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

Views and Opinions.

The Religion of Mental Disease.

It is not difficult to get at the truth concerning religion. It lies at hand in scores of volumes, written by scientific enquirers all over the world, and in the main results there is substantial agreement. With any other subject the evidence would command universal assent. But in the case of supernaturalism it is quietly ignored by all professional exponents of religion. There is too much at stake for them to admit its truth, or to put their followers on the track of studying the evidence. In all the lists of books recommended for religious reading one seldom, if ever, comes across one by men of the standing of Tylor, or Fraser, or Spencer, or Wundt, or other investigators into religious origins. What one sees is studies in St. Paul, or the sayings of Jesus, or meditations by this or that clergyman, books which are of no value whatever save that of maintaining views of religion such as could never be maintained before any competent body of men and women. For amongst those competent to express an opinion there is to-day no greater doubt concerning the nature of religion than there is concerning the truth of evolution. Just as the sole topic of discussion among scientific men is the nature of the machinery of evolution, and not its actuality; so the sole enquiry among scientific students of religion is not whether religious beliefs originated in the mistaken interpretation of natural facts, but only as to the precise stages of development of a primitive illusion. It is not difficult to know the truth concerning religion. The only difficulty is that of getting men with courage who are honest enough to state it.

* * *

How not to do it.

An illustration of the truth of what has been said is to hand in a recent issue of the *Daily Express*. A Dr. Norman Porritt writes therein an article on

“Faith and Fasting”—apropos of the season of Lent. He opens his article in this way:

Fasting is a gesture of all religions, and has been from long before the days of the Christian era. Even savage tribes include fasting among their religious observances. With them the custom may have arisen from the lavish offerings of food to their dead, leaving a scarcity for the living. Herbert Spencer concluded that fasting originated in the desire of primitive man for the abnormal nervous conditions favourable to the visions and dreams which give the soul access to the objective realities of the spiritual world.

Now there is hardly a sentence in this passage which is not misleading, so far as the truth of religious fasting is concerned, and some are quite untrue. Consider the implications of “Even savage tribes include fasting among their religious observances.” That is an admission of the truth, but so stated as to suggest a falsehood. “Even savages” is plainly intended to suggest that one finds among savages some of the glorious truths taught by Christianity; whereas the whole truth is that the practice of fasting originated with savages, was maintained by them from sheer ignorance of the consequences of fasting on the nervous system, and perpetuated in Christian history because for centuries Christians were as ignorant on the same subject as the savages from whom they derived their fundamental religious ideas. To have said that savages made fasting a part of their religion because they mistook its natural consequences for religious illumination, and that Christian “saints” followed the practice for much the same reason would have expressed the truth, but it would have given the game away. Again, the statement about the views of Spencer is a mixture of truth and falsehood. Spencer properly pointed out that fasting was practised among savages because of the visions it induced, but to talk of his concluding that savages did this because it gave “the soul access to the objective realities of the spiritual world” is both false and absurd. It makes Spencer talk like Dr. Glover or Billy Sunday. What Spencer said was that fasting gave rise to hallucinations which made the savage believe he was in touch with a “spiritual” world. That is quite a different thing. Once more one wonders whether it is possible for some people to speak the truth where religion is concerned.

* * *

The Great Illusion.

In the later stages of religion many reasons are given for fasting, such as an act of penance, or a release from the grosser pleasures of the flesh; but there is no mistaking the nature of its origin, nor has it ever departed from its original significance. A lowered vitality, or a disordered vitality, is favourable to hallucinations of all descriptions. A modern

medical man, if a patient comes to him with stories of voices heard, or visions seen, immediately looks to the state of the nervous system for an explanation. He is not in the least troubled by the patient's assurance that the voices or the visions are real. As a mental fact they are real, as real as any other personal experience. It is not so much in the fact as in the interpretation of the fact that religion and science are at issue. And the fact of fasting, deliberate or compulsory, being one of the easiest of acquired experiences, gives it its great significance in primitive religion. Instead of seeing in the debilitation caused by fasting the true cause of visions experienced, it is taken as the condition of entering into communication with the spirit world. The Zulu medicine-man's maxim that "a stuffed body cannot see secret things" puts the philosophy of the subject in a nutshell. A shipwrecked sailor without food, whose tortured state rouses visions of a ship and food, is in precisely the condition of the mediæval saint, the modern mystic, or the primitive savage. From a scientific point of view the visions of the man suffering from *delirium tremens* is as great proof of the existence of a world invisible to the normal human being as are the visions of the greatest saint in the Christian calendar.

* * *

Insanity and Religion.

In both the Old and New Testaments fasting hold a great place. The Jesus of the New Testament has an encounter with Satan after fasting for forty days. Almost anyone who believed in the devil beforehand might have a similar experience after a similar preparation. At the side of that we may place the custom of the Malay priest who, when he wishes to enter into communication with the tribal spirits, prepares for it by a prolonged fast. In the lives of the Saints we have a monotonous repetition of lengthy and regular fasts, the poor wretches being quite unaware of the cause of their hallucinations. George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, says that he "fasted much" and walked about in lonely places. After a great deal of this kind of thing he heard a voice speaking to him about Jesus. Had he been a Mohammedan he would have had a different message altogether. Had he been a modern Spiritualist he would simply have had the spirit of Shakespeare jabbering like the Bishop of London. A modern missionary, speaking of the practices of certain uncivilised people, to whom he was talking his own brand of savagism to effect an exchange, remarks that in his opinion "these rogues (the opposition medicine men) from long fasting contract a weakness of brain, a giddiness, a kind of delirium, which makes them imagine that they are gifted with superior wisdom." It is not difficult for a modern Christian to see the truth about the religion of someone else, but it takes a Freethinker, such as Professor Tylor, to put the whole case plainly by stating that "so long as fasting continues as a religious rite, so long the consequences in morbid mental exaltation will continue the old savage doctrine that morbid phantasy is supernatural illumination. Bread and meat would rob the ascetic of many an angel's visit; the opening of the refectory door must many a time have closed the gates of heaven to his gaze." A sane mind in a sound body is one of the best antidotes to religious belief with which I am acquainted.

* * *

How to see God.

Fasting, however, forms but one part, and a small part of the means by which the "religious consciousness" has been built up and perpetuated. In my

"Religion and Sex" I have dealt at length with the manner in which a misunderstanding of pathological states have contributed to the maintenance of religious belief. There are few, indeed, of the great religious visionaries: Paul, Swedenborg, Fox, Mohammed, Bunyan, Luther, St. Teresa, St. Catherine of Sienna, with crowds of mediæval saints and modern seers, whose visions and illuminations may not be traced to some kind of pathological condition. With modern Spiritualism, if we once eliminate all that is to be explained by dissociation and various kinds of well-understood automatisms, there is very little left to bother about. That is why one seldom, if ever, meets among the believers in Spiritualism an authority on abnormal or pathological psychology. Even Professor William James, anxious as he was to say the best that could be said of these religious visionaries, was compelled to admit that:—

Even more, perhaps, than other kind of genius, religious leaders have been subject to abnormal psychological visitations. . . They have . . . been liable to obsessions and fixed ideas; and frequently they have fallen into trances, heard voices, seen visions, and presented all sorts of peculiarities which are ordinarily classed as pathological. Often, moreover, these pathological features in their career have helped to give them their religious authority and influence."

The misunderstanding of abnormal or pathological mental states for divine illumination is constant from the days of the primitive savage down to our own. Whether we are dealing with the crude practices of the savage, the drinking of prepared concoctions by the Greeks or the Hindoos, or Mexicans, the flagellations and starvation of the mediæval monk, the unhealthy isolation and morbid "meditation" of the professional mystic, the story is the same. In every case the end aimed at is the production of mental states that will give the subject the sense of intercourse with another world, and which are about as great evidence of reality as the drink induced visions of the dipsomaniac. As Dr. Maudesley says: "Steadily are the researches of pathology driving the supernatural back into its last and most obscure retreat; for they prove that in the extremest ecstasies there is neither *theolepsy* nor *diabolepsy*, nor any other *lepsy* in the sense of the possession of the individual by an external power; what there is truly is a *psycholepsy*." The medical consulting room will provide a far better place for the solving of many religious mysteries than the vestry of a church.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Mutability.

How indiscriminate is death, how unsearchable is the stupidity of Providence; the natural Rock of Ages is as fabulous as the Rock of the pious hymn; the best and wisest in the world but build their houses and their hopes on shifting sands; or in Dickens' simile: "Deadly elements are peering in at every seam and chink, and the drowned seaman's grave is yawning in the unfathomable gulfs below. With what magnanimous hopes, illusions, and endurances must poor mortals content themselves." Surely the last, most irrational refuge is in that All-Father who, after all, is but the reflex of the slave, of the dread automaton he has made—or that has made him. We approach to sanity when we see in him but the symbol of natural cause and effect. It is more and more evident that man is the only God—though so few are godlike—let him at last exercise his reason, the accumulation of the ages, even in the loss of all that life holds dear.

A. M.

"The Pain of the World."

LIKE most other religions, Christianity undertakes to explain the nature and purpose of existence. The universe with which we are in direct contact is undoubtedly physical; but, in the attempt to interpret this really existing universe, religion invents another which it calls spiritual, and concerning which it pretends to possess, and to impart, the most intimate knowledge.

At the head of the spiritual universe is a being of infinite intelligence and power, "without body, parts, or passions, the maker and preserver of all things both visible and invisible," whom the New Testament defines as love. This being is the Christian God, the glorification of whom is the chief end of all created things.

Assuming the existence of such a being, the question naturally arises, why is the world so full of suffering and sorrow? Thus we are introduced to a problem which the divines have never succeeded in satisfactorily solving.

Dr. H. L. Goudge, of Oxford, preaching lately in Westminster Abbey, said:

There is so much pain and sorrow and failure that it is sometimes hard to believe in a God of love. If God be good, we say, why is the world so hard for us and for others? Why does he not interfere to set it right?"

Professor Goudge endeavours to answer those questions, or, rather, to supply what he regards as the answer which the Bible gives. He says:

What, then, in brief outline, is the answer which the Bible gives? It is that the pain and sorrow of the world are neither God's first will nor his last. All that is noble and beautiful in the world without and in the human soul within, comes from the good God, and reveals his character. If there is much that is otherwise, that is not, in the truest sense, God's will; largely we have ourselves to thank for it.

That is an ingenious answer, but not highly complimentary to the Deity. How many wills does God have? If pain and sorrow are neither his first will nor his last, are we to infer that they are his third will or his fourth? And when the preacher says that "largely we have ourselves to thank for it," are we to conclude that the fault is partly God's and partly our own? Besides, the saying that "largely we have ourselves to thank for it" does not, in any degree, free God from responsibility, because we are exactly what God made us.

There is absolutely nothing new in the learned Professor's argument, and we are astonished that the Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford has had the hardihood to use it. Take a few samples:—

I suppose that the difficulty which pain presents to our minds arises from our conviction that the world is the expression of the will of God. That is, no doubt, perfectly true; but it does not follow that God is equally responsible for all that takes place in it. Some things God wills unconditionally; some things he only wills if the sins are committed which render them necessary.

Here is another gem:—

It is we, ourselves, who are the causes of our own actions, and of all that follows from them. We men have been made in the image of God, and that image is especially seen in our moral freedom.

This is the most vicious reasoning in the whole sermon. The alleged argument is fundamentally wicked, as well as gratuitous. The Professor's full statement of it shows it in its true light. The following is what he means by "moral freedom":—

We are not just secondary causes, as a dynamite bomb is the cause of an explosion; we are the real

causes with whom the responsibility rests. Argue as we will, we hold ourselves and others responsible—especially others. . . . No doubt all the evil might have been avoided if God had denied freedom to us; but then we should not have been men. Outwardly, indeed, we might have looked like men, but inwardly we should have been as really machines as our clocks and our steam-engines.

"Moral freedom," as defined by the preacher, is an absurdity, and has never existed. A truthful man is not free to lie. The very laws of his being impel him to adhere to the truth. A kind-hearted person is not free to be deliberately cruel. If God had made man perfect his freedom would have consisted in doing right all the time. The Gospel Jesus is declared by the Church to have been a perfect man; but was he free to do wrong?

Moral freedom really signifies—not liberty to violate one's natural instincts, but to continue loyal to them under all circumstances. Had God made man a morally perfect being, sin would have been a literal impossibility to him. He would have remained true to himself and his Maker, at all cost. It is utterly false to aver that, in that case, he would have been as really a machine as a clock or a steam-engine.

Dr. Goudge's conception of the condition that would have prevailed in a sinless world, is peculiarly inane. He says:

Would you rather have this world, even as it is, or a world in which you could never labour or suffer for anyone, and in which no one could ever labour or suffer for you? In the very nature of things, as far as we can see, either evil must be possible, or good, in the true sense, must be impossible. A forced goodness is no goodness. . . . God has chosen the higher and nobler alternatives. He has made us free; he has made us men.

We positively decline to accept the reverend gentleman's conception of what a perfect world would have been like; and we would certainly prefer such a world, accurately defined, to the one we are living in now. Of course, in such a world there would have been no need for the ministrations of the parsons. Their profession presupposes a fallen and sinful humanity, and is endured only by those who hold that shameful faith.

Dr. Goudge goes so far as to hint that human sin has stranger effects than most divines imagine. He says:

It will be said that this is far from covering the whole ground, and that there is much pain in the world which cannot be due to our sin. The lightning strikes a tree and a man is crushed as it falls. A fog comes up on a winter night and obscures the signals, and in a moment one train is dashed into another. The lightning and the fog lie at God's door. What can they have to do with the sin of man? My brothers, I believe that, even here, there is the closest connection. I do not believe that the laws of the world were changed when man first fell into sin. But I do believe that an imperfect world is far the best training place for imperfect men and women, and that the world is what it is because God knew that we should be what we are.

How wonderfully easy it is for an educated man to play upon the ignorance and credulity of a Christian congregation! Dr. Goudge may sincerely believe all he says in this outstanding discourse, but his exceptionally mystical observations are not founded upon a single scrap of knowledge. What he gives us in such full measure is sheer fiction.

The belief in God has done greater harm in the world than all other beliefs put together. Glad and grateful we are to know that it is rapidly passing, and that faith in man is certainly succeeding it. The spiritual universe, with God as its centre, has had its day. Science is busy, unravelling the mysteries of the material universe to which we all belong.

J. T. LLOYD.

Literature in Leash.

Truth is not to be dallied with.—*Goethe*.

Genius hovers, with his sunshine and music, close by the darkest and deafest eras.—*Emerson*.

Freedom is the one purport, wisely aimed at, or unwisely, of all man's struggles, toilings, and sufferings in this earth.—*Carlyle*.

THE price of all kinds of books has been greatly affected by the industrial upheaval caused by the world-war; and it is very unlikely that they will again be so cheap as in pre-war days. Novels have suffered with volumes of far more serious import, and are being sold at greatly increased prices as compared with a few years ago.

This has resulted in a return of readers to the libraries; for, obviously, people will not buy books in such quantities if prices are high. It is only a generation since that nearly all novels were published in three volumes at a guinea and a half; and, during that period, the circulating libraries were in the full flush of prosperity.

In the eighteenth century, novels were issued in four or more volumes, as may be seen in the old editions of Fielding's and Richardson's romances. During the Victorian era many novelists issued their works in monthly parts, usually with illustrations. Dickens, Thackeray, Lever, and a host of authors reached a very wide audience in this manner. Cheapness is not everything. The low-priced novels, such as those issued at sixpence and sevenpence, had little to recommend them. As a rule, the type was bad, and the paper worse. Publishers, too, had a distressing habit of making their authors fit a certain number of pages, which was more advantageous to the publishers than to the readers.

The power of the libraries is enormous; and they can make or mar an author. Even so great a writer as George Meredith had his public recognition delayed for many years by their action. *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, one of the finest stories in the language, was banned on account of its alleged outspokenness. Subsequent books from Meredith's pen were looked at askance.

Among living writers Mr. George Moore has suffered most, for, since *A Mummer's Wife*, that most powerful of realistic novels, first frightened the librarians, most of his books have figured in the modern *Index Expurgatorius*. Curiously, that exquisite and admirable artist, Robert Louis Stevenson, became an idol of the libraries without writing upon romantic love. For, while he does, like Falstaff, in some sort, handle women, his writings teach that it is not the passion of love, but the spirit of adventure, which makes the world go round. But the *New Arabian Nights*, though many would rather read them than the old, did not found a school of novelists.

Never let us forget that the library proprietor is, first and last, a tradesman, and, generally, innocent of literature. As women are the principal patrons of libraries, the libraries exist for the purpose of pleasing women.

This ringed fence restricts the novelist to writing smooth tales, generally of love; that is, if he wishes to live by his pen. Even great authors have been hampered in their choice of subject by these absurd prejudices for innocuous books which can be placed in the hands of maidens of tender and advanced years.

That is one of the principal reasons why stories of romantic love have almost monopolised English fiction. The writers themselves were not under illusions in these matters. They realised that they were giving the public soothing-syrup to induce false dreams, instead of stories related to the facts of existence.

Authors seldom write to satisfy the cultured and sophisticated mind. Nor can they do so, and live,

whilst book-publishing remains purely an industry, and is backed by uncritical commercial speculators, devoted to producing a standardised commodity for the lowest common denominator of mob-intelligence.

Recall Thackeray's words in the preface to *Pendennis*, where he apologises for his timidity in handling the earlier life of his hero. Authors may bow the knee in the House of Suburban Respectability; but they know full well what they are doing.

When Emile Zola, at the height of his fame, visited England he was entertained and feted by his fellow-craftsmen; while his books were barred from all the libraries, and his English publisher was actually in prison for daring to print the works of a master of European reputation.

There have been library committees which have condemned Mrs. Gaskell's *Ruth*, George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, H. G. Wells's *Anne Veronica*, as unsuitable reading because they touch certain aspects of sex. It is a serious state of affairs. The literary artist who wishes to depict life as he sees it is handicapped by the restraining influence of people who know nothing of the alphabet of art or culture.

If the grip of the commercially-minded tradesman so shapes the destiny of the novel, what must its effect be in other directions? Advanced books are blandly barred by smiling librarians. In scores of libraries Swinburne, the greatest of our recent poets, is represented only by a paltry volume of selections. Indeed, librarians have rare noses for heresy; and their sins of omission and commission are numerous. They stock replies to Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*, but exclude the original work. They cumber their shelves with thousands of volumes on theological subjects, but Freethought works are conspicuous by their absence. Their hostility is thorough. Robert Blatchford's light-hearted criticisms are included as well as the scholarly works of John M. Robertson.

This is, by no means, the whole story of the attack on the intellectuals. Where the conspiracy of silence is broken, accidentally, the Christians display another aspect of their attitude towards Freethought, which is, then, misrepresented and slandered.

Few, however, are fully aware that this peculiarly Christian habit is extended to literature itself; and that the campaign of calumny is carried on year after year. Look, for example, at the many works of reference which are to be found in most libraries; and notice how Freethought and Freethinkers are treated in their pages. *The Victorian Age of Literature* (Home University Library); *A Short Biographical Dictionary of English Literature* (Dent's Everyman's Library); and *Chambers' Encyclopædia*, are all open to the gravest objections in this respect. In all these publications the crudest insults are levelled at the great "intellectuals"; and they are full of bias directed against men and women of advanced opinions.

This is the modern form of an infamous religious tradition, which may be traced back through the centuries to the far-off days of Lucretius, and even earlier. The fortunes of famous writers, like Paine, Shelley, Meredith, and Swinburne, have been much influenced by this frigid and calculated misconception.

Freethought, invariably, incurs the hatred of orthodoxy, and no enmity is more unscrupulous, more relentless, or more venomous. This garbage is thrown at Freethinkers of set purpose. It is meant to discredit the characters and writings of men and women who have criticised Orthodoxy.

In so carrying out a campaign of calumny, the perpetrators have rendered a grave disservice to literature by retarding the growth of liberal ideas, and hindering the wheels of Progress.

MIMNERMUS.

The Palm Tree.

A DARK-SKINNED girl, naked except for a fluffy girdle and many ornaments on neck, arms and legs, climbed a palm-tree in one of the Melanesian islands north-east of New Guinea. From near-by huts collected a crowd of neighbours. They gazed at the figure aloft, looked at one another, and listened, as she sobbed out a melancholy chant, and told the cause of her grief. She loved a youth of her tribal clan. He returned her love. Alas! her father wished to impose upon her a rich tribesman for whom she could not feel affection. This wretch had publicly insulted her. Such coarse abuse could have but one result. She must wipe out the reproach by death. She leaped, and came down to the Melanesian earth with a thud. The people bore her corpse away. Sad as the event was, they all allowed that she had done the right thing.

We turn to another, and deeper, palm-tree tragedy. A chief in one of these islets called his wife (that is to say, one of his wives) a foul name. It was spoken in anger; he was really fond of her. She retired to a corner and brooded, and presently stole away and scaled a palm, and mourned aloud, and, in view of a great assembly, flung herself down to death. Not many hours later, as the place echoed with sounds of lamentation for the dead woman, her husband, harrowed with remorse, climbed the same fatal tree, cried his farewell, and plunged. The two bodies were buried together.

I have selected these tragic anecdotes from a very instructive volume by the ethnographer Malinowski.* This explorer has visited the Pacific, lived awhile among the Melanesians, and closely and sympathetically observed their manners and customs. It is pleasant to note the modern temper in which he carries on his researches. His freedom from the narrow old missionary Christianity is complete. You can catch his point of view in the following note:

Many of my Melanesian friends, taking at its face value the doctrine of Brotherly Love preached by Christian missionaries, and the taboo on warfare and killing preached and promulgated by Government officials, were unable to reconcile the stories about the Great War reaching—through planters, traders, overseers, plantation hands—the remotest Melanesian or Papuan village. They were really puzzled at hearing that, in one day, White men were wiping out as many of their own kind as would make up several of the biggest Melanesian tribes.

This is merely a remark of his by the way. His chief object is to examine the modes in which the native mind works on questions of right and wrong, in sex, in the treatment of property, in the giving of gifts and tribute, in trade, in sorcery, in cases of assault, and so on. The palm-tree examples are striking types.

Another lurid instance in Malinowski's survey is the digging up of a corpse to ascertain, by marks on the body, what crimes the deceased (if suspected) has committed. It is to the Melanesian mind a dangerous procedure; and, while the body is being uncovered, men spit chewed ginger on the bystanders as a safeguard against the evil witches that fly about invisibly on such occasions. Sometimes the scrutiny of the corpse closes in doubt; sometimes the proofs are clear. Anyway, the duty of testing guilt or innocence remains, despite the unavoidable peril and horror of the exhumation.

I know that some people read such accounts of the life of Primitives (I prefer that term to "Savages"),

* *Crime and Custom in Savage Society*, by B. Malinowski (Kegan Paul. 5s. Published in 1926).

and class the extraordinary rituals and fashions as "superstitious," "barbaric," "inhuman," and so on; and I am not now discussing the validity of that language. I am interested in the following question: Assuming that the Gods and Devils of the many species of theological belief are not actualities, and that morality is not really created by the Codes and Decrees of Gods, how has it been created in history, and how is it being developed to-day?

In these few lines I am not seeking to trace the evolution of ethics, personal, or social, or international. Only one simple affirmation am I now making. It is this: Morality, or the respect for Right, is the result of continuous human test; the process of test being, to an immense extent, painful, but tending to less painfulness.

The number of persons who anticipate a Day of Judgment, to occur in the year x , is obviously decreasing. But this lapse of belief by no means implies the abolition of the idea of "judgment." In my opinion, mankind was never so much as to-day inclined to test, and to judge, and to record verdicts on actions and motives, individual or collective.

In past times judgment was very much left to a few rulers, aristocrats, priests, and "sages." The multitude acquiesced, and humbly regarded the lines between virtue and sin as precisely those which were chalked by authority.

It is plain that this attitude has not all vanished; but it is in process of vanishing. As democracy grows, its acuteness of judgment grows. It will, in due evolution, attain a majesty far nobler than that of the Great White Throne of our theological fathers. The very paper for which I am writing these simple meditations might be named (though I am not urging Mr. Cohen to adopt the proposal) "*The Freethinker, a Journal of Judgment.*"

I am, as a frequent newspaper reader, aware of the many faults of the Press, and I trust all leader writers and reporters shed tears daily at their journalistic shortcomings; and if they will not, I will try to do it for them. But one can truly assert that at no period since printing was invented has honester and more useful ethical judgment been uttered in the Press than is uttered to-day on economics, politics, sex, science, art, and philosophy.

To-morrow will witness a larger honesty; but the larger honesty is the child of the smaller. For example, I am perfectly certain that no previous war was ever so examined and ethically discussed as the World-War of 1914-1918 has been; and I rejoice at the severity and length of the democratic inquisition.

This modern inquisition is conscious, and is more conscious every day; but, in the ages now bygone, the judgment was, in tremendous measure, effected through many vivid and tragic experiences. I suppose some minds cannot dare to review the pangs and terrors of the past. Perhaps, indeed, a sudden and full vision of all the past hells and purgatories would kill a sensitive woman or man. We know enough and too much as it is; and, with all our ignorance allowed for, what we also know is that our race moves on from one terrible test to another, fording rivers of grief, and crossing deserts of agony and failure, and yet never pauses.

Let others think as they will; I like to think we, in the vast humanity, owe a debt to every sufferer of every pain, noble or ignoble, in the long trial and dreadful analysis. We arrive, step by step, at higher values. And the pride of the labour is stronger by far than when we depended upon the abrupt edicts of the Gods. We test, we hesitate, we suffer, we decide, we change, we progress. It is our own work. The triumphs are ours. The courage, even in failure,

is ours. Not each individual sufferer, such as this or that victim of the palm-tree, can say, with Henley—but humanity as a whole can say:

In the fell clutch of circumstance,
I have not winced, nor cried aloud;
Under the bludgeoning of chance,
My head is bloody but unbowed.

That was said in 1875. It will be said as valiantly and far more victoriously thousands of years hence.

F. J. GOULD.

Acid Drops.

It is very distressing the way in which things happen. Everyone knows that the proper and orthodox manner for people to act when shipwrecked is to sing "Nearer My God to Thee," or "Safe in the Arms of Jesus." In very many tracts we have seen accounts of this kind of thing, and one expects people to act up to it. But when the steamer "Beechtree" was wrecked the other day off Land's End the crew pulled away singing the Frothblowers' Anthem! And they were saved, just as though they had sung a hymn! This is very disturbing. By all rightful considerations they should have been drowned out of hand. But to substitute the "Frothblowers' Anthem" for the orthodox "All Hail the Power of Jesu's Name," is enough to break a parson's heart.

"To the Atheist," says Bishop Heywood, of Nottingham, "the problem of good must be far more difficult of solution than the problem of evil is to a Christian." We can assure Bishop Heywood that neither question presents much difficulty to an Atheist; and, if the bishop would devote a little time to finding out just what Atheism is, and just how an Atheist looks at the world, he would find he is talking nonsense. To exist, an animal must observe such conditions as will enable it to live. That sounds like a truism; but it contains the essence of the matter. And, as human beings live in groups, to the observance of physiological conditions there is added that maintenance of harmonious relations between human beings which makes corporate life possible. For the rest, it is just a question of natural and social selection. This is a condensed answer to the Bishop's difficulty; and it may require more thinking over than the average bishop is capable of; but, we can assure him that it will repay study; at any rate, it will help him to understand the atheistic position.

In the absence of something more exciting, the *Weekly Dispatch* is publishing weekly articles by various writers on the subject of re-incarnation. It is the kind of doctrine that pleases people who are not in the habit of asking themselves what they mean by the language they use, or who imagine that by being sufficiently vague they are indulging in profound speculation. In the issue of the paper for March 6, Sir Arthur Quiller Couch has an article, and the passage of chief importance therein is that in which he says: "my disbelief in re-incarnation largely depends on my personal abhorrence of having to live another life in any shape or form." That will certainly not please Sir Arthur's Christian readers. The confession is worth noting.

The Rev. Carey Bonner told the Sunday School Union Conference, at Coventry, that no useful purpose would be served by trying to discover the causes of the great decrease in Sunday School membership (which was merely 70,000, he said, not 1,000,000 as stated in the newspapers); fullest attention should be given to suggested remedies. How thoroughly Christian that is! Only a Christian would think of applying remedies before he had discovered causes. A right good Christian way of doing business is that. It helps to explain why the world to-day is in such a pretty muddle.

The remarkable decay in the power of tradition and in the prestige of authority have made our task more difficult, says the Vicar of Leeds. He thinks that to do away with authority (priestly authority he means, of course) is perilous. It is—for the Churches and their ju-ju men.

Naturalists estimate that through the destruction of crops by insects last year, the labour of one million men has been lost, and four hundred million pounds' worth of material made useless. The Architect of the Universe evidently meant man not to find the task of collecting the necessities of life too easy. Perhaps he thought that the harder the "graft" on earth, the better the appreciation of the promised harp-twanging and community singing in heaven.

It has always seemed to me, says a shining light of the Baptist Church, an advantage to know what you are praying about. We suggest that a bigger advantage is to know why, in the name of common-sense, you should be praying at all, since the world you inhabit is one where God Almighty is said to ordain everything that happens.

Miss Maynard, the first Principal of Westfield College, University of London, declares she has met students who think "Christianity does not come under the heading of 'knowledge' at all." She has therefore prepared a reply, *Then Shall We Know* (S.P.C.K.). We think these students' notion quite wrong. Christianity can be rightly classified as "knowledge." But it is the kind of knowledge students, or other men and women, can well do without, if they value their moral and intellectual welfare.

The Rev. J. Grange Radford, B.D., recently read a paper at a meeting of ministers at Brunswick. One statement was: "We must remember that God's ethical ideas of truth, beauty, and goodness will lie for ever beyond our perfect grasp." We are very glad to know that. If those ideas are anything like the barbarous ones revealed in Holy Writ, we should say the further they are beyond our grasp the better for humanity.

The high-priest of Wesleyan Methodism, Dr. Russell Maltby, says we live in an age when people are not given to the contemplation of spiritual things. A sense of God and of the unseen eternal things is harder to come by now than it was. Now, that really is very odd. Mr. Maltby can't be reading aright the signs of his time. Doesn't he ever see the newspapers? Why, according to them, the man-in-the-street is yearning, simply yearning, for spiritual things in general and for "true" religion in particular. Surely our infallible purveyors of news are not mistaken, and our latter-day prophets but seeing idle visions? Maybe, though, they have been misled by the popularity of the Frothblowers' Anthem.

We hope the Bill, to permit men to marry their aunts and nieces who are related only by marriage, will be placed on the Statute Book. Our legislators, however, might well have framed the Bill so as to abolish certain other stupid Christian restrictions recorded in the Prayer-Book "Table of Affinity and Kindred." The dead hand of ancient Hebrew medicine-men has dominated marriage—a purely social contract—quite long enough. Whatever restrictions there should be imposed on marriage ought to be suggested by Eugenics and not be dictated by certain bygone primitive Asiatic law-givers. That is the view of modern men and women.

If religion had worn a smile instead of a sour face, says a popular weekly, we might have a brighter and better world to-day. Our retort is: If the Christian religion has been showing a sour face for nineteen centuries, its fundamentals must be as sour as its face. To

expect the miracle of a smile from the sour Christian religion is as foolish as expecting sweetness in a sour apple. The world would be better and brighter to-day if gloomy and hate-inciting Christian doctrines had never dominated it. That is what an increasing number of intelligent men and women are beginning to realise.

You cannot build a healthy, sane civilisation in the world except on Christ. The Rev. T. Charles Williams, D.D., is quite sure about that. Christians have been nineteen centuries attempting to build a civilisation on Christ. Can the result be called healthy and sane? The history of Christian civilisation in a record of priest-blessed wars, grab, bloody persecutions, and gross superstitions. If this is the result of building up civilisation on a Christ myth, then the sooner everyone looks around for something else to build on, the better for mankind.

Of all exercises of human faculty Literature and Art tread nearest to God, says Mr. George Saintsbury. If that be so, it would be interesting to know God's opinion about Mr. Thomas Hardy's two pieces of great literature—"Tess" and "Jude the Obscure," which were honoured by the displeasure of the Holy Roman Church.

The Rt. Hon. T. R. Ferens, of Hull, is very much concerned about the desecration of the Sabbath. The Hull Corporation, he says, was asked to allow Sunday games in the parks; but "our Lord Mayor, who is a Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School Superintendent, was hot against the proposal, and only two hands were held up in favour." So now we know the truth about the Corporation's veto on Sunday games. Certain councillors who were in favour of the games weak-mindedly allowed themselves to be persuaded into voting against them, for fear of loss in business or private life, as a result of back-stair clerical boycott. We advise the broader-minded citizens of Hull to see that they return representatives of a somewhat firmer type of character at the next municipal election.

The Rev. Donald Fraser, a missionary returned from abroad, told a Cupar assembly of business men that the missionaries he knew helped trade considerably in Africa. That we can well believe; also, that they help themselves often enough while doing so. He said, too, that there was "a tremendous difference between the tribal native and the detribalised native; and the tribal native was almost always the better man." That does not say much for the influence of Christians upon the native; but it agrees with what many others have said. So, Mr. Fraser draws the conclusion that the traders should support missions; first, because they make for trade; and secondly, because the missionaries can afterwards help to keep natives in order. It never appears to strike Mr. Fraser that if the traders treated the natives decently they would seldom require much keeping in order; or that the whole plea says very much for the influence of Christianity upon Christians themselves.

There are some very queer Chief Constables in the country, and one often wonders why they gave up office in some chapel to enter the force. Recently the Wolverhampton Presbyterian Church opened a Sunday cabaret. The Chief of Police gave an address at the opening meeting, and expressed his sorrow that it was to be a secular club, without hymns or anything of that description. He would have liked it to be opened with an old-fashioned hymn, and decided it was of no use for young people to come there unless they had looked after their religion beforehand. So, quite on his own, he asked them all to sing, "All hail the power of Jesu's name." All we can say is that the gathering would probably have been the happier if the Chief Constable had stayed away; and we would suggest that this gentleman might do better to resign his post and take up the job of a city missionary.

Another example of the way in which men mistake their vocation is offered by Dr. Salter, M.P. This gentleman was addressing a mission Sunday School at Bermondsey, and lamented that, year after year, statistics showed a decline in the number of Sunday School scholars. This he called a "lamentable social fact"; the circumstance that only one out of sixteen persons went to church in London was a "terrible fact." We would merely remark on this that a member of Parliament who talks in this way represents a very depressing fact, since it indicates a total inability, on his part, to visualise social phenomena in their true light. The social philosophy that a man of this type of mind is likely to bring to bear is not very likely to be useful to anyone.

One other example of the types of mind beloved by the newspapers, and indicative of material for genuine social thinkers, may be found in Sir Arthur Yapp. He writes in the *Radio Times* that he thinks the development of wireless must lead people to see the great "First Cause" behind the marvels of the universe. We really do not know what the great First Cause has to do with it. We know a great many wireless enthusiasts who are seeking the cause of certain kinds of "interference," but they seek it only to eliminate it. We do not know that anyone has ever attributed discoveries in the wireless world to that verbal monstrosity the "great First Cause." We hardly need to inform Sir Arthur, one of the leaders of the Y.M.C.A. movement, that he is talking nonsense. He would probably reply that he is talking religion—which, in its way, would be a kind of agreement with the statement.

But Sir Arthur might be a little more careful of his facts. He says that one benefit of the wireless is that it permits questions to be discussed from all sorts of angles, and that radio offers a platform that is free to all. Sir Arthur knows—he must know—these statements to be quite false. The broadcasting stations reek with religion, in spite of the many thousands of protests that have been made against it; but there has never been permitted a single sentence of unqualified freethought. An address which leaves out religion may be given; but none is permitted that says anything against it. The B.B.C. has always carefully muzzled that kind of thing, and it will keep on doing so. One wonders whether it would be possible for some public men to speak honestly about anything where religion is concerned? We have our doubts.

The Rev. J. C. Carlile (*Baptist Times*) says:

It is biologically true that adaptation to environment is the law of life. Animals that fail to fit in with their surroundings die off. That is exactly what is happening in many cases in organised religion. The Church has not adapted itself. Too often it talks a language the people do not understand, preaches a salvation from perils of which they are unconscious, and forgets the demoralising effect of slum areas and the monotony of modern industry which makes evil almost a necessity. Oh, for an awakening! Any part of London shows the failure of good people to realise the absolute necessity of adaptation to circumstances.

From this we gather that our Baptist Fundamentalists are discovering that the modern man and woman haven't much use for the narrow Baptist doctrines. Therefore, it is suggested that Baptists should follow their Anglican friends, the Modernists, and start pruning and expurgating and re-interpreting, in order to retain their more modern clients and to rope in back-sliders.

Dr. S. Henning Belfrage, hon. medical secretary to the New Health Society, declares that of the total number of deaths recorded for England and Wales last year, one in eight were due to preventable disease. He adds: "Disease and ill-health are too often looked upon as the decrees of Fate, instead of as the working of natural laws." If that false notion is current, is not the Chris-

tian religion to blame? For nineteen hundred years Christians have been told to pray to God for relief from disease and ill-health. The view was that the Lord had sent the disease for some reason or another; and the Lord would, if asked, take it away. As one has said, the devout were on their knees in prayer when they ought to have been down on their knees scrubbing insanitary floors. They were busy imploring a deaf God for aid, when they should have been helping themselves by cleaning their filthy homes and purifying their streets. To-day, priests still tell people to pray when disease visits them. Naturally, then, the false notion deplored by Dr. Belfrage is still common. It will continue so, while Christian beliefs dominate people's thoughts. The task before the New Health Society is, therefore, that of re-educating Christian-saturated minds. The job, we admit, is none too easy; yet it is easier than it might have been had not the *Freethinker* been engaged for 40 years in a similar task.

Phoebe Ralph, an expert in the subtle craft of fortune-telling, was fined £5 by the Wigan magistrates for using a crystal "with intent to deceive and impose." We don't suppose this exploiter of credulity worries over much about that. She knows plenty of lucrative clients are to be found elsewhere to make good the fine. And for that piece of good fortune she should call down the blessings of heaven upon those titled proprietors of popular weeklies who so diligently develop and encourage the superstitious mentality for her to exploit. She might also reserve a little gratitude for our parson-dominated educationalists who force innocent children to drink from that fountain of superstition—the Holy Bible.

Poor Puritan Methodism! There seems nothing for it to do but sell its soul to the Devil in order to retain its younger clients. It appears that commissions have been sent out to enquire about the position and problems of rural Methodism. A pious scribe who accompanied one commission to Devon and Cornwall declares that Methodism is nothing like so strong here as it was twenty years ago. The older members, sturdy old kill-joys all, don't do enough to meet the demand of the young people for social gatherings, concerts, and other ungodly diversions. Hence the younger clients are steering clear of the churches; and hence, the only way to retain them appears to be by introducing sinful secular amusements such as are common to the local Anglican churches. These be sad times for Methodism. But what is to be will be. It's all written on the dear old Pyramids.

There are limits to what parsons can stand—particularly Scottish ones. At Lunderstone Bay, just between Gourrock and Inverkip, every year there springs up a caucas town of holiday makers. That is bad enough, so far as old-fashioned Scotch theology is concerned, but on Sunday there is a jazz band playing, and the good Rev. George McNab hinted to the Presbytery that he could tell them some "very nasty" things about what goes on there on Sunday. Another minister complained that there was actually dancing going on, and he asked plaintively, what chance had ministers against that? Clearly, very little. The overwhelming power of the Gospel has its limits, and the power of the name of Jesus to save must not be put to the strain of competing with a jazz band. So steps are to be taken to bring religion into the summer camp, and to introduce a number of parsons and parsonettes who, between them, will induce the proper Christian atmosphere. But suppose these good Christians are overwhelmed by the influence of their surroundings, and the budding McNabs are found tripping the light fantastic to the sound of a jazz band? And yet stranger things than that have happened. Still, we agree with the parsons, that it is hard these degenerate sons and daughters of Scotland should have taken to this summer camp, instead of being content with whisky and the Confession of Faith in the style of their ancestors.

What a mass of humbug is modern religion! And how the papers work to keep it going! In the United States there have been several cases lately of young men, from sixteen to twenty, who have committed suicide. There is no indication that these boys were anything but religious, and in any case there are plenty of cases of youthful suicides all over the world. But the Churches cannot miss the chance of doing business, even if it is over a coffin, and the *Philadelphia Record* rushes in with the opinions of three parsons and a Rabbi, who are united in their conviction that what is needed is more religion—that is, what is needed is more of them. The transparent humbug of it all is apparent to those who know anything on the subject of suicide, but the parsons and the Rabbi and the newspaper editor are not writing for people who think. They are writing for such as believe in Christianity.

The Vicar of Blackpool is of opinion that children should receive "sound Christian teaching" in public schools. We are not very greatly surprised at this, since it only amounts to saying that the Vicar wants the nation to set to work to train customers for his special form of merchandise. But the reason advanced for this, or rather the justification set forth, is that "The average working man is far from an Atheist, and wants his children to grow up straight, and clean and pure." That is the kind of thing which exposes the essential blackguard. Because the average working man desires his children to grow up strong and pure, therefore he is not an Atheist. If he were he would like his children to grow up weak and impure. With a man of that stamp argument is thrown away. Decent minded men and women can only avoid his society as much as possible. Even decent Christians have grown ashamed of imputing beastliness to others because they differ on religious matters. The Vicar of Blackpool evidently belongs to the old school. He helps us to realise what the old-fashioned Christian was really like.

A concert was recently held at Stockton-on-Tees, on a Sunday evening, for the benefit of the local boot fund. But the Rural Dean is a good Christian and was horrified at such a thing being done. It is not "boots for the bairns" about which people should be bothering, he said; "they ought to be looking after their morals first." We dare swear that all the Rural Deans means by this is that they ought to be thinking more of going to church on Sunday than giving concerts to get boots for children. But, all the same, we would suggest for his consideration the opinion that, if the care for children's feet and bodies was effective, their morals would show a marked improvement.

Canon Peter Green is of opinion that no child under sixteen can be truly religious. We think he places the age too high, but the curious thing is that while believing this, Canon Peter Green believes in teaching religion to children. Why? What is the use of teaching a subject where it cannot be understood? Is it that the Canon feels that unless children are indoctrinated with religion before they understand it, they will never take it at all? And is not Canon Green confusing the feelings associated with adolescence with religion? We should like him to deal with some of the evidence on this head in Mr. Cohen's *Religion and Sex*.

Dr. Finegan, Bishop of Kilmore, Ireland, has announced that the bodies of armed bank robbers who lose their lives in the commission of a crime will not be allowed Christian burial, unless before death they have shown signs of repentance. Now, who is there who will say that the priests are not in the front rank of reformers? The rule admits that the fact of being religious does not stop men committing a crime, and if they are shot out of hand, they will be damned eternally. But if they can only live long enough to profess repentance, and five minutes will be long enough if a man is certain he is about to die, then he may have Christian burial, and so will have taken the first step towards paradise.

The "Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

THE closing date for this special appeal is March 20—the date of our next issue. One who bears a very honoured name in the Freethought movement, Mr. E. B. Side, confesses to being "one of the culprits who leave their subscriptions to the last moment," but thinks that, "if we laggards come up to scratch by March 20, the total amount subscribed should be greatly enhanced." We hope that Mr. Side's expectations will be realised.

Previously acknowledged (corrected total) £1,013 5s. 8d. E. B. Side, £1; T. Dixon, £1 1s.; E. J. O., 2s. 6d.; We Three (4th sub.), 3s.; N. Higham, 2s. 6d.; Noir, 2s. 6d.; E. L. Bishop (3rd sub.), 1s.; D. Walton (C. P.), 3rd sub., £2 2s. 6d.; J. E. Roose (Rhodesia), £1 1s.; V. Murray, £1; W. M., 10s.; A. Hiley, 10s. Total, £1,020 1s. 8d.

Correction.—Among last week's acknowledgments were several received per the West Ham Branch N.S.S. These were included in the ordinary list, but there appears to have been one omission and one inaccuracy. 5s. from Mrs. Bogg should have been acknowledged and H. H. Hurrell should have read £2, not 2s. The total has been corrected accordingly.

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

CHAPMAN COHEN.

To Correspondents.

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

J. RENNIE.—We have no doubt that the Church can do a great deal for the business world; whether it will benefit the world at large is quite another matter. It is rather pitiful to see the way in which the Church is attempting to cajole all kinds of interests. Once it commanded them. Thanks for cuttings.

"WE THREE."—Not hundreds but thousands ought to subscribe to the Endowment Trust. It is one of the best schemes ever launched in the interests of militant Freethought.

S. ANDERSON.—The Roman peace was a real thing. The Christian peace was never more than a sham. The Church sowed hatred and then prayed that men might love one another. It never really aimed at more than the rule of men by a universal belief in a number of ridiculous doctrines.

HOWELL S. ENGLAND.—We are sending on the missing copies. Sorry they went astray, but they were sent from this office.

A. HOLMES.—We have no knowledge of any such practice on a general scale, but it might, of course, take place in individual cases. Self-mutilation in obedience to personal conviction is quite a common thing in the history of Christianity, and is, indeed, noticed in the New Testament. But we question the existence of any such general rule to-day.

J. E. ROOSE.—Please accept our apologies. Will see to it in future. Thanks for contribution to Fund.

W. NELSON.—We noted the enquiry in the *Observer* as to whether there was any modern reply to Paine's *Age of Reason*. There is not, and there is not likely to be. The clergy to-day advance many of Paine's opinions under cover of "Advanced Theology." And as this means they are only about a century behind, we suppose it is advanced—for them.

N. HIGHAM.—Glad to have your promise of further contributions to the Trust Fund.

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.

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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.

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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 (March 13) Mr. Cohen will give the first of two lectures in the Portman Rooms, Baker Street (entrance in Dorset Street). Baker Street can be conveniently reached from all parts of London by bus or tube, and we are looking forward to a good crowd on the opening night. The chair will be taken at seven o'clock, and admission is free. As we before announced, there is in process of formation a West London Branch of the N.S.S., and these lectures should lead to the enrolling of a number of members. They will, if Freethinkers lend a hand in making the meetings known among their friends and acquaintances. Meanwhile, those who care to lend a hand in forming the new Branch may write to Mr. D. A. LeMaime, care of *Freethinker* Office.

Sunday last was the 46th anniversary of the opening of the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester, and the building was crowded in celebration of the event. Unfortunately, the President, Mr. Sydney Gimson, who has held that office since 1883, was unable to be present owing to a sore throat. In his absence the chair was taken by Mr. Hassell, who gave a brief address outlining the objects of the Society. There was an excellent programme of vocal and instrumental music provided, followed by an address from Mr. Cohen, and all appeared to thoroughly enjoy themselves. It is, perhaps, worth recording that among the subscribers to the maintenance of the hall was Professor Huxley, who, in 1891, sent a contribution "in evidence of his full sympathy with the objects of the society."

We have heard from Mr. Franklin Steiner, secretary of the American Rationalist Association, informing us that at its last Annual Congress Mr. Cohen was elected a Vice-President of the Society, and expressing the hope that he will accept the honour. He has, of course, no hesitation in doing so. We are fighting the same fight, three thousand miles apart, and Mr. Cohen thoroughly appreciates the compliment paid him.

Mr. Joseph Lewis, President of the *Freethinkers' Society of New York*, is indefatigable in trying to get the American authorities to act up to the Constitution, and to leave religion severely alone. Recently he discovered that a public school had been granted to a Roman Catholic Church for an entertainment and dance, the proceeds to go to St. Michael's Church, Mount Holly, New York. He at once got into communication with the Superintendent of Education as to what had been done, and his protest appears to have been quite successful, since the letting of the school was cancelled. As Mr. Lewis remarks in a letter to us, it is not child's play stopping Catholics doing as they please in New York. We should "tell the world" it is not, and we congratulate Mr. Lewis upon his determination and his success.

Distributing copies of the *Freethinker* to strangers is usually interesting, sometimes exciting work, and those who wish to indulge in the sport can be supplied with parcels of specimen copies if they will be good enough to write saying how many they can profitably dispose of. We are also prepared to send free copies for six weeks to any address on receipt of threepence in stamps—the cost of postage.

Leonard Huxley, LL.D., is to preside at the next Conway Memorial Lecture, which will be delivered on March 17, at 7 p.m., at South Place Institute, Moorgate, E.C., by Prof. G. Elliot Smith, F.R.S., his subject being "Human Nature." Admission will be free.

The following letter by one of our readers appeared in *Cycling* (March 4 issue):—

A "MERIDEN" PROTEST.

Please permit me to register a protest against the proposed holding of a religious service at the annual Meriden Memorial gathering of cyclists. My objection to the religious service is that it has kept away, and always will keep away, Jews, Atheists, and Catholics, as well as cyclists of certain other Christian sects, and therefore it prevents the gathering from being a truly representative one of wheel-folk.

In place of a religious service, my suggestion is that there should be a purely secular address delivered by some well-known cyclist. This might be followed by a two-minute silence, which would allow each man or woman time to think his or her own thoughts about those who made the supreme sacrifice.

In conclusion, I would point out that only by excluding religion of every kind from the celebration can a truly united and fully representative gathering of wheel-folk of all religious sects and of none, be brought together to pay homage to the fallen. D. P. S.

We suggest that cycling readers might send a postcard to *Cycling*, Rosebery Avenue, E.C.1, stating that they fully agree with the protest by D. P. S. against a religious service being held at Meriden. By so doing they will add considerable weight to the protest.

"The Man with the Hoe."

(Concluded from page 150.)

THE demand by the tenants of the monasteries for the abolition of serfdom was the general expression of the people's developing idea of human dignity. The particular counts in the indictment of the monks as lords of the manor, cover a whole series of mean robberies. There was the custom of taking toll of a dead man's property (heriot) which, for the lord of the manor, amounted to one-third of the whole. That arose from the taking of the serf's best beast, if the total of his stock did not fall below three. When, as was very often the case, the property was considerable, the lord made a bid for the 33 per cent., and the slim move often succeeded. The monks, as lords of the manors, were right up to the front in this sort of extortion; for it had been ordained that a serf could only make his will on his death-bed, and in the presence of his priest. One can imagine the dangling, over the fiery brink of hell, endured by the sinner; and the result. But the raid on the serf's property did not stop with the collection of "heriot." That, the monk took as lord of the manor; as priest he came along with a demand for "mortuary," an offering for the good of the departed soul; and, for that, he walked off with the second best beast; or, if nothing better was available, with the bed on which the peasant had breathed his last. And as in Chaucer's day fully fifty per cent. of the peasants were serfs, the revenue from "mortuary" alone would preserve the "cloistered peace" of the abbeys from any fear of "clamming."

Another disability which afflicted even freemen, was the marriage fine (merchat). Whenever a serf

took a wife, or married off a daughter, he had to pay a fine for permission to do so. The lay lords imposed the same fine as the ecclesiastical landlords; but they acted as ordinary predatory human animals; they did not claim to be guided by the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, or that they had a commission from the same source to look after the morals of the community. When the serf went to another manor for his wife there was some finesse expended in the division of the resultant brood. In order to keep the natural increase in the family so to speak, the monastic authorities encouraged, or, at least, winked at unions which contravened the church degrees of consanguinity. They professed to suffer a loss when a female serf strayed outside the path of virtue, and docked her dad of some of his coin to make up for it. The tithes, the mainstay of the Church in the Mediæval Age, fell on the peasants like the plague. It applied to shopkeepers and artisans, who were expected to hand over a tenth of their incomes; but to the serfs it was devastating. The very pot herbs in their gardens were taxed, the grass they cut along the roadside paid toll to the priest. Even the down from the geese on the common found its way into the maw of the Church. Woe to the man who paid his harvesters before tithing his crop! That was setting at nought the precepts of both the Old Testament and the New, and the culprit was destined for hell. Milk tithe was expected to be delivered in the form of cheese, and there is an amusing account of how some Exeter farmers insisted on paying in liquid and pouring that down in front of the altar. "Whereas," complains Bishop Juivil, "the ancient and approved custom in our diocese is that men should bring their tithes of milk in the form of cheese, some men, maliciously, bring the milk to Church in its natural state, and, what is more iniquitous, finding none there to receive it, pour it out before the altar in scorn of God and of His Church." It required some courage to defy the Church in those times. The defaulters in tithe paying were denounced from the pulpit on quarter-days. This practice of "cursing for tithes" was quite common; one of the few objectors to it was Chaucer's kindly old priest who "Ful looth were hym to cursen for hise tithes."

A side light is thrown on the parasitical nature of the Church by the way in which the clergy referred to the serfs. There was fear and hatred in the utterances of abbots and bishops whenever they took occasion to put the fear of God into their tenants. The monastic chronicler, Walsingham, refers to them as "perfidious, proud, and upstart villains, a false multitude, a treacherous crew, men of lying speech," and quotes "When Adam delved and Eve span" as one of the "ravings" of John Ball. Mr. Chesterton's emancipators did not come from the class whose sentiments tallied with those of Walsingham. John Wyclif was the only schoolman of that time who disapproved of hereditary bondage on principle, and even he denied their right to rebel against their lords. The author of "Piers Plowman" had a sympathetic word for the serf; but when the acid test came along he joined the throng of detractors like the rest. As a matter of fact, the peasant stood alone. He fought his own fight in his own way, and whatever his faults he had sense enough to know that the Church was no friend of his. When the Great Charter was extorted from King John, at Runnymede, the Church was well represented. Archbishop Langton, who, in previous years, had fought for the retention of the most obnoxious of the dues levied on the serfs, was there to see that Mother Church got something out of the business. He had no conception of a liberty embracing the

whole of the nation. Like the barons, his idea of liberty was covered by the privileges he hoped to obtain. The serfs were not considered. "They (the barons) left to the King," says Professor A. F. Pollard, "and they reserved to themselves the right to tallage their villeins as arbitrarily as they pleased; and even where they seem to be protecting their villeins, they are only preventing the king from levying such judicial fines from their villeins as would make it impossible for those villeins to render their services to the lords. It was to be no affair of the king or nation if a lord exacted the uttermost farthing from his own chattels; legally, the villeins, who were the bulk of the nation, remained, after Magna Charta, as before, in the position of a man's ox or horse to-day, except that there was no law for the prevention of cruelty to animals."

More than one hundred and fifty years later, Wat Tyler and John Ball were leading the men of Kent in revolt against the feudalism of the liberators so-called, and the Church was again the most reactionary foe of the people. In sober fact, throughout Europe, the peasant in his risings invariably turned against both regular and secular clergy. True, John Ball and some others were priests; but that does not alter the fact that the Church was recognised as the enemy of the people. It moved forward in the course of time, but the propelling force was not the benign influence of the Christ; it was the power of economic force kicking violently from behind that lent the Church the semblance of progress. That, and the invincible courage of the serf, won the way to freedom.

H. B. DODDS.

A Secularists' Paternoster.

Of your philosophy you make no use
If you give place to accidental evils.
—Shakespeare.

ANY philosophy, or religion, which professes to provide a system of conduct for human life must be prepared to face the practical and perfectly fair question: Does it work? Not only in sunshiny days of happy expectation, in the triumph of achievement, the glow of prosperity—but also in hours of stress and strain, of sadness and disappointment—will it afford strength, wisdom and consolation? Does it work?

Christians, of course, with characteristic self-complacency, refuse to believe that these needs can be met by any system but their own. It is, therefore, very necessary to draw attention occasionally to the inherent sweetness, serenity, and sanity of the nobly austere Philosophy of Secularism; to its power to comfort, as well as to guide and invigorate; to point out, also, its essential superiority, in these and all other respects, to any supernatural creed.

Now, there is an old prayer, the Paternoster, which has had an extraordinary influence over many generations of Christians. Two of the contributors to that collection of pseudepigrapha known as the New Testament have put this prayer into the mouth of the mythical founder of Christianity himself; but modern scientific criticism has conclusively shown that every one of its various clauses has been taken from pre-Christian religious literature. By giving, then, this ancient Paternoster a secular interpretation, by transmuting it, as it were, with the living breath of Free-thought, the efficacy of Secularism, when compared with Christianity, as a philosophy of life, can be unanswerably demonstrated.

The opening address may well have inspired W. K. Clifford, the great Atheist, who was once an Anglo-Catholic, with his conception of a grander and nobler

figure than the slowly-fading superhuman deity:—"Our father Man," "who made all Gods and shall unmake them"; who, "from the dim dawn of history, and from the inmost depth of every soul, looks out upon us with the fire of eternal youth in his eyes, and says, "Before Jehovah was, I am!"

Now come the seven petitions:—

1. Hallowed be thy name! For Freethinkers, the name of Humanity; which Christianity has so terribly degraded by its damnable doctrines of original sin and the essential vileness of human nature. Secularism on the contrary hallows that name by asserting the innate nobility and glorious possibilities of Man.

2. Thy kingdom, come! For Christians, saturated with associations of oriental despotism, this is the kingdom of

A God, like some imperious king
Wroth, were his realm not duly awed;
A God, for ever hearkening
Unto his self-commanded land.

Or it is the vague, enigmatical kingdom of heaven so often announced, but never explained, by the Gospel Jesus.

The Secularist idea of it, as Nature, the Kingdom of Man, is infinitely grander. Sir Ray Lankester urges "slowly-moving Man" to take over his kingdom; describes him as "a being resulting from, and driven by, the one great nexus of mechanism which we call Nature"; and pictures him, "standing face to face with that relentless mechanism, which it is his destiny to understand, and control."

3. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven! What this means for Christians may be gathered from descriptions of life in heaven scattered through their sacred books.

For Secularists it is the imposition, by Man, with ever increasing energy, of his beneficent will on the surrounding Cosmos. To quote Sir Ray Lankester again:—"It is urgent beyond all that words can say for him to apply his whole strength and capacity to gaining further control, so that he may accomplish his destiny and escape from misery."

4. Give us, this day, our daily bread! To the toilers of the fields Secularists look for physical food; to scholars, scientists and philosophers for mental and moral sustenance. But when (except in fables) was poor famine-stricken humanity ever rescued from starvation by the Christian God? or what does Christianity offer, for mental hunger and moral growth, but a magic relic of cannibalism, and the husks of dry, unsatisfying dogmas?

5. Forgive us our trespasses! as we forgive them that trespass against us. There was never a greater falsehood than the assertion, made by Christianity, that, to it, mankind owes the teaching of the duty of forgiveness. That beautiful lesson has been taught, and learned, by non-Christians all down the ages, in a nobler manner than was ever ascribed to Christ. Where, in the whole gamut of Christian doctrine is there anything so exquisite as the tender reproof of Marcus Aurelius:—"Not so, my child . . . I shall certainly not be injured, but thou art injuring thyself, my child"?

Robertson, of Brighton, persecuted as a heretic by contemporary Christians, showed himself a true humanist, by his interpretation of the Church's absolution of those *in extremis*; the priest, in his eyes, being the representative of Humanity conveying, to the dying man, as he takes leave of his fellow-men for ever, pardon from those whom, during his sojourn among them, he may have harmed.

To Secularists, whose great aim is to make this world a vale of happy laughter rather than of tears, the forgiveness of wrongs, the setting right of mis-

understandings which cause so much unnecessary pain, is a paramount duty; and this because, for them, the forgiveness of a god is valueless; no ecclesiastical absolution narcotizes what should be the wholesome discipline of remorse: the human voice of the injured one, alone, can pronounce the only worth-while, *Absolvo te*.

They who have experienced life's vicissitudes, and so best know the value of that human absolution, are, perhaps, the readiest to give it, in their turn. But, alas! for those (and who, among us, has not some such mordant memory?) who long, in vain, to hear these comforting words from lips now forever sealed in death! Yet, even for them, it is saner, and stronger, to face the bitter truth, that they can never be forgiven, than to hug to themselves the vain consolations of a fictitious priestly absolution.

6. Lead us not into temptation!

Sheer blasphemy! or else a wholly unmeaning prayer, from Christians, who believe in an Almighty, All-wise, and All-loving God; but an entirely intelligible, human aspiration for Secularists, who realise how strongly man is influenced, either for good or ill, by his human environment.

A reminder, too, of the responsibilities of statesmen, scientists, and teachers. It is bad, when the blind are led by the blind; but, infinitely worse, when they are misled, by those who can see, for the sake of expediency, or other unworthy reasons.

Dux meus! comes with pathetic readiness from human lips: blessed, for ever, among the children of men, are those who, unheeding the cost, pass on to their fellows the knowledge they themselves have gained; and teach them what that knowledge implies.

7. Deliver us from evil! Pitiful cry of frightened, suffering humanity, ringing, in vain, through the silent spaces of the universe, to a non-existent God! There is no voice; nor any that answereth. Man alone is man's deliverer from evil. Was it the Christian, Jesus, who gave his brethren the knowledge of anaesthetics; who taught them to bridge time, by printing, and space, by wireless telegraphy; who prevented the ravages of disease, and died, by inches, that his fellows might benefit by the knowledge thus wrested from the elements?

Conquering, holding, daring, venturing . . .
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

Evil, for Christians, means also "the evil one"; whose existence is essential to fundamental Christianity! as is, also, the diabolical doctrine of everlasting damnation; which is, still, an article of faith for Catholics—and Fundamentalists. Secularism, not Christianity, answers the cry for deliverance; and kills the dreadful phantoms which have battened, so long, on the terrors of mankind, by laying bare their nature and origin.

Nowhere, as Ruskin beautifully points out, in his *Crown of Wild Olive*, does the practical discipline of Secularism appear so clearly, as here. Secularists know nothing of another world, in which the evils of this one will be redressed. Therefore, while sighing (as they must) over the still existing mass of human misery, they are doubly bound to beware, lest any act of unkindness, or injustice, of their own is adding one iota to those sorrows which can have no compensation, unless here, and now.

The closing ascription of praise, to an imaginary deity, is drowned by the great Victorian's "love-song of earth," which

. . . resounds through the wind of his wings—

Glory to Man in the highest! for Man is the master of things.

Freethinkers will not fear the result of the foregoing comparison; which may not be without its uses,

if it reveals, however slightly, the beauty of the Secular Philosophy of Life, a philosophy which, notwithstanding the stern, bracing truths it teaches, is nevertheless,

Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute;
And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.

F. E. MACAULAY.

Religion in America.

From *Americana*, 1926, by H. L. MENCKEN.
ARIZONA.

The Rev. A. S. Baillie, before the Tucson Rotary Club:
If Christ were in Tucson to-day, He would enjoy being present at the meeting of the Rotary Club.

CALIFORNIA.

From a public bull by the Rev. J. WHITCOMB BROUGH, D.D., pastor of the Temple Baptist Church of Los Angeles:
If Jesus Christ was on earth to-day, He would be a shriner.

IOWA.

From a public bull by the Rev. Dr. P. H. MARTIN, of Davenport, as reported in the *Des Moines Register*:
God was the first advertising man . . . He was the first publicity man.

KENTUCKY.

The Hon. NOEL GAINES, of Frankfort, as reported by the Associated Press:
Professors who teach that the human race has monkeys with tails for ancestors should be hanged.

LOUISIANA.

Moral dictum of the Rev. H. J. McCool, pastor of the Istrouma Baptist Church, in the up-and-coming town of Baton Rouge:

I am not against bathing. I believe that we should at least take a bath once a month. But . . . I am coming to believe that mixed bathing is one of our future problems. . . I doubt seriously if we can retain virtuous thoughts when the whole community is in bathing together.

MINNESOTA.

Advance notice from a distinguished Biblical scholar in the *St. Paul Daily News*:
Jesus will come April 10, 1927, exactly at sunset.

MISSOURI.

Ecclesiastical notice from *Osborne Enterprise*:
They paid off a church debt at North Greenfield, near Springfield, the other night with a hugging social. Eight hundred people attended, and \$75 was raised.
The rates:
Girls under 15, for a two-minute hug 15 cents.
Girls 15-20, same for 25 cents.
Girls 20-25, same for 50 cents.
Other men's wives, same for 75 cents.
Old maids, 3 cents and no time limit.

KANSAS CITY.

Obiter dictum credited to the Rev. Dr. BURRIS A. JENKINS, pastor of the Linwood Boulevard Christian Church, of Kansas City:
If Christ were here to-day He would be either the head of a great newspaper; or would have control of some great moving picture concern; or be the head of the biggest radio broadcasting station in the country.

VIRGINIA.

The Rev. Dr. J. LUTHER SIEBER, pastor of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, of Roanoke, as reported by the *Times* of the same town:
David was the first Boy Scout.

Correspondence.

FREETHOUGHT AND FREEMASONRY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

Sir,—I have just read the answer of Omega to "Alpha" on Freethought and Freemasonry in the *Freethinker* of February 20, and I beg you to allow me a few lines of reply.

As long as I lived in England I could not, being a staunch freethinker, try to become a freemason; but when I resided in Paris, seeing that the Grand Orient de France has substituted the words: "To the glory of humanity" for the old motto of freemasonry: "To the glory of the Great Architect of the Universe," I became a freemason of the Grand Orient de France, and I can assure Omega that in the 300 and odd *loges* of the Grand Orient the belief in a great architect of the universe is not required. A believer may be admitted, as the freemasons are very broadminded, but he is required to state the reasons of his belief, and those reasons are discussed and attacked by all the other members of the *loge*. The belief in a god is rather a hindrance to admission in most of the *loges*. As editor of the *Libre Pensée Internationale* for thirty years, I feel I have a right to be a freemason, and among my brothers I have always found the greatest sympathy for my opinions. The Grand Orient de France is a vast freethinking organisation.

Omega very likely mistakes the Grand Loge de France for the Grand Orient. The Grand Loge of France, which has far fewer members than the Grand Orient, keep still the old motto, though I know many atheists that belong to the Grand Loge; for instance, the learned Paraf-Javal, the poet and novelist Lautaine, etc. I do not understand how conscientiously they may be members of a society having a motto admitting a great architect of the universe.

G. BRACHER.

Lausanne.

PESSIMISM.

Sir,—I was greatly pleased to read the comments of Mr. Vincent J. Hands on my article on Leopardi, the pleasure just a little clouded to think it should be written from a sick-bed. Still, like the great Italian, the older I grow I am less and less disposed to recant my "heresies." I must grow, even if I grow sadder; even if I find my ultimate pleasure in merely knowing the worst. The triumph of truth is not to make us happy. He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow; and, quite apart from learning, I agree with Leopardi when he says: "I believe there is nothing more manifest and palpable than the necessary unhappiness of all the living. If this unhappiness is not veritable, all is false. . . ." One could, at once, cite a thousand witnesses; but for the moment I have just read a scrap (in the *Daily Herald*) from that most masculine of writers, Hermann Melville. Speaking of the succession of whaling voyages, he says: "That one most perilous and long voyage ended only begins a second; and a second ended only begins a third, and so on, for ever and for aye. Such is the endlessness, yea, the intolerableness, of all earthly effort." Let me just add here, irrelevantly but aptly, the incident of the herculean black fellow, one of Melville's chums, and a pagan, a devil, a cannibal. A "greenhorn," whom the black had just cruelly manhandled, was swept overboard by the unlashd boom. First securing the boom at the risk of his life, the black sailor dived into the icy seas and brought the young fellow up from the depths; then, leaning against the bulwarks and mildly eyeing those around him, seemed to be saying to himself:

It is a mutual, joint-stock world in all meridians. We Cannibals must help these Christians.

And, now, Mr. Editor, let it be accounted to me for virtue, by yourself, your readers, and Mr. Hands, that I am writing this in haste on a Sunday; that, moreover, while in excellent health, I have been "off my beat" and *hors de combat*—no matter how—for several weeks, so just pen a mere acknowledgment, hoping to return to the subject later and at great length. Before writing

my final paragraph let me observe it is not the sick, the poor, or the sorrowful man who is the pessimist, but the man who has all that life can give, all that he desires; pessimism is not a malady in the ordinary sense, an indisposition; it is an intellectual and sensual satiety. This, I fear, is not too illuminating, but I must conclude for the present—yet, just a moment. Now I seem to understand the parson's description of pessimism as "the philosophy of the full stomach"! But let us get back again to the man; let us see in the dialogue how Leopardi, as Eleander, repudiates his pessimism in practice. His friend Timander rebukes him for his writings, and says: "the means to human perfection are many and of great utility"; upon which Eleander concludes:

Let us pass them over for the present: and returning to what regards myself, I say that, if in my writings I mention any stern and sad truths, either to disburthen my mind or to console myself with a laugh, and not for any other reason; I at the same time do not cease in the same writings to deplore and oppose and dissuade from the study of that miserable and cold truth, the cognition of which is the source either of indifference and slothfulness, or else of baseness of mind, iniquity and dishonesty of action, and perversity of habits; while, on the contrary, I praise and exalt those opinions, *though untrue*, which generate acts and thoughts noble, energetic, magnanimous, virtuous, and useful to the common or the private weal; those fancies beautiful and joyous, *though vain*, that give worth to life; the natural illusions of the mind; and, in brief, the ancient errors, very different from barbarous errors; which latter only, and not the former, should be destroyed by the operation of modern civilization and philosophy. . . . I am inclined to believe that the antique errors, so necessary to the well-being of civilized nations, are no less, and every day must become more impossible to re-create. As to the perfection of man, I swear to you that if it were already acquired, I would have written at least a volume in honour of the human race! . . ."

ANDREW MILLAR.

Society News.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH.

The usual attitude towards religion, by public men of any note, has been deplored so often by Freethinkers that it is indeed refreshing to find a publicist of the status of the Hon. Bertrand Russell, M.A., F.R.S., openly proclaiming his "unbelief" on a public platform. Such, however, was the case on Sunday, March 6, at the Battersea Town Hall, where Mr. Russell lectured for the local branch, his subject being, "Why I am not a Christian."

Mr. F. P. Corrigan, the branch president, officiated in the chair, performing his duties in an exceptionally effective and efficient manner.

Mr. Russell dealt with many aspects of religion in the course of his lecture, concluding his discourse with a denunciation of Christianity which left no room for doubt on the part of his audience as to his opinions regarding that institution.

Concerning the "design" argument, the lecturer asked: "Was it reasonable to suppose that after millions and trillions of years, the best that God could produce was the world as we see it to-day—with the Klu Klux Klan, the Fascisti, and Mr. Winston Churchill?" He also pointed out that according to the Christian scheme, the object of morals was not to make people happy, but to fit them for heaven; and he clearly demonstrated the hypocrisy of the average Christian by reminding his audience that whereas Christ had exhorted his followers to lend their money readily, yet the last General Election had been fought by them largely in opposition to the idea!

Altogether, the lecture was an extremely interesting one. Mr. Russell handled his subject well, and by his pleasant style and wit, coupled with his penetrating powers of analysis, provided his audience with what can only be described as an intellectual treat.

Quite a crop of questions followed the lecture, and the subsequent discussion was mainly to the point.—A. H.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

It is greatly to be regretted that our audience was so small last Sunday, as Mr. Cutner's address on "Spiritualistic Claptrap" was most interesting and informing. Mr. Cutner has made a wide study of the subject, and it is one upon which Freethinkers should be on their guard, as its follies and frauds have deceived many otherwise reasonable people.

Next Sunday, Mr. C. Batchelor will speak on Socialism and Religion, and we hope our local "saints" will make a point of attending, in spite of attractions in other parts of London.—K. B. K.

MANCHESTER BRANCH.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti had two very interesting meetings on Sunday last, although the attendance, possibly due to inclement weather, was not so large as anticipated. In the afternoon Mr. Rosetti gave us some very interesting information as to the cost of the religion we get, or as Freethinkers we don't get. He showed us that in divers ways, the Church receives some £10,000,000 per annum from the public purse. This offered a suggestion whereby Mr. Churchill might gather half of his estimated deficit, although he felt he will not go to that source for revenue.

In the evening he dealt with a number of popular fallacies about Christianity. The lecture was well received and provoked a number of questions which were satisfactorily answered.

Will friends note our American Tea, Whist Drive, and Dance in the Downing Street Co-operative Hall, on Saturday, March 12, at 3 p.m. Whist at 6.30. Admission free, but there will be a collection for expenses.—W. C.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.

On Thursday, March 3, the secretary, Mr. Fred Mann, addressed a meeting of Govan I.L.P. Guild of Youth on "Rockefeller, Standard Oil, and Salvation." There was a good company of young men and women, who listened with marked interest. The questions were numerous and to the point, and the meeting had to be extended past the usual time before all were satisfied.

Strangely enough *Forward* was published the following day with an article on the Rockefellers, by Walter Newbold. Only a coincidence, but our spook friends might call it something else.

On Friday, Mr. MacEwan, the vice-president of the society, debated with Mr. D. R. S. Smith, a Spiritualist, on the subject: "Is there a Future Life?" The large hall of the Christian Institute was well filled, and our secretary, Mr. F. Mann, was in the chair. The whole debate turned on the question of evidence, and it was obvious that the debaters had widely differing conceptions of the nature of evidence and its validity.

On Saturday, the society held a very successful social gathering. Members and friends were present from places as far apart as Kilmarnock, Shotts, and Helensburgh. All seemed to enjoy themselves, perhaps because they set out to do so.

On Sunday, 6th inst., Mr. Cameron, of the Glasgow Esperanto Society delivered a lucid exposition of the need for a universal language, and of the claims of Esperanto to fill the place in every respect. It was regrettable that so fine an effort had not been made to a larger audience. E. H.

PIONEER PRESS PUBLICATIONS.

WHAT IS MORALITY?

By GEORGE WHITEHEAD.

A Careful Examination of the Basis of Morals from the Standpoint of Evolution.

Price 4d., postage 1d.

RELIGION AND SEX.

Studies in the Pathology of Religious Development.

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

Price 6s., postage 6d.

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.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.5): 7.30, Councillor C. Batchelor, "Socialism and Religion."

PORTMAN ROOMS, 59 Baker Street, W.1 (entrance Dorset St.): 7.0, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Science and a Future Life."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7.0, Mr. Walter Hogg, "Ghosts—Illusion or Reality."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, Morris Ginsberg, M.A., D.Lit., "Heredity and Distinction."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W.): 7.0, a Discussion, opened by Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (101 Tottenham Court Road): 7.30, Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., "Buddhism." Thursday, March 17, Carnival Dance and Social. 1s.

OUTDOOR.

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

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): 11.30 and 3.0, Speakers, Messrs. Botting and Hart.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. D. S. Currie, "The Making of an Atheist." Questions and discussion cordially invited. Silver collection.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Harry Snell, M.P.

Moncure Conway Memorial Lecture.

Professor G. ELLIOT SMITH, F.R.S.,

will deliver the Eighteenth Lecture on THURSDAY, MARCH 17, at SOUTH PLACE INSTITUTE, Moorgate, E.C., the title being "HUMAN NATURE."

Chair will be taken at 7 p.m. by LEONARD HUXLEY, LL.D.
Admission Free. Reserved Seats, 1s. each.

EVERY PENNY, like every action, can be used in a right or a wrong way. Every day we indirectly help causes antagonistic to our dearest ideals. In many connections it is impossible to do otherwise, but in the matter of tailoring you can help Freethinkers to help the *Freethinker* by writing at once for any of the following:—Gents' A to D Patterns, suits from 55s.; Gents' E Patterns, suits all at 67s. 6d.; Gents' F to H Patterns, suits from 75s.; Gents' I to M Patterns, suits from 98s.; Gents' Overcoat Patterns, prices from 48s. 6d.; or Ladies' Fashion and Pattern Sets, costumes from 57s., coats from 53s.—MACCONNELL & MABE, New Street, Bakewell, Derbyshire.

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President :

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary :

MISS E. M. VANCE, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

SECULARISM teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

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