will to Power. But that has no reference to Christianity; it merely states that "when morality—that is to say, refinement, prudence, bravery, and equity" have been stored up by a people they produce effects in the sphere where honesty is so seldom present, the sphere of the intellect. Dr. Levy now assumes that Nietzsche's unflinching honesty was a product of Christian training. He says it is Nietzsche's "long training in this religion"—that is, in Christianity, that we owe his sense of intellectual honesty. And that appears to us as purely absurd. Intellectual honesty is the one quality in which Christianity, doctrinal and historical, is most conspicuously absent. It is the one thing that is never emphasized as of value. Right belief is impressed on all as of value, but it is not the right belief preached by the Buddha, but the right belief of unquestionable adherence to dogmatic propositions. So one can only ask, What has happened to Dr. Levy? What makes him assume that the unconscious influence of Christianity has been in the direction of intellectual sincerity? Nietzsche is too great a man to need such curious recommendations. And it is—we wonder when publicists will awaken to the fact—nothing short of an insult to accuse men of genius of being Christians without knowing. This kind of thing might well be left to the pulpit.

Dr. Levy uses the expression "the higher Christianity," and it need to be said, once again, that in the sense of this being an original Christianity there is no such thing. Real Christianity, the beliefs of the Jesus of the New Testament, and of the earlier generations of Christians, are so crude, so barbaric, and so antagonistic to a healthy morality that very few civilized people can be found who will express adherence to them. What is called the higher Christianity is not real Christianity at all, but a form of belief that represents the original minus the barbarities and crudities Christians have been forced to drop, and plus the social and ethical teachings they have been forced to accept. One might as reasonably speak of the higher Ptolemaic astronomy, after it has been revised in the light of the teachings of Copernicus. This kind of thing makes for anything but intellectual strength or moral courage.

By the way, a correspondent writes asking why we are so insistent on people using a certain term to describe their position rather than others. It appears to him a war about words, and hardly worth bothering over. Well, to put the matter as briefly as we can, it is because we are keenly apprehensive of the power the words have in the determination of thought. Clear thinking involves the use of precise language, and when a man gets in the habit of using words that are merely in the neighbourhood of what he thinks, his thinking soon becomes coloured with the same quality. And when such words are deliberately chosen with a desire to avoid conflict with other people, the consequences

are equally disastrous to his moral strength. It is with the intellectual and moral qualities as it is with the physical ones, they gain in clearness and precision as they are constantly and profitably exercised. There was a certain strength and dignity about the narrowness of Puritanism during its best period because the Puritan, ridiculous as his beliefs were, refused to palter with their expression in the slightest degree. There is neither strength nor dignity about the present-day Christian, who is afraid to set out his beliefs in clear straightforward language. And that is the matter in a nutshell. The principle applies to all, Christian or non-Christian. It is not a question of "mere words." It is a question of keeping one's intelligence in as clean and as healthy a state as is possible.

We referred last week to the Christian Chinese General who is now playing a prominent part in the Chinese troubles. Our readers will be interested in the following, which appeared in the press, and represents one of the orders issued to his troops:—

Shoot the enemy at long range until your ammunition is exhausted. Then use your bayonet till it breaks. After that hammer them over the head with the butt of your rifle. When that splits, bite their ears off.

There is no doubting the Christian note in that order. It reminds one of some of the fighting bishops of the medieval period.

The House of Laity of the Church of England were discussing the other day the expunging of the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian creed. And it was with an unconscious humour that the mover of an amendment described it as a "burning" question. But one of those present said that the clauses were the "most terrible which had ever appeared," and Sir Edward Clarke said the Athanasian creed had spoilt for him the happiness of the services on the great festivals of the Church. We do not doubt this, in either case. But the chief point to bear in mind appears to us that these brutal and savage clauses, which shock such men as Sir Edward Clarke are the products of Christianity, and if they have shocked him they have also shocked others. More than that, they and similar teachings emanating from the Christian Church are largely responsible for the brutality and coarseness of manners which have been such distinguishing features of Christian society.

In the end the matter of whether an uncertain proportion of the human race shall or shall not go "into everlasting fire" was put to the vote, and by a majority it was decided that they shall. Now that is a very dreadful affair. To think that, probably, the majority of the human race are condemned to everlasting fire on a majority vote of the House of Laymen is very distressing. And after deciding on that they all went home to supper and to bed, satisfied that they had done their duty to everyone, and that all would be well cared for during eternity. There is nothing like Christianity for breeding concern for one's fellow.

We see by numerous advertisements in the papers that all our troubles will disappear if we will only drink Worthington's beer regularly. Another one has it that if we would only use the right kind of shaving soap—supplied by the advertiser—we should go off to our day's work with a cheerful spirit, and get easily through our work. There are many scores of this kind of advertiser, and the clergy belong to this gallant band. Thus, the Rev. Maclean Watt, of Glasgow, says the one thing that can make us all brighter, and better, and happier, is the Church. It is exactly the same as Worthington and the shaving soap man. The only difference is the article that is supplied. If Dr. Maclean Watt were a commercial traveller for Worthington we feel sure he would be able to use his present formula with only a slight verbal change.

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.

A. E. THOMAS.—Sorry we are unable to use verses. Not up to standard.

T. H. HOW AND OTHERS.—Pleased to have such general appreciation of our reply to Mr. Hamilton Fyfe. Still it is wise not to take these professional journalists too seriously.

E. W. CLARK.—We are afraid that discussion on the reality of the Flood would not prove of interest to readers of the Freethinker. Rationalizing the Bible is the most hopeless of tasks. Taking the Bible for what it says, and read in the light of a fair knowledge of anthropology it is an interesting and an informing volume. In any other light it is of very questionable value.

C. KENNEDY.—Thanks for securing new subscriber to the Freethinker. Every new one is a fresh help to the cause the paper serves.

T. ROBERTS.—Thanks for calling our attention to the Morning Post articles. Mr. Cohen has dealt with the subject of Spiritualism in the two concluding chapters of his "Other Side of Death."

J. SANDFORD.—Year's subscription for Freethinker received. Pleased to know you think so highly of the paper.

D. GARLAND.—G. W. Foote published some years ago a pamphlet dealing with theosophy, but it is now out of print. We believe that the two things that are making headway in England are Freethought and Roman Catholicism. They represent the logical extremes, and there is a tendency in most things to divide in that manner in the end.

T. S.—A capital letter, but we are not surprised to know that, with others, it was not inserted. Still, we fancy from what we hear, that Mr. Hamilton Fyfe has learned his lesson.

MR. F. PELGATESTONE writes: "All success to Mr. James Taylor's excellent inspiration given in your issue of the 14th inst. I 'struck lucky' as soon as I made my private vow to pay for or obtain a reader." We are glad to hear it, and hope that others will adopt Mr. Taylor's suggestion with the same good result.

R. SMEDLEY.—"Development" is the name given by us to change in a particular direction. All that goes on in nature is change. It is we who give the value to change as it takes this or that turn. The language of Sir Oliver Lodge is that of a theologian, not that of a scientist. We are not responsible for the unphilosophical language of certain biologists. We wish they wouldn't, but we cannot do more.

G. W. IRVING.—Thanks. We were not nearly so severe as we might have been, and with men of a better type. But one has to preserve a sense of proportion in these cases.

MR. H. WOODS points out that in his letter in last week's issue, "cannot always tell a wonder story" should read "you can always, etc." and "his acts were miracles" read "his acts were not miracles."

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

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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.

We have to thank several correspondents who are taking the task of securing new readers for this paper in the right kind of spirit. Our late editor, G. W. Foote, used to say that he dreamed of a time when the Freethinker would show a sovereign profit at the end of a year. He did not realize that dream, but there is no reason why it should not be realized one day. It is still far off, but if our friends would take the job seriously in hand, we might live long enough to see that miracle accomplished. We do not know a Free-thought paper anywhere that does pay its way, but Britain might lead the way. It is worth working for, anyway.

The International Freethought Congress, which was to have taken place in Rome this year, will meet in Paris on August 15-18. A general invitation to Freethinkers of all shades has been issued, there will be the usual programme of papers, discussions, excursions, and a public luncheon. Full particulars may be obtained from M. L. Van Brussel, 70 Rue du Canal, Louvain, Belgium.

A German correspondent writes:—

You will no doubt be interested to learn that in Germany we have at present about 3,000,000 organized Freethinkers. Besides many other Freethought organizations such as the Monistenbund, with Professor Ostwald as President, there exists an association of Freethinkers for the promotion of burial by incineration. At present the association has about 400,000 paying members. The subscriptions are at the rate of twopence halfpenny, fourpence, and one shilling per month respectively, according to age, representing a kind of insurance premium. On the death of a member the association provides for everything in connection with the cremation. An affidavit stating that the applicant desires to be cremated on his or her death has to be lodged with the association previous to his enrolment as a member. It is a condition of membership that the applicant has by statutory declaration before the Lower Court severed his or her connection with that religious body he or she has been paying taxes to—we still have Church taxes in Germany which ceases after the declaration.

We are glad to learn that our fellow Freethinkers in Germany are so well organized. We have as many Freethinkers here as there are in Germany, but they apparently lack the spirit of organization. Perhaps one day there will be an improvement in that respect.

Too late for last week's issue we were asked to announce that the West Ham Branch has arranged an excursion for Broxbourne for to-day (June 28). The train will leave Stratford Station at 10.25. Tea will be provided. Mr. Warner, senior, has volunteered to act as guide. All Freethinkers and their friends are welcome.

The nature of God, immortality, the being of the soul and its connection with the body, are eternal problems, wherein the philosophers are unable to give us any further knowledge.—Goethe.

One man finds pleasures in improving his land, another his horses. My pleasure lies in seeing that I myself grow better day by day.—Socrates.

Dr. Johnson and Freethought.

FEW questions in literary criticism have been contested so hotly or so long as that of the respective merits of Johnson and Boswell. Yet the impartial observer may wonder that so much pertinacity is shown in the controversy, when it is remembered that none of Johnson's works retain any vitality to-day. His fame rests upon one book, and his case differs from those of Pepys or Blackmore in that even that book is not his own.

But his champions, routed in one corner of the field, renew the contest in another. He is represented as the supreme example of the Christian literary man, and, as such, Freethinkers may be excused if they investigate his character with a greater care, and pass judgment with less leniency, than is usually the case.

There can be no doubt that Johnson was sincerely and deeply religious. His only essay into fiction is a moral treatise masquerading as a novel; whilst his contributions to the journals of the day, his poems, letters, and prayers are all pervaded with a gloomy melancholy. It would be interesting, albeit fruitless, to enquire whether he would have been a happier man if he had not been so religious: but Johnson without his religion is as unconceivable as Johnson without Boswell. Certainly, religion held for him more of mortification than of consolation.

Generally speaking, Johnson was a good Church of England man, with kindly leanings towards Rome. He claimed to have anticipated every argument which Hume advanced against Christianity and yet to have kept his faith. "As to the Christian religion, sir," he once told Boswell, "besides the strong evidence which we have for it, there is a balance in its favour from the number of great men who have been convinced of its truth, after a serious consideration of the question." On another occasion he said, "No honest man can be a Deist: for no man could be so after a fair examination of the proofs of Christianity..... Hume owned to a clergyman in the bishopric of Durham that he had never read the New Testament with attention!" He believed in the influence of evil spirits upon men's minds, and seems to have admitted the possibility, at least, of witchcraft. Whilst declaring that the New Testament is "the most difficult book in the world," he expressed his conviction in the certainty of the Scriptures.

The idea of toleration was anathema to him. He admitted the right of liberty of conscience, but refused his assent to its corollary, liberty of talking and preaching. "No member of a society," he declared, "has a right to teach any doctrines contrary to what the society holds to be true," and added that the only way in which religious truth can be established is by martyrdom; whereupon Goldsmith made the pertinent remark that a man who deliberately courted martyrdom was, in reality, a suicide.

Infidelity, which in Johnson's day, was but another name for Deism, made him shudder. General Paoli once asked him what he thought of the spirit of infidelity which was then so rampant? He replied that he believed that it was but a passing cloud, which would soon be dissipated. Freethinkers may take heart when we observe how Time has falsified his pious opinion, and may also find encouragement in the statement made by "a person, originally a Quaker, but now, I am afraid, a Deist," that he did not believe that there were in all England more than two hundred infidels.

On another occasion Johnson was good enough to state that, in his view, the character of an infidel was more detestable than that of a man guilty of an

atrocious crime, for the former would commit any crime if he felt so disposed.

Such remarks incline one to doubt whether the Doctor's intellectual abilities were so great as we are asked to believe. But there is another side to his character which needs stressing. Not only was he intolerant, but he carried his intolerance to such lengths that he was often deliberately offensive. Boswell more than once was the butt of his insulting remarks, but it is difficult to feel much sympathy for a man who had evidently more than a spice of toadyism in his composition. But his cheap witticisms at the expense of Goldsmith are unforgettable—and unforgivable. "Sir, you are impertinent," he once shouted at the author of *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Again, his remark to Sir Adam Ferguson is hardly compatible with the character of a gentleman. "You, now," he said, "would have been with a wench, had you not been here"—then added in parenthesis, "O! I forgot you were married!"

Is this the model which our authors are called upon to imitate? Is this blustering, dogmatic, brow-beating old lexicographer to be set on a pedestal for our admiration and worship? Surely it is time that we saw Johnson as he really was, and not through the mists in which his apologists have enveloped him. We have no time to spare for his books; his morality depresses, and his theology revolts us. In his life he does not appear to have been above the general level of conduct, and his opinions were a disgrace to a generation which knew Gibbon and Hume, Voltaire and Rousseau.

Religious no doubt he was, but let those who glory in his piety not forget his statement—surely one of the saddest and most revealing in literature—that he had never had a moment in which death was not terrible to him.

E. ROYSTON PIKE.

Under the Greenwood Tree.

An Intermezzo.

Under the greenwood tree
Who loves to lie with me
And tune his merry note?.....

We all do, I dare be sworn. The canopy, the ritual, the choir, the shimmering of the fretted windows of the woods, the dappled glades, the "sombre boskage" of the leafy month of June, mysterious harmony of light and shade and gentle motion, strange expectant stillnesses; or the wild misty blast from the solemn hill beyond rushing through "the sweeping theatre of hanging woods" with pattering rain drops, have a refreshment and an appeal for all, that common "impulse of a vernal wood, that unison of man and nature, that one "immortal soul" which the imposing but empty artifices, the pomp and circumstance, savage sectarianism and pious prostration of church and creed can, at best, but divide and defer.

We were a small party of Esperantists. We would be Freethinkers could we find a footing and a following. It was our picnic day. Since then the Firth of Clyde, with its bare capes and island hills, bright waters, wooded slopes and ravines of the mainland, have been basking in the sun, their skies without a cloud! Hundreds of motor-cars are filled with "unconscious" Freethinkers; beauty and pleasure, some on Bacchus bent, each in his own way "breaking Sunday"; the whole a wholesome protest against the irksome restrictions of the parson's day—confound his impudence—and he frail as the worst, if disguised for his trade in suits of solemn black, uttering many a gospel groan, perhaps so insistent on righteousness from a too painful sense of his own unworthiness;

the head and front of his offending being just that impossible perfection, that mock morality and superstitious fear, which, if there were no other safeguards in nature, would leave mankind in parlous and hopeless case indeed. The medicine man is still a power in the land, not always for good, and he is all too apt to overlook the purely secular and essential qualities and activities of the tribe. To paraphrase Parnell:—

While these without his "charms" suffice
To make men moral, good, and wise.

But to our interlude in Fairlie Glen: Our day was cloudy and gusty, with threatening rain, but, as it seemed, the more refreshing. We had come some ten miles in a wicked Sunday train. On our way up the woodland path we passed a grey ruin, at one end of which grew a giant stem of ivy with spreading fan of foliage. This we were told had been noted and sketched by "Saladin" on his charmed visit to the place. A steep ravine on the right was the cradle of a little stream with a succession of cataracts wearing away the "Old Red Sandstone," while cliffs of the same rose above us surmounted by sentinel trees. Tea over, an "Invocation" was to have been read—after the manner of Volney, or the present writer! but the precious MSS had been left behind. It might have ran something like this:—

Samedeanoj (same-idea-ones, or comrades and friends) pilgrims of time and effort and hope—I will not say of eternity, for nothing is eternal in a lasting shape and being but varying particles of an eternal All; pilgrims of time, to this pleasing, anxious being still resigned, endeavouring to be happy, useful, good and wise, the leaves and grass and trees, the flowers, the stream and cataract, the lofty heavens, and all the gentle vale salute you, all are your kith and kin and patrimony, bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh, their beauty and deformity are yours, their good and bad, their savagery and gentleness. And so, alien town-dweller, you salute the fields and streams, rest upon the bosom of nature, list the lullaby of the wind in the trees, the silvery music of the stream, while the rooted turf heaves gently as a mother's breast; so all your childish frets and cares are soothed and lulled, your senses sleep till you waken, childlike, from refreshing rest as though in the arcade and paradise you had lost so long, and even ceased to seek for in your dull despair.

Someone owns this Eden: so many have "owned" it since the first possessor: They are dust, and it possesses them. We are allowed to enter here: what magnanimity in some being ephemeral as ourselves. But we salute him too, or return his salute, as freemen, not as slaves to a master, as equals to an equal: no more than this for this unearned superiority of his, but only, if by chance he hath it, for that greater nobility of nature which all men should do obeisance to, even in a landless beggar. So his lordship is today entertaining illustrious company, peaceful but proud, assertive but complaisant, seeking not their own at the moment from signatories of rank and possession; respecting, yet smiling at man's temporal claim to eternal things; seeking rather to sweeten, widen, and ennoble the mind, which at last achieved, by knowledge and wisdom, mutual communal, international rights and understandings, by an international form of speech like Esperanto, and by all other helps, and which at last may allow mankind to make its paradise of what has been too much and too long its hell upon earth. Room for the human spirit; let its struggles sweeten the universal mind as these gracious shades have sweetened and awakened ours.

A. MILLAR.

Mary-Worship.

MARY, the mother of Jesus, made a very slight impression upon the mind of the early Christians. Those who knew her and her son, had eyes only for the latter, and as a result our first notices concerning her are extremely brief and bare. Two or three generations later, however, Catholics began to regard this oblivion as an injury, and by and by they furnished Mary with a detailed biography, tracing her career from the moment of her spotless conception right up to the day when angel hands bore her off to heaven. There can be no doubt that Monasticism greatly assisted the triumph of Mary. The monks in the lonely cells took her for their beloved, and poured forth impassioned praises of her grace and beauty. Artists and sculptors vied with one another in presenting her under the most bewitching forms; and the modest maiden of Nazareth who went aforesome in her simple homespun kirtle to draw water at the village well, had her effigy enthroned on marble altars in sumptuous apparel and costly gems. With this growing interest in Mary there arose a belief in her transcendent spiritual worth, and thence a tendency to extol her as the mightiest of intercessors, and even to set her forth as an object of worship. Tauler, one of the most powerful and imaginative of pulpit orators, terms her "the daughter of the Father, the mother of the Son, and the bride of the Holy Spirit, the queen of heaven, the lady of the world, and the intercessor of all those who implore her help"; and he goes on to exclaim, "She is the star that was to come out of Jacob, whose lustre imparts light to the universe; accordingly in every distress fix thy eyes upon Mary, and thou canst not despair; follow Mary and thou canst not miss thy way."

Pius X., in a Pastoral addressed to the French Catholics, and dated at Rome, January 6, 1907, expresses his trust that "the Immaculate Virgin, Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Word, and Spouse of the Holy Ghost," will use her influence with "the Most Holy and Adorable Trinity"—the capitals are very suggestive—to procure better days for the Church in France.

Among speculative theologians the language is even stronger. It has been boldly affirmed that Mary is "the complement of the Trinity"; and that by being assumed into the Godhead, she has made the Trinity into a Quaternity (see Pusey's *Eirenicon*). There are other instances, where the supervention of indecency to blasphemy precludes quotation. What is most remarkable, however, is not the doctrine of divines concerning Mary but the practical effect which her exultation has had upon the popular mind. There is no doubt whatever that in Catholic countries she is a greater favourite than her son, and much more beloved by the people. She is the grand attraction of the Church, both in the West and in the East, for she has perhaps a firmer footing in the Greek Obedience than in the Roman. What Tauler says about flying to her for help is the literal conduct of millions. The girl who has been betrayed and forsaken, the mother who has lost her child, the sailor in peril on the deep, the merchant harassed in his affairs, even the malefactor and the harlot seeking success in their vile pursuits—one and all fly to Mary, feeling assured of her sympathy and assistance. She is an indulgent mother, ever ready to aid her children; full of compassion for their failings; and skillful at turning away the wrath of their angry father. This is the catechism which ages of Catholic teaching and practice has written deep in the heart of believing multitudes, and

Why was woman created at all?—*St. Augustine.*

¹ Sermon on the Annunciation.

it offers perhaps the greatest of all obstacles to the acceptance of the faith *first* delivered to the saints.

Strange and shocking as these perversions must appear to those privileged to live under the pure light of the Gospel, it is not difficult to explain how they came into existence, for one simple fact alone suffices to point out their origin, namely, the absence of an open Bible. A careful and prayerful study of Holy Writ, the habit of searching the Scriptures to see if these things be so, in short the ready use of the sword of the spirit which is the Word of God, is the best preventative of and remedy for all such errors. But, also, this exercise is forbidden as dangerous by the Catholic Church, which denies that the individual believer is directly enlightened by the Holy Ghost, and teaches that he must rely for religious instruction upon his spiritual guides, those stewards of the manifold grace of God, who alone are capable of rightly devising the word of truth.

The nature of the disease in this case, however, indicates the nature of the cure; and hence we propose to deal with the present subject not on general considerations, or grounds of reason, but upon the authority of the Bible which is correctly regarded as the basis and bulwark of the Protestant religion. Leaving out of account those more extreme forms of devotion to Mary which have never been officially authorised, and considering only the honours paid to her and the functions ascribed to her by the general consent of the Catholic Church throughout the world for many ages, let us examine what warrant, if any, these doctrines and practices have in Holy Writ. What Scriptural sanction, for instance, has the belief that Mary occupies a high position in heaven, that she should be greatly venerated, and that she exercises a mighty influence over the Godhead. As far as we can see, not an atom of such sanction is forthcoming for any of these articles, whilst their unscripturalness is plain as the day.

1. The sacred writers take very little notice of Mary, and never extol her in any way. We hear not a word about her virtues; and although she is spoken of as "blessed" for being the mother of Jesus, this distinction was purely passive, and Jesus himself expressly objected to its being regarded as a supreme honour. (Luke ii., 27, 28.)

Of the twenty-seven works composing the New Testament, twenty-two contain no reference whatever to Mary. Apart from the four Gospels, she is mentioned only in Acts, where her name occurs on a list quite casually (I., 14). John, in whose house she is supposed to have lived some years, says nothing about her in his Epistles and Apocalypse; and the same thing applies to Paul and Peter. This silence is not due to anti-feminism, for Dorcas, Lydia, Priscilla, Phœbe, and other women are referred to as honourably connected with the work of the Church. It is equally untenable to declare that Mary vanished from the sacred page because she died shortly after the death of her son. For, if as tradition asserts, she were fourteen years old at the birth of Jesus she would only be forty-seven at his death, and might therefore survive him many years; besides which if she died during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles, it is utterly inexplicable that the fact should not be recorded in this work; and moreover her being dead would never explain the silence of the apostolic writers touching her career.

The true explanation is one of two things, either she left an unfavourable impression upon her fellow Christians, or else she made hardly any impression upon them at all. In the former case they suppressed their recollections; in the latter they had nothing to remember. The probability is that her character was

colourless and commonplace, and that she possessed none of the force necessary to leave footprints on the sands of time. She shone with a reflected light and derived her sole claim to celebrity from having given birth to an illustrious son.

How foolish, then, for the Church in later ages to clothe her in divine glory, when the Church of her own time, and the time of the Apostles, hardly took any notice of her existence.

2. Neither by precept nor example did Jesus ever suggest that his mother should become an object of reverence. Great importance is to be attached to this fact, for of all those who have ever lived, Jesus was the most straightforward in his way of treating people as they really deserved to be treated. He never yielded a moment to the conventional distinctions of society, but gave honour to whom he thought honour was due, and in *the degree* to which he thought it was due, and no more. Now not only do we find him treating his mother without any special veneration, but we see that he had the habit of keeping her in her place, when she showed a disposition to leave it. On two occasions, once when twelve years old, and once when over thirty, he quickly and firmly put down her interference with his designs. As far as our records show, he never sought or accepted her advice on any subject, nor yielded to her intercession; a point well worthy of being considered by those who vainly place their confidence in her ability to influence him favourably on their behalf. Again, from the way in which Jesus treated his mother, we can form an idea of his opinion as to her character, for we know that he was just and discerning. Now there was one thing that Jesus never tolerated, namely, want of faith in himself and his mission, and we know from John that his brethren did not believe in him, and from Mark that his friends tried to seize him on the pretence of insanity; but in the last instance the responsibility for this strange conduct falls upon Mary, who should have taught her family, especially her other children, to regard Jesus in a sacred light.

Jesus himself appears to have seen and felt this cruel wrong, for once when his mother and brethren came to seek him at an assembly he was holding, he declined to join them, and stretching forth his hands to the company before him, exclaimed with infinite pathos: "Who is my mother and who are my brethren; verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall do the will of my father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." On another occasion when a woman in the crowd said: "Blessed be the womb that bore thee and the paps which thou hast sucked," Jesus replied, "Yea, rather blessed be they that hear the word of God and keep it."

In both instances it seems plain as the day that Jesus was alluding to his own mother's want of faith, and contrasting her unfavourably in this respect with those whom he regarded as true believers. Again, although Jesus said that the woman who had washed his feet loved much; and that Mary of Bethany had chosen the better part in listening to his words, we never find him addressing any such gracious and tender remarks to his mother, which he most certainly would have done had he thought her worthy of the attention. But the crowning argument of all, and one the Catholic divines have never met, and never can meet, is that supplied by the conduct of Jesus at his resurrection. On that solemn occasion when he had led captivity captive, trampled upon death, and brought life and immortality to light, he would undoubtedly have announced his triumph in the first instance to his mother Mary, had he desired that she should occupy the position subsequently assigned to her by the Catholic Church. But, as a matter of fact, we never hear of his appearing to his mother at all;

whilst we learn that the first person to whom he did appear was Mary Magdalene, whence it follows that he showed more honour to the one out of whom he had cast seven devils, than to her whom the idolators of Rome call the Queen of Heaven. The fact is that Mary of Bethany, Martha, the Magdalene, and other women, played a far more important part in the life of Jesus, than his mother ever did, and this because of their superior devotion. We have no wish to seem harsh towards Mary, but in face of the facts before us drawn from Holy Writ, we can only say that she was utterly unworthy of the place assigned to her by the Catholic Church; and that her son Jesus thoroughly discountenanced her claim to any such honour.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

Correspondence.

"THESE YELLOW SANDS."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your able contributor only mentions Charles and Mary Lamb and Thomas Carlyle and his wife in connection with Hastings and St. Leonards. He might also have alluded to Julian Hawthorne, George Macdonald, Coventry Patmore, Herbert Spencer, Sheila Kaye Smith, Mark Rutherford, and M. Bentham-Edwards, all great authors, and associated as residents or visitors with the famous Cinque Port. I can well remember myself in the autumn of 1870, seeing the Empress of the French and her son, the Prince Imperial, who had both taken refuge at Hastings after the disaster of Sedan. Rossetti, the artist-poet, was married at St. Clements' Church, High Street, Wellington, and his bride once lived at Halton Barracks. Holman Hunt painted some of his well-known pictures at Clive Vale. Tom Hood, the poet, and F. W. Robertson, the preacher, were constant visitors. Edmund Waller, member for Amersham in the Long Parliament, and noted for his amatory poetry, was once Mayor of Hastings. Among many other celebrities I would add Clifford Harrison, Stephen Phillips, and that great Comtist and Freethinker, Edward Spencer Beesly, who all lived, died and were buried at this famous sea-side resort.

JOHN STEPHENS.

CHRIST AND MIRACLES.

SIR,—In reply to your correspondent, Mr. Harold C. Woods, who says I am incorrect in saying that a man who catches a ball arrests the law of nature, and he proceeds to explain that if the ball passed through the man's hand and through the earth to the other side the law of nature would have been arrested. There can be no interesting or fruitful argument with a man who does not see that the latter is a gross violation of all law; in fact, utter lawlessness. The word arrest, according to my dictionary, has no such meaning at all. It means to stop something from carrying out its original movement or intention, as, for instance, to stop the course of some destructive disease. It does not mean violation or annihilation of anything.

If I may say so, this writer's argument about psychological evidence is openly ridiculous. He says that if a man, being hungry, bit off his, Mr. Wood's arm, and seeing his, Mr. Wood's, annoyance, stuck it on again, would the naturalness of the one act prove the truth of the other? I can say no more than that if there is a more unnatural act than for one man to bite off another man's arm (so far as I can tell, it would be a wonderful exhibition of most unnatural strength), the crowning unnaturalness would be the same savage's kindly miracle in sticking it on again. Here is inconsistency *de luxe*.

Now, I believe all that I write, and I have given serious thought and much reading to the vital issues. I recognize the shallow illogicality and parasitic qualities of established Christian churches and the value and honesty of much Freethinking work. I believe,

however, that Jesus of Nazareth is our only example of a Normal Man, and if we find difficulty in believing the miracles or theological teaching, in order to be just and rational, let us at least examine his ethical teaching and see if it is not the most pure, sane, and complete guide to all endeavour and activity that has arisen among men. The position of the churches is well described in a recent American book as follows: "The materially minded race is as yet able neither to assimilate the example of Jesus nor to let it go. I can only take it and corrupt it." Am I to come reluctantly to the conclusion that Freethinkers can only stare at it, and without understanding it, abuse it?

HUBERT C. KNAPP-FISHER.

MORE ABOUT MIND.

SIR,—When a Herbert Spencer is convicted of grave philosophical error there is no need for an amateur dabbler to pretend to infallibility. If I am wrong I desire most earnestly to be put right—and this, I think, my friend, Captain Panton, appreciates.

It will be remembered that the sentence commencing: "Between a change in consciousness and our consciousness of the change—" was not mine, but was imputed (quite erroneously, no doubt) by a friend to Prof. Tyndall. Captain Panton says, and rightly, that I have not sufficiently analysed this sentence; I accepted it as implying the same thing as Tyndall's declaration concerning "molecular processes and the phenomena of consciousness" because I could not see to what else it possibly could refer. The curious thing is that Mr. Panton saw this part of my article in the MSS without commenting adversely on it.

Having thus pleaded guilty to my friend's criticism, I can accept all that follows, I think, without in any way disturbing my main thesis. Consciousness is, primarily, a state of awareness: it is the subjective aspect of what, viewed objectively, is a physico-chemical process. In science it is recognized how mental processes are indissolubly linked with metabolic processes; in philosophy it is the fashion to ignore it, or deprive it of significance, lest its general apprehension should lead to the disruption of a state of society in which the few are able largely by virtue of this doping process—to hold the many in mental and economic bondage.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

NEWCASTLE PROPAGANDA.

SIR,—In reference to your notice of above in the last issue of the *Freethinker*, special mention is made of Messrs. Chapman and Bartram being active, and you note "that this is only what we should expect." Personally, I think it is time Messrs. Chapman and Bartram were put upon the retired list, and a fuller recognition given to some of our younger friends, especially Messrs. Atkinson and Carlton, who do the most essential part in outdoor propaganda. Whilst Mr. Atkinson must travel twenty miles before he can give his voluntary efforts, and return home, I regret some of our Newcastle friends are too indifferent to show any appreciation by their presence. While on the other hand we often have Messrs. Chapman and Fothergill from Shields, Mr. Bell and Robinson from Pelton neighbourhood, and Mr. White senior, from Stanley. These veterans in the movement are all congenial comrades of more strenuous days, whom it is a pleasure to meet. I want readers to note it was not I who sent the report which placed Chapman and Bartram in the limelight, while apparently forgetting the strenuous efforts of others. I may add our Branch does the best it can with the help obtainable.

J. G. BARTRAM.

[We are always pleased to make public acknowledgment of work done by the younger men in the movement, but we can only deal with reports as they are sent us. But we are not anxious to see the older ones placed on the retired list. There is room, and work, for all.—ED.]

"PATRIOTISM AND POETRY."

SIR,—"Towards the end of the Great War, after the mists had rolled away," Patriotism suffered a much-deserved and long over-due slump, and on every side was heard the cry, "Never again." This must be a

very sad reflection to Joseph Bryce, who dogmatically tells us, "Patriotism is a fact of human nature." In his own words, "This wild assertion is not supported by any evidence," and "is the dream of a diseased imagination." Patriotism—a fact of human nature! Exactly so. And so are lying and theft. But we don't glorify and worship them. A. G. B.

Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission.

Mr. Whitehead has been opening up new ground at Ashton-under-Lyne. He reports six good meetings there. Opposition was given at first from those who appeared to have heard Freethought arguments for the first time, but by the end of the week the audiences became both attentive and enthusiastic, and there is every prospect of a good Branch being formed. Mr. C. Newton and Mr. Owen Connolly both rendered valuable assistance to our lecturer. It being found impossible to hold a meeting on Sunday, Mr. Whitehead and a few of the faithful went over to Manchester and held a meeting there with good results. Mr. Whitehead is at Swansea until July 4, when he goes to Stockport.

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. R. Dimsdale Stocker, "The Ethical Possibilities of Suggestion."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit., "The Sciences and Civilization."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 6.15, Mr. J. Marshall, 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, Mr. A. D. McLaren, a Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3.30 and 6.30, Mr. C. H. Keeling will lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Outing to Broxbourne. Train 10.25 from Stratford Main Station. Those taking part will bring lunch, and tea will be arranged. Party will be in charge of Mr. F. Warner, senior. All Freethinkers and friends welcomed.

COUNTRY. OUTDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.—Ramble to Ballingeachon; meet at Clarkston Car Terminus at 12 noon.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor, near North Road entrance): 7, Mr. F. B. Carlton, "Freethought on Spiritualism."

SWANSEA BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission.—Friday, June 26, Gorseinon; June 27 and 28, Swansea Sands; Monday, June 29, Victoria Park Gates; rest of the week, Swansea Sands. Every evening, 7.30; Sunday, 6.30.

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