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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>The Other Side.—The Editor</i> - - - - -	337
<i>Religious Self-Exaltation.—J. T. Lloyd</i> - - - - -	338
<i>The Best of Byron.—Mimnermus</i> - - - - -	340
<i>The Philosophy of Marcus Aurellus Antoninus.—</i> <i>C. Clayton Dove</i> - - - - -	341
<i>J. A. Froude and his Assailants.—W. Mann</i> - - - - -	342
<i>A Note on Oscar Wilde.—Andrew Millar</i> - - - - -	346
<i>N.S.S. Annual Conference.—G. B.</i> - - - - -	347
<i>Christianity Under Colour.—F. W. R. M.</i> - - - - -	348
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,</i> <i>Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

The Other Side.

We have often wondered what would happen if each of us saw clearly the implications of many of the arguments we advance, and the inferences therefrom that other people might reasonably draw? Certainly we would all be more careful in stating our case, most probably many might not argue at all. There is, for example, the case of the Christian who rests so much of his argument upon the attraction his religion has for bad characters, and the number of them it manages to secure. His mind is fixed upon the captures, whereas the attention of some of his listeners may be directed to the important psychological question of the cause that makes Christianity attractive to depraved characters. There is a problem here, the answering of which may not be quite so flattering to the Christian religion as its advocates assume. Or here is another case. The other day, on performing a trifling act of service to a Christian friend, we were surprised to find ourselves overwhelmed with expressions of appreciation. We stood it for some time, and then remarked, "If you had not received so bad a bringing up from the Church to which you belong you would not be so surprised and so overwhelmed at another person behaving in a decently reasonable manner." Of course, he had never looked at it from that point of view, and so did not realize the angle from which a non-Christian might view his thanks. A better creed would teach a man to expect ordinary human beings to act in an ordinarily decent manner whether they believed in a God or not. But Christianity has for so long dwelt upon the essential blackguardism, and the necessity of some supernatural incentive to right living, that its followers are naturally a little astonished when they discover that the disbeliever in God is not always a cross between Jack the Ripper and Charles Peace. When the thing is properly appreciated it will be the low moral tone of the Christian religion that will stand forward as its chief characteristic.

* * *

A Lesson for Christians.

There was a rather striking illustration of what we have said above given in an article by Dr. T. R. Glover, the gentleman who writes the weekly reli-

gious article in the *Daily News*. Dr. Glover wrote a column of eulogy of what he called the "Greek Spirit," and I could quarrel with but little that he had to say, and nothing at all that was important. Every student knows, or has some idea, of the debt the world owes to ancient Greece, mainly to ancient Athens. The impetus given to speculation in all directions, the amazing freedom with which the Greek mind criticized everything that came before it, its development of the genuinely scientific spirit, its poetry, its literature, its ethical speculations are subjects on which thousands of volumes have been written, and on which many more thousands will be written. Dr. Glover says of the ancient Greek:—

He will use tradition and he will keep freedom. He will absorb all the past has to teach, but he will not accept it blindfold; he will look for himself, and he will understand. He will be bound by the laws of experience, but he will enlarge them. He will claim the utmost of freedom, and challenge himself, while he does it, as to his right to be free. In art, poetry, in philosophy, in religion, he asserts the right of the individual to think, and will remind him of duty and sanity in every exercise of the mind. In all such antitheses there is danger on one side or on the other, but of all men the Greeks avoided both, and the wonder grows as to how he did it. Was it instinct given by Nature, or the challenge of his peers? However he attained to his high fortune, one thing stands out—the keynote of all the sense of truth as his deepest, sanest, happiest, and most glorious characteristic.

Now that is not overstating the case. A reading of such an easily accessible collection as the Platonic dialogues will show anyone the wide range of subjects the Greeks criticized with complete impunity. And it is evident they did not do this with a sense of running risks such as only the other day men felt when criticizing certain subjects in this country. If an ancient Athenian had called one of his governors a fat Adonis he would not have been imprisoned as William Hazlett was for applying the phrase to that stupid rake, the Prince Regent. Men in Athens were able to criticize the stories of the Gods over two thousand years ago with far greater freedom than they were able to do in any Christian country in the world less than a century since.

* * *

Freedom and Faith.

Dr. Glover asks how they did it? How came the Greeks to exhibit this marvellous freedom of spirit and versatility of mind? But he does not answer the question, nor as a Christian writer in a Christian paper, read by a Christian public, could he do so without arousing resentment or making himself unpopular. And yet the answer is not very far to seek. The Greeks passed on their love of speculations, their belief in the value of truth-seeking, and their belief in mental freedom to the Roman world. And when was the belief in these things eclipsed? Well, Dr. Glover knows as well as we do, that they were lost

sight of with the accession of Christianity to power. The Romans were even more inclined to give complete freedom of opinion on all matters than were the Greeks, for while we have cases in ancient Athens of persecutions for opinions expressed, occasional and unorganized as they were, we have nothing of the kind in Rome. It was Christianity that first in European history made the suppression of opinion a sacred obligation, and thoroughly organized the art of persecution. Of what Christian period could one write with truth that it asserted the right of the individual to freedom of thought in philosophy, in religion, and in literature? Of what Christian period could we say that the sense of truth was its deepest and sanest characteristic? Could we say as much with truth of our own community to-day? Why the very paper for which Dr. Glover writes would never admit an article which, on the subject of religion, would be likely to shock the "Christian conscience." There is nothing that has been more foreign to the Christian spirit than that freedom in intellectual matters that was so characteristic of the Greek and Roman mind. The Greeks did indeed hold up the search for truth as one of the noblest of human aims. It was the thing about which the Christian concerned himself least. It is the thing upon which the Christian Scriptures, and the Christian doctrines say least. If they use the word "truth" they do not mean what the Greek meant by it. They mean only a settled body of doctrine which has been accepted as true, and about which there must be no further questioning.

* * *

The Burden of the Bible.

The Greeks were free because they had no "sacred" book. The Christians were not free because they had the Blessed Bible—surely in its consequences one of the greatest disasters that has ever befallen mankind. The Greeks had their stories of the gods in the poems of Homer, but these were not sacred, there were no laws threatening with death, imprisonment, or outlawry anyone who questioned or rejected them. And as there were no prescribed penalties for those who criticized them, there was not developed the chronic dishonesty of the Christian world which deliberately sets itself to work to see by what amount of twisting, reinterpretation, and falsification their sacred books could be made to mean something entirely different from what they had always been understood to mean. The kind of literature that has developed in this manner in Christendom could never have developed among a people with whom the love of truth was strong. The last thing that a Christian commentator asks himself is what does the Bible mean? The question he actually puts to himself is what he can possibly make it mean, so that it may still be accepted. Even Dr. Glover himself is open to this charge. Would a man who had the passion for truth with which he credits the Greeks set himself week after week to try and so interpret the teachings of the New Testament as to make them square with the sociological and scientific views of 1926? A very little consideration would convince him that the writers of the Bible could only have voiced the knowledge and the sentiments of their time. To honestly think otherwise is to proclaim oneself a fool. To say otherwise is to retain credit for intelligence while incurring the charge of downright dishonesty.

* * *

Greek and Christian.

The Greeks had no "Holy Bible"; the Christian world had, and the difference accounts very largely for the difference of outlook between the ancient

Greek and the Christian. A people who frankly and openly take experience as their guide always have with them the possibility of improvement. They may make mistakes, they will make mistakes, but the mistakes form part of the very experience from which they learn. They will learn to value truth and the search for truth, because they realize that truth is only found out by experience, and by freedom of enquiry. But a people who start with a sacred volume, go a long way towards damning themselves from the outset. There is no room for development, all they need know is already in their possession. There need be no enquiry, because there is nothing of importance about which to enquire. The enquirer is not a friend of the people; he is an enemy of the Gods. Persecution and suppression become established, and the mental canker eats deep into the life of the people. Greece Pagan and Greece Christian, Rome Pagan and Rome Christian are the answers to those who tell us that Christianity saved the world. The Greek of two thousand five hundred years ago as a man who loved truth above all things, and the Christian who followed him, lying for the glory of God, sending Galileo to his prison and Bruno to the stake, falsifying documents, manufacturing legends, foisting upon the world the legends of a barbaric people as the last word in ethics, sociology and science, best show what the world owes to the Holy Bible and to the Christian Church. We quite believe that Dr. Glover would never have written as he has done about the Greek spirit had he foreseen the inferences that some of his readers might draw. For he, too, is a Christian, and the poison of the creed bites deep.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Religious Self-Exaltation.

II.

(Concluded from page 324.)

ARE Christians, on the average, morally and socially superior to non-Christians, similarly taken? The leading article in the *British Weekly*, now under discussion, does not formally affirm that they are, but by implication that is undoubtedly the only logical conclusion to which its argument inevitably leads. While seemingly subtle and superficially plausible, the argument is essentially fallacious and leads nowhere. As already pointed out, the Old Testament repeatedly speaks of the Jews as "a holy people," whom the Lord had chosen to be "a peculiar people unto himself, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth." The editor of the *British Weekly* takes the truth of that statement for granted, and begins to wonder and enquire on what ground such a strange and apparently unfair choice was made. He maintains that "there are differences amongst peoples and races which probably can never be eliminated," and we agree with him; but we maintain further that on his theory of a Divine creation, or of an intelligently and divinely guided process of evolution, such differences are absolutely inexplicable, and imply a deplorable lack of justice on the part of the Creator or Guide. At this point Dr. Hutton states that, "for this reason," the Hebrews "became the chosen people of God"; but does he mean by "this reason" the "differences amongst peoples and races which probably can never be eliminated"? If so, he represents the God whose servant he claims to be as a hideous respecter of persons, as guilty of grossest partiality, and as showing favouritism based upon "differences amongst peoples and races" for which he alone can be held responsible. To show that we are not unfair to the

popular preacher we give the following extract from his article:—

The Bible does say of the Hebrew people that they had something in them, from the very outset it would appear, which made them dissatisfied with the lot which they had as a subject race in Egypt. And so it happened that, when a man of vision like Moses, appeared amongst them and spoke to them of a higher future, telling them that they were capable of something loftier and more worthy than making bricks as slaves under a foreign power, there was already something within them which made it possible for them to set out. And because there was at the heart of the Hebrew race this moral core, this living cell which from the very beginning was putting out its tentacles into the future, the eye of God beckoned them, and he resolved to make them his instruments in the region of moral insight and freedom.

Had that passage stood quite alone, and had it contained no reference to the beckoning eye of God, there would have been some sense in it, to say the least; but the introduction of the purely imaginary activity of a Supreme Being into it divests it of all claim to be regarded as historical, and shows the so-called Deity in a most unenviable light.

Now we come to the very crux of the problem. Dr. Hutton uses a word of an exceedingly doubtful reputation when he says that Christianity makes a great *insinuation*. We consult the *New Standard Dictionary of the English Language* and find the word defined as 1. "the act of insinuating; indirect suggestion; implication; as the *insinuation* that something is wrong. 2. That which is insinuated; hint; as a speech full of *insinuations*. 3. Gradual or sly introduction; instalment; as *insinuation* of infidelity. 4. (Rare.) Power or faculty of gaining affection, favour, or confidence." Thus we see that, on the whole, the word bears a bad reputation. But let that pass. Christianity, we are told, *insinuates* that what was true of the Hebrew race is true also of the Christian fraternity. From this point to the end of the article the *British Weekly* employs increasingly vague language and less and less relevant quotations from the Gospels. Not a single attempt is put forth to establish the truth of "the great insinuation which Christianity makes." The truth is that it would have been worse than useless to undertake so impossible a task. It has never been and it never can be accomplished. It is quite customary with irresponsible Christian apologists to allude to the Apostolic Fathers and their immediate successors in terms of almost adoration, but when challenged to adduce evidence of their superior saintliness they either squeal or become mute. Mr. H. G. Wells' *Outline of History* was "written with the advice and editorial help of Mr. Ernest Barker, Sir H. H. Johnson, Sir E. Ray Lankester, and Professor Gilbert Murray." In the section dealing with the "Rise of Christianity," an extravagantly optimistic view of the early triumphs of the Faith, and of the excellent character borne by the primitive disciples finds expression, and in a note on page 373 Professor Murray, as assistant editor, challenges its accuracy. He calls the Church "the Secret Friendly Society, based on the proletariat of the Eastern manufacturing towns." In proportion as this Friendly Society prospered, anxiety and suspicion increased in imperial quarters, and at last, under Diocletian, it was decided, after a conference, to crush it out of existence, not as a religious sect, for many such were being freely tolerated, but as a Jewish political faction probably guilty of sedition against the Empire. Then Professor Murray observes:—

The conception of the blameless and saintly Early Christian is, I think, romance. No doubt there were

many saintly people; but consider the appalling accusations made by all the Christian sects against each other, and the furious denunciation of the turbulent Christian monastics by Augustine. Also consider what a spirit lies behind the Book of Revelation! We should certainly hang and shoot if we found such a book circulating in India: a series of elaborate and horrific curses on the Roman Empire, until at last the Christians march in Roman blood "up to the bridles of the horses," rejoicing and praising the name of the lamb.

When Mr. Barker, the only orthodox member of the editorial board, read that note his indignation ran out like a red stream, and he wrote to Mr. Wells, the editor-in-chief, saying: "I do not understand the reference to the Book of the Revelation of St. John. (1) That book was long prior to Constantine; (2) it says nothing about Christians marching in Roman blood up to the bridles of the horses. The whole note hurts me, and I should like to see it deleted." That is an angry squeal of ignorance, and it wholly evades the question at issue. If anyone will take the trouble to consult the *Anti-Nicene Christian Library* he will not have to read many volumes before he finds out what manner of men most of the Fathers were. If the world had seriously heeded their vile denunciation of woman as an animated mass of corruption, for example, the human race would have ceased to exist many centuries ago. With equal ferocity did they attack Pagans and the Pagan worship. Christianity was the only religion in the world which deserved to be tolerated and protected, and as soon as they had the power in their hands they proceeded by force first to plunder and then destroy the Pagan temples.

The Church has always been more or less corrupt from Paul's day to this. As a class Christians have never shone as brilliant exemplars of moral and social virtues. At no period have they been distinguished as lovers and advocates of ecclesiastical and secular peace. Take the condition of the Church in France on the eve of the Revolution. It was perhaps the wealthiest institution in the land, its annual revenue amounting to more than £8,750,000; but it was rotten to its very core. As Bertha Meriton Gardiner puts it in her excellent little work, *The French Revolution*, p. 6:—

This great wealth was unfairly distributed, and to a large extent misapplied. As a rule, all higher posts were reserved for portionless daughters and younger sons of noble families. Bishops and Abbots, who revelled in wealth, were nobles; parish priests, who had barely enough for subsistence, were bourgeois and peasants. Thus the Church teemed with abuses, and exerted little moral influence. Her wealth excited the jealousy of the middle classes, whilst the luxurious and profligate lives led by many prelates and holders of sinecures brought disgrace on the ecclesiastical profession. Of reform there was no hope, since the lower clergy who had interest in effecting it, were excluded from all part in Church government.

Who, then, were the advocates of reform in France towards the end of the eighteenth century? They were sceptics, every one of them. First and foremost stood Voltaire, who "held up the Church to derision, indignation, and contempt, as the great enemy of enlightenment and humanity." Voltaire was not an Atheist, but a Deist. Rousseau, next to him in importance, was likewise a Deist. Many others followed, few of whom were out-and-out Atheists. Amongst them stands the honoured name of Thomas Paine, who, though not a Frenchman, put in a noble fight for freedom during his brief residence in that country.

As in France at the close of the eighteenth century so in our own country during the early years of

the nineteenth, it was Freethinkers who bravely fought the battle for the freedom and happiness of the people against the cruel tyranny of the privileged classes. The Church was never wholeheartedly in favour of social reforms. Even to-day echoes of the battle of the sects are still heard at sectarian conferences. And yet these warlike Christians are the people who take it for granted that they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Best of Byron.

The like will never come again; he is inimitable.—
Goethe.

I claim no place in the world of letters; I am, and will be, alone.—*Landor.*

BYRON is not only one of the most fascinating figures in English literature, but he has the rare distinction of being a European poet, like Shakespeare and Sterne. Not only England, but Europe admired him. When he died a soldier's death at Missolonghi, Byronism became a fashion. From Moscow to Madrid, armies of young men lengthened their hair, shortened their collars, and were in love with poetry and their neighbours' wives. Both supremacy in genius and personality belong to Byron. Astonishing, perhaps, but what a man, what a poet!

There was nothing narrow nor insular in Byron. His genius crossed all frontiers. He moved the aged Goethe and the youthful Victor Hugo. What, said Castelar, does Spain not owe to Byron? The austere Mazzini sounds the same note for Italy. Sainte-Beuve, Steudhal, and Taine speak of his power in France. He was the intellectual parent of Pusckin and many Russian writers, and the revival of Polish literature dates from Byron. Eckermann and others in Germany help to complete the verdict of the Continent.

Why is this? Byron was a great poet, and he was easy to understand. He deals rhetorically with elemental emotions, and he enjoyed the fame of being a rebel, an aristocrat in exile, a champion of the democracy. Eloquence makes the widest appeal, for it expresses with vigour the simple feelings of men. "Give me liberty, or give me death!" That is the kind of thing, a sonorous and impassioned phrase flung out to fire the brains and thrill the hearts of thousands. Byron's verse has this attractive rhetorical quality. Verse upon verse of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" reads like Ingersoll's speeches, grandiose and sweeping:—

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll!

You can almost see the outstretched arm, hear the resonant voice. The effect is simply enormous. "The Isles of Greece," and "Ode to Napoleon," and "Lines on Completing my 36th Year," and many other poems, have this pure oratorical note and ring. Listen!

The sword, the banner, and the field,
Glory and Greece, around me see,
The Spartan, borne upon his shield,
Was not more free.

There is music in it; the trumpets sing to battle. Nor is this all, for Byron had a Voltairean gift of wit and satire, a command of mocking phrase and rhyme. There he was no poseur, for it overflowed in his familiar letters to his friends. Recall his jest concerning his mother-in-law, who, he said, had been dangerously ill, and is now dangerously well again. Remember his parody of Shakespeare, when, in describing a crush at the opera at Venice, he said that he almost beat a Venetian and traduced the State.

The writer of "Don Juan" and "Beppo" is as delightful as the author of "Childe Harold," although the subject-matter is so different in the poems. What would you have? Even his stolid countrymen were captivated, whilst his heroic attitude fascinated a continent.

Byron was a Freethinker. He tells us that all forms of faith are of equal uselessness.

Foul superstition, howsoe'er disguised—

Idol, saint, virgin, prophet, crescent, cross,

For whatsoever symbol thou art prized—

Thou sacerdotal gain, but general loss,

What from true worship's gold can separate thy dross.

"The Vision of Judgment," in which Byron's genius has full force, is startling in its blasphemy. From its audacious opening with the angels singing out of tune, to its close with old King George the Third practising a hymn, it is full of mordant satire of the Christian Religion. Every epithet hits, every line that does not convulse with laughter, stings. In the preface to "Cain," another poem as full of profanity as an egg is full of meat, Byron remarks that it is somewhat difficult to make the Devil "talk like a clergyman," and that he has endeavoured to restrain Satan within the bounds of "spiritual politeness."

"Childe Harold" is saturated with the nature-worship of Rousseau, the same Jean Jacques whose books were condemned solemnly by the Archbishop of Paris. In this rare atmosphere the petty religions of man all dwindle and disappear, "like snow upon the desert's dusty face."

Even gods must yield; religions take their turn;

'Twas Jove's, 'tis Mahomet's, and other creeds,

Will rise with other years, till man shall learn

Vainly his incense soars, his victim bleeds—

Poor child of doubt and death, whose hope is built on reeds.

Byron may have dreamt, like so many poets during the centuries, of immortality. He certainly did not believe in it. How finely he apostrophises this longing:—

Still wilt thou dream on future joy and woe.

Regard and weigh yon dust before it flies,

That little word saith more than thousand homilies.

He uttered a predominant mood when he wrote:—

My altars are the mountains and the ocean,

Earth, sea, stars, all that springs from the great whole,

Who hath produced, and will receive my soul.

Leigh Hunt, his friend, says Byron was "an infidel by reading." Tom Moore, who knew him well and wrote his life, admits that the great poet was "to the last a sceptic." Apparent as his heresies are in his poetry, his correspondence show that he was no Christian.

Few men so impressed themselves upon their generation. Tennyson has told us that, when Byron died, it was as though the firmament had lost some mighty star, in whose vanishing the world was left to the blackest night. When Byron went flashing and glowing down the troubled skies, trailing clouds of glory, his sudden quenching afflicted men as with the sense of some elemental phenomenon.

MIMNERMUS.

Finally, let us hug the truth; whether it be of imagination, fancy, wit, humour, knowledge, or word; remembering the doctrine of Plato: "False words are not only in themselves evil, but they infect the soul with evil."—*Sir T. Clifford Allbutt.*

Heaven is the work of the best and kindest men and women. Hell is the work of prigs, pedants, and professional truth-tellers. The world is an attempt to make the best of heaven and hell.—*Samuel Butler.*

The Philosophy of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.

II.

(Continued from page 316.)

III.—*The Soul of Man.*—According to Marcus, the human soul is an individual form of the divine soul:—

There is one intelligent soul though it seems to be divided (xii. 30). Every man's intelligence is a god, and an efflux of the deity. His very soul came from the deity (xii. 26). Among reasonable animals, one intelligent soul is distributed (ix. 8).

He thought that the soul is imparted between conception and birth (xii. 24). In an interesting passage, he says that, "on the hypothesis of souls continuing to exist," they would no more exceed the local capacity of the air, than bodies exceed that of the earth; because, just as bodies "after a certain continuance" finally "make room for other dead bodies" by dissolution and mutation, "even so souls which are removed into the air after subsisting for some time are transmuted and diffused, and assume a fiery nature by being received into the seminal intelligence of the universe, and in this way make room for fresh souls which come to dwell there" (iv. 21). This would seem to imply that individualized parts of the universal soul sustain in the process of individualization a loss of refinement; and that the original purity is recovered only upon the cessation of individuality, the acquired coarseness being transmuted by the action of "the ethereal fire," which, according to the Stoics, is the very essence of the deity, or of "the seminal intelligence," as Marcus terms it. But the fact that he professes to be arguing hypothetically discredits the supposition that he is exposing his own proper views. In any case, a limit is attributed to the soul's survival after death; and, if the analogy between the body and the soul is intended to be complete, that limit is fixed at no great distance. But we cannot think that Marcus admitted even this limited survival, for elsewhere he teaches clearly and repeatedly that individuality perishes for ever at death, because the human body and soul are temporary modifications of the universal body and soul.

Remember that no man loses any other life than this which he now lives; nor lives any other life than this which he now loses (ii. 14). Near is thy forgetfulness of all things, and the forgetfulness of thee by all (vii. 21). Soon, very soon, thou wilt be ashes, or a skeleton, and either a name, or not even a name (v. 38). About death: whether it is a dispersion or a resolution into atoms, it is either extinction or change (vii. 32). Before long thou wilt be nobody and nowhere [also viii. 5], nor will any of the things exist which thou now seest, nor any of those which are now living. For all things are formed by nature to change and be turned, and to perish in order that other things in continuous succession may exist (xii. 21).

'Twice only does he seem to hesitate on the question. After saying that it is wrong to blame the gods for not having provided good men with a future life, he adds, "Because [as] it is not so, if in fact it is not so, be thou convinced it ought not to have been so" (xii. 5). And again:—

Thou art come to the shore get out. If indeed to another life, there is no want of gods, no, not even there (iii. 3).

These transient doubts of an unbeliever are analogous to those by which believers are so frequently assailed. But whilst in the former case, the cause is a recrudescence of traditional views, in the

latter case it is the striving of the rational principle. For the rest, that oft-repeated willingness to pass away, and to lose self for ever, is one of the characteristic differences between the teaching of Marcus and Christianity, where the chief pretention is that of having "brought life and immortality to light," and thus "delivered them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (2 Tim. i. 10).

IV. *Freewill and Necessity.*—Like the Stoics in general, Marcus held that conduct, whether active or passive, is determined by opinion, and that opinion is formed from appearances. Discrimination is the work of a power called "the ruling faculty."

Things stand outside of us, themselves by themselves, neither knowing aught of themselves, nor expressing any judgment. What is it, then, which does judge about them? The ruling faculty (ix. 15). Zeus has given to every man for his guardian and guide a portion of himself. And this is every man's understanding and reason. [Here and in iii. 3-17 this directive principle is termed "the daemon"] (v. 27).

Marcus insists strongly and frequently that "the ruling faculty" enjoys perfect freedom.

I can have that opinion about anything which I ought to have (vii. 2). Intelligence and reason are able to go through everything that opposes them (xii. 11). Remember that the ruling faculty is invincible (viii. 48).

Hence, as conduct is determined by opinion, and as the formation of opinion is unrestrained, conduct itself is quite free. Marcus often proclaims this liberty.

There is no one who hinders thee from always doing and saying the things which are according to the nature of which thou art a part (ii. 9). No one is able to hinder thee so that each act shall not do its duty (viii. 32). It is in my power never to act contrary to my god and daemon (v. 10). What a power man has to do nothing except what god will approve (xii. 11). Show those qualities then which are continually in thy power, sincerity, gravity, endurance of labours, aversion to pleasure, etc. (v. 5).

Nevertheless, on other occasions, when urging the duty of forbearance, Marcus no less earnestly contends that wrongdoing should be pardoned because it arises from ignorance and is therefore involuntary.

If men.....do not right, it is plain that they do so involuntarily and in ignorance. For, as every soul is unwittingly deprived of the truth, so also is it unwittingly deprived of the power of behaving to each man according to his deserts (xi. 18). We ought to blame neither gods, for they do nothing wrong either voluntarily or involuntarily, nor men, for they do nothing wrong except involuntarily. Consequently we should blame nobody (xii. 12).

Of course, if man acts involuntarily, he is not responsible for his conduct; and cannot be regarded as a fit subject for either reward or punishment. But this does not mean that evil doers should have their sling. For, if the idea of punishment vanishes, the necessity of repression abides, since crime, like pestilence, being an evil to society, is a thing that must be combated. The theory of irresponsibility has two advantages: it favours a more humane view of the criminal; and it saves him from an oppressive feeling of degradation. Moreover, as a question of jurisprudence, the effect of repressive measures remains unimpaired. For, provided it is known that, whether agents are free or otherwise, certain inflictions will follow certain conduct, then, because motives determine action, the desire to avoid those inflictions will cause men to avoid that conduct. For

the rest, it may be said, that in excusing others for vice as involuntarily, whilst stimulating himself to virtue as within his power, Marcus resembles the child who is so preoccupied in chasing a butterfly, that he does not see a perilous gap at his feet. Intent on promoting goodness he adduced in support thereof every plausible consideration without tarrying to examine whether these mutifarious arguments co-operated, or whether they clashed. In the present case, he remembered that if men can do right, and will not do it, they deserve no forbearance; and that unless men believe in their power to act they never will act; but he forgot that if the ox is slaughtered it cannot be kept at the plough. The truth is, that by his reiterated application of motives, he exhibits a firm belief in their effectiveness; and thus gives a practical acknowledgment that in moral, no less than in physical matters, action is determined by impulsion. Indeed, the illusion of choice is occasioned by nothing else than perceiving different impulses without perceiving the strength of the decisive one.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be Concluded.)

J. A. Froude and his Assailants.

THERE is a widespread impression abroad, sedulously propagated by those who disagree with his political views, that James Anthony Froude, the historian, is untrustworthy and unreliable. No great historian of equal calibre has been so rancorously and maliciously assailed—except, perhaps, Gibbon for his celebrated fifteenth chapter of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, dealing with the origin of Christianity—Freeman, the historian of the Norman Conquest, attacked Froude for years, first in the *Saturday Review*, and afterwards in the *Contemporary Review*, until ultimately Froude turned upon him and silenced him once for all, but not before Freeman had created the impression—on the principle that there is no smoke without fire—among those who take their opinions ready made, that Froude is a reckless and untruthful writer.

The latest assailant of Froude is Mr. Frederick Chamberlin, the author of *The Private Character of Queen Elizabeth* and *The Sayings of Queen Elizabeth*. The introduction to the latter work consists of a violent diatribe upon the character of Froude as an historian. He admits the brilliance of Froude's literary style, he observes, "Froude is irresistible. He has had few equals as a writer of attractive English prose, and as an alluring historian none at all except Macaulay. His many thousand pages are as fascinating as the best of romances" (p. 12). And further, "Froude is the only historian of the period [Elizabethan] who could write well enough to induce the general public to read twelve large volumes about it."

Mr. Chamberlin goes on to say that although Froude "has been so universally condemned by the scholars," which is not true, "the charges against him have been so vague and so little known as to fail to carry conviction to the public" (p. xiii.). This seems to dispose of Freeman's efforts at any rate. Of the brilliance of Froude, he further observes:—

It is this almost uncanny ability of Froude to obtain and enthral readers that lies his great danger for the true history of Elizabeth.....The truth cannot make its way against so great a flood of misrepresentation as is in Froude's twelve volumes until the public has been seduced into reading its refutation. The writer who can meet Froude with any hope of success in that arena—not at all the arena

of truth against falsity, but of dulness against brilliance—has not appeared (p. xii.).

"And yet," he adds meditatively, "it may be that I shall be the one after all to discover to the public the truth of these charges, for I may reach the general reader, something these more celebrated men were not fortunate enough to do" (p. xv.). Well, we can only say that if Mr. Chamberlin is depending upon the brilliance of his style for success, then he is doomed to disappointment; here is a sample of it: "Happily I am free. I shall be just as 'distasteful and invidious' as is necessary for me to tell the truth. I cannot lose my job, for I pay myself. I am not afraid, socially or otherwise, for I live in my island in the Mediterranean and I am not a 'professor.' There is no post on earth that I would accept. I am going to tell the thing exactly as it occurred, and prove it" (p. xx.). There's style for you! It can be compared with nothing but the shrill hysterical invective of an irritated old maid. There are nine capital I's in less than nine lines! "Can you beat it?" as the Americans say. Mr. Chamberlin valiantly declares that he lives on an island, and is "not afraid." What has he to be afraid of? The man he is attacking has been dead more than thirty years, and we have been told, a few pages previously, that: "No other historian has been so universally condemned by the scholars." There does not seem to be much valour in attacking a dead man, whose reputation has already, according to Mr. Chamberlin, been destroyed.

Mr. Chamberlin's anger is so great against Froude that it becomes grotesque. He declares: "*Delendus est Froude*—Froude as an historian must be destroyed" (p. xiii.). And again: "I have set myself the lifelong task of refuting Froude's claim. One of us must go down. Either he must be destroyed or I must be." In fact, the whole diatribe is in a style that, if spoken, would be accompanied by shouting and a wild waving of arms. The writer of them seems to be a proper subject for the psycho-analyst.

It is over the character of Queen Elizabeth that Mr. Chamberlin falls foul of Froude. He is a firm believer in the "Good Queen Bess" legend; his attitude to Elizabeth falls not far short of worship. He complains that Froude draws a "picture of Elizabeth as a brainless fool," which he certainly did not. Froude accused her of deceit, meanness, and treachery. He shows how she was in the habit of giving orders for certain things to be done, for which she did not wish to bear the responsibility—notably, the execution of Mary Queen of Scots—and then denied that she had ever given such orders, and handed the unfortunate officials over to the law for punishment. Froude said that Elizabeth "did not seem to understand what honour meant." He declares that "vain as she was of her own sagacity, she never modified a course recommended to her by Burghley without injury both to the realm and to herself.....The great results of her reign were the fruits of a policy which was not her own, and which she starved and mutilated when energy and completeness were most needed" (p. 508). But he never regarded her as a "brainless fool," neither did her enemies, for that matter; they credited her with more than Machiavellian astuteness.

Mr. Chamberlin's disagreement with Froude arose over the character of Queen Elizabeth, but most of Froude's antagonists have been inspired by theological rancour; such was the case of Freeman and the *Saturday Review*. We shall return to Mr. Chamberlin later on. Sixty years ago the *Saturday*

¹ Froude, *History of England*, vol. xii., p. 507.

Review was the most influential review of the time, and included on its staff the most brilliant writers of the day. On most subjects they were fairly impartial, "holding that there was nothing new and nothing true, and that if there were, it wouldn't matter."² This Gallic frame of mind, however, did not extend to the proprietor, Beresford Hope, who was a strict High Churchman, and, in ecclesiastical matters would tolerate no difference of opinion from himself. To him, Froude's history was anathema; the account there given of the founding of the Church of England completely traversed that given by the High Churchmen of the Oxford movement.

From the first the *Saturday Review* was hostile. In 1864 the campaign became systematic, when the editor secured the services of Freeman, the historian of the Norman Conquest, who was also a pugnacious political controversialist and pamphleteer. Freeman's views upon the Church coincided with those of the editor, and he joyfully assumed the task of attacking Froude's history, as the volumes were issued. Now Froude was a bad proof reader, and often allowed mistakes to go through, which were not really his, but the fault of the printer. Freeman, on the other hand, seems to have had a gift for proof reading and took every advantage of Froude's laxity in this respect, magnifying molehills into mountains, and pretending they were due to Froude's ignorance.

W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

Acid Drops.

The *Chicago Tribune* for May 19 contains a report of an enquiry instituted at Harvard University as to the religious beliefs of undergraduates. The figures cover all the larger denominations, and the paper remarks that there has been a marked religious slump since the war. Those who say they have no interest at all in religion have increased by 50 per cent. Of course, the godly have still the consolation that Lucian gave Zeus—that if the intellectuals are against the gods the more numerous body of fools will still support them.

In a poor part of London the drum-smiters and trumpet-blowers usually gather on Sunday mornings to interfere with the rest of the somnolent workmen. On May 16, however, the atmosphere disturbers were missing, but they were eventually sighted in a prosperous suburb not far away—for, as one knows, the divisions of society are as thick as the wooden partitions in a public-house. There is no moral in this record—this Acid Drop—this report—this episode of ours; the poor had no money. In *Riverside Nights* there is a play written by a boy of ten years of age, and in the introduction Mr. Nigel Playfair announces that the play is supposed to be serious, *although* the Salvation Army is mentioned.

There are some queer people in the world, and one of them turned up in the person of a judge in Atlantic. Sentencing a man, whose evidence he did not believe, to sixty days' imprisonment, he said that during that time he could sit in his cell and read the Bible, which would teach him to tell the truth. We do not care to say that by the same reckoning the judge might well spend sixty days in the same compartment, but we should like to know where the Bible lays such emphasis upon truth speaking that a reading of it would induce a man to cease lying. The emphasis is slight in the Old Testament and in the New it is practically non-existent. Truth speaking has never been a conspicuous character of Christians at any period of their history or at any place. And where religion is concerned there

is no creed in the world that has paid so little attention to it.

A reader of the *Times* pleads that anyone who will pray regularly will discover that prayer is answered. A Methodist writer, commenting on his statement, explains that the *Times* reader does not mean by this that we always obtain what we ask for (we all know we do not), but prayer is not wasted when we ask for something, and God, in his wisdom, gives us something different. We infer from this that prayer is none too sensible a pastime. First, as God is an omnipotent deity, and so always knows what we desire the moment we think it, there is obviously no need to voice our thoughts. Second, if God gives us what is best for us irrespective of what we desire, whether we ask or do not ask makes no difference to the outcome. We shall get only what is considered fitting for us as a unit in the divine scheme of things. Then, why pray?

We see from an item in one of the papers that Dr. Norwood, of the City Temple, thinks we are getting back to the time when we shall again accept the miraculous element in the Bible. Well, all we can say on that is that the opinion indicates the very solid intellectual ground upon which Dr. Norwood's own views are built. He is quite ready to go back to the more primitive view so soon as it becomes fashionable. We do not deny the possibility. Reverses in civilization are not unknown in human history. But the man whose own view is sound of things does not change his opinions when he sees certain primitive conceptions again gaining ground. Rather does he fight the harder to prevent it.

The Alliance for the Defence of Sunday is organizing a Sunday Defence Congress lasting several days. By means of the Congress the Alliance intends to broadcast to the churches and the people "the arresting vision of our glorious British Sunday." And during the sessions of the Congress various aspects of the Sunday question, we are told, will be considered "in the light of the fresh and full vision." We beg leave to point out that that kind of "light" is exactly what the Sunday question will not be considered in by these Sabbath Day fanatics, but in the twilight rather of savage taboo.

The Vicar of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields being confined to his bed with an attack of asthma, the striking of the clock and the playing of the bells of his church, next door to the vicarage, have been discontinued because disturbing to the patient. Perhaps the reverend gentleman, when he recovers, will see to it that the bell-ringing in his parish is severely curtailed in future for the benefit of other invalids whose feelings in the past have evidently received but little consideration. We consider that bell-ringing is an intolerable public nuisance which local authorities everywhere would do well to suppress, or at least to limit considerably. The senseless and nerve-wracking clangor of bells which inflicts the ear for hours on Sunday and on practice nights in countless numbers of towns and villages, is a form of mental torture which healthy people as well as invalids would willingly dispense with. We may add that we have always regarded bell-ringing as one of the most stupid and selfish hobbies that ever obsessed the Christian mind. And it is only because the silly practice is connected with religion that it is not vigorously protested against.

Brighton Town Council have decided not to permit Sunday golf on the municipal links. The godly councillors, we suppose, do not themselves wish to play, and so are determined to prevent other people from playing. That is a dog-in-the-manger attitude which one expects from Sabbatarians.

Two missionaries in the Uganda Lake area, with three natives, were hunting a hippopotamus when the infuri-

² Paul, *Life of Froude*, p. 147.

ated animal attacked its pursuers and upset their canoe. All the hunters were drowned. Evidently the saving of souls in foreign lands has its pleasures and its dangers which do not get mentioned in missionary reports touting for pennies from pious old ladies.

Miss Hanna, Headmistress of West Cornwall College, Penzance, objects to her children singing the second verse of the National Anthem. She told the Borough Education Committee that she disliked the words, "Scatter his enemies, and make them fall; confound their politics, frustrate their knavish tricks." She urged it to be wrong to teach children to sing sentiments of that character, and said she hoped the Committee would prevent a repetition of this verse in future Empire Day observances. As one might expect, strong opposition was expressed to the Headmistress's objection, the chief dissident being the Rev. Fred Carr. This primitive-minded parson's conception of patriotism appears to be that of expressing crude, vengeful sentiments. We should much like to know how he squares this with his claim to represent a God of Love and his teaching of "forgive your enemies." Still, one cannot expect civilized notions in a man mentally steeped in the barbarous ideas of Holy Writ with its glorifying of a God of Vengeance. We shouldn't be surprised to learn later that the Education Committee, following the lead of its clerical member, had come to the conclusion that its outspoken Headmistress is hardly a fit person to educate children. For, as everyone knows, the chief basis of true education is a thorough grounding in the English Hymn of Hate.

The Rev. T. H. Warner, vicar of Frizinghall, near Bradford, who introduced faith-healing services at his church a year ago, has undergone an operation for an internal complaint. Replying to comments on the fact that he himself did not rely on spiritual healing when ill, he said spiritual healing did not necessarily exclude faith in the efficacy of medical science. We have no right, he added, to expect God to work special miracles for us constantly. The reverend gentleman's excuses do not sound very convincing. It is not a special miracle we look for, but an ordinary cure which shall be the invariable consequent of faith as an effect is of a cause. If the faith-cure does not operate thus, and constantly, it is obviously not the wonderful specific for every ill our faith-healers have led us to believe it is. And we stand just as good as chance of being cured by the doctor's treatment as by faith. According to the reverend gentleman's statement, the heavenly panacea only works spasmodically, so if one happens to need it in its "off-season," one lies one to the doctor, as did this parson. What appears to be the disconcerting thing about this spiritual cure is that we never can tell when the heavenly "fluence" is off or on! So we have to depend on the doctor to put us right, even though we be chockful of Christian faith.

In discussing the proposed union of Methodist churches, the Rev. Wm. Wakinshaw is moved to make a plea for toleration. One portion of his letter to the *Methodist Recorder* is worth quoting:—

Lecky, in his *History of Rationalism in Europe*, has shown us that, with notable exceptions, priests and ministers have invariably been the fiercest opponents of toleration. All our intellectual and spiritual liberties have been won for us by laymen, literally, or figuratively, at the point of the bayonet. We can readily believe this of Romanists; but it is the tragedy of history that sometimes Protestants have been as fanatical as Catholics in defending the ramparts of bigotry. John Knox, for example, in spite of what he had suffered from persecution, in his demands for rigidity of doctrine was almost as bloodthirsty as a Spanish Inquisitor. In his lecture on the Men of the "Mayflower," I heard Dr. Punshon declare that they braved the dangers of the Atlantic to seek a sky broad enough under which to worship God. But these very Pilgrim Fathers were, in their turn, so intolerant that they hanged Quakers.

No doubt most of this would be news to the average

Methodist. But as the reverend gentleman did not indicate the true moral to be drawn from the sorry facts, he simply spilled ink to little purpose. What his readers needed to be told was that there must be something radically wrong with a creed that has enabled Catholics and Protestants alike always to find moral justification for their fierce intolerance and bloody persecutions, and that has soured all social relationships for nearly two thousand years.

In *T.P.'s and Cassell's Weekly* the *Autobiography of Margot Asquith* is appearing in serial form. For the sum of twopence one may learn the personal opinions of the distinguished authoress on political and social celebrities past and present. In a conversation with the late Lord Salisbury about his two sons Hugh and Robert, the distinguished lady denounced the building of churches while the parson's pay was so cruelly small—this a somewhat lame reason. She writes:—

I said that few good men could afford to go into the Church at all; and the assumed voices, both in the reading and in the preaching, got on the nerves of everyone who cared to listen to such a degree that the churches were becoming daily duller and emptier.

The writer's critical faculty is either asleep or chloroformed, for the assumed voice business is part of the guilt on the gingerbread of superstition.

A curious defence of missionaries appeared in a recent issue of the *Daily Herald*. The writer, who signs himself as "One of 'em," commences by protesting against the common delusion that all a missionary has to do is to preach the gospel. This, he says, is quite wrong, since it "is the last thing he attempts." What he has to do is to settle down, offer the native chief sufficient inducement to order his people to clear the jungle and build a house, and then proceed to teach the natives certain useful trades. All of this may be quite true, but there does not seem anything here that is specifically religious, and we fancy we have heard some strange stories of the profits made after the natives have been taught "useful" occupations. If the material interests of missionaries in the industries of natives were examined some rather surprising results might come to light.

There is also food for thought in the confession that "real Christianity" is taught only to children, grown up converts "are probably mere self-seekers who have embraced the new faith to gain some private end." That is certainly the case in China, where, owing to the extra territorial concessions wrung from the Chinese Government, natives who wish to avoid their legal responsibilities, have always found a profession of Christianity a great help. And the "rice Christians" of India have become a by-word all over the world. The main object of roping them in is to provide figures of conversion for home consumption, and as very few take the trouble to check the figures year by year, the foreign missionary soon finds he has a very docile public with which to deal. But is it certainly strange that the best defence "One of 'em" can put forward is that he does not preach the gospel to any great extent, but that his main work is no other than what most of the whites are after in their exploitation of the native races all over the world.

Providence has again been busy. In Japan over a thousand people have been wiped out by a volcanic eruption. And we have the authority of John Wesley for saying that earthquakes always occur through the action of God. Of course, it will be said that the people are to blame for building their homes on a site where volcanic eruption is likely. Translated into theological language it would mean that the man who builds his house in a position where God Almighty has an extra good chance of demolishing it richly deserves what he gets. The proper policy would appear to be to trust in the Lord, but watch him very carefully all the same.

The National Secular Society.

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

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

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

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

Back Numbers.

COPIES of the *Freethinker*, dated May 9-16 (double number) and May 23, are still being called for, but a considerable number remain on hand. The wholesale distributors have not yet got themselves into proper working order, newsagents all over the country are experiencing difficulty in getting supplies. As before announced, on receipt of stamps—3d. per copy—we will send the missing numbers post free.

To Correspondents.

"FREETHINKER" ENDOWMENT TRUST.—E. Wright (N.Z.), 5s.; A. Hawkyard, £1 1s.; A. C. Boers, 5s.

W. T. BLACKBURN.—Thanks for copy of *My Country*. We may use it later.

A. MILLAR.—We can quite understand a disturbed state of mind of anyone during the late upheaval. Luckily you have the material within yourself for tiding over such times. It is on those occasions that the man with some kind of an intellectual hobby has an advantage over others. It serves to keep one clean and healthy.

J. HART.—We do not question but that Salvation Army agents try to do good, and are often animated with the desire to do good. How much good they do is another question, and the value of what they do still another. But in any case, where good is done, it is absurd to attribute it to the power of God. Social feelings, the power of human sympathy, etc., are quite enough. As we point out elsewhere in this issue, the worst feature of Christianity is that it gives its followers so poor an ethical training that it cannot accept a decent action as an expression of normal human nature.

A. B. MOSS.—Thanks for congratulations. We are glad to know that you are better. Hope to see you soon. There were enquiries after you at the Conference.

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

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.

It is well known to many of our readers that for some time there has been hanging in the air the probability of a discussion in Manchester with the Rev. Mr. Johnson, of Cross Street Chapel. We have had many enquiries about this, Mr. Johnson being one of the five who were selected to reply to Mr. Cohen's *Evening News* article. The Manchester Branch of the N.S.S. invited each of these five to meet Mr. Cohen in a public discussion. Four of the five promptly found public discretion the better part of valour, and declined. Mr. Johnson alone remained, and he tried by every device of trickiness and evasion to retire with the honours of war, while escaping an actual conflict. Eventually he agreed to a written debate, laying down the conditions. These were accepted, and at his own request the editor of the *Manchester Evening News* was to act as umpire. Then his courage forsook him entirely, and a final way of getting out of the discussion was to accuse the editor of being an ally of Mr. Cohen's and that he could not trust him to act fairly, and therefore would not proceed with the debate.

Mr. Cohen cannot claim the honour of having the editor as being an ally, or even an acquaintance. Mr. Johnson had been in personal touch with the editor and Mr. Cohen had never met him, and knew nothing of him, save by repute as a fair-minded, honourable man. The editor writes an article in the *City News* for May 29 explaining the situation, and dismisses Mr. Johnson as "a pricked bubble." The editor shows great restraint under the treatment he has received, but it should now be plain to all in Manchester that Mr. Johnson never intended to debate if he could possibly get out of it. It is a deplorable situation—for Christians. In all Manchester there is, apparently, not to be found a single Christian minister who has the courage to stand up in public defence of his faith against a qualified Free-thinker. We hope Christians will relish the situation, and that the general public will reflect upon its significance.

The newly formed American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, judging from a bulletin just issued, appears to be very active. It has a membership larger than any other anti-clerical organization, it has managed to establish branches in some of the American universities, and it is keeping its programme and its principles before the public by entering actions to prevent religion being taught or patronized by the State. So far as the organization is helping to stir people out of their apathy with regard to the evils inflicted upon Society by current established religions it is doing good work in a field where workers are badly needed, and we wish it all success.

We are very glad to see a re-issue of Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Dynamics of Religion*, originally issued about twenty years ago under the name of M. W. Wiseman. Mr. Robertson's book is, in the main, a study of the play of economic forces and of vested interests in the field of religion, and it is carried out in his usual thorough-going style. It is among the most suggestive books that Mr. Robertson has fathered, and should find a place on the bookshelves of every Free-thinker. We would much rather see it on the bookshelves of every Christian, but that is too much to expect. The vast majority of Christians, now as ever, show their faith by never looking at what may be said against their creed. The book is published by Watts & Co. (7s. 6d.), but may be ordered direct through this office.

We are asked to announce that a discussion on "Birth Control, For and Against," has been arranged between Mr. H. Cutner and the Rev. Father Desmond Morse-Boycott, of St. Mary Magdalene's, Somers Town, at the Victoria Hall, Lewis Street, Victoria Road (adjoining St. Pancras Reform Club), Kentish Town. The debate will take place on Friday, June 11. Dr. Binnie Dunlop is to take the chair.

A Note on Oscar Wilde.

It was my good luck lately to read a book, *The Life of Oscar Wilde*, by Leonard Cresswell Ingleby (Werner Laurie) a most intimate and charming and withal just appreciation of that unfortunate genius—unfortunate from birth perhaps—misfortune of the most hopeless and deadly kind, that which does not merely overtake a man but is born within him, growing with his nature, overthrowing, crushing him at last in hideous shame, the patent and the potency of the curse held “immediately from Almighty God.” How weak is will, how non-existent in contrast with creation’s eternal and immutable compulsions! So philosophy might comfort the prisoner in Reading Gaol and more rationally and atoningly than in the ministrations of the Church—though such a suggested atonement once roused the ire of a preacher who burst out angrily: “Determinism is a lie, sir!” And such, indeed, is the necessary denial of the pulpit, which, with other hidden contraband—hidden, yet obvious to a child, as also to adult timidity and hypocrisy—must pass the ever stricter customs officials of modern thought. Other “gifts” in abundance had Oscar Wilde from the same creative hand—for glory and for shame. We may pass over his foibles and follies of æsthetics; in art, we are told, and may willingly agree, he was supreme, and in that pure and undefiled; he was wittier than the wittiest, and could strike home with simple, original, paradoxical flashes of pen or voice; his better plays were better, at least shorter, than Shaw’s. *Salome* has world attraction as play and opera; his few novels of debatable merit, but strange and wonderful as the man himself; what a man! but, ah, that other man; who, without sin, will throw the first stone? Who has not a skeleton in his cupboard? Who, even among that London mob who jeered the wretched captive on his way to prison? A good sinner would have pitied him—as, indeed, did a rough convict in his prison yard, who was punished for his compassion—the good sinner but not “the bad Christians who would ride in a coach to heaven”—what facile salvation! It is left for the Wildes to take the yoke upon them and “learn of Him.” And, yet, in the utter ruin and oblivion of his *de profundis* it is not the Christ that raises him from the deeps, but that unquenchable ego of his, of ours, that “glorious magnanimity of soul”; that sophistication of conscience and reason that compounds, forgives, and saves to seventy times seven. There would seem to be in our manifold nature sanctuaries for all the extremities of mental and physical ill, as though a blundering creation, while dooming them from the first, had yet had foresight to provide for the aberrations of its creatures. For creatures less “magnanimously” compounded there would still remain those thousand open doors of death; but why more than the other conclusion should this be peace with honour? In *De Profundis* Wilde writes beautifully, but “blasphemously,” of Jesus Christ. His good biographer and other Catholics are shocked at Wilde’s picturing Jesus as a mere focus of art, of imagination, as a cynical philosopher consorting with sinners.....

because he found them more interesting than the good people, who were stupid.....the world had loved the saint as nearest God; Christ, through some divine instinct in him, seems to have always loved the sinner as being.....nearest the perfection of man. To turn an interesting thief into a tedious honest man was not his aim.....of course the sinner must repent.....to realize what he had done.....a man is the better of any sort of emotional experi-

ence, when it is past, because he is fertilised by it as by a crop of wild oats.....“But even this writer (Wilde) does not suggest that Christ himself gained his moral beauty by sinning”.....

Wilde goes on to “praise the Redeemer” as the palpitating centre of romance, of colour, life, mystery, strangeness, pathos, suggestion, ecstasy, love, and says that is why he is so fascinating to artists. “It is horrible,” says his biographer, “this patronising analysis of the Redeemer as another and great Dante, merely a supreme artist to whom artists should bow because of that and no more.”

For consolation Wilde turned to the real source of his good and ill, creator and destroyer:—

But nature, whose sweet rains fall on unjust and just alike, will have clefts in the rocks where I may hide, and secret valleys in whose silence I may weep undisturbed. She will hang the night with stars so that I may walk abroad in the darkness without stumbling, and send the wind over my footprints so that none may track me to my hurt; she will cleanse me in great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole.

Nay; but let these words be pose, illusion, or the mere joy of art, a momentary exaltation, they are good while they last, and reveal a precious faculty of the mind, that however shamed and crushed and beaten, will afford to the last, if sought for, those clefts and nooks and healing springs: It is what he loves here, not what he hopes hereafter, that acts upon the heart of man; one man may have erred deplorably, but all men in their degree, for there are none righteous, no, not one, the best man as mythical as the worst: let every man, good and bad, forgo in his extremity, as he must, or die, his overweening egotism, and seek those quiet waters of healing for himself, and help and happiness for others.

Elsewhere, says Wilde, in another jewelled sentence: “When one has weighed the sun in the balance and measured the steps of the moon, and mapped out the seven Heavens, star by star, there still remains oneself.”

Yea, judge, jury, and executioner, who may err as cruelly in judging himself as others err in judging him. He feels, but he may not know, or tell, what was the weight that pulled him down; but there he lies. In closing our book we cannot help retaining a picture of the impenitent as he lay dead at last in a sordid garret in Paris. Says a French writer:—

At last the odour of some disinfectant struck my nostrils. An open door. A little square room. I stood before the corpse. His whitish, emaciated face, strangely altered through the growth of a beard after death, seemed to be lost in profound contemplation. A hand, cramped in agony, still clutched the dirty bedcloth. There was no one to watch by his body. Only much later they sent him some flowers. The noise of the street pierced the thin walls of the building. A stale odour filled the air. Ah, what loneliness, what an end!

The biographer apologises for this picture as “ugly and vulgar”; but why? It is mortality. There is no such thing as “dying like a gentleman,” and is almost as hard, in many cases, the living like one; saint or sage might have looked at last just so; this poor Oscar had been all things in his time, gifted with the greatest of all time, though erring in his genius once in a way that normal people find it hard to forgive; who or what paved his way to this? Was this also his gift—and his curse? The pious but excellent biographer must uplift his mind from such a scene to

the supreme hope of all of us. The man who had suffered and sinned and done noble things in the

world had gone away from it. Doubtless, when the Frenchman with his prying eyes and notebook was gloating over the material sensation of the scene, the soul of the poet was hearing harmonies too long unknown to it, and was beginning to undergo the Purification.—*Requiescat.*

Death mocks this mockery, flouts this fantastic faith. It is Nature bestows, changes, and purifies the dead, gives them back again, all disidentified, in various form of life and matter; what shapes survive, survive in death, in the minds of living men, in reason's, truth's, and beauty's ear; so only the works (the spirit of Wilde) will survive, and are even now being chosen and restored at the hands of "the mediator and redeemer time."

A prince of poets, a lord of language, beauty and art ensnared him, he grew drunken with their enchantment, so easily intoxicated that supremely quick and sensitive brilliant mind: he loved this too solid flesh too well. Pathetic pinch of shrivelled dust, what contrast to yon Grecian maid of love's young day whose loosened kirtle disclosed those—

.....Smooth, cool flanks
And bosky hills of snow!

Alas! we poor mortals.

A frontispiece portrait of Wilde shows long, regular, refined, or delicate, face; sensitive, "rose-bud" mouth; proud, penetrating, bold, slumbrous eyes; the Irishman evident; soft, parted hair, forehead and temples, a noble front; one to attract, compel, the love of man and woman; the front of Love, indeed, mild and forgiving, no doubt, but merciless in insight; something indescribable, also that repels, a hint of decadence, perhaps, or the ravages of the hidden destroyer; still the brow is lovely, and the brain is grand, what magnetism was *here!*.....now lies he *there*; but he will arise again, out of his ashes; the Church may have his body and his sins, we will have his better part, and we will love it with a love that to true genius cannot be denied.

ANDREW MILLAR.

N.S.S. Annual Conference.

WHIT-SUNDAY, May 23, found a very cheerful party of delegates and members assembled in a very comfortable room at the Imperial Hotel, Birmingham. No doubt the industrial crisis which occurred while Branches and members were considering their plans for Whitsun, materially interfered with the representation of distant districts. Freethinkers are historically an optimistic party, and it would be difficult to find a more business-like or less depressed Conference than that which met at Birmingham this year.

The following Branches were represented: Bethnal Green, George Bedborough; Birmingham, E. Clifford Williams, O. Melton; Glasgow, Fred. Mann, Jas. E. Raeburn; Leeds, Mrs. Greenwood; Newcastle, Miss K. B. Kough; North London, George Bedborough; Manchester, F. E. Monks, W. Collins; Plymouth, W. J. W. Easterbrook; South London, Sydney Dunce; West Ham, R. H. Rosetti.

The delegates from Ashton-under-Lyne, Mr. Owen Conolly and Mr. Clarence Newton, were held up by the difficulties in transit, as were also the delegates for Bolton, Hull, South Shields, and Swansea.

Amongst those present were noticed: Miss Dorothy Cooper, Mr. and Miss Dobson, Messrs. H. Grant, G. H. Garrett, George Heritage, A. G. Iye, Mrs. Melton, Master Otho Melton, Mr. W. W. Kensett (Horsham), W. T. Pitt, Mrs. E. Rogers, W. Simpson, Junr., E. A. Sandys, A. R. Thornewell, Mr. and Mrs. Terry and Miss Freda Terry, Miss L. Underwood, Mrs. and Miss Williams, and Mr. P. Waters.

After the minutes of last Conference were confirmed, the Executive's Annual Report was read and adopted. The Financial Report was discussed and adopted *nem. con.*

Mr. Bedborough, on behalf of Bethnal Green Branch, proposed the re-election of Mr. Chapman Cohen as President. He paid a well-deserved tribute to the qualifications of Mr. Cohen, and it was evident from the reception of his remarks, that the Conference was in the heartiest agreement. Miss Kough (North London) seconded, and Miss Vance, who had temporarily taken the chair, declared Mr. Cohen unanimously re-elected, handing him the gavel inscribed with the names of Richard Carlile, James Watson, Charles Bradlaugh, and G. W. Foote. Mr. Cohen thanked the Conference in a brief speech, characterized by both dignity and humour. The re-election of Miss Vance as Secretary was proposed by Mr. Rosetti (West Ham), seconded by Mr. Bedborough (North London), and was carried with acclamation. Miss Vance, in reply, referred to her thirty-five years' work as Secretary, and expressed her willingness to "go on," while acknowledging her indebtedness to Miss Kough. Mr. Bedborough (Bethnal Green) proposed, and Mr. Rosetti (West Ham) seconded, the re-election of H. Theobald & Co. as auditors. Carried unanimously.

The following were unanimously elected to the Executive:—

SCOTLAND.—Mr. James Neate, nominated by Glasgow Branch.

WALES.—Mr. Gorniot, nominated by Swansea Branch.

N.E. GROUP.—Miss K. B. Kough, nominated by Newcastle Branch.

Mr. A. B. Moss, nominated by South Shields Branch.

N. W. GROUP.—Mr. H. R. Clifton and Mr. R. H. Rosetti, nominated by Liverpool and Manchester Branches.

S.W. GROUP.—Mr. G. Wood, nominated by Plymouth Branch.

MIDLAND GROUP.—Miss C. Quinton (Junr.) and Mr. J. G. Dobson, nominated by Birmingham Branch.

SOUTH LONDON.—Mr. E. Coles, nominated by South London Branch.

NORTH LONDON.—Mr. S. Samuels, nominated by North London Branch.

EAST LONDON.—Mr. H. Silverstein, nominated by Bethnal Green and West Ham Branches.

A motion by Mr. Clifford Williams (Birmingham), seconded by Mr. Dunce (South London), was carried unanimously:—

(a) That bearing in mind the many opportunities which present themselves for propaganda through the medium of the press this Conference is of opinion that arrangements should be made for the appointment of representatives who would act as publicity agents in the interests of the Freethought movement.

(b) That the attention of Branches be called to the many opportunities which exist for introducing Freethought views into new quarters through the arrangement of debates and friendly Conferences with other Societies.

Mr. Cohen and others spoke appreciatively of what Mr. Williams had done in getting our principles brought before many who never came to Secularist meetings, and various suggestions were made, aiming at extending our "publicity" and "propaganda" in newspapers and elsewhere.

Mr. Raeburn (Glasgow) moved: "That the place of meeting of the Conference be decided by vote taken at the preceding Conference." This was seconded by Mr. Bedborough, who made some suggestions with a view to rendering the proposal more practicable. Mr. Cohen asked the proposers to consider the fact that the delegates were not empowered to give a vote committing the Branches to any particular town for the 1927 Conference. After a long discussion on Mr. Cohen's suggestion, the following was unanimously adopted: "That Clause 1, Rule 17, be suspended for one year and that the place of meeting of the 1928 Conference be decided by the vote taken at the 1927 Conference," and it was understood that Glasgow delegates would ask those present to-day to recommend their Branches to support the Conference being held in Glasgow in

1927, the Executive undertaking to send very early invitations in order that a decision should at once be arrived at.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti proposed:—

That this Conference, having in mind the high rate of taxation which prevails, and the desire of the Government to discover new sources of revenue, calls attention to the vast amount of property in the shape of churches and chapels that are relieved of rates and taxes, and suggests that by compelling these buildings to bear their fair share of the taxation of the country a new source of revenue will be opened up, and a manifest injustice to the whole of the population removed.

Mr. Clifford Williams, in seconding, hoped that some definite relative statistics should be obtained showing the nature and extent of these sources of revenue. Mr. Pitt and Mr. Kensit continued the debate, and the motion was adopted by the Conference.

Miss Kough (Hull) moved, and Mr. Rosetti seconded:—

That in view of the great value of the *Freethinker* to the Freethought movement, this Conference is of opinion that the Executive should take steps to advertise the paper wherever Branches of the N.S.S. exist.

It was decided to adopt the motion, Mr. Cohen pointing out, in answer to a question, that this resolution in no way involved any reproach to the Branches.

Mr. Cohen moved on behalf of the Executive:—

This Conference regrets the fact that the fictitious offence of Blasphemy still remains in the Statute and Common Law of the country, and calls upon Freethinkers everywhere to do their utmost to secure the support of Members of Parliament for the Blasphemy Laws Amendment Bill at present before the House of Commons.

He explained the difficulties in the way of Parliamentary progress in this matter, but pointed out the value of the Society for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws keeping a Bill constantly before Parliament. Mr. Clifford Williams seconded, and it was carried unanimously.

In the unavoidable absence of Mrs. Rosetti, the following motion was moved by Mr. Rosetti, seconded by Miss Macaulay, and carried without dissent:—

This Conference calls attention to the danger to Education and the injustice to teachers involved in the recent arrangements that have been set up by various educational bodies for denominational instruction in schools supported by State funds, and urges upon all interested in securing the best education in State schools the importance of insisting on the policy of complete Secular Education as the only plan by which justice can be done to the community.

Mr. Bedborough (North London) moved a resolution relating to the phrasing of the Membership forms, but on the advice of the President and with the consent of the Conference moved as a simpler way of attaining the object in view:—

That the form to be signed by new members shall read, instead of the words "its objects," the words "the above principles and objects."

This was carried *nem. com.*

Mr. Bedborough moved, Mr. Kensit seconded, and it was carried unanimously:—

(a) That Clause 13 in the statement of Immediate Practical Objects be recast so as to read, "To eliminate the idea of punishment in the treatment of offences against the law. To aim at the avoidance of prison sentences wherever it can be done without immediate danger to the public. To prohibit corporal punishment in all prisons, reformatories, and other places of detention.

(b) That the 4th clause of the Immediate Practical Objects be amended by the addition of the words, "To humanise the treatment of the insane and those convicted of offences against the law."

The motion by the Newcastle Branch:—

That in order to enlist a larger number of supporters for the National Secular Society arrangements be made for a standing appeal in the *Freethinker* dwelling upon the need for closer co-operation between those who are in accord with the aims of this Society.

was considered, and approved in principle, but the matter was left to the discretion of the Editor of the *Freethinker*.

The afternoon session, after disposing of the business left over from the earlier session, was devoted to hearing and discussing two papers:—

Miss F. Macaulay read a most interesting and thoughtful study of that much debated question: "The Historicity of Jesus."

Mr. George Bedborough read a paper entitled "The Soul of a Secularist."

It was decided to ask the writers to send their papers to the *Freethinker*, as it was the general opinion that both papers should reach a wider circulation.

The Chairman and Miss Vance expressed their appreciation of the splendid efforts made by the Birmingham Branch to make the Conference a success, and thus ended one of the most interesting of our Annual Conferences.

G. B.

Christianity Under Colour.

In Tidal Basin Road, across the front of an impressive three-story building one may read "Coloured Men's Institute." What is it? A coloured man enters into a spacious tea-room, but behind the counter are a white man and a white woman, and he wonders if the sign is not an error. Up the stairs is a room with one billiard table, and a small room containing a writing table. The other numerous doors in this large building are labelled "private," excepting one marked "gentlemen." About 6.30 o'clock the tea-room is converted to a chapel. A white man and two women are seated in the front row, but soon women and children and a few men appear to the number of about fifty, including about ten negroes, all but two or three of whom occupy back seats.

A sleek Malay appears from a door marked "private," mounts the small platform, on which is a Bible stand, and announces a hymn, then prays, and another hymn. He reads from the Bible, and then sermonises on humility, and sets himself forth as an example. He, Mr. Churchie, has greater temptations than his hearers. For instance, he is more tempted to think that he is somebody, but not so does he overlook the fact that he is dirt before God. He tells of his royal blood and how as a Mohammedan in his position if he saw a pretty girl he simply had to ask his attendants, "Who is that girl?" and when he returned to his bungalow she would be there. He has forsaken that, and devoted his life to help his coloured brethren. He tells of his efforts which were at length crowned by his establishing the "Coloured Men's Institute" in the east end of London, and the good work it is doing, etc.

Another sermon by K. A. Churchie. The text is of Moses and the Israelites. They prayed to God to deliver unto them the Canaanites that they may destroy them. And God answered their prayer, but the Israelites were dissatisfied, so God sent serpents among them and many died by being stung. Then Moses erected a brass serpent, and all who looked upon the brass serpent were healed. You do not want too much intelligence, said Mr. Churchie, but you must have that child-like faith. No matter what you may think of some of the things in the Bible; no matter whether the whale swallowed Jonah or Jonah swallowed the whale, have that child-like faith that saves, etc. Then more solemn prayer by Churchie, followed by two coloured men and a white woman. These two leaders are evidently his chief supporters, and both sat near the front and apart from the other coloured men. The prayers of both of these were most wordy. The latter implored God to grant us that child-like faith, and "although many of us need more than we ought to have, grant that thy will be done," etc. Amen!

P. W. R. M.

Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making.—Milton.

Correspondence.

THE DEVIL AND THE DELUGE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. William Clark has sent two interesting communications, one correcting a geometrical slip in one of "Keridon's" articles and the other propounding a fascinating and original theory of the Devil and the Deluge. It is one *a priori* I should be much inclined to accept if possible. For this reason I am sending one of two difficulties for the purpose, if they are futile, of getting rid of them. The first is, "Are the traditions of a general deluge sufficiently universal to render the astronomic and meteoric explanation most likely the right one?" The universality of the tradition has been explained in two ways which more or less coincide. In the first place primitive people with few means of locomotion consider their own small territories the whole world. Thus the Andamanese fully believe, or believed, that the Andaman Islands constituted the whole universe. Thus local floods could be handed down by tradition as universal deluges. Again, according to Volney, in early science, confusion existed between the world and the Cosmos, *i.e.* the annual recurring order of things. So that the spring floods figured as the recurrent deluges of a universal order of things, which afterwards came to be transformed into a material extended universe. Again (see my *Great Divide* or the comments by Macrobius of Scipio's dream) the recurrent deluges of hot water may be accounted for by the absurd ideas the ancients had about the torrid zone and the perpetually recurring sequence of hot floods and hot droughts resulting therefrom. The theory may, however, have resulted from traditions of some real but more or less universal deluge in far past times itself. Again, is the Arizona meteor accepted as a reality by orthodox and competent science. I read such marvellous accounts of it and the possibility of mining it for diamonds and other precious stones in the *Los Angeles Examiner* that I at once jumped to the conclusion, perhaps too hastily and sceptically, that it was a purely Yankee meteorite. Lastly, Mr. Clark supposes that the carcasses of the hairy mammoths may have been carried north and deposited in Siberia from more equatorial regions as the universal deluge subsided. But does not their great coats point to their being elephants of a frigid clime?

As to retreating ice caps, that is no doubt the orthodox theory, but the subjoined extract from *L'Humanité* throws a certain amount of doubt upon this generalization, not but what it can be made to harmonise therewith.

THE VOLUME OF THE GLACIERS IS INCREASING.

Is it the result of a general cooling of the earth?

The latest results of observation appear to show that many of the great glaciers in Europe are in process of increasing in volume. For more than a century the movements of our glaciers, those immense congealed rivers of ice of the highest mountain ranges, have been studied by our science. Shaving and graving the rock that supports them, these enormous masses of ice—sometimes from one to two hundred metres in thickness—are slowly advancing, and delivering the mountains, crumb by crumb, to the rivers which spring from the base of them.

The service of *Waters and Forests* has lately published an important volume on the study of the glaciers. It sums up the results of twenty years of observation of the Savoy glaciers. From a series of measurements of the length and volume of what they have gained by snowfall and lost from the sun's action, as well as measurements of the movements of the sides, surface, and bottom, it is found that the glaciers of Savoy are everywhere advancing. *They have advanced from 23 to 51 metres a year, and have gained in volume from 500,000 to 8,500,000 in the same time.*

One of the most interesting pages in this study concerns the advance of the central glacier of Mont Blanc, known as that of the Boisons. The observations made month by month since 1917 shows that this glacier does not advance in block, but with an oscillating movement first at one side then at the other, then in the middle, like an awkward person who slouches forward first with one shoulder and then with the other.

Paris.

W. W. STRICKLAND.

THE LAW OF POPULATION.

SIR,—May I be permitted to "cross swords" with Mr. Cutner upon his assertion "that population outstrips food supply" in your columns? Food is produced abundantly enough—the ability of the producers to buy back their products is another matter. But, because it leads to Socialism the study of that side of the question is taboo to Mr. Cutner. There are economic rocks ahead and Mr. Cutner stupidly refuses to steer his ship another yard. Malthus has said, "Population outstrips food production," and Mr. Cutner re-asserts it, and be damned to your economics or Socialism either.

The Malthusianist suggests that a limitation of family solves the poverty problem. But would not such limitation of family intensify the inadequacy of food production? The average worker produces many times more wealth than the worker of a century ago, thanks to machinery, and if a tithe of the labour now spent on senseless luxury provision the food supply could become abundant. As it is, the destruction of amazing quantities of food to maintain high prices is a mighty consideration in opposition to Malthusianism.

Does Mr. Cutner deny that vast quantities of food are destroyed for that very reason? Is he aware that production is purposely restricted and even stopped altogether to create artificial famine and thus maintain high prices? Has Mr. Cutner never heard or read of whole catches of fish being thrown back in the sea or sent for manure-making—because there was too much fish? Quite early in May of this year Sir Charles Macara, a cotton magnate, writing in the *Manchester Evening News*, tells us "that the trouble in the cotton as in the coal industry is that there is too much produced." And Sir Charles is *not* a Socialist nobody, but a real live knight, and he should suit Mr. Cutner. As for wheat production, man's productivity has increased a hundredfold in the last century—thanks again to improved methods and machinery. With bonanza farms miles in extent requiring but a few workers with up-to-date machinery, thus increasing food production a thousandfold, how can anyone say that supply is difficult. The real poverty existing arises from anarchy of distribution, and it is not Socialists or "Communists" who are responsible for that. As Mr. Cutner is so sure of his economics, does he deny these facts? And does Mr. Cutner claim that the world's population has increased with equal ratio or anything approaching it in the last century?

To ignore the anti-social methods of distribution of wealth of the capitalists, how they have ordered wheat to be burned, mills to close, crops to rot, and generally cease production during crises is enough to make those working-class men who favour "sabotage" turn green with envy.

During the war millions of workers were withdrawn from wealth production and set to murdering each other for four years, during which time I noticed everybody was fed, clothed, and housed. Millions of women were employed in making "shot and shell"; they, too, were fed, clothed, and housed. Few people indeed must have been employed on purely food production during that four years, yet all were fed. That does not seem like population outstripping food supply. How does Mr. Cutner account for that? The millions murdered in the late war should have solved the problem, but has it? Then, again, France. The population there, as in Ireland, is steadily decreasing, but I see no diminution of poverty.

A.I.F. NOBLE.

SIR,—The manner and method of Mr. Cutner's reply to my criticism of an article by him is evidence to me of the weakness of his case. I do not propose to there follow his lead, but, with your kind permission, restate the facts as I see them, so that not even Mr. Cutner will have any excuse for further misuse of inverted commas.

The basic assumption of Malthus' *Essay on the Principle of Population* is that mouths increase just twice as fast as food. I quote from Everyman edition, although I am familiar with others "Supposing the population (of the whole world) to be equal to a thou-

sand million, the human species would increase as the numbers 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, and subsistence as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9." Although accepted at the time with most unfortunate consequences, succeeding events have proved its absurdity. Mr. Cutner is compelled to admit this, and airily dismisses it as a minor detail to which he makes no direct reference. But surely he must see that the most important consequences that Malthus infers from this principle are also vitiated.

Malthus' work was an attempt by him to give a scientific account of the cause of the terrible poverty of his times, which he attributed to fact that all forms of life anywhere at any time tend to outrun subsistence. The only hope of any betterment in the lot of the starving masses he could hold out was in comparative celibacy and as much chastity as they could practise.

When confronted with the fact that there has been since that period a steady improvement in the lot of all classes of civilized people all over the world, Mr. Cutner replies that this is because new countries were able to send us in exchange for our manufactures their surplus food. But Malthus denied there could be any surplus, nor could there be if his principle were true. In addition to this our own lands were going steadily out of cultivation. I have no occasion to regret that Mr. Cutner has no time to "teach me the elementary facts of economics."

Mr. Cutner may know all there is to be known about the laws of population, but I again repeat if the geometrical ratio is false, what, then, is the exact relation between population and food. Until we have solved this problem, the first principle, how can it be said we have a science of population? Malthusianism is, at the best, unscientific and inconclusive, offered as a cause of social ills in the past and present. Land monopoly is quite adequate to explain them, and, that being so, Malthusian doctrines appear as an insidious example of the *ad hoc fallacy*. Birth prevention in some respects may be very desirable, but it is at the best only a palliative. Social reformers in concentrating on this, to the neglect of land and financial monopolies, are simply repeating the mistakes of the dismal science—economics—of the last century. Malthusians, including Mr. Cutner, are like prophet Baxter—all the dreadful consequences of our acts are to happen in the future. To Mr. Cutner's query, or poser, of the problem of increasing population in the future, I present the falsification of Malthusian principles of the past.

SCIO.

SIR,—I am afraid I really cannot understand Mr. A. Noble's letter on the above subject. Perhaps he means that because I can't distinguish between Socialism and Communism, therefore Malthus is entirely wrong. Or because he "rather doubts" population outstripping food production, he has finally annihilated Malthusianism. What the rest of his letter has to do with my articles, I haven't the least idea.

H. CUTNER.

Obituary.

We record with the very deepest regret the sudden death, by accident, of Mr. Arthur Henry Harden, of Wandsworth, at the age of seventy. Mr. Harden had been for many years a very warm admirer and supporter of the *Freethinker*, and held his Freethought as something of which to be proud. Travelling in a sidecar attached to a motor-cycle, the bar connecting the two gave way, with the result that Mr. Harden was pitched out on his head and lived for but ten minutes. The funeral took place at the Putney Vale Cemetery, on Thursday last in the presence of a large number of friends of Mr. Harden, with representatives from various bodies with which he was associated. Mr. Cohen was present and delivered a brief speech at the graveside. Mr. Harden lost a son—the only son—during the war, but leaves behind a widow and two daughters, to whom we offer our deepest sympathy in the loss they have sustained.

Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission.

Mr. Whitehead writes us that in spite of the holidays, weather, Communists, Socialists, and police, he has managed to address fourteen meetings at Plymouth. He reports that there is much scope for propaganda in Plymouth, and the crowds welcome it, but the local "saints" want rousing up. He has now gone to Leeds where he will be for a fortnight, and then to Newcastle. E. M. V.

SALE AND EXCHANGE.

This column is limited to advertisements from private individuals only. Letters may, if it is so desired, be addressed to the Box Number, c/o "Freethinker" Office. Advertising rates 6d. for first line, every additional line 4d.

FOR SALE.

STANDARD Typewriter, new, £8, carriage paid.—J. S. REYNOLDS, 1 Church Street, Ripley, Derbys.

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.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Hall, Lewis Street, Victoria Road, adjoining St. Pancras Reform Club, Kentish Town): Friday, June 11, at 7.30 p.m., Debate between the Rev. Father Desmond Morse-Boycott and Mr. H. B. Cutner. Subject: "Birth Control—For or Against?" Affirmative, H. B. Cutner. Negative, Father Boycott. Dr. Binnie Dunlop in the chair.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Mr. John Murphy, "Impressions of the American Ethical Movement."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.15, Mr. H. Constable, a Lecture.

NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): Every Tuesday and Thursday at 7.30; Sunday at 11, 3.30, and 6.30; Lecturers—Messrs. Hart, Howell Smith, B.A., Hyatt, Le Maine, and Saphin.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6, Mr. H. B. Samuels, "Legal Evidence and Christian Evidence."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3 and 6, Mr. R. H. Rosetti will lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside the Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. H. C. White, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission, May 31 to June 13.

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

THINGS DONE WELL, and with a care, exempt themselves from fear. Conscious that our work is good and truly worthy of the noble cause whose organ we support, fearlessly we appeal to you, week in, week out, to give us that trial which our persistence merits and our performance justifies. Write to-day for any of the following:—Gents' A to D Patterns, suits from 55s.; Gents' E Patterns, suits all at 67s. 6d.; Gents' F to I Patterns, suits from 75s.; Gents' J to N Patterns, suits from 104s. 6d.; or Ladies' Spring Fashion and Pattern Book, costumes from 60s., frocks from 52s. 6d.—MACCONNELL & MABE, New Street, Bakewell, Derbyshire.

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Secretary: Miss E. M. VANCE.

THIS Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up.

All who join the Society participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are eligible for re-election.

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