

The

# FREETHINKER

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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>Our Savages.—The Editor</i> - - - - -	769
<i>The Dean of St. Paul's.—J. T. Lloyd</i> - - - - -	771
<i>Whisperers and Shouters.—Mimnermus</i> - - - - -	772
<i>The Price of Charity.—G. J. F.</i> - - - - -	773
<i>"One, Two, Three."—William Herbert</i> - - - - -	773
<i>The "Freethinker" Endowment Fund.—Chapman Cohen</i> - - - - -	777
<i>Random Reading.—H. B. Dodds</i> - - - - -	778
<i>Obscurantists.—W. Thompson</i> - - - - -	779
<i>The Evolutionary Process.—C. C.</i> - - - - -	780
<i>Society News</i> - - - - -	782

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

table. But why should they? The wearing of charms and mascots is not done in secret, it is a parade. Leading sportsmen avow their faith in them, and there is a huge trade done in the supply of love philtres and the like. The press, ever quick to exploit the ignorance of the general public, make the most of stories of haunted houses, and all classes are easily attracted to any form of superstition that shows itself. Palmists and astrologers flourish, and there are large numbers who will not walk under a ladder, or undertake an important piece of business on a Friday, or who will solemnly inform you of the way in which a death has resulted from breaking a looking-glass. People ashamed of being superstitious. They will avow their belief in this or that piece of absurdity as though it were a possession of which good manners would not seek to deprive them. The Roman Catholic papers contain lists of cures and strokes of good fortune which have followed the saying of certain prayers or the wearing of certain holy charms, just as any quack will provide cases of cures that have been affected solely through the ignorance of those who have written the testimonials. Society is honeycombed with superstition, and in this respect Sir Austen and those with him may claim to be really representative in a way that clearer intellectual folk could not. And it would require a better calculus than I have at my command to estimate the precise strength of the evil reaction of this type of mind on social and political progress.

Views and Opinions.

Our Savages.

THE *Evening Standard* for December 3 reports that a luncheon party was held in honour of Sir Austen Chamberlain, in Paris, on the date named, attended by a number of statesmen, including the French President and the French Foreign Secretary. Sir Austen was on his way to attend a meeting of the League Council at Geneva. But at the last moment a terrible discovery was made. The number of guests totalled thirteen. So in order to avoid trouble an Under-Secretary was invited, with the understanding that if one of the guests were to stay away the Secretary should consider the invitation cancelled. The luncheon, it should be mentioned, was a mere occasion for the discussion of a number of questions of first-rate importance, including the state of affairs in China and the question of disarmament. But someone, or several, or all, were afraid to sit down thirteen at table for fear something dreadful should happen. And these were not ignorant, uneducated nobodies. They were all men who have the destinies of nations in their hands. They can pledge their respective countries to serious undertakings. They may sow the seeds of wars, or seriously affect the happiness of millions of people living and of millions of others yet unborn. But they could not rise superior to the idle superstition as to the unluck attending those who sit thirteen at table. If that is the kind of mentality possessed by the most prominent of citizens, have we really any right to look down upon the superstitions of the "common" people?

The Social Deep.

Superstition, as I have often pointed out, is not limited by what is called education, or by social standing. Park Lane in this respect is hail fellow with White-chapel, and the throne is at one with the hovel. One might have thought that men holding the position of the delegates at Paris would have been at least ashamed of publicly avowing their belief in so childish a superstition as the fatality of thirteen at

Two of a Trade.

The other day the House of Commons gave its assent to the third reading of a Bill intended to remove certain disabilities from which Roman Catholics suffer. As it was a measure to help Roman Catholics, who have a well organized, if largely ignorant vote, the Government gave time for its passing. Had it been a Bill for the removal of the Blasphemy Laws no time could have been found. Of course, as a Freethinker, I have no objection whatever to freeing Roman Catholics from any restrictions placed on them either in the way of performing their religious ceremonies in public, the settling of religious orders in Britain, or to their having complete freedom of bequest. So long as they do not ask for special privileges, and so long as they are subject to the same restrictions that affect everyone else no one has any cause to complain. But looking over the Protestant protests against this Bill, it is quite clear that the opposition rests largely with the same type of mind that fills the Roman Churches. When religious people argue desperately about the Mass, or some other Romish doctrine, it is not because they are awake to its absurdity, but because the thing in dispute is offensive to God Almighty. The complaint is not that certain people are acting foolishly, but they are acting irreligiously. To quarrel whether prayers shall be directed to the



Virgin Mary, or whether she ought to be called the Mother of God, and at the same time to assert the truth of the Virgin Birth and pray to the son of Mary, does not indicate different types of mind of different social value, but involves the same type of mind of the same social value. The superstition is there, and whether it is concerned with tweedledum or tweedledee is a question that only fools will worry themselves about.

\* \* \*

#### The Great Taboo.

Here is another instance of the prevalence of a superstition and of its dangerous reaction. I was reading the other day an interesting book by Mr. F. H. Colson on *The Week*. Mr. Colson shows that our seven-day week is not nearly so old nor so universal as many imagine, and he has compiled a very useful mass of information on the subject. But with regard to the superstition of Sunday, he does prove, what I have often said is the case, that the Christian Sunday rests upon the sheer superstition which connected one day of the week with a particular planet. This was not, of course, the Sunday, but the preceding day. The ancient Babylonians knew of seven planets, and in common with astrological teaching each of these planets exercised a different influence on human life. Mars was warlike, Venus was the planet of love, the Sun was made for gladness, etc., and to Saturn was given a wholly maleficent influence. Anything done on the day of Saturn was almost certain to end in disaster. If a man entered on a business transaction it would not prosper. If he went on a journey it would end disastrously. If he sowed seeds the crop would be unprofitable. The safest plan was to do nothing, and in the end, as some allowance had to be made for human nature, only works of actual necessity were permitted. This was unquestionably the origin of the Jewish Sabbath. The day of the Sun was, on the contrary, a day of joy and merrymaking. The Sun was the symbol of life and health, all the more because it followed immediately the gloomy day of the slow-moving malignant Saturn. With the rise of Christianity, with its close and organic relationship to the worship of the Sun-god, the day of rest was changed from Saturday to Sunday, and became afterwards mixed up with the resurrection of the Sun-god Jesus. So the situation continued, always with a contest between the conception of the Sabbath, inherited directly from the Jews, and that of the wholly Pagan Sunday. The growth of Puritanism in this country led to the full emphasis being placed on the conception of Saturn's day, and the seventeenth century saw a complete identification of the two. Sunday became a veritable Sabbath, or day of Saturn, and for about three centuries the English-speaking people have been living under one of the most demoralizing superstitions that have ever dominated a seventh of the life of a civilized people. It is sheer superstition from beginning to end, a superstition that has been deleterious to both mind and body.

\* \* \*

#### A Day of Despair.

It is difficult for the present generation to conceive a time when to take a walk in the country on a Sunday was looked upon as more or less of a sin, when tracts were published and sermons preached full of tales of the diseases and disasters that overtook people because they did not keep Sunday as the sour-minded Puritans imagined it should be kept. It was a day when everything in the nature of healthy, mental and physical recreation was forbidden and legally suppressed. Healthy sports were prohibited, and such possibilities as there were for

the people visiting public institutions of an elevating character were refused them. In Scotland and in the Puritan States in America things were worse than here. There, people were actually imprisoned for travelling on the Sunday, and men were fined for kissing their wives. They had a legal right to beat them, and I know of no case where that was ever brought forward as an infraction of the Sabbath. There is no wonder that drunkenness increased. What else could people do but get drunk when they were not actually at work. Drink did give them at least a few minutes of active vitality, and I remember the Rev. Mr. Aked of Liverpool, saying, when dealing with drunkenness among the Scottish people, that with a religion such as Scotland had in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries whisky was the only thing that could keep their humanity alive.

#### Paying the Price.

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I might give many more illustrations to the same end. But the prevalence of these various forms of superstition are not mere intellectual diversions, they stand for frames of mind that have a great and a disastrous reaction on our social life. How can we blame people for believing in unlucky days, in charms, in signs and omens, and the like when we have a religion established, enjoying a privileged position in the public services, in Parliament, in the law courts, in social life, in which every form of superstition is taught and thrives? There is not an absurdity that exists, and of which folk-lore students collect examples, that cannot be paralleled by what is actually going on in the churches and chapels. Why should it be thought ridiculous for a man to believe that he can cure rheumatism by carrying a potato in his pocket, when the Roman Church is teaching him that the same complaint can be cured by a saintly relic? Why should we laugh at the belief in a charm when we teach that the weather or the harvest can be affected by a prayer? And why should we expect people to act rationally in social and political affairs when they are all the time taught to flout reason in their religion? After all, the simile of men keeping their minds divided into watertight compartments is a very misleading one. The brain functions as a whole and bad habits encouraged in one direction are likely to show themselves in others. If we strive so hard to keep the savage alive in our daily lives, we must not be surprised if at seasons of strain he becomes active and we pay the price for his preservation in a devastating war or in national misconduct. The "Great War" was to many the most significant of modern events. But I doubt whether the sight of a handful of representative statesmen, meeting in the capital of one of the most cultured of European nations, but afraid to sit down thirteen at table, is not as pregnant in its significance.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

#### In Hoc Signo Vinces!

WHERE is Servetus? Where is Calvin now?  
Cold blooded monster of the narrow way;  
Gloating upon the victim he would slay,  
While pious vengeance burnt his iron brow:  
Oh! cruel tiger soul that would endow  
With longer suffering life an easy prey,  
Until his gorge divine would end the play—  
Jealous of cruel Time that cried—Know!  
Should we rejoice that peace and calm are found.  
Where once the reptile spirit sought to kill;  
And deem ourselves secure on holy ground;  
No more the victims of the Christian will?  
Not so—the mission as of old is still  
The same; but our resistance is too sound!

W. J. LAMB.



## The Dean of St. Paul's.

As Canon Peter Green pointed out a few years ago, Dr. Inge is not only many sided, but two distinct men between whom there is really nothing in common. In many of his articles published in various journals, and in most of his lectures delivered in this and other countries, he shines brilliantly as a thoroughly qualified higher critic of both the Bible and Christianity. Indeed, taking him as he shows himself in some of his latest books one finds it difficult to realize that he is a Christian believer at all. But there is another and entirely different Dr. Inge, who reveals himself in the pulpit and as the Dean of St. Paul's. In the majority of his sermons the critic is conspicuous only by his absence. In these we see him as a humble, devout believer, whose faith in Christ is the grand necessity of his life. Quite recently he appeared at the anniversary of Whitfield's Tabernacle and preached the anniversary sermon, which appears in the *Christian World Pulpit* of November 25, and his introductory observation was as follows:—

It is very seldom indeed that I have been able to accept an invitation to take part in a service in one of the Free Churches. That is not at all because I disapprove of these friendly acts of brotherhood; far from it. The reason is that I have to decline five-sixths of the invitations that come to me from my own Church, and it might make a bad impression if I were to accept invitations from outside. But in this famous Church, and on this special occasion, I do not think my action can be misinterpreted, and I count it a great pleasure and privilege to be here among you to-day.

It was really a double anniversary, the 170th Anniversary of the Church and the 23rd of the Central Mission. It is evident from his words that Dean Inge is not a member of the Anglo-Catholic party in his own Church, for it is understood that that self-righteous party will have no intercourse whatsoever with the Free Churches.

The Dean's text was 2 Corinthians, iv. 6: "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." One of his first sayings is that "Christianity is good news, not good advice"; but is it not both? If its news be true, is it not worth its while to exhort people to accept it and live by it? The Dean deplures the fact that "in the most popular writing of to-day, especially in the most popular fiction, religion is simply disregarded, as if it was no longer one of the moving forces of our social life." It is easy enough for a high dignitary of the Church to characterize such books as "drab and dirty"; but there is another fact which he ought to face, namely, that the younger generation read these modern books whether drab and dirty or not, with supreme delight, or "with so much avidity that one would hardly suppose that a Divine revelation had ever come to mankind." Here we face a most vital point. Surely the younger generation have a perfect right to ask with due seriousness, "Has a Divine revelation ever come to mankind?" and the majority would unhesitatingly answer, "We have failed to find it anywhere; will you kindly tell us where it is to be found?" Dean Inge, instead of dealing with so vital a situation, proceeds to discuss the insoluble and useless question as to whether the Gospel Jesus actually did or even intended to found a new religion. In any case, did Jesus reveal God to the world? The Dean says:—

What was the core, the centre of his message? I wish to emphasize this, that it was good news

about God, rather than a revelation or information about his own person. That is a point which has been brought out very well by Dr. T. H. Glover, whose books no doubt you know; that Jesus Christ came to earth not to tell us what he himself was like, but to tell us what God is like. His revelation was chiefly a revelation about the nature and the character of God the Father. In that revelation consisted the centre and the kernel of his message. What was it that he came to teach us about the Creator of the World? Primarily, that we may, without fear, call him Father; that he is the Father of all the human race, and that in consequence all human beings are in the position of brethren to each other. That supreme revelation carried with it a great deal. Jesus Christ levelled and abolished almost all artificial man-made barriers by ignoring them.

Now, nobody in the world knows better how absolutely false the whole of that passage is than does Dean Inge himself. The barriers which separate mankind into artificial classes are as real and binding to-day as they ever were, and the realization of human brotherhood is as far off as it ever was. In one of his *Outspoken Essays* he expresses a doubt as to whether an ideal state of society will ever be established on earth, but adds that if ever it will be, "it must be based on a religious basis, since religion has a cohesive force greater than any other bond"; but his very reverence forgets that in history the Christian religion has proved to have been much more of a *devisive* than a *cohesive* force, and must be held directly responsible for most of the bickerings, dissensions, strifes, and bloody wars which darken the pages of history. Even in the Dean's own Church the Cross by no means makes for peace and harmony, but for angry disputes and bitter contention between irreconcilable parties. He candidly recognizes and bemoans this melancholy state of things. In another portion of the *Essay* just quoted, he says:—

Some may wonder why I have not expressed a hope that the guardianship of our intellectual and spiritual birthright may pass into the hands of the National Church. I heartily wish that I could cherish this hope. But organized religion has been a failure ever since the first concordat between Church and State under Constantine the Great. The Church of England in its corporate capacity has never seemed to respect anything but organized force. In the sixteenth century it proclaimed Henry VIII. the Supreme Head of the Church; in the seventeenth it passionately upheld the "right divine" of kings to govern wrong; in the eighteenth and nineteenth it was the obsequious supporter of the squirearchy and plutocracy; and now it grovels before the working man and supports every scheme of plundering the minority.

We do not agree with all the Dean says in disfavour of his own Church, but the only possible conclusion from what he says is that, even in the Anglican Church, religion has been a most dismal failure, and there is nothing to show that it has been a signal success in any other Church known to us. Strangely enough, while frankly admitting the truth of all this, the Dean still maintains that Christianity is the only religion destined to hold its own in the world. His reasoning is totally unconvincing. There never has been a crowd around the narrow gate. After cheerfully admitting the truth of that statement he quite as cheerfully adds: "I ask you to read the Gospels, and consider whether in any single place our blessed Lord suggested that there would ever be an inconvenient crowd gathered round the narrow gate. On the contrary, he warned the disciples with the utmost plainness what they had to expect.....'Straight is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'"

There is but one conclusion to which we are



inevitably led, namely, that Christianity, whether preached by optimists or by pessimists, is a wholly false religion, because from the beginning until now it has never been able to accomplish for men and women what it was said to have been supernaturally intended and qualified to achieve.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Whisperers and Shouters.

Talk about it as we like, a man's breeding shows itself nowhere more than in his religion.—*O. W. Holmes.*

Broad ideas are hated by partial ideas; that is, in fact, the struggle of progress.—*Victor Hugo.*

The Bible is that great cord with which the people are bound.—*Bradlaugh.*

A VERITABLE storm has been aroused by the publication of a book of alleged reminiscences, which has proved to be merely a volume of spurious, spicy scandal concerning well-known people. But for the critical acuteness of the editor of a leading newspaper, the reputations of a number of famous persons might have been tarnished by a discreditable scribbler who rehashed the idle gossip of a generation with the purpose of making money.

Doubtless, public men are often exposed to calumnies, but the seamy side of politics is nothing like so black as it was a generation or so earlier. Leigh Hunt's attack on George the Fourth is a case in point. The genial poet for once dipped his pen in vitriol, and dubbed the unhappy George "an adonis of fifty," "a demirep," "a violator of his word," and a few other pleasant things. William the Fourth fared as hardly at the hands of those light-hearted caricaturists, Gilray and Rowlandson. "Silly Billy" had an affair with an actress, Mrs. Jordan, and these gay wielders of the pencil loved to publish cartoons depicting the monarch wheeling a perambulator full of children, with the lady walking by his side. Across the English Channel, Louis Phillipe was made fun of in similar fashion. One daring artist always depicted the king with a head like a pear, and, when prosecuted, he convulsed the court with laughter by protesting that, as Nature had done this wicked thing, she ought to be in the dock, and not the unfortunate artist. Even in the later years of the nineteenth century there were echoes of this robustious method of criticism, and the pious Gladstone was dubbed "an Atheist," because of the part he played in the disestablishment of the Irish Church, and an assassin because he deserted Gordon in the Soudan.

These, however, were exceptions, and not the rule. Politicians are always attacking one another, and, like the curse directed against the famous Jackdaw of Rheims, nobody seems a penny the worse for it. Religious animosity, on the other hand, has always been responsible for much that was really brutal in speech and in action. Roman Catholics burned Protestants, and Protestants killed Papists. Both Catholics and Protestants tortured and murdered Freethinkers. The austere Milton left the slopes of Parnassus and used the language of Billingsgate when he attacked priestcraft. The warm-hearted Sydney Smith could no more speak civilly of Methodists than Mr. Hilaire Belloc, or the editor of the *Morning Post*, of Jewish people. William Cobbett was more than usually brutal in his treatment of Quakers. That a Freethinker must be either a fool or a rogue is a postulate of Christian Evidence lecturers. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has denounced Materialists with unsavoury rhetoric, a form of speech he never used before he embraced Spiritualism, and preached of the Never-never Land.

Shelley's known Atheism incurred the hatred of Christians, and no enmity is more relentless or more venomous. The abuse which was supposed to have killed Keats was the pink of courtesy compared with the assault and battery made upon Shelley, who, it will be remembered, devoted his short life of twenty-nine years to the service of Humanity. The late George Foote, the first editor of the *Freethinker*, had more than his share of abuse and slander. His waste-paper basket was seldom without an insulting letter or postcard sent to him by Orthodox folk. "I have been accused of all the crimes in the calendar, except murder," he once remarked. "That solitary exception is due to the difficulty of finding a corpse." Charles Bradlaugh was subjected to similar harsh treatment, and he was excluded from the House of Commons for thirteen years on account of his known Freethought opinions.

Away across the Atlantic, Christian prejudice barred Robert Ingersoll from advancement in the political world. A man of his consummate ability might easily have attained the proud position of President of the United States. Fortunately, for us, Ingersoll esteemed duty more highly than dollars, and in an age of commercialism remained faithful to principles. Even women had to endure their share of suffering. Jane Carlile was the object of attack no less than her brave husband. Annie Besant, who gave fifteen years of her splendid womanhood to Freethought, was attacked in word and deed. Lime was thrown at her, sticks broken over her shoulders, vile epithets hurled at her. Few women have had to endure such a lengthy martyrdom. A Court of Justice actually deprived her of the custody of her own child, simply on account of her advanced opinions, a dishonour similar to that imposed on Shelley over half a century before.

All these things were done in the name of religion, yet Christian apologists never tire of boasting of the tolerance of the creed they profess. A little study, however, of the Bible shows that it reeks of bigotry and persecution, and the Old Testament Hebrews were expressly ordered to kill heretics. The earliest apostles of Christianity were also imbued with the spirit of persecution. According to the New Testament, the Apostle Paul smote Elymas with blindness for opposing him, and John, "the beloved disciple," said, "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, says: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than ye have received, let him be accursed." Even in the infant Christian Church the unbeliever is to be shunned like poison, and the history of Christianity after its accession to power justifies the Freethinker in regarding bigotry and persecution as of the very essence of that religion. Indeed, while Christianity survives, the recrudescence of religious persecution is always possible. To say that a superstition which threatened men with eternal suffering in Hell for unbelief is opposed to persecution on earth is but to gloss plain facts. The Blasphemy Laws are still on the Statute Book of this country, and are at any moment liable to enforcement. They are the standing menace of a dying creed to those who smile at its childish fables too ostentatiously.

The Church of England, which is the Government Religion, fosters this persecuting spirit. The ecclesiastical canons are still in force, except they conflict with the laws of the land, and the courts have decided that they are binding on the clergy of the Established Church, of whom there are about twenty thousand. The first dozen canons are aimed at Nonconformists, including, of course, Freethinkers, and all but one ends with a curse, a distinguishing mark of the Religion of Love. If you deny the supremacy of



King George the Fifth in the affairs of the Church of Christ you are cursed. If you deny that the Government Religion teaches the doctrine of Christ you are cursed. If you say that the Anglican Prayer Book is out of harmony with the Bible you are cursed. And so on, and so forth, in the true spirit of Christian charity, which thinketh evil of all opponents. But that the law of the land overrides these canons, everybody who refused to attend Church on Sundays should be cursed, and the names read out in Churches.

It is a grievous thing that such nonsense should be thought in a civilized country in the twentieth century, but it is a bitter thing that the priests who teach it should pretend to tolerance and goodwill, and deceive silly women and ignorant people with their speciousness. These priests are not so honourable as the Mexican bandit, who, when dying, was asked: "Have you forgiven your enemies?" He raised himself for a final effort: "I have no enemies, I have shot them all."

MIMNERMUS.

### The Price of Charity.

WHEN, in 1920, the Commissioners of Inland Revenue suggested to the Royal Commission on the Income Tax that Charitable exemption should be withdrawn, so far as it related to the education of the well-to-do, the religious bodies and certain miscellaneous bodies, they stated that there was no reliable information to show with any degree of accuracy what would be the effect of restricting exemption to charities for the relief of poverty and physical distress. Subject to a liberal margin of error they estimated that there would be a saving of £1,500,000 per annum. Figures were not given to show what proportion of this annual subsidy went to the upkeep of religious bodies, but it may be safely assumed that they took the lion's share. The rate of taxation has fallen since the above estimate was made, but the writer feels that even now that estimate is not excessive.

There are in this country approximately twenty thousand parishes, so that if a particular denomination has on an average one church to each parish and the average net annual value of each church is a modest £100, the total annual value is two million pounds and the tax saved—quite apart from the tax on investment income—£400,000.

It is, however, quite impossible to measure the advantages that accrue to religious bodies from charitable exception. The following regularly practised device will illustrate the complexity of the problem:—

A regular subscriber to a particular religious body is invited to enter into a legal undertaking to continue to subscribe for a period of seven years an amount equal to his usual annual subscription. The effect of this is to cause his subscription to become an "annual payment" within the meaning of the Income Tax Acts, from which Income Tax can be deducted and in normal cases retained by him. If we assume that a subscriber, liable himself to Super-Tax at the maximum rate, ordinarily contributes £40 per annum. His payments under the seven-year guarantee will take the following form:—

Gross Payment	...	...	£50
Less Income Tax	...	...	£10
Net Payment	...	...	£40

The Income Tax deducted and retained by the Subscriber is refunded to the religious body by the Revenue Authorities under the Charitable exemption.

The subscriber himself also benefits, for when making his return for Super-Tax purposes he deducts the £50 and saves £50 at 6s. = £15 tax.

That is, whenever this subscriber gives £40, the Revenue pays out £35—£10 to the religious body and £15 to the subscriber.

It reminds one of the ninepence for fourpence.

G. J. F.

### "One, Two, Three."

ANY lover of the ironical with seven and sixpence to spend, but not to throw away, cannot do better than purchase Mr. Paul Selver's latest book, *One, Two, Three*, published by Messrs. Jarrolds. The story is of a young gentleman of discernment who, having written a satiric play in which it is argued that life would perhaps be tolerable if it were not for "One, Two, Three," that is, Love, Politics, and Religion, contrives, with the aid of a friend, to foist the work upon the British public as the translated masterpiece of a Polabian playwright.

The theme is slight enough, but many a page glitters with wit. For, in truth, Mr. Selver is one of the most habile of our younger novelists. *One, Two, Three* is not so long, unhappily, nor perhaps so good as his first novel, *Schooling*, but it is quite as interesting.

Not the least absorbing parts of both these books are the all too few references to the *New Age*, in the days when that wonderful paper was edited by Mr. A. R. Orage. I wish Mr. Selver could be induced to say a lot more than he does of Tillyard and his young men on the "Mistral," and I have no doubt that no other pen could be so fascinatingly enlightening. For who could review books better than A. E. R. or criticize plays than John Francis Hope, or be so learned on the Czecho-Slovakian poets as Mr. Paul Selver himself, who, in those great days, peppered the pages of the *New Age* with translations from the Serbo-Croat and with searing original verse.

Mr. Selver writes English so well that he must forgive us for suspecting that he is not wholly British; and his other published writings, an *Anthology of Modern Slavonic Literature* and *Modern Russian Poetry with Accented Texts*, rather confirm this. Both Mr. Osten in *Schooling* and Tancred in *One, Two, Three* have a forte for what Englishmen would call out-of-the-way languages; and it is possible that Mr. Selver's heroes have lost a little good taste by perusing the unhallowed pages of *Simplicissimus* or the little tales in Krauss' *Anthropophythisia*, which last they probably read without the aid of the thoughtfully-provided German crib.

But the book is not exclusively about Dr. Wolfgang Boltz and words like "Dewynsdeszimtas." There is, of course, a love interest, and in this connection there is one point worth noting. Both Tancred and Anthony are what may be called mildly promiscuous in their relationship with women. There are many, I know, who regard this sort of thing as venial. But Mr. Selver does hint that such a state of affairs is not perfectly ideal. Apart from the obvious danger of infection, a good deal of avoidable cruelty is inflicted in the breaking off of these casual relationships. Anthony, by his friendship with the lady journalist does seem to inflict sorrow on Lucia. No doubt Anthony could have defended his conduct, but it can be argued that promiscuity is undesirable because it is necessarily cruel. After all, as Remy de Gourmont once wrote, it is doubtful if the real lover of books is he who takes down volume after volume merely to put them back on the shelves again.



Anthony himself says, "Cynics could scoff, but a clear conscience added vastly to the comforts of life." This point of view may be that of Mr. Selver himself, and should he care to make it a theme for his next novel, I have little doubt that it would be better worth reading than even the amusing and clever *One, Two, Three*.

WILLIAM HERBERT.

## Acid Drops.

Those who imagine that "low down," ignorant advocacy of religious beliefs is confined to Salvation Army preachers and professional evangelists would do well to read an article by the Earl of Denbigh, on "Our Life to Come," in the *Weekly Dispatch* for December 5. It beats anything we have read for a long time. A footnote to the article describes the writer as the most prominent of English Catholics, which would rank the rest of the English Catholics as pretty low. But, perhaps the *Weekly Dispatch* is referring to the title only, which we suspect may be one of the reasons why the Earl was invited to write. As it is the article is incoherent in its ignorance, and vulgar in its abuse. We do not wonder at his proclaiming himself a staunch believer in the Roman Catholic Church. He appears to have been doomed to some such fate by his natural equipment.

In the course of the article we have such gems as that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is "proved by the best historical evidence of many eye-witnesses," which is not true, even if we take the New Testament alone, and is not true in the Earl's case, since his evidence is the authority of the Church to which he belongs. And when he adds that he believes it on as good evidence as any "well-attested historic event," he is talking just rubbish. We do not say that he knows it to be rubbish, since that would imply the possession of intelligence such as the article gives no proof. And when we come across this brilliant sentence, "I cannot conceive an army of convinced Agnostics going through the war," if it is not putting a too great strain on his intelligence, we would suggest that if the world were sufficiently advanced to furnish an army of Agnostics, it would probably be sufficiently advanced to be able to get along without the war—that is, unless somewhere there existed a nation of Christians sufficiently large to render the application of brute force necessary.

But the gem of the Earl's article is the reason he gives why some people do not believe in immortality. He suspects that—

They protest against the possibility of a future life because, perhaps, to grant it would be tantamount to admitting their responsibility for the moral conduct of their lives, and the likelihood of retribution hereafter for having misspent them.....They will not believe because they will not behave. The moment of death will be the lightning flash of their disillusion.

That passage is worth preserving, if only to prove that the troglodytes of the religious world are still with us. Considering the number of eminent and well-known men and women who have and who do proclaim their complete disbelief in immortality, the Earl of Denbigh's belief that they only pretend to disbelieve in a future life because they want to go on leading "misspent lives" does not require refutation. It would be an insult to decent men and women to attempt it. A disinfectant of some kind would seem to be the only thing suitable where the Earl of Denbigh is concerned. But this man has a vote and a seat in the House of Lords. And one is left wondering at the reaction of his very Christian convictions on the life of the country.

When the rain ceases, timid pedestrians emerge from shelter. After the war has been over eight years

Mr. E. A. Baughan, in full song, writes in the *Daily News* what had, during the war, a great difficulty in finding expression. Reviewing the film, "The Big Parade," he states of it, that:—

There was no glorification of its miseries and savagery, and no one could see this picture and think lightly of war as the only way for human beings to settle their disputes.

It is now the Bishop of London's next move, now that for many subtle and complicated reasons war is not desirable by the powers that use newspapers as gramophones.

One little voice, then there may, perhaps, be another one, and yet another one. Writing in his book, *The Dying Peasant*, Mr. J. W. Robertson-Scott is deserving of a medal for calling things by their proper names, and he says of the dweller in villages, in the remotest village the *Sunday Scum* reaches him. And this well-named *Sunday Scum* will always be found unintelligently yelping at the heels of any movement that would try to lift man out of the Stone Age.

A little smoke and pother has been raised over the Boycotting of Jews at Golf Clubs. If there was present a sense of humour, Disraeli's saying might have been recalled; half the world worships a Jew, and the other half his mother, but this can scarcely be expected at a time when soldiers and the clergy were the chief attendants at a function to celebrate the end of the war.

"The Dominion of Man," with a substitute, "Some Problems of Human Providence," is the second volume of Dr. E. Griffith-Jones' study of Providence. The matter, says a reviewer, is grouped under three heads: The making of man, The arrival of man, and The Future—man's unfinished tasks. This last section devotes two chapters to the future of religion and the religion of the future. We haven't read the book, but we are pretty certain the priest is shown to be well in the future in the religion of the future. As he has been very prominent in the religion of the past and present, a better title for the book would have been the "Subjection of Man," as being much more illuminating.

Many cobwebs have been cleared out of the mind of the Bishop of Birmingham, which may explain his statement that Facism is as hostile to freedom as Russian Communism. His Lordship is growing up—Hallelujah!

Clerical candour (of a kind) is fashionable—now that the truth cannot be covered up any longer. Hence "Woodbine Willie," at a Wesleyan Mission, trumpets forth: "Religion has been responsible for some of the filthiest and most brutal crimes in history." As the following remarks are next in the report before us, we presume they represent "Willie's" explanation of the Christian misdeeds:—

Religion is the surrender of yourself to a supreme great desire. It may be the most damnable and loathesome thing or the finest and the best. It all depends where your heart is fixed.

A reasonable inference from all this is, that the Christians responsible for the "filthiest and most brutal crimes in history" must have surrendered themselves to the "most damnable and loathesome thing" they could find. That seems more than possible. We know their hearts were fixed on God.

There has been spent on Drink, since the war, enough to build and furnish for half the families in the country, declares Mr. Philip Snowden. Why pick on Drink for illustration? Why not parsons' wages and churches? The money spent on these is pure waste.

Mr. A. T. Schofield, M.D., who "is at the same time an eminent physician and a most devout believer in



Jesus Christ," has just published a book entitled "Christian Sanity." The type of sanity depicted well deserves the epithet "Christian." For our part, we prefer the quite ordinary type of sanity, and leave the fancy brands to the mumbo-jumbo merchants.

South Australian State schools are having a chapter on the League of Nations added to their history-books. That is a good move. The next, we suggest, is a re-writing of the history in the books. What is wanted is a wholesale expurgation of the flattering details about scheming kings and courtiers, and the glorification of battles, soldiers, and various cut-throat heroes now given so large a place in most school history-books.

At a time when such stupendous issues are at stake as the revision of the prayer book, we have the report of Sir George Newman, Chief Officer of Health. It states:—"Year by year," he says, "there is a steady and undiminishing stream of physically defective children coming into the schools at five years of age." Yes, we sadly need more churches.

The Merchandise Marks Bill has its object the labelling of goods with particulars of their origin. There will have to be a convocation of Bishops for the difficulties this will entail with the goods handed out by professional religionists—and the labels would be a joy forever.

Writing in the *Vigil of Advent*, the Rev. A. E. Whitham says:—

Waiting! That has been a prevalent mood and attitude of men through centuries. Sometimes the ache of suspense has been so acute that it had temporarily deranged weak minds; and, juggling with numbers and texts, they have said, with a fanatical glint in the eye, "It will be next year, next week, to-morrow at sunrise."

It is rather brutal of Mr. Whitham to speak thus of the millions of earlier Christians, who expected Christ to be waiting on their doorstep every time they awoke in the morning. The fact that they had weak minds is patent enough, but need the reverend gentleman have exposed the truth quite so nakedly? Not content with this, he blurts out that these weak minds were deranged by what they had read in the Bible. He, of course, attributes the deranging business to juggling with texts. We suppose we must take his word for it. He is more of an expert at this juggling than we are—he does it every week in interpreting the Scriptures to suit his particular modern views. But we think we ought to point out that of the earlier Christians who went astray in their reading; God wanted a good few centuries before he thought fit to correct his worshippers' false notion. We presume it was all a part of God's plan of "progressive revelation." In that case, we would hardly care to call the deranging of weak minds a particularly kind action on the part of God.

"Safety first" is a good enough motto for preventing street accidents, thinks a Baptist writer, but it does not embody a principle that a Christian could apply generally. Christ, we are told, refused to be bound by the sordid advice of "safety first." And the heroes of all ages have put honour, principle, righteousness and God first; safety last of all. We can't quite see why a Christian should declaim against the "safety first" principle. For it is the main thing that urges him to accept religion; by professing the Christian doctrines he hopes to escape the heavenly torture chamber. "Safety first" is his motto first, last, and all the time. and it is the winning ace in the revivalist's pack of cards. We don't know what the Catholic Church and Salvation Army would do without it.

The repeated shocks and upheavals of nature that have lately been devastating the world have roused up

a mighty thinker in the shape of Baron Porcelli. Writing in the *Morning Post*, he points out that the scientists do not explain them for the simple reason that they do not understand "the primary cause behind terrestrial calamities." The only persons, we learn, who seek the cause are the students of "the more sure word of prophecy"; and these see in the upheavals a certain indication of the preliminary to the Second Coming of Christ. The benighted scientists ought to be grateful to the Baron for putting them wise to the truth of things. It probably hadn't occurred to them that God was still busy exhibiting his tender mercy to mankind, and that the upheavals were the result of his solicitude. The only thing left for the scientists to do now is to pack up their instruments and take out the Bible. There is one point we note about the Baron's God—he is splendidly impartial in serving out the suffering. He sees that godly and ungodly get an equal dose. Nothing could be fairer than that. Our Second Advent friends never seem to mention the point. They will probably be grateful for our pointing it out.

The outstanding achievement this year by the Lord's Day Observance Society has been the preventing of thousands of people in the Metropolis from enjoying quite innocent recreation on Sunday. The Society doesn't put it quite like that; it merely records the fact that Sunday opening of theatres and music-halls has been prevented. It is now concentrating on keeping the cinemas closed. An advertisement of the Society tries to make the blood of the godly run cold with: "Shall we stand idly by whilst the sacred hours of God's Day are being desecrated with films suggesting frivolity, debauching, and fast living?" What canting humbug these Sabbatarians are! The impression they seek to give is that their opposition is based on the morally degrading character of the cinema fare. Whereas the real grounds for their objections are that the cinemas would interfere with the Sabbatarian trade, and would be a source of pleasure. The quality of the cant can be realized if one bears in mind that these flatulent kill-joys would protest just as noisily no matter how refined the cinema programme might be.

Professor Julian Huxley, in his lectures on *Biology and Life*, draws attention to the mistakes made by civilization. In its hurry it herded many thousands of human beings into cities. To house them cheaply it erected tenements. To feed them cheaply it invented artificial foods. To save money it allowed a pall of smoke to hang over them. To save space it cooped them up without sufficient room to stretch their limbs or to play. The result from all this was a poor breed. Now, however, there are efforts being made to alter such state of affairs. To this we may well add that there has never been any official protests from the Churches at this state of things. The reason for this is plain enough. The Churches had a quite satisfactory explanation of the evils they saw around them, and this was in "original sin," drink, and debauchery. It was left to a group of Freethinking Social Reformers, who refused to accept the Christian explanation, to raise protests, to rouse the sluggish Christian conscience, and to suggest methods of improvement. For all that, the pious are not backward in claiming to have achieved all that has been done.

The prayer-meetings for young people at the Wesleyan Church at Scunthorpe are the best-attended meetings of the week. The Rev. G. Evans Watson vouches for that. He thinks there is nothing artificial in the young people's desire to attend. For they are taught to believe in prayer as a natural thing for a Christian. "Nothing artificial" about it! Yet the young people have to be taught, almost from the cradle, the habit of prayer. Mr. Watson has notions quite his own of what is natural. On his own showing, it is quite clear that the young wouldn't pray unless the habit had been artificially bred in them during the years of immaturity. Mr. Watson also believes that to commend the Christian religion to young people, the Church has merely to



emphasize the manliness of true religion, its joyousness, buoyancy and adventure. We doubt it. One of the reasons why young men keep out of the churches is that they can discern so few signs of manliness, and the other qualities mentioned, in the churches' doctrines. Assuming the Biblical picture of The Man of Sorrows to be true, what does one see? Christ is shown as repudiating his earthly mother, turning the other cheek to the smiter, always seeking signs of wickedness in other people, never earning an honest living but existing by begging alms, and finally, whining on the Cross for his agony—which he knew was inevitable to the Saviour business—to be taken from him. The manliness and joyousness is not particularly marked in this picture of the ideal man. No wonder youth is giving Christianity the cold shoulder.

"When you came into the world you brought nothing with you except the power to make yourself a nuisance." Thus the Rev. Dr. Maltby, addressing an assembly of Wesleyan youth. The Doctor, we suggest, should have reserved such a statement for an address at a clerical training college. Before an audience of embryo parsons he could quite appropriately add that the college training was designed to develop fully the "pioneer" within them at birth. He could then earnestly exhort his hearers to give their strongest support to the various kill-joy associations that aim at making Sunday the saddest day of the week.

The habit of the "sloppy mind," says Sir Maurice Craig, is far too common to-day. That is true. But that type of mind is far less common than it once was. One can tell that by the fact that few people nowadays read those quaint pieces of literature called "improving" novels, which had a very carefully stressed moral attached. Neither do they pose over volumes of sermons. And as for reading tracts—they use these for shaving paper. "Sloppy minds" are not being bred quite so rapidly nowadays. So many people stay out of the churches.

There is trouble brewing in Belfast. The Belfast Presbytery recently passed the following resolution:—

That this Presbytery deplores the Sunday band performances in the Pirrie Park, as being in themselves a breach of the Fourth Commandment, and as tending to more ungodliness by hindering the work of the Sunday schools, by militating against attendance at Sabbath evening services, by bringing in their wake classes of people with practices offensive to their neighbours.

All of which, when boiled down, means that these ministers are experiencing a falling off of business and want to get some measure of protection to bolster up a decaying industry.

"Woodbine Willie," in referring to his correspondence said recently, that he seemed to have a natural attraction for lunatics—perhaps because they felt the presence of a brother. There's many a true word spoken in jest.

Dolefully easing an over-charged heart Principal Clow, of Glasgow, laments: "Nothing should give us more concern than the neglect, even among believing men, of daily Bible reading." For our part, we see in this neglect no particular occasion for tears. For we note that with the decline in Bible reading there has come about such social improvements as: decrease in crime, emptying prisons, less vindictive punishment, more humane treatment and consideration of children and animals, better manners, and greater tolerance. These things may, of course, have little connection with the neglect of the Bible, but it seems significant that they had to wait till Bible reading was no longer the fashion.

In the American *Anglican Theological Review*, a writer asserts that many preachers need to be told not to bellow or whine or drone, but to speak naturally. This clerical disinclination to speak like ordinary

humans is quite understandable. The preacher has a bundle of irrationalities, which have to be eked out with special clerical logic, to be dumped into the congregation's heads. To hide the real nature of the matter a special manner becomes necessary. We advise the parsons to stick to it, for there is danger attached to speaking naturally. For instance, a parson who we believe has dropped the particular clerical manner, told a conference of young Wesleyans: "God gives all to those who have nothing, but he claims all." When question time came he was asked: "If God knows all, and has arranged all, what need is there of prayer?" Now, if the parson had only given out his piece of twaddle in the traditional manner, ten to one the young doubter of the value of prayer would not have thought of his awkward question.

There can be no possible doubt that God safeguards his missionaries, and it is interesting to know how he does it. An inkling of this can be had from the statements of a lady missionary lately home from China. While in Chengtu, she says, her party had policemen following to give protection wherever it went. The Chinese General in charge of the city warned the police that they would be executed should a foreigner be injured. That's it, then. The British Government puts the fear of retribution in the General, the General puts the fear of death in his subordinates, and the missionaries give thanks to the Lord for his tender watchfulness. Quite plainly, it's all done by love and kindness.

Another bombshell in the religious camp. After Canon Barnes having the courage to tell the truth about St. Francis of Assisi, and describe him as both dirty and in a mentally pathological state, Dean Inge declares the sudden conversion is myth. He says: "Among my own family and friends I have never seen a case even remotely resembling sudden conversion." Naturally, a great many people who do not like the exposure of this myth are protesting, and a Salvation Army official writes to the *Daily Express*, that the Army can provide the Dean with any number of cases of sudden conversion. We have no doubt. It is the Army's business to provide them, it loves them, and what with the Army's notorious carelessness about truth where its own interests are concerned and the kind of converts it gets, we have not the slightest doubt but that it would bring forward witnesses when desired. For that reason it may be remembered that other people in the preaching profession were ready with their witnesses on behalf of the angels appearing at Mons.

Converts at revival and other meetings of similar character are generally converted before they go. There is a certain class of people who look forward to revival meetings with the same eagerness that the regular drunkard looks forward to his next "spree." And these are converted time after time with unflinching regularity. The travelling evangelist knows them quite well, the parsons who look after these revivals know them quite well, but both connive at perpetuating the imposture. Sudden conversion, the miraculous power of God, the influence of the Holy Ghost, all presenting the picture of the marvellous and unaccountable, which always has an attraction for the vulgar mind, is too valuable an asset for Christians easily to let go. So we expect that the fraud and the delusion of sudden conversion will go on for a long time yet, in spite of all that Dean Inge may say about it.

Some of the papers, and some of the preachers, are asking, "What about the case of St. Paul? The illustration is not a very happy one, for St. Paul's conversion has all the features of being due to a nervous seizure, and to be quite pathological in character. That he should have mistaken this for supernatural influence is not at all surprising. It was the general opinion of the religious circle in which he moved, and proved that in this respect he was on no higher a mental level than the Jesus of the four gospels.



## The "Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

WE are getting on with this Trust, although we are still in need of nearly two thousand pounds to secure the £1,000 promised by Mr. Peabody. Still, it is well to remember that from now onwards, provided the whole sum be subscribed, every pound given counts as two. We have a good time ahead in which to raise the money, but it is well not to put off sending in the hopes that one may do better. There is nothing like acting at once. We have to thank all those who have promised further subscriptions, and publish the following from an old friend of the Cause, Mr. F. H. McCluskey:—

I think your note in last week's *Freethinker* was just the right thing in the right place. There is too much apathy in the rank and file, and the example of the larger subscribers instead of encouraging them seems to make them think that their little bit will not be necessary or isn't wanted. I trust the response will be quickened now as a result of your hint.

All we can say is that if this appeal is to be brought to a successful and early close the help of everyone is required. And the larger the number of contributors the better.

The following is the list of this year's subscriptions to date:—

Previously acknowledged, £670 17s. 2d. A. H. Dingwall, £5; E. R., 10s.; F. Jackson (Sheffield), 1s.; W. C. Bishop, £1; Mr. and Mrs. Cross, £1; Anno Domini, £2; J. Ross, 10s.; Richard Allen, £1; A. Mitchell, £1; F. Read, £1; A. Harvey, £3; F. G. H. McCluskey, £5; H. Tucker, £1; Mrs. E. Kirby, 10s.; In Memory of Charles Bradlaugh, 10s.; A. Bob, 1s.; We Three, 3s.; Mrs. J. May Hinley, £1 1s.; Ernest, £1; Shawlands Cross, 5s.; W. P. Kernot, £1 1s.; Lieut.-Col. K. C. Sanjana, £1; E. Pinder, £1; J. Burrell, 2s. 6d.; J. Dyson, £1; J. G. Dobson, 5s. Total, £700 16s. 8d.

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.

J. MADDEN.—A *History of Divorce*, by S. B. Kitchin (7/6), or *The Influence of the Church on Marriage and Divorce*, by J. McCabe (3/6), would probably suit you.

H. DENT.—The tract about Thomas Paine recounting his death-bed repentance, has been dealt with time after time. But nothing will stop a certain type of Christian from telling lies about his opponents, and there is little or nothing about his religion to discourage him.

M. J. STAUNTON.—The New Testament Jesus, if he existed was a Semite, and his type must be taken from that. The Semites are not usually classed among the coloured peoples. The Rev. Donald Maclean's story strikes us as belonging to the usual missionary variety where anything does so long as it will "thrill" the attendants at missionary meetings.

MISS E. KIRBY.—Thanks for promise of further help.

ANNO DOMINI.—Shall hope to see you soon.

E. PINDER.—We do not know that we can pride ourselves on carrying on with excessive patience. We never expected to overturn Christian belief in a year or so. We are con-

tent that we have done something to weaken its influence. And, at any rate, we have never had to do what so many of our predecessors have had to do—exercise patience within the walls of a Christian prison.

T. A. WILLIAMS.—Letter held over till next week.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums

To-day, December 12, Mr. Cohen lectures in the Assembly Rooms, Weston-super-Mare. In the afternoon, at 3, he will speak on "The Making of Man," and in the evening, at 7, on "What is the Use of Immortality." Admission to both meetings will be free.

The decline of Sabbatarianism appears to be seriously alarming Christians, and we notice that correspondence has been taking place in the *Leicester Mercury*. We are glad to see some very pointed letters from the Freethought, which is sensible and the civilized point of view. There is nothing behind Sabbatarianism but the survival of a particularly stupid Eastern superstition. Improvement in manners has gone side by side with the breakdown of the Christian Sabbath, and it should always be emphasized that the movement for a rational day of rest is one that makes for the physical, moral, and intellectual betterment of all.

Mr. George Bedborough writes:—

Sunday journalism is as bad as daily newspaper rubbish. Of course in many cases we see merely a Sunday repetition of the same editorial activity from the self-same presses, inspired by the identical bosses who control the daily editions of these banal Sabbath substitutes for sense.

But there are some daily and a few weekly newspapers which strive after a reasonable ideal of limited liberty. Some of these are conducted with great ability by men (and women) of incorruptible straightforwardness. Is there a single Sunday newspaper of which one could say as much?

The *Sunday Express* is nominally edited by James Douglas. The real editor is, or was until recently, Mr. Beverley Baxter.

Last Sunday it contained a half-page article by the Right Hon. C. F. G. Masterman on "Heroism in Parliament." Its chosen heroes, famous for the courage with which members of that assembly have at times stood up against what Mr. Masterman calls "that intangible and illusory element which is called the spirit of the House of Commons."

The list of courageous members include the brave Lord Hugh Cecil, the wonderfully defiant Alfred Lyttleton, the highly successful A. J. Balfour, the martyr Augustine Birrell, the singularly ineffective Sir Edward



Clarke, and a few miscellaneous noisy obstructives like Joe Delvin.

Charles Bradlaugh? Not likely. Mr. Masterman naturally ignores the one man whose glorious courage had no element of unworthiness in it. The bravest of them all, he defied the House only when it was discrediting its own reputation, with unique gesture, responded to his courageous appeal.

The *Express*, its editions, and its particularly uncourageous contributor will be forgotten or remembered only with contempt in days to come, when the House of Commons will shine in history for the Resolution passed on January 27, 1891, expunging from its records the decisions which brave Bradlaugh fought and overcame.

Mr. J. Dyson, enclosing cheque for Endowment Trust, compliments us upon the quality of the *Freethinker*, but adds, "I cannot share your optimism for the Cause, although I have been led from being an earnest Christian to the belief that Christianity is an enemy of Society. Dean Swift is nearer the truth in saying that men are as fitted to fly as to think." We confess to some sympathy with both Dean Swift and Mr. Dyson so far as the mass of the people are concerned. Yet some people think clearly and cogently, and have the courage to act accordingly, and it is with the few that the progress of the world rests. As we have said elsewhere, Society lives upon its averages and moves upon its exceptions. And when we look at what this country was like religiously only a century ago, and what it is like to-day, we see little cause for despair, however well it is to be on your guard against the sin of over-confidence.

### Random Reading.

I STOOD and listened the other night while a Salvation Army soldier prayed to God. He was a commissioned officer; I could tell that by his decorations, so he probably was acquainted with the technique of prayer and knew exactly how to get the petition through to General Headquarters. It was a strenuous matter, although the object of the appeal seemed somewhat trivial, having to do mainly with the souls of the odd half-dozen standing around, who were all, apparently, indifferent whether they had souls or not. It is pretty certain that the prayer wasn't answered, at least, as far as I was concerned. I felt no ill effects, but I could not help thinking that a return to mediæval methods might improve the prestige of the Army. In G. G. Coulton's *Social Life in Britain from the Conquest to the Reformation*, he tells how a peasant woman at Harnicourt, "failing to get justice by humble prayer, tucked up St. Benedict's altar cloth, beat the altar soundly and cried: 'Effete old Benedict, idle and slothful, what dost thou? why sleepest thou?' After this her prayer was heard." It seems simple enough, and feminine, but perhaps the way of the crowd at the burning of the Cathedral at Canterbury in 1174 would suit our vociferous petitioner better. "The crowd," according to the Archbishop, furious and indignant at the disaster, "hurled grisly curses against God and His Saints, the patrons of the edifice." There is no record of how the protest was received at the Celestial Courts or how the Archbishop reacted, but, considering that man has made all his Gods and exalted them at his own expense, the privilege of swearing at them should be maintained at all cost. It may be that neglect of this early established custom is responsible for the decay into which prayer has fallen.

"As a business man trying to look at the problem practically he believed that there was an unanswerable case for the work of the missionaries in foreign lands." So said a typically successful merchant at a missionary exhibition that is being held in this northern city,

and I wonder what he meant. It could hardly be that he visualised a huge dusky market, weaned from cannibalistic and other gastronomical delights in favour of his own tinned sprats and salmon. That would be intruding the huckster spirit into the domain of the Lord, where the commodities are supposed to be without money and without price. Probably he meant nothing more than the fact that a business that could induce the British Public to invest four million pounds per annum in it and be content with a volume or two of reports by way of return, could truly be described as unanswerable. It is, in its hardness of face, but had the merchant been really desirous of knowing just exactly what sort of harvest was reaped after the Christian superstition had been preached to the benighted native races, the testimony of the late Mr. C. H. Prodgers, who travelled a good deal in South America and gained the confidence of the natives in a way seldom attained, would have helped him to a right conclusion. In his last book, *Adventures in Peru*, Mr. Prodgers writes: "I am much interested in missionary enterprise and am filled with admiration of the wonderful work some of the missionaries have accomplished in various parts of the world; but I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that in South America, at least, the Gospel message seems to have had a disastrous effect on the morals of the Indian." This may, of course, be attributed to the fact that the trader with the rum bottle follows hot foot after the Gospel messenger. Until the tenets of Christianity were preached to them, immorality was practically unknown among Indians. Writing of these people a hundred years ago, a well-known authority said: "Chastity, especially in the married state, is a national virtue. As a Christian, I cannot but feel humiliated when I think of the change that came over some of the tribes after they heard the Word and received it gladly." They have the town placarded with the picture of a negro, with outstretched hands, beseeching the white people to send him the message of Christianity. Better that he remain content with his ju-ju; it cannot possibly inflict deeper degradation than the "Word."

I have a hazy remembrance that a bishop once declared that he found the inmates of a lunatic asylum very susceptible to religious appeals, and as long as mental deficiency does not debar anyone from the Kingdom of Heaven there is no reason why the mentally deranged should not enjoy a similar privilege. But I fancy that if the religious feeling of his asylum inmates could have been analysed the bishop would have been mightily surprised at the results. Suppressed sexual loves and hatreds would probably have been in the ascendant in their composition, although they are expressed, more often than not, in passionate love for the Saviour. When the process of explaining Christianity has been finished, not the least of it will be connected with the dominance of the sub-conscious in the region of sex. Anyhow, if the inmates of lunatic asylums are of the kind destined to dwell with the Lord, those of mental deficiency are not far behind. There is always a job in the vineyard for the weak-witted. According to Erasmus, fools have always been "most acceptable to God Almighty owing to their plainness and sincerity of heart," and it is common knowledge that the Church has harboured the fool of the family ever since it was established. But it would be questionable if any of them would be entrusted with the task assigned to a simple son of the Church encountered by Mr. H. Nevinson somewhere in the Levant. He was visiting a monastery perched on a crag, accessible only by being dumped



into a net bag and hauled up by rope and windlass. After "having seen the dark chapel, the incredible galleries built over the verge, and a monk who had dwelt there unspotted by the world for immemorial years, we were again laced up in the bag, and another uncombed monk, his brown flesh peering through the raiment at the most unexpected intervals, kicked us off into space from the scaffold, so that we went spinning down and ever round. My interest was increased because I had discovered that this monk was the local idiot, who was given the privilege of controlling the windlass as being incapable of any more distinctly religious office." If Nevinson had been a Christian what an alluring example of trust in the Lord the incident would provide for some wandering evangelist or the religious press.

One of the minor iniquities of Christianity is referred to by the author of *Taboo and Genetics*. There it is recorded that the practice of castrating boys in order to get the famous adult male soprano voices for the Sistine Choir was discontinued only in 1878. This degrading of life values was not, of course, confined to the Church of Christendom; but Turk practised the custom from another motive, but the disregard for any ethical consideration was the same in both cases. In the case of the Church, it was one of the little crimes of Christianity in which the dignity of human beings was debased in order that the Lord might be praised in a manner befitting the Church at whose birth he presided in person. Indeed, the dignity of humanity has been consistently worsened wherever the Church has had power. Nor was it confined to religious matters. Any mental activity but its own was anathema. It enslaved the minds as well as the bodies of men and women. In Professor Coulton's *The Medieval Village* there is a footnote on page 494 which reads: "The Popes derived a regular income from the brothels of Rome; here, for instance, is a passage marked by Lord Acton's watchful pencil: Of the Alma Mater Rome, it is reported by Jacob Heerbrand, who died in 1600, as rector of the University of Tübingen, 'When I was at the Council of Trent, in 1553, I heard from the master of the horse of the Lord Erasmus, Bishop of Strasburg (who had then returned with his episcopal master from Rome), that there were at Rome more than 24,000 prostitutes, who paid a monthly tribute to the Roman Pontiff in proportion to their professional earnings.'" That is how the dignity of women was raised by the Church. In the same book there is a reference to Barbour's poem in praise of liberty. "Oh! Freedom is a noble thing," and it has been quoted to show that even in the 14th century the Church was concerned for the liberty of the people. Barbour was an Archdeacon of Aberdeen, when the Bruce was conspiring and fighting for the liberty of Scotland, which meant, by the way, the liberty of Bruce and his friends and nothing more. He wrote the story of King Robert, which, in Mr. Eyre-Todd's translation, is a most readable book, but his notion of liberty was that held by the Bruce and by the Church. He was, in reality, a serf-owner and serf-dealer. The Church justified servitude in both theory and practice then and for centuries after. It was, if anything, behind the times as far as a more humane outlook was concerned; it was then, as now, the great anti-progressive force among the nations.

H. B. DODDS.

Whenever you hear a man dissuading you from attempting to do well, on the ground that perfection is "Utopian," beware of that man.—*Ruskin*.

## Obscurantists.

To those few earnest souls who love knowledge for its own sake: who regard neither wealth, nor honours, nor fame, nor notoriety as goals to be gained through its acquirement, but find the continuous acquirement of knowledge a sufficient reward in itself: and who consider that the paramount duty of those who take it upon themselves to enlighten others upon observed phenomena should be to give, without personal, religious or metaphysical bias, the consensus of the highest informed opinion on the subject at issue—this criticism of some of our would-be teachers is addressed.

No doubt it would be a great strain to a disciple of Descartes—who, by the master's principle of "methodic doubt," has made away with the whole universe, his body, his senses and his past, and acknowledges only that "something is conscious"—to teach natural philosophy to creatures bounded by objective reality; but, to my mind, there is no greater inconsistency in this than in Christian priests teaching and preaching a hotch-potch of Christianity, Philosophy and Evolution, or university professors writing a farrago of Science, Christianity and Spiritualism. The way of the student is hard enough in all conscience, and life is short; and it is bad enough to suffer acknowledged quacks and frauds without having to sift the wheat from the chaff of the alleged learned articles that emanate from the eminent possessors of brains and bounce in the press and the pulpit.

On the one hand are those anachronisms, pseudo-scientific bishops who, in analysing the position of modern science and thought and accepting their findings, nevertheless, after treating us to protracted rigmaroles of theological jargon, come to the conclusion that Father, Son and Holy Ghost might also be expressed in the equation  $\text{God} = X$  or  $X = \text{Love}$ . Luckily for these Christian priests, and thanks to the pioneers of Freethought, they and their Christian readers are living in an age when intolerance, although still rampant, at least expresses itself in less brutal forms than the rack and the stake. One wonders if these Christian leaders—who find Christianity in perfect accord with the theory of evolution and who write so fluently about the wonders of the great Nebula in Andromeda—ever remember that every important scientific generalization, not excepting the theory of uniformity in Geology and the Nebular Hypothesis, has been bitterly opposed by the Christian Church because it contradicted the teaching of the Bible.

To add further inconsistency to their pretences and to heap absurdity upon absurdity, in its final analysis the science which they are so fond of parading relegates them and their religion to the intellectual plane of the cave man; for, in the nebulous fears bred in the sluggish, brutish brain of pithyanthropus erectus, is traced the origin of the whole bag of tricks—priests, churches, gods and devils.

If also it be considered that these divines are not only paid huge salaries to teach and to preach the history, science, morals and ethics of the Gospels, but are also "called" by Omnipotence—(Jah—Jehovah?) to do that job, then there seems something particularly rotten in the state of Denmark. It seems that there is one religion for the rich and another for the poor. I was about to write "intelligent" for "rich" and "ignorant" for "poor." This, however, would have been not only a base calumny on the poor, among whom there are as many intelligentsia as among other classes, but also it seems to me that there is little to choose between the intelligence that finds mental satisfaction in



pseudo-scientific-theological nonsense, and that that finds æsthetic exaltation in singing "The bells of Hell go ting a-ling a-ling," or "There is a fountain filled with blood," etc. The hell-fire Salvationist at least does not err by being illogical and inconsistent. Like Mr. Cook, the Salvationist holds to his slogan, the slogan which no doubt would have delighted the old fathers of the Church: "Not a coal off the fire, not a string off the lyre".....In any case, these "advanced" thinkers in the Christian Church are not only derided by the savants they first vilely abused and then sought to placate, but are regarded as suspect by the Church itself and recognized as obscurantists by every person with common-sense.

Then, on the other hand are men of science, university professors, eminent in their own departments, whose addresses from the platform and in the press simply reek with anthropomorphic terms. They know that in practice the religious and the atheistic scientists are in complete agreement, yet to tickle the ear of an audience weaned on Theism, they will hypocritically employ such terms as "the Gospel of Evolution," as though evolution were a creed and they were its high-priests; and use the terms "Creator" and "Creation" with a capital C more frequently than they use full stops. It would be more to their credit if they taught their audiences a little elementary science, and told them that the "law" of evolution does not assume a lawgiver any more than any other "law" of nature.

But our criticism strikes deeper than this. Their attitude of pitiful timidity and fear of hurting the feelings of the pious, and their general reluctance to emphasize the Atheism of modern scientists before a public which regards science as a kind of polite parlour entertainment, is of too common occurrence to create particular notice. They know that in the laboratory and in forming scientific theories God is not taken into account. If any supernatural phenomena were observed it would have to be explained, but both in theory and in practice God is left nothing to do.

It is, however, when they leave their own particular departments, where all phenomena are examined scientifically, and interest themselves in matters which forbid the rigid control and careful research of the laboratory, that one begins to doubt not only their ability but also their sanity. They are accepted as authorities on atoms or ether, etc., etc., because their researches have been accepted by the whole world of savants after careful scientific investigation and consideration; but when they pose as spokesmen from the spirit world, all thinking people beg to be excused. On science we are only too willing to listen; on nescience we can find others more entertaining. It cannot be asserted too emphatically that spiritualism is "a mockery, a delusion and a snare." From its very inception until the present day its high-priests—the mediums—have been, without exception, convicted fraudulent tricksters, liars and rogues, whose proper sphere should be a prison or a mental hospital. Never yet, despite the assertions of their eminent sponsors, have mediums succeeded in getting into communication with the dead or in producing any genuine spiritual manifestations of any kind whatever when placed under *properly controlled scientific test conditions*.

Never was the world more in need of clear thinking, yet never was the obscurantist more rampant. If regarded in the light of freedom of thought, one reads to-day a new significance into the words of Mirabeau: "Eternal Vigilance is the price of Freedom."

W. THOMPSON.

## The Evolutionary Process.

IN the opening years of this century we were at war with the Boers, whom our delightful press described as barbarians who were resisting the advance of civilization. It will therefore be rather disturbing for those who echoed this cry, and who possess the capacity for remembering to-day what they said yesterday, to find one of the barbarian generals of the barbaric Boer army published a work which, after all legitimate criticism has been offered, must be counted as a real and a suggestive contribution to the literature of philosophy. In *Holism and Evolution* (Macmillan, 18s.), General the Right. Hon. J. C. Smuts proves that in spite of a busy political life he has had the time and the inclination to make himself familiar with the results of scientific research and of recent speculations, and what is more important, to have a genuine grasp of the philosophy of science. It is true that he does not always bear this in mind, but one ought to be thankful for what one gets, and the general result is a work that is both fresh and stimulating.

We should have preferred the title used by Professor Lloyd Morgan, *Emergent Evolution*, in place of the rather inelegant one, *Holism*, and it is to that conception that General Smuts' main thesis is related. For *Holism* is only another name for a series of "wholes," which the author believes to be the characteristic of universal evolution. The thread on which the whole volume is strung is the conception of nature as a continuous process, so continuous that for long stretches it is impossible to detect differences. But by the interaction of natural forces there is gradually established differences which gives us a mechanical, a chemical, a biological, and a psychological "whole." Nothing new—in the sense of an obtrusive force from the outside is ever introduced, the "whole" is not something different from the parts, it "is the parts in a definite structural arrangement and with mutual activities that constitute the whole." Thus life, mind, personality, are never something added to what exists, they are the products of the parts working together and evolving what the author calls a creative synthesis. This, some of my readers will remember, is on similar lines to the conception stressed by me some time back when dealing with the subject of Materialism, and I am satisfied that it is in harmony with a sound scientific philosophy. Says General Smuts:—

The radical mistake made by both science and popular opinion is the severance of an individual whole into two interacting entities or substances, the view of life and mind as separate entities from the body.....It is the assumption of these entities and their interaction with physico-chemical entities of a different order which produces the contradictions for thought and the problems for experience.

And he sets out what he humbly calls—

a modest contribution towards the reform of the fundamental conceptions of matter, life and mind, to assist in breaking down the apparently impassable gulf between them, and to interpret them in such a way as to present them as successive more or less continuous forms and phases of one great process, or as related progressive elements in one total coherent reality.

With this wise warning against the multiplication of "entities," and with the sound determination to see nothing in a whole but the interaction of its parts, with new qualities set up as a consequence of that interaction, General Smuts might have consistently worked out a completely materialistic philosophy, particularly as he does recognize that the various stages, physical, chemical, biological and psychological, are working conceptions of a sound scientific philosophy. But before long we find that the different categories are taken as expressive of "holistic activity" and holism rapidly becomes the active working principle behind all. To tell us that "holism" is typical of all structures is one thing. That is a useful conception, covering what we actually see. But to say "holism is creative of all structures" is to commit in another form the very mistake made by the anthropomorphist, on whom he looks with considerable scorn. And such expressions as "creative holism" really do nothing



in the way of either explaining or clarifying the problems before us.

General Smuts does not, it would seem, appear to have been sufficiently on his guard against his own language. Although protesting that all that takes place in the evolutionary process is "a more intensive organization of the pre-existing factors into the new creative structure of life," he goes on to speak of things as "higher" and "lower," of there being a "deeper harmony," a "new music of being," etc., all quite permissible as poetic expressions or as connoting useful classifications, but when one permits them to dominate one's sense of natural values, they become means of confusion, as when he says that the persistent trend from higher to lower "cannot possibly be the mere result of accident." On his own showing the words higher and lower have no value when applied to natural phenomena. There are differences, there is a growing interaction of forces, but that is all. Higher stages only exist when we create them for our own purposes and for our own use.

There are several places in his book in which General Smuts protests, not, I think, successfully, against Holism being identified with Mechanism. He says that the fundamental conception of Mechanism "involves a system or combination of parts in relation to each other of such a character that these parts do not lose their identity or substantial independence in the combined rôle they play in the system. The system consists of the parts maintained in their identity, and its action is the resultant of the independent activity of all these parts." I take strong exception to this as a complete statement of Mechanism. It is true that in a purely physical system the parts retain their identity, but even there the result is not the sum of the parts only. The four or five strands in a rope may each retain its identity, but the breaking point of the rope is certainly not that of the separate strands added together. And when we come beyond merely physical systems, then as General Smuts points out, we have to count on the interaction of the various factors and the new "whole" set up as consequence, without there being anything new introduced.

The essence of the mechanistic theory of the universe is determinism, and from the evolutionary point of view, Mechanism means precisely what Dr. Smuts sets out to prove, namely, that at no new stage of evolution can we believe in the introduction of any new factor from without. The present is always the outcome of the past, never identical with the past, different, because it is the result of the past, and we have to look in the assemblage of certain factors for an explanation of whatever lies before us.

General Smuts is to be congratulated in that he does not muddle his readers with talk about the "Divine Mind" or the "Divine Personality" controlling evolution. These are ideas that he expressly repudiates. But he commits much the same blunder in seeing in "Holism" anything more than a merely descriptive term, which may be quite useful, as other terms are coined for their utility. Perhaps he would have been saved from this error had he realized more clearly that the whole work of science is to discover and describe the conditions under which a given phenomenon occurs, and that when it has done that it has done all that it can be expected to do, or can profitably be asked to do. I am quite sure that this conception of scientific labour is not foreign to the mind of General Smuts, but he allows it to become submerged in other and less fruitful trains of thought.

Nevertheless, and in spite of many criticisms that might be passed on the work, General Smuts has given us a book which will set many speculating, and will stimulate those who find points of disagreement not less than those who follow him throughout. He brings to his task a mind well stored with an actual knowledge of science and an appreciation of its philosophy which one would wish many of the scientific men in this country possessed. I have read it with much greater interest than most other books on philosophy I have read of recent years.

C. C.

Veracity is the heart of morality.—Professor Huxley.

## Correspondence.

### "JONAH AND THE WHALE."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—May I be allowed to give the interesting sequel to the Rev. Desmond Morse-Boycott's courageous attempt to vindicate Jonah. We, of this journal, of course, can sympathise with his determined efforts to prove the authenticity of the Gospel of St. John by showing how a man, swallowed by a whale, was still alive the day after, though rather dazed. And, personally, I am quite certain that there must be many people who, after reading the thrilling narrative, no longer have any doubts whatever about the Lord Jesus being actually and veritably the son of God.....and so on.

At the same time, it is my painful duty to report that quite a large number of St. John's critics, who have done their best to prove to an unfeeling world that St. John never wrote the gospel which bears his name, are actually Christian clergymen. How they can take up such an attitude from within the church is beyond me, and I do hope Jonah will turn them from the sinful path. Unfortunately, the enthralling sea epic which Mr. Morse-Boycott "pinched" for the benefit of the discriminating readers of *T.P.'s Weekly*, seems to suffer the same fate as St. John. That is, heartless cleric, to wit, Canon A. Lukyn Williams, had the audacity to write to *Notes and Queries* for June 16, 1926, that as neither the owners of the ship on which the gallant sailor worked, nor his widow "had ever heard of the incident, I think," adds our Canon, "we may safely assume it was a canard pure and simple."

Unlike Mr. Morse-Boycott, the worthy man did not swallow the delightful story without at least some small attempt at investigation, and some of us feel that had he investigated the other stories which embroider the Lord Jesus, he might have joined our sceptical ranks. It is only fair to say that *T.P.'s Weekly* published Mr. Williams' story, cited by Mr. A. S. E. Akerman, the author of that extremely able work, *Popular Fallacies*. Mr. Akerman starts out by quoting Spurgeon, "A lie gets half-way round the world before truth has got her boots on." My own emendation would be, "A Christian lie, etc." What does the Rev. Desmond Morse-Boycott think?

H. CUTNER.

### VOLNEY, MACAULAY AND GOLDSMITH.

SIR,—With regard to the query of your correspondent in the *Freethinker* of November 14, as to the possibility of Macaulay getting his idea of the "New Zealander Sketching St. Paul's," from *Ruins of Empires*, I would suggest that a paragraph from Macaulay's essay on "Oliver Goldsmith" may prove helpful and interesting. Speaking of Goldsmith's poem, "The Traveller," Macaulay, says:—

No philosophical poem, ancient or modern, has a plan so noble, and at the same time so simple.

An English wanderer, seated on a rock, among the Alps, near the point where three great countries meet, looks down on the boundless prospect, reviews his long pilgrimage, recalls the varieties of scenery, of climate, of government, of religion, of national character, which he has observed, and comes to the conclusion, just or unjust, that our happiness depends little on political institutions, and much on the temper and regulation of our own minds.

Thus it would seem that Macaulay took his idea from Goldsmith's poem. And taking into consideration the fact that "The Traveller" was published in 1764 and engaged a widespread popularity, it is not at all impossible that Volney himself took his idea from it, and greatly expanded it in his monumental work.

H. WILKINSON.

Freedom of thought, being intimately connected with the happiness and dignity of man in every stage of his being, is of so much more importance than the preservation of any constitution, that to infringe the former under pretence of supporting the latter is to sacrifice the means to the end.—Robert Hall.



## Society News.

## GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.

On Thursday, December 2, Mr. E. Hale, the President of the Glasgow Branch, lectured to the Govan Branch of the Independent Labour Party Guild of Youth. The meeting was not open to the public. In a conversational tone and manner suited to the occasion Mr. Hale explained, clearly and interestingly, what Secularism stands for, illustrating his points largely by references to local events well-known to his hearers. The questions asked after the lecture by the young members of the Guild were relevant to a degree that is most unusual at public meetings.

The Branch had a Social Evening in the D and F Café, on Saturday, December 4. A large number of members and friends were present to meet Mr. Whitehead, who was the Society's guest. A most enjoyable evening was spent, and the Socials Sub-Committee is to be congratulated on the success which has rewarded its efforts.

There was fog and rain at Glasgow on Sunday last, but in spite of this, a fairly good audience heard Mr. Whitehead's midday lecture on "Some Lessons from History"; and in the evening, when Mr. Whitehead lectured on Psycho-Analysis, the hall was crowded to the doors, many being unable to find seats.

Next Sunday (December 12), Mr. J. Grant, a Christian theist, will lecture to the Glasgow Branch on "Pagan Christs." Mr. Grant is a provocative speaker, and welcomes opposition.

## NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.

Last Sunday, at St. Pancras Reform Club, we were fortunate in having Mr. F. Sinclair, whose "Defence of the Novel" opened up quite a distinctive and unhackneyed subject of discussion. Mr. Sinclair made a very interesting opening in which he traced the history and nature of this form of literature, glancing briefly at its salient features and most brilliant pioneers and exponents.

An interesting feature of the opening was the reading of messages to the lecturer by Mr. F. Swinnerton and Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith, specially written for this evening's meeting. The whole of the opening was devoted to a consideration of the educational and ethical value or otherwise of the novel.

In the discussion which followed there was considerable divergence, not only of opinion, but even of fundamental point of view as to the legitimate character of a novel's scope. Even political and religious ideas coloured the various speeches, this subject naturally lending itself to the most miscellaneous treatment. All the audience, however, seemed to enjoy both the opening and much of the debate, Mr. Sinclair being warmly complimented at the close.

This Sunday (December 12), Mr. George Ives, well-known in every sort of humanitarian movement, will lecture on "The Poisonous Snakes of Four Continents." Everyone who knows Mr. Ives will anticipate a thoroughly interesting, informing, and attractive evening. They will not be disappointed. G. B.

## MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.

On Sunday last, Mr. Sam Cohen, of the Manchester Branch, lectured at "Ashfield," Salford, on "Freethought and Labour." This was one of a series of lectures to comprehend all points of view. Mr. Cohen gave an excellent lecture in which he outlined the attitude of the Church, and showed that no assistance will come from that quarter. He emphasized the play of ideas as being more essential than improved economic conditions. There was a very good attendance, and the lecture resulted in questions and discussion to which the speaker replied.

Physicists have extended the life-history of the Earth from the 5,000 years of Ussher to the 1,000 million years of Rutherford.—*Professor H. F. Osborn.*

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

## LONDON.

## INDOOR.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE (Emerson Club, 1 Little George Street, Westminster, S.W.1): 3.30, Lecture in French, by Mlle. Delbende, "L'Emancipation de la Pensée au XVI Siècle." All invited.

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. George Ives, F.Z.S., "The Poisonous Snakes of Four Continents."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Kennington Oval): 7, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, "The Things We Do."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "Is the Good Life Interesting?"

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (101 Tottenham Court Road): 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin, "Phallic Worship" (Lantern Lecture). Tuesday, December 14, at the Working Men's Institute, near the Holborn Hall, Clerkenwell Road, E.C.1, at 7.45, a Debate between Father Hugh Pope, O.P.D.Sc., and Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., on "Is Catholicism Natural or Supernatural?" Thursday, December 16, at 101 Tottenham Court Road, at 7.30, Mr. Robert Harding, "The Tower of Babel."

## 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.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street): 7, A Paper by Mr. J. G. Dobson. Questions and discussion cordially invited.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. J. Grant, "Pagan Christs." Questions and discussion cordially invited. Silver collection.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. George Whitehead, "Sex and Religion; Psycho-Analysis Explained."

WESTON-SUPER-MARE BRANCH N.S.S. (Assembly Rooms, High Street): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "The Making of Man"; 7, "What is the Use of a Future Life?" Questions and discussion cordially invited.

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