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Views and Opinions.

Religion and Science.

The Will of God, said Spinoza, is the sanctuary of ignorance. That was a telling expression, and a deadly one. It put the fundamental aspect of the belief in deity in a few words, and the history of theism is little more than an elaborated commentary upon it. The greatest writer in defence of the belief has never rested it upon actual, verifiable knowledge, never upon a fact nor a collection of facts in which, or through which the power of deity could clearly be seen to be working. It was always at the point where knowledge failed that "God" was brought in as an explanation. The scientist, so long as he understood the nature of the facts he was examining, never called on God and had no use for him. But all knowledge, no matter how advanced, has its limits, and at the point where knowledge ended the religious scientist found a use for God. It did not help him to understand, for it told him nothing. But it helped him to cover a gap in his knowledge of things with a mere phrase. There is simply no exception to this rule. Every plea for theism when analysed illustrates it. Common language enforces it. When a man says "God only knows," he is only saying in a squint-eyed way that neither himself nor other people know. If he said plainly, "I do not know," he would be saying the same thing, but more helpfully. For in that case he would realise his ignorance, and the realization of ignorance usually acts as a spur to the acquisition of knowledge. But "God" is a narcotic. Its use is similar to the use of alcohol by one who gains a few minutes' artificial stimulation at the price of a later and a more severe depression.

* * *

The Value of Science.

There is ample illustration of this in the volume, *Religion, Science, and Reality*, with which I was dealing last week. Then I was concerned only with the essay by Dean Inge. At present I want to take the essays dealing with science and religion. These are three in number—*The Historical Relations of Religion and Science*, by Dr. C. Singer; *The Domain of Physical Science*, by Professor Eddington, Professor of Astronomy at Cambridge; and *Mechanistic*

Biology and the Religious Consciousness, by Professor Needham (Biochemistry). It is important to remember the fields in which these gentlemen work in order to appreciate the significance of their contributions. Professor Singer's essay is so admirable as a whole that I do not purpose to offer a few criticisms that might be made on quite subsidiary and unimportant points. If Christians read that essay intelligently it should give some of them food for thought. Taking the Greeks as a starting point, Professor Singer points out that it was the relatively poor development of their religion, with the absence of that tremendous drag on progress, a "sacred" literature that accounts for the high development existing among them of science and philosophy. And he rightly emphasizes the fact that it was not the mere practice of science which makes the Greek contribution so important, but their possession of, and emphasis on, the scientific idea. They alone among the people of antiquity present us with the clear teaching that the world is knowable, that its activities can be reduced to definite "laws," and it is this conception that, applied in various directions, "led to a profound modification of the interrelations of peoples, and to an alteration in our attitude to each other and to the world around us.....In helping man to gain a clear knowledge of the knowable world, science has also helped him to understand his fellow men."

* * *

Hippocrates and Jesus.

Had the Greeks been burdened with a "sacred" literature such as oppressed later European thinkers, we might have seen in Greece the same process of "harmonization," of dishonest attempts to fit the sacred volume in with the later acquired knowledge, that has been the case with us. And we might have seen with them, as with us, an insincerity, and a trifling with truth, that has become so established with public characters as to pass without serious comment. As it is, the one clear thing that emerges from a study of the Greek scientists and philosophers is the conviction that it is possible to obtain a completely mechanistic or deterministic explanation of the universe. The notion that an explanation of the world might be found in air, or fire, or water, or by a combination of them, with the much more fruitful and wonderful atomic hypothesis of Democritus, implied just this, that the growth of the world, the movements of the planets, the changes taking place on the earth, the movements of men, might ultimately be expressed in terms of determinism. The great, the outstanding contribution of the Greeks to the world's progress was that they set clearly before humanity the ideal of explaining the world without the agency of the Gods. One may appreciate this by taking an example from the New Testament and comparing it with a specimen from a great Greek thinker, as cited by Professor Singer. I will give first place to Jesus Christ:—

And behold a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son.....

And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out and they could not.

And Jesus said.....bring thy son hither.

And as he was a coming the Devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

That is the way in which the New Testament deals with epilepsy. We are in the atmosphere of savage Central Africa. And here is the teaching of Hippocrates, who died about three hundred and fifty years before the date given for the birth of Jesus. He is also dealing with epilepsy, which was called the *sacred* disease, because of its supposed association with supernatural influences:—

As regards the disease called sacred, to me it appears no more divine than other diseases, but to have a *physis* (i.e. a natural cause) just like other diseases. Men regard its origin as divine from ignorance and wonder, since it is a peculiar condition, and not readily understood.....To me, then, it appears that they who refer such conditions to the gods are but as certain charlatans who claim to be excessively religious and to know what is hidden from others. These men do but use divinity as a cloak to their own ignorance.....Surely then this disease has its *physis* and causes whence it originates, even as have other diseases, and it is curable by means comparable to their cure. It arises like them from things which enter and quit the body, such as cold, the sun, the wind, things which are for ever changing and are never at rest. Such things are divine or no, as you will, for the distinction matters not, nor is there need to make the distinction anywhere in Nature, wherein all things are alike divine and all are alike human, for have not all a *physis* which can be found by those who seek it steadfastly.

One might call that, but for the difference in dates, Hippocrates on Jesus. As it is one may contrast the teaching of the Christian God with the Greek physician, and to reflect that while the one gave his sanction to the demonology that held men fast in its degrading hold for centuries, the other paved the way for the healing art of the sanitarian, the surgeon, and the physician.

* * *

Christianity and Science.

Hippocrates was, of course, but one of many, and is cited here to illustrate the tendency of Greek scientific and philosophic thought, and although a slight reaction took place with Plato and his school, the note struck remained strong until Christianity assumed the upper hand. As Professor Singer makes plain, the contribution of Christianity to the development of science was just nothing at all. And he is correct in pointing to three things; first, that "so far as the Renaissance meant anything for science, it meant a rebirth or resurrection of *ancient science*," second, that during the Middle Ages the traditions of Greek learning and Greek science were mainly in the hands of Jews and Mohammedans; and, third, that the Christian writers even when dealing with natural phenomena show themselves to be quite destitute of that search for general causes which is the essence of the scientific method. "If we seek for interest in the eliciting of new general laws of nature we shall have a long and fruitless hunt in the vast wilderness of time that we call the Middle Ages." The true Christian had no real interest in scientific method, and no place in his mental make-up for the scientific spirit. Moreover, there was the hostility of the Church to face. And here Professor

Singer notes that for a time it was the physicist, and not the biologist, who came in for most of the trouble. That was to be expected. The biologist of the period was chiefly concerned with noting and tracing the connections and the working of different parts of the animal structure, and the danger of this was not so patent nor so immediate. But the physicist and the astronomer threatened the very foundations upon which Christianity was built. It was in defence of the Ptolemaic system that the Church fought, and only when that battle had been hopelessly lost, and the question of the origin of forms of animal life began slowly to come to the front, did the Church turn its attention to the new enemy that had arisen.

* * *

The Price of Our Ancestry.

Professor Singer's essay is by far the most satisfactory in the volume, and the short sketch he has given helps the average reader—the better because it is short—to realize something of what the world lost through the rulership of the Christian Church. It took the better part of a thousand years for the world to begin to lift itself from the slough of ignorance and superstition into which Christianity had thrust it, and from the fragments of Pagan science and Pagan philosophy that were left to learn to look at the world with a saner vision. It is to the credit of Professor Singer that he does not attempt any of the special pleas for the reconciliation of Science and Religion that disfigure some of the other essays. Let anyone put the quotation from the New Testament above given, along with the one from Hippocrates—on the same topic—and then say whether one can honestly reconcile the two. He has just a word or two on methods of reconciliation that others have suggested, and wisely leaves it at that. And in a concluding paragraph he says:—

Historically men of science have found various modes of escape from the tyranny of Determinism. The majority of men of science, like the majority of other men, have small philosophical powers. They like other men have accepted their religion as they found it. They have made their science their daily occupation without clear relation to their religious convictions. A proportion of scientific men, incensed by the mere discrepancy between the biblical and the scientific record, have abandoned more or less completely their relation to religion. A considerable section have ranged themselves as "Agnostic."

Evidently Professor Singer's opinion of the mental powers of these religious men of science is not a very high one. But what would you? They are of Christian ancestry. They have descended from generations in which one would live longer if he were foolish or cowardly, than if one were brave and outspoken. They move in an environment which is saturated with Christian traditions. They see no harm in compromising, and may even congratulate themselves on their astuteness in so arranging matters that while saving some proportion of their own self-respect by not accepting Christianity in all its primitive barbarity, they can express their dissent so as not to arouse against themselves the hostility of the guardians of the superstitions of primitive mankind. One cannot spring from a thoroughly Christian ancestry, and live in a Christian soaked environment without paying a price for one's heredity and education.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be Continued.)

The race that shortens its weapons lengthens its boundaries.—O. W. Holmes, "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table."

Apologetics at Its Maddest.

MR. ELLIS ROBERTS is a journalist who imagines that he has a special aptitude for literary criticism. For some years he worked on the Secular press at Nottingham. At present he is a regular contributor to the Anglican Church weekly paper, *The Guardian*. His articles are chiefly devoted to reviews of new books on a great variety of subjects, and justice compels us to observe that with many of his criticisms we have been in complete agreement. He has acquired a wide, if not profound, knowledge of literature, and generally his judgment is reliably sound. Of course, Mr. Roberts is a Christian believer, for otherwise the *Guardian* would have no use for him. Furthermore, he is a bigoted and more or less ignorant defender of the Christian Faith; and it is as such that he reveals himself in his article on "Rationalism," in the *Guardian's* issue of November 13. Significantly enough, with the foolhardiness of a comparatively young writer, he dismisses the Rationalist Press Association and the Right Honourable John. M. Robertson with severe and sharp animadversions, calling the former "an obscure religious superstition," and characterizing the latter as one "for whom the world of thought has not advanced since the days of Tom Paine." Such expressions stamp him as at once a hopeless ignoramus and a contemptible maligner.

We hold no brief, however, either for the R.P.A., or the distinguished scholar so flagrantly vilified. We represent the cause of Atheism pure and simple, and are of necessity Anti-Christian. It is our main object to discredit Christianity by proving it to be untrue. Mr. Ellis Roberts says:—

There is no reason why societies with this object should not be formed, but I have always wondered why their adherents prefer to pass under some other title. Why does nobody start a society and call it frankly "Anti-Christian," or "The Atheist Club"? The most honest name was that of the old Secular Society—and it suffered, I believe, from its comparative frankness. The hesitation to adopt a direct, descriptive title is involuntary evidence that the members of these societies are not really confident of the bankruptcy of Christendom. They know that they would only get a handful of members if they asked for subscriptions to the Anti-Christian League.

Here we must charge Mr. Roberts with culpable ignorance or of deliberate misrepresentation. The Secular Society is still in existence, with Branches in most of the towns and cities of this country, and paying members in all parts of the world. The National Secular Society prides itself upon "knowing nothing of divine guidance or interference," and upon its "exclusion of supernatural hopes and fears." "Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people." Mr. Roberts had no right whatever to make the statements quoted above while in total ignorance of the facts. How easily he could have consulted the *Literary Guide* and the *Freethinker*, if he had been anxious to learn the truth about either Rationalism or Freethought.

His article is nominally a review of the new work, entitled *William Archer as Rationalist*, published by Messrs. Watts & Co. We have not seen this book, but we carefully read all Mr. Archer's contributions to the *R.P.A. Annual* and the *Literary Guide* as they appeared, and on this ground alone we are quite prepared to give the lie direct to Mr. Roberts' ruthless

sneer that "it is a lamentable volume." To him no doubt, as an inexperienced Christian apologist, the contents may not be palatable, because he cannot meet the arguments therein advanced; but surely this does not in the least justify his lampooning it as a "lamentable" production. With this aspect of the case, however, we are not directly concerned, our only point being that Mr. Roberts does not understand what Freethought is based upon. It is certainly not based upon "a contradiction," but, rather, upon a definite denial of supernaturalism in all its forms. Mr. Archer was a thoroughgoing Anti-Christian, and the arguments by which he supported that position are profoundly convincing. He advocated what he termed common-sense views of the universe, but was the sworn enemy of metaphysics. Mr. Roberts pokes fine fun at that distinction, saying: "I venture to say that if that is put into English, all common men would reject its meaning. 'We live in a world of things, not of thought,' will serve as a rough translation." Nothing of the kind. Mr. Archer used the word "metaphysics" in its etymological sense of *beyond* or *after physics*, a fact which our reviewer seems incapable of appreciating. There are expressions in Archer's essays which we cannot possibly endorse. Here is one: "There may, indeed, be realms in which the writs of reason do not run; but ought we therefore to conclude that the secret of the universe is one which does not merely transcend reason, but contradicts and flouts it?" We know nothing of, we do not even recognize, such realms. It is our knowledge, not our reason, that is inadequate. This is another:—

Reason is all very well so far as it goes, and we do well to trust to it; but it may prove, after all, that the things that are behind and beyond and above reason are the things that really matter.

We do not know what he meant by such "realms" or such "things," possibly he did not know himself; but whatever he did or did not understand by them, we do not hesitate to aver that to us, through utter lack of evidence, they are non-existent. On this point we agree with Mr. Roberts when he says that we know such things "only by accepting a philosophical hypothesis which is as incapable of proof as the being of God."

Freethought, as we conceive of it, implies Atheism, and Atheism inevitably necessitates the adoption of Secularism as the only rational philosophy of life. To us God is an absolutely meaningless term, for which we have no use whatever, and the so-called invisible or spiritual world, "an undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns." William Archer never quite arrived at this destination. Mr. Roberts supplies the following account of his fall from Christian grace:—

Archer was brought up in the atmosphere of a minute Presbyterian sect—a split from the small "Glassite" body—that is, from his childhood he was accustomed to the Calvinistic idea of God. Now it may be said without, I trust, rousing any general argument, that Calvin's idea of God, as interpreted and developed in Scotch Presbyterianism, was predominantly, if not exclusively, monarchical-tyrannical. God did all; man did nothing. He was pre-ordained to heaven or hell, and his utmost efforts could do nothing to alter his destiny.

The present writer was brought up in the identical creed, first in Welsh Calvinistic Methodism and later in the American Presbyterian Church, by which he was accepted as a candidate for the ministry and sent to the Union Theological Seminary, New York, to study theology under Smith and Shedd and Schaff, as a result of which he emerged a full-fledged Cal-

vinistic theologian. Mr. Roberts is entirely mistaken when he asserts that Calvinism involves "a conception of man's relation to the Eternal which no Christian theologian would defend." Is he not aware that Calvinism still prevails not only in Scotland and America, but also in England and Wales, and to a certain extent even in the Anglican Church itself? We are at one with him in his denunciation of it as false and injurious; but we challenge him to prove that his own theology is one whit more reasonable or susceptible of verification than the one he so mercilessly but justly condemns. Whether he belongs to the Church of England or not his articles appear in one of its organs; but let him take the theological conditions in that communion seriously to heart. There are the two opposite extremists, the Anglo-Catholics and the Modernists, with a comparatively small number of Evangelicals in between, and we ask, which of the three parties, if any, possesses and teaches the Divinely inspired and infallible system of theology? Can Mr. Ellis Roberts inform us? He cannot, nor can anybody else, for no Christian knows. We, on the contrary, are prepared to declare, with the utmost assurance, that all theologies are alike fundamentally false and have done incalculable mischief in the world; and this declaration is firmly based on the indubitable fact that God, of whom they all treat, can be traced back to the alleged ghost of either a sleeping or a dead man. Such a ghost was the first God in whom mankind believed, and the evolved Deity of to-day is no more real than that original ghost. Is it any wonder, then, that the belief in God is dying out, and that only about seventy-five per cent. of the population of this country even pretend to believe in and worship him? Thus rapidly, at last, is Secularism coming into its own.

J. T. LLOYD.

Counting Noses.

Christians have never lost sight of the idea of universal domination.—*G. W. Foote.*

Gold will knit and break religions.—*Shakespeare.*

CHRISTIANS are past masters at propaganda. Things are not so rosy as they might be with the Anglican Church; but the *Church of England Year Book* records the multiplication of bishoprics, and the docile pew-renters are satisfied. In Roman Catholic circles the assets of their Church are set out with such pomp and circumstance that one wonders if there are any Protestants left on the earth. The Free Churches are disguising their dwindling numbers by clever methods of fusion with similar bodies. The Salvation Army, utterly regardless of consequences, publish extraordinary lists of weekly conversions, which, if true, prove that every man, woman, and child in the country belongs to their organization. Fortunately, the adherents of these various religious bodies would not be seen dead with copies of publications of rival religions, so the game goes merrily along.

The Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, in their zeal for domination, even descend to the pleasant pastime of body-snatching. When a distinguished man dies they like to get the credit of his name, if possible. To this end such world-renowned Free-thinkers as Charles Darwin, Thomas Huxley, and Algernon Swinburne, were buried with the rites of a superstition they despised whilst alive. Sir Richard Burton had the sacraments of Rome administered to him whilst he was in his death-agony, a dishonour shared by Jerome Napoleon. So one might quote example after example of the shady tricks practised by priests in order to feather their own nests.

In spite of all the powerful organizations of Priestcraft, the British nation is actually revolting from Christian teaching. And the reaction is as much against the Free Churches as it is opposed to the older Churches. This is as it should be, for, in the last analysis, they are fundamentally alike. As Milton puts it, "Presbyter is but priest writ large." Sunday is no longer so religiously observed as it was by the last generation. Amusements are on the increase, and relaxation, rather than religious observance, is the order of the day among the younger people. Easter, the most sacred festival of the great churches, is rapidly becoming an interlude from work, such as August Bank Holiday week. The Anglican Church, one of the most formidable Christian organizations in this country, insists on the indissolubility of the marriage tie, and the answer of the English nation is the crowded lists of the Divorce Courts. Books on theological and religious subjects are no longer read as they used to be. With rare exceptions, the Churches no longer attract first-class brains into their service, and the loss is seen in a steady diminution of power and popularity.

The bare truth is that the conscience of the race is rising above the two thousand years' old Christian Superstition, which has outlived its period of usefulness, thanks to the endowed system of Priestcraft. As the old Radicals saw quite clearly, the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England would mean an end to the present belated domination of Priestcraft in this country. There is little danger from the "Fancy Religions," who could not dominate National Education, the Universities, and the Public Schools, even if they wanted to. Nor could Free Church ministers ever exercise the same influence in the social life of the nation as the Anglican priests, who, at present, are, to all intents and purposes, a branch of the Civil Service.

However, the Anglican Church is doing its best. If it cannot increase its power, it can at least engage in the pleasant pastime of counting noses. If men of ability are uninterested in the Church, there are others. Some of the others are worth noting. Here is a cutting from a daily newspaper which shows what is happening: "Samuel Johnson, awaiting trial on a charge of murdering a young woman at Stretford, was confirmed in Strangeways Gaol, Manchester, by the Bishop of Manchester."

Of course, this is not the first time such a thing has happened, but most of these converts have to content themselves with the ministrations of the prison chaplain, and are not honoured with the services of a right reverend Father-in-God. Bishops usually seek their converts in the comfortable homes of the leisured classes, and prefer those with bank-balances. A glance at criminal history shows that a large number of murderers do "find salvation" in the prison cell. And thereby hangs a curious piece of Christian ethic. According to Christian teaching, if the murderer believes in Christ, he gets his reward. When he is ultimately "jerked to Jesus" he goes straight to heaven, and, presumably, is handed a golden harp. Nor is this all, for in the topsy-turvy teaching of Christianity, unless the victim of the crime is killed whilst prepared to meet his God, the unhappy victim is not only deprived of his life in this world, but goes to a fiery damnation in the next. Which, a critic might say, was adding insult to injury.

Prisons are not the only places where Christians are seeking adherents of the Faith once delivered to the saints. Some time since a confirmation was held in which the participants were patients in a lunatic asylum. Doubtless, they would have equally enjoyed the service had it been conducted by Mor-

mon Elders, or cannibals from the South Sea Islands. But what are sane folk to think of such methods of propaganda? In matters intellectual the method of counting noses is not considered usually as a satisfactory Court of Appeal. And when the noses happen to belong to persons who are known to be demented, the joke has been carried too far, and is in bad taste.

Whilst the churches and chapels of this country show so often a beggarly array of empty benches, the ordinary citizen will note how the leakage is made good. Counting noses cannot make up for the absence of brains in any organization, religious or secular, and it is idle to pretend otherwise. That wily ecclesiastic, Cardinal Manning, knew what he was about when he flattered and cajoled the unsophisticated Labour leaders thirty years ago. The question of disestablishment and disendowment of the State Religion has been dropped out of the Democratic programme, and Labour leaders of to-day pay lip homage to Clericalism, which has always been the deadliest, because the most artful, of their enemies. Priests think in terms of the sixth century and not the twentieth century, and what real need is there at this time of to-day for education and progress to be held in check by the machinations of Priestcraft. The minds of children are narrowed by this supervision, and the national life had been shaped to far other ends if it had not been for the forty priestly votes in the House of Lords. Measure after measure has been killed, or scotched, by this clerical interference, and the printed pages of *Hansard's Parliamentary Register* is in itself a sufficient condemnation of the priest in politics. English priests are not so vociferous as their Continental brethren, but they are as mischievous. They are not to be judged by their honeyed public utterances, but by their wire-pulling on parish and county councils, by their intimidation of teachers, and terrorism over children. They have one voice for the public platform, and another for the Church meeting and the Sunday-school. Socialists never weary of denouncing Capitalism, yet think nothing but good of the Anglican Church with its capital of twenty millions devoted to upholding the present industrial system.

O Sancta simplicitas!

MIMNERMUS.

"Post-Mortem."

II.

(Concluded from page 742.)

THE last chapter of Dr. Mac Laurin's book, entitled "Death," is, we think, the most interesting, in which, from the discussion of special cases, the doctor discusses the fact of death itself. Why does the ordinary normal man fear death? Dr. Mac Laurin thinks: "Probably what most men fear is not death, but the pain and illness which generally precede death; and apart from that very natural dread there is the dread of leaving things which are dear to everyone."

There is no pain, as the doctor points out, in the act of dying; no more than in the act of going to sleep. It is the thought of what comes after death that most people fear. He quotes Hamlet's soliloquy, "To sleep—perchance to dream," and he adds "nightmares?" There is the nightmare of hell, for instance; of this terrible belief, he remarks: "It is one of the disservices of the Mediæval Church to mankind that it popularized and enforced the idea of hell, and that idea has been diligently perpetuated by some narrow-minded sects to this day. But to a modern man, who, with all his faults, is a kindly

and forgiving creature, hell is unthinkable." The doctor also points out that in time to come the souls, saved and lost, must be of infinite number, and when we begin "to realize infinity, that everyone of the millions of known suns must each last for millions of years, after which the whole process must begin again, and so on *ad infinitum*, the thing becomes simply inconceivable; the mind staggers, and takes refuge in Agnosticism, which is not cured by the scoffing of clergymen, whom one suspects of not viewing things from a modern standpoint."¹

Nor do the wicked find dying any harder than the good, in spite of pious stories concocted as to their dying agonies. Dr. Mac Laurin tells of a case of a girl with sarcoma of the thigh, which he had to amputate, but the sarcoma recurred, and he had to send her to a home for the dying. He says:—

She did not seem very much perturbed. I suppose the proper thing to say would be that she was conscious of her salvation and had nothing to fear; but the truth was that she was a young rake who had committed nearly every crime possible to the female sex, and she died as peacefully and happily as any young member of the Church I ever knew. But who is so terrified as the old woman who trips on a rough edge of the carpet and fractures her thigh-bone? How she clings to life! What terrors attend her last few weeks on earth, till merciful pneumonia comes to send her to endless sleep (p. 239).

Dr. Mac Laurin has a sense of humour that at times borders on the fantastic. We suppose that familiarity with death breeds, if not contempt, at least indifference. He says that the physician wages an endless battle, in which he must inevitably lose, because life cannot be prolonged indefinitely, and then, some day, he himself will lie pallid and horribly inert, the doctor continues, in a vein reminiscent of Svengali when he is telling Trilby what a nice skeleton she will make: "Somebody will come and wash your body and tie up your jaw and put pennies on your eyes and wrap you in cerements and lift you into a long box; and large men will put the box on their shoulders and lump you into a big vehicle with black horses, and another man will ironically shout Paul's words, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Dr. Mac Laurin adds his testimony to that of so many other medical men as to the unreality of the death-bed scenes related in pious tracts, with such devout gusto, as to the terrible end of the unconverted sinner, and the beatific visions of the saved. He observes: "I do not remember to have noticed any of that ecstasy which we are told should attend the dying of the saved. Generally, so far as I have observed, the dying man falls asleep some hours or days before he actually dies, and does not wake again" (p. 239). The breathing and the heart-beats gradually become more and more feeble until they cease altogether. "There is no more heroism nor pain, nor agony in dying than in falling asleep every night. Whether a man has been a good man or a bad one does not seem to make any difference. I have seldom seen a death-agony, nor heard a death-rattle that could be distinguished from a commonplace snore" (p. 240). Sometimes there may be convulsive muscular movements for some time before the actual death, but they are quite unconscious, and, says the doctor, "I am quite sure that the patients never feel them." Again, he says: "Nor have I ever heard any genuine last words such as we read in books. I doubt if they ever occur. At the actual time of death the man's body is far too busy with its dying for his mind to formulate any ideas" (p. 241).

¹ C. Mac Laurin, *Post-Mortem*, p. 244.

The nearest approach to a "last word" that the doctor remembers was that of a very old and brilliant man who lay dying, in the early days of the Great War. The nurse was trying to rouse the old man by reading the war news, which happened to be concerned with Austria. "He suddenly sat up, and a flash of intelligence came over his face, 'Pal—Austria, with her idiot Archdukes—that was what Bismarck said, wasn't it?' Then he fell back, and went to sleep." He lay unconscious for a week before he died.

And, after all, as our author observes, what does it really matter whether we die to-morrow or live twenty more years? In another century it will be all the same, death has to come sooner or later. "Whatever we believe of our life beyond the grave is not likely to make any difference. We were not consulted as to whether we were to be born, nor as to the parts and capabilities which were to be allotted to us, and it is exceedingly unlikely that our wishes will be taken into consideration as regards our eternal disposition." Of Heaven, he remarks:—

The idea of Heaven is simply an idea that the atrocious injustice and unhappiness of life in this world must be balanced by equally great happiness in the life to come; but is there any evidence to favour such a belief? Is there any evidence throughout Nature that the spirit of justice is anything but a dream of man himself which is never to be fulfilled? We do not like to speak of "death," but prefer rather to avoid the hated term by some journalistic periphrasis, such as "solved the great enigma." But is there any enigma? Or are we going to solve it? Is it not more likely that our protoplasm is destined to become dissolved into its primordial electrons, and ultimately to be lost in the general ocean of ether, and that when we die we shall solve no enigma, because there is no enigma to solve? (pp. 252-253).

There is another side to this question of a continuation of life, which very few of its defenders seem to consider. Dr. Mac Laurin says: "No doctor who has seen an old man with an enlarged prostate and a septic kidney therefrom, or with cancer of the tongue, can refrain from wishing that that man had died twenty years sooner, because however bad the fate in store for him it can hardly be worse than what he suffers here on earth. And possibly there are worse things on earth even than cancer of the tongue; possibly cancer of the bladder is the most atrocious, or right-sider hemiplegia with its aphasia and deadly depression of soul" (p. 237). These diseases cause great physical agony. There are others the cause of great mental anguish, as the doctor points out: "The illness which causes the most misery is an illness complicated with neurasthenia, and probably the neurasthenic tastes the bitterest misery of which mankind is capable, unless we admit melancholia into the grisly competition. But I often think that the long sleepless early morning hours of the neurasthenic, when the patient lies listening for the chimes, worrying over his physical condition and harassed with dread of the future, are the most terrible possible to man" (p. 251). Nor does the fact that neurasthenia does not always indicate any real physical disease provide any consolation. Now supposing that we were endowed with the gift of living for ever; consider the position of these dreadful sufferers, condemned to bear these exasperating torments for all eternity!

People who wish for a future life, take it for granted that it will be better than this. Why should they? Because good and evil are mixed here, that is no proof that another life will be all good. We have all read of the man to whom the geni granted any gift hewished for, and the boon which was to

make him so happy turns out to be a curse which he is at last glad to be rid of.

It is one of many cruelties imposed by religion that however atrocious the sufferings of a human being may be, yet they must be borne to the end, however long that end may be. However much the sufferer may implore the doctor, or his friends, to end his sufferings with a lethal draught, the law will not permit it. The person doing so would have to answer a charge of murder, the Christians who made this law argued. "God endowed this person with a soul, and you are sinning against God by depriving him of it."

Just as the Church declared the indissolubility of the marriage tie, it did not matter how badly the marriage turned out it must be endured until death. Again because of God. What we have suffered from God! A bogey God that never existed.

W. MANN.

The Thrice Anointed One.

To those who know nothing of the original, a faithful portrait sometimes appears to be a caricature. There is a danger lest the present article should share this fate. It shows by a striking example how orthodox critics interpret the Bible, and what singular conclusions they reach in pursuit of their method. The writer has avoided distortion, and trusted to close imitation for the display of the absurdities involved. Here then beginneth the lesson:

Jesus was three times anointed by women, and by a different woman on every occasion. The cases, according to chronological order, are reported thus, the first in Luke vii. 36-50; the second in John xii. 1-8; and the third in Matthew xxvi. 6-13; and in Mark xiv. 3-9.

The circumstances proving that the above functions were all separate events, are as follows:—

1. The first anointing being anterior to the feeding of the five thousand, preceded by more than a full year the death of Jesus; the second took place seven days before this event; and the third three days before it.

2. The first anointing was at the house of Simon the Pharisee; the second at that of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, and the third at that of Simon the Leper.

3. The first anointing was done by "a sinner," the second by Mary of Bethany, and the third by "a woman."

4. On the first occasion the worth of the ointment did not transpire; on the second, it was assessed at three hundred pence; and on the third, stated to exceed this sum.

5. On the first occasion, nothing was said about the anointing being wasteful; on the second, Judas Iscariot objected to it on this ground; and on the third, certain of the guests raised the same objection.

6. On the first occasion Jesus testified approval of the anointing by saying that the sins of the anointress should be forgiven because she loved much; on the second, he simply sanctioned the deed; and on the third, he commended it in the very highest terms.

7. Finally, the sinner weeping, bathed the feet of Jesus in her tears, dried them on her hair, kissed them much, and then anointed them; Mary of Bethany, a prey to no such agitation, simply anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her tresses; and the other woman, leaving the feet of Jesus untouched, poured the ointment over his head.

There are no doubt resemblances pervading the three narratives; but we cannot on this account resolve the three into two, to say nothing of into one.

as certain spurious votaries of reason have vainly attempted.

The feeding of the five thousand resembles the feeding of the four thousand; and the sending forth of the seventy resembles the sending forth of the twelve; but it is perfectly clear that in both these cases different incidents are intended. If one woman loved Jesus enough to anoint him in the presence of assembled guests, two or even three may have been inspired by the same devotion.

As to the details of the first unction and those of the other two collectively, they are so different, that it is impossible to blend them into component parts of the same event, without dealing a deadly blow at the trustworthiness of either two or three of the four evangelists. As to the details of the second and of the third unctions, the likeness which they undoubtedly present in some respects, and even in some very important respects, is easily accounted for by the similarity of the circumstances in each case. Jesus felt sure that his end was drawing nigh, and that very soon he would be a corpse; hence a remark that he made in reference to this fact seven days before his death, he might pertinently repeat four days later, as the circumstances suggesting the remark were the same in both instances.

All New Testament scholars know the value attached to the number three in that work. Three persons in the holy and ever-blessed Trinity; three years' ministry of Jesus; three assaults of the Devil at the Temptation; three favourite Apostles; three petitions in the Garden of Gethsemane; three denials by the faithless Peter; three appearances to the assembled twelve; three appeals for the love of the repentant disciple; three crowning graces of the Christian life; and three states of the soul. What wonder then to find three unctions performed by three devoted females on the dear body of their Lord; and what purblind folly to confuse these actions, or to pretend that only two, or perhaps only one of them, is adequately attested, when the evidence of all is equally valid.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

Acid Drops.

All our converts do not call themselves Freethinkers. Some—many—continue to call themselves Christians and some may be parsons. Here, for example, is the pastor of Mill Hill Chapel, who declines to believe that Sunday is any holier than other days. He concludes by saying:

It was idle to say that Sunday games would involve forced labour. Museums and galleries were open and their staffs were compulsorily employed. If these places were open for the mind, why should not the body's rights be considered? The end sought to be served by Sunday games was not a bad one—health and social intercourse—and in games there was an education for the mind and the soul as well as the body. Until the opponents of Sunday games could show that there was something wrong in the game itself, their protests would fall on deaf ears.

All that quotation needs to complete it is to have "Freethinker" written at the bottom.

The *Scarborough Evening News* writes what it calls a reply to some recent comments of ours in this column. And the writer says he will reply in three lines, thus, "The Bible and the Churches do not pretend to teach science; they teach religion." Well, we will reply with equal brevity, thus, "The Churches and the Bible both claimed to be authorities on matters of science until science and Freethinking exposed the farcical nature of their pretence." Now we may perhaps have another three lines.

"Dean Inge wants men in Church" is a newspaper heading in the paper just mentioned. Dean Inge is not

alone in this. All the other clergy want them. What they get is a choice selection of old ladies of both sexes.

The word "Atheist" is only allowed to raise its head in our daily press provided that nothing good is spoken of it. The *Morning Post*, in a leaderette on Dr. Jeffery's "Moral and Religious Aphorisms of the Reverend and Learned Doctor Whichote," picks out the first aphorism. "Some are Atheists by neglect; others are so by affectation." This appears very clever; even Pope could not use the word Freethinker without the doubtful qualifying "smart," but his difficulties were those of Scansion. An Atheist is not like a drunken man, converted at a street corner by a Salvation Army. Let us try our hand at aphorising: (1) Some are Christians by habit; others dare not be anything else. (2) Some are Christians through fear; others because it pays. (3) Some are Christians without thinking; others because they cannot. It may be that getting the semi-colon right is part of the secret of this game. We recommend it for the dark wintry nights when the headphones are wearily laid aside because the Archbishop of Canterbury is talking in just the same language as an ordinary journalist.

The evolution trouble is still going on in South Africa, and the upholders of the Bible have apparently taken courage from the Dayton case. From copies of South African journals just to hand we see that at the Free State National Congress a resolution was brought forward protesting against evolution being taught in the schools as it was opposed to the Bible and the feelings of Christians. One of the delegates, a Mr. Van Remsburg, said he did not know what evolution meant, but he objected to anything being taught that contradicted the Bible. The Congress ultimately accepted a resolution which objected to anything being taught in the schools with an Atheistic trend or tendency. If that is to be done effectively the best plan would be to bar any pupil thinking. Or, better still, to destroy all bodies whose cranial capacity is above a certain level.

Christianity breeds some lovely types of character, as one may judge from the fact that if a man wishes to express, with a becoming sense of ethical superiority, some of the meanest and lowest views of life, he can always find an occasion in Christianity. For example, here is the Rev. Herbert Motley, of South Parade Baptist Church, Leeds, who informs readers of the *Leeds Mercury* that if he were certain that God was not, the logical result is "devil-may-carism," and 'one vice more or less does not matter. The universe is worse than his own instincts, and there is no justification for his better feelings. Now a man who can seriously believe and feel this is not far removed from the criminal, even though he may never do anything that will bring him within the grip of the law. But the interesting thing is that it is Motley's religion which enables him to talk in this way, as though he is serving the higher interests of humanity. A splendid thing is Christianity. The most that one can hope from it is that it will not make a man worse than he would be without it.

A charge against the R.S.P.C.A. was made in the House of Commons the other day, and a Government enquiry asked for. The charge was that the Society, in order to get funds from the public, "faked" a number of photographs of the trade in old horses, and by means of these, worked on the sympathies of the general public to collect funds. We do not know if the statements made in this particular case is true or not, but we do know that it is quite common to do that sort of thing with regard to a number of the religious and charitable agencies before the public. There are few of them but lay the colours on very thickly, and the more religious they are the "taller" the stories that gain currency. The well-known statement of the London children who have never seen a blade of grass, perfectly ridiculous to a Londoner, owed its origin to one of these religious agencies touting for gifts in the provinces.

But if the Government does institute an enquiry with regard to the R.S.P.C.A., we see no reason why another organization, the Salvation Army, should not also have its methods enquired into. Large claims are made by this Society as to the amount of good done, and some pretty healthy misstatements, both in the direction of exaggeration and suppression are constantly made. Those who remember the tremendous exposure made of the Salvation Army and its methods by Mr. Manson, will also remember that demands from several quarters were made for an enquiry, but it was never forthcoming. Swindles in connection with religion are not often investigated in this country. Those who have influence will not permit it for fear of the harm it may do religion. That plea will not be forthcoming in the case of the R.S.P.C.A. The churches never seriously concerned themselves about kindness to animals, and it is a reflection upon Christian teaching that the R.S.P.C.A. be required at all.

Canon Sinker, of Blackburn, said that the "great French Atheist" declared that if you want to get rid of Christianity you must get rid of the English Sunday. The remark almost equals the famous description of President Roosevelt's concerning Paine for inaccuracy. If Canon Sinker had ever read anything of Voltaire's, or even any reliable work on Voltaire, he would have known that he was a very pronounced theist. And we should like to know where Voltaire said that if you wished to destroy Christianity you must first of all get rid of the English Sunday. As a matter of fact the special form of Christianity that Voltaire was fighting had nothing to do with that mixture of humbug and immorality, the Christian Sunday. But we suppose no one expects a Christian Canon to be accurate.

The professionalism of Canon Sinker is open and unashamed. He told the Mayor, during a sermon preached on Mayoral Sunday, that he would like to see every meeting of the Council opened with prayer. Naturally! If the Canon cannot be there himself, he would like to have the commodity with which he deals well on view. We have no doubt that a firm like Pear's would contribute a fair sum to the local rates if the Mayor would open every meeting by reciting a verse in praise of their soap. But they would not have the impudence to propose it. Canon Sinker is not quite so modest.

The following is from the *Schoolmistress* :—

It is sad to have to relate that the religious problem is rearing its head again in many parts of the country. As Lord Melbourne once said in another connection, "Why can't they let it alone?" Differences are developing in the Church itself. One party is strongly in favour of turning its schools over to the local authorities on terms, while another just as strongly says that the only real safeguard for the continuance of denominational teaching is to preserve the denominational schools. Generally speaking, local authorities are so anxious to get hold of the voluntary schools that they seem to be prepared to make terms that would have caused a great storm twenty years ago. And we may have the storm even now.

This is only saying what we have been warning Free-thinkers against for some time. The Church will not let the situation alone because they want to get more, and if they did, the injustice to other sections of the community, and also to the children, remains. And if the *Schoolmistress* could lift itself above the Trade Union point of view, it might see—or it might point out—that the only way in which education can be safeguarded against the interference of the clergy, and children brought up with a proper and complete sense of intellectual responsibility, would be to declare for a policy of complete Secular education. After all, teachers will only have the fullest amount of liberty possible in their work, when religion is cleared out of the schools, so that even from the Trade Union point of view there is something to be said for the policy here advocated. We commend this point of view to the *Schoolmistress* for consideration.

They do some queer things in America in the name of religion, although, on second thought, just as queer things are done elsewhere. But here is the latest instance, which we take from the *New York Truth-seeker* :—

For the first time in the memory of the oldest citizen a witness was disqualified in Union County Circuit Court yesterday because "he did not believe in God."

The case was that of Dr. A. W. Berrow, of Smack-over, charged with forging the name of a Hot Springs pathologist to a report on a blood test.

Dr. W. T. Carter, Hot Springs, appeared as the State's star witness. Following is the conversation which passed between the defence attorney and the witness :—

"Dr. Carter, do you believe in the existence of a Christian God?"

"No. I do not believe in the existence of a Christian God."

"Do you believe in a future life?"

"No."

"Do you believe in the doctrine of future rewards and punishment?"

"No, I do not."

"Do you believe that when a man dies he dies like a cow or animal?"

"Yes, I do."

"Do you believe in an omnipotent power?"

"No."

At this juncture Judge L. S. Britt ordered the witness dismissed and the indictment against Dr. Berrow quashed.

Evidently in the State of Arkansas they prefer a forger who believes in God, to an honest man who does not. And of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Mr. Edward Shanks, writing in the *Saturday Review*, emphasizes in that paper one of the truths associated with Christianity that is not as yet common property. With those who regard the disappearance of Christianity as a catastrophe, we are afraid that the Christian ethic is handled too tenderly, and it is judged more by words than deeds. We welcome, therefore, the publication of a belated truth in a progressive paper like the *Saturday Review*—for the encouragement of others. Mr. Shanks states that: "We may remember that thousands of years of civilization and even many centuries of Christianity regarded chattel-slavery as part of the necessary framework of life." It was left to men like Robert Owen, Francis Place, and Bradlaugh to let in a little light on this ugly side of the history of Christianity, and its attitude towards slavery would never have been voluntarily abandoned.

In the review of a book entitled *Religion and Natural Science*, by E. Haigh, we came across the following admission that is as a straw showing the way the wind is blowing :—

To take one point only, in face of the widespread belief in God's special interference with the course of nature in answer to prayer they will certainly question his contention that natural science has very little to do with religion, or be quite satisfied with his easy assertion that "some restatement of doctrine has become necessary" but that "the final issue is not uncertain."

Widespread belief is question begging; the average Englishman, if a Christian acts just like any man who has no use for methods that profess to interfere with the course of nature. Is it that reviewers are getting tightened up after religion has been boosted by a penny paper?

We do not know the Rev. S. W. Hughes, of Blackburn, but he is evidently known, and thought well of in heaven. Mr. Hughes informed a meeting in Blackburn that there was a time when he could not believe in Jesus, but "God waited; Christ waited," and in the end their patience was rewarded and Mr. Hughes believed in Jesus. The picture of God Almighty and Jesus Christ patiently waiting for the capture of Mr. Hughes is quite affecting. We had no idea that he was so important. Of course, there are a great many that the two parties mentioned do not capture, but they have got Mr. Hughes, and Mr. Hughes evidently thinks he was worth waiting for.

"Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

We are afraid we cannot compliment either ourselves or the readers of the *Freethinker* on the rapid progress this Fund is making. For some reason or other a number appear to be holding their hands, although we know their names will appear before the final list is published. But we have got to get things moving if we are to see the Fund reach even £4,000 within the next few weeks.

Mr. G. F. Hughes, who has already sent a very handsome subscription towards the Fund, says: "There appears to be fewer smaller donations than usual, as if would-be subscribers are waiting to see what others are giving. I should like to see the £5,000 figure reached before the year closes." So should we, and there is really no reason why it should not be, if everyone, great and small, set to work and resolved that it should be reached.

With regard to the offer of the friend who has already subscribed, but who promised a further subscription of £50 if nineteen others would do likewise, I have received one other promise, which leaves room for eighteen more if the thousand pounds is to be subscribed in this way. It must be remembered in connection with this offer that all that is being asked for now is *promises*. No one will be called upon to pay unless the whole twenty are forthcoming. That offer should certainly be decided one way or the other before Christmas. And we have up to the present touched only the fringe of those who should be ready, and able, to help place the *Freethinker* in a position of financial security, not only for a year, but for very many years to come, and probably for ever. The present effort is a great one only in relation to previous efforts that have been made. It is not a great one in relation to the numbers and the ability of the Freethought Party in Great Britain.

The following is the list of subscriptions to date:—
Previously acknowledged, £3,370 7s. 6d. H. Foyster, £1 10s.; H. Good, £1; R. V., £1; R. M., £1; W. Duncan, 10s.; J. Seddon, £1 1s.; "A few Motherwell Freethinkers," per H. Higgins, 12s. 6d.; A. W. Coleman (2nd sub.), £1; Mrs. R. Ralston, 10s.; A. Beale, 3s.; T. Dixon, £2 2s.; A. W., 2s.; H. Tucker (2nd sub.), £1; W. Moore, 10s.; Mr. and Mrs. Greenall, 10s.; R. Allen (N.Z.), 5s. Total, £3,385 7s. 6d.

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.

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.

C. HEMINGWAY.—Thanks for cutting. There is evidently plenty of room for Freethought work in South Africa. We send a number of copies of the *Freethinker*, and could do with sending more.

R. T. CRANKHERD.—It is not difficult for a man in the Church to get a reputation—among Christians—as a thinker, and Dr. Norwood appears to have benefited from the situation. We do not know that anything ever

produced the universe, and therefore shall not attempt to explain how it was done. The universe is here, and if you—and all of us—will try to understand it we shall have our time fully occupied.

A. R.—Article to hand, but we cannot say when we shall be able to publish it.

"NORTH DOWN."—Please send on address. A letter lies at this office awaiting dispatch.

J. SEDDON.—Thanks for subscription. Never mind the apology. If all the "little chaps" do what they can that is all that is required.

H. HIGGINS.—We are obliged for the trouble you have taken on behalf of the Fund.

E. HALE.—We are not surprised. The tendency of all political groups, from Communists on the one hand to hard-shell Conservatives on the other, is to lean more and more to the use of force in matters of opinion. There is the greater need for Freethinkers to keep their object clearly before them and not to sink it in favour of anything.

E. G. ELIOT.—The stupid tract you enclose, with many others of a like nature, is issued by the million by Christians, and they leave one wondering at the apparently incurable idiocy of large masses of believers. It is clearly no use talking to them, one might as well lecture to the inmates of an asylum. One can only hope for their gradual elimination as the race lifts itself to a higher level.

J. STEPHENS.—Thanks for excerpts. Such are always useful.

J. W. WOOD.—We are obliged for correction. Will bear it in mind if a second edition is required.

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.

The dense fog that had rested over Liverpool for some days had nearly cleared off on Sunday last, but there was enough of it left to have some effect on the attendance, which was slightly less than on Mr. Cohen's previous visit. The hall, was, however, well filled, and the lecture was listened to with the keenest appreciation and attention. The questions, too, were all to the point, save one or two from one of those economic fanatics whose minds seem to revolve round and round a few phrases which they repeat with all the unction of a medieval soothsayer repeating his charms. Mr. Stacord again occupied the chair and Mr. McKelvie and others were busy in other parts of the hall. There were many requests for a return visit, but this must depend upon Liverpool Freethinkers as a body getting to work.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti, we are glad to learn, had a good meeting at Birmingham on Sunday last. His lecture was greatly appreciated, and a little opposition was forthcoming at the end. We also get an excellent

account of Mr. Cutner's visit to Manchester. We should like to see both these gentlemen kept busier on the Secular platform than they are at present. Both usually have something to say that is worth saying and worth listening to.

From a newspaper report we notice that Mr. G. K. Chesterton has been lecturing at Reading on the "Cult of the Unreasonable," and if we must take the account to be accurate, he is merely silly. An extract will show us the bent of his mind:—

What he meant by the cult of the unreasonable was that there had grown up since the age of reason an age of unreason—that was to say, a natural belief in unreasonable things. There was in the modern world a general revolt against reason, a revolt to get away from the fact that two and two made four.

This is so far nonsensical as to almost defy careful refutation. The strange thing is that it should go down with so many people as being witty, and with a smaller number as being wise. The truth is, we suppose that if a man aims at being paradoxical, at even the cost of common sense, there will be found plenty who will regard his forced paradoxes as proof of unusual wit. Mr. Chesterton was fond of paradoxes before he became a Roman Catholic, and then his paradoxes were often sparkling enough to be interesting.

Mr. George Whitehead will be lecturing in the Weavers' Institute, Nelson, on December 1, 2 and 3, on behalf of the local N.S.S. Branch. He is delivering three lectures on evolution, and each lecture will start at 7 o'clock. Admission is free. We hope to hear of successful meetings.

Mr. George Bernard Shaw, in a review covering thirty years, written for a back-patting number of the *Saturday Review*, is not correct in his reference to Free-thought journals. He writes:—

At the same time Socialism, having become recognized and official, has also become straitlaced; and the weekly journals, instead of representing Free-thought (in the general sense), now represents Capitalistic and Socialistic interests in definite opposition.

The *Freethinker* has no political policy; it is devoted to a careful and unbiassed criticism of supernaturalism and all the induced bogeys in life that do not make for sanity. It does not promise anyone another shilling a week for agreement in any policy; neither does it hold out any hope for a reduction in income tax. It is not offended in being overlooked by what we inclined to believe was a progressive mind, and this note is merely a register of a lost opportunity by Mr. Shaw to name the *Freethinker*. *C'est ne fait rien*.

Thoughts on Stage Atheists.

THIS is not to be a talk about theatres or Shavian plays: the stage I am thinking of is a broader one than that; nevertheless, the Atheists I am thinking of have something in common with stage heroes and villains—especially the latter. They are creatures of fiction plus convention, to which we may add a good deal of prejudice and not a little fear.

As a real-life Atheist, who has first-hand knowledge of many other real-life Atheists, I have always wondered at the impudence of the people who continually offer these absurd puppets for show, and the stupidity of those who mistake such scarecrows for realities.

Stage Atheists exist in several varieties. They are supplied with various kinds of repulsive attributes to suit the audience they are required to impress. They are generally (but not always) vicious. Common to them all, however, are lack of all the finer feelings, lack of imagination and shortness of mental vision, combined with a tendency to disbelieve everything, and to limit all speculations and narrow down all interests in life to questions of bodily nourishment

and the coarser kinds of entertainment. The latter quality of the stage Atheist is called Materialism, and the term is most frequently employed by writers who have never given five minutes of their time to a consideration of its meaning.

A generation ago a cruder kind of bogey used to perform—the wife-beating, baby-farming kind of blackguard. He used to bob up and show off his points regularly at the bidding of the prophets of Christian Evidence. This variety is now getting scarce.

All effects have causes. Rumours and traditions are no exception. Where does the stage Atheist come from? Is he an exaggerated or distorted image of the real Atheist? The answer is that the wish is father to the thought. Centuries ago, Christianity treated ordinary morality as a side-line. The goods in the front window were not good citizenship, but the assurance of spiritual salvation, mainly through correct belief and the performance of correct ritual. Common morality, including truthfulness and humanity, were good when, and only when, they helped religion. To-day these values are reversed. Christianity, in order to keep alive, has to show that it promotes good citizenship. Now it is easier to pretend that Atheism favours low ideals than that Christianity and other religions ensure high ideals. The world is too familiar with the doings of Christians and Mohammedans to accept the statement that adherence to either, or to any other religion, ensures a high standard of character; but avowed Atheists being rare, owing to the newness of modern science and the rich endowment of Supernaturalism, lies concerning them are not so easily seen through. Hence the appearance of the stage Atheist.

The first objectionable thing the stage Atheist does is to reject and flout his would-be Saviour. Then he looks round in asinine self-satisfaction at creation, criticizes the work of God, and suggests ways in which it could have been improved. As if a mean, insignificant insect like man could be justified in criticizing the creator of the universe—a worm criticizing an emperor—a toddling infant correcting its parents! Presumptuous! Blasphemous! Ridiculous!

The last condemnation, I think, fits it best. A better adjective still would be *impossible*. Before you can reject a thing you must form some idea of what you are rejecting. All that an Atheist rejects is a *belief*. It may be true that Gods die of unbelief, like the fairies in "Peter Pan." If that is true, it is because, like the fairies, they have never had any existence outside of the imagination of those who believed in them. If God lives at all He is not likely to die, or even feel indisposed, because some Tom, Dick, or Harry doesn't believe there's "any sich person."

I should like to make it quite plain that I should no more dream of criticizing the poorest, meanest little God, than I would tweak the nose of the sergeant-major on parade. But to tell God Almighty His business! Nay, nay, good friends, let us leave that kind of folly to the folk who hand Him up lists of people recommended to His special care, and remind Him of little things He might do if He thinks it worth while, jogging the holy memory as one's secretary reminds one of an interview or a letter. "You might remember the sailors, and don't forget the ladies who expect an increase, and keep your eye on the Bishop of this diocese, etc."

I remember reading once some old doggerel about an Atheist and an acorn. This tomfool stage Atheist was, as usual, telling God his business—chiding him for putting big pumpkins on short stalks and little acorns on big trees. At that moment

an acorn dropped from the tree on to his nose. This, of course, completely floored him. It is quite easy to floor your antagonist when you state his case for him. Christians are always scoring points in that way. They manufacture a dummy and wallop it. If a real Atheist comes along they find they have pressing business elsewhere.

Now I could not make a universe, or even a jumper, and if you can show me a being capable of making a universe I'll go down as flat on my stomach as a newspaper man would before the Prince of Wales. Criticize God indeed! Not if I know it. The very idea is a howling absurdity. Given the existence of the Devil, I would wager that there is not a Christian alive with courage enough to criticize His Brimstone Majesty unless he felt sure that he had a God behind him to back him up. All believers in God admit their fear of Him, and most of them make a boast of it. When they pretend that we have courage enough to criticize God they pay us a mighty compliment, and in one way it seems a pity to have to let it go. Certainly the profession of Atheism is a risky business, but we are not quite such dare-devils as we are painted.

As for criticizing a fellow human being's belief about God, that is quite another matter. I have as much right to criticize my neighbour's belief about God as I have to criticize his views on Einstein or Epstein. I know that one experiences a sharp discomfort when one's pet belief is trodden upon. By some enthusiasts you can be more readily forgiven for treading on their corns. But the theologians never bother about my corns of credulity, so why should I trouble about theirs? *Your* beliefs can go hang—says the Bishop of London, in effect. The same to you, with compliments, my Lord Bishop.

The old-fashioned theologian used to say "Christ has revealed himself—therefore believe." The answer to that was "He may have revealed himself to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and yourself, but He has not honoured me with such a confidence, and what is revelation to those who receive it, is only hearsay to those who are told about it. Until something more solid comes along then, I retain an open mind on the subject."

The less logical but more sophisticated exponents of natural religion, as they call it, open the attack quite differently. "God is revealed in the world around us," they say, "whether there was a special personal revelation or not. The world bears striking evidence of design. Reason required that there must have been a designer. That is where God comes in. A great architect must have designed and built the universe. That great architect is God."

It would carry me far beyond the scope of the present article to make a detailed examination of what is called teleology, or the Argument from Design. It is sufficient to note that the argument from design is always defensive—never aggressive. Missionaries go forth armed with wonders to pit against the local wonders, teleology being kept in their side pockets to get them out of a difficulty when necessary. The only evidence that God had ever revealed Himself to mankind was contained in the collection of ancient writings, called the Bible, which, until the Renaissance, was accepted by all Christian sects as the final authority, though opinions varied as to the right of interpretation. Discoveries like Copernican astronomy, and similar disturbing innovations, caused a weakening of faith in the accuracy and sufficiency of Biblical revelation, and natural religion made its appearance in consequence.

It should also be noted that, to a great extent, design and revelation are conflicting ideas. The

Apostles did not claim that this is the best of all possible worlds. When they preached the Kingdom of Heaven it was not—with all due deference to Mr. Wells—a kingdom of this world, but a happy release from it. Things were all wrong here and heaven was the region where they were to be put right. To be king of the whole world was judged unworthy of consideration compared with the desirability of getting a front seat—or even a back seat—in the Kingdom to come.

The philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while they rarely attacked the fundamentals of Christian faith, ignored them when they endeavoured to prove God through reason, taking the known and undisputed facts of the world as the basis of their arguments. Later progress in science, and a growing sense of the misery and injustice that have always existed in the world have knocked the bottom out of rational theology, and to-day the tendency is to fall back on those mystical kinds of faith that depend neither on supposed revelations recorded in ancient documents—that may always turn out to be spurious—or on arguments that may be falsified at any time by some new scientific discovery.

What is there in the rejection of extremely doubtful revelation, or out-of-date and exploded theological arguments, or the unprovable assertions of the mystics, to justify the condemnation of such rejection on grounds of presumption, conceit, or lack of imagination? Does not the Atheist rather exhibit commendable modesty in declaring that the question of all questions requires far greater knowledge and wisdom than we possess for its answer?

LÉCAPITAINE.

Books and Life.

WITH a fanfare of trumpets William Blake receives a leading article in the *Times Literary Supplement*, and one wonders for whom is published the complete Blake in three volumes, price £5 17s. 6d. Richard Jefferies, another positive and sincere note in the world, suffered the same fate. He is now published in various forms. Reproductions of water colour pictures have been added to choice editions of Jefferies; the grave of this nature writer is in Broadwater churchyard, and we are told that it is an obscure affair and neglected. This, in itself, is a matter of little importance, and would no doubt be held so by the writer of the *Story of My Heart*. Wilde wrote that democracy devoured her children; publishers appear to flourish on the starved children of neglected genius. The happiest announcement, however, following this revival in Blake is that Heinemann have now published, at four shillings net, Swinburne's critical essay which first saw the light in 1868. Open this at random and the roaring praise of Swinburne for his brother seems to be like a breeze from the sea. Blake sings of common things in an uncommon way, and Swinburne's praise is poetry.

Sometimes, in the nature of a voyage of discovery one rummages along the bookshelves to find if each occupant justifies its space. Among the closely packed paper covers of cheap editions we found Haeckel's *Evolution of Man* and *Last Words on Evolution*, re-read them both and replaced them, for they had given a true and faithful account of their right of citizenship. If ever, if ever, was our conclusion—if ever we forget you for the painted lips of poetry, for all poets are liars in the truthful sense of the word, may we be forced as a punishment to dine on music alone. A good digestion may be mistaken for a good conscience, but the glow of poetry must have something substantial on which to glow. Has one better ears for poetry when one has

ballast? And by ballast we mean a fair knowledge of cosmology, geology, biology, anthropology, and psychology. The list looks somewhat fearful. Through one end of the evolutionary telescope we can see ourselves as an object 1-120th of an inch in length; through the other end we can see figures that have thrown bridges across rivers, built mighty railway engines and ocean liners. In the steady intoxication we receive from reading a truly great poet, our ballast will be in his favour, for he tells us that we have risen, and if we follow him faithfully he will help us to grow. If we are snobs we shall forget our ascent and commiserate with ourselves as fallen angels to the slow music of theology.

As an illustration of one aspect of looking through the telescope we may take the art of Aubrey Beardsley. In his illustration of Salomé he has for one figure at least gone to embryology. His original drawings command good prices, but there is an inhuman touch of cruelty in them that repels our admiration, and, at the same time, sounds a note of warning. What is the secret of this dislike? His art appears to have the diabolic touch; he had found his medium in black and white and his grotesque and satiric figures found patrons and worshippers in his time, whereas at present he would have been one among a thousand capable and intelligent craftsmen. It was, in our opinion, a spirited protest against certain stodgy conventions inseparable from the reign of Queen Victoria with its antimaccassars and numerous engravings of "The Stag at Bay," but the breath of sweet sanity was absent from his work, and perhaps he was content to only look at life through the one end of the telescope which ended in decadence.

Amid the stirrings of the church as to whether it has failed, or whether religion is played out, or do we need brighter sermons or should woman occupy the pulpit, one of the features in the literary aspect will have to be considered. Bradlaugh and Carlile have smashed a track through orthodoxy. The pleasantries of Mr. G. K. Chesterton that he makes about biblical characters are permissible through the efforts of brave men in the past who did not count the cost. And this track through the jungle of orthodoxy has made it easier for the novelist. By accident we picked up a novel by Miss May Sinclair. In the *Cure of Souls* she weaves a story round the life of a selfish parson, and anyone who has had first-hand experience of our English country variety will recognize the type. It is true that the writer only deals with externals, and possibly the bearing-rein of her public compels her not to be too outspoken, but there are passages in the book that unconsciously pay their tribute to the spade work of Free-thought. There is the God-making curate who gives his pastor a straight talk; there is the daughter of the complacent tyrant's sister who also makes him uncomfortable, and the conclusion is simply an epitome of the humbug that is associated with a useless and needless profession. Novels such as these reach various readers and give them a clue to enable them to fit together the curiously coloured pieces of life revealed in country villages. They only stir the question, it is true, but with the many cheap books accessible as to the origin of Christianity, the persevering reader may find substantial reasons for a final rejection of word spinning that has no relation to fact. When this is done, as optimistic forerunners of a world without superstition we do not expect nor hope that the goal is reached; a little rubbish is cleared away, that is all, and in the process the novelist has brought to bear on the labour—the broom of commonsense.

To the multitude of hands that help to fashion the earth into states, cities, towns, and harbours, and all other things for use and delight there comes a small army to fashion—thinkers. And each country in the world in a greater or lesser degree produces its offering at the altar of humanity. It is impossible to think

of truth bearing a national label, and it is equally impossible to fix a limit to the illumination from truth. Many readers must have experienced the truth most simply stated at the conclusion of Schiller's *Essays Aesthetical and Philosophical*: "We lay many a book aside which we do not understand, but perhaps in a few years we shall understand it better." The truth finders are the advance and adventurous spirits into the vast and potential field of combat where nothing is gained without a struggle, and if the watchers and waiters cannot discern their prizes there is the grace and mercy of time to help them to understand it better. A nation pays through the nose for its imperial poets, and scarcely flings a crust to its philosophers who do not bear the academic stamp and also do not make a trade of philosophy. With drum sticks rather than with the warm blood of understanding Kipling has written much of his poetry about the East, and how many years it has delayed an understanding between the East and the West no one can say.

The foregoing paragraph has been prompted by a consideration of some comments on *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, by Count Hermann Keyserling. The diary has been published in two volumes, by Jonathan Cape. Count Keyserling was born in Esthonia, and his position raised him above the struggle for life; our knowledge of economics will tell us that someone else did the struggling for him, but he has generously repaid the privilege by his contribution to those united efforts in the world that shall one day produce a world worth living in. His travels have taken him leisurely over the earth—this sport of cosmos—and he returns convinced that man must make his own completion. To the self-knowledge of the East must be added the conviction of the West that that self-knowledge is to be expressed in active life. There is no poetic jingle in this statement, and at first glance one might say that going round the world was too much trouble for something so insignificant. Let us take a closer view of this opinion of a traveller. One of the grandest figures in history said, "Man know thyself." Athens had no newspapers to purvey half-truths, and interested lies; dialectics were used with a purpose, argument had a definite object, and perfection within and without were objects of daily attention. The individual who had self-knowledge was bound to be a better contribution to the world than one who was in ignorance that self-consciousness could be attained. It is clear that Count Keyserling can see that even nations can share each other's virtues, and, in a world where we are advancing in all directions, self-knowledge, together with its expression in active life, would at least give us unity in one direction.

In a novel entitled *The Sailor's Return*, Mr. David Garnett has given us the other side of the picture to the play, "White Cargo," now running at Prince's Theatre. A sailor brings home a black bride—a negro Princess and their son Sambo. The English country village will have none of them, and is finally appeased when the Princess became a drudge in the house where she was compelled to wear cast-off clothing and the parish pump ideas of country life were satisfied with black justice in this form. "White Cargo" and *The Sailor's Return* are photographic art, but neither assist in the coming of age of the human race, and so long as nations cannot make up their minds to accept the inevitable, so long shall we have Mr. Garnett and the author of "White Cargo" running round with their cameras.

In *Silhouettes* Sir Edmund Gosse puts a restraining hand on the high-flown ideas connected with poetry. We cannot spare our singers at the banquet of life, with their prophecy set to music; nor would we if we could. But they must keep at least one foot on the ground. They will be excused if they show us their light surrounded by the coloured paper of Chinese lanterns, but they must not lead us into the land of romance and leave us to perish in the marsh of obscurity.

Sir Edmund rightly insists in the following extract that our songsters shall be somewhere in the neighbourhood of bread and cheese: "Even poetry has little abiding value unless it is in essential harmony with experience and common sense." The reception of the sixpenny books of selections from poets issued by Messrs. Benn should be a test of their indispensability at a time when the majority of newspapers find their most valuable function at the butcher's or the fish and chip shop.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Correspondence.

WAS JESUS A FREETHINKER?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Cutner cannot expect a single issue of the *Freethinker* to contain a reply to all his questions, accusations, and comments.

I have heard Mr. Cutner so often, and always so happily, that I am not impressed by his complaint about the enemy. He is too admirable a debater not to delight when opponents quote Ingersoll as a credible witness.

Let us start fairly. Ingersoll may be right or wrong, but at least he and Miss Rout have the right to say that Jesus was a Freethinker, and Mr. Cutner is equally justified in denying it. I hope Mr. Cutner will not make discussion difficult by accusing me of "carefully concealing" dates, "suppressing the fact," etc. I say now in case of misunderstanding that Ingersoll said very many other things about Christ besides the quotation I gave, and in nearly every other instance Ingersoll's view is utter condemnation of all that Christ stands for to-day. But Ingersoll believed that Jesus was a reformer and an infidel.

I am not "constantly quoting" this passage. I have often spoken and written against Christ and Christianity. This is the first time I have ever quoted anything in his favour. I quoted it because Miss Rout seemed to think that Ingersoll was against her view of Jesus. I corrected her by quoting Ingersoll's own words. Mr. Cutner seems to think that as he quoted the same words three years ago they need never be quoted again.

Ingersoll quotes as his evidence the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Ingersoll was quite reasonable in regarding this anguished utterance as a sign that Christ's religious creed had been finally shattered. Ingersoll given a number of other phrases of Jesus in the same lecture, adding in each case, "Good." but only, of course, on the assumption that Jesus was *man*. Ingersoll no doubt believed that Jesus was put to death for opposing the existing orthodox religion. The Gospel stories are mutually contradictory about what constituted his "blasphemy," two of them say he admitted on his trial that he had claimed equality with God. Two of the Gospels contradict this, and Mr. Cutner is as likely to be right as I am in weighing opposing evidence. But all agree that the priests were on all occasions his enemies, accusers, and finally victors against him. It would not be a wild deduction from facts to say that a man who is persecuted by all the priests and finally put to death through their direct activity, is a Freethinker.

Jesus attacked Moses on vital points, refused to condemn an adulteress, justified Sabbath-breaking, and sometimes spoke in favour of mercy, toleration, and love.

It is not at all my habit to ignore, condone, or justify the other recorded events and sayings of Jesus. I am not a "reverent rationalist." Not a bit. Mr. Cutner and I are at one in attacking the teachings of Christ which have, whatever their original intention, filled the world with intolerable evil. I go farther than this. I assert that what one might call the Tolstoyan teachings of Jesus (if I may be pardoned the anachronism) are none the less evil when they are, as often, impracticable. "Resist not evil" for instance is, in my opinion, wrong in its principle, apart from its impracticability. "Love your enemies" is nonsense.

I ought not to criticize and condemn, as I do the things, the many things I object to, in the "life" of even a myth, without praising anything which appeals to me as good. I only draw attention to the foregoing lest Mr. Cutner should think that to call a man a Freethinker is to worship or at least approve of him as a whole. I repeat what I have so often said, that the evidence that Christ ever lived, is based on demonstrable forgeries and lies. He is a myth like Moses, and the Mons Angels, or the London Russians of 1914, or like Jason and Hamlet. But we call Lady Macbeth a murderess, and I call Jesus a Freethinker.

Ingersoll's method in *What Must We Do to be Saved?*¹ was, obviously, to expose the inconsistency of Christians. It contrasts the good and sound (though neither original nor "inspired") teachings of certain parts of the New Testament, with the vileness and absurdity of other portions.

In *About the Holy Bible*,² Ingersoll riddles the pretence that the Bible was inspired by a wise or good God. This necessary work has never been done so well in so small a compass: it is a mine of munitions for Freethinkers; it has never been answered because it is unanswerable. There is no justification for the suggestion that the latter is Ingersoll's recantation of the former. It is rather its completion. And in it Ingersoll again emphasizes the fact that there are two aspects of the "Jesus" stories:—

Matthew, Mark, and Luke knew nothing of the atonement.....they knew only the Gospel of good deeds, of charity. They teach that if we forgive others God will forgive us. With this, the Gospel of John does not agree.

Again, in the same just but terrible indictment of Christ, his accusation begins with the significant words: "If Christ was in fact God," and all Ingersoll's judgment would be meaningless if this were lost sight of. If Christ were God he was guilty indeed; but, as Ingersoll concludes: "He was a man, and did not know."

If, then, besides Jesus being hated by priests, accused of blasphemy and crucified for conscience sake, three of his four biographers tell of his "Gospel of good deeds," we need not boggle at calling Jesus a Freethinker.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

RELIGION AND CHARITY.

SIR,—As no doubt many readers of your paper are subscribers to the Railway Servants' Orphanage, Derby, the following extracts from the regulations of the institution will be of interest to them:—

1. No diseased, infirm, or unvaccinated child is eligible, etc.
2. The religious instruction in the institution is unsectarian in character. The children attend the services of the Parish Church and Sunday-schools, but if the mother or guardian expresses a wish to the contrary, the Committee provide for their attendance at a Nonconformist place of worship.

All Freethinkers (I use the term in its broad sense) who are subscribers to this Institution, should write to the Secretary, Albert E. Deane, Esq., Railway Servants' Orphanage, Derby, and register their protest against these unfair regulations and demand freedom of conscience for the mothers or guardians of applicants for admission, who hold opinions opposed to vaccination and religious instruction of any description being imparted to them, and, failing satisfaction, to withhold further subscriptions until such time as these regulations are suitably amended.

I may say I have sent my protest, and have received an acknowledgment of same, but support from others will greatly assist me, and I appeal to any interested readers for that support.

HAROLD HUGHES.

FREETHOUGHT IN GLASGOW.

SIR,—The Committee of the Glasgow Secular Society have had under consideration the question of opening a shop for the sale of Freethought literature and to

¹ Published about 1880.

² Published in 1894.

form a headquarters for Secularist propaganda. This has been dropped pending consideration of other proposals. It would help very much if members and supporters would indicate to the Committee any proposals they have and what support, moral and financial, they are prepared to give. Meantime the "Sunday Ban" has shown the necessity of having a hall of our own. A box for voluntary contributions to a Hall Fund will be placed at the exit at all our meetings. The Treasurer, Mr. Robert Muir, 98 Carsaig Drive, Craigtor, and the Secretary, Mr. Alex Stewart, 114 Blackburn Street., will be glad to receive donations for the same Fund, all of which will be duly acknowledged. The Fund will be devoted to this purpose and no other.

ALEX STEWART.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.

We have to thank Mr. Bedborough for one of the most interesting lectures we have listened to this session, followed by an equally interesting discussion. After the lecture and discussion we briefly ran over the immediate practical objects of the N.S.S. with a view to preparing a resolution for our next Conference. Tonight, the head of the Ahmadiya Movement in England, Mr. A. R. Dard, M.A., is opening a debate with our Chairman, Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe, on "The Existence of God." We are hoping for a good attendance. The debate is certain to be extremely interesting.—K. B. K.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.

Mr. H. Cutner paid his first visit as a lecturer for Manchester Branch last Sunday, when he addressed two meetings. The attendance was not as large as could be desired, but it was evident from the questions that mere numbers were no indication of the interest of the audience. In the afternoon Mr. Cutner took as his subject, "Back to Jesus," and in the evening, "Free-thought and Birth Control." Mr. Monks occupied the chair on both occasions.—WM. COLLINS.

RELIGION AND TORTURE.

They were wont to tease the truth
Out of loth witness (toying, trifling time)
By torture: 'twas a trick, a vice of the age,
Here, there, and everywhere, what would you have?
Religion used to tell Humanity
She gave him warrant or denied him course.
And since the course was much to his own mind,
Of pinching flesh and pulling bone from bone
To unhusk truth a-hiding in its hulls,
Nor whisper of a warning stopped the way,
He, in their joint behalf, the burly slave,
Bestirred him, mauled and maimed all recusants,
While, prim in place, Religion overlooked;
And so had done till doomsday, never a sign
Nor sound of interference from her mouth,
But that at last the burly slave wiped brow,
Let eye give notice as if soul were there,
Muttered "'Tis a vile trick, foolish more than vile,
"Should have been counted sin; I make it so:
"At any rate no more of it for me—
"Nay, for I break the torture-engine thus!"
Then did Religion start up, stare amain,
Look round for help and see none, smile and say
"What broken is the rack? Well done of thee!
"Did I forget to abrogate its use?
"Be the mistake in common with us both!
"—One more fault our blind age shall answer for,
"Down in my book denounced though it must be
"Somewhere. Henceforth find truth by milder means!"
Ah, but Religion, did we wait for thee
To ope the book, that serves to sit upon,
And pick such places out, we should wait indeed.
—Robert Browning, "The Ring and the Book."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Stanley Hall, Hallam Street, Great Portland Street, W.): 7.30, Debate—"God Is?" Rev. W. H. Claxton and Mr. E. C. Saphin.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Debate—"The Existence of God." Affirmative, Mr. A. R. Dard, M.A.; Negative, Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Middle Floor, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham): 7, a Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. Harry Snell, "The Challenge to Western Civilization in Asia."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit., "What I saw in France."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BOLTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Borough Hall, Corporation Street, opposite Market): Monday, November 30, at 7.30, Mr. George Whitehead, "How Man Made God." Admission 6d.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, a Lecture.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Jack Green's, 201 North Street, Meanwood Road end): Saturday, November 28, at 7, Mr. G. Whitehead, "The Illusion of Christianity"; Music and Songs to follow. Sunday, November 29, at 7.15, in Trades' Hall, Upper Fountain Street, "The Religion of Bernard Shaw." Questions and discussion invited.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Dramatic Performance by the Secular Dramatic Circle, "A Gauntlet," by B. Björnson. (Silver Collection.)

NELSON SECULAR SOCIETY (The Weavers' Institute): Mr. George Whitehead, Tuesday, December 1, "How the Earth and Heavens were Evolved"; Wednesday, December 2, "The Origin and Evolution of Life"; Thursday, December 3, "How Man developed from Animal"; each evening at 7. Discussion invited. (Collection.)

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Labour Club Hall, Richmond Street): 7.30, Mr. J. Bazell, a Lecture.

OUTDOOR.

BOLTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Hall Steps): Friday, November 27, at 7.30, Messrs. Addison, Partington, and Sisson; Friday, December 4, and Saturday, December 5, at 7.30, Mr. George Whitehead, "On the Unsound Basis of Christianity."

"THE HYDE PARK FORUM."—A Satire on its Speakers and Frequenters. Should be read by all Freethinkers. Post free, 6d., direct from J. MARLOW, 145 Walworth Road, S.E.1.

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