

A SOLEMN ABSURDITY.

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Views and Opinions.

A Solemn Absurdity.

Last week, I gave an illustration of the way in which the savage is perpetuated in modern London, by instancing the performance of the Witch-doctor in charge of St. Etheldreda's, Ely Place. Before these notes were in the hands of my readers, another illustration came to hand, in the publication of the draft of the proposed revisions of the Book of Common Prayer. For twenty-three years a council of bishops, with the two archbishops, have been considering in what way the prayer book may be brought up to date, and adapted to modern taste. This is largely a domestic matter, which concerns Christians alone. The kind of incantations which a priest uses, the style of dress he wears, the length of time a piece of bread and a drop of wine retain their magical properties after the priest has said his Abracadabra over them, and the question whether these magical qualities may be "reserved" or not, are points which are of value to believers only. Between the two warring parties in the Church, there is, from the point of view of a civilized intelligence, no substantial difference. The intelligence, displayed by Sir William Joynson Hicks, when orating in the Albert Hall on the sinfulness of the Romish practices of English parsons, is not substantially different from that of an uneducated Roman Catholic peasant trembling before his priest. Both are at one in their substantial beliefs. Otherwise, they would not be disturbed because some one has adopted what they believe to be the wrong way of asking a non-existent deity to do an impossible thing. Each is desperately anxious to see the incantation performed without a wrong word being used or a comma displaced. That is characteristic of all magical formulæ. All savages show the same punctilious regard for the exact performance of ceremonies. The circle, within which the mediæval magician might safely perform, had to be drawn in a particular manner; and the controlling words used in a special way. Children are equally careful not to misuse the formulæ used in their inherited games. Immature intelligence acts in much the same way

all over the world. It does so, because there is no attempt to understand the real significance of what is being done. The power of words forms a most important chapter in the history of religion; and it goes back to the immaturity of human thought. The importance of Fe-Fi-Fo-Fum lies in its being Fe-Fi-Fo-Fum. Fum-Fo-Fe-Fi would lose all its significance. It would be nonsense recognised; and the unrecognisability of nonsense is the very essence of religious worship in a civilized country.

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Go-as-you-please Parsons.

The changes in the Prayer Book are not to be compulsory. If a parson does not like them he can let them alone. And, when we bear in mind some of the things which these bishops, the cream of the intelligence and learning of the British Christian world, suggest might be left out, or changed, in order to bring the prayer book up to date, it helps us to realise the kind of intelligence which goes to the make-up of the present-day Christian. First of all, there is the bother about the Reservation of the Sacrament. When the priest has converted the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ (whether actually, or only symbolically), can it be removed from the Church and carried through the streets to other people who are not in Church? Yes! say some. It will lead to idolatry, and open the road to the Roman Catholic doctrine of the mass, say others. What is the outsider to make of it? Can wine and biscuits ever be more than wine and biscuits, whether blessed by a priest, and paid for in the "offertory," or handed over a Fleet Street bar at a fixed price? The new prayer book repeats the legend that Christ bade his followers eat the bread and drink the wine, as his body and blood, when they met together. But the scientific student of religion knows that this is all false. He knows that this doctrine and practice go back to the very early days of religion; first, as the eating of a human being (= God); then, as the eating of an animal in place of the human being; and, finally, the eating is reduced to various forms of symbolism. The mystery religions which flourished all round the basin of the Mediterranean, long before the Christian Church appeared, all had this Eucharistic rite. The Christian Eucharist is a survival of the most primitive and of the most revolting form of religious service. It has no other origin; and no other fundamental meaning. But, for all the notice taken of existing scientific knowledge, it might, just as well, be non-existent. The Bishops say they have been twenty-three years trying to find out how the Prayer Book might be adapted to modern thought. They have been doing nothing of the kind. Their work has been to see by what tricks of language they can disguise from newcomers the real nature of the Christian religion.

Women and the Church.

Look at some of the things which the clergy may now eliminate from the Prayer Book. In the Communion Service the long string of "curses" may be dispensed with. That will, no doubt, be missed by many; for, there is nothing that gives a Christian such a conviction of his own goodness as the pleasure of a wholesale denunciation of the sins of other people. In the marriage service the bride need no longer promise to obey her husband; in flat contradiction to St. Paul, who said that she was to obey her husband in the same unquestioning way that Sarah obeyed Abraham. One of the religious papers says that this has brought the Church to the recognition of sex equality. It does not say that it is the development in other directions, outside the Church, that has forced the Bishops to recognise the advisability of taking this step. For, outside the Church, sex equality is fairly recognised; in some directions, sex inequality has, in modern times at least, never existed. There has been no bar to women in the arts, in science, or in literature. She is now permitted to practise law and medicine; to enter Parliament, and local governing bodies. The Church, alone, still bars women from the pulpit; and it does so in virtue of the whole historical tendency of the Christian Church. It was Christianity that revived the primitive views of woman's religious nature; which emphasised her essentially evil nature; and against which, every fighter for social justice to women has had to war. The exaction of a promise of obedience from the woman is becoming too much for moderns to stomach. That is all there is in the advance of the Bishops towards sex equality.

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Permissive Nonsense.

There is quite a number of things which the parson may now omit, if he cares to do so. In reading the marriage service, he need no longer go over the disgusting, and half-obscene portion, which must have often caused a sensitive girl to blush; and a man to wish either to walk out of the Church or to punch the parson's head. It is quite certain that, if the same language had been used in Registry Offices, few would have submitted to it. All the talk of "satisfying men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts," may be dispensed with; the pointing to Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, is also dispensed with. Probably it has, at length, dawned upon these reverend fathers in God that these particular ladies and gentlemen do not form very shining examples for modern men and women. The parson is no longer bound to inform a parent who brings a child to be baptised, that the wicked little devil was "born and conceived in sin"; or, in the marriage service, that God "at the beginning, did create our first parents, Adam and Eve," and did appoint that "out of man woman should have her beginning." The really up-to-date clergyman may, also, leave out such statements as "Thou didst save Noah and his family from perishing by water, and also didst safely lead the children of Israel, Thy people, through the Red Sea." These be brave words; and they help us to realise the dare-devil character of these bishops. After a hundred years of intense scientific activity, they will leave it optional on a parson's part whether he tells his people, as true, things which every well-educated schoolboy knows to be false. Even now, the Prayer Book does not say that these things are not true. It simply advises that one had better not say they are. If you believe them to be true, it will not contradict you. It may even count to you for righteousness, so to believe. It is, obviously, not the business of the Bishops to tell you what is true; their

business is to advise parsons not to say such things as will cause anyone, who is not qualifying for a pulpit, or an asylum, to say at once, "It is a lie!" The Bishops carefully explain that their proposals are permissive. "Permissive falsehood" would not be a bad term to cover the arrangement. But that would be too straightforward for any genuinely Christian assembly.

* * *

A Social Danger.

The quarrel in the Church concerning the revised Prayer Book is not without its lessons to Freethinkers. All over the scientific world the hypothesis of evolution is universally accepted. The evidence for the immense antiquity of the human race is so vast that it is no longer questioned. The notion, that mankind rests under some original curse, is too absurd for serious notice. For over sixty years, investigations into the history of religions have made the position tolerably clear. In all these directions, the question is one of retracing lost steps; not a question as to whether these steps have been taken. In spite of all this, after twenty-three years of careful study, the Bishops, while admitting that the very form in which religious ideas are cast, in their official presentation, affronts common sense and ordinary decency, dare not say openly to their followers that these teachings are false and must be discarded. All they dare to do is to say: "If you prefer the old form have it; if you like a new one use it." This attitude testifies to the immense number of people in this country, who are still looking at the world through the eyes of the primitive savage. The fact that men can work themselves into a state of fury at any proposed alteration, that a Secretary of State can join them in their demonstrations, is evidence of this. Once more we reach the same conclusion. The savage is still with us. He still exerts a powerful influence on our lives; and the reaction of that on our social existence is one of the most sinister features of contemporary existence.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Divines Hopelessly at Loggerheads.

THAT state of affairs is perpetually true of the alleged representatives of God on earth. They have never been united on any subject whatsoever, and never will be; because the things, about which they concern themselves, so frantically, lie, completely, outside the sphere of knowledge.

They are, solely, imaginary things; wild creations of the fancy; with which the intellect, directly, has nothing, whatever, to do. They are spiritual things; not intellectual; gifts from an infinitely higher and nobler source than the intellect can ever hope to be.

Now we come to a most curious and startling fact; namely, that, when the views, of spiritual things, held by the minority, differ, widely, from those held by the majority, the former are condemned on the ground, either that they are opposed to the Word of God, or, that even Reason, itself, lifts up its voice against them.

This has been true of every theological controversy on record; and the same principles are already in operation, to-day, in the embittered opposition now pouring out, like a mighty flood, against the revision of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, as laid before the Convocation of Canterbury and York, at the Church House, Westminster, on Monday, February 7.

Within two days, the *Daily Mail* of February 9 informed us, the whole City of London was ablaze with the flame of theological persecution. The report says:—

Although the revised Prayer Book was only issued on Monday, arrangements for intensive campaigns in support of and in opposition to the changes proposed by the Bishops were being made yesterday.

Thus we learn, afresh, that in the Anglican Church there exist irreconcilable theological and ecclesiastical parties which never agree; though, it is only on such occasions as the present that they allow their differences to be so emphatically and aggressively expressed. Even the Bishops are by no means of one mind, as the letter of the Bishop of Norwich, published in the *Times* of February 8, abundantly shows.

No doubt, the majority of the Clergy and Laity in the Church accept the revision of the Prayer Book, prepared and recommended by the Archbishops and Bishops; but their acceptance is, more or less, blind; while the minority, who criticize the revision adversely, seem to be the only dissidents who use their reason.

The Evangelicals have a rooted objection to the reservation of the sacrament, prayers for the dead, and the use of vestments; so, because those things are introduced in the new Prayer Book, it is anathema to them. National Campaigns of opposition are, already, at work; and the various Protestant societies are determined to do their full share of the work.

In the end, no doubt, the revised Prayer Book will be regarded as the authorized voice of the Anglican Church in its steady march to Romanism. In the meantime, however, we shall witness a marked fulfilment of the old adage that "the Church's worst enemies are those of its own household."

The truth is that the Divines are, always, hopelessly at loggerheads; because they possess absolutely no knowledge of the things for which they contend with such groundless certainty.

In *Rosmersholm*, one of Ibsen's Prose Dramas, the two most conspicuous characters are: Johannes Rosmer, owner of Rosmersholm, an old family seat, near a small coast town in the west of Norway; and Rector Kroll, Rosmer's brother-in-law. Rosmer was a retired parish clergyman; while Kroll was the headmaster of a school, and as narrow-minded as a man could be. These men were constantly meeting, and discussing all conceivable subjects; sometimes, good-naturedly; but, oftener, angrily.

Rosmer had discarded the Christian faith; and had become devoted to the high mission of emancipating his countrymen from all their shackles. He loved the democracy; and wished to live in its service. Kroll really hated the democracy; and despised his brother-in-law for his expressed interest in it. The following conversation between them is characteristic; and hits off their different outlooks on life, accurately:—

ROSMER: I want to awaken the democracy to its true task.

KROLL: What task?

ROSMER: That of making all the people of this country, noblemen.

KROLL: All the people—?

ROSMER: As many as possible, at any rate.

KROLL: By what means?

ROSMER: By freeing their minds and purifying their wills, of course.

KROLL: You are a dreamer, Rosmer. Will you free them? Will you purify them?

ROSMER: No, my dear friend—I will only try to arouse them to their task. They, themselves, must accomplish it.

KROLL: And you think they can?

ROSMER: Yes.

KROLL: By their own strength?

ROSMER: Yes, precisely by their own strength. There is no other.

KROLL (*risss*): Is this becoming language, for a priest?

ROSMER: I am no longer a priest.

KROLL: Well, but—the faith of your childhood—?

ROSMER: Is mine no longer.

Kroll looked upon himself as practically infallible. He possessed God's own Word, and was resolved to defend it at all cost. "Never in this world," he cried, "will I make peace with the destructive forces in society," meaning, thereby, the natural means of human progress. His faith was in Christianity only, in spite of the undoubted fact that it had proved a practical failure in Norway, as Rosmer well knew.

In reality, Kroll was a fool, incapable of anything higher than bombast. "Whoever is not with me in the essential things of life," he exclaimed, "him, I no longer know. I owe him no consideration." That has been the exalted attitude of all divines, from Paul and Augustine down to Luther, Calvin and John Knox; and this is the attitude of the Catholic party in the Anglican Church, to-day, towards such Modernists as Bishop Barnes of Birmingham. The *Church Times* has, for years, treated his lordship with the cruellest persecution.

Now, we ask with due solemnity, does not this lack of harmony, among the divines, prove, beyond all possibility of doubt, that Christianity is an exclusively human creation? To us, this has been, for many years, a proved conclusion. Being thoroughgoing Atheists, no other conclusion has been ever, remotely, possible to us. But, we wish, now, to make a special appeal to those who believe in God; and ask them whether, in their honest opinion, it seems credible that Christianity came to the Apostle Paul as a revelation straight from heaven?

Paul makes that claim, we know; but, we also know that his claim was treated with contempt by most of his countrymen; and, even, his apostleship was stoutly denied by many of his fellow-Christians, as he felt bound to admit. Again, if we read the Epistles attributed to him, we find that his converts were, in no sense, superior people; and that he, himself, did not omit, on occasion, to give them their true character; though, with staggering inconsistency, he called them real judges of the world. Then, we are fully aware that very few of the Church Fathers were, in any sense, great men.

Another fact, which must be borne in mind, is that, after eight or nine centuries of Christianity, the world was, politically and morally, in a deeper depth of degradation than it had ever been before. No one can, possibly, survey the history of the Papacy, without realizing the magnitude of the evils and corruptions in which it, almost openly, gloried.

All these indisputable facts prove that, if a God of truth and love there be, he, certainly, had positively nothing to do with the origin and history of the religion that bears the name of his only-begotten Son.

Our assured conclusion is that, in times of ignorance and superstition, the divines created Christianity; and that, now, in a scientific age, in which knowledge counts, they are, by their bitter controversies and lack of union, helping it to its grave.

J. T. LLOYD.

After death there is nothing, and death itself is nothing.—*Seneca*.

Frederic the Great.

You might read all the books in the British Museum, and remain an utterly "illiterate," uneducated person; but, if you read ten pages of a good book, letter by letter, you are, for evermore, in some measure an educated person.—*John Ruskin.*

Give me health, and a day; and I will mock the pomp of emperors.—*Emerson.*

FREDERICK HARRISON was prominently associated with the development of thought, politics, and religion, for the lengthy period of seventy years. Unlike most men, age did not wither him, nor custom stale. When over ninety years of age, he was lecturing on "Dante" and doing it without repetition, or tediousness. Always of a serious turn of mind, he held to his Positivist principles, firmly. One of his sons was killed in the war. On hearing that he was wounded seriously, he travelled to France; and found an Army chaplain in attendance. "If you think your prayers useful, I don't mind; but please say them outside," was his blunt comment.

This outspokenness was always characteristic of Frederic Harrison; and it lends freshness to his criticism of men and events. One can glean much that is of value from his published books and utterances.

For example, what struck the veteran reformer was "how small a substantial change has been introduced even into superficial details of life by modern inventions and improvements."

He was as emphatic as Henry Thoreau in his denunciation of the hurry-scurry and haste of modern life, and he regarded it largely as a disease.

He was very critical, too, of educational reforms. "Public schools," he said plainly, "are a failure, and the universities have lost their usefulness in specialisation." He regarded the undue devotion to athletics as grossly extravagant.

Frederic Harrison, be it remembered, was no milksop; for he had been a cricketer; and had had his share of mountain-climbing; both unusual accomplishments in a reformer.

The veteran's judgments on men were as interesting as his criticism of other matters. He spoke caustically of Thomas Carlyle as being "precisely like one of Shakespeare's fools"; and, of Frederick Denison Maurice's "muddle-headed and impotent mind," which was not a compliment to the idol of the Broad Church Party.

Of Matthew Arnold, he told us:—

Whether he was criticising poetry, manners, or the Bible, one imagined him writing from the library of the Athenæum Club.

Thackeray, to the austere reformer, was simply "a rebuker of snobs." He is far kinder in his remarks on John Ruskin; who, he declared, was a "fascinating genius in a magnanimous soul." He is unreserved in his admiration of Auguste Comte, whom he always regarded as his master; which is a real tribute to the profound influence exerted by the great French philosopher, who was the apostle of the Religion of Humanity.

Frederic Harrison did his utmost to popularise Positivism in this country; but it never set the Thames alight. That it profoundly affected a number of noble-minded persons is doubtless true; but it never evoked the enthusiasm that Secularism did. Maybe, this was owing to Positivism being modelled too closely on Roman Catholicism. Comte's aim was to preserve what he regarded as valuable in the Christian religion; and he thought that Free-thinkers were too thorough in their methods; and that they threw away the baby with the bath-water.

But English people do not like Sacerdotalism, or

even the appearance of it, and they are sluggish in matters of intellectual concern. Hence their indifference; which, curiously, coincides with the aloofness of the French themselves.

When a Frenchman leaves the Roman Catholic Church he does not attend a side-street tin-tabernacle of another denomination; he simply leaves off going to church altogether. No half-way house for him! no feather-bed to catch a falling Christian! He is, either a Catholic, or a Freethinker; and there are only a handful of Nonconformists, as we understand the term, in the whole of France.

It would, however, be a serious error to minimise Comte's unmistakable influence. That thousands of priests, in this country, are discarding dogma, and avoiding super-naturalism in their sermons, is due in no small measure to the indefatigable labours of Auguste Comte; who, in his closely-reasoned presentation of the Religion of Humanity, forecasted the ultimate fate of all the churches of Christendom.

Frederic Harrison was presented with an illuminated address, on his ninetieth birthday, in commemoration of his lengthy service to his high ideals. It was happily done. We do well to doff our hats to the veterans of the Army of Human Liberation; the only army which desires to lift men up, and not to strike them down.

There was something more, however, in those ninety years than the life of one individual. There was the summary of nearly a century of the biggest change that has ever come over the life of mankind, during the lifetime of one man.

The greatest change, during that time, was due to the undoubted fact that Supernaturalism is played out; and that men's minds are broadening. Men and women are no longer able to accept, upon mere trust, "the lie at the lips of the priest."

Ideas that satisfied their remote, and ignorant, ancestors no longer command their adhesion. Over the pulpits of the fast-emptying churches is inscribed, "To the glory of God." That is the voice of the past.

Secularism sounds the triumphant note of the future, "To the service of man." Based on fables, supported by the money of dead men, trading on ignorance, the clergy now find the conscience of the race in revolt against their mediæval ignorance, and outworn ideals. Theology has long enough darkened the earth, and separated man from man.

A new impulse is at hand, to make men join hands and hearts. This impulse is Secularism; which embraces the world in a brotherhood of humanity.

It is no flattery to say that Frederic Harrison, during his lengthy life, did much to help the secularisation of the Christian religion in this country. The clergy, to-day, are actually tumbling over each other in their anxiety to adapt their mediæval nonsense to modern ideas.

Forgetting centuries of Christian teaching, they use the vocabulary of Humanism. But, "the tools to those that can use them," as Carlyle, long ago, pointed out. In their anxiety to placate the people in the pews, the clergy, as usual, "lay it on with a trowel"; as a good story of the Bishop of London shows.

The Bishop was, once, speaking of the humanitarian work of the Anglican Church. "When I first went to Bethnal Green," he cried, "the neighbourhood was a sink, a morass, a whirlpool of sin. When I left it, after some years of hard labour, it was God's own fair garden." A listener, seated next to an inhabitant of Bethnal Green, asked whether this was a true description. "It wasn't," answered the East-ender, "when I left there, at half-past eleven, this morning!"

MIMNERMUS.

The Pagan Setting of Early Christianity.

(Continued from page 91.)

In *The Golden Ass*, a fantastic and prurient novel by Apuleius, written towards the end of the second century, there is a very full and picturesque account of the worship of Isis and Osiris as practised at that time. The hero, Lucius, figures as an initiate. After baptism he is welcomed by the chief priest as having enrolled himself in the "sacred militia" of Isis. He is told that he has undergone "a new birth to the path of a new salvation." The day of his initiation is termed "the sacred birthday."

The most striking example of a Pagan rite of purification unto the remission of sins is that of the *taurobolium* ("bull-slaughter"), sometimes substituted by the *criobolium* ("ram-slaughter"). This was a long-standing feature of the cult of Cybele. The ceremony, always a public function, was performed in the following manner. The candidate, wearing a white robe and a garland, went down into a pit, over which boards had been stretched. The sacrificial victim was then led on to the boards and its throat was cut, the blood pouring through the chinks over the candidate beneath. Those who underwent this revolting baptism were held to be "born again to eternity through the slaughter of the bull" (*taurobolio in æternum renati*), as we learn from sepulchral inscriptions.

The mystery drama which set forth the agony and return to life of the Saviour-God was believed to possess a sacramental efficacy, and was generally accompanied by a ceremonial eating and drinking of the God's flesh and blood, either in crude literality, or else under some other symbol which might resemble a human or animal organism, or which might be reduced to a mere food token.

It is on record that at Tenedos and Chios a human being was torn in pieces as representing Dionysus, quite late in the historical period. But at other places a bull or a goat was dismembered and devoured instead. This "raw eating" (*omophagia*) was believed to make the initiates "full of God" (*entheoi*). "In order to show yourselves full of the majesty of divinity," taunts the Christian Arnobius, "you press with gory lips the flesh of bleating goats."

A belief in god-eating appears to have been a feature of the worship of Osiris. Among the formulæ of the magical papyri, which have been excavated in such large numbers from Egyptian burying-grounds, there are two which savour of the Roman Catholic dogma of transubstantiation. "Thou art wine, yet thou art not wine, but the members of Osiris." "May this wine become the blood of Osiris." It is true that the latter formula is a love-charm; but Dr. F. Legge is probably right in holding that such love-charms, and other cabalistic sentences of the period, were largely taken from ritual texts.

Holy Communion abounded in Græco-Roman Paganism under the Empire, although there is not in all such cases a clear reference to the notion of god-eating. A formula cited by Clement of Alexandria in the third century points to the existence of a sacred meal in the Mysteries of Attis. "I have eaten out of the drum and have drunk out of the cymbal, and have become an initiate of Attis." In the Eleusinian Mysteries there figured a beverage of meal and water, the *cyceon*. Fasting preceded the drinking of it, as we learn from the following formula. "I have fasted and drunk the *cyceon*. I have taken from the box; having done, I have put

back in the basket, and from the basket in the box." An inscription relating to the Samothracian Mysteries says that "the priest broke the cake and poured out the cup for the initiates." Justin Martyr, writing about the middle of the second century, describes the Christian Eucharist as celebrated in his day. He then goes on to say that the Devil has wickedly imitated it in the Mysteries of Mithra, "for that bread and a cup of water are placed in the rites of one who is being initiated you either know or can learn." The Mithraic cup and paten figure on medals and other monuments of Mithraism.

The existence of Pagan Eucharists is attested by St. Paul, who warns his Corinthian converts that they cannot, consistently with their profession, partake of "the table of the Lord" and "the table of demons," or drink of "the cup of the Lord" and "the cup of demons," the "demons" being the deities of Paganism. The phrase "table of the Lord" was not exclusively Christian. One of the papyri found at Oxyrynchus in Upper Egypt by Messrs. Grenfell and Hunt is a letter, in which one Greek invites another to come and dine "at the table of the Lord Serapis," the god worshipped in the Serapeion, the great temple at Alexandria. We may finally note the express testimony of Faustus the Manichaean, who remarked to St. Augustine: "You (Christians) have the same rite of the cup and the paten as the Pagans."

Renan has remarked that if something had happened to Christianity to frustrate its victory the world might have become Mithraic. The origin of the religion of the Persian God of light and truth is lost in a prehistoric past. Until the middle of the first century of our era it attracted little attention outside Asia. But as early as the second century we find it making considerable headway in the Roman Empire, and before the end of the following century Mithra had proved himself to be one of the most formidable rivals of the Christ. Diocletian, the last persecutor of the Christians, proclaimed Mithra the special patron of the Empire; and men might well believe that a cult which had achieved such signal triumphs would at length obtain a complete victory over all others. Julian the "Apostate" favoured Mithraism more than any other creed, and if he had had his way he would have promoted the organisation of a vast religious syncretism, largely along Mithraic lines.

There is a great deal of uncertainty about many details of the Mithraic theology and ceremonial. Most of our evidence comes from sculptures and inscriptions, of which a very large number are now known. Scanty allusions in the writings of the Christian Fathers, and in Pagan writings, help us a little, a very little. Enough, however, is known to prove that between Mithraism and Christianity there existed some remarkable parallels. The Mithraic Eucharist has already been mentioned. Let us note a few other parallels. Both religions observed the seventh day as sacred and celebrated December 25 as the birthday of their Lord. Both held out the promise of immortality to the faithful initiate. Apparently Mithraism taught, like Christianity, the doctrines of the Resurrection of the Dead and the Last Judgment. The belief in a universal deluge was common to both. The cross was a Mithraic as well as a Christian symbol, and it is represented in art as stamped on the sacramental bread. The Mithraists, like the Christians, had "love feasts" (*agapae*) and called one another brothers. Mithra was said to have partaken of a last supper with the God Helios before ascending in his chariot to the sky; the supper consisted of the food and drink of the Mithraic Eucharist. St. Paul describes the

religious life of the Christian as a warfare against Satan and his host. So, too, the Mithraist figured as a warrior in the army of the God of Light, pledged to fight against the demons with his leader's aid.

Mithra, like Jesus, was both Logos and Mediator. The latter title, however, did not carry with it the Christian doctrine on the subject. In one myth Mithra, again like Jesus, was held to be the offspring of a divine father and a human mother. A divine sacrifice was the central feature of Mithraism. It was symbolised as "Mithra tauroktonus" ("Mithra the bull-slayer"), the subject of so many Mithraic sculptures. Porphyry, the most considerable Pagan critic of primitive Christianity, expressly states that the bull stood for Mithra himself. The sculptures depict the countenance of the bull-slaying God, a beautiful, beardless youth, as full of pain. Whatever may have been the original meaning of the symbol, it certainly came to signify the voluntary outpouring of a divine life, a creative self-sacrifice, to benefit the world.

The various mystery religions just considered do not appear to have carried on an open propaganda to gain all and sundry as did the Christian Church; they rather recall modern Freemasonry in their methods of extension. But missionary activity was not exclusively a Christian feature. The late Sir Samuel Dill, in his fascinating work on *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, observes that "it has perhaps been too little recognised that in the first and second centuries there was a great propaganda of Pagan morality running parallel to the evangelism of the Church. The preachers belonged to all the different schools, Stoic or Platonist, Cynic or Pythagorean." Again, he writes: "Common, ignorant folk have caught the passion for apostleship. Everywhere might be met the familiar figure, with long cloak and staff and scrip, haranguing in the squares or lanes to unlettered crowds. And the preacher is often as unlearned as they, having left the forge or the carpenter's bench or the slave prison, to proclaim his simple gospel of renunciation, with more or less sincerity."

Conspicuous among the Pagan missionaries was Apollonius of Tyana, to whom miracles of an astonishing kind have been ascribed, and who would seem to have travelled widely, even as far as India, and to have been something of a social reformer. He is said to have prevented the introduction of gladiatorial shows into Athens. Dion the Stoic was another great figure. Then there was Musonius, who preached a quite Christian doctrine of forgiveness of injuries, and insisted on a high standard of chastity both for man and woman. Nor must we forget the noble old Pagan monk, Epictetus, who followed that very life of complete renunciation which Jesus taught as the only way into the Kingdom of Heaven. "Dare to look up to God," he exclaims in one of the discourses that have come down to us, "and say: 'Do with me henceforth as Thou wilt.....Lead me whither Thou wilt. Clothe me as Thou wilt. Wilt Thou that I hold office or live a private life, remain at home or go into exile, be poor or rich, I will defend Thy purpose with me.'"

The limits of my space make it impossible to dwell further on the parallels between Christianity and Paganism. But sufficient has been written to illustrate the theme of this essay. Christianity came in the fulness of time. It was a growth, a long series of adaptations. Even if we could entertain the possibility of admitting the supernatural at those points in the evolution of this religion where its natural causation is no longer traceable, we should, still,

have to acknowledge the very great extent for which natural causation accounts.

If there had been a God, who really did reveal himself to men 1,900 years ago, he would have had to express himself in terms of human thought, for otherwise no man would have understood him. If he had appealed to the heart the heart must have been capable of response.

There is always an element in historical movements which baffles the most searching investigations of the historian and the highest flights of philosophical imagination. But does such an element pertain to Christianity alone? Why men act and feel as they do remains a mystery when all is said and done. Every explanation posits a new problem. Concerning the solution of the ultimate riddle the Sphinx seems to be for ever dumb. In a sense we shall never be able to account for Christianity. But its development as a phenomenon in space and time may hopefully engage the student's attention. Much has been unravelled, and fresh materials for clearing up the obscurities of our subject continue to come to hand. When the critic and the archæologist have done all that can be reasonably expected of them, shall we then wonder more at the final victory of the Church than at the rise of Rome, once the seat of a small tribe of bandits, to become the mistress of Europe, or at the diffusion of Buddhism over the whole of Eastern and Central Asia, and its long persistence through so many vicissitudes? And what, after all, was the meaning of that boasted victory? Did the mental and moral attitudes of men really undergo a change when the Imperial power put a ban on the beliefs and traditions of their forefathers? Was it Christianity that survived the wreckage of the ancient world? Or has Paganism, ingeniously disguised as its great rival, become the heir of the ages?

A. D. HOWELL SMITH, B.A.

Acid Drops.

Silence sometimes speaks as loudly as words, and there are times when it says even more. Writing in the *Manchester Evening News*, on the debt civilization owes to medical science, Sir George Newman, Chief Medical Officer to the Ministry of Health, provides food for thought for the reflective reader. Rightly enough, he begins with the debt we owe to ancient Greece. Science owes much to the Greeks, for it is to them, so far as we know, that we owe the introduction of a genuine scientific method. And that is of enormously greater value than the mere collection of facts such as obtained amongst both the Egyptians and the Hindoos. Sir George points out that the Greek ideas dominated scientific medicine for a thousand years. And next to them come the medical schools that flourished under Mohammedan rule, which sent forth an influence that served to permeate the whole of Christendom. "The Arabs," says Sir George, "proved to be the great missionaries of medicine. They were among the first to establish hospitals. Through their influence Greek medicine was spread in the 7th century through Arabia and Egypt, along the North Coast of Africa, as far as Gibraltar, over the Straits into Spain, where there was established the great Saracen University of Cordova."

Sir George is naturally silent concerning the typically Christian period, because there is nothing favourable to report. The first Christian name mentioned by him is Vesalius, who was sent on a penal pilgrimage as a reward for having interfered with the miracle working of the Church. In sober truth, the influence of the Christian Church on medical science was wholly disastrous. It brought the world back from the advances made in both Greece and Rome, to the demonic theory of

disease as taught in the Bible and by the New Testament Jesus. And when the Church had built up a lucrative trade by its relics and miracle cures, every attempt to throw a little light into the darkness was met by the ignorance of the people and the vested interests of the Church. And the situation was made the worse by the Christian neglect of sanitary and hygienic science. Filth and religion flourished side by side, and on that soil disease was a ready growth.

The *Times Educational Supplement* recently had an article on "Giving a Bias." A pious contemporary says that the article raised some profound and intriguing questions, and is symptomatic of that probing and enquiring into the roots of things which is so marked a feature of our day. Our contemporary is waking up. We are glad it has noted that probing and enquiring into the roots of things. Now that it has seen even so little as that, it may be better able to understand why the Christian religion is experiencing "hard times"; and why the parsons' tall tales are no longer accepted unquestioningly, as was the case a generation ago. Since some form of bias is inevitable (in education), continues our contemporary, Christian teachers should not shrink from influencing the child in the direction they believe to be best for the child and the State. Definitely held convictions, it adds, may form a framework on which young life can develop into power and beauty. Now, we do not at all object to teachers trying to develop power and beauty in the young life; but we, emphatically, deny that to acquaint the child with the filthy Bible tales, and to inoculate him with a primitive mode of thinking, is likely to produce in him a character of power and beauty. That is the reason why we are working to keep religion out of the school.

Have you any right to put the facts unless you know them? And, granted the facts, is yours the only explanation? These, says Dr. T. R. Glover, are the cardinal principles of the modern mind. It seems a pity that the Doctor should disturb, in this way, the pious innocence of the prehistoric-minded readers of the *Daily News*. The result may be most deplorable. Some hitherto respectable church-goers may start reading Freethought literature, to discover whether there is an explanation of things, other than that taught by the Churches. And, what is worse, they may even begin to doubt, as a consequence of their reading, whether the Doctor's facts are right. We advise our erudite friend to be more careful in future. The Churches have lost many a client through his developing a modern mind.

For years there has been a gradual loosening of the bonds of authority, says the Rev. Arthur Hoyle. We once had an infallible Pope, then we exchanged him for an infallible Book. At last, he continues, we came to realise that but one element of infallibility was to be found—that which lodged in the Person of Jesus. Mr. Hoyle has travelled a good distance from his Methodist forbears. How they would have shuddered at his airy reference to an infallible Book, and at his suggestion that this, too, has lost its infallibility! The reverend gentleman, however, can't do without some kind of infallibility; and he fancies he has found one in Jesus; the Seat of Authority is how he regards Christ. But, he, carefully, points out that Jesus has, to-day, none of the metaphysical attributes, omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, ascribed to him by the earlier Christians; and that men are now centering on his human qualities. If that be the case, we rather fancy Mr. Hoyle's new infallibility will go the way of the other infallibles; and, for the same reason; that is to say, they have been riddled through and through by Freethought criticism. And what has happened to the infallible Book is now happening to Mr. Hoyle's new infallibility—the human Jesus. That being so, we have little doubt that Mr. Hoyle will, in a few years' time, have discovered that his Seat of Authority has gone to the repairer of "old chairs" to have a new seat put in; and he will, then, be writing about another wonderful infallibility he has just lighted on.

The *Methodist Recorder* thinks the Student Christian Movement is one of the most hopeful factors in the religious situation to-day. As a hopeful factor it is, we fancy, not all that could be expected. The Student Christian Movement, we are told, encourages members to meet in groups for the study of Biblical and doctrinal questions. But the latest report of the movement rather sorrowfully suggests that there has been some falling off, recently, in this direction. College curricula are so crowded, and outside interests are so many and various, that there is difficulty in developing the movement's work as freely as desired. What a shame! The plain truth, underlying the report, is, that the majority of college students are not, in the least, interested in religion, or Jesus, or doctrinal questions; but the pious compilers of the report lack the courage to say so. We strongly suspect that the "hopeful factor" is, after all, merely a pious wish. The godly leaders of the movement will need to jog their imaginations to produce some more hopeful factors in the religious situation to-day. We have no doubt they will manage that all right; seeing that they must conjure cash out of the pockets of pious sympathisers, in order to carry on the good work.

The Church has a struggle to live in an environment that is hostile to an anachronism. In the following extract from the speech of the Bishop of Lichfield, the Lord spiritual has to reprove those who are doing the wrong thing in an atmosphere of perpetual spring cleaning:—

In our parishes sometimes there are middle-aged and elderly people who are a positive hindrance to our work among lads and girls. Their sticky conventionalism, their adhesion to tradition, their utter lack of sympathy with the outlook of young folk make it exceedingly difficult for the parish priest and those working with him to do effective work.

A newspaper report makes interesting reading and carries its own lesson. The liner "President Harding," recently had a rough passage across the Atlantic, and the stewards mentioned little realised the importance conferred on them by a reporter:—

... Much alarm that immigrant passengers fell on their knees in prayer until they were reassured by the stewards.

Serious news comes from the hop growers of Worcestershire. They are going to restrict their crop this year by 20 per cent. In prayers for a bountiful harvest this will mean another amendment, and we trust that the local clergy have been duly advised to bear the matter in mind; or, no man can foresee the consequences.

The *Daily News* giving the prayer book revisions the high seriousness of modern journalism records a good story that is too good to die in one day with other journalistic offsprings. Here it is, as they say in children's story books:—

The most delightful commentary on the Revised Prayer Book I heard yesterday was that of the married woman who inquired whether the elimination of the word obey from the Marriage Service would be made retrospective by the Bishops.

This lady would appear to be trying to balance that big debit against her sex recorded in Genesis.

Seven hundred years ago, we are told, a custom was observed in the Parish Church of Blidworth, Nottinghamshire. A baby was dedicated to the service of God, and it was rocked in a cradle before the altar. On Sunday, February 7, a similar ceremony was performed, and we should not be surprised to hear if the Church dug up another custom of seventeen hundred years ago if its reappearance would help to fill the vacant pews. We commend this phenomenon to those who think the New Jerusalem will be delivered to-morrow with the milk.

In all seriousness the work-a-day world is advised that a "Hallowing" of a Cathedral will take place at Leicester on February 21. In all seriousness, we believe that there are forces at work which intend to see that man shall not grow up. After this, let them brawl and rant to their heart's content of the negative character of Freethought.

The old chestnut of miraculous happenings as the result of carrying a Bible finds its opposite in a story reported in the newspaper. A visitor in London picked up a rosary dropped by a wanted man, and as a result of a confidence trick the victim found himself poorer by a considerable sum of money. The cynic might call the incident a variation on a single air.

We observed two newspaper notices of Hull recently. One was an attack on the moral state of the city; and it suggested that the only vowel in the name of the city might well be replaced by another which occurs earlier in the alphabet. The other was a lengthy report concerning proceedings in the Hull Council with respect to Sunday games. Mr. W. H. Eastman opposed these being permitted; and there was a large number of protests sent into the Council from the churches and chapels. Mr. J. Ward appears to have been the chief of the Sunday games; and he made out, temperately, a strong case for their being allowed. He dwelt, particularly, upon the complaint of the Chief of Police as to the state of the streets on Sundays with young men and women wandering aimlessly about. But that did not, of course, influence the mouthpieces of the churches and chapels, nor the churches and chapels themselves. What they are solely concerned about is people coming to Church; and they would, much rather, have the streets as they are than permit anything like competition with their own places of business. So, in the end, it was resolved, by 42 votes to two, not to have Sunday games; and Hull will continue to stand as a rival to another and warmer place. What Hull needs is a good course of Freethought.

Why is it, asks the Rev. Percy C. Pegler, we so seldom see our own deficiencies? Now; just fancy a Methodist parson confessing that Christians have deficiencies! It doesn't seem credible, when one remembers how eager these followers of Jesus are to find fault with non-Christians; and how anxious to reform everybody and sundry. We hope Mr. Pegler will remember his confession when next he feels moved to launch a diatribe against the wickedness of the younger generation. He adds, later, that the first step, towards freedom from faults, is, at least, to know the truth about ourselves; however uncomfortable it may be. We think Mr. Pegler, and his fellow Christians, ought to be very grateful to the *Freethinker* for revealing to them their little faults and failings. The trouble is that Christians appear not to profit by the instruction.

Philanthropy often takes on the guise of the nasty "Nosey-Parker," says a well-known London magistrate. We hope the large number of Nosey-Parkers, working for the Lord in connection with Church philanthropic societies, will make a note of this utterance.

The Capacity for God is the title of a book by Dr. R. F. Horton. As the Doctor's theme is "Faith, the master-faculty," we suggest the book would have been better named "The Capacity for Credulity." Such a title would certainly make the innocent reader aware of the kind of mental realm in which he was wandering, under the Doctor's guidance.

How do the Chinese receive the dogmas of the different denominations? This was a question put to a lady missionary home on furlough. She replied that, on entering a village, the people desiring to know what denomination the missionary belongs to, ask: "Are you of the Little Wash, the Big Wash, or No Wash at all?" This means do you believe in christening, immersion, or

neither? That is, are you a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a Quaker? The Christian Chinese villagers, evidently, haven't yet tumbled to the fact that, collectively, the various species of missionaries all firmly believe in the noble doctrine of Eye-wash.

According to Reuter, the Lower House of the Missouri Legislature defeated a measure forbidding the teaching of the theory of Evolution in schools. From the fact that an attempt was made to forbid the teaching, Freethinkers will appreciate that the alleged "dead horse" of Christianity still has some kick in it; and that this Christianized world can do with all the Freethought propaganda which earnest readers care to put forth.

The aim of the book of Genesis, says a learned lecturer in Hebrew, is purely religious. Hence, the reward of the reader of Genesis will depend upon how nearly his viewpoint approximates to that of the writer of the book. Well; we should say that the kind of reward, gained by a man bringing his mind down to that of a primitive writer belonging to a tribe of ancient shepherds, is not such as is likely to benefit a truly civilized society. We notice that the majority of Christians have no trouble in doing the approximating business; and that is why we regard them as a serious menace to civilization.

A pious coachman of George III., says a writer, used to put tracts in the pocket of his master's coach, for his Majesty to read while journeying between London and Windsor; and the King encouraged the coachman to keep the pocket filled. We are not surprised. George III. had the type of mind that would appreciate tracts. Such a mind would naturally be indifferent to the injustices against which the American colonists protested in 1774; and which led to the war which cost us the Colonies.

Dr. Glover holds that Christ was a teacher who liberated men from tradition in the most drastic and striking way. Christ must have been a very odd kind of liberator. He released his followers' minds from one prison, only to shut them up in another; and there they will stay until Freethought batters down the door.

Mr. H. Wilson Harris, writing in the *Daily News*, on the situation in China, states that the chief danger, about sending the troops, is the newspaper placards. We agree; and, so long as a monopoly is allowed to exploit ignorance in this form, so long will the intelligent minority have to pay for it. This particular form of exploitation is not confined to the Press; Christianity draws its sustenance from the same quarter, and has always been a standing menace to true enlightenment on the few things in life that matter.

Eight members of the Royal Martyr Church Union met recently at Church House, Westminster. The Union, through its spokesman, does not intend to rest until the anniversary of King Charles' death is formally observed throughout the whole Anglican Church. Unfortunately, the Anglican Church is so busy at present, keeping its head above water that another subject for consideration would only add to its difficulties.

Sir Henry Lunn's book, *Round the World with a Dictaphone*, would appear, in a wilderness of books, to be worth reading. He has a predilection for Hobbe's famous saying: "Words are the counters of wise men and the money of fools." There is luke-warm praise of it, in the *Times Literary Supplement*; and, from the notice of it, we rather gather that it contains good fun. One sample from bulk encourages us to think, that he does what thousands of writers cannot do, he "touches the spot"—"the tragedies being enacted in the struggle for Church property proceeding in the Law Courts of Canada teach plainly certain broad lessons." Canada, or the Kamschatka Mountains, the efforts of people who babble about "mansions in the skies" are all the same; this talk is "spool" for the ignorant; and a very plain warning for those who have burned their swaddling-clothes.

The "Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

THERE is very little to say this week concerning this Trust. We have still a very long way to go before we reach the goal; and the regularity with which many friends repeat their donations proves that they, at all events, do not mean, if they can help it, to lose the £1,450 promised.

What we have decided to do is to close this special appeal on behalf of the Trust on March 20. By that time, all those who intend subscribing on the present occasion will have had the opportunity to do so. Some, I know, are holding off until they see some such announcement as this one.

The following is the list of subscriptions to date:

Previously acknowledged, £988 19s. 8d. Miss E. Williams, £1; W. Collins (3rd sub.), 5s.; R. B. Harrison, 10s.; J. Harvey, 3s.; H. Ross, 2s.; H. Good, 10s.; A. C. A. Boars, 5s.; A. C. Graham, 4s. 6d.; V. H. Smith (8th sub.), 5s. Total, £992 4s. 2d.

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

CHAPMAN COHEN.

To Correspondents.

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

A. M.—(1) Addendum reached us too late for use. (2) Would require an essay to answer; but, take these: (a) What a thing does. (b) Standing by itself. (c) Qualities manifested. (d) Underlying, or ultimate.

C. HARRIS.—We would cheerfully give the *Freethinker* away, if paper-makers, and printers, would work on the same basis. On looking down our list of subscribers, it is borne in on us that some of them are under the impression that this is the principle of its distribution. Of course, it would be easier to get new readers if the paper were cheaper; but, how are we to get along until the prospective and numerous new readers arrive?

MISS F. BELK.—The N.S.S. Secretary is writing you.

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.—G. W. Foote always declined to call himself an Agnostic. Like Bradlaugh, he preferred the unambiguous word, "Atheist."

J. J. NICHOLAS.—Certainly not a return to Christian fold. We have no authoritative information on the matter, and no personal connection with it.

W. MACFARLANE.—The paper will be sent as usual.

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 (February 20), Mr. Cohen lectures in the Town Hall, Hamilton, at 6.30, taking for his subject, "What is the Use of Christianity?" On Monday evening, the 21st, he will address the Cowlairs Co-operative Society in their Hall, at 27 Angus Street, Springburn, on "Freethought Social Reform." On Thursday, he will speak in Co-operative Hall, Dykehead, at 7, "Things Christians Ought to Know." On Friday, in Lesser City Hall, Glasgow, on "Is there any Evidence for a Future Life?"; and on Sunday, in the City Hall, Glasgow, at 11.30 and 6.30.

In spite of the gloomy weather there was a very good audience on Sunday last at Bolton, to listen to Mr. Cohen's address. Mr. Sissons, who occupied the chair, is largely responsible for the activity of the local Branch. He is a hard worker, and level-headed in what he does—and this quality is of great value to anyone engaged in popular propaganda. We wish the Branch all success in its future work.

The course of lectures arranged by the West Ham Branch at the Bromley Hall, Bow Road, will be brought to an end by a lecture from Mr. R. H. Rosetti, on "What We Pay for the Religion We Get." We are not surprised to learn that the vile weather conditions of last Sunday affected somewhat Mr. Saplin's audience. We hope that, for the concluding lecture, the conditions will be more favourable.

All the letters we receive are not complimentary. For instance, here is one that comes from a minister of religion in Islay, Argyllshire:—

Will you kindly cease sending your hellish newspaper to my home! You and your associates are real fools. . . . You are very foolish if you believe that your evil teaching, which you have received from your father the devil, is able to undermine the faith of the children of God. . . . You boast that you are an Infidel, but you know in your heart you are not. There is not an Infidel in this world, nor in hell.

We rather imagined that hell was assumed to be full of "Infidels," and have always looked with pleasurable anticipations to meeting some of them there. The letter concludes, "hoping to meet you in heaven," which is a really unkind cut, for the Christian heaven is the very last place we should care to go. For the rest, we are not responsible for the *Freethinker* reaching this gentleman. But we agree that it is hopeless expecting it will ever convert him. It seems a brutal thing to say, but some people seemed doomed by nature to remain Christians to the very end.

We are asked to remind Branches who desire visits from Mr. Whitehead during his Summer tour, that immediate application must be made.

We see, from a recent number of *L'Action Antireligieuse*, the official organ of the National Federation of Freethinkers in France and its Colonies, that, at the meeting of the National Council, a balance-sheet was presented which shows a very healthy state of affairs; and we congratulate our fellow-workers in France, upon the energy they are displaying, and upon the progress they are able to make.

Though placed in a satisfactory financial position, our comrades, across the water, lament, as we do here, the

inertia, which enables Freethinkers to permit themselves to enjoy the "refreshing fruit," without contributing any personal service to the work of producing it; while the efforts, of those who do not stint their endeavours, are retarded by the indifferent; and hindered, and even thwarted, by those whose political ambitions make them afraid to declare, openly, their freethinking convictions, in unworthy fear of consequences.

L'idée Libre is a monthly review of individual culture, and social reform; which is in its seventeenth year; and is published, by Monsieur Frederic Lecomte, at Conflans-Honorine (Seine et Oise), at the price of fr.1.50, or 3d., at the present rate of exchange.

The present number contains an extended account of the making of a new saint, in the twentieth century: Sainte Therese de Lisieux, canonised by the Pope in 1925; and shows how the French Clergy are, to-day, endeavouring to create and exploit a new Lourdes, by inducing their dupes to believe in a series of lies, which they term miracles, lies so fantastic as to make one wonder how anyone can be found, in these not-so-dark days, to give credence to any of them. The evidence shows, however, that the still benighted religionists of Normandy are imbibing this farrago of nonsense to an extent which makes our French friends say that they despair of human intelligence.

Mr. Phillippe Mairet, in the *New Age*, February 3, had an excellent article on the work of the late Allen Upward. The gifted author was a fine spirit in an environment that he could not welcome; when the world has more time and is not harassed with the pissing problem of daily bread, it will have the leisure to appreciate a noble man.

There is very little to report concerning the Toronto Blasphemy case, save that Mr. Sterry has been committed for trial, which is expected to take place very early in March. The Executive, as will be seen from another column, has decided to give whatever help is possible, and we are now awaiting further information. Meanwhile, it is interesting to note that Canadian Freethinkers are coming for a good share of abuse, which appears to move on a lower level than religious abuse of Freethinkers does in this country. We are not surprised at this, because in both Canada and the United States the more primitive and the more brutal forms of Christianity seem to exert far more influence than they do here. But it is interesting to note that, both here and in the United States, while Christians institute a blasphemy prosecution on the ground that the feelings of Christians have been outraged, they all hold it part of their duty as Christians to outrage the feelings of Freethinkers as much as is possible. It would appear as though the Christian world wished to establish a monopoly of knavery in all its branches.

ASCETIC PERIOD v. RENAISSANCE.

Now the men and women of the Renaissance looked upon creation in the light of the book of Genesis: "And behold it was very good".....It was surely better, they said, to acquiesce in life and make a good thing of it than to mortify it, to crucify it, and live gloomily for an uncertain existence in a merely possible world to come. Into the theology and ethics of these views we are not called upon to enter, but we can see at once how much more natural it was to have a marvellous mental fertility during the Renaissance than during the ascetic periods. Originality of thought and action betokens deep absorption in life, and all its implications, and this the Renaissance period possessed to the full; whereas those men and women who sought seclusion, as a means of finding salvation, developed a mental narrowness that effectually prevented both freedom and advance; albeit they sometimes developed the milder virtues to a high degree.—*T. Sharper Knowlson* ("Originality").

The Great Adventure.

Well; each his way and humour: some to lie
Like nature's sickly children in her lap,
While all the stronger brethren are at play.

—*Fitzgerald.*

WHEN through the vicissitudes of fortune we find ourselves deposited, helplessly, in some remote backwater, while the busy stream of life rushes and tumbles on its way, unheeding, it is natural that our enforced leisure should be occupied by much quiet reflection; and, that our reflections should have, in them, something of the inherent melancholy of the universe.

At such a time, it is to the credit of healthy human nature that we do not think of playing either the moralist, or the theologian; rather do we attune our ear to the soft, sad music of humanity; and, in its wistful, haunting cadence, identify ourselves with all that is—leaving who will to justify the ways of God to man.

In such a situation our emotions are more elemental; our sense of values is directed to the much more fundamental—and, for us, much more important—consideration: the value of life itself.

Instead of asking if life admits of an ethical justification, we ask ourselves if life, individually and collectively, is worth living.

Nature, we know, exists independently of all philosophies; and it will survive both our approval and our disapproval; yet, as thinking beings, we are under the necessity of beating out some coherent order from the chaotic emotions that surge through us. It may not matter to the universe whether we find it a depressing tragedy, a stimulating comedy, or just poor farce; but it matters, profoundly, to us whose happiness is vitally concerned with the manner and spirit in which we approach it.

Our esteemed contributor, Mr. Andrew Millar, touched on this question of the correct attitude towards life, some time ago, in an article on the great Italian, Leopardi; in which he gave pessimism an almost absolute value. He insisted, if I remember rightly, that all the great literature of the world had an undercurrent of pessimism; and that the greatest thinkers had been they who were most conscious of the ultimate futility of existence.

Mr. Millar's courageous plea for pessimism impressed me—I am always impressed by the earnest outpouring of the human spirit—and yet, somehow, I remain unconvinced. There is something within me (it may be because I am young and still cherish hopes—God help me!) that rebels against the idea that, to be a realist, one must perforce be a pessimist; and I think that Mr. J. B. Priestley gives a more correct judgment on great literature, when he writes:—

There are a number of great men of letters, and they are, on the whole, those with whom we spend the most of our time, whose attitude, not to be lightly labelled either optimistic or pessimistic, seems to be the right one; they are neither intoxicated youths clothing the world in their bright dreams, nor bitter hobbledoys cursing the world for their own awkwardness and bad manners; but grown men, ripe, experienced, knowing the worst, but still smiling, a little sadly, but smiling. There is Shakespeare among the poets; Fielding and Thackeray among the novelists; Lamb among the essayists; and Johnson among—shall I say—the literary figures; and, when I remember what they have known, drudgery, poverty, and disease; mad sisters and young wives dead or insane; and all the smaller ills of life besides and, when I remember these things and read their work, noting their humour and pathos, their flashes of indignation, their wise wonder, their lasting kindness, I

understand how life, that is neither rose-water nor bitter aloes, should be approached.

One cannot dwell on the long-drawn martyrdom of man, without being saddened by the agony of it; sorrow is indeed synonymous with breath; to have lived, is to have suffered; and, were this the whole of the story, the indictment of Leopardi would be irrisistible.

I can only say, for my own part—and I have suffered much—that it does not correspond with my own experience. La Rochefoucauld expressed a profound truth when he said: "One is never so happy, or unhappy, as one imagines."

If the history of humanity is dark with suffering, it is, also, bright with human heroism and devotion; and a true philosophy must appraise the value of both. The story of human evolution is not wholly depressing. There is, for instance, the wonderful romance of the critical spirit; the quest of man for truth; the challenging activity of nature's resurgent son.

It is not a relevant criticism to declaim against the futility of life. Supposing our best endeavours, our tenderest emotions, end in the nothing all things end in, what then? How can a judgment of existence vitiate a judgment of value?

The pessimist is curiously inconsistent here; for, if the ultimate futility of life is part of his indictment, he is saying that life contains something, the disappearance of which is to be regretted; whilst, on the other hand, if life is so hopeless as he claims, surely the ultimate nothingness is a consummation devoutly to be wished.

We are left, then, with existence as a datum, common to optimist and pessimist alike; and even Leopardi saw that it was the former that had the greatest survival value. I have, all my life, fought against the fatuous optimism that pictures everything as happening for the best in this best of all possible worlds; but the contrary view is equally wide of the mark:—

And if thy mind no longer takes delight
In sights and sounds, and things that please the taste,
What is it in the world of men and gods
That thy heart longs for? Tell me that Kassapa.

To the ardent soul life is, still, the great adventure.

In one of his works, Jack London says: "It doesn't pay to go behind the scenes and see the angel-voiced tenor beat his wife"; and, in a more recent article, Mr. Millar, still in pessimistic vein, suggests that the Freethinker would be happier if he exercised the same constraint, and ceased to enquire, too closely, into the "realities of life." He hints that we, too, would benefit if we could forget the infelicity of the tenor and his wife, and the dwindling box-office receipts; and become, once more, the unsophisticated schoolgirl, gazing in rapturous wonder from a seat in the pit.

He contends—or, if he does not, his reflections lack point—that the Christian has something of value, which the Freethinker has not; true, he endeavours to recover himself in a final sentence; but the blasphemy is there, writ large; and I, who owe more to the freethought philosophy than any words can express, am anxious to give it the lie; although I am persuaded that Mr. Millar is not so serious as the heresy would suggest.

To one who has been behind the scenes, and seen something of the machinery, the play is, none the less, interesting. True, a certain glamour has gone; we perceive the characters in a different perspective; we find that the good fairy who utters such highly moral sentiments is, in reality, a vixen with a vile temper, and a passion for Guinness; we find much that is sordid, and much that is heroic.

The knowledge that we gain is not always comforting; there is much to cause us profound disquiet; but, having gained that knowledge, I do not think we would return to our primal innocence; or enjoy the contented ignorance of Hodge.

In common with my kind, there are times when I am sorely tried by the heat and burden of the day; when, like Macbeth: "I 'gin to be aweary of the sun"; but, I do not hanker after the moonshine of myth:—

If I have harboured love within my breast,
'Tis for my comrades of the dusty day;
Who, with me, watched the twinkling stars at play,
Who bore the burden of the same unrest.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

Our "Literary": An Episode.

WE are a small company of respectable townsmen, tradesmen, etc., say, middle-class people, more or less well read and worshippers of good literature, the sacred fires of which, in a jazzy and decadent age, we try to keep alive—a most edifying, commendable, and wholly delightful Society; something to charm us through the Winter's gloom and—"The weary widdle o' warly cares." Religion and politics are held as taboo, but will, like "vile self, creep in." We have, indeed, an atmosphere of large tolerance, and a man may rave his fill to quiet smiles and the ultimate elimination of his cruder, more selfish self. Resentment flames up at times at the words of some too daring speaker, but the rule is tolerance, enforced in the common interest, just as the speaker is allowed to find his lesson and his level, a most salutary process, while the most "outrageous" things may be said, if only word and manner are well chosen. But to our tale:—

The subject was "Physical Research," the essayist a genial, aged gentleman of rubicund health, who handled his material—some faded books and scraps of writing—with modest, nervous, fluttering movements, and gave a very rambling account of his own and others adventures with the spirits, and all with the most naïve assurance and decided dogmatism. He went on to refer to many mediumistic miracles, personal and historic, going back to the famous Hume, and his seance given before the first Napoleon and his Empress. On this occasion the royal lady felt her father's hand clasp her own, recognising it by a certain physical defect. The Emperor and his Consort had been much impressed, which, one reflected, in a person of his make-up was not to be wondered at, who was already a god, whose "star" was so obvious, but which led him at length to St. Helena and a miserable death from cancer. We must pity more than we admire those men of god and destiny, if either sentiment be not lost in loathing of those who have been inspired.

... to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind.

So far this spirit-world, of fact or fantasy, has availed nothing, nothing at all, to minimise this martyrdom of man, but, in whatever form or creed, has certainly done much to perpetuate the tyrant on the one hand and the credulity and slavishness of the people on the other. Our speaker went on to tell us of a City doctor who kept a medium to diagnose his more baffling cases. One patient, against all medical opinion, was found by the medium to have cancer, and it was so! But, we thought, why stop here? Why not give the cure, or prevention, in this and all other cases? A painter did pictures, blindfolded, in a trance—we were shown one, a faded water-colour landscape—the painter of which had had his

palette and materials with him—but why these? Why not just “materialization?” The Bible, our lecturer said, first and last, was the best text-book on spiritualism—Freethinkers will heartily agree with that. But enough; the multiplication of such evidences will neither edify nor impress readers of this journal, who are, indeed, long familiar with the negative side of the enquiry, and who are, at least, as open minded as any to positive evidence when it shall appear, but who are not likely to be content with “apparitions”—which are common enough to all, drunk and sober, from the delirium tremens of the dipsomaniac to the child’s vision of its grandmother in the garden; the red-hot man on the dark stairs; the dissolving human shape on the window; the staring Saracen’s head in the gloom at the bedside; the rainbow woman bent above its companion on the truckle bed. We have all been haunted, but are ourselves the haunters, the visions subjective not objective. The natural, external world makes its impressions on the brain—afortime made the brain itself—these, distorted by various processes strictly within the skull, limned on a false objectivity, form the whole stock-in-trade and phantasmagoria of spiritism—surely a sweeping assertion but, really, as one listened to this lecture, the whole Spiritualist claim was seen to bristle with objections and absurdities. Finally, and funny in its gravity, was the holding up of a beautiful crystal ball by the old gentleman. You had to look at it “as through a glass darkly,” we were shown how; a mist would appear, then a shape, an answer, warning, prophesy; but, again, we scoffed, the mist, etc., would be in the gazer’s head, not in the crystal—good, wholesome, material, beautiful glass!—at most suggested by the owner of the magic globe.

The discussion that followed was animated and prolonged. Out of twenty were some half-dozen confirmed sceptics, others were non-committal, some merely credulous or confused. The writer of these notes would have exercised to the full his privilege of comment, but the night being far spent, and many others eager to speak, he modestly and humanely contented himself with less than five minutes opposition. The gist of what he said, or might have said, may interest his readers once more: Unlike a previous speaker, he would not say he was a *free* thinker, which was a very unscientific term, but had his opinions by a process of mental compulsion, ratiocination, logic, determinism. If all were opposed to the lecturer, that would not prove him wrong; if all agreed, that would not prove him right. The assent of famous scientists to the Spiritualist hypothesis, or to what they esteemed actual demonstrations, of a spirit world was quite as indecisive. The essential evidence was quite elsewhere. All fraud eliminated, much was still to be learned, and was being learned; not with the miscalled “psychical expert,” the ultimate analysis must be left to the genuine psychologist, the scientist, the pathologist. Referring to the whole question of survival the writer (for the sake of brevity) quoted from the admirable bit of logic, by Mr. A. B. Moss, in a recent *Freethinker*, as follows:—

The question then arises, will all men live again? And if yes, will idiots live again, and if yes, will they be idiots when they live again? If they are not idiots when they live again, they will have lost their identity. In other words they will not be the same persons, and they might just as well not live again, for they will not remember themselves in their previous condition. It is claimed by Theosophists that man has always existed as a soul, that he has existed in all the distant past, and they allege will exist in all the distant future, although

he has not always been associated with a body. But, as I have said dozens of times in my lectures on the subject, if the above statement is true, I frankly confess that I do *not* remember who I was before I became who I am; and if I do not remember who I was before I became who I am, how am I likely to remember who I shall be when I am somebody else? That is a conundrum I should like to ask any theologian or theosophist to answer.

This, no doubt, made its impression on the inexpressible; but the comment of the evening came from a science master, and was like a page from the *Freethinker*, a wholesome and joyful sound, though the gentleman might have deprecated the association—those also serve the Cause who study only “orthodox” science—the old man, earnest and eloquent, might be little influenced thereby, but others might be, and he remains the genial and generous soul we all knew him to be: that aspect of the matter was never in doubt.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Ballade of Divine Oblivion.

Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad?

—2 Kings, xviii., 34.

I.

ARE they all dead, or do they only sleep,
The gods who filled the skies in ancient days?
Or do they in some nether darkness creep,
Forsaking for a while Olympian ways?
Where are the priests who used to chant their praise?
Where the great throngs of worshippers they had?
Have all departed; is there none that stays?
Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad?

II.

I can call spirits from the vasty deep;
And so can any man, as Shakespeare says;
But when the gods are called they silence keep,
And do not show themselves to mortal gaze:
If on this theme imagination plays—
Such things the poets do, for they are mad—
This question one of them is sure to raise,
Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad?

III.

If at his future man could take a peep,
Could peer with straining eyes through that dim haze,
I wonder, would he laugh or would he weep
To see the picture Chronos there displays:
I doubt not that strange picture would amaze
The gods of Egypt, Sumer and Accad,
But then both men and gods Old Time betrays:
Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad?

Envoi.

Prince, you who have to listen to my lays—
I hope Your Highness does not think them bad—
Were gods (and princes) but a passing phase?
Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad?

BAYARD SIMMONS.

But Byron and Shelley did not succeed in their attempt freely to apply the modern spirit in English literature; they could not succeed in it; the resistance to baffle them, the want of intelligent sympathy to guide and uphold them, were too great.—*Matthew Arnold* (“*Essays in Criticism*”).

Voltaire entered too eagerly into the interests of the world, was by temperament too exclusively sympathetic and receptive and social, to place himself, even in imagination, thus outside of the common circle. Without capacity for this, no comedy of the first order. Without serious consciousness of contrasts, no humour that endures.—*Lord Morley* (“*Voltaire*”).

Correspondence.

FREETHOUGHT AND FREEMASONRY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—“Alpha’s” suggestion, that I do not “know anything of the character or work of the Freemasonry of the Grand Orient of France,” makes me smile.

I could retort; but, with your permission, I will not follow my young friend on to the slippery slopes of personalities, upon which he seems so inclined to set foot.

“Facilis descensus Averni.”

Rather, would I invite him to remain with me upon the sure ground of Rational Intellectuality; and, by patient examination of facts, to co-operate with me, in mutual endeavour, as brother Freethinkers should, to discover points of agreement between us, other than the two which we have already reached.

Firstly; we are agreed, that there should be co-operation between the Secularists of England and France. Can we not agree, that there should, likewise, be co-operation among Secularists all the World over? and, then, set our “united thoughts and counsels” to work out some welcome practical plan.

“Thoughts are but dreams, till their effects be tried.”

Next; we are agreed, that Freethinkers cannot accept the Freemasons’ essential and unalterable landmark; their sole dogma; viz.: “The Great Architect of the Universe; the true and living God most High.” The Antient Charges say:—

Let a man’s religion, or mode of worship, be what it may, he is not excluded from the Order, provided he believe in the Glorious Architect of Heaven and Earth; and practise the sacred duties of morality.

Clearly, this is fundamental.

Logically it follows, that Freethinkers cannot become Freemasons, while the recognition of that fundamental landmark, or dogma, is demanded.

It is, equally, logical and true that, when Freemasons shed their sole remaining dogma, and develop, or evolve, into Freethinkers, they cannot, honestly, remain Freethinkers, while that landmark remains fundamental; the two stages of mind are incompatible; it is impossible to be both in, and out, at the same time.

It is at this stage that my friend and I diverge.

Apparently, he wishes, for some reason I cannot understand, to attempt the impossible; that is to say, he wishes to be a Freethinker and a Freemason at the same time.

But he recognises the illogicality, and propounds a solution. His freethinking propensities lead him to attack the essentiality and unalterability of the landmark.

“Quite easy,” he says, “one can just change the formula; as the Grand Orient did in 1878, and one remains a Freemason.”

I reply: “No power exists, which can enable you to do this, effectively; because (quite apart from all questions of moral, or legal, or Masonic, right to change, or to wish to change, the formula), by the mere fact of changing it, you convert something, which was Freemasonry, into something which, *ipso facto*, ceases to be Freemasonry.

These statements represent our diverging points of view.

Alpha asks: “Who is right?”

In a subsequent letter, I will answer his question; and I do not despair of being able to bring even Alpha to acknowledge his complete agreement with OMEGA.

HIS MASTER’S VOICE.

SIR,—The *Daily News* of the 8th inst., published a report of a spook meeting held recently in New York, Mr. George Valiantini, the well-known “direct voice” medium, officiating.

The possibility that this might be another addition to the long list of “tall stories” from America did not deter the editorial staff from publishing it; but, had a Freethinker sent to them, for publication, a logical

article, which did not uphold the Christian view of religion, it would, assuredly, have found a place in the waste-paper basket, instead of in the columns.

The report states that Mr. Valiantini has been in communication with that ancient Chinese Philosopher, Confucius, who died about 478 B.C.; and has heard the voice of the spirit of Confucius recite one of the poems edited by Confucius 2,000 years ago. Mr. Valiantini calls in Dr. Neville Whymant to help him to substantiate his story; and, between them, they complete, and produce, the farcical comedy.

On what authority do they base their claim that the voice was that of the ancient Philosopher? They never saw him; nor have they ever been in personal contact with him; so, how could they recognise a voice which they had never heard before, and with which they could not, therefore, be familiar? Again, whence did they rake up the voice? Obviously, from someone concealed in a corner of the room in which the seance was held.

Can anyone imagine, for one moment, a voice, that has been still for over 2,000 years, suddenly breaking the silence of centuries, and reciting poetry which the former owner of the voice had composed? Where was the brain which was responsible for the composition of the poem? The brain which was responsible for the writing of it? For the reciting of it? Where was the brain that actuated the voice that is supposed to have spoken after centuries of silence? And what a wonderful memory Confucius must have had!

If Mr. Valiantini has been in communication with Confucius, as he asserts, why does he not try his hand and his art in getting in touch with Moses? Perhaps God might have a message for him from a burning bush; or, why not give Jesus a call? He would probably recite *The Lord’s Prayer* for him, as it has never been recited before; or repeat the *Sermon on the Mount*. A microphone would enable all listeners-in to hear His voice; and, an enterprising Gramophone Company would, no doubt, be anxious to record “THE MASTER’S VOICE” for commercial purposes.

W. MARSDEN.

OUR CLERGY.

SIR,—In reference to your leading article of last week, I merely wish to observe that a Church, which can, successfully, hoodwink the populace, in this present day of enlightenment, with such an exhibition of the savagery described therein, must be accused of downright, wilful, and deliberate, intellectual dishonesty. No one of ordinary intelligence will believe that clergymen, decorated with degrees of learning, are yet so ignorant as not to know that teaching, such as that referred to, is founded on falsity and untruth. These clergymen are the people, who babble about moral teaching in the nation’s schools; whilst they, themselves, preach and teach that which they *know* to be untrue and unreal.

What shall we do to be saved from these impostors? “Of all the evil spirits abroad at this hour in the world, insincerity is the most dangerous.” SINE CERE.

HYPOTHESES AND A CORRECTION.

SIR,—Will readers of “Drama and Dramatists” kindly substitute “The School for Scandal” for “The Rivals?” By a trick of memory Joseph Surface had walked out of one comedy into another. I should also like to ask Mr. Vincent J. Hands not to be too hard on one of the few independent journals we have; its faults may be many, but marking time has never been one of them. It may hasten the coming of the day when men will discover that they can live without killing each other in the name of war, and the problem of the *New Age* is the same as that of the *Freethinker*, so brilliantly summed up in last week’s “Views and Opinions” in seven words—“making the unready mind recognise the obvious.” The superstition associated with a church and bank only differs in kind—not degree, and so to Mr. Hands, I would say, “Gently brother, gently pray.”

WILLIAM REPTON.

Society News.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.

On Friday, February 11, Mr. E. Hale, President of the Glasgow Branch, addressed the members of the Independent Labour Party Guild of Youth, Partick. Mr. Hale, as the title of his lecture, "Cabbages and Kings" indicates, dealt with a considerable number of topics. The Secularist's point of view was stated with lucid precision, and apparently was new to most of the members of the audience. The interest in the discussion which followed was shown by the fact that the meeting was carried on twenty minutes longer than it should have been, before anyone realised that the time for closing the meeting had been passed.—F. M.

MANCHESTER BRANCH.

On Sunday last the Manchester Branch was addressed by local speakers. In the afternoon, the Branch President, Mr. F. E. Monks, lectured on "Determinism or Free Will," and in the evening, Mr. Sam Cohen lectured on "The Value of Freethought." Both lectures were followed by questions and discussion, and altogether the experiment of trying local speakers proved a success.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

In the unavoidable absence of our advertised speaker, Mr. Lombardi, Mr. Reynolds, of the Christian Evidence Society, who was amongst the audience, kindly consented to open an impromptu debate, the subject being: "Is a Belief in the Christian Faith Rational?" Mr. Ratcliffe, being the opposer; Mr. G. Stewart occupying the chair.

An interesting debate was followed by a no less interesting discussion, in which the audience participated. The proceedings were characterised throughout by the greatest good humour and good feeling. We are greatly obliged to both these gentlemen for so promptly and kindly filling the breach at such short notice.—K. B. K.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING, HELD ON FEBRUARY 10.

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the Chair.

Also present:—Messrs. Clifton, Moss, Quinton, Rosetti, Samuels and Silvester; Mrs. Quinton, Miss Kough and the Secretary. Apologies were received from Messrs. Gorniot and Neate, who were unfortunately absent through ill-health.

The President explained that the meeting had been called earlier than usual to discuss a matter which needed consideration, namely, the case of Mr. E. V. Sterry, now being prosecuted for Blasphemy in Toronto. Prior to the last Executive Meeting, only such information as could be obtained from newspaper reports had been available. Since then a cablegram, asking for support, had been received, also letters from the defendant and his counsel, and a copy of the paper upon which the charge was based.

In accordance with the traditions of the Society, a promise of help had been cabled, and the Secretary had forwarded such printed matter as might be of use to the counsel, with a request for still further information. It was now open for the Executive to express their wishes in the matter. After a general discussion, the action of the President and Secretary was endorsed, and it was resolved unanimously that financial help be given should occasion arise before the next meeting, the sum to be left to the discretion of the President within a certain limit.

New members were received for Glasgow, Chester-le-Street, Shotts and the Parent Society.

An application to form a Branch at West London was received. Conditions having been complied with, permission was given to form new branches at Chester-le-Street and Shotts (Glasgow).

The Secretary reported a successful lecture at Birmingham from Mr. Rosetti.

Various items of correspondence were dealt with, and the meeting adjourned.

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.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (101 Tottenham Court Road): 7.45, E. C. Saphin, a Lecture. Thursday, 7.45, a Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.5): 7.30, Debate, "Is Birth Control Necessary?" Affirmative—Mr. R. B. Kerr (Editor, *New Generation*). Negative—Mr. H. G. Everett.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W.): 7, Mr. F. P. Corrigan will open a discussion. Also, Wednesday, February 23, at 8 p.m., Annual General Meeting, at 30 Brixton Road.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Edward W. Harly, "Russia: Through the Famine and After."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2: 11, John Russell, M.A., "The Centenary of Pestalozzi, Educational Reformer."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bromley Public Hall): 7, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, "What We Pay for the Religion We Get." Collection.

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.—A meeting at the Empire Café, 30 Smallbrook Street, at 7 p.m., Sunday, February 20.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (Town Hall, Hamilton): 6.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "What is the Use of Christianity?" Ticket 6d. (No. 2 Room, Glasgow City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. Herbert Brown, "The Anti-Vivisectionists' Appeal to the Secularist." Silver Collection. Friday, February 25 (Glasgow Lesser City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 7.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Is there any Evidence for a Future Life?" Ticket, 6d.

SHOTT'S BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Dykehead): Thursday, February 24, at 7, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Some Things Christians Ought to Know." Questions and discussion cordially invited. Admission Free.

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