

The

FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN · COHEN ■ ■ EDITOR · 1881-1915 · G · W · FOOTE

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper

VOL. XLVI.—No. 27

SUNDAY, JULY 4, 1926

PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions.

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Mistaking the Issue.

There is not, as we have seen, the slightest reason for assuming the passage in *Josephus* to be anything but a clumsy Christian forgery. But suppose we were to put this on one side, and suppose we were to assume that every alleged reference to Jesus was genuine, and also that the four evangelists were contemporaries of Jesus. What would it all prove? Well, it might prove that someone named Jesus—the equivalent of the Jewish Joshua—actually lived; that he was some sort of a religious reformer, who got into trouble with the authorities for creating a disturbance, much as a fanatical fakir in India might find himself in trouble with the British governing power, and that for calling himself God, or for allowing others to worship him as God, he was executed. We might grant, in addition, that there was reason for believing him to have been a man of excellent character, and that he gave utterance to some very excellent, if not original, moral teachings. But having got that far we have not got within what Gladstone used to call a measurable distance of substantiating Christian claims, or of establishing the truth of the Christian religion. It is not Jesus, the ethical teacher, that is needed, but Jesus, the god incarnate. If he was not that, the distinctive character of Christianity disappears. It is simply not enough for Christians merely to place Jesus among the world's good men. A religion is never built upon that basis. Good men may be admired, but they are not worshipped. Every country in the world can boast of its good teachers, but something more than that is required to establish a religion. If the only Jesus put forward had been Jesus the moralist his name would hardly have outlived his own generation.

* * *

God or Man?

Neither is it enough to establish the fact that Jesus was a real historical character. As a matter of fact, there were several teachers of that name known, one of whom at least was put to death. If all these things were established we should have evidence before us only that a man named Jesus had existed, and that a number of people believed he

worked miracles, rose from the dead, and was, in fact, an incarnation of the deity. But that a number of people believed these things is denied by none. There is no dispute whatever on that point. But the story does not gain in credibility because people believed certain things of Jesus about the time when he is said to have lived. There are millions of men and women who profess to believe them to-day. There is here only evidence of belief, and on that head the testimony of the Bishop of London or of a street corner evangelist is quite as good as that of St. Paul. Why, at the present moment there is in London a young Hindoo who is declared by no less a person than Mrs. Annie Besant to be an incarnation of Jesus Christ. The evidence for that is of the same kind as that given for the godhood of Jesus Christ. Many believe it, and it is impossible for anyone to prove that this Hindoo is not what Mrs. Besant says he is. The evidence for the new Messiah is as good as the evidence given for any Messiah the world has known. His divinity is proclaimed and some people believe it. The evidence for their belief is—their belief. No other evidence could be or has ever been offered. So far as Christianity is concerned the apologist is mistaking the essential point at issue. He offers us proof that people believed, when all the time what we are asking for is some evidence of the reasonableness of their belief.

* * *

Blinded by the Past.

The importance attached to proving that the gospel story was written by contemporaries of Jesus, or whether the references to him in non-Christian writings were genuine or not, could only exist so long as the real question was overlooked. If one believes in God, or if one accepts the possibility of miracles in such a way that it is a mere question of evidence as to whether at some time or other twice two equalled five, then it does become important to establish the date and authenticity of narratives concerning them. The whole thing becomes, as even many Freethinkers have assumed it to be, a question of proof, and, that being so, the reliability of the evidence is here instructive. Criticism of the Christian story naturally began with people who were more or less under the influence of belief in the supernatural, and the question of credibility of the witnesses had to come before that of the credibility of the events themselves. Thus we find in the history of heresy, first of all, the expression of doubt as to whether the witnesses were dependable. Were they telling the truth? Or were they like so many other false prophets, the existence of whom all religions admitted? There was also the desire on the part of the more religious to make sure that they had the exact words of "our Lord," and which led to a closer criticism of the documents. But in all this there was no more question of the existence of the supernatural than there is in a Mohammedan criticism of the Christian religion. The substantial basis of both is admitted by the disputants; it is the form

in which the supernatural is presented that is questioned. Actually it is no more than a conflict of rival forms of unreason.

* * *

Authority and Belief.

This aspect of the question is radically changed when we examine it from a strictly scientific point of view. Then it becomes a matter of the nature of the narratives in which we are asked to place our faith. The personal question is altogether eliminated. We are not concerned with the veracity of the witnesses, or with the authenticity of the documents. It does not matter in the slightest degree that hundreds of people who lived about the time of Jesus professed their belief in his divinity, or in his miraculous performances. Far more conclusive evidence of this kind can be brought on behalf of the Roman Catholic miracles or for witchcraft, or for many other things about which no one would to-day dream of settling by way of marshalling "evidence." Testimony of this kind is of no greater value than is that of an unsophisticated visitor to a music-hall who is ready to swear that a conjurer did actually produce a rabbit from an empty hat. All this is evidence of belief only, and of that there has not, we repeat, ever been any question at all. All the superstitions of Mrs. Besant, all the crudities of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, may be firmly established on that basis. The memory of the public is very short, and the fact that about ten years ago a strenuous attempt was made by some of our leading clergy to fix the absurd legend of the Mons angels appears to have been forgotten. There was any amount of evidence produced here. It was argued that it was exactly the kind of thing one might expect God to do. The names and testimonies of many men were brought forward to establish the veracity of the story. There was much greater evidence here than for any of the gospel stories. And the only thing that prevented Dr. Horton, the Bishop of London, and others getting this manufactured tale accepted was that the general intellectual environment was unfavourable to it. A couple of centuries earlier it would scarcely have been questioned.

* * *

Ancient and Modern.

The last paragraph gives at once the altered situation, and the reason why Christian apologists prefer to discuss the question on the basis of "evidence." So long as we confine ourselves to the veracity and the sincerity of the witnesses we are moving in an atmosphere of belief. We practically admit the inherent reasonableness of the stories under examination. In fact, we hardly examine the stories themselves, so much as the reliability of the witnesses. We lose sight altogether of the environment in which religious myths and legends have their birth and of the conditions that gain them credence. But to-day it is the nature of the stories themselves that provides the condition of their rejection. No one who has properly appreciated the scientific conception of the universe need discuss whether the virgin birth is true, whether a man rose from the dead, whether God came to earth to offer himself as a sacrifice for man, or any other of the miracles of the New Testament. He knows that, unless his knowledge of the workings of natural forces is all a delusion, these things never happened. The Christian Church is to-day divided on the question of whether the bread and wine is actually the body and blood of Jesus or not. How many men with a proper conception of scientific knowledge will seriously discuss that question? They know that the question of its actuality is only one degree less absurd

than the belief in its reality. They realize that the subject for examination here is not the actual performance of the miracle, but the mental state which allows a certain number of people to believe it occurs. And that is equally true of the whole series of miracles and of supernaturalism generally. In a purely scientific atmosphere the existence of a personal God, or a separable soul, of heaven and hell, of angels and devils, of incarnations and resurrections, would provide material for the psychologist only. It is his task to explain why people have believed such absurdities to be actualities. It is the historian's business to explain the modifications these beliefs have undergone under pressure of advancing knowledge. And when these things have been done there is nothing left of religion about which to bother. Naturally theologians fight shy of this aspect of the subject. They prefer to move in an atmosphere akin to that in which their legends had their birth. The unfortunate thing is that so many who imagine themselves to have outgrown these beliefs continue to deal with them as though there were at least a probability of their being matters of scientific or historic fact.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Christian Apologetic Up To Date.

Essays Catholic and Critical. By Members of the Anglican Communion. (S.P.C.K., 10s. 6d.)

SUCH is the title of a new apologetical work to a review and discussion of which the *Church Times* of June 18 devotes six columns, which shows that in the estimation of this distinguished organ of Anglo-Catholicism it possesses exceptional theological value for the party which its columns so ably represent. The *Church Times* expresses its conviction that a re-statement of the orthodox Christian Faith is often needed. "Human language," it affirms, "is no stable medium for the expression of truth, nor is human thought more stable, each age finds its own perplexities, looks at old things from a different angle." Worse than all else, the Church's supreme foe "knowledge advances, and the relation between the old Faith and the new knowledge may not at once be discerned and established." The *Church Times* pretends to have risen above the old hatred and fear of knowledge, and claims that "the progress of knowledge makes available new weapons of defence, which the apologist must not neglect." It appears that the Anglo-Catholic attitude to science is fundamentally different from that maintained by Roman Catholicism; and we are of opinion that the latter's attitude is alone justifiable. Between the Christian Faith, in any of its multifarious interpretations, and modern scientific discoveries, no rationally acceptable harmonization is possible. Our contemporary does not agree, and says:—

Christian apologetic, in fine, must be written afresh for each age in succession, if it is to be effective. The methods and the learning of Paley sufficed for his own time, they are ineffective in our own. And the Roman Catholic is under no less compulsion than the Anglo Catholic; *God and the Supernatural* is addressed to modern men, and parts of it would hardly have been intelligible to the Roman Catholic of the eighteenth century.

As a matter of fact no Christian apologetic ever written was wholly effective for people of its own age. Even Paley's *Evidences* were by no means all convincing. In spite of them, Freethought was amazingly common. Writing in 1786, Paley himself used the following language:—

Infidelity is now served up in every shape that

is likely to allure, surprise, or beguile the imagination, in a fable, a tale, a novel, or a poem, in interspersed or broken hints, remote and oblique surmises, in books of travel, of philosophy, of natural history—in a word, in any form rather than that of a professed and regular disquisition.

Essays Catholic and Critical is admittedly a work intended not for Freethinkers and Rationalists, but exclusively for Anglo-Catholics, although it is said to be "one also of which those who differ from us will have to take account." Now, we ask, wherein consists the evidential value of these remarkable contributions to the art of apologetic? Take the first essay by Dr. E. O. James. Dr. James is a distinguished representative of the ranks of Anglo-Catholic parish priests, who is yet an ardent worker in the fascinating field of Anthropology. The reviewer says:—

Dr. James finds the earliest evidence to religion in the earliest remains of man that have come to light. The ceremonial burials of Neanderthal man, the development already reached in the Pilt-down woman, seem to show that religion emerged at a very early period in the history of mankind. The view may still be held that man started his career in a higher state than that in which he is to-day known to the anthropologist; there is no reason for rejecting the possibility of a primitive revelation to man.

There is more of the theologian than of the anthropologist in that extract. We want to know how primitive man acquired the notion of his duality and immortality. Tylor and Spencer investigated this point with the utmost patience and care, and the conclusion to which they were both inevitably driven has never been seriously disputed. When primitive man walked about in the daytime he was constantly seeing his shadow in the sunshine and in the water, and in his ignorance the only explanation he could offer was that he had a double which accompanied him wherever he went. As he slept at night in his hut, this double would occasionally vacate his body and go roaming about in the ocean of space, undergoing all sorts of strange experiences. While thus out of the body he would often meet friends whom he knew well, and not seldom people who had been dead a long time, with all of whom he was enabled to hold intimate communion. Now to primitive man dream-life was fully as real, to say the least, as waking life, and much more significant. What about the doubles of deceased people, who had vacated their bodies for ever? The natural inference was that they must have their abode in some other world than the earth; and it was probably that in some such way the belief in a ghostly or spiritual world sprang up. Well, in this spiritual realm dwelt all sorts of doubles, even those of mighty chiefs and princes, and they were all much more important and powerful than doubles which lived in mortal bodies on the earth. In course of time, no doubt, some of these disembodied doubles or ghosts gained increased importance until they ascended to the dignified and majestic position of superhuman, divine beings. The first God, doubtless, was the disembodied ghost of some great chief, or of some revered and dreaded ancestor. Of such disembodied chiefs and ancestors there was, of course, a countless multitude, and we find that some ancient tribes had thousands of Gods. Then sun, moon, stars, and trees came to be regarded as mighty deities. Monotheism was unknown and not even dreamed of in savage ages. Dr. James does not seem to be aware of the existence of the dream-theory as to the origin of the belief in disembodied ghosts or souls, or of the ghost-theory as to the origin of the belief in superhuman and supernatural beings. There is no trace whatever of a primitive

revelation to man, the whole process of God-making being perfectly natural and entirely due to the ignorance and superstition of savage man. There is no truth whatever in the following sentence by the reviewer: "Beyond all spirits of heroes begins to appear the shadowy figure of the All-Father, creating, ethical, beneficent, but aloof from the affairs of men." How could the All-Father be ethical and beneficent when he stood aloof from man and his life?

Even the Israelites were originally stone-worshippers, and the stones were usually under or near to sacred trees. Then there was the cult of the great Gods whom the people faithfully worshipped. These divinities were superseded by the bull-shaped Jehovah, who claimed to be the only true and living God; and all readers of the Old Testament know what a monster of injustice, cruelty, and immorality he was. His chief attribute was jealousy, and it was by means of this attribute that he won his supremacy, such as it was. And yet the reviewer summarizes the teaching of *Essays Catholic and Critical* on this point in the following terms:—

And to Israel there came the revelation of God as One, the Ruler of the universe, holy and infinite. It was a true revelation; the prophets of Israel were not philosophers, "they were conscious, in fact, of the contrast between their own feelings and ideas on the one hand, and of the purpose and mind of God who constrained them on the other." "This revealed monotheism triumphed in Israel against polytheism, the ethical teaching of the prophets emphasized the moral purity of God, the Messianic hope grew ever more clear, the way was prepared for our Lord and his Church."

Dr. James's essay may be Catholic, but critical, in the best sense, it certainly is not.

We now come to Professor A. E. Taylor's essay on the Vindication of Religion. This is on the whole the most important of all the essays in the volume. It is a curious and most significant fact that after nineteen centuries of its history Christianity still needs to be vindicated; and the vindication attempted here is radically ineffective. Referring to certain passages in this contribution the reviewer says:—

They are preliminary to a passage very reassuring to the man who fears, because he has continually been told so, that there is a necessary antithesis between science and religion, and that whereas science deals with verifiable certainties, religion deals with uncertainties and matters incapable of demonstration. Dr. Taylor insists that the attitude of trust and faith is just as characteristic of science as it is of religion. All natural science is bound up with belief in the principle that Nature is in some way uniform. "Yet it is quite certain both that this fundamental principle cannot be demonstrated, since all reasoning in the sciences depends on assuming it, and that it cannot be definitely expressed by any formula which does not appear highly questionable."

Dr. Taylor's vindication of religion is egregiously fallacious and misleading. Science deals with the known world and seeks by observation and experiment to discover and explain its nature and its laws, and numerous discoveries of the most marvellous kind have already been made. The most astonishing and momentous of them all is that of evolution, which conflicts at every point with the teaching of the Church in all ages. Religion, on the other hand, deals with an unseen and wholly unknown universe, concerning which it is absolutely impossible to acquire the least information. The supernatural world is an ingenious invention of the metaphysicians, existing alone in imagination, and completely unsusceptible of scientific verification. The only existence predicable of it is purely subjective, not in any

sense whatever objective. This is true of God, Christ, heaven, hell, and purgatory, as well as of the human soul which theology declares to be immortal. Very aptly Shakespeare calls the world to come "the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns." Consequently the truth of religion is incapable of any form whatever of demonstration.

J. T. LLOYD.

(To be Concluded.)

Saint Augustine Birrell.

Le rire c'est le propre de l'homme.—Rabelais.

Do I view this world as a vale of tears?

Ah, reverend sir, not I.

—Robert Browning.

A GOOD story was told some time ago concerning Mr. Augustine Birrell. Asked whether he was going to follow the fashion set by Lady Oxford and others and write his reminiscences, he replied: "I have reached a serene and philosophic height from which I do no want to upset anybody. If I wrote my reminiscences and told the truth, I should lose some very good friends, and if I do not tell the truth the book would be valueless. So I shall do nothing." It is a pity that Mr. Birrell cannot screw his courage to the sticking-place, and, like the youthful George Washington is said to have done, tell the truth. He possesses a whimsical humour of his own which is as marked, as personal, as "the Correggiosity of Correggio," to adopt his own smart jest.

Although Mr. Birrell has devoted long years to politics, he is, primarily, the author of *Obiter Dicta* and many other volumes of charming essays. Whether he writes on Charlotte Bronte, or Marie Bashkirtseff, William Hazlitt or Cardinal Newman, he always proves himself amusing and usually a close student of literature. The flashes of fun are, perhaps, the best things in his books. Hazlitt once said: "I started in life with the French Revolution," and he was baptized in a Nonconformist meeting-house. Mr. Birrell remarks genially that "there were always more traces of Revolution about Hazlitt than of the rite of Christian baptism." Concerning Hazlitt's admiration for Napoleon, Mr. Birrell remarks sagely: "It is wisest to hate your country's enemies. The Church allows it, the National Anthem demands it; and the experience of mankind proves it." Hazlitt said that Tom Moore ought never to have written his poem, "Lalla Rookh," for three thousand guineas—which, observes Mr. Birrell, is a hard saying. "Had he written it for nothing one might have wondered."

How good, too, is Mr. Birrell's remark that "the thought of Milton's pipe sanctifies your own." There is sly fun in the statement that "the motives that prompt men and women to go to lectures on winter nights are varied, and include many which have nothing to do with respect for the lecturer or interest in his subject." Writing of the marriage of Roman Catholics and Protestants, Mr. Birrell observes pleasantly: "The severer spirit now dominating Catholic councils has condemned these marriages; but the practical politician cannot but regret that so good an opportunity of lubricating religious differences with the sweet oil of the domestic affections should be lost to us in these days of bitterness and dissension."

The following remark on nationality is irresistible: "No foreigner needs to ask the nationality of the man who treads on his corns, smiles at his religion, and does not want to know anything about his aspirations." Another example of Birrellesque

humour is worth quoting: "The attitude of his countrymen towards John Ruskin was amusing. The *Times* newspaper alternately ridiculed his doctrines and demanded his burial in Westminster Abbey. He was, it thought, so glorious an imposter, so supreme a humbug, so paradoxical a teacher, so false a reasoner, so dangerous a character, that there was only one place for his bones—the Abbey."

Mr. Birrell's absorption in politics did him a disservice with regard to his literary work. Some of his later writing has been produced in a hurry and without adequate preparation. A remarkable example was *Self-Selected Essays* (Nelson), a collection which is a standing example of how not to do it. In their original form as contributions to periodical literature these essays were neither better nor worse than is usual, but placed together in a book they lack that judgment which one expects, naturally, from an author with a reputation to lose.

As the essays were selected by the author himself, it is really astonishing that Mr. Birrell should have permitted the inclusion of a ridiculous essay on Thomas Paine, which was published originally a generation ago as a review of Moncure Conway's *Life of Paine*. Indeed, it is doubtful if Mr. Birrell actually read the book he reviewed, for a careful perusal of that work would have saved many mistakes on the part of the reviewer and some headache on the part of the readers. What is more serious, however, is the evident animus displayed in the essay, because, as a rule, Mr. Birrell is an urbane critic. "Nobody now," he assures his readers, "is ever likely to read the *Age of Reason* for instruction and amusement." As a plain matter of fact Paine's book is a Freethought classic, and for a century has had its annual sale of many thousands of copies. Publishers talk of the glory of a fifth edition. What is to be said of the vitality of a book which has been read by ten generations of readers. Mr. Birrell attacks Paine's style, and dubs him "a coarse writer, without refinement of nature." Whether Mr. Birrell really thinks that Paine is "coarse," or whether he was merely tickling the ears of the groundlings, it is an amazing criticism from a man who has gone out of his way to praise William Hazlitt, and who has defended the vigorous dialectics of old Dr. Sam Johnson.

Another of Mr. Birrell's objections to Paine is that he was not a teetotaler, although he lived in an age of hard drinking. Gibbon, indeed, described the dons of Oxford University as being "sunk in prejudice and port," and Hogarth and Cruickshank have shown pictorially what the worship of Bacchus meant to our forefathers. Paine's many activities absolve him from any serious accusations of debauched living. Mr. Birrell, indeed, would do well to ponder a story told of Abraham Lincoln. During the height of the American Civil War some Puritan busybodies reported to him that General Grant was an intemperate man. "Find out what he drinks," said Lincoln, "and send some to the other generals."

It is, perhaps, unfair to make too much of Mr. Birrell's errors of judgment. They are few and far between. It is better to concentrate on the good things in his writings. "Can you emit sparks?" said the cat to the ugly duckling in the old, old fairy tale. Mr. Birrell can emit sparks of humour, and therein lies his superiority to so many writers who give themselves greater airs and graces.

MIMNERMUS.

Every man carries heaven and hell within him in this world.—Böhme.

Christian Healing, Spiritualism, and the Bible.

RUNNING backwards from the witch-persecuting days of a couple of hundred years ago to the time when man left the trees, disease of every kind was foisted on the Devil and his band of merry imps. Indeed, one can, without any undue effort, find stray traces of it surviving to this very day in these islands.¹

There are men and women in corners of Scotland and Ireland and Wales, and yokels in every agricultural county in England who, in this year of grace, 1926, hold most firmly the belief; there are natives in every colony of the British Empire who, after respectful attention to the words of the missionaries, carry their sick to the local witch-doctor.² The doctor in all savage tribes is the exorcist: his skill with herbs and decoctions is a mere parergy, and without the power of exorcism and invocation of spirits is reckoned of the smallest worth. The laying on of hands, the chanting of magic words, constituted the main medical stock-in-trade of Christ and his disciples. In Matt. xvii. 14-18, is related a typical case:—

And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oft-times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.³

After Christ's death St. Paul carried on the miracle working. So, too, did many others. It is only Christian theologians who maintain that Christ and his chosen lot alone possessed the gift of healing by touch. Asclepiades, a Grecian of a

¹ Lawrence's *Primitive Psycho-therapy* gives as a quotation from *Folk-Lore*, June, 1898, a Lincolnshire spell for the cure of fever. "An old woman, whose grandson had a bad attack of the fever, fastened upon the footboard of his bed three horseshoes, with a hammer laid crosswise upon them. With the hammer the old crone gave each shoe a smart tap, repeating each time this spell: 'Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, nail the Devil to this post, one for God and one for Wod and one for Lok.....Yon's a sure charm,' said she, 'that will hold the Old One as fast as t'church tower, when next he comes to shake un.'"

The same work gives also a German spell against gout taken from Grimm's *Teutonic Mythology*: "God, the Lord went over the land; there met him seventy sorts of gouts and goutesses: 'We go over the land and take from men their health and limbs.' Then spake the Lord: 'Ye shall go to an elder-bush and break off all his boughs, and leave with (such a one, naming the patient) his straight limbs.'"

² The strength of the present-day belief in witchcraft amongst native races, necessitating Government restrictive measures, is plainly indicated in the following quotation from the *Manchester Guardian*, June 11, 1925: "The Government of Kenya has introduced new legislation to control and, if possible, exterminate witchcraft. Their Bill provides five years' imprisonment for any person who professes to be able to use supernatural powers likely to cause fear or injury. Persons invoking the assistance of a professing witch doctor or supplying any article for the purpose of causing injury to persons, animals, or property can be sent to prison for ten years, and the same sentence will be imposed on anyone putting the processes of witchcraft into action. Possession of charms is also an offence which will be punished with a maximum sentence of one year in prison and a fine of £50, or either, and the Government holds the right to confiscate the charms and destroy them."

³ Other cases of healing and the casting out of devils are familiar to all readers of the New Testament: see Matt. viii. 2-3, 14-15; Matt. xx. 34; Matt. x. 7-8; Matt. xii. 24-28; Mark i. 31, 34, 41-42; Mark vi. 5, 13; Mark xvi. 17-18; Acts xix. 12.

century before Jesus' day healed in a very similar way; the Emperor Vespasian cured the maimed hand of a citizen;⁴ the kings of England and France⁵ from the time of the Norman Conquest to the death of Queen Anne were all healers, Charles the Second being the reputed champion. A noted healer, too, was St. Francis of Assisi. So was Father Ignatius. So was Greatrakes, the Irish quack. And Fludd, the theosophist. And Grassner, the Tyrolese preceptor of Mesmer. To-day there is Hickson, author of *Heal the Sick*, a book of doddering nonsense in the style of a rural reporter, who claims to be divinely inspired⁶, and who has repeated pretty nearly every one of Christ's healing miracles. It is evident, astonishing though it may sound, that this Hickson, like Jesus of old, looks on all diseases as the influence of devils. Thus:—

Our Lord's work of healing presents to a mind unbiased by the prevalent belief in the "blessing" of physical infirmity the clearest possible proof that He recognized all physical diseases as manifestations of evil and contrary to the natural laws of God; the work of the Devil and as such to be destroyed.⁷

There is much more in the same strain: the doctrine of demonology being restated again and again: "Remember that you are going out in the Name of Jesus Christ to fight—not flesh and blood—but 'principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world.'"⁸

Now, apart from savages in back corners of the earth, a number of rustics in out-of-the-way spots of civilization such as the Hebrides, the Welsh valleys, the Sussex Downs, rural France, Oklahoma, Virginia, a bunch of naïve theologians, evangelists like Billy Sunday and Gipsy Smith, and amateur moralists such as William Jennings Bryan, it is by way of being a truism that the belief in demonology perished with the passing of witch-burning as a holiday diversion some two hundred years ago. But although the sellers of orthodox theology, in consequence of the vast strides made in surgery and therapeutics, have been compelled, in direct defiance and contradiction of the preaching of Jesus, to bury all ideas of demon possession as a theory of disease,⁹ they have, in the bulk, stuck to some sketchy notion of it being the result, direct or indirect, of divine intervention.¹⁰ It is God's method of trying and testing errant mankind, and, in consequence, any suffering must be borne with equanimity.

In active and powerful competition with this is another and more materialistic theory. Briefly it is that the mind controls the body and is responsible for all the ills and disease, vice, and crime to which human flesh and brain are subject. Insanity, for instance, it is held, results from overstudy in efforts to qualify as teachers or sanitary inspectors, from disappointment in one's amorous adventures, from the discovery that one's wife is indulging in secret fornication. Vice, it is further held,

⁴ See Tacitus, *History*, Book iv. 81.

⁵ Louis the Great, so history states, one Easter Tuesday went through the laying-on-of-hands' ceremony with sixteen hundred people.

⁶ "I may say here that I am conscious of this power flowing through me when healing, as I am also of the Lord's Personal presence."—*Heal the Sick*, p. 4.

⁷ *Heal the Sick*, p. 242.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 268.

⁹ The belief in the Devil being the cause of disease was firmly held by Martin Luther, who went so far as to attribute his own ailments to personal scuffles with the Devil and his recoveries as signs of his triumphs.

¹⁰ The exhortations and prayers used by ministers of religion when visiting and consoling the sick acknowledge this: "Wherefore, whatsoever your sickness is, know you certainly, that it is God's visitation."—From the order for the visitation of the sick.

results from reading pornographic novels, reports of divorce cases, looking at the lingerie advertisements in the newspapers, gazing at the silken-clad legs of the girls; while crime similarly is induced by seeing the antics of film criminals, and from the surreptitious devouring of Nick Carter and Sexton Blake stories by schoolboys and adolescent youths. To deal with these cases, which are supposed to be outside the scope of ordinary physicians, there has arisen a vast army of mental specialists, faith healers, mind curers. They sport various fancy names such as psycho-analysts, new thoughters. They are to be found living commensally with such empirics as futurist artists, Chelsea poets, members of the Tomorrow Club. They are disciples of Sigismund Freud. They are to the faith-healing of Mrs. Eddy what theosophy was to the table-rapping of the Fox sisters.

Stripped of all fancy trimmings, however, the basic idea of one is the basic idea of the lot. Suggestion will cure. Faith in the power to get well will result in getting well. What the emotional power is which gives one this faith matters little. It may be faith in an evangelist as it was in Christ's case two thousand years ago, and as it is vicariously through Hickson's agency to-day. It may be Mariology and the theurgic powers of a holy well as in the case of Lourdes or of St. Winifred's. It may be plain, undecorated faith as in Christian Science. It may be self-hypnotism pure and simple, as in Couéism, and to a lesser extent, in homeopathy. But in every case faith is insisted on. It is drummed into the sufferers continuously. In the Gospels its necessity is repeatedly mentioned. After the healing of Jesus's daughter Christ said: "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole."¹¹ Again, in his own country, Christ was powerless to work miracles or to heal. Naturally enough the rascals who had played hide and seek with him as a boy had neither reverence, fear, nor faith. His sisters failed to see in him an incarnate God: they put him down as a preacher, and, no doubt in private, gave him a good piece of their mind. At any rate, Mark admits that there were no miracles and little in the way of healing: "And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marvelled because of their unbelief."

At the Christian healing missions held by Hickson at Bradford, and in many parts of the world, faith in Christ's power and belief that the cure is coming are the essential rubrics. The mission in every case opens with prayers and hymns, the laying-on itself is punctuated with prayer, concludes with prayer, and the patients are urged to continue their prayers between meals. In short, everything possible is done to arouse the emotional attitude which leads to delusion and hallucination. The miracles of Lourdes offer no variant of the same story. Nor do those of St. Winifred's.¹² Ailing men and women devoid of faith and belief might as well bathe in a bath-tub at home.

Well, and what of all these hymned miracles, these blazoned cures, these cases of instantaneous recovery after years of suffering. The bulk of them are spurious, and in this I am casting reflections on neither the honesty nor the sincerity of the Hicksons, the Lourdes' priests, nor those responsible for the writing of the Gospels. I have gone through Hickson's book with some care and I can find not a single case out of the thousands mentioned where

there is either an attempted diagnosis of the alleged disease or a certificate as to the permanence of the cure.¹³ Since the day when Bernadette Soubirous, the sick, neurotic and unintelligent peasant girl, saw the visions of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes an ever-swelling stream of afflicted men and women trek to the little French town and the record of miracles wrought runs into many thousands. But what does a careful enquiry reveal? Many of the miracles are imaginery; many others are obvious fakes; the best attested rest on evidence so flimsy it makes one pity the credulity of the genuine believers amongst these holy men.¹⁴

Out of this welter of apocryphal healing a solitary fact emerges: that the one brand of disease curable by psychotherapeutic means is the disease that does not exist. To deny the incidence of the non-existent disease is to deny that on which seventy-five per cent. of the doctors rely for their bread and butter. It is the simulacrum of real disease that drives the vast majority of patients to the physician's sanctum. Ask a doctor friend on his death-bed, when he has no point in disguising the truth, ask a patent medicine maker in similar circumstances. By virtue of suggestion a capable travelling quack can have every man and woman in his audience ravaged with pretty nearly every disease in the medical dictionary: a well-written advertisement of a theurgic remedy can induce the symptoms of disease in thousands of newspaper readers. A bottle of pink water and faith effect the cure and the grateful patient becomes a walking testimonial for somebody's Magic Panacea.¹⁵ Such are the diseases which psychotherapy cures, whether it is practised plainly as such or clothed with mystical or religious decorations. But once leave the realms of nervous ailments of fanciful children, erotic women and neurasthenic men and touch the skirts of organic disease and the whole thing collapses. The power of mind over cancer, or phthisis, or small-pox, or a dose of rat poison is astonishingly meagre. But the power over the mind of a bang in the eye by a Dempsey, or of a draught of laudanum taken in error, or a bad attack of paralysis, is just as astonishingly great. Hicksonism, Christian Science, psycho-analysis are alike impotent when confronted by such a relatively simple thing as a broken leg or so complicated a matter as a cancer. Mrs. Eddy, and all her school, would be of as much use in a small-pox hospital as so many clucking hens. Insanity and criminality, the opinions of the Christian Fathers, and James Moore Hickson notwithstanding, are not the results of the influence of devils. Nor do they come, except on occasions of great rarity, from overstudy or love disappointment or patronizing picture shows. The disgusting truth is that as often as not the cause is of such stark unromanticness as vulgar onanism or a bad attack of syphilis.

GEORGE RYLEY SCOTT, F.Z.S., F.Ph.S., F.R.A.I.
(To be Concluded.)

¹³ In justice to Mr. Hickson I must say he admits, with commendable frankness, this very point: "As to the reports of physical healing, I do not put them forth with the idea that they are of much scientific value, for naturally the medical world will ask: 'Where are the medical certificates of diagnosis and cure?' I can only reply that I have none and am not likely to have them, for I have learned that it is not reasonable to expect the medical profession to prove our case for us. I can only say, here are testimonies—for what they are worth—from people of more than average intelligence who speak of what they know from being present at the missions, and from many who have experienced healing for themselves." This sly dig at the medical faculty is the best bit in the book.

¹⁴ For a detailed analysis of these miracles, see Joseph McCabe's excellent pamphlet, *The Lourdes Miracles*.

¹⁵ Magic rings, electric belts, porous plasters, and skunk oil have all figured at one time or another as vastly successful and widely reputed cures.

¹¹ Mark v. 34.

¹² In the Middle Ages there were scores of these holy or healing wells scattered throughout the marches of Britain, Scotland being particularly rich in them. There are clear indications that these wells were shrines of worship and the rites were sacrificial ones.

Acid Drops.

An American evangelist, Mrs. McPherson, who is reported to have attracted huge audiences in America, and who recently paid a visit to this country, was believed to have been drowned while bathing a few weeks ago. She has now turned up, very much alive, and says that she was captured by bandits, but managed to make her escape. What puzzles us is what on earth the bandits wanted with the evangelist. There does not seem to have been any attempt to extort money, and it can hardly be that the bandits wanted Mrs. McPherson to preach to them. We do not question that these bandits were religious—men of that type usually are, but we do not imagine for a moment that they are so hungry for sermons as to want a whole evangelist to themselves. Anyway, if they do, we fancy there are many congregations that would lend a hand at kidnapping their pastor, and even pay the expenses of transport. We should not be at all surprised to find that the whole thing is an advertising stunt. Stranger things than that have happened in the religious world.

At a protest meeting organized by the Lord's Day Observance Society, Captain A. Larking (of the Early Closing Association) declared that the crux of the Sunday amusement problem was in the want of discipline, in giving to people generally all they wanted and all they asked for, instead of giving them what was good for the nation generally. This pious gentleman appears not to realize that if Christians claim freedom of action on Sunday, they must concede a similar claim to others. That being conceded, each person has the right to judge for himself what is best for himself and for the good of the nation, and to act accordingly. So long as each man does nothing criminal, there is no room for killjoy prohibitions here. All that Christians are justified in doing is to point out what, in their view, is the harm arising from Sunday recreation.

The gallant Captain talks about "the good of the nation," and implies that Sunday amusement is antagonistic to it. But, as all he means is that recreation is antagonistic to the good of the churches—an entirely different thing, which concerns only parsons—sensible people will continue to use the day of rest as they think fit.

Another speaker, Prof. Avary H. Forbes, based his objection to Sunday pleasure on the ground that one day's rest in seven was essential to man, to beast, and to metals. His contention was that not only man but machinery also benefited by the rest. On this thesis, then, why doesn't he with his noisy Sabbatarian friends, advocate one day's rest in six for everybody? That would give the Christian two whole days to spend in his praying shed, and the more intelligent man two clear days to enjoy wholesome rest and recreation. Such an arrangement, we feel sure, would be supported by both the religious and irreligious, and the Professor for proposing it would be hailed as a public benefactor.

There are one million inhabited houses in England and Wales totally unfitted for human occupation, deplores the ex-secretary of the National Housing and Town-planning Council. We fear this gentleman must be one of those horrid materialists mentioned so frequently in the pulpit. He seems not to be aware that all true followers of the lonely Nazarene do not worry overmuch about unspiritual matters like sound houses. Comfortable and sanitary habitations for this brief and earthly "spangle of existence" are really not worth troubling about. The all-important question with the truly devout Christian has always been: Have you secured your heavenly mansion in the skies which is to be your home for everlasting? If so, then any old makeshift will do here. That has been the typically Christian way of regarding things until quite recent

times. It has enabled the pious to view with complacency those many thousands of insanitary dwellings which we now know have been, and still are, fruitful breeding-places of plagues and all manner of diseases. Ignorant Christians were wont to regard disease as an "act of God." There would appear to be some excuse for that way of thinking of disease, if one sees it as a direct result of a stupid Christian notion.

There is one thing we may add. The Churches responsible for inculcating this point of view of indifference to material well-being have never objected to taking the ill-spared pence of their dupes living in hovels in order to build grand churches and to provide comfortable houses for priests and parsons. What a sorry spectacle it is—this of millions of people hived in tiny, and mainly unhealthy, brick boxes and contributing to the material comfort of thousands of sleek "men of God!" But the Christian with the peace of God in his heart doesn't mind.

Missionary societies are a little perturbed just now over a certain clause in the new regulations laid down by the Chinese Ministry of Education in respect of educational institutions established in China by foreigners. This clause declares that "the institution shall not have as its purpose the propagation of religion." As it may be taken as requiring nothing but secular subjects to be taught, one of the Nonconformist societies declares it cannot accept it. We are not surprised. Missionary societies are not organizations anxious to impart sound learning to the "heathen" for purely philanthropic motives. Their concern with education is merely incidental: the schools are means to a certain end—instruments of pious propaganda. The stuff which passes for education is but the sugar coating on the pill of Christian dogma. Seemingly the Chinese Ministry has seen through the sorry pretence.

Of the children in Sunday schools, the Rev. F. B. Meyer says that they are at a time of life when most susceptible to religious influences. Five-sixths of church-membership, he adds, are directly derived from the ranks of the young. On the reverend gentleman's own showing, Christianity is clearly a religion for the immature mind. And the reason, we take it, why many adults do not reject the religious dope so very carefully implanted is, that, like "Peter Pan," they never grow up mentally.

Are opponents of Anglo-Catholicism fighting against God? is a query suggested by a Guernsey reader of a daily paper. The recent wonderful growth of Anglo-Catholicism makes him wonder if such is the case. We, on the other hand, noting the widespread growth of secularist notions and the resultant humanizing of Christian institutions and views, could equally well ask pious opponents of Free-thought a similar question. There would be, however, little sense in doing that. We would prefer rather to ask: Are opponents of Free-thought fighting against true civilization? The answer we leave to the historians who in the future will be able to view this age with eyes freed from the Christian squint.

Colonel Wedgwood, M.P., told a Conference of Chief Constables that too much instinctive obedience leads to the slave mentality. Well, what if it does? That type of mentality must be a good thing, or the churches wouldn't expend most of their energy creating it.

The Ecclesiastical Commissioners derive from mining royalties a sum exceeding £400,000 annually. What good the Church does with this no one knows, but it is certain that if any royalties are unwarrantable these are. Churchmen are quite willing to get rid of these royalties—provided they can make a good deal of the transaction. When the Church Assembly next meets, the

Bishop of Manchester is to move a resolution expressing satisfaction with the readiness of the Commissioners to get rid of these royalties, "subject to fair compensation." In other words, the Church is willing to be bought out. That is exactly what occurred in the case of slavery. When it was no longer possible to hold slaves with decency, good Christians and Christian institutions sold the slaves they could no longer find it convenient to own.

A correspondent writes asking why we "jeer" at the Nonconformists for their belief in the State establishment of religion. We do not jeer at them for that, but because they do not really believe in what they say, or do not say what they mean. The disestablishment of a Church is one thing, but that is not of necessity the disestablishing of religion. What the Nonconformists are after is the equal establishment of all Christian Churches. Their quarrel is that the favours of the State are unequally divided—Episcopalians getting more than their share. And we see very little real gain in disestablishing one particular Church, if we are going to endow all the churches with the privileges at present possessed by one of their number.

The sublime egotism, masquerading under Christian humility, has a lesser brother called Spiritualism. We have only the *Daily Chronicle* report before us, but, if it is correct, the latest recruit to the other world business is a peculiar case. Mr. Oliver Baldwin in the course of a brotherhood meeting gave us a choice sample of spiritualistic reasoning. When he was motor-cycling at forty miles an hour he heard a voice cry distinctly, "Take care." He slowed down just before a cross road, and just missed running into a touring car. Now if the voice had said, "Accelerate," Mr. Baldwin would have been saved just the same. Item number two is more pathetic—when he was on active service a voice spoke to him whilst he was sitting with a corporal, "Go and see your company." He went, and a few seconds later a shell landed on the spot where he had been sitting and killed the corporal. The unfortunate corporal's views on Spiritualism are not recorded, but one fact emerges; the spiritualistic influence appears to be a class movement, or it would also have given the non-commissioned officer a warning. If the brotherhood meeting likes that sort of thing, then we presume that that is the sort of thing the members like.

There appears to be an advertising agency which supplies the various churches with what is considered to be gems of wisdom which are printed in large letters and hung up for the edification of the public. One such appears outside a North London Church advises us that "You cannot unlock the door of truth with the rusty keys of prejudice." Of course, it does not really mean what it says, because that would imply that religious folk should get rid of their prejudice and look for truth. What it means is that you must not have any opinion against religion. If it means anything else we wonder whether the officiating parson would advise his congregation to have an occasional look at the *Freethinker*—just to know what the other side has to say? We doubt it.

Never very original, Mr. Lloyd George, speaking in a Welsh chapel in London, returned to the "If Jesus came to London" stunt. He thinks that the Home Secretary would have had him watched as a dangerous character, the Sermon on the Mount would have been censored, and he would have been excluded from the Liberal Shadow Cabinet. This strikes us as rather thin, although some of the papers refer to it as "an amazing speech." All it really amounts to is that if Jesus came to London he would back up Mr. Lloyd George, and Mr. George is doing what all followers have always done—read into the character of Jesus just what they thought he ought to have meant.

Why should the authorities interfere with Jesus at

all? His advice that men should not trouble after the morrow, and that God would feed as he feeds and clothes the birds of the air, would not upset the authorities in the least. The teaching that men should turn one cheek when the other was smitten, would exactly suit any government in existence. The teaching that this world did not matter, but that the great thing was the life to come, is one that all sorts of tyrannies have endorsed and upheld—not always for themselves, but always for other people. To cure physical disease by faith, and social ones by trust in God, is not a teaching of a very dangerous kind. Mr. George's statement that the teachings of Jesus were revolutionary is just so much nonsense. They were no more revolutionary than are the teachings of a Hindoo fakir. They are often nonsensical, but they do not include the kind of nonsense that threatens revolution.

Transylvania has been suffering from some disastrous floods, and in one case the population dashed into a church, and were praying when the building collapsed. Sixty persons were killed and three hundred injured. That was quite a pretty illustration of the power of prayer. We would remind Mr. Lloyd George that this was the kind of thing that Jesus clearly advised. Faith would work miracles. But it quite failed to save these people in Transylvania. God's share in the business appears to have been to drown and crush. It will be man's work to try and redress the balance of evil.

Major Doll, of Chelsea, left his estate, after his wife's death, to his nephews and nieces, provided they were well behaved, not drunkards, insane, imbecile, or bankrupt, or have embraced the Roman Catholic religion, Nonconformity, or any of the fads like Christian Science. There appears to be plenty of religions left, if the heirs wish for one, or they might decide to do without any. It is not clear what was in the mind of the testator.

Drum and trumpet literature does not help towards peace on earth, declares Lady Dudley de Chair. True. One curious fact is that the authors of this kind of literature are almost invariably pious and staunch supporters of some ecclesiastical organization. Again, if we may judge by the bloodthirsty activities of "God's people" throughout the Christian era, Salvation through the Blood of the Lamb literature is about as helpful towards peace as is the other kind. We suggest that international peace is likely to become a fact only when both kinds of literature are relegated to the museum shelf.

The Y.M.C.A. enquiry into "What Youth is Thinking," has elicited the fact that many youths believe in the importance of prayer. Three difficulties, however, are frequently mentioned, namely, the extent to which auto-suggestion is operative, want of faith, and doubt about the necessity of prayer if God is all-powerful. Evidently the new generation is not sucking in the Christian pap with its eyes shut.

"One has heard preachers consoled for any lack of conversions," says a Methodist writer, "by the suggestion that to keep a man a Christian is as good as making a man a Christian." Well, it takes all the energies of a preacher nowadays to do either the one thing or the other.

Charles Dickens when earning his living as a newspaper reporter declared: "Night after night I record predictions that never come to pass, professions that are never fulfilled, explanations that are only meant to mystify and wallow in words." No, he wasn't recording his impressions after recording a big batch of Sunday evening pulpit utterances. He was only referring to his work in the Press Gallery. Still, one can imagine he would have said something very like that if he had had to report pulpit "gas" instead of Parliament "hot air."

To Correspondents.

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

"FREETHINKER" ENDOWMENT TRUST.—J. Wearing, 10s.

A. B. MOSS.—Pleased to know that you are better for your holiday.

J. HAYES.—There is nothing that specially calls for reply in the pamphlet you send. The man who can deny the growth of Freethought would be unaffected by any kind of argument.

T. E. HUMPHREYS.—If all did keep their children free from religious instruction there would be very little religion left in a civilized country. Christians know this quite as well as we do.

A. HEATH.—Glad to have your appreciation of the "Views" in last issue.

C. GOSNOLD.—Stamps received and paper being sent. Thanks also for suggestion.

A. M.—We agree with you that Strindberg is a provoking writer, but he is perhaps more valuable than one with whom we agree. It is good to be forced to do one's own thinking.

J. McCORNEY.—Silence has not been maintained concerning the alleged cures at Lourdes. But one cannot keep on "exposing" the stupidity of things which only those who decline to see disproofs would accept. The fact is that the great lying Church takes care to advertise its claims well, and that imposes upon a certain number of simple-minded people. And we doubt if anything that we could say would ever reach that class.

C. MAITLAND.—A man who declines to read what is said against his belief, but insists upon your stating it in words, is hardly worth bothering with. It strikes us that his mind is closed to conviction.

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

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

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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 62 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, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

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Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 62 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.

Freethinkers, like the rest of the world, take holidays when they can get them, and now that the holiday season is with us, we suggest that it would be a good thing to take a few extra copies of the *Freethinker* and scatter them round during their travels. One never knows where they end, or what good they may do. Those who do not care to get the current issue, may have small parcels for distribution on application.

We take this opportunity of thanking those of our

friends who are taking advantage of sending the *Freethinker* for six weeks to those who are likely to become interested in it. We are sending out a goodly number each week on this plan, and are prepared to send as many as are ordered. All we require is names and addresses, with three penny stamps to cover cost of postage. When a man, or woman, has had the *Freethinker* delivered for six weeks there is good hopes of their becoming regular subscribers.

We do not usually expect to find criticisms of the Churches in the *Sporting Life*, but a racy article from that paper is sent us by a reader, and we should say, after reading it that the writer is not unacquainted with the *Freethinker*. The article is concerned with the new Betting Tax, and with the attitude of the Churches towards betting. Here are a few paragraphs:—

Apart from theology being a form of fortune-telling, the "business end" of theology is a form of betting on "tips" given by the theological "bookmakers." You put your stakes in "the plate" to back a chance of getting "a place" in "the next world," but the "tipsters" know no more than you do if their "tips" will be "winners," or whether you will get "a place" or not. It is true your stakes are not heavy, usually threepence, paid in silver, but the "bet" practically is nothing to threepence.

These "bets," however, have one advantage, which is that as you cannot know the result until you are dead, you cannot "chase your losses." The theological tipsters and fortune-tellers are as dependent upon "clients" as the racing bookmaker, but as the former gives no credit for his threepenny "bets" he gets no "knockers," these being those who bet on credit and then do not pay up if they lose. Thus, if you get enough "clients," theological betting (nothing to threepence) is a safe and very profitable business.

We are decidedly of opinion that the sporting writer scores heavily in this encounter.

We are asked to announce that Freethought literature, including the *Freethinker*, may be obtained from Mr. J. G. Dobson, of 6 Daniel's Road, Bordesley Green, Birmingham. Mr. Dobson is making a gallant attempt to push sales in his district, and as it is a labour of love we hope that Bordesley Freethinkers will do what they can to help.

We are glad to learn that in spite of many opposition meetings Mr. McLaren had a very successful gathering at Brockwell Park on Sunday last. There were many questions asked, and the lecturer's courtesy and ability produced a marked effect upon his listeners. These are two qualities of much greater value in open-air speaking than many speakers appear to realize.

The Man of Sorrows.

On hearing Handel's oratorio, "The Messiah," and with special reference to the extract from Isaiah, "Whose sorrow was like unto his sorrow?"

"Whose sorrow was like unto his?" they cry—
And turn to view the cross with tearful face,
Despite his mother, prostrate at its base,
Distraught with grief and every breath a sigh.
Love for her wayward son had brought her nigh;
She could not leave him even in disgrace,
Though he denied to her a mother's place,
And fled from home ignoring every tie.
He never felt the common pangs of men:
The death of lisping child or loving wife;
Our homes, our kith and kin, art, beauty, life,
He bade us spurn them—all of worth that is—
For paltry, sensuous bribes in heaven. Why then
Still ask, "Whose sorrow was like unto his?"

THOMAS C. FALCONER.

Old Tales.

UP in the north here we have an uncanny legend about a certain Laidley Worm. One of the old kings, so the story runs, who had his domicile in Bamburgh Castle, took unto himself a second wife, who, being jealous of the surpassing beauty of his daughter, sought the aid of witchcraft to turn the girl into a loathsome worm. It spat and devastated the country for miles around. And the tale went forth across the seas and reached the ears of her brother who was seeking adventure in a foreign land, as young men were wont to do in those days. And deep down in his soul he knew that the Worm was his sister, so he built a ship with masts of rowan wood and sped homeward to the rescue. The wife was on the look-out with witch charms to do him a mischief, but the rowan tree was a specific against unholy things, and the sister was restored to her original shape by her brother's kisses, and the wife condemned to wander the Northumbrian shore, in the shape of a toad, which spat venom at the village virgins until the arch-enemy of that sort of thing banished her into the realm of myth.

With the "will to believe" any way well developed, the story goes fairly well in the quaint, halting doggerel in which it is written. How it originated is another matter, although a recent writer on Border matters sees in it an analogy of Christianity displacing Paganism, and seems to assume that it was part of Christianity's work to destroy the legends of an earlier age. But there is nothing clearer than that Christianity flourished and grew fat on tales equally absurd. Much of the abundant wealth of the Bishopric of Durham is derived from the offerings of devout persons who believed that the incorruptible body of St. Cuthbert could perform miracles. The sea stood aside for the passage of the saint's body and his banner scattered the enemy wherever it was displayed. The monkish journals are full of stories of the most astonishing happenings in the region of faith. The *Lanercost Chronicle*, which is a source book for much of the history concerning the relationship between England and Scotland, contains enough to try the faith of the most robust believers. And they were obviously told to strike terror into sinners and augment the coffers of the church. There was in Clydesdale

a certain fellow wearing the garments of holy religion who lived wickedly and died most wretchedly, being bound by excommunication on account of certain acts of sacrilege committed in his own monastery. Long after his body had been buried, it vexed many in the same monastery by appearing in the shade of night. This child of darkness proceeded to the house of Sir Duncan Delisle in order to disturb the faith of simple persons and terrify them by molesting them in broad daylight, or, more probably by a secret decree of God, that he might indicate by such token those who were implicated in his misdoing. Having then assumed a bodily (whether natural or ariel is uncertain, but it was hideous, gross, and tangible) he used to appear at noonday in the dress of a black monk and settle on the highest parts of the dwellings or store-houses. And when men either shot at him with arrows or thrust him through with forks, straightway was burnt to ashes in less time than it takes to tell it. Also he so savagely felled and battered those who attempted to struggle with him as well nigh to shatter all their joints. Now, the knight's eldest son, an esquire of full age, was especially troublesome to him in this kind of fighting; and one evening when the father was sitting with his household round the hearth, this malignant creature came

in their midst, throwing them into confusion with missiles and blows. All the rest having taken to their heels, the esquire attacked him single-handed; but, most sad to say, he was found on the morrow slain by the creature. Wherefore if it be true that a demon has no power over anybody except one who leads the life of a hog, it is easy to understand why that young man came to such an end.

Sheer, unblinking lying, which led Sir Herbert Maxwell, the translator of the *Lanercost Chronicle*, to remark: "It is not so easy to understand how Christianity retained its ascendancy among reasonable beings when its doctrines were enforced by such gross and unscrupulous falsehoods as those with which this Chronicle abounds." But the joy of reading the Chronicles comes from the exercise of the judgment in sifting the wheat from the chaff. There is undoubted truth in the pages of all of them, although hard to find. Saint Cuthbert, whose body, after long years of wandering, selected its own burial place, had all the alleged dislike of women manifested in the writings of the early churchman. Long after he was dead he was capable of raising an unholy row if a woman entered his church at Durham and when he was passing the last years of his life on the Farne islands, no female animal of any kind was allowed to pollute his domain. He even cut milk out of his dietary. "Where there is a cow," he said, "there is a woman, and where there is a woman there is mischief." From a certain point of view there is a profound truth in that, but the holy brethren were the last to profit by it. Some of the fathers-in-God were very human; they cocked their ears to the call that evicted the first of mankind from Eden and were very ready to imperil their immortal souls in that way—just like an ordinary mortal. Maybe Satan walked more abroad in those days or maybe it was only the feminine desire to bring down the biped who had dared to live as if the female side of creation did not exist. Whatever it was, the chronicler now and again had to record that Brother Barnabas or Ambrose had been philandering among the daughters of men and was dreeing his weird in consequence. And there is certain lack of condemnation in the tone of the scribe that suggests that looseness of sexual morals was an everyday affair in the houses of religion. The *Chronicle* says:—

There happened on Christmas Day something to which I give a place here by way of a joke and for the sake of an old saw that gamblers and loose livers always come to poverty. Now, there was in the parish of Well, a careful but profligate cleric, proctor for the rector. He kept unlawful company with the pretty daughter of a certain widow in the village, keeping her privately in the house of the absent parson. But his master's steward arrived unexpectedly to collect the rents of the churches, he had to make way for him and could not think where to hide his bedfellow that she might not be seen. He placed her, therefore, in a secret cell where he kept the rents and valuables of the church because of the security of the place. The girl, when she beheld around her plenty of cash, nor could expect in any other way to provide a competency for herself, thrust into her bosom a bag containing ten marks, and, pretending that she required to withdraw, requested the proctor, whom she called privily, to allow her to go out. He, suspecting no deceit, allowed this daughter of guile to depart, and on the morrow, when he was obliged to render account and acquit himself of what he had received, he found himself cheated by his whore, in consequence whereof he lost his appointment.

That might have happened anywhere or at any time, and there may be some truth in the *Chronicle's*

account of Father John, the parish priest of Inverleithen, who, on the Easter day of 1282,

revived the profane rites of Priapus, collecting young girls from the villages and compelling them to dance in a circle to Father Bacchus. When he had these females in a troop, out of sheer wantonness he led the dance carrying in front on a pole a representation of the human organs of reproduction and singing and dancing himself like a mime, he viewed them all and stirred them to lust.

That was a heinous crime, carrying the thing outside the Church, and the writer records that within a twelvemonth the offending priest had a knife stuck between his ribs, "God thus awarding him what he deserved for his wickedness." That was one way of displacing Paganism—an effective way. The body of Paganism, however, wasn't so much displaced as absorbed. Every Christian festival or saints' day or ceremony has more or less of the old Paganism hidden away at its root, and if it is ignored and kept from the public view in these days, it is not because Christianity is inherently hostile to it; more probably it is due to the tide of civilization, eddying backward and forward during the ages, leaving the old beliefs stranded high up on "the naked shingles of the world."

H. B. DODDS.

Subman, Man and Superman.

IV.

(Continued from page 395.)

MAN has evolved from Subman, therefore we are entitled to ask, will Superman evolve from Man? By Superman we do not mean Supernatural Man, but the lineal descendant of Man. We make bold to answer that question axiomatically:—

As Man is to Subman so will Superman be to Man. The Subman was the ancestral parent of Man before he had evolved the recognizable characteristics that distinguish Man from the lower animals. When he passed the level of a clever Anthropoid Ape he became Man.

The next stage must be from Man to Superman, always assuming that he continues to advance in the future as he has in the past. If Future Man should attain to the same degree of superiority over us that we have attained over the Subman, he would merit the title of Superman, because he would have lost many of the defects and general characteristics of Present Day Man, and developed a much greater intelligence and brain power. He would take a different outlook on life and its varied problems, and would have evolved a greatly changed nature, giving the lie to the often repeated assertion that human nature does not change. He would be able to avoid the errors and crudities of Present Day Man, and would probably regard us with the same mixed feelings that we experience when we think of the Subman, our ancestral parent.

But the sceptic may, quite justifiably, ask what right we have to presuppose a Superman. He may enquire if it is not just as likely that Man may remain stationary, or even recede again to the state of the Subman.

Our answer is that all the evidence of evolution points to an opposite conclusion.

Evolution has been from the original Protoplasmic atom to man in his present stage, slowly but surely, through vast ages, not continuously but irregularly, like the advancing and receding of an incoming tide, each throbbing and pulsating wave reaching higher and higher; and man will not have reached the acme

of his evolutionary progress until he has explored every line of advance to the end.

Can anyone say that Man has not many broad and lengthy avenues for advance stretching out before him? Let us try to visualize and scrutinize some of these avenues. It is evident that an increasing brain-power, a greater intelligence, or what is implied by the term "common sense," will be the determining factor in the evolution of the Superman.

The Subman acted almost entirely from instinct, and reasoned little, if at all. Man to-day is guided about equally by instinct on the one hand and by reason on the other, but it is logical to assume that Superman will act almost entirely from reason. Everything will be deliberately planned for the greatest good to all.

Upon what do we base the logicity of this assumption?

We base it upon the fact that the Subman was individualistic, and probably cannibalistic. Most of the lower animals are cannibalistic and many savage races have been cannibals.

Nevertheless, it was the evolution of the "Mothering Instinct" that first gave Subman his mental superiority over the other animals. This instinct steadily grew and evolved into other instincts: the family, herd, tribal, communal, national, and racial instincts. And to-day there is evolving a new world-wide instinct which for lack of a better name might be called the social, international, and co-operative instinct.

It was the continual progressive evolution of these instincts that always kept Man the fittest to survive. The herd could survive where the individual would have succumbed. We observe later that the larger tribe dispossessed the smaller until increasing skill and intelligence made it possible, in some cases, for the smaller community to defeat the larger. And as we approach the present day we find the more intelligent races generally surviving. Usually those countries with the best organized governments, the best equipped armies, and the best supplied commissariats.

But in recent times we find a profound change occurring as the result of greater skill and intelligence. Gradually the size of the armies and navies have increased, the murderous qualities of armaments have grown more appalling. Physical fitness and personal bravery have become of less importance and the quality of shell, bomb and poison gas of more importance.

But in times of remote antiquity things were different. What counted most was physical fitness. The combatant who survived was the one who was equipped with the greatest strength, agility, and intelligence, who possessed the best sight and hearing, and who was the swiftest on foot. Those killed in warfare were usually the least fit. The progenitors of the race were the fittest to survive. The greater the fitness to survive the greater the number of offspring.

And even later when sword and spear had been shaped and fashioned, and armies organized, the greatest odds were always that the fittest mentally and physically would survive when engaged in mortal combat.

After a battle there was usually a massacre of the non-combatants. The God of Battles of the Old Bible seemed to have issued standing orders, through his prophets, that when the enemy was defeated there was to be a general slaughter of every man, married woman and child. And so splenetic was this revengeful old Hebrew God that in one notable instance he commanded that they should also kill the unfortunate

dog that misconducted himself by committing a nuisance against the wall.

Only the maidens were to be spared, and they were to be divided among their captors as concubines. In this manner God's chosen people, perhaps, unwittingly, improved their race by a continual infusion of alien blood.

But reverting to the present time, we find a great change has taken place. Increasing brain power has resulted in the invention and perfection of many murderous weapons; monstrous guns with an enormous range, shells and torpedoes weighing nearly a ton, automatic machine guns that spit and splutter a hail of death, bomb-dropping aircraft, torpedo-laden submarines, giant battleships, "tank" and other armoured motor monstrosities, murderous hand grenades, barrages of poison gas and deadly gas shells.

We find that in modern warfare it is the pick of the armies on both sides that perish. Physical fitness is of no avail against poison gas and explosive shell. The fittest potential fathers are mangled and slaughtered, or perhaps return home maimed for life.

The C 3 man, or army reject, procreates the human species. War which formerly meant the survival of the fittest now means mainly the survival of the unfit.

This can only point to one definite conclusion: a race must evolve that will settle all disputes by reason, instead of physical force, and that race will be the fittest to survive. Such a race may already be evolving. There may be something symptomatic in the evolution of the much maligned Conscientious Objector, and the recent signing of a pledge by many people not to take part in any future war.

We may safely predict that, when the era of the Superman dawns, war and mortal combat will have completely ceased. All matters of disagreement will be settled by logic and reason. Our descendants of the remote future will look back on the wars of today as we look back on the individualist combats of gladiators.

Having crossed war off the list of the characteristics of the Superman, we may now explore other lines of evolutionary advance.

As we have seen, primitive man was very individualistic, but with increasing knowledge became more Socialistic.

It was indeed an epoch in human history when the first person willingly shared something he really wanted for himself with another who had none.

As a dog fights for a bone, so we can conceive of the Subman satisfying his own appetite completely before he would allow a less powerful and pugnacious companion to share his spoil.

We have observed that gradually larger and larger bodies have co-operated together in various ways, and that always the greater the co-operation the greater the success. This observation convinces us that the more man co-operates the fitter he will be to survive. It follows that the Superman must have evolved a co-operative nature. He will invariably endeavour to act so as to produce the greatest amount of good and happiness to all mankind. He will be extremely sensitive about doing anything that might in any way injure his fellow man. He will have evolved such a changed nature that all anti-social instincts, such as cheating, deceiving, and domineering over his fellow man will be utterly foreign and repugnant to him.

If our reasoning is logical, this side of human nature will evolve because those who possess these qualities will survive and flourish, owing to their greater adaptability to their environment, while the anti-social or atavistic person will be regarded with

mistrust, and all his activities will be curtailed as a result of his own inherent folly.

Those who best succeed in adapting themselves to their environment will sail boldly down in the middle of the mighty stream of Evolution, caressed by every helpful breeze; while those who fail to conform to the ever changing environment will be doomed to certain extinction and oblivion, wrecked on the cruel rocks protruding from the fossil-strewn shores of the River Time.

There is another ramification of this problem that should be noticed. Many people, who would not think of cheating their neighbour directly, have no scruples about cheating the State or the Corporation, which means cheating their neighbour indirectly. But if it be true that the fittest to survive will be those who co-operate in the most perfect manner, there must evolve a changed public conscience which would impel men to serve the State with absolute honesty and fidelity.

Perfect co-operation would mean that an abundance of the prime necessities of life, for the whole community would be produced before time would be devoted to the production of luxuries, or what might be considered as superfluities. Unhealthy or injurious foods and drinks would not be produced at all.

ONA MELTON.

(To be Concluded.)

Correspondence.

AN AGNOSTIC OUTLOOK.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have read with interest and pleasure the article on "The Agnostic Outlook," by "Ephphatha," in a recent issue of the *Freethinker*. I have enjoyed his restraint, his wishfulness to give fair play to the other side, his advocacy of calm moderation in matters of the intellect. But it seems to me that the spirit of liberality has carried his reasoning further than is warranted by the exercise of logic alone, and it makes me wonder whether he has ever followed up the implications of the agnostic attitude which he describes.

"There are some things which, in the present stage of mental development, we cannot ever know.....Of any of the primary Christian doctrines there is, and can be, no real proof nor disproof." "When confronted with any theological proposition" the Agnostic is enjoined to adopt the attitude of science and, in the absence of sufficient data, to suspend judgment. The principle of suspending judgment in the absence of the requisite data is a sound one, but the principle that "any theological proposition" supplies this condition is surely not. If we were to allow that it is, for the same reasons we should have to allow that any proposition, however absurd, must be received with suspended judgment, so long as we introduce into it an element of the supernatural. Suppose I were to say that a lump of lead would float on water if God willed it so, and added that God could be induced so to will it, if prayer were offered up. What this amounts to is that there are circumstances, and moreover circumstances within our control, in which lead can be made to float on water. Science has accumulated sufficient data concerning specific gravity to enable us to decide in the case of lead, but not in the case of lead under the special influence of the Almighty. And it does not matter how many times experience contradicts us, we are open to argue that God has not answered the prayer yet, but he will next time, for, according to "Ephphatha," God and his ways can never be a matter of knowledge to us. In this way the best-established conclusions of science could be rendered questions incapable of judgment merely by the addition of a little theological tincture. It might be thought that I am here taking an extreme or even ridiculous instance for the purpose of argument, but, in fact, it is a well-known part of

Christian doctrine that God could suspend or alter, at will, the uniformity of natural phenomena, and, more than this, Christians of the present day not infrequently offer up prayers in order to induce him to do so. And what does the alleged miracle involve more than this? Yet is science to suspend judgment as to whether water can or ever did become wine, because it is in possession of all the requisite data except a knowledge of God's will and powers. If "Ephphatha" is right, science might as well admit that its truths are at best only useful opinions, but not matters to which the term knowledge in its fullest sense is properly applicable, for in every case we are ultimately confounded by the mysterious will of God. And if this is so, are we entitled to speak of knowledge at all?

I feel sure that I do not truthfully present "Ephphatha's" philosophic attitude, yet I do present the logical consequences of it.

What many people fail to see is that a theological proposition is always one directly concerning life and the world, at all events, where it involves a cardinal doctrine of religion. And even the metaphysical doctrines with which the Roman Catholic Church so largely concerns itself cannot be entirely separated from philosophic foundations. The speculations of religion overlap and conflict with those of science at every point, and it is surely absurd to say that a theological objection must in every case render science in the position of Agnosticism. "Ephphatha" chooses for one of his examples the doctrine of immortality, and would have us believe that the combined sciences of Anthropology, Physiology, and Psychology are not competent for a judgment to be formed as to whether the human body or personality will survive for ever. If this were really the case, it would seem to me that the work of these sciences had been for the most part in vain, for they would have left us with no ascribable certitude regarding the properties and possibilities of the material with which they have dealt.

There is no one the theologian loves more dearly than the scientist who is willing to suspend his judgment at the mention of any absurd possibility, and I am sure "Ephphatha" does himself less than justice when he takes up a scientific standpoint from which he could be forced into this position.

MEDICUS.

SIR,—The "Agnostic outlook" of your contributor, "Ephphatha," seems to be a curiously muddled one. Having told us that there can be "no real proof or disproof" of the existence of the Christian God, "Ephphatha" later makes the Agnostic position dependent on proof—the inadequacy of which compels suspended judgment. But these are two distinct and contradictory propositions: one, that the evidence is irrelevant; two, that it is inadequate. If it be irrelevant on what do we suspend judgment? There is no case. Agnosticism, so far as it is true to itself, stands for complete mental vacuity.

Sir Leslie Stephen said, "The Agnostic is one who asserts—that no one denies—that there are limits to human intelligence." Well, to assert what no one denies is rather a waste of time; the proposition is intelligible but hardly useful. It is kind of "Ephphatha" to remind us of human limitations, but hardly necessary, since the fact may be sure of asserting itself as and when required. To dignify human limitation with a philosophic title is absurd. Whilst to assert that the subject-matter of religion lies beyond these limits is to distort all rational values. One may so dwell on the fact of humanity's limitations as to forget some of its accomplishments, and as an Atheist I am more anxious to dwell on the latter.

This is how "Ephphatha" suspends his judgment on the gods of Christians, and incidentally provides us with an example of courteous consideration for their tender susceptibilities: "They think that their feelings are the voice of their God; they are right! their feelings are the voice of their God, but their God is their feelings!.....they deify their emotions and ludicrously prostrate themselves before incarnate imbecility."

"Incarnate imbecility" is not bad for one who presumes to lecture us on the decencies of controversy.

But, if a Christian worships his own incarnate imbecility his god is a myth. We have already passed judgment on a subject about which the Agnostic professes to know "nothing."

The whole tenor of "Ephphatha's" article points to the fact that his use of the term Agnostic has no better foundation than a desire to dissociate himself from the more unpopular term. This, however, is probably as unconscious as it was in my own case. It was only after I abandoned Agnosticism that I realized how much my profession of it had been due to the desire to stand well with my respectable neighbours. But I never hid my identity behind such an atrocious *non-de-plume!*

VINCENT J. HANDS.

CORRECTION.

SIR,—In my letter appearing in your issue of June 27, I stated the longitude of New Siberia is 140W; it should have been 140E.

WILLIAM CLARK.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

SIR,—Mr. Bedborough is inclined to twist the statements in my earlier letter to suit his case, but he does it very courteously. I remain unconvinced by his arguments, and it may interest him to know that I have passed through the stage of opposition to Capital Punishment and come to the conclusion that the law should remain upon the Statute Book for application when required. This is the "law" I referred to. In every class of crime but murder, we make, or endeavour to make, the punishment suitable; the victim does not lose his life, and, in some measure, receives compensation, even if it is a salve only to his feelings; both he and the criminal continue members of the community and may profit by their experience.

But murder (to distinguish, I will say deliberate murder) is such a complete destruction of life with all its potential use to society, that neither "science nor humanity" can find any compensation, and the only fitting punishment is death. I would return the sexual homicide to society only when secured against repetition.

Civilization is still only a very thin veneer (even Mr. Bedborough admits he would resort to club or revolver if necessary!) and if sentimentalists are going to coddle murderers and treat them merely as naughty boys, the whole criminal code should be abolished and common crime go unpunished, for there can be no comparative scale.

I have no blind opposition to Mr. Bedborough's cause, and when we observe such regulations and methods in our social life that the production of potential murderers is all but eliminated, we may then discuss the abolition of the death penalty. At present Mr. Bedborough begins at the wrong end, and the road, in any event, is a long one.

Mr. Roy Calvert is not quite correct in stating that nine out of every ten are not executed. In 1922 there were sixty cases of murder, and, after deducting the insanity cases, thirty-five received the death sentence, ten were commuted, and the balance represents seventy per cent. of execution.

R. H. YELDIAM.

SWIFT THE SCEPTIC.

SIR,—There is a good account of Swift's religious principles in Bradlaugh's *Half Hours with the Freethinkers*. General Grimouard, in his *Essai Sur Bolingbroke*, states on good authority that the Dean and the statesman were of the same sentiments at bottom. According to Mr. Lytton Stracey, Voltaire and Swift lived for three months together at Lord Peterborough's. Swift wrote a preface to the Dublin edition of Voltaire's works. Swift says in *Gulliver's Travels*:

I remember it was with extreme difficulty that I could bring my master to understand the meaning of the word *opinion*, or how a point could be disputable; because reason taught us to affirm or deny only where we are certain; and beyond our knowledge we cannot do either.

This quite anticipates modern Rationalism. In another part of *Gulliver* it is suggested that life may have been "produced by the heat of the sun upon corrupted mud

and slime, or from the ooze and froth of the sea." Swift gave the planet Mars two satellites when few people knew he had one. Hazlitt says, in his *English Poets*: "Oh, when shall we have such another Rector of Laracor! I can at this time of day forgive Swift for being a Tory." I think we must also forgive him for being a parson.

JOHN STEPHENS.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JUNE 24, 1926.

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Coles, Neate, Quinton, Rosetti, Samuels, and Silverstein, Mrs. Quinton and Miss Kough. The Secretary was absent through indisposition.

Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed. The monthly financial statement was presented and adopted and the pass book produced.

New members were admitted for Glasgow, Newcastle, South London, West Ham, the Parent Society and Weston-super-Mare, and permission for the formation of a Branch at the last-named town was received and granted.

This being the first meeting of the new Executive, the following Committees were then re-elected:—

Benevolent Fund.—Mrs. Quinton and Miss Kough, Messrs. Rosetti and Samuels.

Propagandist.—Messrs. Clifton, Moss, Quinton, and Rosetti.

Correspondence having been read and instructions taken, the President reported on the Annual Conference, which, taking into consideration the adverse circumstances created by the General Strike, was highly successful. Motions Nos. 10, 11, 13, 15, and 16 were dealt with and Motions 9, 12, 14, and 17 were remitted to a future meeting.

On the motion of Mrs. Quinton a vote of sympathy with the Secretary was carried unanimously, and the meeting closed.—K. B. K.

Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission.

Mr. Whitehead writes:—

Our hopes for fine weather in Newcastle were not fulfilled. We had a week of the wettest weather experienced for a long time. An officious policeman provided some excitement by forbidding me to speak in the Bigg Market. As I had obtained permission previously from the officials at the Police Station, I went on with the meeting, but, nevertheless, narrowly escaped arrest! I was booked, and, as a result, in one way and another I made five visits to the Police Station. Eventually the matter was dropped. I addressed six meetings, making a total of twelve for the fortnight, in addition to other attempts. Mr. and Miss Bartram, Mr. Carlton, and especially Mr. Macara, gave me great assistance, all of them attending the whole series, and I thank them very heartily. The coal dispute affects Newcastle very seriously, and this, together with the holiday week, made the collections somewhat small.

Mr. Whitehead is in Hull this week and then goes to Birmingham.—E. M. V.

THOMAS PAINE.

I can well remember when an asserted intimacy with the writings of Paine marked a man from his fellows and invested him in children's minds with a horrid fascination. The writings themselves were to be seen only in bookshops of evil repute, and, when hastily turned over with furtive glances, proved to be printed in small type and on villainous paper. For a boy to have bought them and taken them inside a decent home would have been to run the risk of fierce wrath in this life, and the threat of it in the next. If ever there was a hung dog, his name was "Tom Paine." But history is, as we know, for ever revising her records; none of her judgments are final—*Augustine Birrell.*

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.

A Treatise Partly Theological and Partly Political, London, printed in 1689; Works of Alexander Pope, 5 vols.; Montrose, 1804; 25 per cent. to Endowment Fund.—Offers to WHITEHEAD, 22 Hamlet Road, Chelmsford.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Mr. Harry Snell, "The Future of the Family as an Institution."

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. A. D. McLaren, a Lecture.

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Outing to Richmond. Train 9.30 a.m., from Bow Road (Underground). Cheap fare, 1s. 1d. return. Lunch to be carried, tea will be arranged. Mr. F. Warner, Senr., will act as guide. All Freethinkers and friends invited.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission, July 5 to 11.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Branch of the N.S.S.)—Ramble to Bardowie Loch. Leader, Mr. A. Shanks (Natural History Society of Glasgow). Meet at Lambhill at 12 noon. (Via Blue car "5 B" to Lambhill. Jamaica Street to Lambhill, 25 minutes.)

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Square): 7.30, Mr. L. Davis, "God as Man Made Him."

HULL BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission, June 28 to July 4. Watch local papers for particulars re time and place of meeting.

FREETHINKER (Scotsman), aged 45, commercial experience, intelligent, trustworthy, excellent references, at present unemployed, would be grateful for situation.—Box 88, *Freethinker* Office, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

HAMPSHIRE.—Isolated in a church town, a middle-aged pair with Freethought sympathies desire some congenial acquaintance. Responders of either sex will please state their tastes, position, and politics, also their linguistic attainments (if any).—Address "AUTHOR," c/o *Freethinker* Office, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.1.

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

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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.

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