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

Views and Opinions.

Those Converted Infidels.

Several times of late we have had to comment upon the persistency of religious lying, and of the indestructibility of the religious liar. We cannot say that age does not wither nor custom stale his infinite variety, because there is very little variety about him. He is the same to-day as he was in the early days of Christianity, and if there is any Christianity left a century hence he will be much the same then with the same old tales, told in the same old way, and for the same old purpose. He is an industrious person and he follows a safe pursuit. He is given prominence in the newspapers and they shield him from exposure. They publish his stuff merely because it is in defence of religion, and they prevent anyone exposing its falsity because the lying is being done in the interests of Christianity, or because lying in the interests of the faith is such an old, such an honoured, and so general a profession in the Church. The religious liar is therefore quite safe. The political liar, the commercial liar, the literary liar, the scientific liar, the advertising liar, any other kind of liar runs the risk of exposure and of losing caste among decent men and women. The religious liar runs no such risk. We do not think that in the whole history of Christianity there is an instance in which a man has lost caste because he told lies about non-Christians. He may have been warned to be more cautious, but that was merely in case some laymen should be offended at the clumsiness of his stories. But the religious liar has always worked in absolute safety. His lies may have even counted to his honour, and in the world to come he will probably expect them to shine as so many jewels in the crown of a resurrected saint.

Tales for Children.

The latest specimen of the religious liar we have come across is in the *Sunday Chronicle* for October 24. We say the latest with all reservations, because be-

tween the writing of this article and its appearance in print several more may have made their debut. The article is unsigned, which may indicate that the writer's hand is so far unsubdued to his profession that he is a little bit ashamed of his identity being known. But we feel sure he will soon outgrow that modesty. The article is headed "Atheist Turns Believer," and it is written round the person of Thomas Edison. Personally we do not care the value of a brass button whether Edison turns believer or not. Of course, we would rather see a man's mentality run true to the end, but if he happens to go astray, and revert to childish beliefs which his friends imagined he had outgrown, we do not see why anyone else should be seriously disturbed about his own convictions. Where convictions rest upon a rational foundation, these are not disturbed because someone does not agree with them. But, naturally, where professed beliefs are the echo of mere authority, where a man believes because he has been told to do so, the fact of authority being against him may well be disturbing. It is much like a child who should be told one day that the earth goes round the sun, and the next day that the sun goes round the earth. Some time ago an intelligence test of the rank and file of the American Army was taken, and a large percentage, over fifty, we think, was found to be only fourteen years of age, mentally. We wonder what percentage of genuine believers in Christianity would reach that level?

* * *

Edison and Others.

But to Edison. A week or so ago there appeared a paragraph in some of the papers that Edison had professed *leanings* towards a belief in a future life. That was all, but in the hands of the *Sunday Chronicle* "special" this becomes the full blown statement that Edison the Atheist "has recanted and declares that to-day he believes in God absolutely and unconditionally." It seems a lot to build upon so vague a statement, but not to those who know the workings of the religious mind. Then we have, next on the list, Alfred Russel Wallace, once "a complete sceptic," but before he died Wallace gave the world a "testament in which he affirmed the truth of Eternal Life." But this Wallace certainly did not do. What Wallace did was to proclaim belief in continued existence after death, which is not quite the same as Eternal Life, and to the end he had a contempt for the Christian teaching concerning a future life. Next upon the scene is Shelley, whom, it is admitted, was an Atheist, but before he was drowned in the Bay of Spezzia he "had walked from the darkness of doubt to the white light of faith." We had almost written the white lie of faith, and the mistake would have been excusable. That is certainly lie number two, or three. Shelley's opinions on religion were the same when he died as they had

been for years before. Next comes Mrs. Besant. This "extraordinary woman" preached the Gospel of Doubt—that there is no God—throughout England." To-day 'she has founded a Church.' That is what one may call the lie inferential. For the obvious desire is to let the unreflecting *Chronicle* reader go away with the notion that she has become a Christian. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Besant has no greater belief in a personal God to-day than she had when she was preaching that horrible Gospel of Doubt by the side of Bradlaugh. Mrs. Besant is a Theosophist, although naturally she gets far more attention from our enlightened press in the days of her folly than she ever got in the days of her wisdom. Why even we might be hailed as a profound thinker if we found Jesus. Until we do we stand a far greater chance of being proclaimed an incurable idiot.

* * *

How Things Change!

In passing we may note the way in which these Christians play fast and loose with the opinions of well-known men, before and after their alleged conversion. Before they are converted there is nothing the Christian will fight against more strenuously than the statement that some of the leading men in science, in art, in politics, and in literature are Atheists. We are overwhelmed with arguments to prove they cannot be such, or if they are, that their work unfits them to express any opinions on religion worth bothering about. But once let the tale of their conversion get about, and the erstwhile theist, or religiously incapable person, becomes one of the leading Freethinkers of the world, and his opinions about religion authoritative and conclusive. So if there is not a lie at the beginning there is in the end. "Politics," said George Meredith, "is like climbing the greasy pole. Mutton or no mutton, you get the grease." So one may say that whatever else is uncertain about religion you are certain to get the lie. It is quite the tactics of the ordinary conversionist. Every convert tries to magnify his villainy before conversion; it makes him so much more valuable. It was one of the old teachings of Christianity that Christ delights to get the biggest sinners, and one may imagine that his spasms of delight have been many and lengthy. And certainly the *Sunday Chronicle* special writer will not cause any discomfort in the heavenly courts.

* * *

The Inevitable Paine.

To return to our muttons. Robert Blatchford is the next one served up. To-day he is "sure of immortality and the communion of the saints." And in the *Sunday Chronicle*, Blatchford's old paper! We know that he does believe in Spiritualism, but it is news that he believes in the communion of saints. He surely cannot be so far gone as that! We rather think that is a sample of the lie indirect. But the gem of the whole collection is concerned with Thomas Paine. We all know the pious lie about Paine's death-bed. The orthodox, the regular form, is that Paine died a wretched death, and that on his death-bed he was frightened at the prospect before him, and said he would have given anything never to have written the *Age of Reason*. It is usually left there—the despairing unbeliever wishing Christ could save him. The *Chronicle* man finds that insufficient. So he enlarges thus, Paine "spent his time and energies in scorning the Almighty," the poor devil does not seem to be even aware that Paine believed in both a future life and in a God! Or one can never be sure with the religious liar, whether his lies are the result of ignorance or sheer invention. And it will not do

for Paine to have died regretting having written the *Age of Reason*. He settles Paine "filled with remorse for his life work of destruction. Before he died he was received into the Church." Now that is really fresh. We have never heard it before. But what an opportunity has been missed. If we had been writing that yarn we would have had Paine rescued from his villainous surroundings by some kind-hearted Christian, taken away, nursed back to health, and then die spending his life on some far-away shore trying to bring the heathen to the feet of Christ. We present this suggestion to the editor of the *Sunday Chronicle*. We feel sure he could get one of his staff to work up the story. And as he would certainly not publish any exposure of the tale, he and his contributor would be quite safe. Moreover, not many of his readers would have read Moncure Conway's splendid vindication of the work of the man who did so much to establish the United States of America, to teach democracy to the people, to advocate old age pensions, to preach the possibility of a united States of Europe, to advocate the advancement of women, with numerous other reforms that have now become commonplaces. His readers will know nothing of Conway's scathing exposure of the lie about Paine's death-bed. It is quite safe to lie about Freethinkers—otherwise the *Sunday Chronicle* would not risk it.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Conscience.

If the theory of evolution is true, man belongs to the animal kingdom, and certainly there is no indication that there exists any essential difference between him and other animals. In an article, entitled "The Witness of Conscience," published in the *Christian World* of October 21, the Rev. A. T. S. James, B.A., M.Sc., says that "evolution, as understood in a popular view of it, talks of the ascent of man, and pleases us with the idea that the race is in the order of nature self-improving, having come up step by step out of the primal slime towards the image of the Godhead." That statement is fundamentally misleading. Scientific evolutionists know nothing of the "image of the Godhead," or of anything else of a supernatural character. God is a theologically created being, of whose existence there is absolutely no trace in the history of the universe. Although an M.Sc., Mr. James is not a scientific evolutionist, and although he speaks of "the warnings of nature about our insecurity, and the signs there are in the fossils from the rocks and in the extinction of stars, of the very little that suffices to make the difference between continuance and defeat," he has the audacity to take man clean away from the kingdom to which he naturally belongs, and treating him as a member of a purely imaginary kingdom, of the reality of which there is no convincing evidence whatsoever. His object in doing that, of course, is to be able to believe that man does not perish like the other animals. He says:—

A thousand types are gone; and left to himself in the æons of time what is there to guarantee man against being simply another larger moth in the flame? What separates man off from the withering and decay which were else his lot is that God has crowned him with glory and honour, making him in a special sense his own son, intervening in a particular way for him, and giving to him in the voice of conscience the witness of that greater inheritance into which he was born, and of that high calling from which he has gone astray.

That is sheer dogmatism, supported by not a single established fact. But let us carefully examine what Mr. James calls "the witness of conscience." Curiously enough, this preacher, with a scientific degree, revels in the contemplation of a spiritual world teeming with insoluble mysteries. Take the following utterance:—

The witness of conscience is of this twofold kind; first a witness of an essential kinship which we have with God; and then a witness that we have forgotten God and done despite to that Holy Name. The mystery of sin is in part linked with the mystery of creation, and we can no more explain the one than we can fathom the other. The sin of the world and all that we can see of its fruit in thwarted lives and dashed hopes, and in such sorrows as made Lear remind the heavens that they, too, were old; all this is indeed "a vision to dizzy and appal, and inflict on the mind a sense of a profound mystery which is absolutely beyond human solution." The one countervailing mystery is the miracle of forgiveness; that in a world which is so deep in the ruts of penalty, and so worn down by Promethean toil, there is a gift of mercy and One who can "save his people from their sins."

All such mysteries are metaphysical inventions, which have caused an incalculable amount of suffering and sorrow in the world, and from the tyrannical dominance of which science is slowly but surely delivering mankind. And yet many divines still persist in calling all people "miserable sinners," who at death will be dropped into a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, unless they put their trust in the atoning blood of Christ. Here is Mr. James, a Master of Science, who unblushingly assures us that "the mystery of sin, wonderfully as it is delineated in the story of Eden, is not merely that each of us, in Scripture phrase, falls, but it is the certainty that every child of Adam yet unborn will likewise fall." It is an infamous calumny to speak of human beings in such medieval terms. It is comforting to know, however, that many preachers no longer employ such insulting language.

Mr. James begins his article by saying that "if men are really no longer worrying about their sins, and are therefore no longer craving forgiveness, then it is so much the worse for men, and vastly the worst for their accredited teachers." We must express our entire disagreement with that statement. We admit that if men are no longer worrying about their sins it is so much the worse for the churches and their ministers, but we firmly maintain that for the men themselves it is so much the better. They have succeeded in banishing false fears as well as false hopes. They no longer believe in the supernatural. Mr. James looks down upon them with pity or disdain, taking it for granted that their consciences are either asleep or sadly perverted; but unfortunately his conception of conscience is radically erroneous. He seems to regard it as a sense or faculty possessed alone by man, within whom it was planted by God himself; but we prefer to think with Darwin "that any animal whatever, endowed with well-marked social instincts, parental and filial affections being here included, would inevitably acquire a moral sense or conscience, as soon as its intellectual powers had become as well or nearly as well developed as in man" (*The Descent of Man*, pp. 149-50). John Stuart Mill held that the moral feelings are not innate, but acquired, and that they are acquired through experience in social life. Herbert Spencer says: "Now that moral injunctions are losing the authority given by their supposed sacred origin, the secularization of morals is becoming imperative" (*Data of Ethics*, p. vi.). In course of time, scientific thinkers, who followed the inductive school, came to regard the alleged innate and Divinely implanted moral sense

as a pure myth. As Professor Hudson puts it, "for them our only test of conduct is the test furnished by experience of the results of conduct; and the so-called moral faculty or conscience, so far from being immediate and simple, is itself merely the organized registration in the modern civilized adult of his observations of the consequences of the actions of himself and others" (*An Introduction to the Philosophy of Herbert Spencer*, pp. 83, 84). Thus we clearly see that Mr. James' article is completely out of date, and consequently out of touch with modern knowledge. It is simply not true that "what man needs and must have is forgiveness." In Nature there is no such thing as forgiveness. What man needs and must have, to make life worth living, is harmony with his environment, and this can only be acquired by education and practical experience. Mr. James falls into grievous error when he declares that the true doctrine of man's greatness is that "which lays its foundation first in his guilt and misery, his exaltation being remedial, a restoration from a fall." Man is not a fallen being. The Genesis story is now being entirely repudiated by a growing number of educated divines. The late Professor Drummond published a book under the significant title of *The Ascent of Man*. In the volume already mentioned, Professor Hudson tells us that at one time Spencer cherished a most optimistic estimate of the future of mankind while under the sway of his ethical system; but that towards the end of his life his optimism lost much of its enthusiasm.—

He saw reason to qualify his sanguine prophecy; speaking not, as he had once done, of the "evanescence of evil," but more temperately of its continuous diminution under the discipline of the social state; and, while still believing in a "good time coming," regarding the consummation of moral progress as, at best, very far off. Yet to the end he looked forward to an "approximately complete adjustment" of the characters of men to the conditions of the highest human existence, as the goal towards which we are actually, if slowly, moving. The tendency of his philosophy in this respect, then, is distinctly encouraging. The doctrine of evolution, while, in Huxley's phrase, it provokes no "millennial anticipations," still assures us of the substantial reality of moral progress, makes us, therefore, feel that our own efforts count" (p. 96).

Surely this is a much wholesomer doctrine than that taught by Mr. James. J. T. LLOYD.

Sydney Harbour.

We've reached the Harbour Beautiful, and cried:
 'This is the place appointed—where the dew
 Of Heaven's divinest fell, and Beauty grew:
 All other havens have our hopes belied;
 And with the Gem of Ocean vainly vied:
 The verdant islands, with each living hue,
 Seem all to smile into the water's blue,
 With joy renewed, and glory multiplied:
 Not even Man seeks Nature to defile;
 But with his handiwork hath sought her grace;
 So in his rounded Paradise we trace,
 And feel a kinship in the grandest style,
 That knows the holiest touch of Time and Place;
 A breath from some eternal lonely isle!

W. J. LAMB.

Always laugh when you can, it is a cheap medicine; merriment is a philosophy not well understood. It is the sunny side of existence.—Byron.

Roman Candles.

I would rather be a dog, and bay the moon
Than such a Roman. —Shakespeare.

GREAT BRITAIN is a Protestant country, but owing to sheer inertia there is nothing left of the rigid revolt against Priestcraft which characterized previous generations. Although half the members of the Church of England, and all the members of the various Free Churches are supposed to be anti-Catholic, they seem utterly incapable of effective protest, and have left the work of fighting the worst elements of Clericalism to the Freethinkers, whose backs, fortunately, are broad enough for the burden.

The Roman Catholic Church is as smart as any American showman at exploiting the situation. With clever effrontery, the Catholics manipulate their small numbers with all the dazzle and display of a stage army, which, fifty in strength, has to represent both sides in a scenic Battle of Waterloo. The *Roman Catholic Year Book* is a masterpiece of camouflage, and makes that Church look quite imposing on paper; whilst everywhere the clerical cats'-paws render hard service at the beck and call of their pastors and masters. Astute in their way, the Roman Catholics have concentrated on the cinemas and the periodical press, the two greatest publicity agents in existence. So patrons of the screen get the laughable situation of Catholic vestments being exploited on the screen, not because they happen to be appropriate, but because they are more picturesque than the boiled shirts and dog collars of Free Church ministers. In the newspapers, Roman Catholic journalists, mostly young Irishmen, seize every opportunity of advertising their Church, and regale readers with yarns of alleged miracles served up hot with the latest murder trial, or the still hotter reports of the Divorce Courts. So well manipulated is this stage thunder that its effect is apparent, especially among those worthy citizens who left their education behind them at the tender age of fourteen years.

Take a shining example, and consider the case of the Trade Union Congress. For sheer terror of the Roman Catholic voters, who could all be packed in a few shows at the Wembley Stadium, these would-be statesmen have shelved the question of Secular Education year after year, and now are shirking the equally important issue of Birth Control. That sturdy Trade Unionists should be more afraid of a handful of voters than they are of the Capitalist Press is at once a confession of weakness and a proof of the triumph of showmanship.

In addition to press propaganda the Catholics issue books, and industrious penmen such as Messrs. Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton are pressed into service. During the past few years attacks on Evolution, Birth Control, Spiritualism, and other subjects have been launched; and in one fell swoop G. K. Chesterton lampooned all the "intellectuals" during half a century of modern English literature. Indeed, "No case, rely on abuse" appears to be the usual Catholic method of propaganda. The slenderest argument will suffice, but it is always necessary to remind your opponent that his aunt has a glass eye. For instance, in Mr. Belloc's attack on *The Outlines of History*, he actually goes out of his way to taunt Mr. Wells with his want of knowledge of French, just as if Mr. Belloc's own language was superior to that of Shakespeare's, or his courtesy above that of my Lord Chesterfield's.

Another example of Roman criticism is to be found in a book, entitled *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology*, by a Mr. Summers. This busy compiler actually declares that "the witch" was in reality:—

An evil liver; a social pest and parasite; the de-

votee of a loathly and obscene creed; an adept at poisoning, blackmail, and other creeping crimes; a member of a powerful secret organization inimical to Church and State; a blasphemer in word and deed; swaying the villagers by terror and superstition; a charlatan and a quack sometimes.....battering upon the filth and foulest passions of the age.

As witchcraft extended over the known world during thousands of years, the sobriety of Mr. Summers's remarks will be readily recognized. And his association of "a powerful secret organization" with an old woman in Salem, New England, is worthy of a fourteen years' old schoolboy, as is his forgetfulness that Joan of Arc was a "sorceress" and a saint of his church. Perhaps Mr. Summers will try again in a future volume. It is almost cruel to quote Brother Summers on Spiritualism, but duty is duty. So prepare to receive cavalry:—

Modern spiritism is merely witchcraft revived..... The Catholic Church condemns it utterly and entirely. Not because she disbelieves in it, but because she believes in it so thoroughly, because she knows what is the real nature of the moving forces, however skilfully they may disguise themselves.

In the first place Spiritualism is not "witchcraft revived." The statement is simply Mr. Summers revived, and repeating the same balderdash that he had already written on an earlier page concerning Demonology. The further statement that the Roman Catholic Church recognizes "the real nature" of Spiritualism is a much better guess on Mr. Summers's part, for priests have long recognized the cash value of faked relics and spooof miracles. Remembering the annual frauds of the "Holy Fire" at Jerusalem, and the saint's blood at Naples, it is a wonder that a Roman Catholic priest can pass a Spiritualist medium without winking.

This brazen Catholic propaganda is a bubble that only wants pricking. Trade Unionists have no reason for alarm, for the Roman Catholic vote is so scattered that, except in a few instances, the Papists could not unseat a Borough Councillor, let alone a member of Parliament. And what good would the Roman Catholic vote be to the Labour movement? Papists take their orders from the men who wear the petticoats, and there is as little likelihood of olive-skinned Papa at Rome being in sympathy with a British any more than a French Republic. Altars and thrones have always leaned together, and will continue to do so to the end, despite the vapourings of some Labour leaders before Pleasant Sunday Afternoon gatherings.

The Roman Catholic Church is the church of the ignorant. The bulk of the laymen are not only ignorant, but they are kept in that state. They are not allowed to read any but Catholic books and publications, and the *Index Expurgatorius* contains the names of practically all the books worth reading for generations past. As for the priests, the vast majority are only educated in the patter of their profession. Of the wider and broader aspects of education they are as innocent as so many Pekinese snoozing on satin cushions. A large proportion of them are Irish, or Belgian, and not English at all, and have little understanding of the national character and its aspirations. Priestly supremacy in its worst form finished in this country for ever with the glare of the fires of Smithfield. Labour leaders ought to be made of sterner stuff than maiden aunts in remote country villages, who confuse a Militia training with a German invasion. Roman candles may amuse children; they should never scare men worthy of the name. Even priests are but tradesmen vending spiritual goods. Hence Voltaire's advice: "When kneeling in front of a priest, keep your hands in your pockets."

MIMNERMUS.

The March of Materialism.

V.

(Concluded from page 662.)

It is when we come to consider the effects of such chemicals as alcohol, morphine, cocaine, caffeine, hashish, or adrenalin as they affect mentality, says Dr. Berman, "that the absurdity becomes apparent of various doctrines which regard the soul as a ghost residing in the brain and nervous system and acting through it. Their effect presents the most convincing proof that the manifestations of mind or "soul" are the end results of physical and chemical factors interacting in the nerve-cells."¹

In the light of the scientific discovery of the marvellous effect produced by the potent chemicals introduced into the system by the ductless glands, in the formation of character and personality, what place can be found for the soul? What would be the use of it, if it is to be governed in its manifestations by these chemical productions, or abolished altogether, as in the case of imbeciles and idiots, whose glands have ceased to function? The thyroid gland regulates the development of the nervous system, the unfolding of the convolutions of the brain, and the growth of the different layers of brain-cells. To quote Dr. Berman again:—

Without thyroid there can be no subtlety or depth of thought, no appreciation of beauty, no complex habit formation or behaviour, no learning, no education—nothing that we recognize as characteristic of the cultivated soul or the sensitive mind. And not only that. Should the thyroid become suddenly or gradually defective in one who has always been normal, even super-normal, there is a degeneration of the sensitive mind and cultivated soul. And this may occur at any time during the life circle—in the twenties, the thirties, the forties, the fifties, or even later.

Nothing can be more convincing of the existence of a chemistry of character and personality than to follow the transformations in a series of cases of thyroid deficiency at different ages. There is the change from the repulsive gargoyle of the coarse-haired, thick-minded, dumb, drooling imbecile to the silken-haired, smiling, intelligent, and educable child. There is the change from the lazy, stupid, slow, phlegmatic boy to the ceaselessly active, playful, sharp youngster (pp. 56-57).

And, as he further observes, the same effects may be observed in adult men and women. It is astonishing that men, clever and intelligent in other matters, can still continue to believe in this shadowy ghost of soul, or spirit, in the face of these demonstrated facts. Our character, for good or ill, depends entirely upon the healthy working of these glands. For instance, some people are of a quiet, peaceable, easy-going disposition. Others are fretful, irritable, excitable. Others, again, are melancholy, brooding, dejected and gloomy. In these cases it is the parathyroid glands that are largely responsible. These four little glands, about the size of grass seeds, says Dr. Berman, "control the amount of lime in the blood and tissue. When they are removed, the body begins to lose lime and to suffer the consequences, for the less lime there is in the body the more irritable and sensitive it becomes. The nerve-cells of the brain lose lime and become more irritable..... Differences in the sensitivity between people, which we all recognize as an important difference in people, undoubtedly depend in part upon the parathyroid glands."²

It depends entirely upon the chemicals exuded by the different glands of internal secretion whether we resemble a Mark Tapley, who retains his cheerfulness under the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or a miserable, discontented, and unhappy millionaire.

Such are the materialistic conclusions of these two doctors, Dr. P. McBride and Dr. Louis Berman, whose books we commend to those interested in the study of mind. The scientific advance in this direction during the last few years has been enormous, especially in psychology, medicine, and surgery. As another medical man, Dr. C. MacLaurin, observes: "So rapidly has medicine changed that a book written ten years ago is already obsolete. Indeed, it is not too much to say, that more has been discovered in medicine within the last thirty years than in the whole previous half million years during which man has been upon the earth, one sometimes becomes terrified at the amazing growth of knowledge."³

During the Middle Ages there was a saying: "Among three doctors, two Atheists." Dr. MacLaurin mentions this attribution of scepticism to doctors, and provides a good example of it himself. For he calmly observes: "But quite clearly the notion of God as an All-wise and All-loving Father is inconsistent with medical experience.....And the way Nature has treated woman is still more shocking. Any earthly father who treated his children as Nature has treated woman would be considered as a step-father."⁴

Dr. MacLaurin says that he is often asked by otherwise intelligent men if the *Religio Medici* of Sir Thomas Browne really represents the religion of modern doctors. He says that the nearest approach to a talk about religion he ever heard from a doctor was when he heard one doctor say of another, "that he was believed to pray for his patients; but in that I seem to scent a savour of professional jealousy." Upon the ground, I suppose, that he could not have had much confidence in his treatment if he had to have recourse to prayer. Of the *Religio Medici* he declares:—

I might almost feel justified in saying that *Religio Medici* is generally considered by doctors to be a farrago of quackery, mysticism, credulity, and astrology put into gorgeous and quite unnecessarily obscure language; full of sound and fury; signifying nothing. Probably Browne was unconsciously remembering the teachings of some old lady who had impressed the truth upon him in his early infancy—probably with her slipper" (pp. 274-275).

Dr. MacLaurin is Lecturer in Clinical Surgery at Sydney University, this book of Medico-historical essays deals with the maladies afflicting some of the great historical characters in history, notably Queen Elizabeth, Henry VIII., and Luther. They are a continuation of a similar volume of essays entitled *Post Mortem*, dealt with in these columns a twelve-month ago.

Another work just lately published is *The Mystery of Mind*, by L. T. Troland, Professor of Psychology at Harvard University, from which work we quote the following:—

William James, psychologist and philosopher, a man sympathetic with religion as well as with science, wrote: "The soul is at all events needless for expressing the actual subjective phenomena of consciousness as they appear.....Altogether, the soul is an outbirth of that sort of philosophizing whose great maxim, according to Dr. Hodgson, is:

¹ L. Berman, *The Personal Equation*, p. 50.

² L. Berman, *The Personal Equation*, pp. 57-58.

³ C. MacLaurin, *Mere Mortals* (Cape, 1925).

⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 273-274.

'Whatever you are *totally* ignorant of, assert to be the explanation of everything else.'

All in all, the notion of the soul has proven itself hopelessly inadequate as an attempt to elucidate the nature of self. If the question:—

"What am I?" is answered by the statement: "I am a Soul," the question is still open. Such an answer is merely a dignified way of evading the question.⁵

It takes the metaphysicians all their time to adapt their arguments, for the existence of the soul, to meet the ever-accumulating mass of facts provided by the scientific workers in their laboratories and clinics. The metaphysicians will not demean themselves with research work; it is beneath their dignity. Professor McDougall, for instance, is scornful of "the brain-staining psychiatrists." They prefer the easier task of sitting in their armchairs and spinning their cobwebs out of their own brains. But even they cannot escape the influence of the times, and when they are not actually attacking Materialism, often unconsciously use its language, as we have seen in the case of McDougall, quoted by Dr. McBride.

Another critic, reviewing McDougall's work, *An Outline of Abnormal Psychology*, points out exactly the same thing. He says:—

Professor McDougall is always slipping back into these mechanistic explanations. He starts out bravely with his "hormæ," which are original forms of energy, or at least forms of original energy, but in the last resort he can only picture them as physical reactions. Thus, when discussing the various grades of character between the extremes of introversion and extroversion, "we may assume that the position of any subject in this scale is a function of some quite general property of his nervous system; and we may assume with considerable probability that this property again is a function of some chemical product or products of metabolism; that in short, each subject's position in the intro-extrovert scale is mainly determined by some chemical influence of the nature of a hormone or endocrine secretion, or some complex chemical resultant of the general metabolism."⁶

The fact is, the opponents of Materialism to-day are men who have been trained in the old school of religious psychology prevailing before the great discoveries made of late years. M. Elie Halevy, the historian, remarked that all the young men were in favour of Catholic emancipation and the opposition was defeated "not by the march of improvement, but by the march of death." For as Professor Tillyard, who is not a Materialist, regretfully remarks: "The advance of science during the past seventy years has been definitely along the road to Materialism. Though the pace has somewhat slackened and many an anxious glance is now being turned backward, yet the impetus is still driving us forward, mainly in the same direction. For hundreds of years mankind looked to religion to lead them along the right path. Now, in the western world their gaze is fixed on science. It is certain that, for the next hundred years at any rate, where science leads, there mankind will follow."⁷ Nothing is more certain than that it will not lead them back to religion. W. MANN.

All truth is safe and nothing else is safe; and he who keeps back the truth, or withholds it from men, is either a coward or a criminal, or both.—Max Muller.

⁵ L. T. Troland, *The Mystery of Mind*, p. 21. ("Library of Modern Sciences" series. Chapman & Hall, 1926.)

⁶ *Times Literary Supplement*, August 26, 1926.

⁷ Halevy, *A History of the English People*, 1815-1830 (1926), p. 261.

⁸ R. J. Tillyard, *Nature*, July 31, 1926.

Acid Drops.

The organized crusade in favour of religion in the daily and weekly newspapers continues, and one of these appears in the *Leicester Mail* from the pen of Canon Peter Green. Canon Green writes on Christianity as a Social Crusade, and he follows the usual line of claiming for Christianity everything that is good, and leaving for others all that is bad. Thus Christianity abolished drunkenness, slavery, made war more humane, etc., and claims that all social crusades spring from love of God. It would be hard to string together a stronger list of absurd claims than does Canon Green, and he does so because the coward's castle, the pulpit, has been extended to the press. He knows that no adequate answer would be permitted by the papers that publish his articles, and he would never dream of discussing the matter publicly with one who was qualified to meet him. What he does is to depend upon the power of reiteration, and the muzzling of opposition. Quite dependable friends when one has to deal with a Christian public, and a press that moves in constant fear of the churches and the big advertisers.

The Spiritualists have opened a "Temple of Light" in the Westminster Bridge Road. But such a thing as the discovery of a building to let, could not have been made by a mere earthly being. The information, or rather the inspiration, came from the other world. A man received instructions from the spirits to find a "Temple," so he came to London and boarded a tram-car to see what he could find. The spirits then guided him to the Westminster Bridge Road. Of course, the spirits might have given the man the address at once, and so saved the journey, but that would have been acting too much like an ordinary human being. The formulæ, incantations, and roundabout ways of working are characteristic of "our spirit friends." The Rev. Vale Owen gave the first address, and informed those present that crowds of spirits were there, but they could not see the bricks and mortar. Which seems rather rough after their having discovered it. The building was consecrated by means of a "psychic bath or shower which comes from God, through the Christ sphere to the temple." That is quite clear and very convincing. It also helps us to understand why Spiritualists consider the evidence of a future life so self-evident.

Some of the clergy are letting the Bishop of Liverpool know that whatever happens, they will not do without hell. At a cinema service in Wallasey, the Rev. R. L. Jones said that hell was no fiction; it is real and runs like a red line right through Scriptures. Hear, hear! Fancy the miserable condition of a man on his death bed, and not knowing there was a hell to go to. The bishop ought to be ashamed of himself trying to rob men and women of the comfort their religion brings them.

Dr. F. W. Norwood is also to be numbered among the prophets. In his *The Gospel of the Larger Life*, he declares:—

The Church of to-morrow will not be less concerned with God nor with the world beyond the veil, but will be intensely concerned with the conditions under which men live. She will speak with no uncertain conviction upon the age-long exploitation of man by his brother man in the realm of industry, and the brutal, blatant, futile slaying of man by his brother man in the name of patriotism.....Of the Church of to-day I speak with hope; of the Church of to-morrow with certainty."

The reverend gentleman seems very sure of himself. He has, we suspect, been reading "the signs of the times"; and, fancying that Labour is likely in the near future to wield greater power, hastens to place himself on the winning side and phrases his prediction accordingly. But what the more alert man of the future will doubtlessly ask himself is this, Why is it that the churches—and presumably their God too—have been

utterly unconcerned for all these long centuries "with the conditions under which men live"?

What a Congregational parson, the Rev. Charter Piggot, wonders is, whether the Church is in danger of becoming a "middle-age institution." Most of the work, he says, is at present being done by seniors, and the place given to youth is not large or generous enough. One might fancy from this that youth is clamouring for a job in the churches. Yet the reverse is obviously the case. The parson's hardest task nowadays is to get the younger people to stay with the churches. Those that do so mainly attend for social reasons; and their belief being only half-hearted does not prompt them to take on the church jobs. We should say that the danger feared by Mr. Piggot is a very real one. There is, however, a worse. And this is that the Church is increasingly becoming to be regarded as an antiquated institution. Fear of that danger has led the Church's culinary experts to dish up a very tasty-looking hash of the ancient Christian meat. But seemingly our young people have no greater liking for hash than they have for the original cold lamb it was made from.

"The National Playing Fields Association appealed in the summer for the loan of cricket fields for the use of elementary school-boys. To that appeal there was a fine response. The Association is now requesting the loan of privately-owned football grounds. Most of these grounds are used only once or twice a week; yet there are thousands of boys of the poorer class who have no place to play in. We notice there is no suggestion made to throw open these playing fields on Sunday. Yet it is on that day when the fields would be most useful in keeping boys and youths from loafing at street corners, and out of that kind of mischief which leads to a police-court. Plenty of our prominent men know this as well as we do. But seemingly the Christian Sabbath taboo operates too powerfully to allow of a candid expression of opinion in this matter. We wonder how many of our valiant newspapers have sufficient courage to supplement the Association's appeal with an advocacy of Sunday opening of the playing fields? Few, if any; the churches are still able to scare our newspaper owners and editors.

At an international conference held recently at Geneva, German and French war victims, supported by additional ex-soldiers, pledged themselves to the maintenance of peace. Commenting on this, a popular paper remarks that these one-time enemies have now come to regard themselves as fellow-citizens of the world. If that is a fact, we are glad it is so. For so long as men think otherwise, while they regard themselves as merely members of this or that nation or church, they can too readily be used as tools by any ambitious and scheming king, dictator, diplomat, or church. As history has revealed, the outcome of this way of thinking is not peace, but war.

One of the greatest things done by Signor Mussolini, no matter what mistakes he may have made, has been to introduce the reading of the New Testament in the day schools of Italy. The Rev. Hubert L. Simpson, of Glasgow, all in a glow of thought of it, tells us that. But this is not the castor-oil dictator's latest greatest. He is depriving those Italians who have protested against his despotic methods of their rights of citizenship. These men, some of the finest of Italy's intellect, have dared to champion free speech; and the pious dictator rewards them according to true Fascist principles.

The Rev. F. B. Meyer has just returned from an American tour and has a sad tale to unfold. The American churches are suffering, as are the English, from the growing secularization of the Sabbath. There is clearly a decline in Evangelical religion. He therefore asks the brethren to pray that "our sister realm across

the sea will continue to stand by the principles of Puritanism which have done so much to make her a great nation." So it was snuffing through the nose, suppressing innocent amusements, and interfering with people's liberty of action, that made America a "great" nation. We are glad to be corrected; we thought it was the possession of vast natural resources that had done the trick.

Mr. Hannen Swaffer, a critic of the *Daily Express*, sits in front of the Coliseum stage and records his impressions as "Behind the Scenes." We presume that this is near enough for readers who have forgotten what they read yesterday, and journalists are much too busy thinking of to-morrow to seriously consider their pearls of wisdom of to-day. A little fishbone, however, is tickling the throat of the aforesaid and above-mentioned critic and his fearfulness in saying anything committal about "The Showing Up of Blanco Posnet" tempts one to take him by the hand and help him to say something. The Coliseum, he states, is the only music-hall into which country clergymen take their wives and families, and Mr. Swaffer does not think that they can understand the moral of this particular play. We trust our right reverend and reverend brothers will be duly grateful to our critic for suggesting their incapacity of seeing a hole in a ladder and that they will make arrangements for joining a kindergarten class for the study of St. Bernard and all his works. Mr. Swaffer is not taking sides in this matter. He need not be alarmed; there is no side to take in this emotional trifle that makes a good play with a sugary end, leaving the author on the side of the angels.

At an East Ham Brotherhood meeting the Rev. Aldom French dealt with some recent declarations to the effect that the doctrines of hell had been abolished. The good man spoke of the sterner preaching of the past great pulpiteers, he spoke of the intense seriousness of life, the inevitable results of sin, the judgment as well as the mercy of God, and the folly of sniggering at awful issues. Altogether he appears to show the brethren some unpleasant pictures of what awaited the sinner in the devil's pleasant-Sunday-and-week-day-afternoon meetings in the hereafter. The reverend gent finished his discourse by pointing out "the only way of safety and security." After this, we fancy all the Brotherhood are fervent disciples of the "Safety First" gospel; for the fear of the Lord is upon them.

We wonder how ex-Service men who fought with the 21st Division, like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's pen picture of them in "When The Guards Came Through" at Hill 70. Sir Arthur makes them say:—

We, we were down on our knees,
Praying for us and for them,
Praying with tear-wet cheek,
Praying with outstretched hand.

This unlovely picture of British soldiers grovelling and snivelling and calling upon God Almighty is about as disgusting a libel on brave men as anything could be. It is utterly contrary to the facts we know about the conduct of our soldiers on the battle-field. We should say Sir Arthur Conan Doyle owes the 21st Division men a very thorough apology.

At the Crystal Palace "Bible Day" meeting, the Rev. J. Russell Howden gave an address on the "duty of criticism." Said he: Criticism in itself is neither bad nor good. Think for yourself, study for yourself, pray for yourself, remembering all the time that the Book you are judging and criticizing is *your* judge and *your* critic. About all the advice amounts to is this: Let the Christian criticize and judge the Bible; but let him beware of arriving at conclusions other than those the parsons wish him to arrive at, or else he will imperil his immortal soul. Mr. Howden's advice on criticism is excellent enough in its way—the way of the parson—but we doubt if his critical procedure leaves much room for a man to think for himself.

We consider that Dean Inge owes a public apology to women. He says that many women are better qualified to sit on the Episcopal Bench than many of the Bishops. We do not know what women have done to deserve this slighting reference to either their intellectual or moral qualities. If he had said that any woman could be a bishop if she only cared to become one, the statement might have passed without comment. But to say that many are fitted to be bishops can only be construed as a deliberate insult to the intelligence of such as are covered by the "many."

The *Daily Express* has unearthed something about the Prince of Wales to which it gives appropriate large type headlines, and for which it deserves the fullest possible publicity. It has discovered a nurse who remembers that on one occasion when the Prince was about six he would persist in climbing on the back of King Edward's chair. At last his father lost patience with him and gave him "a few gentle pats." We feel that deserves recording. Such an experience must be absolutely unique in the annals of parenthood, and if it were not, the fact that the common things of family life occur in the Royal Family deserve recording. American papers should note that they are not alone in the exhibition of the same kind of thing that accompanies the tour of the Queen of Roumania. And if it is not quite so great here, is perhaps that it is a more regular feature of our lives.

Both Leeds and Bradford are busy discussing the advisability of opening cinemas on Sunday. The opposition, as usual, comes chiefly from religious quarters. The police, says the *Leeds Mercury*, generally favour the opening of Sunday cinemas because it takes young people off the streets, and tends to better order. But one cannot expect considerations of that kind to weigh with either church or chapel. If it does not bring the young men and women to church, they care little about anything else.

Perhaps to the level of laughter, but never to the height of seriousness, is the subject matter of addresses by the fervid ministers in their own vineyard. The title of an address at Leicester during a meeting of the Congregational Union of England and Wales is a case in point. There can never be too many people in England, or in the world for that matter, to give an example to the young and take an interest in their lives and help to make them all valuable and useful citizens. But, we do think that the following title is the wrong way to set about the job: "The Call of Christ to the Young People of To-day." Apart from the business interest in the announcement we cannot think that one who never laughed has much to say to young people, especially when it is said through the theological filters of the Congregational Union of England and Wales.

The times have changed, and hence there comes also a change in clerical tactics. Many parsons, especially those of the Nonconformist variety, have discovered that wholesale condemnation of amusements results only in emptying pews. Therefore we find the Rev. Arthur Pringle writing in this wise. People must, and will, have amusement. All work and no play, all dulness and no relief, is bad for everyone; and so we cannot, and ought not to, banish the theatre and the picture palace. Mr. Pringle appears to be trying to make a show of broad-mindedness. We suspect, however, that the quality is merely skin-deep. We have little doubt that he believes theatres and cinemas are entirely bad things when they are open on Sunday. Monday's innocent amusement invariably becomes, in Nonconformist eyes, Sunday's evil.

A slight insight of that straddle-legged Christian philosophy carried by the Catholic Church is to be found in *Studies*, an Irish Quarterly Review. A writer in that paper deals with the development of Messrs. Arthur

Guinness, Son, & Co., Ltd., for the pleasure the company has bestowed on mankind. No one will quarrel with anybody who is out bestowing pleasure, but it is decidedly quaint that the encyclicals of Leo XIII., the conflict between Religion and Science, and the unhappy conditions of Mexico bed down in the shadow of a brewery.

The Rev. D. R. Owen, of the Carnarvonshire Baptist Union, protests against English visitors bathing on Sundays, because it is infecting Welshmen with the "bad example." Mr. Owen has good religious grounds for his protest. Bathing was one of the things against which the best Christian conscience set itself, and, as we noted in previous issues, the Christian saints were quite notorious for the manner in which they avoided this heathen custom. It is worth bearing in mind that the Roman bath, which flourished wherever the Romans went, and which was used by the whole of the people, had so completely disappeared under Christian rule that when it was reintroduced from the Mohammedan world, it became known as the Turkish bath. Even its origin was lost among Christians.

On the subject of marriage between black and white peoples, Miss Partridge, a missionary, makes a statement that is not exactly a compliment to Christianity. This religion must apparently need careful handling, but the following opinion could not have been put forward any better by a Jesuit: "If one of the couple were not a Christian, she felt that the evil in one would overcome the good in the other." Now, wouldn't the world be lovely if everyone was like us? However, this is not by any means touching the spot. Missionaries are the advance guard of trade, and miscegenation is a problem thrown up by the somewhat doubtful blessings of what is called civilization, and the introduction of Christian ethics into the matter only complicates the issue. The Rev. W. A. Cotton, who started the ball rolling, believes that all God's chillun's got wings; the facts and history of Christianity are against him.

History in the making. We saw how the story of snow off the boots of the Russian Army had been found on Balham Station; how angels at Mons had appeared to help the British via a Fleet Street public house, and now, hot on the heels of this blurb, Sir William Robertson almost infers that Mr. Lloyd George was the man who nearly lost the war. All this is of to-day and yesterday, and yet there are people who go black in the face with conviction over what was supposed to have happened in Palestine two thousand years ago.

We gather from a newspaper that Dr. Campbell Morgan (with photograph) has received an invitation to settle in business at Westminster Congregational Church. It is not put like that, but that is all it means to those who are not mesmerized with mountains of words. If the activities of various Christian bodies are chronicled in the same manner as limited companies the obvious lesson is, that their places of business should not be free from taxes.

Pity the sorrows of the poor journalist who has to turn on the tap for every occasion. Describing the unveiling of the Guards' Memorial, a scribe states that "a cathedral hush fell upon the crowd," and, later on, this hush deepened. Yes, we pity the sorrows of the poor scribe, the moulder of public opinion that is where the newspapers like to put it.

Mr. H. G. Wood, who has been playing a tune on the results of the recent religious questionnaire, comes perilously near to evoking a camel from his inner consciousness. He says: "Many cling to Christianity as a way of life, while questioning it as a system of beliefs." We have noticed also that the days get shorter now that summer time is no longer,

The "Freethinker" Endowment Trust and Sustentation Fund.

We acknowledge this week the additional sum of £57 13s. 6d. to this Fund, but we have still a long way to reach what is required.

It will be remembered that we hold Mr. P. G. Peabody's signed promise to pay to this Trust the sum of £1,000 when the amount subscribed reaches £7,000. We are given until December 31, 1927, to raise this amount, and there is no doubt but that the sum will be claimed, and, we hope, long before the expiry date. I need hardly say that this is the hope of all subscribers to the Fund. For example, Mr. H. Jessop, who acts as Secretary to the Trust, and who has already subscribed very handsomely to its funds, promises a further £200 to make up the £7,000 provided the balance is subscribed. Mr. Jessop writes:—

The present time is, I know, not the best one to appeal for monetary support, but old friends of the Cause will not need to be reminded of the struggle which the Editor has had since 1914 to carry on. I have been in close touch with the paper since Mr. Foote's death, and I do not know how Mr. Cohen has managed to stand by his post in such trying circumstances. We readers have now a chance of putting the *Freethinker* on a sound financial footing, and it is our duty to do so. I would therefore appeal to all, rich and poor, to give all possible help. Success will pay honour to our Editor, and substantially help the Cause that spells Freedom.

We have also a promise from Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook, another of the Trustees, of a further £100, on the same terms as Mr. Jessop. So that our present position is:—

	£	s.	d.
Subscribed last year	...	3,901	4 10
Collected this year	...	481	19 6
Total	...	£4,383	4 4

This, counting the £300 promised conditionally, leaves us with the task of collecting £2,316 15s. 8d. In other words, so soon as our readers subscribe another £2,316 we can collect an additional £1,300. I am certain this can be done, and done easily, so long as all lend a hand. Mr. W. H. Hicks, who sends along a cheque for ten guineas, expresses a hope that the flow will quicken. We hope so too, but we are not overlooking the fact that this is only the third week of the reopening of the Fund.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

	£	s.	d.
Previously acknowledged	...	424	6 0
"Anti-Christian"	...	20	0 0
W. H. Hicks	...	10	10 0
Mrs. I. J. King	...	10	0 0
H. Marshall	...	5	0 0
"A Friend"	...	3	3 0
"Jersey"	...	2	0 0
Mrs. Robertson	...	2	0 0
Mr. and Mrs. S. A. Merrill (U.S.A.)	...	2	0 0
May Meredith	...	1	0 0
G. B. Church	...	1	0 0
A. J. Watson	...	0	10 0
S. Olsen	...	0	5 0
A. J. Cooper	...	0	3 0
J. W. Wearing	...	0	2 6
Total	...	£481	19 6

Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust, and addressed to me at 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4. Every contribution will be acknowledged week by week in the *Freethinker*.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

To Correspondents

E. B. SHILLINGTON.—We do not know more than what has appeared in the press concerning Edison's alleged "leaning towards a belief in immortality." We are inclined to believe that it is little more than a fanciful theory that Edison broached some time ago, and which was not a belief in *personal* immortality, and the survival of anything else does not matter.

W. LAING.—Pure satire. We thought that would have been obvious. Of course, like all genuine satire, it covers a truth.

W. COLLINS.—Thanks for sending on the anonymous communication. It helps to remind one of the type of mind that naturally finds Christianity so attractive. Canon Green probably knows better than to venture into the open, where his wild statements might be so easily refuted.

W. WRIGHT.—Thanks. Shall appear.

F. MANN.—The desire to give Freethinkers a cup of poison is not unknown in Christian history. The meeting is certain to have done good.

H. B. DODDS.—Article received. Shall appear at an early date.

H. AMEX.—You must not accuse the ordinary newspaper writer of having opinions. He often has no more than a pen and a vocabulary. Of course, he may have opinions, but it does not follow.

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

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

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd.," Clerkenwell Branch.

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):— One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

To-day (October 31) Mr. Cohen lectures in the City Hall, Saloon, Glasgow, at 11.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. In the morning he will speak on "The Press, the Public, and the Farce of Faith," in the evening on "The Passing of the Gods." It will be unusual not to have good meetings at Glasgow, but it is hoped that local Freethinkers will do what they can to bring some of their Christian friends along to the meetings.

On the Monday evening following (November 1) he will lecture in the Empire Theatre, Camp Street, Motherwell, on "Some Things Christians Ought to Know." It is some time since Mr. Cohen visited Motherwell, and the local friends are looking forward to a good meeting, although there is some disadvantage in the fact of that date being the eve of the Council elections.

On the following Sunday (November 7) Mr. Cohen will speak in the Town Hall, Stratford. His subject will be, "If Christ Came to Stratford," and in view of many circumstances the meeting should be a lively one. Stratford Town Hall is easily reached from all

parts of London, as, in addition to the trains, tramcars and omnibuses pass the door from all parts of the metropolis. Admission is free.

On Saturday evening the Glasgow Branch is holding a "Social" at the D and F. Café, Glasgow Cross. There will be the usual music, dancing, and other forms of entertainment, and judging from previous occasions, the function should be an enjoyable one. We presume that the time of commencement will be in the neighbourhood of 7 o'clock.

We have received a copy of *The Story Behind the Gospels*, by B. M. Allen, M.A., (Methuen, 3s. 6d.), for those who wish to have "re-interpretation of the story of Christ from a liberal Christian point of view." Mr. Allen throws overboard many orthodox beliefs such as the resurrection, without which there seems no reason for Christianity, but his book would have been more satisfactory had he attempted to visualize the myths and inherited religious beliefs out of which the New Testament story came. But there is too great an acceptance of the quite orthodox theory that Jesus, the Jewish peasant, transformed "the whole history of the world," which he emphatically did not, and the resolve to find a purely social and ethical reformer who expressed himself in terms of religion. And this simply will not do. An impartial reading of the New Testament in terms of the environment in which Jesus is said to have moved, puts out of court this notion altogether. The Jesus of the New Testament, if he ever existed, was just the ordinary wandering Eastern religious preacher, and the moment one realizes that the extravagant structures of modern Christian apologists crumble into dust. But the book is quite interesting in its way, and for those who wish to read a temperate discussion of the position indicated.

In this connection, we are glad to notice in the new issue of *The R.P.A. Annual* (Watts & Co., 1s.), three articles by Messrs. Arch, Sturt, and Greenly, in which this aspect of the subject is dealt with. In the case of Dr. Greenly, the topic is "The Historical Reality of Jesus," and the reference to the teachings is very slight, but in the other two it is more elaborate, and in each case on the right lines. Hitherto a great many Freethinkers have appeared to fight shy of this line of criticism, mainly, we fancy, because they were timid of giving offence to what are known as liberal believers, but, as we have often pointed out, it is the great fetish of today, and by means of which astute Christians hope to give the old superstition a new lease of life. And yet of all the teachers of the great religions there are none that properly take a lower rank than the Old Testament Jesus, while the whole morality of the New Testament is pitched on very low levels. Mr. Sturt's conclusion that Christian ethics "have had a good influence in the past upon the whole and some applicability to the present time, but less and less as the world improves," may be taken as a survival in the mind of one who has not yet managed to shake completely off the influence of Christian teaching, but quite valueless as a scientific and historical generalization. It will please those who cannot give up Christianity without some kind of testimony to the value of past services, as one sometimes gets rid of a valueless servant, but in kindness of heart passes him on to some other person who learns to regret his acquisition.

Other articles include one by Bertrand Russell on "Is Science Superstitious?"—suggestive and informative as are the writings of Mr. Russell; by Mr. Gerald Bullett, who sadly needs to pay more attention to the meaning of "Cause" in discussing either Science or Scientific Determinism; by Stanton Coit, who wishes to retain the name of religion at any cost, without realizing that these "polarized" words are apt to do more harm than good, however we refine them; by C. T. Gorham, who discusses the problem of woman's attendance at church; and by H. J. Bridges, who rightly argues

that the "larger task of Rationalism is to get rid of the superstitious point of view, or frame of mind, without regard to any particular superstition." We have been emphasizing this for about forty years, and to-day there is more need of this being stressed than ever. When the belief in *things* die out, belief in the names that once indicated them lingers. The reverence for the name of Jesus, for the fact of royalty, for such terms as "law," "cause," or "matter" in science, are all evidences of this need.

Jesus in Faith and in History.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH.

I HAVE been amusing myself lately looking through what famous Christian apologists have said about the miraculous birth of Jesus. What a diverting anthology a fairly complete book of such extracts would make! I like the blunt and sincere Roman or Anglo-Catholic who says straight out that he believes it exactly as described in the two more or less different accounts in the New Testament. He believes it on faith, and that settles the matter. The earnest Christian who proceeds to "explain" the narratives and who obviously does not believe them, but insists that it is the life of Jesus and not his birth which is "true" Christianity, makes me tired. For unless the Virgin Birth story is true, there can be no "true" Christianity. It is as fundamental as the Resurrection. It is impossible for any biographer to tell the *whole* truth about a man, and the four biographies of Jesus either are mere accounts based on heresay or they have been "inspired" by God. The Christian who boggles at the Virgin Birth, but who accepts "inspiration" is surely in a rather curious position. Indeed, one may go further and say that the man who accepts God ought not to kick at the Virgin Birth—which is why I have never quite understood the position of the average Deist or Theist.

One thing, however, is pretty clear. It is quite unfair for a Freethinker to reject the Virgin Birth because there is no *evidence* for it. Why should he expect evidence? And what kind of evidence would satisfy him? Supposing we had a document written by the angel Gabriel, sworn by the Church to be absolutely genuine, stating that Jesus was truly born of a virgin, would that be evidence? Or one by Joseph? Or an affidavit sworn by Mary before Roman and Jewish judges, stamped and countersigned by all the parties concerned—including the angel—would that evidence satisfy our Freethinker? I doubt it. As—according to Christians—the event was the one unique Virgin Birth in the whole history of the world, it seems to me evidence is not necessary, and therefore believers are quite justified in refusing to discuss the question from the evidence point of view. No, the Catholics are quite right. "We believe the story," they cry, "in spite of evidence." For the evidence—whatever it is really worth—is that Joseph, and not God, was the father of Jesus. We would not believe Mary if she said God was the father, because that is contrary to human experience, but we can well believe her when she says Joseph was; which is exactly what she does say. "Thy father and I," she said, when she and Joseph were trying to find Jesus, "have sought thee sorrowing." And Mary ought to know who was the father of her child.

Thus you get the Catholics and the other whole-believing Christian sects refusing the only evidence that can really matter and fix themselves securely on the rock of faith. To believe the Virgin Birth story in spite of Mary's express declaration to the contrary, is what I call sublime faith, and with

that passage in Luke before them, I can quite see why so many of the great Christian apologists—those in particular who appeal to reason and logic—have shirked a clear and express declaration on the subject.

For example, the Bishop of Landaff in his reply to Thomas Paine, avoids any discussion—it would be impossible to say whether Dr. Watson believed the story of the Virgin Birth from his almost forgotten *Apology*. Paley, whose *Evidences of Christianity* is, in its way, a masterpiece, hasn't a word to say about it (unless the passage has escaped me). Soame Jenyns hasn't a word on the Birth narratives in *A View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion* either, nor has the Rev. C. Leslie in *The Truth of Christianity Demonstrated*, except where he merely refers to the famous "prophecy" in Isaiah that a virgin would have a child—the truth of which he never attempts to demonstrate. I could give a large number of similar famous works specially directed against infidels, wherein the Virgin Birth, if mentioned at all, is taken for granted. But let us see what Dr. A. S. Peake has to say in *Christianity, Its Nature and Truth*: "I wish, therefore, to say at the outset that I do not regard this question as one which vitally affects the Christian faith." That is a fine beginning, is it not? Dr. Peake continues: "I desire, therefore, to express as emphatically as I can my belief that the Divinity of Christ is completely independent of the precise method by which He came into the world."

Dr. Peake devotes a whole chapter to a full discussion of "the supernatural Birth of Jesus," and I could imagine it being written by a very reverent Agnostic, who, not believing a single word of the fable, feels obliged to say so in as nice a way as possible. He concludes by remarking, "These narratives show us what human invention would do when it sets itself to speculate on the sacred facts....." The "sacred facts" he quite clearly shows us are not facts, but he does not care to indicate how far the "human invention" went. In any case, here is a scholar and a Christian, like many others, who evidently does *not* believe the story of the Virgin Birth; and so we could go on.

Of course, a large number of theologians do deal with the question. They carefully compare the narratives and conclude that as they are so beautifully written, so sincere and so frank, they *must* be true—which are quite as good reasons as can be given. On the other hand, Strauss and many other great Rationalists, after carefully comparing the two accounts, proclaim them both as late additions and indisputable myths. The truth is that the Virgin Birth story can only be accepted by certain types of mind—mostly ignorant, credulous and fearful. More people 2,000 years ago possessed this "swallow anything" mind than now. Messiahs were then eagerly accepted if only they or their protagonists were dirty enough (like St. Francis), and could talk loud enough and insist they had the hand of the Lord upon them.

Nowadays a Messiah is looked upon rather with suspicion or as a joke. The latest, Mrs. Besant's protégé has been boosted up for years. He has had a wonderful press and far more publicity than any other Messiah, but he has not so far been much of a success—possibly because he was not born of a virgin. And, of course, he has a formidable rival still in Jesus, the greatest of the Messiahs. A Messiah with only a small theosophical following cannot hope to win in a contest with one who has had a running for nearly 2,000 years, who was born of a virgin, and whose followers number about 500,000,000 people.

I have not quite done with the Virgin Birth. There are still one or two aspects of the question worth looking into from the standpoint of faith and history.

And the more I examine them, the more I am convinced of the unreality of an historical Jesus. He lives only, and can live only, in—faith.

H. CUTNER.

The Making of the Gospels.

IV.

(Continued from page 646.)

IN the age succeeding that of the first promulgators of Christianity the primitive Christians were without any definite knowledge of the life or history of Jesus Christ. None one of the apostles, who were supposed to have known the various incidents of the alleged public ministry of Jesus, had left to posterity any written accounts of those incidents. The primitive Church had therefore to find out these circumstances for itself. This was a simple matter, though somewhat long and tedious; all that was necessary being a careful examination of the Old Testament scriptures, which were believed to be full of "prophecies" relating to the Jewish Messiah—and Jesus was assumed to be that Messiah. To find these alleged predictions the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures was searched exhaustively from end to end, and all passages deemed suitable were marked and copied out. This done, the material for the past history of the Saviour was ready to hand.

All the Old Testament "prophecies" selected as referring to the Messiah had, of course, to be fulfilled; narratives were therefore drawn up describing the actual occurrence of the various events and circumstances predicted. The pious Christians engaged in this meritorious work were mostly teachers, and necessarily few in number, the rank and file of the early Church having no knowledge of Greek or Hebrew letters. These self-constituted Gospel-makers were, moreover, not burdened with inconvenient scruples, and considered themselves fully qualified for the work. The crazy teacher Barnabas, for instance, after clumsily twisting an Old Testament passage quite out of recognition, unctuously says:—

Blessed be our Lord who has placed in us wisdom and understanding of secret things.....For this purpose He has circumcised our ears and our hearts that we might understand these things.

To take a second example, Justin Martyr, after similarly distorting several other Old Testament passages, says:—

Would you suppose, sirs, that we could ever have understood these matters in the Scripture, if we had not received grace to discern by the will of Him whose pleasure it was?

Most of the Gospel narratives had been written in Justin's time; but that ancient apologist, having discovered the clue, elected to work them out for himself. And he does so—fearlessly.

In this series of papers I shall confine myself chiefly to the principal Gospel events which make up the life of Jesus Christ. The sayings ascribed to that much-lauded individual will require separate treatment.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH.

It is often contended by Rationalists that the Jesus of the Gospels—like Theseus, Perseus, Apollo, Hercules, Bacchus and others—was a personification of the sun, and that to this source can be traced the origin of the Virgin Birth story. That many of the ancient deities were of this solar character may at once be admitted. We know that the Virgin-Mother myth was almost universal in Paganism, and that

many of the gods and heroes were reputed to have been born of virgin mothers; but this fact, even if known to the primitive Christians—and we have no evidence that it *was* known—would never have originated the Gospel story, but for the presence of Isaiah vii. 14 in the Jewish Scriptures. The latter passage is undoubtedly the source of the Virgin Birth story, and this story is an addition to the first primitive set of Gospel narratives.

Isaiah had predicted: "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel," etc. This prophecy, according to the context, was fulfilled in Isaiah's own days; but such a small matter did not trouble the Gospel-maker. The meaning of the name "Immanuel" was enough for him—"God with us." Was not Jesus God, or at least the Son of God? His mother must therefore have conceived by the Spirit of God—the Holy Ghost. The concoctor of the story may, of course, have heard of Latona and her son Apollo, or of Hera and her son Hercules, or of Isis and Horos, or of the babe-gods Hermes and Dionysos. But these were all connected with Pagan idolatry, which, as a Jew or Christian, the concoctor regarded with pious horror. The writings of Isaiah, however, were of quite a different character. Were they not composed by a holy prophet under the direct influence of divine inspiration? And did not the same sacred writer, in his fifty-third chapter, show a clear and detailed foreknowledge of the rejection and sufferings of Jesus? It was not Isaiah, then, but God himself who spoke throughout the book—the great God who could not lie. And so on, and so forth. As might be expected, the pious concoctor of the Virgin Birth story wrote his veracious narrative with the passage in Isaiah open before him. He concludes by saying:—

Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was *spoken by the Lord* through the prophet, saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel.

The systematic dishonesty of the writer is shown by his completely ignoring the context:—

For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken.....For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and My mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria shall be carried away before the King of Assyria" (vii. 16; viii. 4).

This portion of the prophecy could not, by any amount of ingenuity, be twisted into referring to Jesus Christ; it was therefore simply ignored.

DESCENT AND BIRTHPLACE.

The prophet Isaiah had predicted a ruler, "a shoot out of the stock of Jesse," who should be filled with "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (xi. 1-4). This prediction was, of course, said to refer to Jesus, who was therefore declared to be descended from Jesse's son, David. In proof of this claim two genealogies, each stated to be that of Joseph, the reputed father of Jesus, were fabricated, which contained between Jesus and David (a period of over one thousand years) but two names in common—Salathiel and Zerubbabel. In one of these genealogies there are between Zerubbabel and Joseph the Carpenter *eleven* generations; in the other there are *twenty* generations; moreover, not one of the names during this period, in either of the genealogies, is found in the list of Zerubbabel's posterity given in 1 Chron. iii. 19-24. The fact that both genealogies were accepted as the pedigree of Jesus can only be accounted for by supposing that,

at the first, each circulated singly and in a different locality. Later, when both had become well known it was found impossible to suppress either.

The prophet Micah, again, had predicted a governor who should hail from Bethlehem—"the city of David"—and "be great unto the ends of the earth." This prediction was likewise interpreted as referring to Jesus, notwithstanding the further statement in the context that the predicted ruler "shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he cometh into our land" (v. 2-7). In accordance with this prophecy a story was related of Jesus being born in Bethlehem and the chief priests and scribes were represented as quoted in the passage in Micah (Matt. ii. 6). As to the exact time of the birth of the expected ruler, no prediction could be found: the Gospel-makers were therefore free to fix upon any date they pleased. Two accounts of the birth of Jesus were written. In the first the Saviour was stated to have been born "in the days of Herod the king" (*i.e.*, not later than B.C. 5); in the second, the birth was said to have taken place during an enrolment made by Quirinus, governor of Syria (A.D. 6-7). Both accounts were received as historical by the Christian Church—the explanation doubtless being the same as in the case of the genealogies.

The writer of the Fourth Gospel represents some of the Jews as saying:—

Hath not the scriptures said that the Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" (vii. 42).

These mythical Jews, of course, said whatever the pious Christian fictionist chose to put in their mouths.

THE MASSACRE AT BETHLEHEM.

The Christian Gospel-makers, in their search for materials for the history of Jesus, relied mainly on the Book of Isaiah and the Psalms ascribed to David. In Psalm ii., the writer had said: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed." The word "Anointed" in the Greek version was "Christ"; there was, therefore, no doubt in the mind of the Gospel-makers as to the passage referring to Jesus. In accordance with this prophecy King Herod and the Jewish priests and Sanhedrim were represented as "setting themselves" in array against the Saviour—Herod, as soon as he heard of his birth; the Jewish rulers, during his public ministry. Herod's attempt on the life of Jesus was, of course, made to fail; another "prophecy" suggested the remainder of the Gospel story. A passage in Jeremiah (xxx. 15) described the matrons of Ramah as mourning the loss of sons and daughters carried captive to Babylon. This was twisted into a prediction of a slaughter of babies in Bethlehem, and a story of a massacre was fabricated accordingly. This done, the veracious writer has the hardihood to say:—

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be comforted, because they are not" (Matt. ii. 17-18).

The flagrant dishonesty of the pious Christian fabricator of the story is further shown when we turn to the following portion of the context which he has conveniently ignored:—

Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears.....They shall come again from the land of the enemy.....Thy children shall come again to their own border" (Jer. xxxi. 16-17).

Yet we are for everlastingly told by Christian apolo- gists in general, and by the late Dean Farrar in

particular, that the Gospels were written by men "who were intellectually incapable of having imagined the events they record, and morally incapable of having invented them."

ABRACADABRA.

Jeroboam's Downfall.

THE name of Jeroboam has always had a disagreeable association in our minds. He is spoken of in Holy Writ as the "son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." He flung away some golden opportunities.

Looking through Kings and Chronicles recently, for the purpose of finding a patriarch who would fit into a cross-word puzzle, I became entangled in the history of Jeroboam. We are bidden to search the Scriptures, and, I venture to think, no cross-word enthusiast need be at a loss if they study the nomenclature of Genesis, Kings, and Chronicles.

Jeroboam started well. He was an industrious youth in the service of Solomon, but that much-married monarch failed to play the game in his later days. Consequently a prophet found Jeroboam in a field, tore his garment into a dozen pieces, gave Jeroboam ten of them, and informed the youth he was to reign over ten tribes of Israel. This reads like one of our best sellers. The curious thing that strikes one, on reading the lives of these ancient worthies, is that they were either extremely good or utterly bad. There seemed to be no moderate men among them. No coalitions or compromises were possible. Either they did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, when they had Jehovah's backing, or else they were utterly depraved, did that which was evil, followed Ashtoreth, or Chemos, or Milcom, or Baal, or some other disreputable deity, with the consequence that they were utterly routed, and generally came to an untimely end.

Then they slept with their fathers.

Solomon must have been a fierce old fellow, for Jeroboam had to emigrate to Egypt until the wise king died. Then, when it was safe he returned and became a claimant for the throne. Rehoboam started badly, which gave Jeroboam a chance, yet in spite of many proofs of Jehovah's interest, Jeroboam persisted in his duplicity. He thought the trumpery local gods would be more than a match for Jehovah, but he found his mistake. Jehovah was not to be trifled with.

Jeroboam should have remembered the case of Uzza. That good man, while attempting to steady the ark, when it was brought home, was struck by the Lord, and he died. Most people would say it was a very natural thing to do, when the furniture was rocking in a new cart, and David with "noddings on," was performing the Charleston in front. Yet the box contained such explosive material that poor Uzza paid the penalty.

Over and over again Jah expressed himself in an arbitrary manner. You never knew how to humour him. If David decided on a census, or took a fancy for some pretty maiden at the baths, or if an unfortunate secured his firewood on a Sabbath, the Jewish Deity would flare up "something dreadful," and the luckless person generally lost his life.

On one occasion three well-meaning gentlemen were swallowed by an earthquake. And that little matter of the forty-two children gobbled up by the two bears in order to provide Elisha with a holiday was, to say the least, high-handed.

One is struck, too, with the size of the standing army in those fighting days. In spite of the fact that Jeroboam had 800,000 picked men against Abijah's 400,000, he was worsted badly. But then,

you see, Abijah preached a long sermon before he started, and Jehovah did the rest.

But it is in 2 Chronicles xiii. 20 that we find the dramatic account of Jeroboam's end. Here are the words for us all to take to heart: "Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again in the days of Abijah: and the Lord struck him and he died."

Just as simple as that! We are not told whether it was fought under the Queensberry rules. We do not know whether a ring was made and challenges issued. We are not told whether the combatants went into training, or if a charge was made for admission. We are left to fill in these details as best we may. In any case, it was a knock-out blow. Dempsey couldn't improve on it. The sacred narrative is dignified in its simplicity. It merely states the fact. Let us take to ourselves the lesson taught by this graphic description. The Lord is a mighty man of valour. He has proven it on many a bloody battlefield. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. He was more than a match for Jeroboam.

"And the Lord struck him and he died."

ALAN TYNDAL.

Correspondence.

THE ZANCIGS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—My notice has been called to an article signed Henry Sara, which asks whether it is honourable for me to say that Mr. Zancig does some of his tricks by psychic means (telepathy) when he himself says that he does it by a code. Mr. Sara must really be very simple if he imagines that a conjuror prints books to teach the public the true secret of his own mysteries. I am perhaps the only person in England who has all the Zancig codes—he has several. He gave them to me himself. But over and above those there is a broad margin which his wife has assured me is done by telepathy—an assurance which I personally tested in a way which cuts out all possibility of error. I can inform Mr. Sara that since the Davenportes were driven from the stage on account of their admission that their results were truly mediumistic, no member of the conjuring fraternity will make such a claim, whether he be psychic or not.

It may interest your readers to know that after long study and hesitation, Mr. Zancig has now finally admitted the truth of spirit return. He took this public step because a Danish message, which was arraigned as a test between his wife and himself before her decease, was successfully repeated to him by an American medium.

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

DOES ANYONE REALLY BELIEVE IN HELL?

SIR,—Your correspondent, Evacustes A. Phipson is right in summarily dismissing hell. That was one of the whips used by the exponents of a slave morality rooted in negativism. The poor wretched man was smothered with the burrs of "Thou shalt nots" by the representatives of a creed who have apparently not caught your correspondent in their toils. There is an eternal jingle and jangle with the words positive and negative; but, if words are looked upon as counters, and not as real money, the warfare will deceive nobody.

Is it not asking too much of Freethought whilst engaged in a struggle, to define a creed or recommend a sect? In the intellectual world as in the physical one there is a master and slave morality at work. If your correspondent will carefully keep this in mind, it will be seen that the peaks and mountains of history, called great men, gave a value, or goal, to life, and thus helped the millions of subjects to live. It is therefore a question of finding out on which side is the individual—as a myth maker or a myth believer? There is the myth of faith and the myth of reason. The beauty of the latter is that it works and satisfies.

I remember seeing a picture many years ago, in oils, I believe, in Derby Gallery signed by your correspondent. If I am correct, that alone convinces me that an eschatological creed is not necessary for one, who, in coming to grips with life, is striving to bring order and beauty out of it. As an amulet, suppose we take a sentence that the Chinese children first learn: "Men at their birth are by nature radically good." That is what Freethinkers have been saying for a long time, and because we cannot attract a popular football match crowd to say it, the "original sin" vendors still sit in the saddle, and, as Pascal wrote: "Man is so framed that by dint of telling him he is a fool he believes it, and by dint of telling it to himself he makes himself believe it." We are clearing up the mess made by the maligners of the human race; it is a big job, but in our holiday moments, as suggested by your correspondent, perhaps we can find time to contemplate the excellence of the teachings of Confucius, of Buddha, and our own preference, Nietzsche, about whom the last word has not yet been uttered.

W. R.

FAITH AND FACT.

SIR,—A Sunday paper, which appears to have drifted into sloppy sentimentalism, has published an article by an unnamed author entitled "Atheist Turns Believer," and holds up to view Edison, the clever inventor, as a famous convert from fact to belief.

The article will not have escaped your notice, and your readers will look forward to some scathing comments from your editorial chair.

Without trespassing unduly on your limited space, readers would like to know what the writer of the article means precisely by "the dark realm of doubt into the bright light of a sure faith"?

Now "faith is the substance of things hoped for," and how blind religious faith has any connection with practical material inventions is difficult to see, but the evident intention of the author is to insinuate that because Edison is a very clever inventor he may be taken as a likewise clever authority on superstitious belief; just as the Indian doctor was taken to be clever for no other reason than that he had come from India.

Edison knows just as much and just as little about the existence of God as does any reader of the *Freethinker*. I take it that it is the old trick of the Great Lying Church to hoodwink unthinking innocents.

Of course any individual is quite at liberty to believe anything he likes—that the moon, for instance, is made of green cheese—but the attempt to mislead others knowingly and wilfully is a sham and a fraud.

There are references to historical writers which, if my recollection of these writers is correct, are a tissue of falsehoods. All this from our free British press!

SINE CERE.

Society News.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.

On Friday, October 22, Mr. W. H. MacEwan, Vice-president of the Glasgow Branch, opened a discussion on "Will Secularism Benefit Humanity?" before the Young People's Union of the Govan Congregational Church. The opposition was led by Mr. R. Black a police-court missionary. Many of the Christians present heard a Secularist lecturer for the first time, and had their belief in the unassailability of Christianity rudely shaken. After the discussion the Rev. Peter Smith paid a high tribute to Mr. MacEwan's knowledge and eloquence, and expressed regret that Mr. MacEwan was on the "wrong" side. Members of the Committee of the Glasgow Branch were entertained to tea in one of the church halls after the meeting. A detailed report of the discussion will be printed in the *Govan Press* for the week ending October 30.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.

The wet weather was responsible for the much smaller gathering than was expected to listen to Mrs. Seaton Tiedeman's deeply interesting address on "The Need

for Courts for Domestic Relations." The lecture was followed by an equally interesting discussion. It is quite certain that the establishment of family courts before which might come cases that are now dragged into publicity with no benefit to anyone but those newspapers that make it a point of catering to the public taste for pictures of domestic infelicity or immorality, would often lead to a peaceful settlement. Next Sunday (October 31) Mr. R. B. Kerr, editor of the *New Generation*, will lecture on "The Sex Question." A lively discussion is anticipated.

G. S.

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.

ESSEX HALL (Essex Street, Strand, W.C.): Friday, November 5, at 8, Mr. Joseph McCabe, "The Evolution of Man." (Lantern Lecture.) Tickets 1s. each, apply, enclosing stamped addressed envelope, to Mr. F. L. Monnaie, 87 Ashbourne Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road and three minutes from Camden Town Tube Station): 7.30, Mr. R. B. Kerr, "The Sex Question."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. Arthur Linecar, "W. J. Locke's The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.3): 11, S. R. Ratcliffe, "The Religion of the English People."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (101 Tottenham Court Road): 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin, "The Flood and the Call of Abraham." (Lantern Lecture.) Thursday, November 4, at 7.30, at the above Hall, Mr. A. Hyatt, "The Pickwick Trial."

OUTDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture; (Brockwell Park): 3.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): 11.30 and 3 p.m. Speakers—Messrs. Botting, Hart, and Peacock.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW (Bakunin House, 13 Burnbank Gardens, Glasgow): Thursday, November 4, at 8, Mr. Guy A. Aldred, "Hume and the Metaphysicians." Questions and discussion invited.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (City Saloon Hall, Candleriggs): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 11.30, "The Press, the Public, and the Farce of Faith"; 6.30, "The Passing of the Gods." Questions and discussion invited. Silver Collection.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Dramatic Performance of "She Stoops to Conquer," by the Secular Society Players.

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