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God and Nature.

I pointed out last week that Mr. Arnold Bennett, after opening his article with a confession of disbelief in certain Christian doctrines, proceeded to explain that if he had got rid of one form of religious folly, he was not quite destitute of that fashionable commodity. He avowed his strong belief in the argument from design, and so had managed to provide himself with a God. In this form of self-stultification he was not alone. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle affirms he was an Agnostic, but had all the time a firm belief in God. That is, he did not know whether there was a god or not, but he never ceased to believe in him. Mr. Hugh Walpole, designed for a clergyman, "suddenly" "believed in nothing." Mr. J. D. Beresford "in a single evening" came over to scepticism. Well, men who come into unbelief in that manner, and mistake a passing fit of temper for an intellectual conviction, are not very likely to remain settled, and one is not surprised to learn that they again went back to belief in some sort of a God. It is all so frightfully shallow. If these men had the slightest conception of what unbelief is, if they even had a fair working knowledge of the nature of mental processes, they would surely realize what arrant nonsense they are writing. A state of mental conviction is not formed in the twinkling of an eye. It is a matter of growth; and it should be the business of a novelist to trace that growth in both himself and his characters. In writing thus they are exactly upon the level of a mountebank like Gypsy Smith, who writes that Jesus came into a tent and converted his "rough, swearing, drinking, pilfering gypsy father into a clean, tender, honourable, strong, beautiful, Christian man." No one need believe that Gypsy Smith's father was the terribly depraved character he pictures before conversion, or the beautiful one afterwards. There was probably not very much alteration, save in the acquisition of a number of cant phrases about the power of Jesus. But these miraculous changes are the stock-in-trade of the professional evangelist, from whom no sensible persons expects the truth. But it is a little depressing to find our ten selected writers moving on the same mental level as a Gypsy Smith.

The Carpenter Theory.

With the exception of Mr. Zangwill—who is conveniently vague on the subject—all the rest of the writers profess a belief in God. Three of them, Messrs. Bennett, Jones, and Doyle, give some sort of reason why they believe, and this results in a very commonplace form of the design argument. I often think that in matters of religion one might well take a man's handling of this question as a test of the quality of his intelligence. For when examined the fallacy involved is so obvious that a moderate ability for clear thinking ought to at once make it plain. Mr. Arnold Bennett talks of this "marvellous scientifically-ordered, law-controlled universe" in a way which shows that he has not the faintest conception of what scientific men have in their minds when they talk about natural law or natural order. Mr. Henry Arthur Jones is more elaborate, but not more intelligent. He says:—

Matter has been resolved into force. But this force is everywhere intelligent, foreseeing, orderly, directory, purposeful in its manifestations.....How can I tell that design which shapes and animates the clumsy work of man, and not call that design which shapes and animates the infinitely perfect forms and movements in every cranny of the universe?

Any parson could have said this; all parsons do say it, even Gypsy Smith says it. In religious matters the only bond of agreement is, generally, stupidity. Well, the answer to Mr. Jones' conundrum is that you can call the work of a man designed and you are not warranted in calling natural happenings designed because there is no analogy between the two cases. Mr. Jones thinks he sees design in the universe because he also sees that certain things always follow in the same order, and between what occurs and the conditions that determine the occurrence there is a close and precise agreement. But that fact alone furnishes no proof whatever of design. Whatever occurs, designed or undesigned, there is precisely the same connection between the occurrence and the conditions preceding it. I do not know that a man designs a machine because the parts combine to a definite result. I know this because I know the *intention* with which the man brought the parts together. In the absence of a knowledge of intention I have no right whatever to infer design. Design consists in the marriage of an intention with a result, not the marriage of an end to the means that produce it. And one would like to know from Mr. Jones how he knows that God—assuming he exists—*intended* what we see around us? And in the absence of that knowledge of intention the inference of design is quite unwarranted. I do not say that the argument from design in nature is weak, but that it is irrelevant. It is quite incapable of proving what Mr. Jones thinks it proves.

Mind in Nature.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who never ceased to believe in a God, even when he was uncertain whether one existed or not, has another version of the argu-

ment just dealt with. He says: "I clearly saw order in the universe, and the existence of order postulates a central intelligence." There it is! One has only to put it that way, and the Atheist ought for ever to be silent, particularly in the presence of one who is in daily intercourse with spirits up to the *n*th degree of intelligence. Unfortunately for Sir Arthur, "order," as we have just explained, is not something that now exists where there was previously no "order"; it is simply the way in which things are seen to work together, and even though the working were directly different from what is the case, the existence of "order" would not be affected in the least. Moreover—and here I expect Sir Arthur will open his eyes—it is not the regularity of nature that can give us any ground for believing in a "central intelligence," but its absence. To men like Mr. Henry Arthur Jones and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle it may sound a very hard saying, yet it is nevertheless true. The probability of a directing and supervising intelligence in nature would be given by the absence of a settled order. To make this quite clear I need only postulate two very simple things. The first is that a thing will remain what it is unless there is something to alter it. That seems indisputable, and answers to the first law of motion. The second consideration is that if a thing alters there must be something to alter it. I hope that also is quite simple, likewise that its indisputability is admitted, and yet it knocks the bottom completely out of all the twaddle about "order" and regularity and a central (why central?) intelligence. For, consider. Anything that exists has certain properties by which we know that it exists; and provided that nothing interferes with it these qualities will remain unaltered. Bring this thing into relation with other things, and the consequence is the sum of the relations of the qualities of the two things. And so long as we assume that all we have to deal with are things, their qualities, and their interactions, the whole question of determining the order of nature is purely a question of things and their relations. The Atheistic assumption is that all we have to deal with are natural forces and their interactions. It is also the condition of all scientific working, everywhere and at all times. It is, moreover, a condition of our thinking about the universe as a coherent whole that the same conditions shall always give rise to the same consequences, and so long as this occurs there is not the slightest need to look beyond them.

* * *

"Law" and "Order."

Perhaps I ought to apologise to genuine scientific thinkers for bothering them with what is really a lesson in scientific method, and to the gallant ten for asking them to do some serious thinking on the subject they have been writing about, but at the risk of being wearisome I must follow it out to the end. So my next point is that the distinguishing mark of the play of intelligence in nature is not "order," but rather interference with natural conditions. If I am landed in a place where the water spreads itself in all sorts of directions, where stones are piled up anyhow, and where all sorts of plants are growing in all sorts of ways, I do not infer the presence of intelligent guidance. But if I find the water confined within banks, the stones arranged in symmetrical mounds, and the plants arranged according to their colours or kinds, I do at once say "Intelligence has been at work here." So in the world of nature. If we assume that the natural order is unalterable, if, that is, the properties of things are unalterable, I do not look for any such disturbing factor as intelligence. But if a scientific man found that H₂O forms water one day and whisky the next,

he would at once search outside H and O for some other factor. And if it were found that the qualities of natural forces were undergoing constant alterations, not in a regular order, but in a haphazard way, or even being altered to gain an end such as man himself might think of, then we might easily assume that there were really some intelligence interfering with the course of events. To do earlier generations of believers justice they were guarded against this criticism. For to them with their more intelligent belief God was one thing and nature another, and God showed his presence and his power by "interfering" with nature—by causing rain to fall, or a miracle of some kind to happen. But miracles went out of fashion, and so the believer tried to find a God somewhere. He found it eventually in the "order" of nature, because in his crude thinking he took natural order to be analogous to the rules laid down by a football club, and which might be modified at a general meeting of members. It never struck him that with every fresh demonstration of the invariability of nature, that with every fresh proof of the reign of causation, he was driving a nail into his own coffin. He was committing suicide to save himself from slaughter. Irregularity might give some ground for belief in a controlling intelligence. Regularity proves either that no such thing exists apart from animal organization, or, at most, that if it does exist, we need not bother about it, because things happen as they will in any case.

* * *

No Use for "God."

For the benefit of anyone interested I may summarize the simple points enumerated above. Assuming something to exist, it must possess certain qualities, properties or attributes. And unless we think of something affecting it, it will continue to manifest these properties. As I have said, a thing will remain what it is unless it alters, and if it alters, something or other must be responsible for the alteration. It does not require profound thinking to realize this, a little careful thinking, freedom from the hypnotic effect of established verbalisms will be enough. But so far as we can see everything that goes on around us is the consequence of the action and interaction of the various forms in which existence manifests itself. There is not a scientist of repute in the world who will categorically deny this. If there are gaps in our knowledge of the nature of these permutations and combinations they are gaps that science hopes one day to remove. But if this statement is correct where does "God" come in? What room is there for him? Intelligent direction would involve an arrangement of natural forces in such a way that would not occur by the action of the forces themselves. That is the way in which we detect intelligent action anywhere. Intelligence, has, in short, just that quality of interference which science declares exists nowhere in nature, and for which no scientist the world over makes the slightest allowance. Mr. Jones concludes triumphantly: "We cannot rest in a materialistic interpretation of the universe. We refuse to deify futility and nothingness." No better description could be given of his own deity than the last sentence.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be Concluded.)

I would rather know that all the earth,
That every source of joy, of love, or mirth,
And everything of life that loved the light,
Would sleep forever in eternal night,
Than think one soul on which the light of reason fell
Should suffer torment in a Christian hell.

—ANON.

The Pilgrim Fathers.

MANY people are blind worshippers of the past and prejudiced depreciators of the present. On bended knees they thank God for the marvellous achievements of three or four hundred years ago, and then they deliver speeches and sermons in weeping disparagement of the doings of to-day. It is perfectly true that great is our indebtedness to the past, but this very indebtedness implies that the present is on the whole better than the past. *The Christian World Pulpit* of October 8 contains a sermon entitled "The Legacy of the Pilgrim Fathers," which is described as "the first annual sermon in honour of the Pilgrim Fathers, preached in the Pilgrim Congregational Church, Southwark, on Tuesday evening, September 29, by the Rev. Arthur Pringle." The Pilgrim Fathers were a party of seventy-four English Non-conformists and twenty-eight women who sailed in the "Mayflower," September 6, 1620, from Plymouth to Massachusetts, where they founded Plymouth colony. Nine years later they were followed there by a number of Puritans from England, and these also founded a colony known as the Massachusetts Bay colony. In 1691 these two colonies were united. It is well known that these people left their native country because of the religious persecution inflicted upon them with the utmost brutality under James the First. What they cried for was liberty to worship God according to their own convictions. Three centuries ago religious liberty was utterly unknown in England. Mr. Pringle says:—

Pains and penalties—real pains, terrible penalties—were meted out to those who dared to call their souls their own, who dared to speak above a whisper to God, who dared to claim liberty of approach to the great High Priest.

We are quite certain, however, that the reverend gentleman is entirely mistaken in hinting that the degree of religious freedom enjoyed in this country to-day is "the legacy of the Pilgrim Fathers." It is not true even to affirm that "a very large part of that gain is owing to the men and women whom we meet to-night to celebrate." We go further and maintain that the Pilgrim Fathers were not lovers and advocates of real religious liberty. They only wanted liberty for themselves, but would not grant it to those who disagreed with their religious views. They fled from Old England to escape persecution; but as soon as the opportunity arose they kindled the flame of persecution in New England, which was kept fiercely burning for many years.

We have complete sympathy with all who bravely fight against intolerance and tyranny, but none whatever with those who, having won liberty for themselves, deny it to others. That is a large part of the story of the Pilgrim Fathers, though Mr. Pringle carefully abstains from any mention of it. Has not the reverend gentleman read Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, which was first published seventy-six years ago, and is still in circulation? The picture of religious and social life in New England given in that immortal work is by no means pleasant to contemplate; but those who are familiar with the religious history of New England and the tyrannical laws enacted by the Pilgrim Fathers and their descendants know how painfully true it is.

Mr. Pringle admires romance and culture, and claims that "if the voyage of the Pilgrim Fathers and all that it meant was not a romance, then romance has never existed and been exemplified in this England of ours." What the preacher tells us may be true enough; but we incline to the opinion that to those who experienced that famous voyage its roman-

tic qualities were not visible. The disabilities and sufferings they endured were so terribly severe that they had no time to think of romance, and when they landed on Plymouth rock, the rigours of a cold and stormy winter were such as to well nigh break the stoutest heart. It seems to us that Mr. Pringle purposely employs extravagant language. He says:—

One of the great needs of the day is to ally religion with romance and culture. Not only the people who view our churches and our organized religion with detachment, but we ourselves, who belong to organized religion, if we are educated, and if we have had, above all, the education of a generous temperament and a warm imagination, feel a little resentment within us when religion is starved of romance and is out of touch with culture. We do not feel that it is God speaking to us, but the misguided views of narrow men, if anybody suggests to us that culture is here and religion is there, that science, modern knowledge, poetry, literature, and all the glories of a rich imagination are in one department of life, and that religion, starved, rigid, narrowed, restricted, is in another department.....But I think I can hear you saying to yourselves, "Well and good, but are you seriously going to say to us to-night that the Pilgrim Fathers can tell us how to ally religion with romance and culture? We remember," I think I hear you saying, "what Matthew Arnold said." So do I remember it, and I am going to call it to your more vivid remembrance; it is one of the most famous passages that Matthew Arnold ever wrote, and in the name of "sweetness and light," in the name of the culture of which he was such a distinguished, if one-sided, apostle, he bids us call up this picture, which I bid you call up. He says: "Picture Virgil and Shakespeare on the "Mayflower," with those Pilgrim Fathers, and think what intolerant company they would find them!"

We must bear in mind in this connection that as the Pilgrim Fathers were Congregationalists, so Mr. Pringle represents the same sect, whilst Arnold was a faithful Churchman all his days, though theologically an outcast. Though we have never been connected with the Anglican Church, yet our view of the Pilgrim Fathers is identically the same as Arnold's. It is easy enough, to be sure, for a Congregational minister to charge so noted a writer with "superficiality"; but his doing so is by no means a sign of greatness nor depth on his part. We, too, have read the story of the Pilgrim Fathers many times during fifty years, but it has never struck us as exceptionally fascinating. We will take one or two facts which Mr. Pringle rehearses as follows:—

They thought nothing of going fourteen or fifteen miles to church. One day, when the weather grew bitter in New England, not for the first time, a very bold worshipper—how bold you shall learn in a second—rose and proposed for the fourth or fifth time, timidly but yet hopefully, that as the weather was bitter, they would consent to a stove in the meeting-house to make the place warmer. But they turned on him angrily, resentfully, and said in so many words that good preaching ought to keep a man warm enough, stove or no stove. Judge Sewell tells us in his Diary that this is what happened one day: The Communion bread was frozen pretty hard, and rattled sadly in the plate, yet that same Judge Sewell did not look at the hour glass and went on preaching for two and a-half hours—unwittingly, as he said. One of the Pilgrim Fathers once preached nearer five than four hours, and in case anybody wished to make an untimely exit a constable was placed at the door. If anybody went to sleep in the meeting-house persons with long rods would insistently and tactfully, but very firmly, tap the delinquent on the shoulder till he appeared to show symptoms of being awake. Even the little children were not spared, for they had

an ancient dame, as they called her, who was armed with a rod with which she awed the children into not showing, at any rate, that the service wearied them.

Church attendance was compulsory. Every absentee had to pay a heavy fine. We do not hold that the New England of the seventeenth century was religiously more superstitious and intolerant than the old England of the same period, the truth being that religion has always been an enslaving force in the world. Even in the New Testament Epistles the followers of Jesus are described as his bond-servants or slaves. The supernatural has invariably been a tyrant over all who verily believed in its existence. What mankind needs is complete deliverance from its dominance and the wisdom to live within the boundaries of the natural. Matthew Arnold's belief in culture led him to abandon all supernatural beliefs whatsoever. He even reduced God to an impersonal power which makes for righteousness, and laid the supreme emphasis upon conduct which he treated as three-fourths of life.

J. T. LLOYD.

Lynch Law.

Sun treader, life and light be thine for ever!—Robert Browning.

The drowning of Shelley on that fatal July day in 1822 was, in all probability, the heaviest loss that English literature has ever sustained.—G. W. Foote.

THE poet Shelley has been dead a hundred years, and during the whole of that period his personality and works have been treated largely with undisguised malignity or indiscriminating eulogy. Rarely has the still, small voice of Reason been heard in this babel of noises. During his short life the treatment meted out to the young poet was cruel in the extreme. Regarding his masterpiece, *Prometheus Unbound*, Theodore Hook voiced contemporary criticism by saying that the work was likely to remain unbound. The *Gentleman's Magazine*, on hearing of the poet's death, courteously suggested that he ought to have been hanged. In his life he fared no better. Whilst Shelley was standing in the Post Office at Pisa a burly stranger called him "a damned Atheist," and knocked him down. Nor was this all, for an English court of law actually declared that Shelley was unfit to be the guardian of his own children.

This Niagara of persecution and misrepresentation was caused by the poet's Freethought, which was perfectly well known from the time he left Oxford University. The object of all these persecutors, from judges to jesters, was simply to blacken and persecute the unfortunate poet because of his anti-Christian views. When the poet's genius could no longer be hidden under a bushel, the malignity did not die out, but simply took fresh forms. Generations of critics, from George Gilfillan to Henry Morley, delighted to portray the Atheist poet as an unconscious Christian. Even Matthew Arnold, in dubbing the poet "a beautiful but ineffectual angel," mixed the oil and vinegar in the approved Christian style.

The latest on Shelley, published in *T.P.'s and Cassell's Weekly*, is from the pen of a well-known literary critic, who is also a doctor. Dr. Arthur Lynch, who admits that he is "a Shelleyan enthusiast," has a curious way of showing his admiration of the great poet. Not content with saying that he was "bored to extinction with "Alastor," "The Witch of Atlas," and "The Revolt of Islam," Dr. Lynch throws purely literary criticism aside, and boldly declares Percy Shelley to be a decadent, and

his poetry hysteria and the eroticism of the weak. He goes so far as to suggest that the poet's portrait suggests "less a handsome man, if such there be, than a beautiful woman," with all the sinister pathological implication of such a statement. He even adds that Shelley was a commonplace thinker. The passage is worth transcribing:—

Even in his revolts he (Shelley) is conventional. "Queen Mab," which is regarded as a blasphemous poem, reads to me like the outpourings of a fervent Christian; the sentiment, apart from the magic of words, rises into the hysteria of a revival meeting. The poem is essentially pietistic even to the weakness and insipidity of the pictured utopia.

It is enough to break a critic's heart. "Queen Mab," according to Dr. Lynch, is only regarded as a blasphemous poem. "It is blasphemy," "four square to all the winds that blow." It was declared by eminent judges to be blasphemous, and men and women were actually sent to prison for circulating the book. Queen Mab figured in scores of blasphemy prosecutions. There is no escape from it as one of the most blasphemous books in the language.

Yet this bombshell of a poem was the work of youth. I think it is the most wonderful book ever written by one so young. Note the opening lines:—

How wonderful is death,
Death and his brother, sleep.
One pale as yonder waning moon,
With lips of lurid blue;
The other roseate as the dawn
When throned on ocean's wave,
It blushes o'er the world.

Recall that passage commencing:—

How beautiful this night!
The balmiest sigh which vernal zephyrs breathe
In evening's ear—

and finishing with the words, "so cold, so bright, so still." It is superb achievement from a youth. And, note, too, how young Shelley supports his versified arguments with voluminous prose notes. A German professor, with a large wife and larger knowledge, could have done no more. Whilst other young men were playing cricket this bright, particular genius was playing the philosopher, and playing it to some purpose.

As for Dr. Lynch's suggestion as to the effeminacy of Shelley's portrait, that may be largely due to the sentimentalism of the painter. It has seldom been considered an artist's privilege to paint "warts and all." Recall the many portraits of Byron, who was at least masculine, and note the too prevalent prettiness of the artistry.

Dr. Lynch professes to find "eroticism" in Shelley's poetry. It would be difficult to name a poet who was freer from such a thing. "The Cenci" deals with a sex tragedy, but Shelley writes with extraordinary purity and detachment. "Epipsychidion," a Shelleyan love rhapsody, is a veritable ice-house, and no more erotic than the kiss of a little child. If Shelley is erotic, most poets are simply satyrs and sex maniacs.

Our medical critic says he was bored by much of Shelley's poetry. Most readers of verse could make the same complaint of so many really famous poets. There are scores of uninteresting pages in Dante's *Divina Commedia*. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is not all written at one sublime level. Even Shakespeare nods in some of his plays. It is in the nature of things when men write much. Some of our modern writers of jingle are less intelligible in some "pomes" than others.

To describe Shelley as a half-baked lunatic, for that is what Dr. Lynch's scientific jargon really implies, is cruelly unjust to the memory of a great gentleman and a great poet. Remember that Shelley died

before his thirtieth year, and that his later works were truly a great artistic advance on all he had done before. "The Cenci" is the finest tragedy in our language since Shakespeare. "Prometheus Unbound" is glorious poetry. Had he lived, Shelley would have gone as far as the greatest. Remember that if Shakespeare had died so young as Shelley that it is doubtful if we should know his name to-day. The last scene in Shelley's "Cenci" is one of the most poignant pieces of writing in English literature, especially Beatrice's cry from the heart:—

Here, mother, tie up my hair for me.

In any simple knot—

and, so on, to the sad finale.

As for "Prometheus Unbound, it is essentially Shelleyan, but it is not just neurasthenia. Take two lines at random:—

And the wandering herdsmen know

That the whitethorn soon will blow.

The thought is sane enough, and the artistry could scarce be bettered. Dr. Lynch had better leave Shelley alone, and return to his case-books. Genius is not so easy to diagnose as measles.

Dr. Lynch's article may be clever, even witty, but it distorts facts. In what way Percy Bysshe Shelley was a neurasthenic decadent, I do not know. What is known of the poet is that he was not a weakling, but a man of mental and physical courage. He championed unpopular causes where it was highly dangerous to be a rebel, and he saved Byron's life from the attack of an assassin. "I cannot understand it," said Byron, "to run upon a naked knife for another man." And Byron did not give testimonials as easily as a matinee idol.

Perhaps it is the sense of humour of the present inquisitive days which allows Dr. Lynch to pen detractions where a fuller sense of duty and responsibility would have dictated a more judicial attitude. If he were dealing with a panel-portrait, it would be grossly unfair to describe a man as an erotic decadent on such flimsy evidence. Shelley's life was "a miracle of thirty years." Posterity has but the outcome of his early manhood; and the high assurance of something nobler and wiser was stopped, not by disease, but by the tragedy of his untimely end. What Percy Shelley might have been we cannot conceive, but, in his short life, he wrote his name for ever in the literature of his native country, and made good the splendid boast of the greatest of all poets that he was animated by "the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming of things to come."

MIMNERMUS.

Freemasonry and Freedom.

FREEDOM of conscience is the most valuable conquest of the human spirit; it is the condition of its further advance and of social progress, because, without it, the search for truth, the establishment of justice, and the practice of true brotherhood are impossible.

In its wide sense, it is the right recognized and guaranteed by the Constitutional State to all its members, to adopt those doctrines whether religious, philosophical, political, social, which they think the best; to proclaim and propagate them either in speech or writing by all means without suffering interference by the public authority.

Plainly, it also contains the right to discuss and oppose in speech or through the press those opinions which we do not support. The free examination of all questions scientific, philosophical, religious, political, social, is the application of that freedom.

Religious freedom is a consequence of freedom of conscience: citizens have the right to practise the religion which pleases them or to practise no religion of any kind. No religion can enjoy special favours; all are governed by the common right. The fundamental characteristic of the modern State is the secularization of civil and political life, that is, the expulsion of religious authority of every sort.

Freedom to teach also springs from freedom of conscience. Teaching is the communication of doctrines, theories, beliefs, opinions. Every legal hindrance to that process is an attack on freedom of conscience. But teaching organized by the public authority must be neutral from the standpoint of religion, philosophy or politics because it must be open to all; the State not practising and not protecting any religion, whose mission is to guarantee freedom of conscience to all, cannot force any kind of belief or opinion on the public school; also it must forbid its professors during their labours making any attack on these beliefs and opinions. Yet those professors must enjoy, like all members of the State, complete freedom of conscience.

The constitution of the State must not only guarantee freedom of conscience to all citizens, it must protect its members against every violent act of other members, either singly or in association, to compel them to practise any religion or hold any opinion or adopt any doctrine.

The ancient world had little idea of freedom of conscience: in Egypt, Judea, Chaldea, Greece, Rome, everywhere religion was a public act of the State, and every doctrine not in agreement with its dogmas was a crime to be punished, sometimes with death.

Socrates was condemned to drink poison because he thought badly of the current religion and corrupted youth with his doctrines. In Rome the first Christians were persecuted because they did not support the State religion.¹

The Roman Catholic Church has never welcomed freedom of conscience nor even toleration in religion and philosophy. Always it has hindered the secularization of the public administration, freedom of the Press, freedom of teaching, and religious freedom. Always it has proclaimed the divine right and condemned the human right. Under ancient law when it excommunicated and condemned heretics to death it handed them over to the civil executive, who carried out the sentence. The victims of its intolerance are numberless; its history is the martyr scroll of the peoples striving after freedom of conscience.

During the seventeenth century the authority of the Roman Church began to be contested, disliked, and driven back. The Treaty of Westphalia (1648) was the end of religious wars and made sure the legal official existence of Protestantism and Calvinism. Yet religious freedom only existed for princes, hence the proverb, "*Cujus regio ejus religio.*" Catholic unity had been definitely broken in Europe; this was the first step towards freedom of conscience.

In England the Act of Toleration of 1689 expressed partially and timorously the will to organize the political life according to the principle of religious toleration. That Act had very great influence; the historian, Buckle, has established that at the end of the seventeenth century the clerical influence grew less in England, to a great extent because it was forbidden to clerics to occupy public offices.

We owe to the deistic and pantheistic philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the demand for freedom of conscience. Spinoza, in his

¹ This may be questioned; but early Christianity in Rome may have seemed, or been, indirectly subversive of the State.

Tractatus Theologico-politicus, which appeared in Holland in 1670, demanded first not only religious toleration but also the right to express freely one's opinions.

In England Anthony Collins published, in 1712, his famous *Discourse of Freethinking*, occasioned by the rise and growth of a sect called Freethinkers, and founded the right to Freethought on our duty to seek for the truth. "By what other means can truth be found," he said, "than by the free use of thought?" Some years after, in 1720, another Irish philosopher, John Toland, in his *Pantheisticon*, described an association of members of a religion not based on authority but on reason, thinking freely, declaring themselves enemies of all tyrants, "monarchs, autocrats, proud nobles, or rebellious leaders of the people. He proclaimed the indestructible right of reason.

Reason is the true and first law; it is the light and the brightness of life. "Let us not swear by the word of any man, not even that of Socrates; let us curse all the science of the clericals."

All the thinkers of the eighteenth century in England, Germany, and the Netherlands proclaimed, where they could make their voice heard, the autonomy of the human conscience and opposed the theocracy which denied it. They prepared the way for the modern State founded on national sovereignty and freedom of conscience with its consequences.

Freemasonry has played an important part in the movement for the freeing of the human spirit. It was established to secure a place of refuge and a medium for the enlightenment of those who wished to avoid the oppression of the religious sects, the intolerance and fanaticism of parties, and to practise freedom, equality, and fraternity.

The ancient constitutions of the "guilds" and societies of stone-masons contained the following clause: "The Freemason must be faithful to God and the Holy Church and cannot err or become a heretic." The first constitution of modern theoretical and philosophic Freemasons established in London in 1723 substituted for this narrow rule the following:

A Freemason is compelled by his Order to obey the moral law: if he has a good understanding of his art, he will be neither a stupid Atheist nor an impious libertine. For although in ancient times masons were compelled to profess the religion of the country in which they dwelt, yet from now onwards we consider it more seemly that they be compelled to profess only the religion approved by all honest men, which is to permit to everyone to entertain those opinions which appear to him the wisest, opinions which can make men good, just, sincere, and humane toward their fellows, from whatever place they come or to whatever religion they belong. In this way, and by this excellent principle Freemasonry will become a method and example of unification amongst men and the sole means of establishing firm friendship between those persons who without it would remain divided.

If the deistic philosophers who founded modern Freemasonry proclaimed the necessity for belief in a supreme being, in a creative principle under the name, "The Great Architect of the Universe," yet they declared "that religions can no longer cause the division of men and the setting them against each other as implacable foes." They were thus in advance of the existing laws in all countries, even Great Britain, where toleration had not yet been extended to all religions or all opinions.

Later we shall see why and under what circumstances this formula became widened during the nineteenth century in French Masonry and in the modern "Grand Orient," which professed a new formula more in conformity with the spirit of the founders of the order.

In the eighteenth century English lodges rapidly became powerful organizations for philosophic and moral education, and through their initiations, symbols, instruction, the practice of toleration, etc., they spread abroad in outside society the principle of freedom of conscience and progressive ideas.

Without violent acts, without persecution, asking no aid from outside power, without blasphemy, without insults to their opponents, by the sole power of wisdom and example, they proved the independence of the human conscience, the existence of individual family and social morality superior to and independent of every theological dogma. In their lodges, through the fraternal labour of all "free and well-conducted men," there was prepared the era of freedom which must follow the long period of oppression of conscience. With extraordinary rapidity the adepts of the renovated lodges increased: during twenty years a very large number of lodges were founded not only in England but also in various countries on the Continent. Everywhere they were joined by intelligent men who desired an ideal society founded on freedom, equality, and brotherhood. Freemasons, without freeing their adepts from their duties to their fatherland, taught them their duties to humanity, and preached brotherhood between men and peoples.

The "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" of 1789 was the act of Freemasons. The philosophers of the *Encyclopædia* whose labours led up to it were almost all members of that order. Formerly, under the influence of the same current of ideas, freedom of conscience was practised in the pure democracies which became the United States, and the Constitution of the Federal Republic gave expression to that principle, forbidding Congress to pass any law establishing a State religion or any law forbidding the open practice of religion or limiting the right of free speech or the press. That was the realization of the fundamental principle of Masonry in the outside world. The same happened in France in 1789, and from that time on, in all countries which denied the divine right by putting in its place the human right or national sovereignty. The tenth clause of the declaration of 1789 proclaimed: "No one is to be molested for his opinions, even religious opinions, so long as their expression does not threaten the public order legally established." (Later, *vide* Lord Coleridge.) Clause 11. The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the most momentous human rights. Every subject can speak, write, and print freely—but he is responsible for the abuse of that freedom in all the circumstances legally defined. This was the triumphal end achieved of the agelong fight carried on by famous thinkers in all countries against the tyranny of all those intolerant sects who claimed to possess the absolute truth and the right to force it down the throats of all, even to the point of death.

The Roman Church has always hated Masonry and has evinced this through many excommunications. The reasons for this hatred were explained forty years ago in the *English Review* and the *Masonic Magazine*. The cause of Rome's hatred lies in the fact that freedom and equality have always been supreme among Masons:—

In the tendency of Masonry to encourage the love of science and the search for truth, in the law of benevolence, in its efforts to unite for a common aim, men of diverse religions, and, finally, in its abandoning a heartless and purely formal religion.

We must add that in all countries Freemasonry in its essence is a lay institution, and it proclaims freedom of conscience divorced from all religions.

Those principles are in absolute opposition to the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church.

Pope Clement XII., on April 28, 1738, issued the Papal decision, "In Eminent," forbidding Catholics to take part in Freemasonry and excommunicating all who disobeyed. The Cardinal Secretary of State, on July 14, 1739, made known how this command was to be interpreted—"that it forbade Freemasons to meet anywhere under punishment of death." Benedict XIV., in a Papal letter (Providas) on May 10, 1751, reaffirmed this condemnation on the ground that persons of different religions attended Freemasonic meetings and that it was a *secret* society. He had forgotten that during the first centuries Christianity itself was hidden and persecuted. The majority of the Popes, Pío VII., Leo XII., Pío VIII., Gregory XVI., and Leo XIII. all reaffirmed the commands of Clement XII. and Benedict XIV. Those condemnations were not theoretical:—

In the kingdoms of the two Sicilies, in Spain and Portugal, Freemasonry was on many occasions cruelly persecuted. In 1740 Spanish Freemasons were sent to the penal labour station; in 1825, seven members of the Lodge of Granada were thrown into prison and their feet chained. After a short trial they were condemned to death by hanging.

In Portugal, Brother John Boustos was sentenced to penal labour in 1743, and the English Government had to intervene to save him. In the same country severe persecutions were carried on in 1776. (Translated from the French), of A. Huys by N. Stevenson.

(To be Continued.)

Acid Drops.

Ever since we came into personal touch with the Bishop of London many years ago, we have never ceased to marvel at his capacity for, on the one hand, saying completely idiotic things, and on the other blurring out truths without the least comprehension of what he is doing. Of course, both spring from the infantile mentality of the man—if healthy infants will pardon the comparison. But we see that his latest contribution is to a volume on immortality, by various writers, in which he says that the attempts of Spiritualists to get into touch with the denizens of the next world—in which the Bishop firmly believes—"leads to much waste of time which should be used for improving this world while we are in it." Now that is indeed wisdom—of the kind admired by the Bishop. Talking about God and the next world, of the state of angels and devils, of what God meant before he made the world and what he has been doing since; blathering about the blood of Jesus, and discussing the kind of candles the clergy ought to burn or the dresses they ought to wear, etc.—none of these things is waste of time, because they belong to the craft in which the Bishop is interested. But if anyone comes along and tries to get into communication with the next world, without using the Bishop as an agent, that is waste of time that ought to be given to the world we are in. Other Bishops might have thought this, but we do not think that any other Bishop would have been silly enough to say it.

And yet, to turn to a very different type of man, much the same kind of thing is said in the *Morning Post* by Dean Inge. He argues that all clergymen should be taught the psychology of religion—which is rather rash advice, since if they were taught it properly, and acted honestly, they would not remain clergymen. But probably what the Dean means is that they should be taught

psychology in such a way that they might use it in the interest of the Church. He says:—

A clergyman ought to be able to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy mystical experiences. Many persons of unbalanced mind see visions and hear messages which have no spiritual value, while others may be really gifted with unusual power of coming into contact with the world beyond the veil.

Well, what we should like to know is what is the Dean's test of healthy and unhealthy "mystical" experiences? We have been asking for years for someone to explain the substantial difference between the mystical visions of a man seeing visions under the influence of whisky and the saint seeing visions under the influence of strong emotional excitement. Dean Inge will call the first unhealthy and the other healthy. Why? The only reason that we can see is that one agrees with his religious beliefs and the other does not. The study of psychology is of immense help as an aid to the understanding of religion, but it is no help at all to interpret mental states in terms of an utterly unscientific religion.

The Bradford Diocesan Lay Readers' Association has passed a resolution protesting against the displays of ladies' underwear in shop windows. We strongly advise all parents who have daughters to keep them out of the way when members of the Bradford Diocesan Association are about. A man who cannot look at an article of ladies' underclothing without his sense of indecency being aroused needs very careful watching.

The Rev. E. W. Field has given a new side altar to St. Mary's Parish Church, Norfolk, as a thanksoffering for his two sons not being killed in the war. We wonder what kind of testimonial he is thinking of giving the Deity for not being equally careful of other people's sons? Or perhaps the others do not matter.

The Archbishop of Canterbury says that the Government inspection of schools will mean the inevitable extinction of many of the Church schools. That appears to be only another way of saying that many of the Church schools are in quite an unfit state, but they kept going, not in the interests of the children, or in that of education, but solely in the interests of the Church. That, as we have so often pointed out, is about as far as the Church is interested in them.

Sir Robert Horne is a statesman. In speaking at the Inter-Parliamentary Conference at Washington he said that it would take more than a generation of complete peace among the nations before it will be possible for the world to make substantial recovery from the devastating effects of the Great War. In other words he admits that the world, through war, has been sold a pup. When the Bishop of London has finished with his views of the ten novelists, perhaps he will favour us with a similar confession, and perhaps he won't, as the skirts of Mars are always wide enough to cover the gaiters of a Bishop.

It will be remembered that Mr. Hamilton Fyfe strayed into the jungle of theology—and, as the press in his case was not the pulpit, he had reason to repent of his visit to the land of fogs and mists. He is now, in answer to the question of "What shall I do to be saved?" asking very logically, "To be saved from what?" He, gallant fellow, is also repudiating the Ten Commandments, and, to be in the fashion, he gives us his creed, the kernel of which is "to strive and cry for a new order based on justice and on comradeship." As life itself is but an approximation, his definition, human and comprehensible will do; we hope he will "stay put," as the Americans say, and not break out in a spiritualistic rash or any of the other epidemics that are caught in Fleet Street.

Mr. C. B. Cochran appears to be well able to look after himself by his reply to Prebendary Carlile. "I thank

God that my vision and my mind are not as Prebendary Carlile's," he writes in his reply to the criticism of the the reverend gentleman with the trombone. If the Prebendary (how can anybody be serious in using a name like this?) thanks God for his vision then God must be pleased with them both. After all, the Bishop of London walked in the parks to find things, and the Prebendary (there it is again) looks up at the walls—and behold! in a world that will not stand their pygmalion nonsense, both walk empty away.

Miss Mabel Atkinson writing in the *New Leader* on "Black and White in South Africa," throws an interesting light on the smug hypocrisy of the implications contained in Christian equality—as expounded by missionaries. She wanted an interview with Mr. Twala, of Rhodesia, a distinguished native teacher. Speaking of her difficulties, she says:—

But Mr. Twala could not be received as a guest in a European boarding house or school, nor could he enter a restaurant or tea-room, or even walk beside a European in the streets, and it was only through borrowing for an hour the house of a married native that the interview could take place.

Shall we, brethren, at this juncture, recite a few lines of that great poet, Rudyard Kipling?

In *Foreign Affairs* Mr. David Peat makes the affirmation that "he believes in the high destiny of mankind, but a considerable part of the human race is still in its childhood and must be so treated." He may be right, but he should be aware that there is a powerful priestly caste pledged to see that this considerable part shall always remain in its childhood. For whom could their fairy tales be, except for children. And, although Freethinkers may not agree on all subjects, there is unity in the central idea that the ring shall be kept free for man to grow.

We have often warned Freethinkers against mistaking the minority of so-called liberal Christians as representative of Christians as a whole. We have given many illustrations of this, and they demonstrate that the more ignorant forms of Christian belief are still held with very little alteration. Here is the latest illustration from a man with so large a following as the Rev. Dimsdale T. Young. He says:—

I accept the Bible as the word of God. I believe myself to be a sinner full by nature of sin and corruption. Do they rightly know their hearts who deem themselves otherwise? I believe not. I feel my deep tremendous need of a Saviour. My need is met when I receive by simple faith the atoning work of Christ. I believe in Christ as the Son of God who was God the Son. The Bible says that whoever receives him as his Saviour has life, and whoever rejects him has not life—and I believe it.

There it is! There is all the undiluted ignorance and superstition of a hundred years ago here, and it still represents the belief of the majority of believers.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has been thinking of the attendances at Church, and he concludes that the decline is to be attributed to the poor quality of the sermons preached. We do not think that the intellectual poverty of the average sermon can be questioned. Those who do not attend church, and who do not usually read sermons, have had a chance now for some time to listen to selected parsons preaching over the wireless, and setting on one side the question of whether one agrees with Christianity or not, the intellectual sterility of the sermons preached can be questioned by none. The sermon drags on with a stream of commonplaces, or sloppy talk about love and brotherhood, but there is never an arresting thought or a striking sentence. Let anyone take a sermon and look at it from the point of view of a display of mental ability and they cannot avoid a feeling of contempt for the performance. One

parson will spend his time in telling you that if only the peoples of the world loved and trusted each other, they would not go to war. Another will spend twenty minutes on the labour question, and reach the momentous conclusion that if only employer and employed could agree together there would be no more labour troubles. And this kind of thing is given with an air of wisdom that could hardly fail to disgust an intelligent schoolboy.

Look, again, at the articles contributed to the *Daily Express* recently by the Bishops—not by ordinary parsons, but by Bishops. If we had to convince a jury of intelligent outsiders of the mental incompetency of modern Christian leaders we should be quite content to take these articles and read them without comment, and then say, "That's our case," and rest sure of the verdict. With a fair knowledge of English theology we have no hesitation in saying that at no time in the history of Christianity—if we eliminate the ignorant superstitions of the earliest generations of Christians—has there been a more lamentable display than the modern clergy of all denominations offer. The Archbishop said that the increased knowledge and intelligence of the average citizen calls for a better display from the clergy. But it is this increased knowledge and intelligence that is the root of all the trouble. It is that which has prevented men of first-rate intelligence going into the Churches, and has left a more unintelligent clergy to try and lead a more intelligent laity.

In this connection we may call attention to the concluding article of the *Express* series on Religion. It is written by the Bishop of London. He calls it "The Last Word." And if we use the phrase as a colloquialism, that accurately describes it. It is the last word—in emptiness, silliness, and religious childishness. And to emphasize the fact one need only remember that it is an attempt to reply to the objections of serious-minded people. A man who can solemnly inform us that nothing but a belief in the New Testament as a record of fact can keep people decent, and that if the belief in historical Christianity is undermined, we cannot hope for long "to regulate the unruly passions of mankind," stamps himself as supremely ignorant of all that is being taught in the name of a scientific sociology, or all that is known concerning the development of morality and of society, to say nothing of the evolution of religious ideas. How in the name of all that is sensible can really intelligent men and women be expected to sit and listen to such contemptible inefficiency as this?

But there is one thing the Archbishop overlooks—or perhaps we ought to say there is one thing it would not pay him to notice. Church-going is not, from the Christian point of view, a pastime that a man pursues in order to listen to an interesting or an intellectual discourse. It is an act of religious duty. Collective worship is part of the duties imposed upon Christians by historic Christianity, which, says the Bishop of London, you cannot ignore without ruining society. At no time was it the main object of people who went to church to get a purely intellectual discourse. They went to listen to a Christian discourse, and to fulfil a religious duty. And it is not the intellectual poverty of the clergy that is chiefly responsible for the decline in Church attendance. It is the fact that people have lost faith in the teachings and doctrines for which the clergy stand. But it would not have paid the Archbishop to have said this. It would have given the game away. And so he falls back upon the shallow excuse of the quality of the clergy. Well, you cannot get an intellectual clergy to preach an un-intellectual doctrine. If you have the one you must forgo the other. Some Freethinkers are fond of saying the clergy do not believe what they preach. That is certainly true of some, but it is not true of all. The majority believe—and that is the very hardest thing that can be said about them.

"Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

LAST week we acknowledged in a first complete list of subscriptions the sum of £2,848 17s. This week we pass the £3,000 mark. That is a fine achievement; it represents the largest sum of money ever brought together in the history of the Freethought Party in so short a time. But judging from some of the letters that have reached me, I feel there are one or two things that ought to be said. Two old friends and regular subscribers to the paper have written to me that they are waiting to see how the Fund progresses before deciding on the amount they shall subscribe. Doubtless many others are in the same state of mind, but it hardly needs pointing out that if all adopt that plan we shall find the Fund drag on interminably. In justice to those who have already subscribed, we suggest that the wise rule for all is to fix their contributions according to their interest and ability to help.

Another issue is raised by Mr. N. Holdsworth in the following letter. He writes:—

I am almost ashamed to send my poor little mink now to swim along with the big fishes, but I do not like to see a Fund of this kind go without my doing something to help. The 10s. enclosed is not a measure of my interest in the Cause, but only of the depth of my purse. It is very small at the side of what others are doing, but you must take the will for the deed.

Mr. R. Green also sends a small contribution with a similar apology. But no apology of any kind is necessary. No one is asked to do more than he can reasonably be expected to do; it is enough if each one does what he or she can, and if that rule were carried out universally the whole of the required sum would be subscribed next week. Moreover it is not the intention of the large subscribers for their subscriptions to take the place of others. Their donations are intended to be an encouragement, not a damper on other people's efforts. And no one will be more disappointed than they if the financial rank and file fail to do what they can to place the *Freethinker* in a position of security. And we have not yet travelled half the distance between us and the goal.

It is important to remember that the purpose of this Trust is to amass sufficient funds which, by investment, will provide a regular yearly income to meet the deficit incurred in the maintenance of the *Freethinker*. (A full account of the Trust was given in our issue for October 4, and any further information will be supplied to those interested.) Those who help now are, therefore, helping permanently. Thus, the £3,000 already subscribed is equivalent to someone giving the paper £150 annually, and the capital sum still remains intact. A subscription to the Trust is, therefore, an annual donation, and it is placing the *Freethinker* in a position of security such as no Freethought paper has ever before enjoyed. It is an end worth working for, and there is no doubt of the end being achieved. It is solely a question of how soon the whole of the £8,000 will be raised. That is a question which only the readers themselves can answer. But I am quite certain there must be at least five hundred of our readers who could between them close the whole business were they so inclined, and without any of them feeling the strain.

All the letters that have reached me praise the scheme very highly and regret that it was not attempted years ago. Mr. W. Clowes is glad to see such a Trust in existence, and hopes to subscribe again. Mr. S. Hicks writes that he could not spend money in a better way. Mr. W. H. Hicks encloses

cheque for £10 and apologises for his contribution not being larger. Mr. T. How sends £2, and says that "anything which has Mr. Cohen's approval is good enough for me." From one whom we have known for over thirty years we value so high an expression of confidence. Mr. J. Foot expresses his sense of the importance of the Trust and thanks us for what we have done for the Freethought Cause. Mr. G. F. Hughes, as an old reader of the *Freethinker*, says the paper "has always kept the flag flying, and at no time with greater distinction than now. If the full amount aimed at is raised it will be a grand thing to have relieved you of anxiety." Mr. F. Shaller says it would be a great calamity for the *Freethinker* to knock under and a disgrace to Freethinkers generally. We can assure Mr. Shaller that there is no question of the *Freethinker* going under; it is only a question of how it can best be carried on. But it has too many friends for it to perish. Mr. L. M. Werrey Easterbrook sends a contribution to what he calls our £10,000 bank, regrets his inability to send more, but promises another subscription later. W. D. B. (Streatham) says the appeal catches him at an inconvenient moment, but promises £5 later. Our old friend, Mr. J. G. Finlay, sends £5, and wishes the scheme all success. Altogether a cheerful batch of letters indicative of the warm friendships the paper evokes. We close our excerpts with a reply to Mr. J. Robinson's query whether "you appreciate how much your fine work on behalf of freedom is appreciated by the rank and file of our movement?" To that we can truthfully say that if what we have done gives others as much pleasure as it has given us in the doing, we are content.

The following is the list of subscriptions to date:—

Previously acknowledged, £2,848 17s. R. Green, 5s.; A. H. Deacon, £1; Mrs. A. Robertson, £2; G. F. Hughes, £100; F. Shaller, £1; Dorothy W. Coleman, £5; A. W. Coleman, £10; H. Tucker, £100; N. Holdsworth, £1; E. L., 5s.; J. Foot, £2 2s.; J. G. Finlay, £5; T. H. How, £2; S. Hicks, £10; E. Oliver, £5; W. Clowes, £1; W. H. Hicks, £10; S. Healing, £1; W. Nelson, £10; L. M. Werrey Easterbrook, £1 1s.; J. Robinson, 5s. Total, £3,116 15s.

Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the "*Freethinker* Endowment Trust," and crossed Midland Bank, Limited (Clerkenwell Branch). All letters should be addressed to the Editor, *Freethinker*, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

As we old men get up home to the end of the road we grow deep, and I often surprise myself now wondering at the Almighty's reasons. He han't called to offer us creatures a reason, of course, and I be the last to demand it; but sometimes to the thinking and prayerful soul He lets truth be seen, and I reckon why it pleased the Lord of the harvest to smite the harvest be this: the hungering and hankering for foreign corn—God made this a corn-bearing land, you understand. 'Twas arranged for that purpose, but less and less corn be growed, and more and more comes from foreign parts; so the Almighty, if I see his drift, be coming to feel that man thinks he knows best. And so he says, "If these here humans won't grow corn as I meant 'em to grow it, be blessed if they shall grow corn at all! Let 'em eat their messy foreign corn," He says, "and presently, when they are sick to death of paying too much money, and the country's ruined, they'll come back to reason, and then I'll bless their crops with increase in the old way." 'Tis something like that I doubt be in the Everlasting Mind.—*Eden Phillips, "Demeter's Daughter."*

The National Secular Society.

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

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

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

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

To Correspondents.

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

W. H. J. MILLER.—Thanks for cuttings. We have no other particulars to hand concerning the alleged confiscation of the property of the Priory of Tepi by the Prague government, and should not like to build upon statements made by the *Universe*. We can only say that we would like to see Christian sects treated with exactly the same amount of fair play which we claim for Freethinkers. But we are afraid that the Church is apt to cry out if it is not favoured by the State. We do not know how the law stands in Czecho-Slovakia, but in this country the property used by the State Church is the property of the State, and if the State choose to put it to other uses it would be stupid to call it robbery. The cutting about the discovery of a whale that could house Jonah for several days before it got sick of its visitor is quite suitable for a Catholic paper.

W. BIRKETT.—We are sending your name and address to Mr. McKelvie, who will be glad to get all the help he can in advertising Mr. Cohen's lecture.

J. A. TOMKINS.—Shall appear next week. Crowded out of this issue.

R. STILLING.—The ideal Jesus is ideal nonsense. You can make him an ideal character if you leave out all the questionable things attributed to him, and read into him everything that you consider good and admirable. The only reason why the Churches will have the name of Jesus to the front is because it is the trade mark of their wares.

M. BARNARD.—Held over till next issue

A. J. MADDOCK.—We have had to hold over several letters this week owing to want of space. We agree with you as to the cant about "Back to Jesus," and also share your appreciation of Mr. Cutner's criticism. They are usually very much to the point, and, like ourselves, he hates shams and make-beliefs. Thanks for promise.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Next Sunday (October 25) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Picton Hall, Liverpool, at 7, on "Evolution and Christianity." The Picton Hall is a large one, and we are hoping for the co-operation of all Freethinkers in the city to see that the place is well filled. Admission is free, but there will be a limited number of reserved seats at 1s. These must be applied for beforehand. Application to be made to Mr. W. McKelvie, 29, Claremont Road, Seaforth, Liverpool. Those who are disposed to help Mr. McKelvie in the arrangements for the lectures, the distribution of handbills, etc., should also write with as little delay as possible. The meeting is intended to be the forerunner of a regular series in Liverpool, and it will be the fault of the local Freethinkers if it is not so. There are plenty of Freethinkers in and about Liverpool, and it is time they settled down to serious work.

We have had many letters in praise of Mr. Cohen's last booklet, *God and Evolution*, and we fancy our readers will excuse our publishing the following, which comes from one who does not hesitate to express disagreement when he feels it, and does not praise without consideration. Mr. F. W. Haughton writes:—

Please accept my warmest congratulations on your *God and Evolution*. It is the strongest and most unanswerable statement of the Freethinker's case that I think it is possible to make. It is not only comprehensive of the whole case, but it is, at the same time, concise. It is more, it is a masterly statement of the position at and up to the present date.

As to conciseness we can only say with Bishop South, that it would have been still more concise had we had the time to make it so. Our excuse for printing Mr. Haughton's opinion here is that we want to see the booklet as widely circulated as possible. We neither write nor lecture for the sake of doing one or the other, but for the sake of the ideas in which we believe, and there is so much misunderstanding of the meaning of evolution, even by many who advocate it, and so much downright confusion as to the bearing on religion, that the circulation of the pamphlet is bound to do good. It is going well at present, and we should like to see the edition exhausted soon.

Some Plymouth friends are very anxious to see an active propaganda carried on in that town, and so far as we can gather, they are interested in Freethought, and do not intend to fritter their energies away on all sorts of side issues. When that is done it inevitably spells disaster so far as regular work is concerned. A meeting of Plymouth Freethinkers is to be held to-day (October 18) in the Labour Club Hall, Richmond Street, at 7.30. The speaker will be Mr. J. McKenzie, subject, "Christianity under Criticism." We hope there will be a good gathering, and that something will be done to give Freethought in Plymouth the position it deserves.

A Branch of the N.S.S. was recently formed in Ashton-under-Lyne, and it is full of the enthusiasm which ought to command success. Rooms have been taken over Salt-house's Fruit Store, and the first public meeting will be held to-day (October 18) at 7.30. Local Freethinkers should give the young Branch as much support as they possibly can. There is nothing like encouragement at the beginning of a struggle.

Drama and Dramatists.

By coincidence, that strange factor in life, we saw the problem of marriage twice in one week. The cynical may retort that it is possible to see it every day, but the question of getting married is in "White Cargo," now being played at the Prince's Theatre, and the peculiar treatment of this question was also presented at the Regent.

Swift could not have treated the matter more brutally than it is handled in "White Cargo," but there would have been the redeeming feature of common sense under the surface of his savagery. In "White Cargo" this is absent; the author does not know where he is going, and, judging by the audience, it cannot tell him. The rough scaffolding of old-fashioned melodrama succeeded in at least keeping the chief virtues to the front, but there is a dreary and barren purpose in the play that leaves the heart cold and the head untouched in spite of the tropical atmosphere of three acts. The West Coast of Africa is hot and unhealthy for the English body, and also for the English mind. When the English mind goes to pieces there is always the medicinal properties of whisky for consolation. This is consumed in large quantities on the stage.

A clean, well set-up young Englishman—stock type—arrives in West Africa at a place some hundreds of miles from anywhere. He also arrives in a clean white suit. His reception by the few of his countrymen there is not exactly as cheerful as that at a funeral, and we knew he was in for a rough time. End of first act and curtain with a well-known prostitute at the door of his bungalow. As prostitution is a matter of co-operation—for it cannot exist alone, the second act finds the stock type well in the toils of the native woman; he insists on marrying her and the local missionary is called in, and argued into agreement, much against the protests of Jim West (Godfrey Tearle) who vigorously relieves his mind of his opinion of missionaries. In the third act, Tondeleyo, the native woman, who knows she can leave her husband if he is dead, attempts to get a divorce in this crude manner by attempting to poison him. She partly succeeds, but is found out by the Englishman, who has been in that hot country for seven years. He forces her to finish the remainder of the poison and she disappears in the bush. Her husband is shipped back to the old country on a stretcher, and the veteran is left to welcome a new arrival in all respects the same as the one returned. Such, in brief outline, is the story.

The author has only caught occasional glimpses of the question. He had a fine opportunity in our present dispensation when the evolution of mankind is in that state preparatory to its awakening to a sense of responsibility and unity. Missionaries are the advance guard of trade; the late Lord Leverhulme knew that if natives were persuaded to wear clothes they would need soap to wash them. The lady in the harem knew her book when she told the English lady that the only difference between them was that she knew her rivals, and the other did not. And the native black dramatist, if he exists, could cancel this play by laying his scenes in England showing the downfall of his own countryman by exactly the same means. We leave the theatre depressed by this reasoning from the particular; there is something fundamentally sound in a child's love of what are called "niggers," and this is a surer guide to world affairs than the picture of a black prostitute among the wreckage of life where the Englishman by birth is unfitted to live. To take a lesson from our hand he is the little finger trying to function as the thumb,

and, as an individual unable to live on hatred, we refuse to have the glass of our outlook on the world blurred by this foggy presentation, and "White Cargo," in our opinion, is black nonsense.

In the atmosphere of "Getting Married" we move to a different world, but with the same results. Shaw appears to be constantly tuning up but he never gives us his symphony. A Bishop and a General at top and a greengrocer at bottom of society, together with make-weight of various other characters, set out to draft a new marriage agreement—and fail. The question of getting married was only an ecclesiastical one because the church was determined to come in at the one of the three events in life. But this does not make the church indispensable. It is in affairs of this kind like Will Wimble, and if Mr. Shaw does not know where he is going, the audience cannot follow him, although the spasmodic cynicism evoked spasmodic applause from different parts of the house.

Lesbia, the old maid, who could not bear the smell of tobacco, reminds us of the old lady mentioned by Steele as being "too nice"—she would have been well married to a man like Sir Thomas Browne, who wished that the race could propagate like trees. However, as Browne had eleven children, we can estimate the sincerity of his sentiments, and we must leave Lesbia with her unachieved object of wanting to be a wife without a husband—the best thing she could do would be to superintend Girl Guides or patronize the poor by telling them what they ought to do. The characters in the play are a mixed batch, the question is side-tracked by property, temperament, and the opinions of the social scale in which Shaw's figures move. The projection of the subject on the stage—instead of in the pulpit—is the only redeeming feature of "Getting Married."

With our, first, second, and third-class carriages, with our grades of society founded on money, with our journalists running round to get the opinions of the Rockefellers, Carnegies, or any other successful men, on matters which their very lives render them incapable of giving wise advice, "Getting Married" will titilate the subject. France at this moment is concerned about the birth-rate, and a national need will pour a broadside into the current accepted codes that pass muster. In one of his novels Sir Phillip Gibbs writes: "Clergymen thundered joyfully from their pulpits, and went back to the Old Testament for that fine old law, 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.' Elderly virgins married the youngest subalterns. The youngest flapper caught the eldest and wiliest of bachelors." With the question thoroughly distorted at the beginning a clear answer was impossible. When the touring company is hard up for a play, "East Lynne" is a good and faithful winner. When the dramatist's fountain of inspiration is dry there is always marriage.

"White Cargo" and "Getting Married" are a brace of disappointing plays. The author of the former creates fools of men who want to take codes with them into a country that knows nothing of the white flower of blameless life in white society. And Shaw merely jeers at the question, is wordy and windy, ignores the healthy preferences of a normal individual—and continues to tune up.

It will not matter if we do not get a Secular symphony from him. The race does not exist "by your leave" from the Church that should read the marriage service and St. Paul's views with a sack over its head. If the Church performed any function at all in the matter, it should be one of protest against marriage as a propagation of original sin—and spurn the seven shillings and sixpence.

We are citizens of a country and then citizens of the world. Our loyalty to our species, our member-

ship of a community imperfect as yet, and our affirmation of responsibility can all be met by marriage as a civil contract—with the religious part as a bouquet to those who need it and require "The Voice that breathed o'er Eden" on the organ.

These two plays are good in so far that they are provocative, and presented with a "wooliness" that passes for profundity, and considering that all our troubles commenced with two unmarried people, civil marriage is an improvement and a safeguard that children shall not wander in the wilderness infested by lawyers and all the other parasites on the infirmities of man. WILLIAM REPTON.

"A Sabbath Well Spent."

It was Sunday and a bright sunny September day, visibility perfect, the surrounding scene superb, the slopes and peaks of Arran on the Clyde rising from the sparkling Firth in indescribable beauty and grandeur. Other inland hills were steeped in the golden light, themselves sadly but splendidly brown in the touch of autumn—a spiritual touch, an abstract atmosphere that nature can diffuse over all according to age, scene, and mood; even the Christian is chastened at such a moment and whispers "God" and pities the benighted Atheist, if he can believe in the possibility of such. His polarised mind fails to grasp the full generosity of nature to all her children, or that they who worship nature only, worship the only god that was ever manifest to man. The Freethinker equally enjoys the "gift," but as for the Donor of it it is to him and science still a mystery; to the Christian a mere assertion, a belief involving anthropomorphism or the incomprehensible—which, to the Christian, the more it is incomprehensible the more he is impressed, the more impressive to him his Sunday sermon. Oh! how solemn we should be—and fearful—and stupid!

But the hills we said (oh, confound that editorial "we," or egotistical "I!") why should we not enjoy them? Why trouble so much about what is above them, below them, beyond them; beyond this place of wrath and tears—made such largely by religious fears, and gratuities for small mercies, these magnified out of all sense and proportion by this conception of a Creator and Condemner of the human race. When will God, even this imaginary God of the Christian, be permitted to smile like the sun or be as sensible and good as his average worshipper (in actual life) really is? Why should we fear at all, why not just live, love, and enjoy our life, doing a little good as we pass along, adding our little to the sum of human happiness, careful at the very least to take none of it away?

Even these reflections—and compare them with your Christian's best—we put aside for the moment; they would keep and mature like good wine; there was beauty all around and we must not miss a moment of the scene and day. The old Roman cried that he had lost a day; we had just found one. We had come to the cross roads on the old bike; now, which way should we turn? a delicate question, such choosing is the fine art, the very science of a recreative outing. On other days we had liked to be "going somewhere"; on others still, a little limp and numb, we thought of a short run out to hedgerow or woodland nook and there by some little stream to rest and restore the soul. To-day's "choice" is the cunningest and subtlest of all: we just get astride the wheel and let it take us where it will, coming as near as possible to freedom, free-wheeling, and free-willing; of course, we have decided, but only by the faint divergence of a hair—just so are destined much more

important things! We have really many reasons for our outing this lovely day. Among others, just as we have never cared for menageries of captive beasts, we grow tired at times of the menagerie of men, and in a little change and solitude seek rest or stimulation as occasion requires. In fine, our road led us among the little hills, and reaching the top of our favourite mount we found it in possession of a picnic party of nice, interesting people to each of whom, as a punishment for invading our shrine, we gave a copy of the *Freethinker*, and which they promised to read. The leader of the party, an ex-farmer, was a hearty and robust man of the world, and of the soil, one could no more withstand his robust commonsense than thistledown the wind; given a gun or a club it seemed such a man could have chased all the book-worms in Christendom! Besides, our own social faith was a little pale and uncertain, we felt the need of a "strong man," and here he was! One learned he was "daft about poetry"; incredible! he had ridden to the hounds across these moors. Still we were not comforted; with such manly masters of fate and gallant fox-hunting squires we had visions of the sweated fox, elongated in desperate flight across these very moors, hounds and hunters in merciless pursuit, the vulpine drama suggesting poignant analogies of human fate and fugitive truth and justice.

A little dismayed, at least a sadder and a wiser man, we descended the hill, searching the inner soul, forgetful of the truly magnificent prospect from the little mountain top.

In a delightful nook at the hill-foot our devotions were again disturbed by two arrivals. Born of a little dog-in-the-manger irritation, perhaps, we on this occasion did the talking, and to the two quiet fellows, who had never done us any harm, gave a discourse on the philosophy of human happiness, denying the religious road to it—save as an illusion—which left the hearers silent if not convinced. All too seldom, we reflected, in excuse, do such people meet the Atheist Messiah of the wilderness. On such a day, in such a place, it was most fitting to speak the word; as a necessary exercise and test of the spirit; to add one's grain of sense to the platitudes of the pulpit; only by such reiterations is religion refined and the clog of religious custom removed from the inner wheels of the mind.

And so home in the peaceful afternoon, at peace with ourselves and all the world, tarrying by the way, observing the pretty aspects of nature in field, wood, and hedgerow, cloud and sky, little grey bridge and busy burn in copious haste, evening sun lighting the grey limestone rock crumbling away in little irregular knolls under patches of green velvet sward, the deposit of unknown antiquity—sweet spot, fantastic forms, immemorial witness of "the faith within us," a faith not yet delivered to the saints, yet crying aloud through the ages to heaven and them—Home, and heard the London microphone "magnify the Lord" in Mendelssohn's sublime oratorio, "St. Paul," magnifying also that meagre and mistaken apostle of the name. It is comforting to think that Wagnerian music could as triumphantly exalt the Heathen gods, that some day some sublime musician would exalt man himself.....Then out of the void, the mincing voice of some "Woodbine Willie" assured us of the precious nearness of Christ, and our nearness to him; that we were God's immediate, constant, and eternal care; how much he loved us, how infinite was the divine solicitude, etc.; in all that pathos of "softening of the brain"; the old, old story; the old, old lack of evidence of its truth; but such the power of the most puerile pulpit oratory with old established custom and the constant refurbishing and refabrication of that old, old lie, that millions

are made to believe "their heads are shaved while not a hair is shorn."

And still it goes on. The voice reaches us afar through the ether: how much more remote the message, childish, absurd, impossible, incredible! "Wonderful is the imbecility of the people."

"Close down" is announced and, playing with the knobs, we switched on to a wicked jazz trot from France—that awful Continental Sunday! Surely, if a little rambling, it is a Sunday fully, if not wisely, spent.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Correspondence.

WAS JESUS A FREETHINKER?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Miss Rout is so very angry with me and so very anxious to shout from the housetops that she is right and I am wrong, that she throws the usual ethics of controversy to the winds and attacks me with a flood of words, ideas, and suggestions, which, as far as I am concerned, have little to do with the case. The least one can expect in a discussion is to have one's work read, but this evidently does not trouble Miss Rout, as she says, "Mr. Cutner recently quoted my statement (without my proofs)....." Well, I wrote six articles and devoted most of the third to a minute examination of her statement that Jesus was a Freethinker. I quoted her "proofs" in her own words and I copied Jesus's nonsense about the lawyers, at the same time showing why Jesus said it. I even anticipated her addition of "priests, scribes, etc." (which is not in her original statement) and dealt, I hope, fully with that. If Miss Rout can reply to my article, let her do it—or admit she can't, but not airily claim I did not quote her "proofs."

Miss Rout feels that if Freethinkers have not "progressed"—along her lines, of course—and are not willing to admit that Jesus was, let us say, the greatest Freethinker the world has ever seen, they are Little Bethelites and Bible-bangers, and she is good enough to add that Bradlaugh and Ingersoll, besides being Bible-bangers, are "out of date." This, mark you, in the face of the Dayton trial, in the face of our Plymouth Brethren, and the large number of similar believers, in the face of the Roman Catholic Church, the reply of the Bishop of London to Arnold Bennett, and the flood of letters appearing every day in the *Daily Express*!

Bradlaugh and Ingersoll do not need me to defend them. The belief that these two great Freethinkers are out of "date" or were "Bible-bangers" is one carefully cherished by the Christian Evidence Society and their like, and they can claim it as a feather in their cap that they can now add Miss Rout to their other zealous propagandists. But, without wishing to be disrespectful to Miss Rout's more modern Freethought, I venture to hint she is not only hopelessly ignorant of what Bradlaugh and Ingersoll have done or taught, but she is equally ignorant of modern Biblical criticism and the position of Jesus in that criticism.

For example, her particular Jesus is one "stripped of the priestly tinsel and lies." For twenty years or more, I have tried to get a glimpse of that Jesus and what he taught. Alas! all I can get is that he is the "real" Jesus; the others being, of course, the false ones. Whether Miss Rout can enlighten us and tell me, in particular, where I can find him. I don't know. When she has finished with my six articles, if she is so "disposed," I do hope she will tell us all about the real Jesus. So far he has eluded me.

Miss Rout, I regret to see, mistakes noise and assertion for argument. Neither I nor any other "out-of-date" Freethinker cares a brass button that she prefers Jesus to Ingersoll or Socrates or Newton or anybody else. But if she enters the Freethought arena and tells us that Jesus is a Freethinker, we have a right to know why. I dealt with the arguments in her letter in my article, and I hope, if she returns to the contest, she will

give us not only the reasons why the "real" Jesus is a Freethinker, but also explain why she thinks Ingersoll was wrong. I need hardly add that although Miss Rout credits me with being a Bible-banger, with the exception of one reference to the Bible as the great Book of the German militarists, I never referred to the Bible as a whole at all. Nor did I discuss what "so-called" Christians or "so-called" Freethinkers thought of the Bible. I confined myself to my subject, "Back to Jesus," and was very careful not to enter into any discussion as to the authenticity of the Bible and similar red herrings. Either Jesus said, and did what the Gospels say he said and did, or the Gospels are not authentic. I invite Miss Rout to tell us whether the extracts from the words of Jesus I gave are genuine or not, and, if not, which are—and the proofs. It is evidence we want and not assertions or faith.

I apologise for the length of this letter, but had Miss Rout stuck to the one subject, my reply might have been much shorter.

H. CUTNER.

SIR,—I have no wish to butt in between Miss Ettie Rout and Mr. Cutner, but I should like somebody now to claim that Jesus was a Malthusian, vegetarian, and teetotaler. It might be more to the point perhaps if some admirers of Jesus would give up proofs that he ever existed.

I would like to conclude by saying as an ardent advocate of Bible criticism and ridicule, that those people who dislike "Bible-banging," are generally those who do not know the Bible, nor to what base uses it can be put.

H. B. SAMUELS.

SIR,—Miss Ettie A. Rout's statement that Jesus was a Freethinker is one which rather took my breath away. I think the first thing that a person, who makes such a remark, should do is to ascertain whether a man called Jesus ever existed. Possibly in two thousand years some people may be exercising their minds over the point, whether Hamlet was really a Prince of Denmark or the creation of a dramatist's brain. All the evidence, when carefully weighed, for and against, is in favour of the idea that Jesus Christ as a man never existed.

Who then was Jesus Christ, or rather what was Jesus Christ? The answer to the riddle is given in the fifth verse of the first chapter of Revelation: "Jesus Christ is the first begotten of the dead." This, of course, is directly contrary to Christian teaching, which asserts that Christ is the *only* begotten son of God, and implies that God still exists. The dead God, of whom Christ is the son, was, like Christ himself, an inanimate mass of matter, and, like all other celestial bodies, was deified and personified. Christ Jehovah, Eostre, Ishtar, Isis, Mithras, etc., are merely names for the moon, but in process of time the connection between the name and the matter has been lost except only for religious observances. In Christianity and Judaism the Easter moon is the pivot around which both religions revolve, why, I need not now explain.

Assuming that Christ is the moon, then his wounded side and subsequent ascension into heaven are capable of physical explanations, and the two events are no more miracles or mysteries than the ascent of a football into heaven when it has been kicked. The photographs of the moon undoubtedly show how the moon got struck, and the lava flowing from its wounded side, had, to people on this planet, the appearance of blood. Taking the above to be the real meaning of the Christ myth, then obscure ideas of all religious systems are capable of an easy explanation. "The sun was as black as a sackcloth of hair and the moon was as red as blood," really means that between the earth and the sun huge masses of matter, also begotten sons of the dead god, obscured the only real god—the sun—and some pieces struck the moon. Our little speck in space was on the outer edge of this flying atom.

WILLIAM CLARK.

AMERICANISMS.

SIR,—I regret to see that a correspondent uses your space for cheap and narrow sneers, in the usual cockney style, at the new or unfamiliar expressions by which the

practical Americans have enriched our common language, most of which are eminently handy and concise, and, as such, have been largely adopted over here, while others are simply old English words which have survived in their country while they have become rare or extinct in ours. Many of those he cites are merely supplementary to the literary form, while even those which are indubitably slang are certainly no worse than similar locutions here, indeed one of the most objectionable, "disgruntled," is common, even in print, with us. If this word means "discontented," then obviously "grunted" should mean the opposite, and the fact that it does not condemn the former. A good American speaker is mostly only distinguishable from an English one by his rich choice of words and easy eloquence, devoid of the affectations which so mar much English rhetoric, and it is surely more remarkable that the two speeches are so nearly alike, after these years of separation, than that divergencies have arisen. "Pavement" is not synonymous with "sidewalk," which may not be paved at all, while "gage" is a rational spelling of the word we continue stupidly to write "gauge," and to say "aggravate" for "irritate," or better, "peeve."

There would be much more point in condemning the far more numerous vulgarisms and solecisms of our own colloquial and provincial dialects, and especially such shocking blunders as dropping the aspirate and slurring the "r," which are so widespread, though carefully sounded over the water; misused words such as "expect," used of past events, when it only can be correctly of the future, "directly" for "immediately" or "shortly," "Christian name" for "forename," "permanent way" for "ballast" or "roadbed," "suppose" for "guess," "ween," or "trow," "cockroach," "cockchafer," "weathercock" for "roach," "chafer," "vane," and, worst of all, the numerous misspelt or mispronounced quasi-French expressions, such as "en masse," "en route" for "in mass," "on route," "naïveté" for "naivety," "clientèle" for "clientele" or "clientage," "cortège" for "cortege," "impasse" for "impass," "morale" for "moral," "rôle" for "role," better "roll," "mirage," "massage," "garage," "barrage," with foreign pronunciation, and "raconteur," "colporteur," for "recountner," "colporter." All this is needless pedantry.

Mr. Bernard Shaw has sensibly substituted the good English "misalliance" for the unpronounceable "mésalliance," and we might with equal advantage write "attachee," "fiancee," "habituée," instead of the present sickening Frenchisms, and pronounce "restaurant" like "protestant" and "prestige" like "vestige." "Many a man," said Premier Seddon, "thinks he is riding a *hors-de-combat*" when in reality he is only astride of a miserable nag!"

EVACUSTES A. PHIPSON.

North London Branch N.S.S.

An animated discussion followed the most interesting and instructive lecture delivered by Mr. Graham Peace, at the St. Pancras Reform Club, last Sunday night, on the Land Question. Mr. Peace's lectures always provide food for thought and evoke many differing shades of opinion. During our Spring session, we hope to fix up a debate between him and Mr. Palmer. To-night (October 18) Mr. Cutner and Mr. Coldwell, of the Catholic Truth Society, cross swords. The opponents are both able speakers and debaters, so we hope for an overflow audience. Further particulars are given in the Guide Notice.—K.

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LONDON.

INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Debate, "Is the Catholic Doctrine of Confession Rational?" Affirmative, Mr. G. E. J. Coldwell; Negative, Mr. H. Cutner.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. Harry Snell, "Darwinism and American Fundamentalism."

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

STANLEY HALL (Hallam Street, Great Portland Street, W.1): 8, Mr. E. C. Saphin, "Signs of the Times" (Astronomical).

OUTDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3, Mr. H. Constable, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. Robert Parker, "John Galt." Questions and Discussion. Silver Collection. The Branch will also have a Social Evening on Saturday, October 31. Tickets, price 2s. 6d., will be on sale at all the meetings.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Trades' Hall, Upper Fountain Street): 7.15, Mr. Roger Anderton, "Freethought and Economics." Questions and Discussion invited. Admission Free.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Professor Robert Peers, M.A., "Towards a Science of Well-being."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Labour Club Hall, Richmond Street): 7.30, Mr. John McKenzie, "Christianity under Criticism."

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