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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

| | Page |
|---|------|
| <i>Truth and Fact.—The Editor</i> | 785 |
| <i>“My Disillusionment in Russia.”—George Bedborough</i> | 786 |
| <i>“The Tenderness of God.”—J. T. Lloyd</i> | 787 |
| <i>Stupid Conservatism.—Mimnermus</i> | 788 |
| <i>The New Christian Heaven and Hell.—Arthur B. Moss</i> | 789 |
| <i>“Freethinker” Endowment Trust.—Chapman Cohen</i> | 793 |
| <i>The Prayer.—A. R. Williams</i> | 794 |
| <i>Evolution: Its Real Significance and Origin.—J. G. L. Overbeck</i> | 795 |
| <i>Black Art and White Cargo.—H. Irving</i> | 796 |

*Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,
Letters to the Editor, etc.*

Views and Opinions.

(Concluded from page 770.)

Faith and Fact.

Properly to deal with a number of the issues raised in the book with which we have been dealing would require a lengthy examination of the meaning and historical significance of Materialism. Most of the criticisms that are passed on the Mechanistic and concept turn upon that. But as that would take us at least two or three weeks, it had better be left for the opening of a new volume, and we shall thus be enabled to fulfil a promise made some time ago to deal with that topic. For the present we propose discussing two or three disconnected issues raised by Dean Inge and others. “Religion, Science, and Reality,” as Dean Inge explains, is not intended as a defence of Christianity, but only to make clear the relations between religion and science, and indicating possible terms of peace between them. Dean Inge thinks it should be content to give up all the doctrines and beliefs which were based on the pre-Copernican view of the universe, and restrict itself merely to emphasizing an emotional value that may be placed upon certain scientific teachings, then it may be that a reconciliation will be effected. But it will be at the expense of dropping all that has hitherto stood for religion, and giving that name to the æsthetic and ethical aspects of life. Peace can usually be procured by one side giving up all for which it has fought, and adopting the forms of government dictated by the conqueror.

* * *

Christianity and Miracles.

One of the most striking features of the volume is that not one of the ten essayists has anything to say in favour of the historic doctrines of Christianity. The special inspiration of the Bible, the virgin birth of Jesus, the resurrection, the ascension, the miracles of the Bible, all these are quietly passed by as though they had never existed. It is true that Lord Balfour, with that easy going air of philosophic superiority which disguises from many some very shallow philosophizing, says that the talk of the impossibility of miracles is very loose speech. But as he discusses the credulity of miracles from the standpoint of experience alone, his criticism is not very

impressive. For it is, after all, not miracles in the abstract, but particular miracles upon which Christianity rests. And our rejection of the specific miracles of Christianity is not based upon theorising whether experience has exhausted the possibilities of nature, but upon the knowledge of two facts—one, the mental conditions which give rise to the belief in miracles; the other, that the specific miracles of Christianity, such, for example, as the turning of water into wine, or the birth of a child without a male parent is a sheer impossibility. And it will not do to slur over the fact that we know such events as these to be impossible by stressing the uncontested point that we do not yet know all the possibilities of nature. It is like arguing that because no one can tell what new forms of motive power may be invented, therefore, one of these days twice two may equal four. It is a common religious trick to argue in this way, but it can deceive none capable of five minutes' clear thinking. Christianity must stand or fall by the specific miracles contained in its own annals. And to-day they are too absurd for any educated person to defend.

A False Creed.

What has been said about miracles applies to historic Christianity as a whole. Historic Christianity—there is none other worth bothering about—has stood before the world with a fairly well defined body of doctrines and beliefs. They were laid down in creeds, articles of religion, and Confessions of Faith. Freethinkers said that the doctrines were absurd or brutal, the beliefs were false. They were rewarded with imprisonment, or death, or ostracism. Now highly placed preachers do not say they are false—that is a degree of outspoken honesty Christian preachers, even the most advanced, have not yet achieved—but they say they need restating, or re-interpreting, and they give their best endeavours to make these articles of faith mean something other than they have always meant. So well known a personage in the religious world as the Rev. Dr. H. D. A. Major said the other day that the Church's official theology is out of date, that such “terrible doctrines as that of everlasting torment, the depravity of human nature, the Divine demand for an expiatory atonement, have been discredited and abandoned.” Quite true, but they are part of historic Christianity, and if they are not true then the only Christianity the world has ever known is admittedly false, brutal, barbarous. But none of the clergy is honest enough to say this plainly. They will not say Christianity is false; they will only admit that it probably is not true. Or they will try and re-interpret it so as to make it mean something entirely different from what it always has meant. On that plane every convicted lie may stand for an eternal truth. What need is there to call the Ptolemaic system false, and to discard it? It is true it said the earth went round the sun, but one has only to read sun for earth, and earth for sun, and you have re-interpreted it so as to make it an

accepted truth. Every trick of the shifty apologist must be tried, every canon of intellectual uprightness outraged, rather than admit that for centuries the Church taught demonstrated falsehoods, and only gave them up when it found it no longer profitable to preach them.

* * *

An Unanswered Problem.

Professor Webb, who writes the essay on "Science, Christianity, and Modern Civilization," commences by saying:—

It will be generally admitted that our civilization is strikingly distinguished from that of earlier ages by what may be described as its essentially secular character. Religion which was once regarded as the very foundation of the common life of men, is looked upon to-day as a matter left to individual choice or even caprice; as something which does not, or at least, ought not to, enter into political arrangements or affect the freedom of economic, scientific, artistic, or general social intercourse, whether of citizens of the same State among themselves or of the citizens of one State with those of another.

It would have been interesting for Professor Webb to have made plain in what way and from what causes this tremendous change had come about. Instead of this he occupies his space by a purely fanciful account of how Christianity may one day become a world religion. But as it was once upon a time that—at least so far as Europe was concerned—one would like to know the causes that led to it losing this position. It is certain that Christianity did not lose it because it was brought into conflict with a degree of open force that deprived it of its position. All the force was upon its side. It commanded all public institutions, and still largely influences them. It took charge of the individual at the cradle and never relaxed its grip till it left him at the grave. It had all the pomp of place, and the power of wealth. It controlled education, and decreed the conditions of social and political preferment. It had everything on its side save two things — the growth of knowledge and the pressure of social life. Neither money, nor influence, nor brute force undermined the power of Christianity, and from a dominating position in life reduced it to one of marked subordination. It is an explanation of that position that is required. To gloss it over with speculations as to whether Christianity is better fitted to become a world religion than Hinduism or Mohammedanism is sheer futility. It evades the question raised by discussing one that has nothing whatever to do with it.

Naturalism.

Some of the other issues raised may be deferred until we come to outline the case for Materialism. But there is one remark made by Dean Inge on which we feel inclined to comment. He properly describes the essential issue as one between Naturalism and Supernaturalism, but he thinks he finds a flaw in the naturalistic position by saying that, "if there are phenomena, whether biological, psychological, or religious, which cannot be made to fit into the framework of Naturalism, Naturalism as a philosophy is overthrown." One admires the careful confusion here, so admirably calculated to secure agreement from those for whom it is written. But if we read it that if there are phenomena which *contradicts* Naturalism, then Naturalism is overthrown, we are in a different position. What Dean Inge is asking is that everything shall be explained by Naturalism before it can be accepted, which is absurd, for that would assume that our knowledge of nature is com-

plete, which is, if possible, even more absurd. No hypothesis is bound to explain everything before it can be accepted. The only fatal thing to any hypothesis is when there are found facts that contradict it. And it would puzzle Dean Inge to offer a single fact that contradicts the Mechanistic conception. One need only add that one is invited to throw overboard an hypothesis against which not a single fact can be adduced in favour of one on behalf of which not a shred of verifiable evidence has ever been offered.

* * *

A Useless Hypothesis.

Finally, it is noteworthy to find so many indications in this volume that "God" is recognized as no more than an hypothesis. And the value of an hypothesis extends no farther than what it is able to explain. But it is quite clear, even from the essayists themselves that "God" explains nothing. The theory of a supersensible world operating on this one explains nothing. The strongest plea that any of the writers have to offer for their "God" is that the Naturalistic theory breaks down here or there. That is, it is not their knowledge, but other people's ignorance, on which they base themselves. And that is a very dangerous basis. For ignorance is shifting, while knowledge is permanent. What a man knows he knows, and once he knows it he knows it for ever. But ignorance is with all a diminishing quantity. The greatest fool alive has not quite so great a stock of ignorance as he once had. One cannot live without learning, even though many live without learning very much. But knowledge grows and ignorance declines; and that is the fundamental reason why the belief in God everywhere gets weaker. As Lucretius said, things which the gods are believed to do can be seen occurring without their aid. Their activity in life diminishes. They do nothing where they once did everything, and their most intelligent supporters can only find room for their operation in some sphere which may be inaccessible to attack only because it is inaccessible to reason and common sense. "God" is an hypothesis. And an hypothesis that explains nothing can safely be dispensed with.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"My Disillusionment in Russia."

My Disillusionment in Russia, by Emma Goldman (Daniels, 7s. 6d. net).

THE *Freethinker* naturally cannot express any opinion on the most highly controversial questions raised in this book. It is, however, the work of a very able eloquent, moderate, and fair-minded Freethinker, and no student of contemporary life in the new Russia can afford to disregard it. We can imagine her generalizations and deductions to be highly contested, but she writes with obvious restraint, and an evident desire to be impartial. Her conclusions are a very terrible indictment of Bolshevik methods. She makes her case the stronger by her absence of bias, and by her strenuous refusal to substitute rhetoric and second-hand prejudices, for a calm judicial summary of her own personal observation. All this is not to say that she makes out her case, or that the observation of others who came to an opposite conclusion is necessarily at fault.

A philosopher once said "Justice hears and weighs." There never was a time when we need more to study the patient investigations of genuine truth-seekers. You cannot get the facts about Russia from the *Morning Post* or the *Daily Herald*, nor the facts about anything at all from the illustrated press. Anybody who reads Miss Goldman's book will feel that she chronicles only what she actually saw, and she saw sufficient to make her book absorbingly interesting.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

"The Tenderness of God."

SUCH is the title of Dr. F. W. Norwood's article in the *Christian World* of December 3. As many of our readers are aware, Dr. Norwood is the present minister of the Congregational Church known as the City Temple, London, whose first and greatest pastor was the famous Dr. Joseph Parker. In some respects there is a similarity between the two men, though it must be admitted that Dr. Norwood lacks some of the qualities which contributed to Parker's unique greatness as a preacher. The latter was a born actor, or idealist, as his friends preferred to call him. Dr. Norwood is equally evangelical in his theological views as well as in the earnestness and passion of his pulpit appeals. He is also equally impatient with and contemptuous of unevangelical and especially of anti-Christian sentiments. He cannot even treat the advocates of such opinions with ordinary civility, as was abundantly shown by his abusive letter to the *Daily Express* in reply to Mr. Arnold Bennett's article on Religion, in which he looked down upon unbelievers, lecturing them as inferior persons, his refrain being, "If they would but think."

Such is the author of the article entitled "The Tenderness of God," which, he informs us, "a temporary impulse" made him write. He expresses the hope that his readers will recognize his "temerity" in so acting. He begins in the following words:—

Surely if one were to attempt to state in due order his conception of the attributes of God, the last he would venture to put upon the list would be his *tenderness*. Those great Latinized words which have become embedded in our creeds, such as Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience, would doubtless head the list. Their very polysyllabic sonorousness seems appropriate for any statement concerning one so incomparable as God. Might so superlative, empire so boundless, wisdom so unfathomable—the soul itself expands as it ascribes these attributes to the Great Supreme. We let ourselves go as we give expression to them. They have the force of an argument which crushes down all criticism.

In that extract the apologetic game is exposed in all its hollowness. No form of theology can endure criticism, and in consequence, without rhyme or reason, it is violently crushed down, with the inevitable result that the theologians "let themselves go" with a vengeance. And in reality that is the only thing they can do. Their only commodities are words, words, words, employed recklessly, without any apparent display of "temerity." Of the grace of humility, however, they manifest not the least sign. And yet, if you dare to ask them what they mean by omnipotence as applied to God they will tell you that it is a term used symbolically, and does not literally signify omnipotence at all. The same thing is true, they will say, of omnipresence. An omnipresent person is absolutely inconceivable. Curiously enough, Dr. Norwood frankly admits that, when "prompted to doubt some apparent failure in the ways of God," the theologians fly for refuge to what he calls "the larger assumptions." He says:—

We have thought of a power too great to see any hindrance in what seems to us a limitation; of a presence too all-embracing to recognize a temporary intrusion; of a wisdom too deep to be checked by any folly of man. Thus the long word seems like a long room in which we can move freely; like a throne-room, great as majesty is great.

Here again we have words, words, words, with no attempt at argument of any sort. What Dr. Norwood says is that when face to face with any apparent

difficulty he and his friends take shelter behind long Latinized words.

Now we come to the alleged tenderness of God, which, we are told, is "to come down suddenly to the limited locality where we actually live." We fail to see the point of this ambiguous observation. If God is all-powerful, all-present, or all-knowing is he not so for the benefit of the universe, and particularly for the good of his wonderful masterpiece, man? Surely it must be taken for granted that the Almighty, if he exists, comes down deliberately to "the limited locality where we actually live," in order to clothe our cringing weakness with his all-conquering might. But Dr. Norwood's present subject is the Divine tenderness, and he says:—

Tenderness, as we ourselves think of it, is a kind of amiable weakness. We indulge it when we lay aside our cares and responsibilities, become a big boy with the children, let baby fingers pull our hair or stroke our cheek, talk in what Swift called "a little language" to those we love.

That is exceedingly pretty, but we are convinced that even we ourselves think of tenderness as something higher and nobler than that. Certainly tenderness in social life is not an amiable weakness of which we should feel ashamed. So far from being unmanly, it is in reality one of the holiest, manliest virtues of which we are capable. It is simply foolish to regard it as a "womanly" grace, though it is doubtless true that women, as a rule, exercise it with greater efficiency and beauty than men seem able and inclined to do. But the question now before us is what evidence is available that there is such a thing as Divine tenderness? Even Dr. Norwood is painfully conscious of the enormous difficulty of dealing intelligibly with this enquiry. Speaking of the belief in the Divine tenderness he observes:—

We should feel that it contradicted the facts. Life is a fight not a fondling. Rough justice there is in the universe, but its laws can tread very callously upon the individual life. Nature is "so careful of the type," as Tennyson said, but "so careless of the individual life." The love of God must be conceived of as spacious enough to include earthquakes, volcanoes, world-wars, and innumerable personal privations. Our mental fights are waged that we may reconcile the fierceness of the facts of life with some belief in the Divine love. We do not think of that love as tenderness, but rather as widely-slung wisdom illuminated with the moonlight rays of good-will.

That is surely a badly conceived and clumsily phrased passage. Does not love of necessity imply tenderness, and do not the fierce and cruel facts of life exclude the possibility of rational belief in a God of love, or, for that matter, in any God at all? If we believe that an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, all-wise, and all-loving God is the maker and ruler of the universe, how on earth can we satisfactorily account for the evils, sufferings, and heart-breaking sorrows due exclusively to the action of natural laws? No rational and ethically true explanation is possible, and of necessity such a belief falls to the ground for ever. Dr. Norwood is an extremely clever man, but he has not yet succeeded in "reconciling the fierceness of the facts of life with some belief in the Divine love." The problem is altogether too big and tortuous for a genuine solution on any theistical lines whatsoever.

Dr. Norwood tacitly concedes that the problem is insoluble in this life. He is resolved not to judge the Almighty hastily, saying:—

I have made the supreme venture of faith and do believe that rationality and not absurdity is the motif of the universe; that love and not indifference brought it into existence. I will not presume to

judge him finally while I am in the embryonic state of this mortal life. I am of the same creed as the gallant man who went down upon the "Titanic," who, when he saw the ocean waters rolling up to engulf him, turned to his friend as he let go, saying: "Now for the great adventure." I will reserve my final verdict until I have seen behind the veil, and meanwhile will base my faith upon the rationality of God, and in moments of exaltation, at least, will dare even to think of the Motherhood of God.

We readily give Dr. Norwood the credit of being thoroughly honest and sincere in the expression of his faith, and we are firmly of opinion that he ought to be quite as ready to give us the like credit when we declare our utter inability to share his faith, because to us it is a faith based upon no ascertained and well attested facts whatsoever. He deliberately tells us that his faith is only based "upon the rationality of God," which is, of course, not a fact at all, but a mere belief cherished despite the admitted "fierceness of the facts of life." We reject that faith because there are no facts known to us which justify it. We maintain that the universe was not brought into existence by love and goodwill, but that it has undergone a long process of evolution without any external guidance or interference of any kind. This is the view held by the overwhelming majority of scientific investigators. Intelligence, will, and mind are the products of evolution, not its causes and directors. Human beings are the latest products of the evolution of life, and they have clearly been derived from so-called lower and less complex forms of living beings. In other words we are Nature's offspring, and our whole duty consists in getting into harmony with our surroundings, whatever they may be. All we need, to make life worth living, is the confiding love of our fellow-beings which we can only gain by bestowing the same upon them.

J. T. LLOYD.

Stupid Conservatism.

Calm's not life's crown, though calm is well.—*Matthew Arnold.*

A certain old volume, once considered a book of divine revelation, but now a collection of old wives' tales, the Bible.—*George Borrow.*

THE naughty newspaper men, in their attempts to get increased circulations, are exploiting the men-of-God. Not the common, or garden, curates, but the lawn-sleeved, right-reverend Fathers in God have been used for the purpose of filling spare columns with spicy reading. One of the unforeseen results of this publicity is that the unhappy men-of-God have, unwittingly, brought religion more into contempt than even wicked Freethinkers are said to do. Quotations have been given in the newspapers from the Bishop of Birmingham and the Dean of St. Paul's which appear to be specially selected to contradict the more threadbare theology of the Bishop of London, an old favourite with editors in search of humorous copy. The wily journalists, knowing full well that variety is the spice of life, usually request very ordinary citizens to express their more or less valued opinions on the subject of religion and its dogmas with pleasing, if sometimes ridiculous, results. Thus, after the Bishop of the Cannibal Islands has indicted his ponderous periods on the subject of immortality, Miss Lardi Longsocks, of the Frivolity Theatre, with the astute assistance of a Jewish manager, will put up a plaintive plea for human survival. Her effusion may be followed by the more masculine opinions of the secretary of the Cats' Meat Mens' Union, who hopes,

for immortality for both cats and horses, as well as human beings. So the literary game goes merrily along, not so much for the glory of God as for the satisfaction of the editors and the advertisement managers, who think more of Mammon than all the other deities put together.

To turn, however, from the ridiculous to the sublime, one has to recall the words of Dr. J. A. Kempthorne, Bishop of Lichfield, to a Diocesan Conference on the weighty subject of staying away from places of worship, especially on the part of young people. The Bishop is quite reckless, for an ecclesiastic who wears sixth-century raiment in the twentieth century. He does not speculate where these dreadful young persons will spend eternity, but says he is not surprised that the rising generation do not care to go to church "where everything is being swayed by the stupid, sticky conservatism of some of their seniors." His suggestion is the more initiative and inventive in order that the young folk may be attracted. But churches cannot be transformed into dance-halls, café-chantants, or cinemas, with perfectly satisfactory results. The more serious worshippers would stay away, and the flighty ones would prefer the ordinary places of amusement, or, perhaps, the public-houses.

The Bishop attacks the elders for "stickiness and adherence to most unnecessary and undesirable ancient customs." He is right here, but whilst he puts the whole of the blame on the persons in the pews, some of it rightly belongs to the clergy themselves.

Just as the ecclesiastical dress of a bishop belongs to the sixth century, so do the ideas which they seek to perpetuate. The creeds of the Anglican and Roman Churches are hopelessly out of touch with modern thought. The priests who drew them up were, from the modern point of view, extremely ignorant and fanatical men. They might have known "a little Latin and less Greek," but they did not know the rudiments of astronomy, biology, chemistry, geology, or psychology. And to-day Physical Science is the Verdun fortress which the battalions of Priestcraft cannot pass, do what they will.

So clear is this that even priests are compelled by the force of public opinion to resort to camouflage. At ordination they must subscribe, or pretend to subscribe, to the creeds of their Church, but some of them talk quite another language in the pulpit. Ignoring the Bible, averting their eyes from the creeds, they profess to find harmony between the Christian Religion and Science. Quite a number of well-known clergymen no longer teach Christianity as understood for twenty centuries, but they still repeat the old, old words of the Church ritual with the faithfulness of a parrot's recitative. What is the plain man to make of it all? Is he being forced to the conclusion that the Christian Religion is becoming a thing of shreds and patches? The Anglican Church, the most formidable Christian organization in this country, is crumbling, slowly, but surely, like the old cathedrals of the Ages of Faith. The Free Churches are in no better plight. Wesleyan ministers to-day preach sermons which would have driven John Wesley to drink, or a madhouse. The sermons of Spurgeon, once the idol of English Nonconformity, are now almost forgotten, and to read them is to be transported to a world as paradoxical to modern folk as that visited by Alice in Wonderland.

The religion of to-day is invertebrate, and the mass is held together largely by money and the inherited prestige of the past. When the disestablishment and disendowment of the Anglican Church becomes a matter of fact those who are onlookers will see the

rats leaving the sinking ship, some seeking the shelter of the Free Churches, and a larger number bound for the haven of Roman Catholicism. For the Romish Church is the only one of importance in England which remains really faithful to the old ideals. This is the one secret of her strength. So astute an observer as Charles Bradlaugh said that the fight of the future would be between Rome and Reason, between the Catholic Church and the Free-thinkers. Protestantism, as such, is actually losing ground. She has made no new conquests since the so-called Reformation, which was, actually, but a phase of the Renaissance among peoples who were slow in assimilating new ideas. In France Protestantism did not prosper. The swift, live Gallic intellect dislikes half measures, and when a Frenchman ceases to be a Catholic he becomes a Free-thinker, and not a Swedenborgian, Muggletonian, or Christadelphian.

"Gold will knit and break religions," says Shakespeare. How true this is! In Russia the Greek Church was a few years ago all-important and all-powerful. Her money was taken from her by the strong arm of the State, and a new generation is now growing to maturity free from the worst practices of Priestcraft. In France, largely owing to political intrigue, the Romish Church has been permitted too much power, and the result is that the deadliest enemy of the French Republic is not the troops across the Rhine, but the black army of petticoated priests on French soil itself. In Spain the worst enemy of the Spanish people is the Roman Catholic Church, which wilfully and of set purpose opposes education in order to batten upon the superstitions of the masses. Leon Gambetta never said a truer thing than when he declared Clericalism to be the enemy. She is the arch-enemy of progress, and of the people, and the more deadly because of the innocence of her dupes. When people are better educated they will cease to be as gullible as little Red Riding Hood, and be able to distinguish between a loving grandmother and a greedy and rapacious wolf, bent on plunder.

MIMNERMUS.

The New Christian Heaven and Hell.

In my youth—a little more than fifty years ago—Christians had no doubts in their minds as to the real existence of what are called Heaven and Hell. But if anyone asked them where Heaven was, and where the warmer quarters, they pointed with perfect confidence upwards for Heaven and downwards for the other place. They had been taught from their childhood by their spiritual pastors and masters that Heaven was located somewhere above the clouds, and Hell was down below, although they were unable to fix upon its exact locality.

Heaven was then the Christian's great hope—Hell their abiding fear. They were promised reward in Heaven for their unquestionable belief in the Christian Faith, and everlasting punishment in Hell for disbelief, and anybody who had the temerity to try and disturb these beliefs was looked upon as a human monster—unfit for the society of honest men. That was fifty years ago. Christianity has undergone many modifications since then, thanks to the criticisms of many distinguished unbelievers, and to the courageous attitude of some of the most learned clergy in the Anglican Church. But few of us who fought the terrible fight against superstition in those early days ever expected to see the day when learned clergymen like Dean Inge and others would boldly declare that there are no such places as Heaven and

Hell; that in point of fact they existed only in the minds of men, and never had a real tangible objective existence.

Omar Khayyam however made this discovery long before them. He wrote:—

I sent my soul through the invisible,
Some letter of the after life to spell,
And after many days my soul returned
And said behold myself am Heaven and Hell.

But how will this new view fit in with the rest of the Christian creed? The idea of rewards and punishments in the next world would have to be banished for ever; for if there is no Heaven awaiting the believing Christian no golden crown, except in "his mind's eye, Horatio," of what further value his belief in the incredible stories of the Bible, or his unquestionable faith in the efficacy of the blood of Jesus to blot out the sins of mankind?

However I notice that in *Reynolds'* newspaper of November 15, the Rev. Canon James Adderley, M.A., has written an article to defend the new view of his friend and colleague, Dean Inge. "From time to time," he says, "some Christians get troubled about these questions of Heaven and Hell, everlasting punishment, and so on." I should rather think so. And why not, if they sincerely believed in them, as too many of them unfortunately do even to this day? But says Canon Adderley, "It is very doubtful whether the question of locality really worries them so much as the question of what we mean by Heaven or Hell." Well, what do they mean by such expressions? Canon Adderley then tells us that the question of "above the clouds" or "down below" are only figurative expressions. Also that everlasting punishment "does not mean *endless*, but *timeless*." All I can say is that everlasting meant *everlasting* when I was a boy; and not only the clergy, but eminent dissenting parsons like the late Charles Haddon Spurgeon used to insist upon this interpretation in their sermons Sunday after Sunday. Further Canon Adderley says, "Heaven was literally on earth as Jesus walked about with his disciples." Indeed! Then why did Judas betray him for thirty pieces of silver, and why did the rest of the disciples forsake him in the time of trouble, if they were living in a Heaven upon earth? But Canon Adderley goes on to say that "Heaven might be in the House of Commons or the place at Geneva where the League of Nations meets. A little bit of heaven was at Locarno the other day as men drew nearer to universal peace. It is to be hoped that Heaven is always permanently in the churches and chapels, though their quarrelsomeness makes this doubtful." Canon Adderley knows perfectly well that this metaphorical language is not applicable to the idea the great mass of Christians have in their minds as to the Heaven to which they expect to go when they have finished their weary and often painful sojourn in this vale of tears. They expect to go to a real Heaven, where they will find Jesus sitting on the right hand of the Father and where they expect to be joyfully welcomed in the abode of heavenly bliss. But what does Canon Adderley have to say about Hell? Is that a place or only a state of mind? "No doubt," he says, "men have thought that Hell was in the centre of the earth, just as they thought Heaven was above the skies. But our knowledge of the earth and the sky, while it makes it impossible to believe in such crude theories, in no wise upsets the spiritual realities of Heaven and Hell, a wonderfully peaceful and beautiful reality in the former, and a terrible and grim reality in the latter. Whatever we call these things we cannot help believing in them." Now with all due respect to Canon Adderley I cannot help think-

ing that he is merely juggling with words. What is the use of talking about the spiritual reality of Heaven and Hell, if neither of these places exist outside the human mind. In fact he says so himself in so many words. "In other words," he says, "the most real Hell is within us, just as the most real Heaven is also."

Then what becomes of the whole scheme of rewards and punishments in the next world—if we get our rewards and punishments in this world according to our belief in Christianity and our conduct towards our fellow men? I am afraid that this new interpretation of the meaning of Heaven and Hell will not be readily accepted by the great mass of Christians in this or any other country.

And if this new interpretation is to be accepted, will there be a second punishment meted out to poor unfortunate sinners in another world after they have already undergone their punishment in this? Or is the alleged future life only another figment of the imagination? If so, think of the millions of poor credulous Christians who in the past were driven almost to madness and despair by the thoughts that they would have to spend an eternity in hell flames. And what would they think to-day if they were alive, of their priests and parsons who had so grossly and grievously deceived them? And if priests and parsons have been so woefully wrong in their interpretation of Scripture in the past, what reliance can Christians put upon their interpretations to-day? There is also another consideration. Canon Adderley believes in the immortality of the soul and presumably in the resurrection of the dead. If, therefore, everybody is going to live again; on the morning of the resurrection, where will all these souls go to if there is neither a local Heaven nor Hell? Will they all wander about in infinite space through all eternity in search of a habitation and a home? Or will they go off in search of other planets? It is bad enough in all conscience for persons in London to-day to find accommodation, in these times of house shortage; but what will it be for millions of poor souls in search of habitation with the abolition of their long dreamt-of paradise above, or their greatly dreaded Hell beneath? It would be too terrible for words for those Christians who had relied on these figments of the imagination as veritable truths. These old ideas of Heaven and Hell have distracted the human mind for ages, but at last the most cultivated among the Christians have had to give them up as incredible and absurd; no doubt, in time, many of them will accept the view of the Freethinker and proclaim that this life is the only one of which we have any certain knowledge and that "after life's fitful fever" man enters upon the tranquil sleep of death from which there is no awakening.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

WHAT IS GOD?

"Who holds the world between His bill, and made us strong or weak,
Is an undying moorfowl, and He lives beyond the sky.
The rains are from His dripping wing, the moonbeams from His eye."

I passed a little further on, and heard a lotus talk;
"Who made the world and ruleth it, He hangeth on a stalk,

For I am in His image made, and all this tinkling tide
Is but a sliding drop of rain between His petals wide."

A little way within the gloom a roebuck raised his eyes
Brimful of starlight, and he said: "The Stamper of the Skies,

He is a gentle roebuck; for how else I pray, could He
Conceive a thing so sad and soft, a gentle thing like me?"

W. B. YEATS.

Acid Drops.

Apropos of our notes in last week's issue on the Communist trial, we have received a letter from Mr. A. S. E. Panton, which we regret we cannot publish because it deals with an issue with which we have here no concern. Neither the *Freethinker* nor the National Secular Society has any concern with the economics of Communism, Socialism, or any other political theory. Both are concerned with (a) the destruction of superstition, and (b) the securing of the fullest equal freedom of thought and speech for all. We were concerned with the Communist trial only so far as the desire to suppress a particular opinion may have influenced the prosecution. And our Freethought happens to be of the kind that is as much concerned with securing freedom for the opinions to which we are opposed as with those with which we are in agreement. That has always been the policy of the *Freethinker*, and it will remain so.

Mr. Panton appears to think that if one has got hold of what one regards as the truth one is therefore justified in using force to impose it upon people until such times as they recognize its value. We do not agree. We fail to see that the establishment of a theory or an opinion by force in the name of the "Proletariat"—whatever that means—is more justifiable than the establishment of the theories of the Christian Church. On the contrary, we should be inclined to say that the policy of the Christian Church was the more defensible since it at least claimed to impose its rule for the benefit of the whole. But there is nothing more dangerously fallacious than to assume that so long as an idea is thought to be true, force may be used in its establishment. Genuine persecution has always rested itself upon this fallacy. The thing that is of fundamental importance is that every theory and every opinion shall have an equal chance of publicity. And we repeat what we said last week, that so far as the law of this country is concerned there is nothing to prevent anyone advocating the complete reversal of every institution we possess, or returning to the next House of Commons a majority of men and women pledged to establish Communism or any other 'ism it can manage to persuade the people it is for their benefit. And, after all, calling a method Communism instead of Christianity does not make it the better. It is only a case of new Presbyterianism *versus* old priest, and we object to both.

Lord Newton told the House of Lords that he thought the Nonconformist conscience had gone out of business. With Birmingham barring bare legs, Bradford Christians raising protests against the display of ladies' underwear in shop windows, and the insatiable hunger of the public for all the details of "society" divorce cases, we are afraid that Lord Newton has not judged the situation as accurately as might be.

Christians believe in the Brotherhood of Man, but there are limits to it in application. In the United States it stops short with the negro. And in South Africa it is the Kaffir, and other natives. The *Rand Mail* reports a meeting held in connection with a Town Council election in which a Dr. T. C. Visser, who represented the attitude of the Dutch Reform Church, made a savage attack on Church of England parsons who had been championing the natives. He said that South Africa's two great dangers were Communists and the English parsons. He hoped that it would not be long before they were able to chase the Bishop of Pretoria overseas. The candidate whom Dr. Visser was supporting was quite explicit on the policy he was upholding. He said:—

He wanted absolute segregation. The Kaffir should have separate trams, and his trams should even run on different tracks to those of the Europeans. Vrededorpers would then be free from the shouting, malodorous, dirty natives with which the suburb was now pestered. The Kaffir even destroyed the white man's

soul, because he came shouting past the churches, and the white man worshipping inside sinned because in his heart he said, "There go those — Kaffirs again."

The picture of these good Christians at prayers and being forced to swear every time they thought of the Kaffirs is quite pathetic. Evidently God blundered when he made them.

The Rector of Ardwick, Manchester, explains in the Parish Magazine that it may be all to the good of the parish to have a change of leadership for three months. He says, "Things are not what they used to be even a few years ago. Congregations are smaller, collections are less, and there seems a general lack of interest all round." Altogether he thinks the parish may gain if he takes a holiday for three months. Probably the parish may gain from his absence, but if they are to have another of the same kind on balance there may not be any gain worth talking about.

Mr. James Douglas, who is writing a series of articles on "What Do We Believe?" in the *Daily Express*, appears to have had a very horrible childhood. This seems to have been due to the fact that both his parents were very religious, not because they were in any other way blameworthy. But he writes, as an introduction to his articles:—

I cannot remember any period in my life without some kind of religious emotion, some kind of religious thought, some kind of religious anxiety, and some kind of religious comfort. Happy I have never been. I am not happy now. In this life I feel sure that I shall never attain happiness. My state of unhappiness is caused by my conscience, which tells me every day that I am falling short of its demands.

Mr. Douglas appears to have developed, and maintained, a thoroughly unhealthy state of mind. He says that during his childhood he lost sleep over believing that he was guilty of "sinful pride" in cherishing a new pair of gloves. He remembers one preacher who told him that God held sinners by the scruff of the neck over hell so that they could smell brimstone. His childish imagination was haunted by nightmares of damnation. So he believes he is "qualified to write about religion because all my life I have been tormented by it, tortured by it, haunted by it, hunted by it, and generally made miserable by it." That is a very striking instance of good parents planting a deadly disease in the mind of a child in the name of Christianity. And Mr. Douglas's parents were only two of many millions of others. Christianity when seriously believed in implants a poison from which the system never afterwards frees itself.

And that is why Mr. Douglas is quite mistaken in thinking that because his mind was poisoned by religion therefore he is well qualified to write about it. It is one thing to write about the pains one feels as a result of ingesting a poison. It is quite another thing to describe the nature of the poison, how it operates, and what are its after effects. The first is well within the scope of an intelligent patient. The second requires a skilled physician, who is all the better if he never had the complaint at all. And Mr. Douglas proves the truth of this by still thinking that he must have a religion of some kind if he is to get through the world safely. He must take another hair of the dog that bit him. He doesn't realize that because of his unfortunate and miserable Christian past his opinion is as pathological as that of a confirmed whisky drinker as to the necessity of frequent nips of his favourite beverage.

Perhaps Mr. Douglas's early training is responsible for the following:—

But Atheism is a state of peace which I have never been able to attain. It would settle many of my enigmas if I were sure that there is no God and no future

life. For one thing, it would cut the claws of my conscience and enable me to live a reasonably quiet and selfish life. It would help me to put up with many private turpitudes and meannesses and basenesses which my conscience insists on execrating. It would make me less sensitive to the anarchy of my own secret thoughts. It would deliver me from the turbulent sea of self-reproach which never ceases to wash the shores of my mind.

One does not like to be hard on Mr. Douglas because of his unfortunate and disastrous childhood, but he really ought to know better than to write that if he were an Atheist he would be able to put up quietly with his own meannesses, and live a quiet and selfish life. And Mr. Douglas might have at least learned that before one writes about a subject one should find out what it is. Perhaps we are wrong in blaming Christianity for being wholly responsible for this, his being a journalist on our leading drapers' advertising circular may have something to do with it. Some of his Atheist friends, of whom he writes as "complete and contented Atheists," might inform him. At any rate it is quite certain that if Mr. Douglas had had a better childhood, if he had not gone through the Moody campaign, if he had not troubled himself for years as to whether he was going to hell or not—which does really point to a natural selfish strain—he would not be mewling like a sick calf about his uneasy conscience, and the many meannesses of his secret thoughts. Mr. Douglas exhibits all the characteristics of a thoroughly unhealthy mind, and if his own diagnosis is sound, he owes it all to Christianity. Our advice to him is to try to play the part of a man, throw off his religion, and he will then realize the truth of Emerson's teaching that the things that trouble him never troubled a healthy and upright mind for a single moment.

A Gypsy evangelist in Glasgow—Gypsy Sykes—told his audience a most wonderful instance of an answer to prayer. He appeared before his audience with an old rain-coat, and told the audience he had no time to change for another one. A night or two after a man met him with a coat and said he was about to bring a coat to him, and gave him one. We have no doubt that many speakers might get answer to prayer in a similar way. But one could readily believe that Gypsy Sykes would manage to get converts from an audience of that kind of people to whom such tales appeal. If they cannot believe in Jesus no one can.

We live in an age of discovery, and one of the strangest is made by Mr. C. M. Joad, in a review of *Pygmalion, or the Doctor of the Future*. He points out that in all cases which involve nervous trouble, cheerfulness, and confidence, whether in God, nurse, or doctor, help. Thus, "the religious live longer than the Atheists, and have smaller doctor's bills." We should really like to know on what statistics Mr. Joad builds this remarkable conclusion. We know of none. There is probably a smaller amount paid by Atheists to doctors than is paid by religionists, and insurance companies certainly decline to take any notice of a man's religious beliefs. Perhaps Mr. Joad only means that religious people ought to live longer than do non-religious people. But it would be as well not to take theoretical fancies for established facts.

Dr. R. T. Glover says:—

It is the great and living things that divide opinion; and a united Church, where everybody thought alike, would be pretty sterile. Even the Roman Catholic Church owes a great deal to the constant challenge of heretics. At the very worst, heretics serve one useful end in keeping the mind of the Church fitfully awake; and that, one would suppose, cannot quite be outside God's providence.

So the freethinking heretic (under God's providence) does, after all, serve a useful purpose. His Atheism

is not quite so "blank" as it is painted. He most certainly does his utmost to keep the churches more than "fitfully awake." That is why they (under God, also) have always done their best—or worst—to suppress him—they were never too sleepy to omit doing that.

An American Association for the Advancement of Atheism was recently formed in New York, and it applied to the Courts for incorporation. The Judge, Justice Mitchell, refused the application. In setting forth the aims of the Association, the application states:—

In prosecuting its work, which shall be purely destructive, the society shall hold public meetings and erect radio stations for the delivery and broadcasting of lectures, debates, and discussions of the subjects of science and religion; publish and distribute scientific and anti-religious literature and conduct a general propaganda against the Church and the clergy.

Specialising as it does in mental reconstruction, the society shall contribute to the building of a better civilization by operating as a wrecking company, leaving to others the designing and establishing of the new order. Especially shall it endeavour to free American scientists and statesmen from the necessity of patronizing religion.

The President of the Association, Mr. Charles Smith, explained that the society is "destructive only in the sense that Abraham Lincoln and the Abolitionists were destructive," and that, it is organized "for the purpose of destroying a belief which it considers detrimental to the interests of mankind and civilization. It most surely does not attempt to destroy existing society."

From the New York *Literary Digest*, we see that one minister, the Rev. A. Wakefield Slaten, Unitarian, New York, has protested against the refusal as "an example of the misuse of the power of government to maintain religious beliefs." And the *Louisville Times* also goes for the judge, and points out:—

America is nominally a Christian nation. It is what may be called a religious nation. But it is fundamentally and essentially a free country. It was founded on the belief that men have the inherent right to accept or reject any and all religious creeds. Under a religious tyranny, the right to speak or to write against the established order is denied. In a free country such right is, and must be, sustained and protected.

But that is a lesson Christians in any part of the world learn very slowly. Was not the first triumphant march of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels, made on the back of a jackass? And Christians, who have so great a taste for symbols, have never lost sight of the significance of this incident.

Another paper, the *South Bend Tribune*, thinks the situation offers a great opportunity. It says:—

They invite the efforts of the greatest missionary minds and spirits of the churches of God. If the professors of Christianity can convince this man Smith and his brother officers and some followers, they may have hopes of convincing the many men and women who compose the inactive, silent, non-Christian forces waiting to be awakened by the truth.

And that hits the nail on the head.

Since writing the above we have received a note from the President of the Association to say that the right of incorporation has been granted. The society should be none the worse for the conflict or the delay.

Here is a sample of the religious wisdom sent out by wireless by the Chaplain-General of the Forces:—

The philosophers and wise men of the past, and of to-day, say, "Accept our ideas"; Jesus says, "Accept me, follow me." The world's biggest men re-compelled to sink themselves in their theories; Jesus merges all ideas, all methods into loving devotion to himself.

There is nothing strange and unusual in this. It is the common cry of the religious fanatic and the religious leader all over the world, and at all times. The really

intellectually great man is usually too modest not to sink himself in his theories, and too sensible to ask anyone to accept his teachings save as they commend themselves to his intelligence.

Mr. Arthur Henderson has been addressing meetings in his constituency, and one of them was delivered in the Methodist Church. Naturally he lamented the growth of a "barren Materialism"—no one knows quite what he means by that, but to a religious audience it sounds well—and contended that there was to-day a greater estrangement from organized religion than had ever before existed, the people were suffering from a "soul-destroying inertia," and unless the "authority of the Church was revived," there was a positive danger to democracy. But he also thought there was a more humane outlook regarding social and economic questions than had previously existed. One does not expect accurate thinking from a religious Labour leader stumping the chapels, but if there is a more humane outlook on affairs, it would seem the decline of religion has not brought much harm—perhaps the two things are connected.

A writer in the *Methodist Recorder* discovers that the type of Atheism has changed. The present-day Atheist no longer denies the existence of God. Well, Bradlaugh may be taken as a sample of the Victorian Atheist, and he always insisted that the denial of "God," without any definition of what was meant by it, was sheer nonsense. Then the writer discovers that the present-day Atheist is filled with a "strange hopelessness." But we may certainly claim to know as much about present-day Atheists as the *Methodist Recorder*, and we have never yet met this strangely hopeless Atheist. Later we learn that it was easier to deal with the "Victorian Atheist" than with those of the present day. It always was easier to deal with a dead Atheist than with a living one. There is nothing new at all in that. Perhaps it is because we are told that the Atheist asks, "Why doesn't God do something?" Well, that seems a perfectly reasonable enquiry. If there is a God he really ought to do something. Millions of people do enough for him—even to keeping him alive. And he should at least pay for his keep.

The future of broadcasting in this country is now under consideration by a Government Committee, and it is possible that it may become a department of the Post Office. One of the persons heard by the Committee was the managing director of the B.B.C., Mr. J. C. W. Reith. Among other things, he said that in his opinion:—

There should be a definite association with religion in general and the Christian religion in particular. Broadcasting should not assist the secularization of Sunday. Sunday programmes should be framed with the day itself in mind, without being dull, and should not encroach on church hours, except where a service is being broadcast. There should be a religious service every Sunday evening from every station in the country.

We do not know who Mr. Reith is, but it is quite evident he is a Christian. The calm impertinence of his advice is quite Christian, and he is quite Christian in advising the Government that with a service undertaken by the State it should see to it that it allies itself with a special form of religion. Last week we had some comments on the *Christian World* complaining about Church religion being taught in certain rate-supported Church schools. Well, here is an opportunity of that journal showing that it really does understand what principle means, and of protesting against the State, which is made up of all sorts of religious believers, and of those who have no religious belief at all, paying for the religion of a section. Nonconformists in general have the same opportunity. But we doubt if they will take it. So long as it is Christians who are being subsidized and patronized by the State, they are content. It is only when justice is being done to all sorts of opinion that Christians begin to squeal.

"Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

THE purpose of this Trust is to acquire sufficient funds which, by investment, will produce an income of £400 annually, the capital remaining intact. It is an endowment secured by legal Trust Deed, administered by five Trustees, of whom the editor of the *Freethinker* is one. It means giving the *Freethinker* permanent financial security, and is thus a businesslike and sound scheme, which should commend itself to all supporters of the Cause. A full explanation of the Trust was given in the issue of the *Freethinker* for October 4, and any further information will be given to anyone interested.

Previously acknowledged, £3,420 7s. 6d. A. B. (2nd sub.), £5; G. Smith, £5; H. Organ, 10s.; W. Robertson, £4; H. Miles, 10s.; F. Hobday, 5s.; H. Boll, £5; Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Finney, £1 10s.; A. H., £1; A. B. Moss, 10s.; H. Small, 2s. 6d. Total, £3,443 5s.

In addition we hold promises of three sums of £50 each, to be redeemed on condition that seventeen others will promise a similar amount.

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.

F. C. SULL (Transvaal).—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

A. S. E. PANTON.—"The urge towards social welfare, and the subordination of the individual to the whole" lies at the base of the modern religious talk about man's desire for something larger than self. As is often the case, religion builds upon a misinterpretation of vital facts. We do not think our disagreement with you is much more than verbal.

A. M.—Both the addresses on "Religion and Socialism," and the article on "Armistice Reflections," are capital and very much to the point. We hope readers and hearers will have made the most of them.

S. CHAMBERS.—We appreciate your anxiety about our soul, but, after all, God is more concerned in getting people to believe in him than we are in believing, for if no one believed in him he would soon cease to exist. No one is sure what man owes God, but it is quite certain that God owes man existence.

H. RULE.—We share your appreciation of the late Moncreaf Conway. But you are wrong about his appreciation of the Agnostic position. What he said about it was, "Agnosticism is especially the euphemistic retreat of scientific thinkers unwilling to be thought nature worshippers, and cultured Freethinkers escaping the vulgar connotations of Atheism, while maintaining their criticisms on all theistic theories." The only correction we should wish to make in the above is to substitute "timid" for "cultured." And by way of emendation we would point out that the use of Agnosticism rests upon a sheer confusion of a philosophical problem with a theistic belief. Agnosticism has no possible right reference to the belief in God.

G. B. (Glasgow).—We are pleased to hear from one who was converted to Freethought from reading a chance copy of the *Freethinker*. You are not the only one, by a goodly number, the old paper has brought over, and it will keep on doing so.

A. RUSSELL.—You do not appear to have grasped the point at issue. There does not seem to us the slightest room for doubt that "matter" divorced from sensible

qualities is as much an abstraction as "mind" is apart from mental states. You will realize this if you set yourself the problem of how we arrive at our knowledge of "matter." This is not denying the reality of matter; it is only making plain what "matter" stands for. You give the name "matter" to an abstraction; we do not. That is the main difference between us. We hope to deal with the whole question of Materialism in the New Year.

S. DOBSON.—Glad to know that Mr. Melton gave such an enjoyable discourse on Sunday last.

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.

To-day (December 13) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Town Hall, Birmingham. There is only one meeting, in the evening. The meeting has been well advertised, and we are looking forward to a good audience.

The soundness of the suggestion to establish an endowment in order to secure the safety of a Freethought paper has evidently appealed to our friends on the other side of the Atlantic. We see the suggestion is made that an Endowment Fund should be started for the benefit of the New York *Truthseeker*, which requires 5,000 dollars annually. This would mean, at five per cent., a capital sum of £20,000. We gather that one or more substantial offers have been made, and in America, as here, there are quite enough Freethinkers to do all that is required with ease if each will do his or her share. It all turns on that "if."

Mr. A. B. Moss, in sending a subscription to our Endowment Trust, writes:—

Of late some Christians have been boasting that since some of the leading lights of the Church have given up so many of the fundamental doctrines of their faith there is no need for any Freethought organization. That is a great mistake. Christianity is an old and effete superstition, but it has behind it a powerful organization before which great masses of the people have to bow in submission in some way or another. Christianity dominates all our institutions, and often a man cannot earn a living unless he submits to some form of Christian tyranny. As Freethinkers we want to do away with all this and make men and women equal in all affairs of daily life. But we can only do this by upholding our rights as Freethinkers to express ourselves fully and freely. It therefore becomes our first duty to maintain the organ of our movement and put its suppression beyond the power of Christian tyranny.

Mr. Moss's enthusiasm, after so many years of service should act as an inspiration to younger men.

We should be the more pleased with Mr. F. A. Hornbrook's *Physical Fitness in Middle Life* (Cassell, 6s.) if we knew precisely the people whom he proposes to endow with long life and good health. To keep some people alive a little longer than they might otherwise live is not doing the best one might do for one's fellows. And we are the more uneasy about this book because the advice given, the simple exercises and rules of life suggested seem well calculated to do what it sets out to do. The work is full of "horse-sense," and it makes it possible for the man of middle life to get, what he often does not get, reasonable health and comfort. There are a few plates, the text is plainly written, free from a parade of medical terms which tell the average reader nothing at all, and the exercises so simple that they will tax no one's time or patience. If Mr. Hornbrook had done his work less well, we might commend it with fewer misgivings. As it is, we repeat, we are not sure that this threat to make everyone live longer is in the best interests of society. The world is the better for some people having lived—and for others having died.

Folkestone Council adopted a resolution in favour of opening the Museum and Public Library on Sundays. There was the usual objections raised, among others, a Mr. Gunn objected because it incurred extra expense, and opened the door to other things. If it does not it will fall short of giving the full benefits to the people of Folkestone.

Mr. Whitehead has concluded his Lancashire tour, and although the recent spell of severe weather was very much against him, he appears to have done well in most places. In this connection we are glad to hear that good meetings were held at Ashton-under-Lyne. This is a new Branch, and the members seem to be working with enthusiasm. Mr. Cohen hopes to visit the town early in the New Year.

The Prayer.

I.

"RIVERSIDE INN," an old, half-timbered, creeper-bowered hostelry, stood on the bank of the river about three miles above the ancient city, the pinnacles of whose magnificent cathedral tower could be seen looming above the high elms clear-cut against the blue summer evening sky. At quarter-hour intervals the distant sound of the chimes floated through the still air. A mile back behind the orchards the tapering spire of the village church pointed heavenward.

"Riverside Inn" was the resort of the waterside fraternity, of fishermen and sportsmen. On this July Sunday evening the public rooms were full of patrons drinking and talking. A large number of men were seated outside.

A small motor-boat chugged up to the little wooden landing-stage. Its solitary occupant stepped out, threw the mooring rope over a post, and walked up to the drinkers outside the house. He was greeted heartily, seeming to be a favourite.

This was Ethan Carduss, a science master in the City Schools, a man of great knowledge and abilities, and even greater eccentricities. One of these last was an outspoken contempt for intellectuals, and a love of consorting with common people.

"Damn highbrows!" he would say. "Give me bellies; human beings alive and thirsty. My hero is a navvy: working hard, living rough, smoking twist and drinking beer. I wish I was one."

In summer "Riverside Inn" was his resort, where he was popular, smoking and drinking heavily, talking brilliantly and scandalously by the hour, delighting his hearers, and courting the dismissal from his post which inevitably came.

Ethan Carduss drank off a glass of beer before saying, "I nearly lost my way coming up."

"How?" asked several voices, knowing something would follow.

"I almost went into the Cathedral, but I thought perhaps the Bishop or Dean or whoever was preaching might be embarrassed, so I didn't."

"He'd be greatly surprised," laughed someone.

Carduss laughed too: "Perhaps he'd be like a minister who told me that he could never preach if there was an infidel in his congregation. Said he felt the presence of the sceptic even if he didn't know him. I replied it showed the weakness of his religion; that the shadow of suspicion of doubt or criticism unbalanced him, because it made him admit to himself that he had no case."

Ethan Carduss cried aloud to his host, "Why, Harry, I believe you have more people here than there are in the village church."

"Aye, a lot more," smiled the landlord.

"And we're enjoying it better," said one.

"And doing more good," added another.

"Anybody can pray and preach," was a further comment.

Came a chuckling remark from the open window, "Mr. Carduss could preach us a better sermon than any parson. He often does."

At this sally there was a general laugh. For a few seconds Ethan Carduss sat still and moody, head hung down. Suddenly looking up, his eyes beaming and the evening sun reflecting from his glasses, he exclaimed, "I'll pray for you."

II.

Before anyone else could speak or move, the man rose to his feet, knelt in the cane chair he vacated, raised his hands to the sky, and began:—

"O God, we thank thee for this lovely summer evening. Look upon these sinners and be merciful, for they know no better. None of us know what thou wantest, not the wisest of us. In understanding of thee the fool is as wise as the philosopher. Yet we thank thee, Father, for being alive, and having a small share of the good things of this world."

Lowering his hands to rest the finger-tips on the back of the chair, he looked steadily across the flowing river and spoke in firm, level tones:—

"And yet, O Lord, all is not as it might be. Thou art the Creator of the universe, and to us mortals the scheme of things does not appear perfect. Look upon thy creation and consider. Our birth may have been a sleep and a forgetting, but for our mothers it was a time of anxious pain, of certain suffering and risk of death. For ourselves it was the beginning of a period of storm and stress, the prelude to a life of burden-bearing, with we know not at the end, except that death will come, and we are not sure but what it is the end of all things for us. Some younger than us have already gone, snatched away with their lives incomplete, with the possibility of enjoyment frustrated. Some went suddenly, some lingeringly, some miserably. And we are left wondering.

"Dangers are rampant round our daily lives. Torment, agony, and death may come from the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat. The glorious sun that promotes growth will with equal facility strike us down. The vivid lightning flash can mar and destroy us. The refreshing wind might hurl upon us tree or building. The water in which we happily lave, on which we float and trust our lives, will end them swiftly. Every minute a life begins. Tell us what for. Every minute a life ends. Why?"

"O God, the whole of thy creation is parasitic. Man destroys numberless living creatures, often painfully, for food, for clothing, for adornment, for sport,

frequently for mere lust of killing. Beasts and birds, fishes and reptiles, insects and mollusca prey upon each other. If they do not, but eat growing plants, they are themselves devoured. The weapons of defence developed by live creatures become too often the means of offence. Slaughter and rapine stalk through the world unchecked. Man kills man in hideous warfare, tortures him, starves him. Those who have professed to love thee best have often hated their fellows most and treated them worst.

"Accidents, illnesses, and disasters occur hourly. Poisons exist in the most innocent and beautiful guises. Some of thy creatures, O Almighty, are so small as to be invisible, so numerous as to be everywhere, and so potent as to be the causes of endless suffering and death. Against all these we wage unceasing but futile strife. Our hospitals are full of people diseased and damaged in body, our asylums of persons weakened in mind, our prisons of those enfeebled in morals. And many outside are no better: they have escaped confinement in institutions by luck or cunning, or by the mere haphazard distribution of right and wrong, of favour and mischance that marks all human doings.

"O God, we acquire a modicum of knowledge hardly, and often without wisdom. For most of us the mere struggle for daily bread absorbs all our strength and skill. Our intellectual powers are a nuisance to us. We are like cabbages which have bolted prematurely to seed instead of making wholesome hearts. Our thoughts are hotbeds of seething perversities. The method thou fixed, or allowed to evolve, of reproducing our kind is too often a snare, a pitfall, and a misery for us. We do injury and injustice to ourselves and to each other much easier and more often than we do good and right. Why, O Creator, should all these things be? Tell us why.

"When we regard the past of humanity it is like looking back on an evil dream. Mankind has struggled through a thousandfold slough of vain effort which leaves us despondent. As we are to-day we cannot pretend to be satisfied. And the future holds no promise unless we have more guidance. We are indeed the blind leading the blind. We stumble in the dark, and no one lights our way or heals our bruises. O Mightiest, give us a revelation better than is given us by those who pretend to interpret thy will. Too often they only give us their own prejudices, their own desires, their own gloss upon crass nescience.

"Man by himself is lonely till he is sick unto death. In association with his fellows he is unsociable, obstinate, greedy, and unreasonable to an inordinate degree. When we do what we please we hate what we do. Yet those who are lords and masters over us control us so ill that they had better leave us alone. Falsity swallows up truth, and wickedness overwhelms honesty.

"Give us truth, O Lord, even though it blind our eyes. Reveal a thousand times more than was perhaps revealed to one small group of half-savage tribes. That revelation has merely become a will-o'-the-wisp leading us farther astray.

"Instead of one book of uncertain authenticity open to us the full pages of thy intentions and divine will. So far we have barely looked upon the margins of the Deific document. We have but annotations by vapidly upon ignorance; an illegible palimpsest upon undecipherable hieroglyphics. Grant us full knowledge, though it shatter us. If this is thy best possible creation, tell us so, and we will remain content to make the best of it.

"O God, we are humble. We don't even ask for things to be better. Failing all else we simply ask thee to let us know why they are as they are.

We pray thy will be done, but let us understand for sure what thy will is. Amen."

III.

Ethan Carduss stood up off the chair whereon he knelt. All his hearers were silent and serious, some uncomfortable. They had not expected such an eloquent and earnest outpouring. Nothing discommodates the ordinary indifferentist quicker than sincerity, either of belief or unbelief.

For an appreciable time Ethan Carduss stood gazing across the gleaming tree-shadowed river at the landscape glimmering under the declining sun.

Saying "It's a beautiful evening: for those who don't think," he sat down and drank.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

Evolution: Its Real Significance and Origin.

WE know that life started with the simplest form of a single cell, the life in this cell being specified as a co-ordinated duplicate system of negative and positive electricity balancing each other in amount as well as in degree. The whole of this electricity being derived from the action of the chemical materials upon which the cell feeds and touching its surface, it is therefore solely a superficial matter in the first case.

Life could only commence after the simultaneous production of certain chemical elements capable of carrying out its characteristics in a particular place under the correct electrical conditions to produce that electric action upon which life depends, and which, in its duplicate form, defines the elixer of life. The contents of the cell were of a semi-fluid nature, with particles of more, and liquids of lesser density. All chemical reaction is an expression solely of the setting free of the negelectronic units of electricity belonging to the outside planetary orbits of the solar system (like little atoms), of which chemical matter is invariably composed.

If we imagine that the energy of our most distant planet, as taken from the sun, could be knocked out of its orbit and used for other electrical purposes, we have the exact simile of our negelectronic unit knocked out of the exterior orbit of a planetary atom. Since the simplest cell cannot be said to contain definite organs beyond the contents called the nucleus, we can understand only that these electric currents partake of the nature of the Gulf Stream, in so far that they represent direction of currents in which force is sufficient to overcome the resistance of the peripheral walls in the liquid in which the current is present. Thus a single cell requires neither our later developed dry current, electricity wires, or nerves, nor our wet current blood pipes. The life of ourselves is merely an enumeration of the compound lives of our cells, co-ordinated to certain definite ends by electric evolution, brought about by the attraction and repulsion of the negative electrons, and nothing else whatever.

In a single cell the blood brought by the capillary containing its loosely bound oxygen produces all the oxygen-chemistry of breaking down, during which the negative units are set free. These negelectrons are at once taken up by the nerve fibrils, each nerve fibril being composed of a large number of very fine wires, so to speak. We know that when an electric current passes down a wire insulated from a neighbouring wire, an opposite current is at once induced in this neighbouring wire, passing in the opposite direction. This is exactly the case of the nerve fibrils, the positive current being induced in

the opposite direction, and accepted by the blood capillaries. Therefore our nerves (or the nerve current in a single cell), carry our *free* energy for all our actions, voluntary or involuntary. At the same time, the blood capillaries takes away from the ends of these little nerve fibrils positive current, and transmits this to the compound chemical molecules, which we know exist in the blood in various super-electrified states. Thus carrying out our system of life in precisely the same form now as at the beginning.

Hence all our initial effects may be looked upon as surface actions still, since our blood and nerves carry the same process still to every buried cell, which in the original mono-cellular life, only existed for the use of the sole or single surface.

Therefore Evolution must arise from the result of this simple action in the primary cell. The greater the secret in nature (so-called), or mystery, as some men *gratuitously* prefer to term it, when properly understood, always turns out to be both perfectly straightforward and honest, for the simple reason that everybody can at once appreciate, for Nature has no axe to grind.

We therefore envisage the primary cell as a little circular body of semi-fluid jelly, surrounded by a wall of a harder description in which circulated little streams of negative electricity, which accounts for all the life energies of the cell, *i.e.* movements, granular, or such as are to be seen in the contractile vacuoles, seen in nearly all cells, and which possess a rhythmic motion of expansion and contraction, or even the granular Brownian movement.

All motions consist of free negative electricity, and therefore our negative microscopic currents explain these. The opposite, or chemically feeding electricity, which in us is carried by the blood, possess in the single cell its own little streams of chemical atoms super-electrified and capable of giving up their charge wherever required, to keep the total balance of the electric life of the cell permanent, and therefore its whole electric life complete.

The two electricities balance each other and must be of a fixed pattern in the primordial cell. All cells, which to us would be later called by some name, would be so called solely because we should find that they are all built upon the same pattern. Now should by any chance an unbalance of negative electricity (such as sun's violet rays) come into contact with the surface of this cell, this might modify the directions of the original negative current, thereby inducing a self-balancing alteration consequent upon it in all the positive currents also. In other words, the pattern of the cell life becomes temporarily altered. We know very well that when we pass through a wood we prefer to use a beaten track for ease of transit. It is just the same in our primary cell, with its currents of electricity.

Since the normal direction of the currents was fixed, the electricity naturally passed in these directions by preference, owing to the existence of the beaten track already prepared. When, however, this beaten track becomes altered, and remains so for a sufficient length of time, and different from the original, then will the new directions of these currents crystallize themselves into a track as easily passable as the original, the consequence being that the life of a cell offers itself as an alternative of a different nature. Every variation in current sufficiently marked to alter this life characteristics of any cell produced by such primordial modification of the original design, underlies the whole of evolution and explains the same indubitably and in such a way that no controversy upon the question is ever likely to arise. We can conceive no simpler reason for the exact changes which evolution produces.

We therefore see that the great secret of Evolution is the old story of the attempt of electricity to produce self balance, according to the circumstances in which it finds itself. The whole of the creation of forms by electricity is nothing else but an expression of ringing the changes upon the diverse manifestations of the one and only force known to science in the whole of the universe, *i.e.* electricity.

Whatever we do, or is done, produces a result. The result is the expression of the cause. Whatever question we put to ourselves, we shall find that the answer to it is always a reply balancing the question. The whole of evolution owes its existence therefore to the simplest and only electrical law that we are aware of, the balance of electrons (conservation of energy).

Remember that there is nothing in the whole of the universe that is ever moved, or can move, but the electrons. It is this which explains so clearly why all our energies are the same, whether we look at light, or make a sudden movement, or heat a body: it is all absolutely the same thing, *viz.* the movement of the electrons.

We come back to electricity as the creator of the universe in its every sense, matter, and energy. Nature exists as a result accruing from electric laws, and nothing else. If the mind is desirous of probing further, it is well qualified to state that since the electron is definite in size and power and not haphazard, and that all laws derived from it are quantitative as well as qualitative, the inclusion of the idea into the one-ness of the whole of nature may also be translated as a one-ness of "purpose" to those who wish to be able to specify the powers of nature in other fashion than a scientific one.

Thus the universe, hitherto the greatest mystery, is of startling simplicity, and the whole of this is carried out in a manner as simple as understandable, and therefore it only shows how credulous we have been to consider such things as "mysteries," when they were really not beyond our comprehension after all. No "mystery" exists: we know or we do not know—nothing else. Such "assumptions" always point to "parties" gaining some advantage from it.

J. G. I. OVERBECK, F.R.S.A., F.G.S., F.C.S.

Black Art and White Cargo.

MODESTY is my besetting sin, but there are some things one cannot put up with, as the lady said whose husband habitually bashed her face at meal-times: "Why can't he wait till the things are cleared away," she complained. My trouble has been started by Mr. Wm. Repton. Once upon a time I didn't like Mr. Repton's contributions. I thought he used too much glaze and too little pigment. Time has remedied that. The pigment is there now, but not invariably are his colours pure. There is a smudge in his article of November 29, the reason being that Mr. Repton has borrowed his paint instead of mixing his own.

A few weeks ago Mr. Repton tilted at the drama, "White Cargo." In the article under criticism he returns to the charge, and to get home his point, uses a borrowed illustration maligning the photographic art, and photographers. The simile comparing things deemed trivial with photography is a fashionable one. It isn't true.

"White Cargo," he says, "is photographic art and does nothing to forward 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 authors like the author of 'White Cargo' running about with their cameras." If to confer

benefits on mankind is to further this coming of age, a big book could be written on the part photography has played, is playing, and will play in that great push. In every science, it is a necessity. Through Photo-Micrography and through the X-rays it has lessened the distresses of humanity. Its aid in the projection picture and the newspaper illustration has widened the knowledge of teeming millions. Tele-photography is already accomplished; and who can say what great wonders will follow its development? "Running about with cameras" is a term of desipal, but a great deal more than Mr. Repton realizes, depends on the "runner." The camera is a tool, just as the brush, the chisel, and the pen are tools. A camera does not work by its own generative powers, even if the late Dion Boucicault got away with that idea in "The Octoroon" a generation ago.

Masterpieces and rubbish come from the camera as they come from the other mentioned tools, according to the degree of skill and capacity of the worker. The artist and technician in photography will see and achieve what "Johnnie with his camera" would never dream existed.

Has not the author of "White Cargo" done something creditable in drama? Ought a dramatist ever to ply his art and craft in the direction of: "When man to man the world o'er shall brithers be for a' that?" I think dramatic art would quickly bore us if it stuck to that moral. Pulpit art is narrowed to that issue and pulpit auditors yawn and sleep. The theatre is a place where we go to keep awake.

"White Cargo" gives scope for good acting, and theatre goes like good acting. The play shows vividly how climate can reduce both human beings and trees to rotteness—not a mean artistic touch that, Mr. Repton. It shows the incompatibility of a child-minded, free-loving black woman and a white man of some culture. Even if the fusion of the races is inevitable, this should be no condemnation as the same incompatibility is evident all around us at home among white people.

Tragedy is made up by the passions wrecking their vessels, and to condemn "White Cargo" is to condemn "Macbeth," "King Lear," "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," and all great tragedies.

The coming of age of the human race is always coming. Can it ever arrive? Satisfaction must be in fighting for changes, but the stage need not always be used for propaganda.

H. IRVING.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.

On Sunday evening Dr. C. V. Drysdale gave a splendid lecture, which was followed by a most animated discussion, on human heredity and breeding for quality rather than quantity. To-night, Mr. Rex Roberts and Mr. H. Cutner debate on Freud's psychological theories. We hope for a good audience for what is certain to be a good debate.—K. B. K.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.

A very successful "Social" was held on Sunday last (December 6) at New Morris Hall, and a very enjoyable evening was spent by all who attended. We were glad to see present friends from West Ham, and a cordial invitation is hereby extended to members of other Branches for future occasions. Some of the talent displayed by the artistes was of a very high order; so much so that local friends are warned to turn up in good time for the next "Social" (January 3), or they may be crowded out. Next Sunday (December 13) Mr. Van Biene will repeat, by special request, his lecture on "Education." Please come early.—A. HEATH, Hon. Sec.

Correspondence.

WAS JESUS A FREETHINKER?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I hope with Mr. Cutner that this discussion will lead to truth. I have answered Mr. Cutner, and he describes my answer as "funny" and "nonsense." I can hardly say anything in reply except that I don't agree with him. Your readers must decide whether he is right or wrong.

There is much point in "Demea's" plea for a definition of "Freethinker." It is highly probable that all your correspondents would agree about placing Jesus aright if we agreed about our definition. It is quite clear, however, that the word "Freethinker" is not used in the same sense by us all. If we regard a Freethinker as a great man, an Atheist, a Rationalist in the modern sense of the term, the phrase is meaningless as applied to Jesus. Jesus was a blasphemer and an infidel, persecuted by the church of his day, and finally put to death by priests on account of heterodox religious views. I called him a Freethinker on this account. I did not call him a member of the National Secular Society; I do not think his religion (or the religion bearing his name) is either true, original, or, on the whole, good. According to our several definitions of the word, "Freethinker" he will be inside or outside that label.

Mr. Egerton Stafford writes a very interesting article with most of which I fully agree. I admit his palpable hit on the three "degrees" contained in one of my letters, but Mr. Stafford of course sees that these are merely accidents arising from our use of question-begging phrases. If I were discussing the character of Lady Macbeth I should probably say that the "fact" that she said, "Out, damned spot," ought to be sufficient warrant for our drawing certain deductions about her. My semi-humorous (out, damned humour, my enemies will never forget this admission!) remark at least stopped half-way by saying, "makes me almost think so and so," while the expression of my opinion which I think coincides with Mr. Stafford's, was that I am one of those who regard Christ's history as unproven.

I hoped when I read Mr. Stafford's first paragraph that he was arguing on my side. I was surprised that after such an opening he turns his back on his very excellent dictum: "We have too many Freethinkers who cease to be rationalistic during such times as they are called upon to think of Jesus." Excellent. But wait. Presently we see Mr. Stafford insisting that "in discussing the character of Jesus" Miss Rout must first "make it clear that she is dealing with a mythic character," etc. Why should she do so? Would Mr. Stafford's reading of character in the case of Lady Macbeth vary according to his calculation of her historicity? But "so many people still mistake Jesus for an historical person." Very well, put them right, for this is not the only error they make. But at least let us commit ourselves very definitely indeed to our judgment on the lies (if Mr. Stafford will not let me call them the facts) before us. Channing is not the only author who picks and chooses so as to make Jesus fit into the category he has assigned him to. But some of good friends do not realize that it is equally illogical and wrong to see only the evil in a man (or myth) as it is to see only the good.

I learnt in my young Freethinker days that, generally speaking, what was new in Christ's teaching was evil and that what was good was not original. It seems to me more reasonable than the assumption that Jesus never even by accident said or did anything good.

Mr. Stafford's witty description of what Miss Rout would say to an opponent is only an exaggeration of what one might say with excellent truth and effect: "Here is your own fictional story of an ideal Christ, and in order to clothe him with any semblance to goodness you have had to picture him as the enemy of all priests, as a blasphemer against the religion of his day, and as persecuted by all the priests as all good things always are!"

Mr. Cutner, Mr. Stafford, and I are at one in wishing that Freethinkers would quote equally often the aspect of Jesus which is repellent to all our ideas of sense, justice, truth, and toleration. I agree that the *Bible Handbook* is an excellent antidote to Cruden's so-called *Concordance*, and I do not believe for a moment that we have won the Bible battle. We shall need all our ammunition for the enemy: it seems a pity that we waste so much of it on each other. We can concentrate our guns on those who regard Jesus as a God, or Jesus as an ideal man. But perhaps some Freethinkers regard "freethinker" and "ideal man" as synonyms.

I am an Atheist, and I altogether dislike names like "Agnostic," coined, I think, solely to avoid an unpopular label. But I realize that the word "Freethinker" has a far wider scope than "Atheist." It includes a very mixed multitude—and properly so. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines the word as meaning "rejector, etc., of authority in religious belief; rationalist, etc." There is much virtue in "etcetera."

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

"POST-MORTEM."

SIR,—In his interesting article under this title, Mr. Mann quotes Dr. MacLaurin's opinion that Marat's peripetic dermatitis would have soon finished himself off without the help of Charlotte Corday. If so, it must have been a very violent form of the ailment, for, as a rule, forms of herpes only send persons to a better world in extreme old age, from the irritation and weakness a severe attack may cause. Herpes and peripetic dermatitis, from which I have suffered off and on all my life, occur where there is hereditary gout. In my opinion it is a diffused form of it. It helped to finish off the late baronet—but at ninety years of age, and he might have lived to a hundred and over in spite of it if he had not made a will disinheriting, so far as he had the power, my humble self. I am liable to violent facial attacks under certain conditions which I have carefully observed. The facts are, I believe, quite unknown and unheeded by the medical world.

I have offered myself as a subject to medical men, but they are far too stupid to realize the value of an explanation of these curious attacks. In hot weather, with bright or only diffused sunlight, if hot and stuffy, violent attacks occur after an hour or less in closed valleys formed by the eruptive rocks of the miocene (tertiary). They are quite certainly caused by the refraction of the sun's rays from these rocks or by an ecerabation therefrom produced by the sun's rays. No matter how hot and sultry the weather, no attacks are ever caused thereby in cretaceous or magnesium limestone regions, nor, so far as I am aware, in calcareous or oslitic ones. I cannot demonstrate it, but I have no doubt myself that my absolute immunity from smallpox is somehow connected with this peripetic diathesis. For this reason alone a study of this curious malady and its relation to the sun's actinic rays and refraction from miocene eruptive rocks might be of supreme interest and value in the prophylaxis of smallpox. But hidebound medicine men do not seem to realize this. A good remedy for local irritation in this malady seems to be the application of petroleum and then to dust the part with finely pulverized magnesia. The best prophylactic is to avoid living in eruptive tertiary regions, particularly in closed valleys in such regions, for on open plains near the sea and swept by fresh sea breezes, these eruptive rocks are generally innocuous.

W. W. STRICKLAND.

SUBLIME FAITH.

Pierre was the general village nuisance. He was lazy, he drank, he swore, a few small thefts were laid at his door, and he wouldn't go to church. One night when he came home drunker than usual, his hut caught fire—it is supposed he upset his kerosene lamp—and on the following morning only his charred remains were found. The curé said that that was God's punishment for the man's sins.

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.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE (Emerson Club, 14 Great George Street, Westminster): 3.30, Debate in French on "L'Instinct et la Raison." Opener, Mr. P. Riviere. All invited.

NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Stanley Hall, Hallam Street, Great Portland Street, W.): 7.30, Debate—"Man is Spiritual and Immortal." Rev. J. G. Dufty *versus* Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Debate—"Are Freud's Psychological Theories True?" Affirmative, Mr. Rex Roberts; Negative, Mr. H. Cutner.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Middle Floor, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham): 7, Mr. F. H. Van Biene, "Not Wanted—Education."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Dr. Stella Churchill, "The State of the Public Health."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "The Economy of 'Muddling Through.'"

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (The Town Hall): 7, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "God and Evolution." Questions and discussion cordially invited. (Collection.)

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. Herbert Brown, "The Antivivisectionists Appeal to the Secularist." Questions and discussion invited. (Silver Collection.)

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Trades' Hall, Upper Fountain Street): 7.15, Mr. W. Crossley, "A New Idea for Local Secularists." Questions and discussion invited.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Professor Maurice A. Gerthwohl, M.A., "Great Britain, the Empire, and International Co-operation—Real and Unreal."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Labour Club Hall, Richmond Street): 7, Business Meeting.

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