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Views and Opinions.

The Challenge of Unbelief.

As a consequence of my recent lecture at Weston-super-Mare, I received a letter from one of the audience regretting that I should waste my energies on trying to destroy something which so many believe to be helpful to them in their journey through life. There is nothing new about this complaint, nor in the accompanying statement that mere unbelief leads one nowhere. That is a mere echo of the pulpit, but as it is often the language of those who have had their belief in Christianity shaken, it is, for that reason, worth dealing with again. And I may commence with the assurance that there is not the least element of doubt in my mental state with regard to Christianity. I do not doubt the truth of the biblical miracles, or the virgin birth, or the resurrection of Jesus, or of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian religion. With as much certainty as it is possible to have on such matters I *know* they are not true. And I know that because they run directly against things that I know to be true in other directions. There is not the slightest doubt or indecision in my mind with regard to these things. And I am equally convinced that it is not the conviction of their falsity, but that of their truth that would daunt effort or paralyse action. And if this is not the case with professing Christians it is because they either do not believe them or they do not apply them in a consistent manner. Probably they cannot, because while one may profess belief in a most absurd doctrine, there may be no great harm done so long as one does not attempt to put an absurdity into practice. There is, for example, no certain injury in believing that in the name of Jesus one may safely drink poison. It is when one acts on it that trouble begins. Nature tolerates a considerable degree of foolishness in her children, but there is a limit beyond which none may go.

Belief and Doubt.

I am referred to indiscriminately as an "unbeliever" and as a "doubter," as though the two things are identical. This they are certainly not. Doubt indicates a suspensive state of mind; unbelief implies a positive one. If the evidence before me is not enough to induce conviction I am in doubt. But in that case I neither believe nor disbelieve. I am in a state of suspense. The popular, but quite erroneous phrase, "honest doubt," hides this from many, but doubt, as such, can be neither honest nor dishonest. Speech may be one or the other, because what I say may not truly represent my state of mind. But belief and unbelief are not opposites at all, they are two aspects of the same state of mind, and one is involved in the other. And for that reason I do not question at all the statement that the world's saviours have been men of strong belief, although whether they are called sturdy believers or sturdy unbelievers depends entirely upon the side from which we approach them. And if "honest doubt" is a stupid phrase, so is "honest belief." An honest unbeliever can only mean an unbeliever who acts honestly. But here the reference is to his conduct or speech, not to his state of mind. No man can believe what he will, although a predisposition to accept certain things, or a refusal to look all round a case may lead to imperfect judgment. But this does not affect the *fact* of his belief. A man may pretend to believe, but in that case he is simply a hypocrite professing to hold a belief that is not there. These are but elementary lessons in the psychology of belief, but they are needed in more instances than many of us are inclined to think.

* * *

The Value of Belief.

I do not wish to imply that it is of no consequence, or even of little consequence what a man believes. The social importance of beliefs are not affected by the question of their nature, or how they arise. I am convinced that a man's beliefs are the most important thing about him. They are the index of his attitude towards life, they determine what he does, and the historian, or the sociologist who leaves them out of account is bound to go wrong in his conclusions. From 1914 to 1918 we had a ghastly lesson that it was what men believed about the designs of Germany, the rightness of war, the possibility of what might be done with the world, or what the world could be saved from, as the result of a successful war, that kept the greatest conflict the world has ever seen in being. My complaint is not that beliefs are of no value in the world, but that people do not attach sufficient value to them or take sufficient pride in them. There are thousands of men who will take pride in their books, or their

pictures, or their car, or in numerous other things, but how many are there who will take pride in their opinions and fight for them as among the most valuable of their possessions? And here, again, we have the instructive fact that while the Christian Church has always stressed the fact of the importance of certain beliefs, there is no other institution that has done so much to rob men and women of the social and individual value of belief as a factor in the well-being of Society. It is not right belief in the shape of intellectual conviction that has been stressed, but assent to certain formulated doctrines.

* * *

A Question of Approach.

The deepest and the oldest division in the mental is that which separates the natural from the supernatural. It is the fundamental difference between the Christian and the Freethinker. But our disbelief in the supernatural is only one aspect of our affirmation of that supremacy of the natural. We do not believe that at any time, or anywhere, the existence of the supernatural has been observed. And this is a belief upon which the whole of modern science is based, and without which science would be a sheer impossibility. It is the Christian who implies a disbelief in the cardinal principle of modern scientific thought. And this denial runs right through the whole of Christianity. Whether someone around whom the gospel stories have gathered ever lived or not may be a debatable question, but if he lived, then we believe that the conditions governing his birth were precisely those that governed the birth of Jack Jones or Thomas Smith. In all such cases what is really involved is the question of the universality of natural law. And when we are called unbelievers it would be an apt retort to say to the Christian, So are you. The vital question is not whether we are believers or unbelievers—we are all both—but what is it in which we believe or disbelieve, what do we affirm or deny? Again, I see no reason whatever for discriminating between the Christian deity and the gods of other peoples. I find they are all supported by the same kind of arguments, and I see them all developing in the same way and dying out in the same manner. I am in no doubt whatever about this, I am not uttering "mere negations," I am not merely destroying. I am affirming and establishing positive conviction based upon ascertainable facts in place of a number of other beliefs that rest ultimately upon an old view of the world that is repudiated by every civilized and educated mind.

* * *

Is Morality Natural?

It is the same in other matters. In a dozen different ways, now in the blatant language of the pulpit, now in the more sophisticated language of the philosopher, the Christian advocate is to be found asserting that belief in a God, in a future life, etc., is essential to right living. The man who loses his hold on religious beliefs, we are warned, loses everything. Now, put in plain language, the Christian belief stands for the assertion that without a direct bribe or a threat it is useless expecting men to behave with tolerable decency. Man must always be under the eye of a policeman, for calling the policeman God, and placing the headquarters in heaven instead of in Scotland Yard, makes no substantial difference. The two acts of belief, therefore, stand for the assertion and the denial of natural human morality. The Freethinker's fault lies in the belief that the course of social evolution has been such that, on the whole, the play of human feeling, aided by intelligence, can secure of itself a

line of conduct that shall, in the long run, make for a healthier life. The curious thing is that the Freethinker is accused by the Christian of taking a low and debasing view of man. Of course, the Freethinker may be wrong. It may be that the Christian is right, and nothing but the fear of hell or the hope of heaven will keep man straight, but it is the height of absurdity to talk of his view as being low or debasing. Ingersoll once said that the only doctrine of the Church that it has fully illustrated by its conduct was that of human depravity, and if we restrict our view to human teaching and conduct there is a great deal to be said for that now unfashionable teaching. On the other hand, it may really be more helpful to deal with man as a natural product, to believe that the feelings that centre round the group and the family are a far safer guide to a better life than professed faith in a number of nonsensical religious teachings. But, if it is ever permissible to speak of unbelief as being immoral, it is surely so when we are faced with a frame of mind which reduces reason to a mere delusion, and men and women to an aggregation of would-be criminals, and human nature as a whole to something lower than that met with in the higher animal world.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Prayer and the Mission Field."

SUCH is the title of an article in the *Christian World* of November 25, by the Rev. A. T. S. James, B.A., B.Sc. The writer is one of those "who love foreign missions" and are prepared to advocate them to the utmost of their ability. Curiously enough, Mr. James does not even attempt to say anything new on the subject, and the whole of what he does say is of a purely sentimental character. The subject of the article really is not foreign missions but prayer as the greatest power in human life. He tells us that "when the Church prays things happen, and very unexpected things which men deem impossible." That is a dogmatic assertion of the truth of which not even the shadow of evidence is provided; and without a moment's hesitation we proclaim it utterly false. We challenge Mr. James to mention one deed performed by the Church which ordinary human beings would deem impossible. Another incredible statement in the article is that "it was said of an old preacher that when he prayed he bent the heavens to his purposes," which means that the Almighty modified his government of the world in response to the expressed wishes of an ignorant pulpiteer. The absurdity of the idea is unspeakable. Consider the following passage:—

An illustration of this mysterious power of prayer can be found in the spiritual tone which George Herbert created round Bemerton, and in Isaac Walton's saying of him that the men working in the fields did so love and reverence Mr. Herbert that they would let their plough rest when Mr. Herbert's saint's bell rung to prayers that they might offer their devotions to God with him. The influence of those three brief years at Bemerton has gone far through the world, and whatever gifts Herbert had, his force derived from a kind of genius he had for prayer.

George Herbert is one of the most interesting figures in religious history, in whom the poetic fire burnt strongly and brightly; but his emotionalism was largely due to his Welsh blood.

Applying all he has said about prayer to foreign missions, Mr. James proceeds thus:—

Just as it is a ministry begun and continued in that spirit that can alone hope for fruitfulness, so

it is with missionary work, which is the ministry of the whole Church; farther back than all the contributions of wealth or the skill of the intellect there must be the profounder deep of the Church's devotion.

At this point we should like to know on what grounds the Christian Church advocates and engages in foreign missions. Is not the very idea of them an insult to the all-powerful and all-loving Father in heaven? Is there not in it an implied accusation that for countless generations he did not do his parental duty towards myriads upon myriads of the creatures of his hands? The Bible frankly admits that Jehovah practised partiality in his treatment of different nations, and glories in the fact. In Deut. xiv. 2, we find these words addressed to Israel: "Thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth." That was partiality with a vengeance. In the Old Testament no attempt is made to abolish the all-pervading injustice, and even in the Gospels the blessings of Christianity are intended for the Jews, and the Gentiles are to inherit them only in case the Jews reject them. But the Christian Church, particularly during the last two centuries, has been doing its utmost to convince its adherents that God, for some reason known only to himself, has hitherto withheld the knowledge of the riches of his redeeming love from whole nations and tribes, but that now, at last, he is inspiring his people to go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature.

Here we see the Christians in their true character. Their egotism is phenomenal. They regard themselves as paragons of all the virtues. They possess the only true and perfect revelation of God and the very best of all religions. Of course, in their estimation, all Heathen nations were without God and hope in the world. Sixty years ago we heard an enthusiast for missions trying to frighten an audience by saying: "Just think of it, my friends, so many millions of the Chinese go down to hell every year, because they have no knowledge of Christ." Orthodox divines are dominated by that hideous view to-day. Probably Mr. James does not cherish it, and yet, if not, why does he advocate foreign missions with such burning zeal? He evidently believes that faith in Christ is essential to salvation. Having given his own spiritual theory of missions, Mr. James adds:—

Now there may be some who think all this is rather the visionary and less real side of things, and that the movement of the Church towards a universal conquest of the world depends more than seems to be here allowed for, on a sort of real statesmanship: in other words, on large programmes and elaborate organization. There is a passage in the Memoirs of Arnold Foster of Hankow, in which he contrasts the two ideas, and says that in the long run the spread of the Gospel turns first of all on faith and prayer. In all that is essential this does seem to be the right view.

In the preacher's own mind there clearly exists some doubt as to which is the correct view, but from our point of view it does not matter one jot or tittle which is the true idea, the real question at issue being: What moral right has the Christian Church to force its religion upon people who are satisfied with their own cults, and object to their being denounced and condemned by foreign men and women who have never acquired anything like adequate understanding of them? It is absolutely wrong thus to interfere with the religious conditions under which Heathen nations live. This is a point that Mr. James totally ignores, although it is really of very vital importance. He sees only the Christian side of things, and is blind to everything else. According to him, foreign

missions cannot be a success in the absence of supreme love for non-Christian races. All efforts must fail, he says, "unless we have first of all a genuine love of men in the bonds of Christ; and there is no other sure road to this love of mankind except by prayer. We shall never really love men with a compelling love in Christ until we have the full inward impulse which comes only through constant fellowship with the Son of Man, and through having tarried much with him in the Upper Room." Such teaching is at once damnable and damning. It is a deliberately wicked defamation of human nature. Fortunately there is not a word of truth in it. If it were true it would follow that a conscientious Buddhist could not love his fellow-beings with the noblest kind of love. Every man in his senses is fully aware how utterly false that is. It is most difficult to realize how a man of Mr. James's education and culture can give honest expression to such a debasing heresy.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Winter of Their Discontent.

If somebody had not blasphemed a century ago, we should now be hanging each other's grandmothers for witches.—O. W. Holmes.

Liberty, a word without which all other words are vain.—Ingersoll.

RELIGION in England is getting in a bad way. Superficially, the three-headed Christian god is still in his heaven, and all is right with the Orthodox world. Tens of thousands of priests shall drawl their mediæval nonsense, and keep their greedy eyes on the offertory bags. Jerry-built churches, and tin tabernacles are being erected in many places. Yet the ugly fact remains that the rising generation is not interested in religion as its predecessors were. The props of the churches are middle-aged and elderly people, but the younger folk are becoming indifferent to theological matters. Observe that the newer generation is not actively hostile, but is simply bored by religion.

The clergy are realizing this state of affairs. They preach sermons, and write articles on the question, "What's wrong with religion?" They give many answers to their question, but never the true one that religion itself is at fault. And, as blindly as the noblesse of France before the terrors and thunders of the Revolution, they continue their mummeries regardless of what the morrow will bring. For, as certainly as night follows day, a complete revolution in religious thought must follow inevitably the present position.

For the average young Englishman is practical, and by no means given to dreaming. He feels that no man can dress himself like a stained-glass window saint, and remain in sympathy with the viewpoint of the twentieth century. And if he is told by this mediocrally-dressed priest that confession is good for his soul, and a chapelle ardente is a useful addition to a business man's home, he would be annoyed: "If a man wants to be pious at all, why can't he do it without making a silly ass of himself."

Maybe, this is not a scholastic argument, but it is an effective one. For the priests of the Established Church, which is, after all, the Government Religion, have largely discarded the old, simple forms of worship, and are blindly imitating the priests of Rome. And Englishmen do not kindly take to priestcraft, as was shown when British troops were on the Continent during the last war. There is a strain of Puritanism, of austerity, if you prefer it, in British blood, and it comes out in unexpected places. For Englishmen are not emotional, but conscientious, and should they fully realize the humbug

of Priestcraft, so much the worst for priests of all denominations.

Religion, in this country, means the Christian Religion. This is an imported, Oriental faith, crammed with exotic, Eastern ideas. Englishmen have, with few exceptions, simply given lip-service to it. Take, for example, the quietism taught in the New Testament. Englishmen simply ignored it in their national life. The story of England is not that of a nation offering a cheek to the smiter, but of a resolute man fighting his way at the sword's point. The truth is that the Britisher is secular at heart. Whilst in church, on Sundays, he may have said in his haste that he was a miserable sinner, but he forgot, conveniently, the soft impeachment on the other six days of the week. This divorce between priestly precept and lay practice has exposed the Englishman to the wholesale charge of national hypocrisy, due entirely to his obedience to authority, tempered by common sense.

In the high and palmy days of priestly influence death was the punishment for opponents, and the average Englishman did not think martyrdom a business proposition. Even so, priests never had a very safe seat on English shoulders, and the glare of the fires of Smithfield brought home to Englishmen the price that had to be paid for the luxury of sacerdotalism. The power of Priestcraft was never so unquestioned and unresisted in this country as in France, Italy, and Spain. There is a stolidity in British blood, which is cooler than that of the Latin races. It shows itself whenever any specially arrogant claims on obedience are heard, as Charles I. and James II. knew to their cost, and as the long contest for the freedom of the press also proves.

This indifference of young people to religion is highly significant. Priests, for centuries, have had, and still have, control of education in this country. With all this advantage priests have lost their grip on the rising generation, who are far more interested in secular matters than so-called spiritual affairs. All the Christian churches are out of touch with the problems of the day. They are much too conservative and reactionary, and far too slow in appreciating the forces of progress. The utterances of the priests are almost entirely theological, and sound as strangely to modern ears as the abracadabra of an ancient charlatan. Especially is this true of the Roman Catholic Church and its younger Anglican rival, which is Romish in most everything except name. Curiously, as belief has waned, so priests have come to rely more and more upon ritual, until critics have suggested that the fight of the future will be between the Church Catholic and Free-thought, between Rome and Reason.

There is little doubt which will win in the end. Priestcraft may do its worst. We shall never, as a people, permit the cesspool of the confessional. We shall never submit to the poisoned weapons of Priestcraft, its hypocritical affectations of celibacy, its tyranny in the home, its officiousness in public affairs, its menace and robbery at the death-bed. When people are better educated they will know too much for the priests. Like the story of the Italian silversmith. When a priest showed a crucifix to the dying man, saying: "Behold your God!" the invalid pushed it away, with the remark: "Yes! I know, I made the thing myself."

When the Christian Churches fail to attract the young men and women they are doomed. It is the beginning of the end. Science, which is simply, ordered knowledge, continually expands in search of light and truth. The Christian Churches are still entombed within the covers of an Oriental fetish book, which pretends to explain the origin of mankind by means of a tale of a talking snake, and the

origin of languages by childish babble concerning the Tower of Babel. Men ask for the bread of knowledge; the Christian Churches offer but the stones of ignorance and superstition. Such priestly teaching was never of any practical use, and it only represents a sluggish and slimy backwater in the river of human knowledge. The great river of thought rolls on, and bears us further and ever further from the ignorance and superstition of the past, further and further from the shadow of the discredited Cross.

There are black shadows, indeed. For two thousand years Christian priests have gloated on the so-called "sinfulness" of man. In season, and out of season, they have reminded their fellows that they are "miserable sinners." The most sacred emblem of their religion is the figure of a dying man nailed to two pieces of wood. It is an evangel of horror, which would not have been listened to had not the threat of hell forced an unwilling acceptance. Under the Christian scheme the earth is a Sahara, and man the most loathsome object squatting upon it. This constitutes the most fearful libel on the human race, for, from a Christian point of view, mankind is but the soil from which the roses of Paradise spring. No wonder the young are repelled by a religion which "makes a goblin of the sun." MIMNERMUS.

The Making of the Gospels.

IX.

(Continued from p. 742.)

JUDAS THE TRAITOR.

THE story of the betrayal of Jesus by one of his disciples is the next matter to be elucidated. This, like all the other recorded events of Gospel "history," was suggested by so-called "prophecy." The words of Psalm xli. 9—"Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me"—was interpreted as a prediction of a traitor amongst the disciples. One was therefore selected from the legendary list of names of the apostles in the person of Judas Iscariot, and a story of the betrayal was invented. That the words of the Psalmist referred to some event which had already taken place—and if written by David, might be applied to the action of his false friend Ahitophel—did not matter in the least: a history of Jesus had to be written. No such betrayal was known to the first-century writers, Paul and the author of the Apocalypse. Had such a story been current in the days of these two writers, one or the other could not well have avoided referring to it and holding the traitor up as a warning to posterity—and if the story were true it must have been known to both. That it is purely mythical receives further confirmation from a recovered fragment of an early uncanonical Gospel—"the Gospel of Peter." In this Gospel the writer, who claims to be Peter, says that after the alleged resurrection of Jesus "we, the twelve apostles of the Lord, wept and lamented, and each went mourning over what had happened to his own home." This was a week after the supposed Resurrection, when, according to the present Gospel accounts Judas was not alive. Furthermore, if we take the narratives in the canonical Gospels, we find that the Jewish leaders could have laid hands on Jesus at any time. They had but to send someone to watch when he retired at nightfall, and then go and take him. A betrayal of Jesus by Judas, or by any other disciple, is simply ridiculous: the story, from beginning to end, is pure fiction.

The kiss given by the traitor to Jesus in the garden was, no doubt, suggested by that of Joab to Amasa

when about to stab him (2 Sam. xx. 9). Joab's treacherous greeting was: "Is it well with thee, my brother?" Judas was represented as saying "Hail, my Master" (Matt. xxvi. 49). It may also be noted that throughout the Gospel narratives there is no instance recorded of the disciples treating their Master with such familiarity; they are depicted as standing in great awe of him, and as reverential to an excess. Nowhere is it stated that it was the custom of the disciples to kiss their "Lord"; yet if this were not their customary manner of saluting him, the kiss of Judas, as a sign, is inexplicable.

With respect to the fate of the mythical Judas, there appear to have been several stories in circulation, each flatly contradicting the others. One of these is preserved in the First Gospel, another in the Acts of the Apostles, and a third by Papias, bishop of Hierapolis. According to the first account, Judas, as soon as he saw that Jesus had been condemned to death, brought the price of his treachery to the priests in the temple, and then "went away and hanged himself." Some time *after his death* the priests applied the money to the purchase of a potter's field (Matt. xxvii. 5-7). According to the second account, Judas *himself* bought a field "with the reward of his iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out" (Acts i. 18-19). According to Papias (A.D. 150) "Judas walked about in the world a sad example of impiety; for his body having swollen to such an extent that he could not pass where a chariot could pass easily, he was crushed by the chariot, so that his bowels gushed out."

Now it is evident that Papias knew nothing of the stories in the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, and also that the Acts account is a later version than that known to Papias. The latter fact is certain, for the story preserved by Papias explains that in the Acts. The last-named account simply tells us that Judas purchased a field, and then without any explanation says that he "burst asunder in the midst," etc. There is clearly something omitted. Obviously, the purchasing a field was not the cause of his "bursting asunder." If, however, that ill-fated man had swollen to the extent mentioned by Papias, the wonder is, not that he ultimately "burst asunder in the midst," but that he held together in that condition for a single moment. The fate assigned to Judas was probably suggested by that recorded of a wicked king who slew his six brothers, and "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord." This more ancient "example of impiety" was smitten with an internal disease, and "his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness" (2 Chron. xxi. 19).

The story of the betrayal of Jesus for thirty pieces of silver and the purchase of a potter's field with the money (Matt. xxvi. 15; xxvii. 7), was suggested by Jeremiah's purchase of a field (Jer. xxxii. 9) and an ambiguous passage in the Book of Zechariah (xi. 12-13). That these two passages were the source of the story is evident, for the latter is referred to as a prediction which was fulfilled in buying the field, though it is erroneously attributed to Jeremiah (Matt. xxxvii. 9). The word "potter" in the Old Testament passage is either an error or a falsification; in the Syriac versions the word is "treasury." That the latter is the correct reading is self-evident. The passage reads:—

And I said unto them, if ye think good, give me my hire.....So they weighed for my hire thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter, the goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them into the potter in the house of the Lord.

There was no *potter* in the temple, but there was a *treasury*. Moreover, there is no sense in Zechariah

giving his salary as prophet or preacher to a *potter*, even if one were permitted to take up his residence in the house of the Lord; but that he should cast his money into the *treasury*, more especially at a time when it could not be very full, is not at all extraordinary. Yet, on the erroneous reading "potter" was constructed the Gospel story of a potter's field. It was, no doubt, the words "the goodly price that the Lord was valued at" which suggested the betrayal of the Lord Jesus for the sum mentioned by Zechariah.

The selection of another apostle in the place of Judas Iscariot is also stated to have been made as a fulfilment of "prophecy." In the fictitious story in the Acts of the Apostles, Peter is represented as saying to the other apostles:—

Brethren, it was needful that the scripture should be fulfilled which the Holy Ghost spake before by the mouth of David *concerning* Judas.....For it is written in the bok of Psalms, Let his habitation be made desolate, and let no man dwell therein, and His office let another take (Acts i. 16-20).

The passages in the Book of Psalms which, according to the Gospel-makers, were written by David "concerning Judas" are the following:—

Ps. lxix. 25.—Let *their* habitation be desolate; let none dwell in *their* tents.

Ps. exi. 8-12.—Let his days be few; let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.....Let there be none to extend mercy unto him; neither let there be any to have pity on his fatherless children, etc.

In the first of these passages the word italicized shows that, whoever may have been referred to, it most certainly was not Judas Iscariot. In the second passage—which is but a small portion of a Psalm that may be taken as a beautiful sample of Bible morality—no one save a professional Christian apologist will be able to point out where Judas comes in. For when we get to the end of the long string of curses, we find that the offence for which the terrible punishments mentioned are invoked consists only of the following: "Because that he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man" (verse 16)—an offence common to all ages, peoples and tongues since man has lived upon this planet.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

Gin I Was God.

GIN I was God, sittin' up there abeen,
Weariet nae doot noo a' my darg was deen,
Deaved wi' the harps an' hymns qonendin' ringin',
Tired o' the flockin' angels hairse wi' singin',
To some clood-edge I'd daunder furth an', feth,
Look ower an' watch hoo things were gyaun' aneth.
Syne, gin I saw hoo men I'd made mysel'
Had startit in to pooshan, sheet an' fell
To revive an' rape, an' fairly mak' a hell
O' my braw birlin' Earth—a hale week's wark—
I'd cast my coat again, rowe up my sark,
An', or they'd time to lench a second ark,
Tak' back my word an' sen' anither spate,
Droon oot the hale hypothec, dicht the sklata,
Own my mistak', an', aince I'd cleared the brod,
Start a'thing owre again, gin I was God.

The culture of the mind is as it were a kind of food to humanity.—Cicero.

Acid Drops.

A lady reader sends us an "Acid Drop" commenting on the plans that are being prepared for thirty-eight new churches in the Chelmsford diocese, and with it a leaflet stating that the Chelmsford Hospital for Children may be compelled to close two of its largest wards unless the sum of £20,000 is forthcoming almost immediately. But surely this lady does not expect the necessity for hospital beds to be counted as of greater urgency than the opening of new churches! Her "spiritual" faculties must be almost atrophied. We have the authority of Jesus for saying that all complaints can be cured "In my name," and if the Churches are built there will be so many more places where the cures can be effected in this way. Building hospitals and trusting to medical skill is only another way of casting discredit on the power of God. It is almost an interference with the operations of Providence.

Of all the frankly professional pleas on behalf of the sanctity of Sunday, we have never read a more direct one than that contributed to the *Evening Standard* of November 24, by the Bishop of Durham. Dr. Henson writes against the fashion of Sunday motoring and its effect on Church attendance. He points out that the possession of a motor-cycle or car is a great temptation to people on the one clear day they have during the week. The result is that in a large number of cases Bible-class, Sunday-school, or regular Church attendance is dropped, and it is all for the open road. Again, "the influence of the English clergyman depends, to an extent it is difficult to overstate, upon their contact in the common worship on Sundays." There is no claim that the use of the car or cycle leads to a worsening of manner or morals. It is only that they keep people away from Church, and so clear of the clutches of the parson. Therefore we must diminish the use of both so far as it can be done. The great thing is to get people under the influence of the parson, and to do that we must keep them at Church. It is professionalism writ large. What the Bishop of Durham is really concerned with is to see his business in a good condition. So does every merchant, but not many of them are foolish enough to tell the public that it must buy what it clearly does not want in order to keep his trade flourishing.

The habit of drinking at Holy Communion from a pot used in common by all the communicants is a practice not hygienic, asserts a newspaper reader. He has no objection to drinking a bit of God, but he draws the line at being asked to take in at the same time a bunch of God's germs. His Christian faith seems a very weak-kneed kind of thing when contrasted with that of another correspondent, who replies to the objection, thus:—

Surely the communal chalice continues because the faith that brings us to our knees in acceptance of it gives us full assurance that from this particular cup no infection will be allowed to pass.

This good man regards his faith as a disinfectant! No doubt there are many more thousands of earnest believers who take a similar view. All this is very illuminating. It enables us to understand just how religious notions have helped to spread disease during the Christian era, and continue to spread it to-day. The fact may interest the gentlemen of the New Health Society. Another thing it enables us to do is to glimpse at the constructive side of Freethought work—the valuable part this has played and still plays in ridding men's minds of harmful superstitions.

To-day, declared the Rev. Dr. Poole, at Blackburn, Christians were often told that religion was a kind of dope, an anodyne, an anæsthetic. He asked his hearers to dismiss the statement as a libel, and confidently affirm that religion is something which stabs

one wide awake. He thought they were badly off if they depended on Fleet Street for news. He added:—

We ought to be men and women in receipt of invisible tidings from afar. That does not lead us into a nebulous sphere, and take our feet off the earth, but it does suggest that even in our day there are angel ministrations to those who are receptive.

By this piece of word-spinning, reminiscent of Central Africa, the reader can gather that the Doctor is a past master with the hypodermic needle. Another item of wisdom from this modern ju-ju man is that there is a validity of knowledge not contingent on sense appreciation, and not conditioned on scientific acceptance. True, "Alice in Wonderland" and the Holy Scriptures are full of this kind of knowledge. But an intelligence truly grown up has no use for it as a guide to the affairs of life.

Miss Maude Royden is to celebrate her fiftieth birthday in a novel fashion. A large hall is to be provided for a "party," and all persons welcome provided they bring their own grub. We fancy the Lord Jesus must have performed the famous feeding of the five thousand on this plan. If Miss Royden happens not to believe in the Christly miracles, or rather, in the accounts of them, she may be glad to accept our explanation of this particular miracle for future use in converting the sceptical.

In giving some statistics to show the spread of the Bible, the Rev. Carey Bonner stated that, though in 1500 only fourteen languages possessed any printed portion of the Scriptures, to-day the total number of languages in which the Bible was printed was 835. This total is one short—the universal language of superstition needs to be added.

The President of the Wesleyan Methodists doesn't believe the old Puritan Sabbath will come back. Nevertheless, he thinks Christians should not forget what it gave them. He remembers a Scottish landlady of his who used to lock the piano on Sunday and open the harmonium. "You may deride it," he says, "but the memory of those peaceful Sabbaths is very sweet; they sank a deposit of pure gold into my nature—the very richest thing I have got." The President is welcome to his pure gold, but it glistens too much like Calvinistic lead to suit our taste. What the majority of people do object to is that the Sabbatarian rabble should try to force upon us their Puritan prohibitions and gloomy restrictions. Among this majority may be reckoned the Glasgow Corporation. It has decided, despite the noisy protests of religious bodies, to allow children's swings in public parks to be used on Sundays. Oh, Glasgow! Cannot you hear the groans of Calvin and John Knox echoing in your depraved ears? Don't you realize that you have set the feet of innocent children on the path leading to Perdition? Alack the day!

A tremendous trade, says a weekly journal, is done in motor mascots; as much as £20 is paid for one of these. A favourite mascot is a figure of the patron saint of travellers. Presumably a proportion of the purchasers really have a superstitious belief in their value as "luck-bringers." The journal adds that a motorist expert lately remarked: "The best mascot of all for the motor-driver is a little schedule of rules fixed, not on the bonnet of his car, but firmly in his own head." That is the voice of common sense speaking to fatuous stupidity. If listened to, the number of fatalities on the road would be considerably lessened. What concerns us more particularly is the prevalence of the belief in mascots. This is a survival of primitive modes of thinking that should have very largely died out with the spread of modern scientific knowledge. For its continuance the more ancient Churches are to blame. With their pocket crucifixes of figures of saints they fostered the belief in magic charms for averting the harmful, and thus kept alive earlier superstitions. They did not stamp out Pagan

superstitions, they incorporated them, merely revising them to suit ecclesiastical ends. And that is another black mark on the Churches' scroll of ill-fame.

The real danger of our civilization, thinks Miss Margaret Fry, is that we shall all become standardized. We wear the same kind of clothes. We hear the same broadcasting, read the same newspapers, and think the same thoughts. Our pleasures and amusements are at the mercy of advertisers, and immense pressure is put on us to make us believe that we all like the same things because it is very convenient if we take our pleasures wholesale. There is much truth in what Miss Fry says. On the other hand, there is to-day more individual thinking than there has been for a good many years. The revolt against conventional notions, including those of religion, is a proof of this. But there is enough standardization going on for one to realize that Free-thought, and what it stands for, needs all the encouragement it can get in this exalted civilization of ours.

According to the Methodist writer, Christians in England have an extraordinary lack of knowledge on the subject of India, her peoples, and their religion. They seem to think of India as the poor, down-trodden slave-girl in chains appealing to the good, kind English to rescue her. And if it is suggested that India does not want the British, and has no high opinion of their morals or philosophy or religion, people are shocked. They think of India as irreligious, or of the East as looking up to the West on the ground of the latter's superior morality. The writer adds: "I think we ought to tell people more of the actual position." It's the same old game. All these false conceptions about India have had their origin in Christian tracts, Sunday-schools, and lectures by returned missionaries, and are still cherished by the more ignorant section of Christians. The parsons, however, are discovering that the more widely read public, which has come about through the spread of education and the easier access to reference libraries, openly smiles at these pious tarradiddles. Hence the sudden discovery that the truth had better be told, at all cost. But we don't suppose the missionaries and their brothers here are likely to let go too much truth at a time. There are the pious old ladies with money to be considered. They must not be unsettled, or else they will be difficult to persuade in the very important matter of finding the "root of all evil" to missionary societies.

From America comes some words of cheer as an offset to Dean Inge's sombre picture of British commerce and British character to-day. According to Rev. Dr. Parkes Cadman, broadcasting at Brooklyn, and things here, are not quite so black as they have been painted. We are a resilient race, and we have a Faith. "Buried in the British heart is that firm trust in God, which has manifold outlets in the nation's life and character." As an indication of that faith, the Doctor points to Westminster Abbey, and to the great cathedral now being erected at Liverpool to cover 100,000 sq. feet of earth. These two things, we learn, "express the exalted conception of the religion that will yet prevail" here. Hence the Doctor's optimism. It seems none too soundly based. The presence of the Abbey merely indicates that faith in God was once professed; the building of a new cathedral, that a certain number of people still profess that faith. But so far as our reading of history goes, it has not been faith, but applied intelligence that has enabled man to solve the various difficulties confronting him throughout the ages. Now, in Glasgow are 40,000 people forced to live in one or 2-room tenements. In Liverpool, faith is building a huge house for God. If these facts may be taken to indicate the quality of the nation's applied intelligence, Dean Inge would appear to have better grounds for his pessimism than Dr. Cadman has basis for his optimism.

General Sir George Milne, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, recently spoke on the possibility of future war. It was "very unlikely," he said, "that after 5,000 years of the fighting spirit the next ten years will induce us to come to ideals of peace, which seem to be almost visionary." He added, "change seems to be around us at every moment, but one thing has not changed, and that is human passion." A Second Advent contemporary of ours points out that Sir George was, of course, regarding the matter from one standpoint—that of the professional soldier. It submits, however, that that is not the only standpoint. Human passion has not changed: granted. But, it asks, what if there is another factor in the production of wars: namely, the activity of Satan, deceiving the nations and fomenting strife? This factor, we are told, is one of which human statesmanship can take no account. But God has provided for the elimination of that factor. For at the second coming of Christ, Satan shall be bound a thousand years, and the whole earth will then be at rest.

We hope our contemporary does not expect us to admire its wonderful Lord. God is clearly responsible for the "fighting spirit" and "human passions"—he endowed mankind with them in the first place. He has been allowing the Devil to run the affairs of earth for 5,000 years. Seemingly, he is enjoying his little "scrap" with his Satanic Majesty. Mankind must wait till such time as the glory of the Celestial conflict has faded. Then, according to our pious contemporary, the good Lord will very kindly send again a bit of himself, namely Jesus, to bring peace to the earth. Meanwhile, what about the awful sufferings of his faithful people? These, it seems, are essential to the Scheme, and can be compensated for in Heaven. What a queer picture these Christians give us of a loving Father. He, it appears, is unable to create and run a world in which peace is the predominating factor. Yet, he is to be credited with being all-wise and omnipotent!

A number of clergymen and others have been writing in the *Christian World* in favour of conducting a crusade against war. This is quite an easy pastime—between wars. Then no one believes in wars—at least very few say they do—and there is small popularity to be gained in advocating them. But what the influence of the clergy is worth was seen during the last war. For during the whole of that period practically the whole influence of the Christian clergy was thrown on the side of war in such a way as to make a reasonable peace almost an impossibility. The Christian clergy not merely supported the war, but did their utmost to inflame passion, and to encourage those feelings which made for the further unsettlement of Europe when the war was brought to an end. The Christian Churches, here, in France, in Germany and elsewhere, were amongst the most disastrous of all the influences between 1914 and 1918. That is something we should never forget.

Even now it is difficult to believe that the clergy are serious in the matter. If they are, there is a very simple plan by which they might strike a decisive blow at the state of mind that makes for war. And that is, let them stand resolutely aside from all military life, from all military shows, and from all war-like preparations. If the clergy were to decide that it is not their place to dress in semi-military uniform and take part in military parades, it is not their duty to say prayers over battleships or military banners, it is not their function to receive army pay as chaplains and take rank as military officers, and whenever war breaks out, instead of indulging in the cheap process of pointing out that their country is engaged in a holy crusade (as though there was ever a war that was otherwise to the people of each country engaged), let them restrict their activities to preaching that war does not and cannot override the claims of a common humanity, and the call of justice and truth. If they did this they would be striking a heavy blow at one

of the greatest menaces to civilization. But they will no do it. We might then get rid of the superstition that wars are made by soldiers. They are not. Wars are made by civilians. It is the soldiers who fight them. And when war does again come, we shall find the clergy at their old game, just as between wars they will scramble for posts in the army, and struggle for a prominent position in military pageants.

The spirit of advertisement has now become visible with our Churches. Slogans are the order of the day. In the front of a London Church the following motto is shouted to passers-by, "Take courage, the worst never happens." As the Churches have always specialized in the essence of Jeremiah, there would now appear to be hope for them becoming almost human.

Bloomsbury Chapel has the title for a Sunday address, "Practical Agnosticism." The late A. C. Benson must have set the fashion, and in time perhaps, we may reach the stage where reverent Atheism may be discussed without fear of the steeple falling down or the world coming to an end.

If it had been plain, John Smith, who had wanted a marriage annulment, there would have been nothing said. As the Duke of Marlborough is concerned the matter has a different complexion. An illustration that we do move, however, is to be found in the comment of the *Nation and Athenæum*..... "The sophistry of the ground taken and the rank and wealth of the suitors give a mediæval flavour to the whole transaction." There is one nail hit on the head, anyway, but to students of the divagations of Catholicism, it is no news that the heaven gazers always had their eyes on the main chance.

In the *Sunday Times*, Lord Oxford, dealing with significant persons and phrases in history quotes, with approval, President Butler as saying :—

It was reserved, not for a Milton, or a Locke, or a Rousseau, but for a twice dismissed exciseman of Norfolk, who had gone to the Colonies when nearly forty years of age, to apply the torch to the inflammable material that lay ready to hand from Massachusetts Bay to the Carolinas..... If the Declaration of Independence can be said to have had a single proximate cause, that proximate and moving cause was Thomas Paine's pamphlet, *Common Sense*.

"Yet," asks Lord Oxford, "how many Englishmen have read and digested this epoch-making deliverance?" Far more have read it than Lord Oxford appears to believe, but we quite agree with him that not so many have read it as ought to have done. And for this we have to thank the unscrupulous intolerance of Christians and the timidity of so many writers on history and sociology. The latter have spared no pains to keep alive the picture of Paine as an evil living, ignorant declaimer against Christianity, and the latter are so afraid of offending Christian prejudices that they prefer to pass over Paine's great work in inspiring the democracy of England and America that they slur over the work of one of the greatest reformers of the past hundred and fifty years.

It will be remembered that placards showing General Booth, and giving a message that he went about doing something or other in his business, were recently on view. Advertising in that form is expensive, and would indicate that money was not lacking. In Seoul (Korea), we are informed that prolonged street fighting in which Korean Salvation Army officers took the offensive against British and American officers marked the visit of General Booth. The Korean officers wanted the same pay as their British and American equals in the sight of the Lord. A Korean received a black eye, and the police parted the combatants. Let brotherly love continue, and let the leading lights of brazen vulgarity take what comfort and satisfaction they can from a movement which does not rise to the height of comedy.

Perhaps the administrators of the Salvation Army ought to be handed over to Mussolini as a spare time job.

We have all heard from the pious what happens to human beings who have no use for their particular ritual and beliefs. They are lost, without the restraints of religion, and, we have reached the stage when Sunday School is prescribed for delinquents. The following report, however, leaves the ordinary man puzzled :—

The Rev. Alfred Reginald Thorold Winckley, aged 61, Vicar of Cadney, cum Howsham, near Brigg, Lincolnshire, was sentenced to six months' imprisonment by Mr. Justice Sankey at Lincolnshire Assizes yesterday for indecent conduct with youths.

The Christian Evidence speakers might remember this in their dismal pictures of the woes of unbelief.

The Gods sell us all they give us. To be born a Duke or a Princess must be paid for, and the recent royal wedding in Brussels was an occasion for the special reporter to write up an account. The Catholic marriage service was read in Latin, but the responses were made in French. There was no mass as the bride was a Lutheran. Although the lingual difficulties were not absent, the only foreign language appears to be the Archbishop's declaration that, without the religious ceremony there can be no real marriage. Which is a pretty low estimate of human beings, and would lead us to suppose that civil marriages in Belgium are on the increase.

The Register-General's quarterly report shows a decline in the birthrate. For the third quarter of this year for England and Wales there was a decline of 6,933 against the figures the same period of last year. Between the squabbles of builders and workers, it would appear that the housing question will settle itself, with the use of a little common-sense, that is not supplied by the Roman Catholic Church.

The reporter and the religious expert have much in common. The latter can always be counted on to paint a vivid picture of death, and the former has a keen nose for the gruesome in supplying what is fantastically known as "what the public wants." The crowd of reporters at the scene of the Brunner tragedy was so great that it had to be regulated by the police. This is the mob known as "moulders of public opinions," and one counts it a privilege, and it is a strong one at that, that a movement like Freethought owes nothing to them. To be regulated by the police, like a football match crowd; we trust the titled people who engage in back-patting at Press Dinners will remember that their boy scouts had to be regulated by the Police.

The *Glasgow Record* is responsible for the statement that in a small town in Kentucky, Church officials recently gathered to discuss whether it was permissible to sell eggs that were laid on Sunday. Some were in favour of destroying the eggs, but it was finally decided that the eggs might be sold provided that the proceeds went to the Church funds. We suggest that as a means of identifying such sabbath-breaking eggs the hens should be fed on some coloured dye stuff every Saturday. Or special persons might be told off to preach to the hens—we could name a few in this country whose intellectual abilities are far better fitted to the occupants of a hen roost than to a gathering of adults.

At the ripe age of 86, the Rev. W. Wheeler, of Sutton, a prolific writer of articles dealing with the Second Coming of Christ, has just died. A pious writer says of him that, to within a short time of his death, he was able to read and study with an alert mind and to keep abreast of current thought. Readers noting the special subject favoured by this departed clerical scribe, may be able to measure this degree of mental alertness and his conversance with current thought.

The "Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

I HAVE received a grumble from a Sheffield reader which I make public, because he thinks I am not going the right way to work to bring this Trust Fund to a successful conclusion. He says:—

It is not the slightest use making an appeal to send what we can afford. We don't know what is or should be the small amounts you want from each.....Ask for a sum (from each), if it is only a shilling. They mount up. You have much to learn from the Churches on how to get money from people who are not over anxious to give. We know the *Freethinker* is not in danger of going under. That is the cause of the apathy. Don't remind us of it. To a working man 5s. is a lot of money to send at once. If you can get him to send five one shillings during the next year, it is the same thing, and he is much more likely to do it. Those who can afford £1 will send it without much trouble, those who can only afford a shilling need a lot of asking. I trust you will take this letter in the spirit in which it is sent.

We are not at all likely to mistake the motive of this letter, and we appreciate it. What we are asked is to invite readers to undertake to contribute a given sum during the next year by instalments. But I think Mr. Jackson will find, if he looks back, that several contributors have already promised donations along that line, and we are ready to receive more.

I do not know what more can be said. What we have to raise is just over another £2,000. Now, it must be left for all interested to say how much of this each is ready to guarantee. I will, if necessary, keep a list of names and publish them if desired. One pound from only 2,000 readers would do the trick. Some may promise more, some less. But the shilling contributor is as welcome as the hundred pounder. All are needed, and all are helping towards making the greatest effort ever made in the history of British Freethought a triumphant success, I do not know that I can say more. It may be that Mr. Jackson is right when he says I have a lot to learn from the Churches in the art of getting money from the people. But I have always flattered myself that the appeal to Freethinkers is and should be based upon a higher level than that of the Churches and Chapels. And I prefer to go on thinking so. But I invite readers to consider Mr. Jackson's suggestion.

Miss A. Wilson promises 10s. quarterly to the Trust Fund. We are keeping a list of all promises.

Previously acknowledged, £618 19s. 2d. A. B., £5; P. G. Bamford, £20; A. Goodman, £1; R. E. Side, £2 2s.; J. Jackson (Sheffield), 1s.; Dinah, 2s 6d.; T. Saunders, 5s.; M. F. E., £10 10s.; Miss A. Wilson, 10s.; W. Moore, 2s. 6d.; J. B. Middleton, £10. A. Lion Cachet, £1; A. Button, 5s.; A. C. Rosetti, £1. Total £670 17s. 2d.

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.

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

W. J. R.—Thanks for cuttings with comments. Crowded out this week, but will be used in next issue.

W. MOORE.—It is rather rash trying to explain things that one has not personally seen. If telepathy were to be true that might serve as an explanation, and if true, it has nothing whatever to do with spirits. Perhaps Podmore's "Modern Spiritualism" would serve you best.

J. G. PAYNE.—Thanks for article, but the ending is too weak for use. The idea would, however, bear working out.

A. C. ROSETTI.—Thanks for good wishes.

S. DOBSON.—Glad to learn of the successful meeting of Mr. Williams, and that there were many newcomers present. It is them we need. Sorry to learn of the illness of Mr. Willis.

C. A. S.—We can supply copies of Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man* at 3s. 6d., or 3s. 8d. post free.

M. BLENKINSOP (S.A.).—Sorry for the news, but hope for better times. Paper will be sent in any case.

F. PRICE.—We do not know where you would be able to get portraits of those Freethinkers who represent our side of the work. Portraits of Darwin or Huxley are easily procurable.

CINE CERE.—Letter received. Contents fully appreciated.

J. B. MIDDLETON.—Thanks for contribution to Fund, and promise of further help. Very many express the desire to do more than they have done, but the times are against them. We shall keep pegging away until we do what we have set out to do.

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.

There was a fairly good audience at Battersea Town Hall on Sunday last, but the lecture was in the nature of an experiment, and it was so far encouraging. At any rate, the local Freethinkers appear to have worked well to make the meeting a success, and it was a very large hall to fill. In a moderate-sized building the meeting would have looked a very good one. Mr. Coles acted as Chairman, and showed that he knew how to hold a meeting in hand. Mr. Corrigan took charge of the stewards, and all the arrangements were carried out well. Some visitors were present from other parts of London, amongst whom we noticed our contributors Mr. A. B. Moss and Mr. W. Repton. But

judging from the nature of some of the questions that were put at the close of the lecture, Battersa stands in need of an intensive course of Freethought lecturing to bring it up to date. Perhaps it is that the more intelligent Christians in the district recognized that their case was not one for public discussion, and so gave the other sort a clear field.

In sending his contribution to the Endowment Trust, Mr. R. E. Side writes:—

Whilst lately reading *Creative Spirits of the Nineteenth Century*, by George Brandes, a passage therein, taken from a description of a meeting with John Stuart Mill, calls to my mind the way in which the *Freethinker* deprecates the manner in which some of our leading men fall flat when discussing certain ideas. The passage is as follows: "Many times during our first conversation he returned with regret to the lack of courage that everywhere withholds writers from supporting new ideas." The *Freethinker* bids me, by the example of its contributors, to show this courage, and, if for this reason only, I think that every endeavour should be made to place the paper upon a secure basis.

It is more than fifty years ago since Mill said that it was time that all men spoke out freely on the subject of religion, but we still have a number of them praising religion with their tongues in their cheeks, and many others adopting all sorts of evasions to hide the fact of their unbelief. If an epidemic of moral courage were to sweep over the country the Christian Church would hardly survive another generation.

We are glad to say that we received the other day an article from Mr. Vincent Hands, which we hope to publish soon, and which we welcome as an indication of his approach towards recovery from his recent illness. We know that our readers will share our pleasure in that respect.

The Pope Could Not Do It.

A FEW weeks ago, I lingered an hour or two in the Cathedral of St. Peter's, at Rome. Many are the side chapels in that vast building, so that several services—a mass, a wedding, a christening and the rest, may be carried on at the same time. I watched the men, women and children, rich and poor, citizens and peasants, kneeling, bowing, crossing themselves, and confessing the faith of Jesus and Peter and Mary, amid a splendour of arches, pictures, statues, coloured glass and gilding—a splendour which would have dazzled and perhaps grieved the simple folk who, in the year 100 or 120, ate bread in the Love-feasts in humble rooms at Antioch or Smyrna. As I stood under the immense dome, or walked in the colonnades which skirt the wide courtyard outside, I reflected that I was at the centre of the most active theistic faith, in a geographical and political sense, in the world. The Papacy watches over (so the almanac says) 300,000,000 disciples. In various history-books, I have read the record of the Papal influence over kings and emperors, over aristocracies and armies, over councils of state, and over the rural labourers of wide stretches of plain and forest; and also over poets, scientists and philosophers. Here are evidences of authority, past and present.

Very well; and now I recall the World War of 1914-1918. The recall is rendered more acute and tragic by the memory of an hour I spent amid the melancholy ruins of Monchy-le-Preux, near Arras, thinking of a young soldier, who was blasted to fragments there, one early morning in May, 1917. But even without such personal impulses, we all of us are compelled to brood over the deaths of ten million young citizens in the four and a half dreadful years. In the sense that the keener the conscience, the viler cruelty appears,

it may be said that the World War of 1914 must seem to the world's conscience the worst event in the annals of civilization. This may be affirmed while we hold in deepest respect the memory of those who fell in that ghastly struggle; for I am one of the Pacifists who admire the individual virtue of the soldier and the seaman. But the question arises: Why did not the Head of the Catholic Church stop the war?

The Pope could not do it.

All the talking in the world will not wipe out the enduring significance of the fact. The church of miracles, prayers, interdicts, excommunications and eloquent bulls could not do it. It is not a case of meeting the objections of a heretic—a Bruno, a Vanini, a Paine, an Ingersoll, a Nietzsche. The hoarse voices of ten million victims have demanded a plain answer. Can the tears of Armistice Day give the answer?

The Pope could not do it.

It is useless to tell us Jesus rose from the dead about the year 29. Even if that marvel happened, it would, for us in 1914, have been of less importance than the salvation of ten million sons, fathers, and brothers, from the damnation of trenches, bombs and poison. Would one Jesus, who only suffered wounds for six hours, compensate a great multitude of mothers for the loss of sons, many of whom bore worse agonies than those of the Roman Cross?

I sincerely believe that Pius XI., as a man, grieved at his failure. Yes, but from the Vice-grent of Heaven we look for effective decrees, not laments.

Let us rather turn to the future. Apart from our preferences and views on economics, politics and social philosophy, which do we judge to be the chief forces in the world of 1926? In other words, which forces are the factors for the evolution of to-morrow? One is the Papacy, but it is declining, and it bears on its brow the brand of the failure of 1914. A second is International Banking. A third is the League of Nations (now numbering 56, with Spain and Brazil hesitating as to withdrawal). A fourth is the British Commonwealth of Nations, whose premiers have recently met in conference in London. A fifth is the Republic of the United States. A sixth, in process of becoming, but yet immensely grave, is the Awakening of Asia (to use my late friend Hyndman's phrase). A seventh is the general Labour Movement. An eighth is the wide-spread Freethought Movement, in many variations. A ninth is the body of knowledge known as Science, expressed in machinery and multitudinous inventions, and in ever-broadening visions of man and nature. A tenth is the aroused social sense of Womanhood. An eleventh is the combined effects of the popular educational systems of all the civilized communities. A twelfth is what M. Jovenel of Paris has termed the Universal Conscience; and this also is an incomplete process, but yet very significant; indeed, it is essentially the greatest of all the twelve. Of course, I am not speaking of what may be called elemental forces, such as hunger, sex, family relations, and the like. I am speaking of those social energies which have a more or less organized existence, and which one dreads, or values, and which, in any case, need to be taken into our calculations as factors that modify.

Leaving out the Papacy, not one of the forces I have enumerated is theological. Take three examples out of the other eleven. International Banking (which happens to be a force I dislike, but no matter!) is not theistic. Some bankers attend church, mosque, or synagogue; but one cannot possibly imagine a united prayer-meeting, or Advent Testimony meeting, or Communion Service, of the leading hundred bankers of the world. The League of Nations, as I have repeatedly asked people to observe, is not officially joined to any creed, and the name of God

does not occur in its Covenant; and, in passing, it is worth while to remark that it was born in France (1919). The Labour Movement, in spite of certain singular habits and catch-words, of some Socialists (mainly British), is not associated with God, Allah, Brahm, or Yahweh. The statesmen of the world systematically keep their eyes upon religious bodies and problems, and make arrangements for the exercise of religious cults in reasonable freedom, a practice which I deem just and commendable. But this is rather done on the principle of Old Age Pensions, and of decent reverence for values that pass.

From these divers considerations, I infer that the forces we now have to reckon with in social evolution are, in effect, human and only human. I have already intimated the point to which the best of these forces converge, namely, the universal conscience.

I beg leave to omit the Papacy and the International Bankers. I will not linger over the separate merits of the rest in my catalogue. Nor will I so discredit the wits of the reader as to suppose he wants an explanation of what Womanhood might do, or Applied Science might do, and so forth. What I insist is, that in the new era now opening, these kinds of social and ethical driving-powers will transform civilization; and their motive-energy is not theological. They represent mankind's self-reliance. They represent mankind's self-direction. In any case, and estimating the worth of such forces as you will, I ask for serious reflection on the master thought, that is, the building-up of the Universal Conscience. This does not mean the building-up of a universal likeness. Good sense forbid! I am prepared to retain distinctions of races (yet removing social bars to inter-marriage if desired), of nations (on an assured basis of peace and arbitration), of an infinity of innocent manners, customs, costumes and fancies, so long as, on the vital questions of mutual respect, mutual forbearance and mutual free co-operation; and the abolition in every corner of the globe of poverty, ugliness and cruelty, the assemblage of republics moves in obedience to one conscience.

Nor will I here be content to sketch an ideal for next century. I assert, in simple and plain English, that this universal conscience is now on the way. It is being created. It is being forged. Already it shows effects.

A warless, a healthy, a clear-headed, a joyous-hearted, a beautiful world?

The universal conscience can make it. The universal conscience *will* make it.

F. J. GOULD.

The Rejected Invitation.

(Concluded from page 747.)

III.

AUTHENTICITY.

MARK does not report this parable. Matthew introduces it immediately after that of the *Wicked Husbandmen*, which Mark and Luke and he all have in the same connection. Whether Matthew invented or merely adapted the parable, his intention certainly was to enforce what he believed to have been the moral of the *Wicked Husbandmen*. Luke, who had more respect than Matthew for Mark's order, does not venture to break it in this instance; and, therefore, finds another place for the parable, inserting it earlier on among a quantity of material which he was clearly unable to allocate with propriety. As the Matthæan version contains references to the war

of suppression, followed by the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, besides containing allusions to such relatively late doctrines as the divine sonship of Jesus, and his marital connection with the Church, it is obviously corrupt, if not entirely unauthentic. The same condemnation must be passed upon the Lucan version in so far as this concerns the respective cases of the Jews and the Gentiles. Naturally, if Luke here used no other source than Matthew, then the whole of his version, and not merely the above part deserves no more credit than Matthew's does. But Luke, as his work proves, had access to material which he did not get from either of his predecessors; and in some cases he may have read or heard accounts which varied from theirs on the same subjects. Hence, he might have found the present parable in a form, or with a moral different from the form, and the moral that Matthew reports; and yet, whilst revising Matthew's account he might prefer to retain some of its characteristic traits, especially the point concerning the rejection of the Jews and the vocation of the Gentiles.

Now, as I said previously, there are in Matthew's version, only two lots of invited guests, those who decline the invitation, and those who accept it; whilst there are in Luke's version no less than three lots: the two just specified, and a final one, which, like the second of those, accepts the invitation. Moreover, as I also remarked, Matthew's second lot and Luke's third lot are described as wayfarers, but not as sufferers from poverty, either with or without infirmity; whereas poverty attended in some cases by infirmity is attributed to Luke's second lot. Thus it would appear that in the original parable there were only two lots, namely, Matthew's two, which correspond with Luke's first and third; and that Luke himself invented his second lot, probably to make the parable teach an additional lesson. Here is the passage in question. After hearing how the guests first invited made excuses to the servant who came to tell them the feast was ready, we learn that

the servant came and told his lord these things.

Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go quickly into the streets, and bring in hither the poor, and maimed, and blind, and lame. And the servant said, Lord, what thou didst command is done, and yet there is room.

And the Lord said unto the servant, Go into the highways and hedges, and constrain *them* to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

A glance at the above passage shows that the inset part disjoins the otherwise perfect narrative, and weakens the relevancy of the final words by severing them from their proper occasion. Luke, whose work displays his great sympathy with the poor, apparently desired to make Jesus illustrate by the parable a recommendation which he makes him give almost immediately before speaking the parable. In the first verse of the chapter he says that Jesus "went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees on a Sabbath to eat bread." He then relates how Jesus proceeded to cure a dropsical man; and how, on seeing the guests choosing for themselves the best seats, he warned them against this practice. Next he reports that Jesus said to his host:—

When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor rich neighbours; lest haply they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind and thou shalt be blessed; because they have not the *wherewithal* to recompense thee:

for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

At this point Luke adds, that a fellow-guest having exclaimed, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God," Jesus replied by relating the present parable. The above account contains various improbabilities, as for example, that a ruler of the Pharisees gave a feast at his house on the Sabbath; that the guests really selected their own seats; that Jesus instructed his host whom to invite in future; and that he spake an irrelevant parable in answer to an irrelevant observation. Thus the whole seems to be a rather injudicious compilation; but this does not exclude the fact that some of the parts, as for instance, the reproof of ambition, the injunction about the poor, and the outline of the present parable, may be authentic fragments though falsely placed. It does seem, however, that the near position which Luke's report of the command about the poor bears to the illustration of that command in his version of the present parable, is a very strong argument against the authenticity of his difference from Matthew's version with respect to that particular.

If the original form of the parable were that offered by Luke (except for the references to the poor and infirm), then at first it presented a close analogy with the one about the Two Sons told to Work.⁷ In both cases there was a comparison between the different attitudes taken respectively by two different classes of the Jewish people touching a divine call; and in each case the class which might have been expected to obey the call was the one that disobeyed it. In the *Sons* the rejectors were the morally good; and the acceptors the morally bad; whilst in the *Invitations* the rejectors were decent folk engaged in social pursuits, and the acceptors feckless haunters of "the highways and hedges." Thus, in what I have suggested as its original form the parable of the *Invitations* bears marks of authenticity because it agrees with the teaching elsewhere attributed to Jesus in regard of the class from which he chiefly recruited his followers.

One question remains, Did Jesus utter the cruel parable of the *Wedding-garment* which Matthew attaches to his version of the *Rejected Invitations*? Here it is worthy of special note that whereas according to Matthew the meal in question was "a marriage-feast" given by "a certain king" "for his son"; according to Luke it was simply "a great supper" given by "a certain man." Hence, whilst in Luke the meal is the Messianic banquet, in Matthew it is the nuptial banquet of Christ and the Church. This part of Matthew's version, as I previously observed, is certainly unauthentic; and therefore, the *Wedding-garment* which is connected with and depends upon that part must be regarded as equally unauthentic. The episode appears designed to oppose the Pauline doctrine of salvation by faith. *The Revelation*, which introduces Christ under the form of a Lamb, and refers to his "marriage-supper," declares that "the fine linen" worn by "his bride" at the ceremony "is the righteous acts of the saints" (xix. 7-9).

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

Your knowing is nothing unless some other person knows that you know it.—*Persius*.

Slavery enchains a few; more enchain themselves to slavery.—*Seneca*.

Strange Tales.

It is interesting to note the beginning of the arts and make allowance for the bird's-eye view rapidly taken by the writer of the Pentateuch—a discussion of which landed Colenso in hot water. The making of the world, the christening of the various species; the numerous details connected with Cain's nuptials; the placing of the sentry with the flaming swords, the assizes held on the account of the garrulous serpent; all took time, and the inspired writer may be congratulated on the art of condensation. It is great art to present such wonderful pictures in a few verses.

Almost in a flash we are down to Lamech. Lamech deserved a special word of encouragement. He was a brave man. He married two wives. The offence of bigamy was unknown in those leisurely days, and the names of the ladies were Adah and Zillah. This is only three or four generations removed from Cain, so the population question must have solved itself. In four extended generations, Lamech had quite a choice of maidens, and he would secure the most prepossessing.

Adah very soon became the proud mother of Jabal, who is the progenitor of all who dwell in tents and of such as have cattle. Tent-makers and tent-dwellers trace their genealogy back to Jabal. Paul of Tarsus, our armies in the field, and Boy Scouts are in direct line of succession from Jabal.

Jabal had a brother called Jubal. When the mother called the little boys in for dinner, there might be some confusion. It was too bad to name them so nearly alike.

In any case Jubal became in time an organist. His genius ran in the direction of musical instruments. Nothing came amiss to him. Harps and barrel-organs were turned out with equal proficiency. Jubal has a lot to answer for now in the way of broadcasting.

Zillah, not to be outdone by her rival, also bare a son, whom she called Tubal-Cain. This is the beginning of the double-barrelled names, which have come down to us. But Zillah's brave son had other qualifications. He was the first brass-finisher. He became an ironworker on a large scale. He was a Captain of industry. His smithy stood under the old chestnut-tree.

What was of more consequence to the young men of the village, he had a sister. And they called her Naamah.

Lamech on one important occasion made an eloquent speech to his two wives. It would require a full-fledged commentator to explain its purport. He must have been flushed with pride at the success of his professional sons. This is the report of his speech:—"Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech, for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold."

You see Lamech here in quite a burst of eloquence. Perhaps this is the first poetic effusion on record. Never, since the sons of God shouted for joy, had been such an emotional display. What the trouble was about no one knew, not even Lamech. Times like these occur in the history of most of us. We like to air our high-sounding phrases, and this is a good example of that form of Hebrew poetry used with good effect later in Proverbs and in Psalms.

When the boy said that God made the world in six days, and on the seventh was arrested, he may have had Lamech in his mind. Trouble of some kind had taken place at the cross-roads. However, we are proud of Lamech as the first poet, and the parent of the first blacksmith.

ALAN TYNDALE

Merrie England!

ONE hears so much nowadays of the onward rush of civilization that it sometimes becomes necessary to stop and think of the progress we have made since, say, 1066. We hear of the bettered conditions of the working classes, the advance of education, and the emancipation of women. But have things improved as much in 800 years as they should?

Certainly, in this enlightened age one man does not treat another as a slave or a dog, much, perhaps, as he would like to, but that is mainly from fear of the consequences which would be imposed by the saner section of his countrymen.

Education, votes for women, and the restrictions on child labour, were only gained after hard fights. Why is it necessary, 1,000 years after the introduction of Christianity into these islands, to maintain both a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and a R.S.P.C.A.? A man is fined for selling a packet of cigarettes after 8 o'clock of an evening and another is allowed to hunt a fox or a deer with a pack of hounds in order to tear it to pieces, not for food, but for sport!

A man who puts an animal to the worst torture he can think of is fined the same amount as a man who deliberately breaks a plate-glass window, or rather less. That is, if the former picks on some illegal torture. The child-defiler gets a lighter sentence than the defrauder of an insurance company.

Truly, a visitor from Mars, studying the laws of this country, would think they were drawn up by men with no sense of the fitness of things.

MICHAEL BLAKE.

Correspondence.

EDISON AND IMMORTALITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—There was some exhibition of interest in your issue of October 31, over the recent alleged statement of Thos. A. Edison respecting his belief in a future life. As reported in this country, his statement seemed to have been intentionally garbled to make the impression that he favoured the theory of immortality; but reading between the lines, all I could gather from what he said or intended to say, was that the forces of man's being, the influence of his life, would go on indefinitely after death, which was equivalent to saying that the world was not coming to an end right away.

What Edison thinks or says about individual conscious life beyond the grave is no more important than what a child of three years old might say about the same thing. Neither can throw any light on the unknowable. The only significance attaching to the alleged Edison interview is the fact that the church can lie on an old man and get away with it. However, it seems to be Christian tactics in dealing with any prominent Atheist to wait until he is too old to take notice or defend himself before forcing a cross into his hands, willy-nilly.

Besides, on general principles, a man's mind weakens with his body. Neither is as vigorous at eighty as at sixty. What a man says at fifty or sixty is more reliably the sentiments of a keen and strong mind than what he says at eighty or ninety. The new light that the piping dotard is supposed to receive to guide him into the kingdom of the church, is the silliest kind of bosh. The only light he possesses is the sputtering candle of life with just flame enough left to distort, delude, betray.

JOSEPH SELBY.

Asheville, N.C.U.S.A.

THAT JONAH LEGEND.

SIR,—I have been sent a clipping from your journal in which you wonder whether "the Rev. Desmond

Morse-Boycott is quite such a fool as he pretends to be," because he has supplied the press with a yarn about a sailor who, it is alleged, was swallowed by a whale, and came out alive. Permit me to answer you.

I have not supplied the press with the yarn. It pinched it. I get clippings from all over the country, and the story seems to have created a provincial sensation. Actually, I wrote it for a journal of some repute, *T.P.'s Weekly*. If you will refer to the article you will see that I, in turn, "pinched" the story from a book which is specified, because it struck me as such a good reply to the superior critics who affirm in their self-confidence that the Jonah story never happened.

Personally I do not mind in the least whether the Jonah story is accepted as literal fact or religious allegory. I am after those critics, who are never so happy as when they are proving (in their own minds) that, for instance, St. John never wrote his Gospel, because tradition says he did, or that the Lord Jesus was not the Son of God, because the Scriptures say that He is.....and so on.

Finally, I do not pretend to be a fool. I am one, without pretence. I only wish that you and your readers could be smitten by the foolishness from which I suffer. To be a fool for Christ's sake is an exhilarating and altogether jolly business.

DESMOND MORSE-BOYCOTT.

After reading Mr. Morse-Boycott's letter, we feel inclined to repeat our query. We do not at all question that he may feel it a jolly business to be a fool for Christ's sake, although it might be more of a compliment to the second person of the Trinity to show that following him induced common sense. We were led to notice the paragraph about the man being fished up inside of a whale, because we recognized it as a very old yarn, and wondered whether it was possible that Mr. Morse-Boycott might see anything in palming such a story on quite ignorant readers. Evidently he thinks the case is covered by the fact that he is working for Christ's sake, it is a jolly business. In the business world they would call such tactics by a very much harsher name. We readily acquit Mr. Morse-Boycott of originality in the matter. Indeed we said that it was a very old lie, and was first told for Christ's sake.—EDITOR.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

We are gradually becoming far too big for our environment. Almost every Sunday our audience exceeds the accommodation. Last Sunday Mr. Rex Roberts drew an overcrowded room at St. Pancras Reform Club to listen to a refreshing novel "talk" on "Some Burning Questions."

Mr. Roberts provided a combination of humour, eloquence and common-sense. He did not attempt to suggest which were the questions that, in his opinion, ought to be regarded as the important topics for popular consideration. He had studied the newspapers of the day and had come to the conclusion that the Burning Questions of the day are the following:—

- (1) "The Stella Maris" case, with its bearing on the value or otherwise of the jury system, and the question of capital punishment.
- (2) The Labour Party's Vote of Censure in regard to the recent Coal Dispute.
- (3) The present tendency towards Trusts and Combinations, with the problem of how far Trusts influence prices.
- (4) The Mustard Club.
- (5) The Imperial Conference and the Relationship of this Country and the Dominions.
- (6) The general question of Toleration.

Mr. Roberts had some illuminating comments to make in regard to all these questions.

The discussion which followed was most interesting and complete, every speaker agreeing that the lecture was one of the most stimulating and provocative we have had this session.

North London Freethinkers and others are reminded that on Sunday next, Mr. Sinclair will speak "In

Defence of the Novel," a subject particularly interesting and certain to lead to a very free debate.

To-night, we expect a very interesting discussion opened by Mr. Sinclair, who is making his first visit to the Reform Club. Mr. Sinclair is a delightful speaker and an expert on his subject.—G. B.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.

On Sunday, November 28, Mr. Fred. Mann gave a short lecture to the Glasgow Branch, on "Lord Birkenhead forgets Charles Bradlaugh." The lecture was followed by many questions and vigorous discussion, into which even the chairman, Mr. Hale, was drawn. Next Sunday, December 5, Mr. George Whitehead will lecture to the Glasgow Branch at 11.30 a.m., and 6.30 p.m. We hope to see every seat filled at both meetings. Will those who have received tickets for sale for the debate please account for them to the Secretary, at the Branch Social, on December 4.

F. MANN.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING, HELD AT 62 FARRINGTON STREET ON NOVEMBER 25.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present, Messrs. Clifton, Cohen, Gorniot, Rosetti and Miss Kough. The Secretary was still absent through indisposition, and there were several absences in consequence of the suddenly inclement weather.

Minutes of last meeting were read and confirmed.

The Monthly Financial Statement was presented and adopted and the Pass Book examined.

New members were received for South London and the Parent Society.

Correspondence from Plymouth, Bolton and Birmingham re future lecturing arrangements was received and dealt with.

The Birmingham Branch also reported that in consequence of the difficulty of obtaining a Hall on a suitable date for holding the proposed demonstration, the matter had been postponed until the New Year.

Mr. Cohen reported successful meetings at Glasgow, Motherwell, Nottingham, Weston-super-Mare and the Kensington Town Hall. It was resolved that application be made for the hire of this Hall for week-night lectures early in 1927.

Re attendance at Divine Service in the Navy, correspondence was read from several seamen, pointing out that it was Compulsory, and Mr. Cohen undertook to address a letter of protest to the Admiralty.

Further arrangements for the Annual Dinner were discussed, and it was reported that the date was now fixed for Wednesday, January 12, 1927. K. B. K.

Obituary.

We deeply regret having to record the death of Elizabeth Griffiths, of 7 Woodlands Avenue, Wanstead. For many years she had been attached to the Freethought movement. During the past twenty years she suffered a series of bereavements, but nothing ever seemed to mar the sweetness of her character. The admirable properties which noted her during her life are still to be seen in the kindness and staunchness of her surviving children. The interment was at the East London Cemetery, on November 17. Despite the very bad weather a good number of her women friends gathered at the graveside, whilst a Secular Burial Service was conducted.—F. P. CORRIGAN.

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LONDON.

INDOOR.

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. F. Sinclair, "In Defence of the Novel."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Kennington Oval): 7, Mr. E. C. Ratcliffe, "Free Love."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, R. Dimsdale Stocker, "John Galsworthy's play, *Escape*."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit., "Is there a New Religion?"

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (101 Tottenham Court Road): 7.30, Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., "The Growth of Papal Power." Thursday, December 9, at the above Hall, at 7.30, Mr. H. Cutner, "The Philosophy of Atheism."

OUTDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. E. Baker, a Lecture.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Harry B. Lowerison, "Buddha."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): Mr. George Whitehead, 11.30, "Some Lessons from History"; 6.30, "Psycho-Analysis Explained." Questions and discussion cordially invited. Silver Collection. The Branch will have a Social Evening in the D and F Café, High Street, Glasgow, at 6.30 p.m. on Saturday, December 4. Tickets 2s. 6d. A Public Debate on "Was Jesus a Socialist?" will be held in the City Hall, Candleriggs, at 7.30 p.m. on Monday, December 6. Affirmative, Mr. Guy A. Aldred; Negative, Mr. George Whitehead. Questions. Tickets, price 6d., can be had at the meetings on Sunday.

Pamphlets.

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