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## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>Bishop Gore on God.—The Editor</i> - - - - -	433
<i>Christian Apologetic Up to Date.—J. T. Lloyd</i> - - - - -	434
<i>The End of a Chapter.—Mimmermus</i> - - - - -	435
<i>Palestine Exploration and the Bible.—W. Mann</i> - - - - -	436
<i>Books and Life.—William Repton</i> - - - - -	437
<i>Subman, Man and Superman.—Ond Melton</i> - - - - -	442
<i>Thomas Clarkson: The Friend of the Slave.—Joseph Bryce</i> - - - - -	443
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

## Views and Opinions.

### Bishop Gore on God.

We hope later to notice ex-Bishop Gore's just published work on *Can We then Believe?* at some length. This is advisable, not because of its intrinsic value, but because it is regarded as a document of some importance by the religious world. For the moment, however, it is worth while dealing with a passage which occurs in the preface to the book. This runs as follows:—

I find it hard to believe that anyone, who has at present no glimpse of a divine self-disclosure, could steadily contemplate the world and humanity in the mass and find there the evidence that God is love, or even, short of that, that the purpose of the universe as a whole is good. But equally I cannot imagine that he could concentrate his attention upon the higher reaches of human development without wondering whether, after all, it must not be so.

The passage as it stands—all but the concluding sentence—is reminiscent of a famous deliverance of Cardinal Newman's, and in both cases there is the damning admission that so long as we look at the world as it is it fails to supply evidence that the purpose of the universe is good. A more logical thinker than Bishop Gore, and one less afraid to draw conclusions, would have decided that there is no evidence of purpose at all, and have left it at that. But with his preconceptions clouding his judgment the logical conclusion is alien to him. Still, the admission as it stands is well worthy of note. There is no evidence supplied by a candid examination of the world which would lead one to conclude that the purpose of the universe is a good one.

### Man and God.

A steady contemplation of the world fails to find any evidence of benevolent purpose—at most we are left with a vague "May be," and only that when we concentrate upon certain aspects of the whole. That is Bishop Gore's conclusion, and if the bishop had the courage to face the facts he would find in his own statement an explanation of the gradual weakening of religion. Belief in God begins without any reference whatever to goodness. It is concerned only with existence. If the gods are there they must receive attention. That is the philosophy

of the primitive believer, and it is a logical one. It is only later that emphasis is placed upon the goodness of God. And that is not a further discovery of the nature of God, it is an expression of the reaction of the developing social sense of man upon his religious beliefs. Men begin slowly to realize that a god who is not at least as good as human beings, while he may exist, is not worthy of being worshipped, and in order to retain the worship the character of the deity is improved. One need go no further back than the history of Christianity for proof of this. For generations no one saw anything wrong in worshipping a God who did with us as a potter does with his clay, who sent one to heaven and a dozen to hell as he would, and who forgave or condemned as he thought fit. But the development of a deity of that kind became more and more objectionable. So his alleged revelation was reinterpreted and his character was brought up to the level of his worshippers. The humanizing of God is the excuse that man makes for continuing to worship him.

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### Why Trust God?

Bishop Gore's statement reminds me of a complaint from one of our pious Labour Members of Parliament that our belief in God is only theoretical, not practical, and that we are inclined to place more faith in a millionaire than we were in God Almighty. Well, why not? Millionaires may frequently be not very admirable persons, although in a Gilbertian vein one might suggest that it is as possible to be a decent fellow with a million as it is on three pounds a week. Still, some of them are quite decent, and in any case, decent or indecent, there is no question of their existence. No one questions that. Is there any such certainty in the case of God? The existence of God is on the most favourable view only a probability, his wisdom and benevolence a mere inference, which Bishop Gore admits is unjustifiable in the absence of a revelation to that effect. Further, in a case of distress we could approach a millionaire with some amount of confidence as to the way in which he would respond. Could we place an equal reliance upon what God would do? Thousands of human beings are destroyed every year by earthquakes, by flood, or by pestilence. The world—God's world—shows no greater regard for human welfare than it does for that of the ephemeridæ. Bad as even the millionaire of Socialist fiction is, he is not quite so bad as that. For God has nothing to gain from all this destruction and suffering but the sheer pleasure of witnessing it.

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### Faith and Fact.

Why should humanity place faith in a God of this kind? As a matter of fact, when we put the matter to the test of actual experience, we find that in very many cases the professed believer places no more reliance upon God than does the avowed unbeliever. It could not well be otherwise.

A fact, a natural fact, is the most stubborn of things. We may run our heads against it as often as we will, but sooner or later we are compelled to come to terms with it. It is immovable, and the recurring concussion produces only a feeling of humiliation. The Gradgrindian philosophy was not wrong because it insisted upon keeping to facts, but because it did not take into account all the facts. And it was the neglected facts that ultimately wrecked it, as it is the neglected facts that ultimately wreck religious theories. If the belief in God answered to a natural fact, we could not go on ignoring it without paying a heavy price for our blindness or stupidity. But we can go on, generation after generation, ignoring the assumed fact of God. No man is made a penny the worse for putting it on one side, no one is clearly better for taking it into consideration. We may profess faith in God to cure disease or to move mountains, but in times of stress we fall back upon the physician or upon the engineer as being more reliable. We may say that we believe God is on the side of right, but in practice we know that being in the right gives no protection against the action of natural forces. No goodness of disposition will protect a man against the ravages of disease, nor has the social value of any individual ever acted as a guard against the knife of the assassin or prolonged his life for a single day. Man does not trust God in practice because experience has shown that it is a broken reed upon which to rely. And the crowning proof of the uselessness of God is that so many millions of people have been able to get on without him.

#### Blind Belief.

In the passage cited from Bishop Gore there is the tacit admission that if we leave revelation on one side there is nothing on which to base a reasonable belief in God. So that, when all is said and done, all the elaborate argumentation to prove the existence of God is so much verbal dust thrown in the eye of common sense. You cannot prove the existence of God from a study of nature, still less can you prove the existence of a good God. Common sense rejects the one, ordinary decency rejects the other. If you already accept revelation, all is plain sailing. You must believe, to begin with, in a "divine disclosure," then all the rest is easy. With that we quite agree, but your belief must precede examination; it does not follow it. Bishop Gore thus becomes an unintentional witness to the logical strength of the Atheistic position. The Atheist says he can see no evidence which would lead him to believe in God. Quite so, says Bishop Gore, but if you will only believe in revelation the rest is easy. In this way you prove the reasonableness or absurdity number one by adopting absurdity number two. It is Voltaire's story over again of the saint walking a hundred paces with his head under his arm. You can believe ninety-nine of those steps if you can only get over the first one. It does not appear to strike Bishop Gore that the question which sensible people are asking and have asked themselves is whether there is any justification for believing in the first step. The statement is a revelation of the mentality of the highly placed cleric, and of his blindness to the real trend of modern scientific thought. Bishop Gore is still moving in the mental atmosphere of the Middle Ages. He ignores all that the past century has taught us concerning the origin and history of the idea of God, all that we know of the blunder which brought the wholly unnecessary hypothesis of God into existence, and have a better understanding of the facts upon which that idea was based. Neither he nor other representatives of the Christian religion

to-day will fairly and honestly face the fact that there is no longer room for discussing whether God exists. There is only scope for tracing the origin and development of one of the greatest delusions that has ever troubled the human mind.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## Christian Apologetic Up To Date.

### AUTHORITY.

*Essays Catholic and Critical* devotes two sections to a discussion of this subject, namely, "Authority as a Ground of Belief," by Alfred Edward John Rawlinson, D.D., Student and Tutor of Christ Church, Oxford, and "The Authority of the Church," by Wilfred L. Knox, M.A., Priest of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, Cambridge. Dr. Rawlinson is by no means unacquainted with his subject, for a few years ago he published a book under the title of *Authority and Freedom*, and yet, though the essay is exceedingly well written, its presentation of the argument for the validity of authority in religion is fundamentally unconvincing. Take the following statement: "The Gospel does not descend from heaven immediately, as by a special revelation. It reaches men through the instrumentality and mediation of the Church." But how did the Church gain possession of it? Was it not St. Paul's proud boast that he did not receive it from man, but that it came to him "through revelation of Jesus Christ"? So sure was he of the truth of his claim that he did not hesitate to say: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." That Dr. Rawlinson is an Anglo-Catholic divine is evident from the manner in which he frames the following questions: "How is the relation of the Church to the Gospel properly to be conceived? Is the Church the creation of the Gospel? Or is the Church, in a more direct sense than such a view would suggest, the supernatural creation of God—a divine institution—the Spirit-filled Body of Christ?" One can see at a glance wherein, in the author's opinion, lies the authority of religion. If the Church is not the creation of the Gospel, or if "the Gospel is the divine message of redemption which is entrusted to the Church," it inevitably follows that the Church is the only seat of religious authority. Dr. Rawlinson says:—

Unless certain dogmatic assertions are true, the whole Gospel of Christianity falls to the ground. The truths, therefore, which to the Christian mind have appeared to be implicit in the truth of the Gospel, or to be presupposed by the assumption of the validity of the Christian Church life and devotional practices, were eventually formulated, more and more explicitly, in the shape of dogmatic propositions; with the result that a body of *credenda* arose, which in the traditionally Catholic presentation of Christianity are proposed for the acceptance of the faithful on the ground of the teaching authority of the Church.

It is perfectly clear that "unless certain dogmatic assertions are true the whole Gospel of Christianity falls to the ground"; but on what evidence does the Church declare that such "dogmatic assertions are true?" This is a question which neither Dr. Rawlinson nor Father Knox pretends to answer. The former admits the existence of difficulties, saying:—

Meanwhile, in the world of our time, all Christian teaching whatever is very definitely under challenge, and the issues are further complicated by the existence of variant forms of the Christian tradition, and of a number of more or less conflicting

religious authorities.....The mere existence in the world of conflicting religious authorities raises problems enough. It is clear that religious authority has been claimed in different quarters for a large number of statements which, because of their manifest conflict, cannot all of them be equally true, and in some cases are definitely false.....The question inevitably arises, what is the ultimate relation between authority and truth? What of the intellectually conflicting claims put forward by different self-styled authorities in the sphere of religion?

But the mere acknowledgment of difficulties by no means removes them. In fact, the difficulties are immensely greater and more important than Dr. Rawlinson's statement would lead us to imagine. Catholicism declines to recognize Protestantism as anything but deadly schism. The Pope denies the validity of all orders in the Church of England, and to the overwhelming majority of Anglicans Nonconformist orders are utterly valueless. And yet, despite all differences and contradictions, everyone of the hundreds of Christian denominations in existence regards itself as the sole holder of the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Does not the existing state of things in the religious world prove without the shadow of a doubt that there is no such thing as supernatural authority in any form of Christianity? According to Father Knox only the Catholic system of theology possesses Divine authority, by whatever Church it may be held. Thus Modernism falls under his ban, his claim being that "Modernism as hitherto expounded has obviously undermined the foundations on which Christian experience rests." Of course, this gentleman represents a party in the Anglican Church, and by no means speaks for the whole of that Communion. How radically different this essay would have been had it been written by the Rev. H. D. A. Major, B.D., Principal of Ripon Hall, Oxford, and editor of the *Modern Churchman*. He, too, could have called himself one of the "Members of the Anglican Communion."

Nothing in the world is easier than to speak and write in the name of the Lord. The prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New did so without a moment's hesitation. The early Fathers of the Church did it, though they often contradicted one another. St. Augustine, in his immortal *Confessions*, speaks to the Lord, saying among other things:—

When Thou art poured out upon us, Thou art not debased, but we are exalted, Thou gatherest us yet art not scattered. But when Thou fillest all things, dost Thou fill them with all Thyself? Or because all things cannot contain the whole of Thee, do they receive a part of Thee, and do all receive the same part at the same time? Or does each receive its own part, greater things a greater part, lesser things a lesser? Then is one part of Thee greater, another less? Or art Thou wholly everywhere, though naught receives the whole of Thee?

It was purely a monologue in which the great man indulged, the imaginary being addressed making no reply whatever. Countless myriads of prayers, in every age and land, have been directed to his fanciful throne, but no response has ever reached the earth. This fact is entirely ignored by the Rev. L. S. Thornton, Priest of the Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield, who, in his essay entitled the "Christian Conception of God," employs the following extravagant language:—

God guides the stars and he also touches the heart. He embraces all the worlds and he is also the voice that speaks in Jesus Christ. He is to be known in his cosmic relations through the severe impersonal studies of science and philosophy. Yet he can be vividly known to each of us in the pen-

trating sway of conscience and in the hidden depths of prayer. We know him through very varied schools of discipline and through many channels of revelation. None of these can be left out of account. For all contribute to the enrichment of each and every particular field of experience with which as individuals we may be most concerned.

We would ask Mr. Thornton on what authority he makes such dogmatic assertions concerning God? We are fully aware that ardent believers in all generations have given expression to similar sentiments, but that does not supply them with verification, for there has not been a time yet when superstitious credulity did not hold sway among mankind; and it should also be borne in mind that there have always been positive unbelievers in the existence of a Supreme Being, whom the Church took special delight in imprisoning and burning. Giordano Bruno was one of the noblest of them all, who on refusing to recant his views was condemned to death, and burnt at the stake in Rome on February 17, 1600. Of him Swinburne sings so sweetly in a poem called "For the Feast of Giordano Bruno, Philosopher and Martyr":—

Lift up thy light on us and on thine own,  
O soul whose spirit on earth was as a rod  
To scourge off priests, a sword to pierce their God,  
A staff for man's free thought to walk alone,  
A lamp to lead him far from shrine and throne  
On ways untrodden where his fathers trod  
Ere earth's heart withered at a high priest's nod  
And all men's mouths that made not prayer made moan.

Servetus was another pioneer Freethinker whom John Calvin was the means of putting to the cruellest death conceivable. The fact is that for several centuries Christianity has been slowly but surely losing its authority. Even in Spain it is finding it increasingly difficult to silence unbelievers, while in almost all other countries it experiences the severest struggle to keep itself alive; and *Essays Catholic and Critical* is a work unlikely to render it any substantial service. At last Freethought has come in to stay and to conquer.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The End of a Chapter.

Of all stupid entourages that of Middle-Class dissent strikes me as being the worst.—*Matthew Arnold*.

There is nothing divine beside humanity.—*Landor*.

Nought may endure but mutability.—*Shelley*.

THE announcement that Spurgeon's Tabernacle has been sold and is to be transformed into a Jewish synagogue will come as a shock to those who remember the Boanerges of Newington Butts. For forty years he was indisputably the most popular preacher in England, and his sermons attracted all and sundry. Even Matthew Arnold listened to his rolling periods and a few lines of urbane satire remain on the printed page to show what a gulf of difference there was between the most cultured of our critics and the foremost Christian evangelist of his day.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon sprang into prominence as a boy preacher in the middle of the nineteenth century. His evangelistic services in the old Surrey Zoological Gardens were so successful that the young preacher asked his admirers to build a place of worship worthy of the occasion. Cash was freely given and the Surrey Tabernacle rose like an exhalation, but it was not exactly a triumph of architecture. It was one of the ugliest buildings ever erected by the hand of man, but it held thousands of people. No organ was permitted, for Spurgeon was ever a hard-shell Baptist, and a tank for baptisms occupied a conspicuous position in the church. This place

became the Mecca of British Nonconformity for two generations, one of the show-places of the religious world, and one of the sights of London.

Spurgeon started preaching at an age when large numbers of boys are still at school. He had all the narrowness of the provincial. Once, with a plentiful lack of humour, he declared that he learnt all his theology at his nurse's knee. The confession was not without foundation, for all his life he read and expounded the Bible as if it were a copy of the *Daily Telegraph*. This is a distressing habit and very likely to lead innocent people to imagine that the word "publican" in the sacred text might imply the trade of the licensed victualler, and that the expression "divers diseases" has some relation to the pathology of deep-sea workers.

Not only was young Spurgeon a Baptist backwoodsman, but all his life he carried on the most rigid traditions of the stern creed to which he belonged. There is a touch of eighteenth-century Nonconformity in the very titles of his books, such as *A Cheque Book on the Bank of Faith*, *John Ploughman's Talk*, *The Sword and Trowel*. Considering his enormous popularity as a preacher it is curious that Spurgeon's prose should be so wooden. It was simply the language of a working man purged of its slang. There was none of the prose-poetry of John Bunyan; none of the word mastery of Baxter; none of the austere strength of Newman. Spurgeon's printed pages are but wildernesses of words; the ideas are all as secondhand and threadbare as the articles at a marine-store dealer's. Yet his oratory was such that he addressed audiences of thousands; and his tabernacle was a fashionable feature of the religious world of the Victorian period.

Mind you, the man had some wit in his earlier years, but he reserved his liveliness for his lectures. His famous address on "Candles," in which he compared the Baptists to "dips," was as lively as severe. *John Ploughman's Talk* has a few good things in it. Quite notable, too, is his advice to the Baptist College students: "Fill yourselves with your subject; take the bung out and let it go," a piece of worldly wisdom that deserved better than a narrow sectarian audience.

Spurgeon never grew in mental stature. He thought and talked precisely the same near sixty as he did at sixteen. And he was honestly indignant and even astonished when he found himself the representative of a lost cause, with all the world changing around him. Middle-class Nonconformity was ever a little dull, just a trifle slow, in appreciating intellectual matters, but even Spurgeon's stodginess could not prevent their sons and daughters absorbing new ideas. The great preacher's flock kept the flag flying bravely to the finish, but all the world realized that they were leading a forlorn hope. On the day of the great preacher's death a notice was fixed to the Church's gate: "Our beloved pastor entered heaven at 11.5 p.m.," and men lifted their eyebrows at the time-table realism in an age of unfaith.

Spurgeon wrote a shelf-full of books. He preached and printed a sermon a week for forty years. His tabernacle was crowded whenever he chose to step on to the platform. Theological students used to attend to listen to his silver voice, hoping to catch the secret of his oratory. His portrait was in thousands of shops, and thousands of homes. He was almost worshipped by the small sect to which he had devoted his talents. Yet his claim to remembrance is that he was the last preacher with a reputation to lose who sought to defend the awful doctrines of eternal damnation. On this subject he was out-of-date as a boy of sixteen. Nearing sixty he was repeating the old, bad shibboleth, his voice the more

shrill because he knew that the public conscience was no longer with him, but against him.

The fear of hell has been a whip in the hands of the priests for centuries. It has made "a goblin of the sun" for millions of Christians. And now, at long last, the conscience of the race is rising against it, and the most potent weapon of priestcraft is being broken in their hands. There are only two Christian bodies of any consequence which still enforces the dogma, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Salvation Army, the two most reactionary religious organizations in the country. There is now no preacher with a reputation to lose who dares defend eternal damnation.

This revolution in public opinion has been due to the Freethinkers, although they never get the credit of it. And it is none the less effective because the revolution has been a silent one. A black fear has been taken from the minds of men, and the earth is sweeter and cleaner for it. When some Central-African natives were brought to London for the first time they were asked what impressed them most. One spread his hands, saying: "You have turned night into day." The Freethinkers have dispelled the worst darkness of superstition and replaced it with sweetness and light. Is not Freethought justified of her children?

MIMNERMUS.

## Palestine Exploration and the Bible.

### II.

(Continued from page 422.)

No wonder that the excavator whose lot is cast in Palestine envies the lot of his more fortunate brethren, whose lot may be cast in Egypt, in Mesopotamia, or in Crete. "Not for him," says Professor Macalister, "are the palace of a Minos, the library of an Assurbanipal, the treasures of a Tutankhamun. He must be content to turn over, month after month, the sordid relics of a sordid people, only occasionally striking a spark of excitement from them."<sup>1</sup>

Palestine has been continually inhabited since Neolithic times, and modern excavation has laid bare the record left by man from that time onward, with the result that

it is no exaggeration to say that throughout these long centuries the native inhabitants of Palestine do not appear to have made a single contribution of any kind whatsoever to material civilization. It was perhaps the most unprogressive country on the face of the earth. Its entire culture was derivative. Babylon, Egypt, Crete, Rome, each in its turn, lends a helping hand; never is it stimulated to make an effort for itself. As we walk through a dirty, ill-smelling modern village, with its flat-topped huts of rough stone and mud, we may fancy ourselves, without any illegitimate straining of the imagination, in one of the "cities" of the rascally "kings" of the Tell el-Amarna period, or in a village of the time of Solomon, or of Ezra, or of the Gospels. (R. A. S. Macalister, *A Century of Excavation in Palestine*, pp. 210-211.)

We have always been taught to believe that when the Israelites, after their flight from Egypt, made their ruthless descent upon the Canaanites, that a higher civilization superseded a lower one; that the inhabitants of Palestine, who were dispossessed by the Israelites, were a low, savage, and degraded race. This is the only excuse offered for the murderous

<sup>1</sup>R. A. S. Macalister, *A Century of Excavation in Palestine*, p. 208.

campaign described in the book of Joshua. The excavations prove exactly the opposite of this fancy picture. "The Israelites," says Professor Macalister, "entered the Promised Land while they were still at a very low stage of cultural development. They found themselves among a people superior to themselves in all the manifestations of material civilization" (p. 268). The excavations prove that, "at this time there was a sudden collapse of Palestinian culture. Never very high, it had attained to respectable elevation just before. But now it does not decline; it smashes. As a result of the Israelite settlement in Canaan, the civilization of the country, such as it was, was effaced, and had to be painfully built up again with the help of the cultured Philistines" (p. 164).

Notice the expression "cultured Philistines." When Matthew Arnold sought for a word that would sum up the ignorant, uncultured, narrow-minded middle class, he picked upon the word "Philistines," taking for granted that the picture drawn of them in the Bible was correct. Since then the word has passed into the English language as a synonym for everything conventional, uncultivated, and vulgar, especially in regard to matters of art. And now the researches in Palestine have established the fact that the Philistines were cultured, and that the representation, given by the inspired Bible writers, is a malicious slander.

Another delusion destroyed by Palestinian research, is that of the pure monotheism of the ancient Israelites. In hundreds of theological treatises we read of the contrast of the Israelites worshipping one God, while surrounded by Pagan polytheists, worshipping a multitude of gods. In fact, it has been claimed, impudently claimed, that "the first chapter of Genesis is not meant to teach geology, but to teach monotheism."<sup>2</sup> But the records of ancient Palestine know nothing of distinctive monotheism. Professor Macalister observes, "From the Biblical account we should have gathered that between the Israelites and the Canaanites there was a great gulf fixed, in language, in theology, and in general morality. But now we know that there was singularly little difference between the two peoples. The Canaanites spoke a language scarcely to be distinguished from Hebrew. When the Israelites entered Canaan, they came to no foreign land; they settled among their blood brothers, served their gods, and spoke their speech."<sup>3</sup>

And, further, the same writer points out:—

Mesha tells us how he sacked a certain Israelitish city, and looted the sanctuary of its god Yahweh; he sacked another Israelite city, and looted the sanctuary of its god Dodah. Mesha can see no difference between the two deities; to the eyes of a foreign onlooker the one is equal to the other. At a later date we find a colony of Jews established in the island of Elephantine in Upper Egypt. These Jews worship Yahweh, and, in addition, at least five other gods or goddesses—native deities which they have brought with them from their home, not gods of the Egyptians round about (p. 147).

The monotheism of the Psalms, of Isaiah, and the later prophets, was not the belief of the mass of the Jewish people until very much later times. If the historian of a couple of thousand years hence were to take the philosophical writings of Spinoza and Goethe, the poetry of Tennyson, and the lamentations of Carlyle, and declare that these writings represented the beliefs of the mass of the people of our time, he would make exactly the same mistake that our theologians make, when they declare that the

ancient Jewish prophets represent the beliefs of the ancient Hebrews.

Neither was the much vaunted morality of the Israelites above that of their neighbours. Says Professor Macalister:—

We can read the dark story of Jephthah without feeling obliged to cast about for loopholes of escape from its literal truthfulness, for we have now learnt from excavation that Jephthah and his contemporaries had not advanced beyond the conception of a deity who, upon occasion, called for human sacrifice. In general, we can paint in its true colours the drab background of the stage on which were played out the sordid tragedy of the mighty Samson and his private oratory, and the gruesome episode, hardly to be matched in the records of the most degraded of savages, of the Levite of Bethlehem and his concubine. (Macalister, *A Century of Excavation in Palestine*, pp. 163-164.)

Of course no actual record has been found of Samson or Jephthah, or of Moses and Aaron, or Saul and David, or of Solomon and his fabulous temple. Between the Tell el-Amarna letters (which are most of them from Egyptian officials in Canaan and Syria, addressed to the king) and the Bible, "there is a complete lack of any coincidence of detail. If we had lost the Book of Joshua, we could not recover its narrative from the Amarna letters. Thus, where both narratives name kings of specific towns, their names are quite different in the two documents."<sup>4</sup> Neither does it fare any better with the New Testament record, for

Herod and Pilate, Annas and Caiaphas, Nicodemus and Gamaliel, exist for us only in the Books that tell us of them. A recent discovery has thrown some light upon the foundation of the Synagogue of the Libertines, whose leaders were among the bitterest accusers of the protomartyr Stephen. But it tells us of people called Theodotus, Vettanos, Simonides, whose names are quite new to us. It might almost be thought, on a superficial view of the results of excavation, that the excavator and the historian were working in totally different fields (p. 145).

Yes, the Bible writers were working in the field of myth, legend, and imagination. W. MANN.

(To be Concluded.)

### Books and Life.

MR. SINCLAIR LEWIS, the well-known American author, has refused the Pulitzer Prize. In his decision it appears that he has declined to bow the knee to the god of respectability in literature that is produced for readers under nine and over ninety, and we gather that he is afraid that the offered distinction would have the effect of making him pot-bound. Mr. Lewis has illustrious predecessors in his craft. Emerson, Whitman, Bret Harte, Thoreau and Ambrose Bierce were not birds for the cage, and a chained eagle is a melancholy sight. If the loaves and fishes connected with the Pulitzer Prize are, so to speak, going begging, they will find ready takers in this country where timidity is at a premium and ideas at a discount. The distinction might be included as a bonus with the next new religionist from America who contemplates coming in order to save England. Perhaps Mr. Sinclair Lewis neither requires our approval nor seeks our praise; we remember a passage in his novel, *Martin Arrowsmith*, which may, in a nutshell, explain his attitude to toys for good boys: "There is two things you must do; work twice as hard as you can, and keep people from using you."

<sup>2</sup> J. P. Clarke, *Common-sense in Religion*, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> Macalister, *A Century of Excavation in Palestine*, p. 161.

<sup>4</sup> Macalister, *A Century of Excavation in Palestine*, p. 159.

The tender shoots of hope spring up in most unexpected places. Lord Birkenhead, a late recruit to those who wish to shift the parish pump of discussion, has been talking, and after a quiet survey of his subject-matter, he is pronounced to be qualified to take a place near to Thomas Paine. His Lordship enunciates an axiom of Freethought—and, better later than never, he said: "Everything that makes for free and friendly discussion is to the good." In the velocity and momentum gained from such a good start he concludes his speech as a good European: ..... "there is, after all, a brotherhood and sisterhood of men and women which triumphs over and ultimately must defeat the narrow claims of nationality." One swallow does not make a summer, but, to the watchers and waiters of and for the growth of man here is a slight movement—granted even microscopical—that is worth the peccage bestowed on that most aggravating man of all men, the Englishman, who, before the blisters have disappeared from his feet is fumbling in his pocket for coppers, or perhaps silver, for the children of miners. It was almost a century ago that Emerson photographed this type of man in a few words: "He is a churl with a soft place in his heart, whose speech is a brash of bitter waters, but who loves to help you at a pinch. He says no, and serves you, and your thanks disgust him."

What reader of books can pass a bookstall without hoping to find a pearl washed up from the obscurity of the ocean of the past. Accidentally, a copy of the *Trial of William Hone* (1818) provided a detailed report of the proceedings and the Subscription List at the end was interesting. A few entries are as follows: (1) His Grace the Duke of Portland, £105; (2) The Marquis of Tavistock, £50; (3) The Earl of Darlington, £105; (4) A Member of the House of Lords—an enemy to persecution, and especially to religious persecution, employed for political purposes, £100 (5) Leigh and John Hunt, *Examiner* office—not what they would, but what they could, £5 (6) Rev. Ebenezer Jones, £1; (7) Ellen Borough, £2 2s.; (8) The Ghost of Dr. Slop's Dirty Shirt, £1 (9) From a School-boy, who wishes Mr. Hone to have a very grand subscription, £1; (10) A Mussulman, who thinks it would not be an impious libel to Parody the Koran, £1.

There are many more, but the above prove that the peccage had more than a little sympathy for the object of ventilating the stuffy atmosphere of theology. Number five tells its own tale of literary life being a bed of roses; number six belies the name of the unfortunate subscriber; number seven is slightly flattering to Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough, who presided at the trial on the last two days and who subsequently found fame at the hands of Shelley; number eight is as illusive as a local joke in Aristophanes; number nine makes one wonder who the schoolboy became when he had successfully prevented his schooling from interfering with his education, and the last entry displays a lesson in the liberality of the followers of Islam. The days of 1818 were alive in matters of intellect; the days of 1926 are not dead when Lord Buckmaster can place a well-reasoned resolution to bring knowledge to the poor and get it carried in spite of opposition from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Viscount Fitzalan, and the Marquis of Salisbury.

This well-ordered life of ours, in which the Englishman is always sure of getting his eggs and bacon for breakfast, this well-ordered life of ours, we repeat, will not stand much of a close scrutiny. And, to strictly define what we mean by the word life, we mean all sentient beings to the lowest forms of life. Rose trees have life, and what there is left of their leaves by greenfly is greedily attacked by caterpillars. Then come the birds with reckless industry after the caterpillars, and then, the ominous quiver of the hawk's wings will send the birds to silence under cover. A gamekeeper with a gun, thirsting for trophies for his

gibbet will take advantage of the hawk's advantage over other birds. Noticing on the flower bed a dull red mark, our curiosity was satisfied by the pathetic picture of a dead ladybird. It had come in the track of a one dimensional snail and the result was a garden tragedy. To tell this tale is only to utter an old truth, but, a new star is announced, the paper-boy howls in the street about the wreck of an express train, a bride is ordering her wedding gown, the sexton is making a hole in the ground, and a man has invented a method to make key-holes luminous in the dark. The tragedy and comedy of life are not explained even though a Titan like Milton shall go blind in reading, and attempt to justify the ways of God to man.

The writers of books on books, or books on writers serve a good purpose if they send readers to the originals. Mr. J. B. Priestley has a study of Meredith in the English Men of Letters Series, and Mr. John Bailey makes a book of Walt Whitman (Macmillan). Only a few months ago Mr. Gerald Bullett had a study of Whitman (Grant Richards) and the student is left to diagnose these symptoms. What do they mean? Is it trade or genuine interest? Or do these very capable writers on the giants manifest a searching or groping for some tent pole to raise among the debris of smashed values? Mr. Priestley observes of Meredith that "he first stresses the community of Man and Nature, and then the community of Man and Man.....keeping before his mind not the Kingdom of Heaven and the state of his soul, but the Kingdom of Earth and the happiness of his children and his children's children." Mr. John Bailey's essay on Whitman sent us to *Walt Whitman. The Man and the Poet*, by James Thomson, and we found underlined in the late Bertram Dobell's introduction, "The gospel of godliness has been tried for many centuries with very dubious results; let us now give the gospel of manliness a trial." For our part we care not if Whitman swallows Meredith, or if they both sing in unison, for they are both needed at a time when our society, through the recent upheaval, has found out that the head and foot—such as they exist, are mutually indispensable as there are no short cuts to Utopia.

WILLIAM REPTON.

## Acid Drops.

Mr. A. H. M. Brice, the Recorder of Tewkesbury, writes an article for the *Sunday Express*, on the Cato Street Conspiracy. Of Thistlewood, who was the chief man in it, he says: "He arrived in Paris shortly before the downfall of Robespierre, and his experiences there, combined with admiration for Paine's *Age of Reason*, brought him back to England fairly persuaded that the first duty of a patriot is to massacre the Government and overturn all existing institutions." Now what on earth is one to do or to say to a man of this type? And what on earth had Paine's *Age of Reason* to do with the massacring of governments and the destruction of all institutions? What a fine type of judge Mr. Brice would make! On that passage we should not care to trust him to adjudicate on the matrimonial tangles of a couple of stray cats.

The Bishop of London is convinced that gambling and drinking could be stopped if the clergy would only put their heads together. It reminds one of Sydney Smith's remark when the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's were in trouble about the expense of wood-paving for the churchyard. Oh, said Smith, you have only to put your heads together and the thing's done.

The Bishop of Salisbury is convinced we are on the eve of a great religious revival. We have heard that kind of thing before, but somehow each revival seems to leave the Churches worse off than they were before. But the Bishop does not seem to perceive the absurdity

of a religion that can only maintain a hold on people by a series of sensationally-organized and well-advertised revivals.

Writing about the Scout movement, which the Churches have graciously taken under their wing of late years, Dr. E. G. Griffiths, Warden of Liverpool University Settlement, declares that "any form of Scouting that is not Christo-centric is not worth the candle either from the point of view of the scouter or the scout." By the term "scouter," we may explain, the Doctor means one who believes in the value of the Scout movement as a character-trainer of youth. All that Dr. Griffiths' statement amounts to is that the Churches have no use for Scoutism if it does not help to secure new clients. We are inclined to fancy the Churches are experiencing a difficulty in making the movement "Christo-centric." The average scout has already made it "Baden-Powello-centric" (if we may be permitted the phrase). And he is not at all ready to depose his hero in favour of a gentleman who trotted around advising the smitten to hold up his other cheek and invite the smiter to wallop that also. Again, Scoutism insofar as it is fostering initiative and self-reliance is producing a type of mentality the exact opposite to that slave-mentality on which the Churches have flourished so happily in the past, and which they have so easily manipulated. We shouldn't be surprised if the Churches before long find some serious flaws in the movement to serve as an excuse for dropping it. One Catholic Cardinal, as we noted recently, has already done this with the Girl Guides in Hungary. But, then, a Catholic priest always did have a keener nose for danger than has his Protestant brother.

Only a very few of us, these days, says a Methodist writer, enjoy thinking of ourselves as righteous; under that head we shrivel up. We don't want to separate ourselves from our fellows; we are not willing to be singular, least of all to be boastful. This gentleman has obviously not attended some of the recent Lord's Day Observance protest meetings. If he had, he would have encountered a goodly number of those who enjoy thinking of themselves as righteous. And he would have heard them condemning in fluent language those whom they think are very far from being righteous.

In the bookshops of Italy, we learn, is on sale the *Vade-Mecum of the Perfect Fascist*, setting out eighty-seven maxims and ten axioms embodying the ideals of the present governing party of Italy. The cover is adorned with a rosary, a glass of wine, and a cutlass. And just to remind the reader that Fascism is thoroughly Romist Christian, one axiom declares: "There is only one Pope, and he lives in Rome; remember it." The artist who designed that cover must have had a deep knowledge of Christian history. Only such a knowledge could have inspired so happy an association of Cross and Sword as the right symbols of a butchering creed whose traditions are being nobly carried on by a despotism that also relies upon force.

The world a few generations ago must often have been a trying place, says Mr. Neville Chamberlain. The shades of Freethought pioneers will no doubt feelingly agree with that statement.

"The Catholic should remember to put himself in the other fellow's place," declared Mr. Sidney Dark, editor of the *Church Times*, in a recent address. We should say the warning is well needed. Believing his narrow fanaticisms are the truth, and that people who differ from him are necessarily degraded or wilfully sinful, the Catholic glorifies intolerance into a virtue, and becomes blind to the fact that other folk are entitled to their own point of view. Naturally then, the Catholic, like other kinds of Christians, finds that it is the hardest of tasks to put himself in the other fellow's place. Still, after all, the dear, simple-hearted Jesus experienced the

same difficulty. He had nothing but abuse for those who "wickedly" persisted in holding to their own particular dogmas, and warned them of the very hot time awaiting them in the Celestial Hot-pot. If the gentle Shepherd could cultivate to so fine a degree indifference to other men's viewpoint, need one wonder overmuch that the silly sheep walk so faithfully in their Master's footsteps?

Oxford Union Debating Society, by 32 votes to 27, has condemned fox-hunting, declaring that because of its cruelty the "sport" should be made a criminal offence. This condemnation is a little belated. We note, too, that only just over half of the Society favour the resolution. But perhaps one ought not to expect from an aristocratic "home of learning" too rapid a progress towards civilized notions. Now that Oxford has given her opinion, possibly the Churches may muster up sufficient courage to censure this kingly "sport" of our well-to-do barbarians. The problem, however, confronting the Churches is, if fox-hunting is condemned, will pew-rents suffer and generous donations to church causes diminish? In an affirmative answer we can see the Churches discovering a very excellent reason for a continued silence.

The President of the United Methodists' Conference thinks the outlook for the Churches is very hopeful. One of the circumstances he finds encouraging is "the Church is awake, as never before, to the social implication of her Creed." Hence, says he, the Church has something to say about wages and conditions of labour, and the homes of the people. We must say the Church has been rather a long time in awakening—though maybe the ecclesiastical mind does not call nineteen centuries long. That period of stretching and yawning has not, we freely admit, been exactly wasted. Many important—nay, highly essential—matters have been dealt with. The nature of God, the Personality of Jesus, Virgin Birth, miracles, the value and significance of the Atonement, questions of ritual—all these have been threshed out and more or less satisfactorily settled. First things first, has been the motto of the Church. These things out of the way, she is now able to devote her attention to secondary matters—the rather sordid affairs that concern the material well-being of the masses, about which Freethinking social reformers have for so long agitated their horrid animal minds. The Church is awake! And she already has found a solution to our troubles. All that employers and employees need to do is to put into practice the teachings of Jesus. Then all these knotty economic problems will dissolve into thin air. It's as easily as falling downstairs. The queer thing is that no one thought of it before.

Dean Inge says, "Religion deals with the relations of man to a supersensuous reality." This may mean almost anything. It might mean something neither personal, nor intelligent, but merely some unknown force. But this "reality" "must be known from within." One would like to know how one comes into contact—either from within or from without, with a supersensuous reality? And as it must be known from within, it is evidently no more than a mere fancy. "Faith means the resolve to stand by the noblest hypothesis. Philosophy means trying to think things out. The real sceptic is the man who thinks it is not worth while to think." This kind of thing is sparkling rather than profound, and smart journalism rather than scientific thinking. Still, we suppose it is something to have at least one clergyman in the Church who can be interesting. No one looks for a parson to be instructive.

Mrs. Smith, a Spiritualist, has just returned from Africa, and informed a representative of the *Manchester Evening News* that she had discovered many natives with a "psychic" sense, and that they were not at all surprised at her ability to speak with the dead. We should have been surprised if it had caused surprise. Native medicine-men have been at that game for centuries, and if it had not been for the savage giving Mrs.

Smith a start, we question whether she would have ever talked with the dead herself. And what Mrs. Smith, or any of these Spiritualists mean by a "psychic" sense is more than we have ever been able to discover. It is one of those blessed words that serves to narcotise people, and so serves a religious purpose. The notion that some people possess a psychic sense when others have it not, is about the last word in scientific moonshine. It is of that stuff that religions are made.

The present age will never choke with thought or a superabundance of people capable of dissecting the wheat from the chaff. In a Greek age the activities of the Bishop of London might have provoked a little mild derision; to-day he can with safety recommend the putting together of ecclesiastical heads to meet the tremendous evil of betting and gambling. He is agin' the Government in this case, but his opposition is like that of stage antagonism occasionally witnessed in the House of Commons. Apart from the fact that Christianity is itself a speculation and a gamble we have no doubt that it is the workman who has "a bob on" who is the chosen victim of the Bishop and his colleagues. Their kindness in this respect is historical, and the workman looking backward at church favours, might say with truth, "Thank you, my lords, for nothing."

The ribald question of "Where was Moses when the light went out?" reappears in another form. The *Daily News* has a report of a spiritualistic meeting, and, as the spirits have to be propitiated, we read that: "After a hymn had been sung and the Lord's Prayer recited the light was turned out, and we were left in complete darkness." From which it may be gathered by those who can see through a ladder, that the movement is a branch of the old firm.

Two girls working in a field near Hummelstadt, Germany, declared that they saw a white cloud in which the figure of the Virgin Mary was distinctly visible. We also learn from a report in the *Irish Telegraph* that as a result of thousands of people, including the lame, the halt, and the blind, making for this place, the ecclesiastical authorities at Wuzburg have issued an appeal to the faithful to keep away until an official investigation has been made. The time has not yet arrived for the twentieth century to stick its chest out.

The Rev. Henry James, at the United Methodist Conference, was in full-throated song about "the rampant Paganism of our times." A careful examination of his rhetoric shows that the gentleman is upset because he, with his come, let us be joyful, brethren, are unable to put a stop to Sunday games and Sunday cinemas, but it would not do to call things by their proper names.

Mr. Herbert Read, for whom we have the warmest admiration as a provocative critic, is the author of a book, *Reason and Romanticism*. As the majority of religionists, plain and fancy, are not even on speaking terms with the word "reason," Mr. Read's definition may give us a valuable key to the activities of obscurantists: "Reason should rather connote the widest evidence of the senses, and of all processes and instincts developed in the long history of man. It is the sum total of awareness, ordained and ordered to some specific end or object of attention." Reason will take the enquirer through the barriers of faith, away back before the time of Adam and Eve. In our English history the names of Hume, Locke, and Hobbes appear to be of less interest than brawls between kings; our troubles might be less at present if they had had greater prominence and wider advertisement. In the words of Nietzsche, "Christianity pronounces a curse on intellect. Doubt is already a sin. Belief means not-wishing-to-know what is true." Therefore we may clearly see the antagonism of established religions towards reason; if the people think the priests are lost.

In *The Faith of an English Catholic* we learn that the author, Darwell Stone, D.D., is a strong upholder of the practice of regular confession, and, to substantiate it, quotes with approval a priest who observed that he had never known anybody who was not better for it. This is very clever; the doctor did not apply for a cobbler's opinion of confession—he kept his enquiries in the business, and a priest can never have too much power.

From an Indian paper, *The Light*, we learn that the struggle between Islam and Christianity, put bluntly, is a struggle between Truth and Gold. As they say in the children's game, so we can say to that paper, "You are getting warm." If Islam has put a halo over the head of a great man we deny no one their hero worship, but, when we read that a meeting of our eminent divines discussed the alteration of the Prayer Book without wanting to bite off each other's ears, and in the same newspaper we read a report of the bad effects of six people living in one room, we humbly conclude that we cannot have too many great men of the right sort.

Mr. Sean O'Casey is a desperate chap. When asked by a critic to cut his play, "The Shadow of a Gunman," he replied that he would not cut the Gunman for anyone, not for God Almighty. Not a little of the Irishman's charm is his picturesque and copious use of a theological vocabulary; it is more romantic than the coster's, and means less.

To convince Mr. Rudyard Kipling that he is talking through his drum the above paper gives an instance where two influential Germans have embraced Islam; is the famous line about East and West meeting an acceptance of the world as a perpetual menagerie?

"Ezra," of the *Methodist Recorder*, relates a little passage-at-arms he had with his wife over her declared intention to go to a political meeting. "Ezra" remarked that there was no need for her to attend. He could tell her all she needed to know and whom to vote for. Most of you women, he added, use the vote foolishly, but since you have got it you ought to take St. Paul's advice and ask your husband for any information you want, and then vote as he tells you. "Well," retorted his spouse, "I'm going to the meeting. And if women are the fools you think they are, I'll tell you why it is. It's because for nineteen centuries they've been asking their husbands, and you can't learn wisdom that way." Oh, these modern women! They don't seem to be at all the Christians they ought to be. We are inclined to fancy the Churches will have trouble with them presently. They appear to regard dear old St. Paul and his sturdy masculinity as a back number, and seem prepared to dump his oriental notions in the dustbin. Why, some of our anti-Paulites even want to spring-clean the dirty old Christian marriage service. Alack, the day!

We are going to get the truth about the Great Pyramid of Gizeh "straight from the horse's mouth." A company of Spiritualists are to set out for Egypt for the purpose of holding some sittings inside the Pyramid, and of getting into communication with the spirits so that they may be informed all about the building of the Pyramids. The Rev. Walter Wynne is one of the leaders of the expedition, and he believes that the structure of the Pyramids foretells all that has occurred, including the war of 1914 and the coal strike. It also foretells a number of wonderful things to come. But why the spirits can't communicate in England as well as in Egypt we do not understand. It may be that Mr. Wynne wants a holiday and the spirits do not. Still, we feel inclined to prophesy that the mediums will get communications, and we shall expect Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to swallow them whatever they are.



### To Correspondents.

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"FREETHINKER" ENDOWMENT FUND.—C. Banks, 10s.; W. J. Lamb, 7s. 10d.

E. B. SIDE.—Thanks for cuttings. The revolt of youth is for the Christian religion one of the most serious things it has to face.

W. B.—Compulsory Church Rates were abolished in 1867. Slavery was completely abolished in British Dominions in 1833.

H. BAYTON.—Pure Buddhism has nothing so crude and so primitive as belief in a personal God. It is essentially an Atheistic system. Critics of Atheism like to ignore this.

C. CLAYTON enquires whether we can give him in this column a short summary of Psycho-Analysis. With the temperature at ninety in the shade! Certainly not.

G. BUSH.—The story of the recantation of Richard Jefferies is just a pious lie. Mr. H. S. Salt exposed the nature of the tale many years ago—immediately it was put into circulation.

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

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### Sugar Plums.

Some ten years ago it will be remembered that the London County Council took advantage of the war being on to attempt to stop the sale of propagandist literature in the London parks. Thanks mainly to the efforts of the N.S.S. the attempt broke down when the case was taken into the courts, and the Council was ordered to rescind the resolution it had passed. It has now taken another step in the same direction by passing a regulation forbidding the sale of literature in the parks, and the Home Secretary has promised his sanction to it. That is what one would expect from Mr. Joynson-Hicks.

It is rather early yet to say what may be done, but as this is only a preliminary to the attack on the holding of meetings, the first step should be defeated if it is possible. In this matter the Home Secretary's support is not final, and it is possible that the courts may have something to say on the abolition of so old established a privilege. If literature to which any sound objection can be taken is sold it should be quite possible to deal with such cases under the existing rules and

regulations. The manœuvre is clearly only part of an attempt to suppress the right of propaganda, and should be dealt with as such. The Executive of the N.S.S. will have the matter before it at its next meeting, and will then decide what steps are possible.

The following makes rather a lengthy "Sugar Plum," but its rather unusual nature will justify it. It is from the *Manchester Guardian* of July 6. Not many English papers would have had the courage or the honesty to say as much. It may be taken as one of the decisive proofs that we are really getting less Christian:—

Celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence could hardly pass without appropriate tribute to the part played in rousing the American colonists to a consciousness of their impending nationhood by that extraordinary herald of a new age Tom Paine. Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, in his address in London yesterday, gives Paine the chief credit for causing the "almost unrivalled political somersault" which issued in that mighty document. We are apt to think of the Declaration as an inevitable step in the march of events. But for months after the war had begun Congress was at pains to record formally the fact that the forces it had called to arms against the King were not raised to further any design for separation, and in the camps of the colonial troops the chaplains actually offered public prayers for the monarch against whose authority the soldiers were in revolt. The logic of the situation might point to independence as the war went on, but the public demand for it had yet to come, and the ablest skill in argument was on the whole against it. The torch was lit by the man whom John Adams, who helped to frame the Declaration, himself described as "a disastrous meteor." Paine's pamphlet, *Common Sense*, which appeared in January, 1776, ran in the first three months after publication into the enormous circulation for that time and place of 120,000 copies. It was anonymous, and those fathers of the revolution to whom it was attributed—John Adams, Samuel Adams, and Franklin—disowned it with some contempt. Yet its popular appeal was irresistible. The forty-year-old ex-staymaker and Exciseman who had crossed the Atlantic only two years earlier, and who had shown in his previous career none of the gifts of responsible leadership that would command the confidence of those with whom he had to work, found a response for his message in the hearts of the simpler sort in the new land which not only made easy for the founders of America the final severance from Britain, but actually forced them to it. No man probably has been the centre of more controversy on both sides of the Atlantic than Paine, but whether he be ranked as demagogue or statesman, as visionary or practical reformer, his contribution to the birth of a nation will keep his name alive through the ages.

The Y.M.C.A. has been sending out enquiries all over the world as to what boys believe. The report of the Association says that there is little evidence of close contact with the Bible, young Australia expresses the belief that scientific knowledge hinders the use of the Bible, Switzerland has no time to pray or read the Bible, and young China says: "It is an instrument to weaken China. It is a camp of Imperialism. It is not necessary in a scientific world. It is too emotional and mysterious." Still, the Bishop of Salisbury expects a great revival. It looks as though the churches will need it.

For the thirteenth time in twenty-one Quarter Sessions the Recorder of Bedford has had no cases for trial. This sort of thing is happening in counties other than Bedford. The odd part of it is that the masses who are keeping out of the police courts are so dreadfully pagan and indifferent to religion. If more people get like that, prison chaplains will soon be applying for the dole.

It is a sign that real religion is in a state of decay, when passages in compliment of it are applauded at the theatre.—William Hazlitt.

## Subman, Man and Superman.

### V.

(Concluded from page 412.)

PERFECT co-operation would mean that every human being would fit into the scheme of things like a cog in a wheel. Unemployment would not only cease but become impossible.

In that perfect state of society the Government would be mainly engaged in a wise and equitable distribution of labour, and the products of labour, so that the greatest possible benefits would accrue to all. There would be no Army, Navy, nor Police Force. There would be neither foreign ministers nor foreign affairs, for the very good reason that there would be no foreigners.

The Superman of that perfected State would be filled with amazement at the folly and stupidity of the governments of to-day which permit great masses of people to remain unemployed, or else in non-productive work, or in the production of non-essentials, or mere superfluities for the idle rich; or in the production of munitions of war. He would be astounded by the fact that great masses of unemployed workers and their families should be maintained on the "dole," exacted from the employed workers. A state of Society in which those who produce the prime necessities of life, not only maintain themselves, but also a large number of non-producers who are denied the privilege of working and producing.

Let us consider another line of advance. There can be no doubt but that the ability to preserve and lengthen life indicates fitness to survive.

Medical discoveries during the last century have resulted in considerably lengthening the span of human life, and there is undoubtedly much room for further research.

We can safely predict that the span of life will be still further extended. There may come a time when unfailing remedies for every disease will have been discovered, and man will only die of sheer old age, or by unavoidable accident.

There is another broad avenue open for the evolution of man which we may well explore, and this will lead us to consider the highly contentious question of birth control.

No well-informed person will seriously deny that from the time of the Subman, almost until to-day, the Survival of the Fittest meant that the weakling, mentally and physically, perished almost at birth. Only the hardest survived. But the social co-operative nature is gradually evolving. We have reached the semi-civilized stage, greater care is being given to the weak and unfortunate, and, paradoxical though it may seem, this evolving innate goodness of man to his less fortunate fellow man, is reacting disastrously on the human race in certain cases.

When population increases more rapidly than the rise in the subsistence level justifies, a point is reached where the worker is compelled to toil through every waking moment to obtain the simplest necessities of life. Education and intelligence decrease conjointly. There is not a moment left for thoughtful reflection or mental improvement. Man steadily deteriorates to the level of the brute, becoming selfish, bestial, and treacherous, like a dumb dog continually beaten.

Serious over-population cannot occur among Barbarians, because the Barbarian is governed mainly by brutal animal instincts, and the weaklings soon perish because if there is not sufficient food to go round they simply do not get any.

It is when a race has become semi-civilized, and

when reason has begun to replace instinct, that the results of over-population are most disastrous. All may go well if the surplus population can emigrate into other under-populated countries, but when that outlet is closed terrific wars usually ensue, and population is temporarily reduced by wholesale slaughter among the combatants, and plague and famine among the non-combatants left behind. Such a race, denied these remedies for over-population, becomes less virile until its people perish from disease like flies at the approach of winter.

Such mobs are certainly not the fittest to survive, and are forced to become continually more ignorant and anti-social, each individual being compelled to snatch at the insufficient crumbs that come in reach, until they descend again to a state of barbarism, and then, like Anatole France's Inhabitants of Penquin Island, they may perhaps begin the long ascent anew.

If, as we believe, the fittest to survive will be those who first evolve the analytical mind, who first acquire the ability to govern their entire conduct by reason, instead of allowing themselves to be dominated by instinct, then Superman will have evolved, indeed must evolve, a high sense of duty to his fellow man. Every adult would be engaged in useful and productive work, and not, as at present, supporting several others engaged in employment that is useless or positively injurious to mankind, or else performing no useful service of any kind.

The limitation of population would be reduced to an exact science. Every child would be admitted to this world by special passport, and treated as a guest of honour.

The exact increase, or decrease, of population would be fixed by the Government, and carried out by common consent. At marriage every couple would be notified officially of the exact number, if any, of children that they would be entitled to present to the World Commonwealth. Parents would have evolved such a keen sense of justice that they would regard it as a crime to inflict unfit or unwanted children on the public. Each child would receive the best education it was capable of assimilating, because Superman would not tolerate any of the social, economic, and religious fallacies that are taught to children to-day.

Finally, we must not overlook the fact that inventions will have a great influence on evolution, either in retarding or accelerating its upward tendency. If we contemplate the marvels of present-day inventions, and then consider the vast possibilities of future inventions, we are lost in wonder. We often forget that many things that seem commonplace to-day were not even dreamed of in the life-time of our great grandparents.

We hear the roar of the electric trams and motor vehicles of many kinds. We speak of railways and trains as something quite out of date. We are not surprised to hear aeroplanes droning in the sky, and to see them "looping the loop," or writing with smoke. Most of us have seen the majestic air-ship. Everywhere there are telegraphs and telephones, and cables stretch beneath all the seas, great liners cross the oceans, and submarines dive beneath them. The records of music and of human voices, even of those long dead, are preserved and reproduced on the gramophones. And now people can speak around the world by wireless. We can listen to music and people's voices from across the Atlantic. At midnight in the heart of a great city we have "listened in" to the melodious singing of nightingales in distant Surrey.

Unless some great cataclysm occurs, there can be no doubt but that in course of time there will be only one common language, only one common race,

descended from all the races that exist to-day. There will be no armies, nor navies, no wars, nor preparations for wars. Communication with the remotest parts of the world will be almost instantaneous, and at the same time it will be possible to see those with whom one may be speaking. People will travel by superplane, many hundreds of miles per hour.

As Man, continually evolving, moves forward almost imperceptibly towards the acme of his perfection, all the cults will become merged into one single cult, the Cult of Reason. Man will learn that the degree of his own happiness is entirely dependent upon the degree of his own contribution to the happiness of others.

All the Gods, ghosts, and devils will have perished, and curious inscriptions concerning them will be unearthed along with the deeply buried fossilized remains of Present-day Man. ONA MELTON.

### Thomas Clarkson: The Friend of the Slave.

Clarkson! it was an obstinate hill to climb:  
How toilsome, nay, how dire it was, by thee  
Is known—by none, perhaps, so feelingly;  
But thou, who starting in thy fervent prime,  
Did'st first lead forth this pilgrimage sublime,  
Hast heard the constant voice its charge repeat,  
Which, out of thy young heart's oracular seat,  
First roused thee, O true yoke-fellow of time.  
With unabating effort, see the palm  
Is won; and by all nations shall be worn!  
The bloody writing is for ever torn,  
And thou henceforth shall have a good man's calm,  
A great man's happiness; thy zeal shall find  
Repose at length, firm friend of human kind!

THIS was Wordsworth's tribute to Thomas Clarkson, on the final passing of the Bill for the abolition of the slave trade, March, 1807. The summit of the "obstinate hill" had at last been reached, and his long years of unabating effort crowned with success.

The story of the movement for the abolition of the English slave trade, and the long Parliamentary struggle it entailed, with its exposure of all the human cruelties and barbarities connected with the traffic, receives but tardy recognition in the political histories of the period. Macaulay, in his *Life of Pitt*, only once incidentally refers to it, to remark that Pitt's speech in introducing the Bill then before Parliament, which he undertook in the enforced absence of Wilberforce, was regarded as the finest specimen of his oratory. The period was no doubt an anxious one for statesmen and politicians. The loss of the American colonies some time previous, was followed by the French Revolution and the later Napoleonic menace; and the whole country was seething with social and political discontent. But amid all the turmoil of the times, there was one man who set himself the seemingly hopeless and impossible task of abolishing the infamous traffic in human flesh and blood, of which England at one time had held the monopoly for thirty years. That a trade so diabolical should have been so closely interwoven with the commercial and religious life of this country, and be in the hey-day of its prosperity only little more than a hundred years ago, seems almost incredible to people of the present generation. But the humanitarian spirit, which is such a marked feature of our age, received a tremendous impetus through the abolition of the slave traffic.

Thomas Clarkson was the son of a clergyman who was Master of Wisbech Grammar School. As a student at Cambridge, studying for the Church, he had won the annual prize for the Latin essay. In the following year, the subject of the essay was entitled: Is it lawful to make slaves of others against their will? Suspecting that what Dr. Peckard, the

Chancellor, had in mind was negro slavery, some of the horrors of which were beginning to see the light of day, Clarkson set to work to collect particulars of the slave trade. He was, of course, spurred on by ambition, having his scholarly reputation to maintain. Of the subject itself, he tells us, he was entirely ignorant, and he had only a few weeks in which to prepare his essay. Working nearly night and day in its preparation, he was again successful in carrying off the prize. But the writing of that essay had strange results. It proved to be one of those little incidents which frequently change the whole current of a person's life. It lost the Church a promising cleric, and gave to humanity a firm and zealous friend. All Clarkson's pride of scholarship, all his personal ambition had vanished; the appalling nature of the facts he had collected sat like a nightmare on his heart and soul, and it was with the greatest difficulty he could persuade himself that the facts were really true. And out of the travail of his soul there was born the idea of abolishing the nefarious traffic, and putting an end to all its attendant atrocities.

At this time the Devil took Clarkson up into a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world. "All these," he said, "will I give you if you will only abandon the mad project you have conceived of abolishing such a legitimate branch of commerce. Consider your own future and its prospects. You have already distinguished yourself at college, and your attainments will carry you far on the road to fame and opulence. If you enter the Church, as was intended, preferment in your case will undoubtedly be very rapid. The probability is that you will soon marry some wealthy heiress, and that in a few years you will be given a lucrative bishopric. Then think how pained all your relatives and friends will be at your decision not to enter the holy calling, and when they see you embark upon a career of such madness. The trade has been carried on for centuries, and the Christian Church has never raised a protest, while many of its most worthy members have accumulated vast wealth out of it. A Christian ship-captain, who has had experience of the trade, has no such silly scruples as yours, for if any of the negroes in their passage across the ocean so much as complain of a pain in their tummies, he thinks nothing of throwing a few hundred of them overboard to feed the sharks—and claiming their market price from the underwriters. So why should you foolishly ruin such a brilliant career as lies before you, for the sake of a few damn niggers?"

These arguments, so Clarkson himself tells us, had considerable weight with him, and for awhile he wavered. His academic honours, his clerical future, the esteem of his relatives and friends had all been dear to his heart. But in the end, the cry of the down-trodden negro conquered, and his life henceforth was devoted to the interest of the slave. It was twenty years before the Abolition Bill was passed, but, beginning single-handed in the fight against the trade which formed a considerable part of the commerce of London, of Liverpool, and Bristol, he never faltered until he had conquered.

Having made this great decision, and casting about for some method of procedure, Clarkson, first of all, had his essay translated, and, having strengthened it with additional facts, he sought a publisher. The first one he approached would have been very pleased to publish the essay as an academic trophy. But Clarkson had ceased to have any interest in academic trophies. By a fortunate chance, he was led to another publisher, a Quaker, who was himself interested in the condition of the slaves, and was not

unacquainted with the essay. It was in this publisher's office, while seeing his book through the press, that Clarkson was introduced to Granville Sharp, of whose previous efforts on behalf of the slave he had not until then been aware.

Mr. Sharp's labours dated back some twenty years previous. It was customary for the West Indian planters when visiting this country in their big straw hats, to bring a few slaves with them as a mark of social standing; and in a dispute arising in connection with one of these, Granville Sharp took the case to court. English law on the subject at that time was ill-defined, and Mr. Sharp set to work to study the law for three years. In the end he obtained a verdict from an eminent judge that "as soon as a slave set foot on English soil he was a free man"; a verdict that freed all the slaves then in England, much to the consternation and chagrin of the planters. When the Abolition Committee was formed to further Clarkson's project, Granville Sharp's name stood at the head of the list; and Clarkson ever after regarded him as the "father" of the movement. A peculiar trait of Mr. Sharp's character remarked by Clarkson was that though he acted as their chairman for twenty years, and performed all the duties incidental to his office, he could never once be persuaded to "occupy the chair." He invariably came to the meetings a little late, to give the committee time to fill it. Clarkson's modesty in regard to his own labours is perhaps the reason his name has been overshadowed, but he saw to it that everyone else was given honourable mention. If he so much as heard of a monkey that gave a shriek at the sight of a slave being ill-used; or if he read of some ambiguous papal letter sent to some Spanish priest in reply to a complaint about the treatment of the conquered Indians, he would rope them all in—monkey, pope, and priest—as "fore-runners and coadjutors" in the great slave movement.

The plan of campaign decided upon by the Committee was first of all to distribute the remaining copies of Clarkson's book (which he had intended to do at his own expense) among Members of Parliament, and solicit their interest in the cause. In this way it fell to Clarkson's lot to call upon Wilberforce, a visit which resulted in their life-long friendship, and co-operation in the cause of slavery. Wilberforce already had some interest in the subject and promised Clarkson all the help he could. After matters had progressed somewhat, and the Committee were thinking of Parliamentary action, Clarkson visited Wilberforce to sound him on the matter; but, being nervous that Wilberforce might not be inclined to take action, he left without stating the particular object of his visit. On another occasion, when some of the friends quietly assumed that Wilberforce would take up the question in Parliament, Clarkson was obliged politely to remind them, that "although Wilberforce had pursued the subject with much earnestness, he had never yet dropped the least hint that he would proceed so far." It was at Clarkson's suggestion that his friend Bennet Langton finally approached Wilberforce, and secured his consent to act. And there can be no question that the lavish praise that has been accorded to Wilberforce was justly merited. Battling with a feeble constitution all his life, his Parliamentary labours in the cause of abolition were almost superhuman. But it was Clarkson who provided all the material for the campaign; his accumulated store of ugly facts, as well as his inspiring efforts were the dynamo that drove all the abolition machinery.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

(To be Concluded.)

## Correspondence.

### AN AGNOSTIC OUTLOOK.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I cannot help thinking that if your correspondents, "Medicus" and Mr. Vincent J. Hands, had read my article on the above subject a little more closely, the bulk of their criticisms might have been left unpenned. "Medicus" is certainly under a misapprehension when he imputes to me the suggestion that we cannot reasonably deny any theological proposition. I did not say that at all. I said there was no real proof or disproof of any of the *primary Christian doctrines*, but I never intended to imply that we could not deny any theological proposition if the evidence against it were strong enough. Indeed, seeing that I devoted the third paragraph of my article to a brief summary of considerations which inevitably lead to the denial of the infallibility of the Bible, such a disclaimer is rather superfluous.

"Medicus" refers to the miracle of a lump of lead being made to float on the water, and suggests that I do not, from my standpoint, proclaim that miracle to be impossible. But why should I? I have not the slightest evidence of a direct kind to show that such miracles have ever taken place. Why go further? It is idle to speculate as to the philosophic aspects of occurrences, which, as far as we know, never took place. Of course, if God exists, obviously he could set into action forces which would cause lead to float on water and if the Almighty be susceptible to the prayers of his occasionally foolish followers, he quite clearly might consent to perform such an exceedingly useless miracle to please them, or just to "show off." But as there is not the slightest particle of evidence to be found in favour of the supposition that the objective phenomena that must inevitably result from such a train of circumstances, have ever occurred, science has no cause to bother about it. Nobody can dogmatically deny that such occurrences have taken place in history unless he be fully cognisant of human history down to the minutest details of individual experience. But the Agnostic can—and does—deny that there is any evidence in favour of such occurrences.

When I referred to the "*primary Christian doctrines*," I had in mind the existence of God and the immortality of the soul—the two cardinal postulates of Christianity and all theistic religion. Many Christians do not believe miracles ever occurred, that Christ was divine or that the Bible is infallible, and we are bound to take them into account. With reference to the doctrine of immortality, I do not personally believe that "the combined sciences of Anthropology, Physiology, and Psychology" furnish any real disproof, though admittedly they raise many difficulties. Nor can I acquiesce in the view that these sciences are "for the most part in vain" if they give us no decisive evidence against Spiritualism—though obviously the immortality of the body is impossible, if this is what "Medicus" means.

I regret I can see very little beyond a number of extraordinarily illogical pieces of reasoning in Mr. Hands' letter. I am told that the statements that "the evidence is irrelevant" and "that it is inadequate" embody "two distinct and contradictory propositions!" That is quite a novel conception of evidence! In my agnostic simplicity I had always supposed that irrelevant evidence had reached the limit of inadequacy and that inadequate evidence was, to that extent, irrelevant. Now I know better!

Mr. Hands dislikes "dignifying" human limitation "with a philosophic title"—a caricature of Agnosticism which might well have emanated from one of our clerical friends—but, as an Atheist, can he escape the imputation of "dignifying" a sheer negative "with a philosophic title"? Moreover, Agnostics, as well as Atheists, care for the accomplishments of humanity and one may pertinently ask how we may evaluate human achievements without realizing human limitations? Truly, human limitation "may be sure of asserting itself as and when required," as Mr. Hands so meaningfully points out—the whole of the Agnostic case might

be summarized as the proposition that this is exactly what has taken place in the case of Christianity.

In referring to the "incarnate imbecility" of the thoughts of Christian revivalists, I doubt if I went beyond "the decencies of controversy"—I certainly did not go beyond the truth. Perhaps Mr. Hands has never been to a revivalist meeting. Perhaps he has never heard of people going mad with religious mania. I stated the opinion—forcibly and with considerable invective, I admit—that Christians who indulge in excessive emotional orgies over religious ideas are qualifying for Colney Hatch rather than Paradise. How this can be distorted into a blank denial of the existence of God, I do not know.

Finally, I absolutely deny that I would give twopence to be "dearly loved by the theologian." I think neither of praise nor obloquy in becoming an Agnostic. Naturally I have no particular desire to be unpopular with anybody—I never had any patience with martyrdom for martyrdom's sake or heresy for heresy's sake—all I care for is reason for reason's sake. The world may be a stage but life need not be cheap melodrama. Robert Green Ingersoll can hardly be accused of assiduously courting the favour of Christian theologians. Even Mr. Vincent J. Hands might hesitate before accusing him of hypocritical poltroonery, conscious or unconscious. Here is his exposition of Agnosticism:—

It seems to me that the man who knows the limitations of the mind, who gives the proper value to human testimony, is necessarily an Agnostic. He gives up the hope of ascertaining first or final causes, of comprehending the supernatural, or of conceiving of an infinite personality. From out the words "Creator," "Preserver," and "Providence" all meaning falls.<sup>1</sup>

In the somewhat forlorn hope that it may partially appease Mr. Hands' offended sense of etymological propriety, I append my name and address.

J. STEWART COOK ("Ephphatha").  
Lyndhurst, Fischall Road, Ipswich.

AGNOSTIC, ATHEIST, OR ANIMIST.

SIR,—“Medicus” and “Ephphatha” are fighting the old fight of Agnostic and Atheist. I am another A, a primitive savage animist. So I am an impartial outsider. I think “Ephphatha” has the best of it. He does not seem to suffer from that worst of intellectual diseases, Faith. “Medicus” does suffer from it, almost as much as Christians do. So does Mr. Hands. Atheists generally do. Atheism is etymologically a simple negative, like anti-tobacconism, but everybody means the same thing by tobacco, while no two people mean the same thing by god or theos, any more than they do by love or reason. Hence Atheists, in search of a solid meaning for this name, have flung their tendrils round Established Laws of Nature, and cling to them with a pathetic faith in their solidity. Thus Atheism is a kind of halfway house for people who have abandoned the Semitic interpretations of the world, but must believe something, cannot be genuine infidels. Agnostics seem to have gone rather further on the way to infidelity, but whether they are prepared to be sceptical about two and two always making four I do not know. Yet two three-halfpenny stamps and two penny ones make fivepence, two rats and two virtues make nothing; to be sure of having four as a result you must make it a mere matter of names, just as he who begins a thing always commences it.

The truths of science, as “Medicus” says, are “at best only useful opinions.” But that is no discredit to the scientific men. What better can be had? Chemical and physical uniformities are just as useful if they are empirical statements of the observed habits of some billions of gods as if they represented the uniformity of some inconceivable sort of event which is not the act of any person. I own I am not a perfect sceptic about that kind of event. I say definitely and dogmatically it is inconceivable and impossible. C. HARPUR.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

SIR,—I have followed the articles of your two corre-

<sup>1</sup> “Why I am an Agnostic,” p. 4, R.P.A. Pamphlet).

spondents of Capital Punishment, and am not swayed by any one of them, as both admit they are in favour of it. Capital Punishment has been in vogue long enough to test its efficacy, murder is still a common thing, and Capital Punishment not a deterrent. If I may be permitted to state my views, I would say, that like any other animal, the murderer is not at all responsible for his crime.

I am of opinion that a man will be swayed by his predominant desires, and also that he is not responsible for the thoughts that enter his brain, which are the parents to those desires; so I conclude, that a man who has ruined his life, and possibly those nearest and dearest to him, through drink—has lost self-respect and the respect of all with whom he has come in contact, and has arrived at that stage when he is a nuisance and a menace to society; that the desire for drink is all predominant, and stronger than any other desires for home, respect, and a clean and better life. Like the vice of gambling it has become an obsession with him; he can't control it, and all our reform laws can do for him is to cast him into jail for a certain period, which has not, so far, cured the victims, nor yet proved in any way a deterrent.

Now for a man to be able to take life, he must be either mentally low, temporarily insane, or possibly thirsting for revenge; he is like the gambler and the inebriate; he can't control himself; the fear of the rope never enters his head, as normality does not return until after the crime, when it is too late for him to estimate the significance of his deed.

Premeditated murder to me is the outcome of what has become—from an idea—a fleeting thought, possibly an obsession, and then the murderer cannot be in his right mind; and the impulsive murder is done without thought.

The first consideration of society is to exert itself in the endeavour to cure the tendency to murder (it has been claimed that these tendencies assert themselves in childhood) instead of waiting for the crime to happen, and then futilely hanging the murderer afterwards.

Socrates said: “We pity the man with a crooked spine, and condemn the man with a crooked brain,” the same as we make allowances for a tiger who has followed an instinctive impulse, and killed a person, and condemn and callously hang a man who has done a similar thing.

Hanging, or any other form of Capital Punishment, has never proved a deterrent, and never will.

Our reform system is to merely establish the fact, and then allow twelve ordinary men to decide whether the culprit shall die; psychology plays no part in the finding, and our only compensation is that when the State is finished there has been double murder. Only those people with a lust for further blood-spilling can gain any satisfaction from such a barbarous, base, and degrading practice as Capital Punishment.

J. SURMON.

SURVIVAL.

SIR,—I think I have discovered an argument which effectually disposes of the pretence of Spiritualists to hold converse with disembodied spirits. The argument is as follows: We live on this planet by virtue of being material beings and are held on its surface by the force of gravity as set forth by Newton. A spirit being immaterial, without weight or substance, would be left behind by this planet as it pursued its course through space. The circle round the sun at the rate of several thousand miles a second, and, not only so, but the sun round which we are circling is itself hurtling through space with immense velocity and pulling its attendant planets along with it. Granting that a spirit leaves the body when the body dies, the spirit on leaving the body would become detached from the earth, as it is without weight and substance, and in a few minutes would be left millions of millions behind in the ethereal void where, we are told it is 400 degrees below freezing point. It is, however, a reassuring thought that the spirit would be impervious to cold as the spirit is immaterial and cold is a material condition.

To pursue this subject on another line, I am inclined to think that people who talk of spirits do not realize their own implications. They say that a spirit is immaterial, but it is quite impossible to conceive anything not made of matter. Chambers's *Twentieth Century Dictionary* defines matter as "that which occupies space, and with which we become acquainted by our bodily senses: it is that out of which anything is made." Spirits, therefore, must be considered as mere nonentities; the assumptions of ignorance. They are, in fact, a legacy from our savage forbears.

Certain men of science, such as Lodge and Crookes, are often brought forward by Spiritualists in support of their tenets, but it must be remembered that men of science are just as apt to be wrong as others when straying outside their own special provinces. Even Sir Isaac Newton indulged in nonsense, and his work on the Prophecies is as dead as the dodo. I take it that men of science are, as a rule, ill qualified to discover trickery. In their researches they rely with confidence on the honest collaboration of their assistants, and never look to be misled by silly pranks. The old saying of setting a thief to catch a thief holds true, and professional conjurers are the men to experiment with mediums. There are, to be sure, a few genuine phenomena in Spiritualism which you, sir, have clearly explained in your able treatise on *The Other Side of Death*, but I have no hesitation in saying that more converts are made to this superstition by trickery and fraud than by any other means. It was by pure trickery that Crookes and Lodge were converted to Spiritualism, and the same applies to Conan Doyle and to all others whose experiences I have read.

A recent distinguished convert to Spiritualism is the worthy editor of our local paper, the Hon. L. F. Moore, Member of the Advisory Council. He states in an editorial headed "Survival," that he has been reading some books on the subject of Spiritualism, and that from the evidence furnished in these books, he now believes in "Survival," as much, and on similar evidence, as he believes that there is such a place as Constantinople. This is rather dumfounding, but may be taken as an example of how unable some men are to appreciate and weigh evidence. It was a shock, but I still survive. So it is a case of Survival after all.

Kafue, Northern Rhodesia.

J. E. ROOSE.

#### CHURCH PARADES.

SIR,—*Re Church Parades in the Army.* I don't know whether my experience may be useful to "T. F.," but I will tell it for what it may be worth. I found that "fatigues" were usually reserved for Agnostics. Hence, I used to fall in with the C. of E. party, which used to march to the local parish church, and, on arrival, instead of going inside too, I would step aside and wait till all the party had gone inside. Then I would wait in the porch till the service was over. I say I "would wait"—in actual practice, and when in Canterbury, I used to slide off to my billet, get my cycle, and be home at Ashford (fourteen miles away) before my pious comrades had come out! I worked this manœuvre pretty successfully, but it might not come off in the "peace time" army, where every private is under the eye of his immediate N.C.O. If the latter had a "down" on a private, the "sliding off" biz. would get twigged. But I believe the stepping aside at the church door and waiting till the service was over wouldn't arouse adverse comment, and would save unnecessary fatigues as well as unhealthy interviews with the company commander. I would certainly advise "T. F." to try it—if he has enlisted as an Agnostic (as I did).

In connection with these Church Parades, I'm wondering what will be the effect on them of the present C. of E. conflict over Prayer Book revision. The Anglo-Catholics seem likely to bring about Disestablishment of the National Church. If that happens, there will probably be a better chance of the Army Order about compulsory parades being repealed. For so long as both Church and Army are part of the State (shall we say?) the Army authorities are certain to recognize that all soldiers must attend Church of some kind.

D. P. STICKELLS.

#### Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission.

Mr. Whitehead reports very successful meetings at Birmingham, quite free from the rowdyism referred to in his last report. The meetings were all well attended, and followed with great interest. Mr. G. Dobson, who is doing good work in getting the *Freethinker* into the hands of newsagents, attended all the meetings, with an enthusiasm that should inspire some of the younger members. Some of these were present and gave what help they could. It was a good week's work, and should produce good results. During the present week Mr. Whitehead visits Swansea, where good meetings are anticipated.

#### 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, S. K. Ratcliffe, "Bernard Shaw at 70."

##### OUTDOOR.

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

NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): Every Tuesday and Thursday at 7.30; Sunday at 11, 1.30, and 6.30; Lecturers—Messrs. Hart, Howell Smith, B.A., Hyatt, Le Maine, and Saphin.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6, Mr. H. B. Samuels, a Lecture.

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside the Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. F. G. Warner, a Lecture.

##### COUNTRY.—OUTDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Branch of the N.S.S.)—Short ramble to Mearns Castle. Meet at Rouken Glen main gate at 12 noon. Total walking distance four and a half miles.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Square): 7.30, Mr. L. Davis, "Religion and Liberty."

SWANSEA BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission, July 12 to 25.

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.

REQUIRED for Geneva, young Gentlewoman as Nursery Governess; boy (6½) and girl (1½); must be really fond of children and accustomed to them.—Write Box C.C.4, c/o *Freethinker* Office, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

WANTED.—(1) *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, by Tyrrell; (2) *Priests, Women and Families*, by Michelet; secondhand will do.—Box 90, c/o *Freethinker* Office, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

WHAT IS REPEATED too often becomes insipid and tedious. Nevertheless, we must say to you again we are tailors who have faithfully and successfully served scores of your fellow Freethinkers, eager to give you proofs that we shall do no less for you. Viewing any of the following costs a penny and may save pounds:—Gents' A to D Patterns, suits from 55s.; Gents' E Patterns, suits all at 67s. 6d.; Gents' F to I Patterns, suits from 75s.; Gents' J to N Patterns, suits from 104s. 6d.; or Ladies' Fashion and Pattern Book, costumes from 60s., frocks from 56s.—MACCONNELL & MABE, New Street, Bakewell, Derbyshire.

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