

THE LAW AND FREETHOUGHT.

THE FREETHINKER

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Views and Opinions.

The Law and Freethought.

WE think our readers will be interested in reading part of the charge to the Jury in the recent Canadian Blasphemy case, in which Mr. E. V. Sterry received 60 days' imprisonment, with a recommendation for deportation to England at the expiry of the sentence. In the *New York Times*, of March 16, the following appears:—

"Probably nothing is more sacred to us than our religion," said the Judge in charging the jury. "We have been taught to reverence the name of God. We regard Him as the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, also as our Maker and Creator through Whom alone we believe we live, move and have our being.

"All that we have in this world worth having we believe comes from God. We look to Him also for our salvation in the world to come, after we have passed out of this life.

"Our conception of God is so much a part of every life that it is an integral part of our national life. The Bible, the Holy Scriptures, are to us as the revelation of God's will concerning us and all His people. We look upon the Bible as the basis of every good law in our country. It is to us the dearest and most precious book in the world."

The Jury promptly responded with a verdict of guilty, and the Judge passed sentence. All things considered, we are surprised the Jury did not recommend the blasphemer be hanged out of hand. And we feel sure that only legal restrictions prevented such a judge passing such a sentence.

* * *

A Bigoted Judge.

The Judge, Judge Coatworth, is a Sunday School Superintendent. The Jury were all Christians. If ever the expression "a packed Court" is applicable, it is surely in such cases. A man on trial for murder, with twelve of his sworn pals in the box,

would be far more likely to act impartially than such a judge and jury trying a man for blasphemy. The verdict is delivered before the case comes into court; the sentence is pronounced before the evidence is heard. All that takes place in any trial for blasphemy—short of something like a miracle—is the mere registration of the sentence. In the days of the Inquisition to be accused of heresy was equal to a condemnation. Christians cannot to-day have the Inquisition, but they will always get as near to it as they can. A man of decency of character, engaged as a Sunday School Superintendent, would have declined to take the case on the ground that his activity in the Church might prevent him acting impartially. If it had been any other case but one in which religion was concerned, he would probably have acted on that principle. A jury, with expressed opinions directly against the man who was to be tried, would have been denounced as an outrage and a travesty of justice in connection with any subject other than religion. But once let religion come upon the scene, and rules of justice and common-sense, and even decency, cease to function. In the name of religion, in the interests of Christianity, there is not a conceivable form of injustice and brutality that men are not ready, even eager, to commit.

* * *

The Uneducated Public.

The state of public opinion in Canada must be in a shockingly bad way, when such things as Judge Coatworth said, can be uttered from the Judicial Bench. Doubtless many of our public officials believe these things—men like the Home Secretary and the late stop-gap Lord Chief Justice, who spoke of blasphemy as a "crime"—appear to do so; but I fancy they would be ashamed to say as much in the course of a public trial. In this, decency and education have with us advanced a little beyond that stage. A man who can speak of the Bible as the basis of every good law in the country indicates the possession of an amount of ignorance that should form a complete mental equipment for a battalion of the Salvation Army. Even educated parsons in England would hardly speak of the Bible as being the "revelation of God's will concerning us and all His people," without serious qualifications. But in England there has been continuous Freethought propaganda for the past hundred years, and we have, if I may be permitted to say it, had a *Freethinker* in active existence for nearly half-a-century. These things have certainly not been without their influence. We have managed to make thousands of Christians ashamed of such terrible crudity as that which is able to air itself on the bench in Canada. The religious bigotry of the Judge is well shown by his lack of a sense of decency; for I venture to say that no man with the slightest sense of what was

fitting would preface his remarks by an address which betrayed the strongest possible prejudice, and which reads like a calculated appeal to the religious intolerance of the jury. Coming from the counsel for the prosecution, such an address would have been reprehensible. Coming from a Judge, presiding over a trial for blasphemy, it is as great a travesty of justice as one could imagine.

* * *

The Bible God.

It is, I think, worth while reprinting the main passage upon which this charge of blasphemy was based. Here it is:—

The God of the Bible is depicted as one who walked in the garden of Eden, talked with a woman, cursed a snake, sewed skins together for clothes, preferred the savoury smell of roast cutlets to the odours of boiled cabbage, who sat in a burning bush or popped out from behind the rocks; this irate old party who thunders imprecations from the mountains or mutters and grouches in the tabernacle, and whom Moses finds so hard to tame, who, in his paroxysms of rage, has massacred hundreds of thousands of His own Chosen People, and would often have slaughtered the whole if cunning old Moses hadn't kept reminding him of "What will the Egyptians say about it?" This touchy Jehovah, whom the deluded superstitionists claim to be the Creator of the whole universe, makes one feel utter contempt for the preachers and unfeigned pity for the mental state of those who can retain a serious countenance as they peruse the stories of His peculiar whims, freaks and fancies, and his frenzied megalomaniac boastings.

Now, if I had been drawing an indictment against the biblical God, I might have put the matter a little differently, but I do not know that there would have been any substantial difference in the indictment. I fancy I should have put it much stronger. After all, every statement made can be substantiated from the Bible itself. And bearing in mind that quite well-placed preachers of Christianity in this country do not hesitate to speak of Jehovah of the Bible as brutal, and that even Mr. R. J. Campbell once described him as an old woman, the difference between an old woman and an old party does not seem enough to send a man to prison for. But it makes a tremendous difference whether you attack the Bible in the name of a sensible Freethought or a nonsensical religion. In the latter case no pardon is possible. In the first instance much may be forgiven, because, after all, if you have driven folly out of the door you have left the window wide open for its re-entrance; and that it shall be housed somehow, is the chief consideration with our "spiritual leaders." An any rate, as Judge Coatworth appears to be unacquainted with what the Bible really contains, we are sending him a free copy of the *Bible Handbook*, and if that does not enlighten him, nothing will.

* * *

The Moral of the Case.

I have dealt in this place with the Canadian prosecution, because I think it has a very direct bearing upon Freethought in this country. Canada is a long way off; the condition of the public mind is evidently on a lower level, in relation to religion, than it is in this country; but it is part of the British Empire, and what is done there affects us, and what is done here affects people elsewhere. And the one fact before us is that the basis of the law against blasphemy in all our Colonies and dependencies is the English Common Law of Blasphemy. While that exists here it is not likely to be abolished in any part of the Empire. If it is abolished here, a

lead, a sensible lead, will be given to the rest of the Empire, and also to the United States. It would look somewhat ridiculous if, in Great Britain, it was thought the Christian's God was quite safe without the sheltering arm of a policeman, while elsewhere he was not safe without such protection. The trial comes as an apt reminder that so long as the Blasphemy Laws are permitted to survive here, so long will they be taken as an encouragement to bigotry and ignorance in all parts of the English-speaking world. If Freethinkers and others value real freedom of opinion, and do not wish to see a revival of religious persecution in this country under the name of "law and order," and a hypocritical desire to maintain the "decencies of controversy," they will see to it to do something to wipe out laws that are a standing disgrace to any country which makes claim to be considered civilized and enlightened. And the only safe way to do this is to go on making Freethinkers. It was a golden saying of Ingersoll's, that Christianity never willingly gave up burning heretics; it only ceased burning them when the number of heretics was great enough effectively to object to being burned. Christians will abolish the blasphemy laws only when there are enough avowed Freethinkers to make their application bring more loss than profit to the Christian Churches.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"The Pilgrim of Eternity."

A fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy.

—Shakespeare.

Laughter is the property of man.—Rabelais.

Art should exhilarate, and its highest effect is to make new artists.—Emerson.

BYRON has been dead over a century. His literary reputation is quite secure, for he is one of the very few British authors who have a European reputation. During his life, owing to the freedom of his opinions, he was accused of almost every crime except murder, the exception being made, probably, on account of the difficulty of finding a suitable corpse. Not long since the literary world was once more discussing the poet's character, owing to the publication of a new edition of Lord Lovelace's *Astarte: a Fragment of Truth*. This extraordinary work, written by Byron's grandson, reopened the whole question of the separation of the poet and his wife, and tried to prove that the domestic trouble was caused by Lady Byron's discovery that her husband had wrong relations with his half-sister, Mrs. Augusta Leigh.

There must be a public for this sort of thing, otherwise there would have been no reason for the publication of a new and revised edition of such a work as *Astarte*. The revision was undertaken by the Countess of Lovelace, and, despite some additional letters and some slight alterations in the letterpress, did not establish the extraordinary charge which the former Lord Lovelace brought against his distinguished relative. It is really difficult to understand the reason for a second edition of a work such as this. The matter was thrashed out in the "sixties" of the last century, following the publication of Mrs. Beecher Stowe's sensational article in *Macmillan's Magazine*. The author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, writing two generations after Byron's death, relied chiefly upon American tea-table tittle-tattle for her sorry story. Not an atom of real evidence has ever been produced to support so serious an allegation.

Curiously, fresh from the reading of *Astarte*, I find the house of Murray has just issued a new book on

the famous poet, entitled, *Lord Byron in His Letters*, edited by Mr. V. H. Collins. This is a very welcome publication, for Byron was a master of the epistolary art, and there is an abundance of wit in its pages. Of all the English authors Byron had the Voltarean gift of wit and satire, a command of mocking phrase. It is seen at its finest in the inimitable pages of *Don Juan*, and it overflows into his private letters to his friends. Every reader of poetry can recall his description of the pirate:—

The mildest mannered man
Who ever scuttled ship or cut a throat.

It is this particular quality that spices his intimate correspondence. Jokes concerning mothers-in-law are as old as the everlasting hills, but Byron contrived to say something quite fresh on the subject. Writing to a friend, he says: "My mother-in-law has been dangerously ill, and* is now dangerously well again." Byron's knowledge of Shakespeare's works was unusual, and he often turned it to the happiest account. Describing a crush at the opera at Venice, Byron said that it was such a crowd that he almost "beat a Venetian and traduced the State." The same delightful humour bubbles out in the preface to *Cain*, in itself a somewhat tedious poem, where Byron assures the reader that it was difficult "to restrain Satan within the bounds of spiritual politeness." There was no posing in all this; it was the fun of a high-spirited man. His account of Betty, the boy-actor, in that player's later life, is almost Dickensian in its humour:—

His figure is that of a hippopotamus, his face like the bull and mouth on the panels of a heavy coach, his arms like fins fattened out of shape, his voice the gargling of an alderman with the quinsy.

Byron could pose, as, for instance, in his outbreak, written in his three-and-twentieth year:—

My whole life has been at variance with propriety, not to say decency: my circumstances are become involved; my friends are dead or estranged, and my existence a dreary void.

This, however, was the veriest "mouthing and coxcombry" and was the literary fashion of that time. Byron, who had genius, grew out of much of this romanticism, and wrote enduring prose and verse, which is read with delight by a later and more realistic generation. Indeed, a selection of Byron's best work would prove an excellent antidote to the rubbish which some latter-day poetasters have expectorated over our fair land, and attempted to lower the national taste for what is fine and beautiful.

Byron's love letters are excellent, and quite unlike those political screeds with which Nelson bombarded the beautiful Emma Hamilton, and which would almost justify the belief that the lady had poked his eye out with her parasol. Byron was too much of an artist to mix crude politics with his love-making. Here is a touching note to Caroline Lamb, wife of Lord Melbourne, one of the Victorian Prime Ministers:—

"I am about to go out with a heavy heart. Do you think now I am cold and stern and artful? Will even others think so? Will your mother ever—that mother to whom we must indeed sacrifice much, more, much more on my part than she shall ever know or can imagine? 'Promise not to love you!' Oh, Caroline, it is past promising."

This, indeed, is the kind of writing that the lapse of the years cannot stale. The fact that so many of Byron's letters were preserved by such a variety of correspondents, young and old, gives evidence of the personal fascination of the writer. Letters are not always kept, unless by the indulgence of doting relatives, and there are few instances of so wide a contemporary interest being concentrated on a com-

paratively young man. There was something fundamentally attractive in the poet's nature, something which made even strangers think it worth while to keep the letters he had written. They are full of human interest, too. One addressed to his wife, calls attention to the size of the butcher's bill, and adds, "I did not know we had so much meat." That a poet has many moods is proved by the fact that, enclosed in the same envelope, were the touching lines, beginning:—

"Fare thee well, and if for ever,
Still for ever, fare thee well."

Shelley dubbed his friend, Byron, "the pilgrim of eternity." It was a fine phrase misapplied, but Byron's vogue was then so widespread and so enormous that the younger poet may be forgiven for being blinded by its brilliancy. Since that time five generations have passed, and the whirligig of time has brought in its revenges. Shelley and Keats, both neglected during their short lives, are now fixed stars in the literary firmament, and their reputations are still growing. Byron is still read and admired, but many of his poems, which sent our forefathers into ecstasies of admiration, are neglected to-day. Present-day readers do not care a straw for *The Corsair*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Giaour*, and other weary and romantic verse. Modern men and women prefer *Beppo*, *Don Juan*, and those delightful letters, which reveal the man whose genius once dominated Europe, and helped to remove the reproach of provincialism from his country's literature. Byron will survive because he knew the book of the world as well as the world of books, a singularly happy combination in a man of letters.

MIMNERMUS.

Miracles.

THE *Christian World Pulpit* of March 31 contains an extraordinary sermon, entitled, "The Miracles of Christ," by F. R. Barry, M.A., D.S.O., Professor of New Testament Interpretation at King's College, London. Professor Barry's attitude to the miracles attributed to the Gospel Jesus, in which he firmly believes, is exceedingly peculiar; but, with that, we are not at present concerned. The fact that matters is that he treats them as supernatural incidents which really happened. On one point he agrees with Matthew Arnold, namely, in the conviction that miracles cannot be regarded as evidence of the truth of Christ's claims, but unlike Arnold, he accepts the traditional view that they were veritable occurrences in the public life of Jesus. In *Literature and Dogma* Arnold closes the chapter on "The Proof From Miracles" in these words: "Our point is that the objections to miracles do, and more and more will, without insistence, without attack, without controversy, make their own force felt; and that the sanction of Christianity, if Christianity is not to be lost along with its miracles, must be found elsewhere." Curiously enough, his rejection of miracles as things that never happen did not impel the celebrated school inspector to repudiate the belief in Christianity as well. Professor Barry is much more logical when he says:—

What are we to make of these stories of miracles? The first thing to say, I think, is clearly this—that you cannot possibly cut out of the documents the miraculous stories. Many people will say: "We know how, round every great religious leader these legends of miracles at once begin to accumulate, and it happened round the figure of Jesus just as it happened round the figure of Buddha or St. Francis, or anyone else; and therefore you are not on safe historical ground, and must go through

the Gospels with a sort of editorial mind and cut out all these supernatural incidents as legends, and what remains will be authentic history." That is begging altogether the question, and without anticipating what point of view we shall finally reach, it seems to me quite clear that that is a hopelessly impossible suggestion. If you cut out the miraculous stories, what you have left is not authentic history but practically nothing. They are so completely interwoven in the whole texture of the narrative that without them it would collapse and fail to make sense.

With the whole of that extract we are in complete agreement. To us the Gospels are purely legendary documents, and the being they depict never lived, never could have existed at all. Professor Barry is entirely consistent in his acceptance of the Gospels, though his belief in them seems to us to be itself almost miraculous. The man Christ Jesus was from all eternity the second person in the Holy Trinity, who in the fulness of time descended to earth, entered the womb of a young woman who had never known a man, and therein grew and developed until after so many months he was born exactly like any other baby. This strange babe, with the Godhead in him dwelling, advanced in wisdom and stature, and then, at the close of a public ministry of less than three years; during which he walked on the sea, turned water into wine, healed the sick, and raised the dead, he was slain as a rebel against the State. On the third day he burst out of the tomb, and for forty days flitted about in a miraculous fashion, entering buildings through closed doors and windows, and in the end finally disappeared in a cloud and returned to heaven, there to sit on the right hand of his Father as mankind's advocate for ever more. Such is the Christ in whom Professor Barry believes and whom he preaches with no small zeal and eloquence, and for his consistency and courage we heartily commend him.

We now come to a somewhat puzzling passage in this unique discourse. After warning us not to think that Jesus is what he is, that he is what we claim for him because he performed miracles, but rather that he did so because he is what he is, he proceeds thus:—

Coming a little closer in, in regard to what actually happened, as a matter of sheer historical fact, I feel that you have got to use always a certain reverent reserve. You cannot dogmatize and lay down the law. You always have to have what Dr. Sanday used to call something like the note of interrogation in the margin. You are never going to know exactly what did happen. One must remember that the mental atmosphere and climate in which the Gospels move is extraordinarily primitive, and credulous, and oriental; that it is as far removed as anything could be from the attitude of the twentieth century scientific world in which we breathe. The people who figure on the Gospel pages are, as regards their mental attitude, more like the peasants in South Italy, or even like the natives of Central Africa, than they are like people living in London. You have to make tremendous allowance for all that, and you have also to recognize in regard to all these stories how simply impossible it is to get the kind of evidence that the twentieth century rightly demands before it can interpret the facts.

After all, Mr. Barry's consistency is not so perfect as the first half of his sermon led us to imagine it to be. What we find in the Gospels, he now admits, is "the vague impression that was left on the minds of mystery-loving, miracle-loving, credulous Syrian peasants twenty centuries ago." Again, he says: "I do not think you are ever going to discover exactly what happened; you have just got to exercise

a certain amount of suspension of judgment and reserve." Here is one more most astonishing admission: "There is no doubt, of course, that a trained scientific observer of the twentieth century, if he could have been present at the time, could probably have given a very considerably different account of events than that which has actually come down to us." By making these candid admissions the preacher gives the case for Christianity clean away.

Towards the end of the sermon Professor Barry indulges in the following wholly rationalistic observations:—

Let us get it perfectly clear that, in so far as there are such things as laws of Nature, they cannot be broken. Nothing can happen which is not in accordance with the laws of Nature. Whatever is recorded to have happened, if it did happen, happened in accordance with the laws of the universe. Nothing can conceivably happen otherwise.

Now if that statement is true certain miracles ascribed to Jesus are ruthlessly ruled out, such as turning water into wine in the twinkling of an eye, walking on the sea as on dry land, calming a violent storm by a word, and bringing the dead back to life. Just here, however, the Professor introduces a rider, to the effect that "we do not know what all the laws of the universe are, and that in the particular case of the miracles which are claimed for Christ, you are dealing with a personality which, *ex hypothesi*, is unique, and therefore you have no standard of reference with which to compare these stories"; but such a rider is utterly illogical and based on no ascertained fact. Strangely enough he has already assured us twice that, in consequence of the fact that the so-called miracles were witnessed by "mystery-loving, miracle-loving, credulous Syrian peasants," it is quite impossible for us "to discover exactly what happened." Does it not necessarily follow that, if we cannot discover exactly what took place, it is at least equally impossible to learn what the real character of the alleged miracle-worker may have been? Professor Barry believes in the existence of spiritual beings concerning whom he cannot acquire any knowledge whatever. He believes that "mind is very definitely a thing apart," a belief absolutely incapable of verification. These beliefs are dealt with as if they were veritable items of knowledge. We are deeply convinced that the psychologists are fully justified in refusing to believe that "the mind is in the brain, or in fact that the mind is anywhere in the universe of space." As "a thing apart" mind does not exist at all.

Professor Barry's conclusion is that "the supreme and crowning miracle of all is the moral perfection of the Lord"; but this conclusion is itself inconclusive. The point at issue is not settled by such a statement. Our conclusion is that, like all other saviour Gods, the Gospel Jesus is simply a myth, who never performed miracles, or even lived at all, and such sermons as this now before us mainly confirm us in that conclusion.

J. T. LLOYD.

When I open a noble volume, I say to myself, "Now the only Croesus that I envy is he who is reading a better book than this.—Philip G. Hamerton.

The worst of the worthy sort of people is that they are such cowards. A man groans over wrong; he shuts his lips, he takes his supper; he forgets.—Voltaire.

Logical consequences are the scarecrows of fools and the beacons of wise men.—Professor Huxley.

Books and Life.

It is always interesting to speculate on what new additions will be made by J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd. in the "Everyman" series. Twenty new volumes are now published, chosen with good taste, and three which attracted us were *Under Fire*, by Henri Barbusse, translated by Fitzwater Wray, William Blake's *Poems and Prophecies*, and a *New View of Society and Other Writings*, by Robert Owen. When our own words on war have died on the wind, a reading of *Under Fire* again brings us back to the unspeakable futility of trying to settle anything by national struggles, assisted by all the infernal inventions of those bipeds only capable of destruction. At a time when the Chamber in France has given the Government power to conscript the nation, it is difficult to understand the Gallic mind in this step, and especially after Briand's dramatic announcement of "Henceforth, no more war!" This act of the French Government brings war to the full circle of thoroughness—as thorough, one might say, as the technical means that must now exist to wipe out civilization. There is a grip in *Under Fire* that completely exhausts the subject, that cuts out Machiavellian policy and reduces war to mud, blood, horror and bestiality. The epilogue is on a note of hope, but facts are chronicled that must be faced. "Men are things that think a little but chiefly forget," says one of the characters. Another says: "If we remembered, there wouldn't be any more war." In a desperate position the author writes . . . "and retaining only just enough energy to repel the thought of the sweetness it would have been to let ourselves die." And now, who would seriously argue against the malleability of human nature, that, under the worst conditions possible did not stifle the precious acts of nobility, where the world of construction now needs them.

There is a fascination and charm about Blake with his direct commonsense that deserves a wider circle of readers. In our rag-bag of cuttings, there are numberless scraps recording efforts to trace Blake's grave, to erect memorials, to register fancy and astounding prices for his pictures, and this, according to Gilchrist, when the poet-painter at one time spent his last shilling on a camel-hair brush, and was also denied the favour of shaking hands with an Academician, William Collins, R.A., as he was seen by this exalted personage carrying a pot of porter in the Strand. Who would not envy his power with a pen, and what amplification could not even a penny-sermon parson get from two of his lines:—

A Robin Red-breast in a Cage
Puts all Heaven in a Rage.

His acquaintance with Paine, and his help to the deistic outlaw, are acts that show his mental orientation, and the smiling cornfields of France prove that, if at times his head was among the stars, his feet were on the earth:—

The sword sung on the barren heath,
The sickle in the fruitful field;
The sword he sung a song of death,
But could not make the sickle yield.

And in the nature of throwing a brick at those who try to measure him with the yard-stick of theology, he writes: "Holiness is not the price of Entrance into Heaven." As, according to him, Heaven only admits those who have cultivated their understandings, there will be no traffic problem in that place, and Freethinkers may review their decision of not wanting to visit the place.

With the quotation from Blake now appearing on an Empire Poster, it may be well remembered that he wrote, "Empire Follows Art"; there will be many proud to live in such an Empire—not the least of which will be Freethinkers.

Mr. G. D. H. Cole, in his introduction to the *New View of Society and Other Writings*, states of Owen, that there are few men who are so much talked about,

and whose works are so little read. That is true, and particularly so of representatives of political thought, who forget that most of the first reformers were either Secularists or had little interest in the kind of atmosphere that prevails in most respectable Labour circles. What these representatives will get for temporising remains to be seen. In listening to the Moncure Conway Memorial Lecture, on "Human Nature," by Professor G. Elliot Smith, we were constantly reminded of one of the principles of Owen: "Any general character, from the best to the worst, from the most ignorant to the most enlightened, may be given to any community, even to the world at large, by the application of proper means; which means are to a great extent at the command and under the control of those who have influence in the affairs of man." Here is a direct challenge to "original sin," and later on, this pioneer visualises the fight between superstition and knowledge: "The heads of the Church have wisely discovered that reason and inconsistency cannot long exist together." And the writer of this has made it possible, in the line of succession, for places for Mr. Arthur Henderson and Mr. Ramsay Macdonald and others, as the catalogue says, "too numerous to mention." William Blake shall walk out of the previous paragraph into this:—

I found them blind: I taught them how to see;
And now they know neither themselves nor me.

We recommend these three books, and if any reader or writer is short of a thesis, the *Everyman Library* will suggest one. The total of volumes issued up to the present is eight hundred; relating to things that matter in man's brief life, it would be a subject of much interest to speculate on the value of eight hundred books as against eight hundred battleships. But a bookman, of course, would put it that way—why didn't he ask, is the pen mightier than the sword?

As Chaucer has it, "mordre wol out," and the student and reader of books will never forget to look also at the great book of nature. Paginated for the moment by astrology, the sun has now been mounting higher each day since his new birth, and the first taste of Spring has brought pink petals to the almond trees, and rich yellow to the gorse bushes. The monarch of the heavens now enters Aries, and about this time Chaucer tells us that he flings away his books. A poet, of course, would convey the idea in that form; the book reader of to-day will remove a little dust from little used books of his collection, and shake hands with old warriors who have given him of their best. For some reason we can never see the first daisy without thinking of Chaucer, nor can we look in running brooks without thinking of Swinburne's line, in the chorus to *Atalanta*, in *Calydon*:—

"Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot."

Here were the glories of Spring well and truly sung; here was a Pagan poet with no "by your leave," catching the pure, joyous spirit of the season. New grass is adorning the fields and meadows, and the mind echoes the lines of Omar: "Now the reviving herb with tender green," and in the many subtle recesses of memory, we can hear Courtice Pounds singing, "Under the greenwood tree," from *As You Like It*. From which the reader will gather that it is Spring, with or without the permission of governments, trade unions of priests, dictators, or that gallimaufrey of vulgar imbecility, the Salvation Army. In letting the Spring between the leaves of Chaucer we found that we had underlined the following in his *Legende of Good Women*:—

A thousande tymes I have herd men telle,
That there is joy in hevenc, and peyne in helle,
And I accorde wel that it is so;
But, natheles, yet wot I wel also,
That there is noon dwelling in this countree,
That eythir hath in hevenc or in helle y-be.

This was mildly sceptical, and a precursor of Hamlet's famous soliloquy, but, with Chaucer, as with Meredith, there is never any doubt that both were content with one world at a time, were in love with life, and pointed the way to cut the knot of foolish speculations that can bide our time.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Acid Drops.

Those who think the Bishops are not worth their salt should pay heed to the fact that the House of Bishops has just issued a prayer for the League of Nations. Here it is:—

Let us pray for the Assembly of the League of Nations.

V. He maketh wars to cease in all the world.

R. He breaketh the bow and snappeth the spear in sunder, and burneth the chariots in the fire.

O God, who art the lover of justice and peace; Give Thy grace, we humbly beseech Thee, to the Assembly (or Council) of the League of Nations; and so guide them by Thy Holy Spirit that by word and deed they may set forward Thy glory and peace and goodwill among men, through Jesus Christ our Lord.—AMEN.

Now that makes it quite plain. The Bishops solemnly (several years late, as usual), call the Lord's attention to the League. It reminds him that it is his job to guide the League aright, and so if they go wrong, one may assume that the Lord is not free from responsibility. Moreover, they say, quite plainly, that "He maketh wars to cease in the world." So that if wars do not cease, it is because He has not made them cease. If the Bishops are right, and another war breaks out, we shall know who to blame. Not that we imagine for a moment that any Christian would have the courage to tell the Lord quite plainly that he was to blame. Camels and Christians, so says Ambrose Bierce, take their burdens kneeling.

According to the *Daily News*, the U.S. Passion Play is a substantiation of Mr. H. L. Menckens' summary of religion in America. Rich and fruity, as it were, are the following extracts from the report:—

The performance, culminating with the crucifixion, is of an intensity and realism that would never be allowed on the ordinary stage. It is made possible because all the actors and actresses are devout Catholics.

For eventualities, arrangements have been made:—

A small first-aid station has been set up where those occasionally overcome by the intensity of the scene are helped to recover.

If Columbus had owned a wireless set it might have kept him at home instead of going gadding about on the ocean.

It is perhaps expecting too much that the case for Atheism can be correctly stated by a novelist. Mr. Sinclair Lewis, however, who cannot be ignored, has forced Mr. E. V. Knox to be on the defensive in a notice of *Elmer Gantry*, Mr. Lewis' latest novel. The critic is entangled in the delightfully false issue that simplicity, honesty, temperance, justice and mercy blossom in the hearts of Atheists and Freethinkers alone; in that mud we will leave "Evoc" of *Punch*. He would be on much safer ground if he stuck to the leather of *Punch*, with its remote humour about charwomen and the lower orders in general.

A serious battle is now taking place in the House of Commons over votes for women of 21 years of age. The world will hold its breath over a matter as vital in affairs that matter as the number of spots on a rocking-horse, but the prospective barbed wire round the mind of the youth up to the age of 16 will almost pass unnoticed. The hand of the priest will arrange that.

Woodbine Willie has discovered that it is not God's will that defectives should be born. He believes that we ought to take drastic steps to prevent their being born. "That ought to be laid down absolutely as God's will." The worst of it is that God appears to be always meaning well, but somebody or the other is always preventing his good intentions being carried into effect. As a "good-willer," God is without a peer. As one who never manages to get what he wants, he is even more secure in the race for first place. The Atheist is content with relieving him of all responsibilities for producing imbeciles and parsons. It is his followers who hold him up as a mixture of incapacity and folly.

"Can an imbecile love God?" asks Woodbine Willie. Really, we see no reason why he should not. A certain amount of imbecility seems about the only guarantee for anyone doing so.

Having been aroused by the League of Nations, the principal European nations appear to be taking an interest in child welfare. That this interest should be manifested at a time when the Christian religion has lost its hold on the people is a rather odd coincidence. Seemingly, the less the interest in God, the greater the concern for humanity. If that is so, the timid doubter of the Christian creed, fearfully visualizing a world in collapse when the rotten prop of religion no longer sustains it, may take unto themselves a little courage.

Some of our modern theologians, in their fantastic efforts to rope in or retain clients, are fond of asserting that Christianity is Socialism or that Christianity's main object is to inculcate willingness to serve one's fellows. With a reminder that such is not the case comes the Rev. J. A. Broadbent, of Bristol, who declares: "Jesus said a great deal more about faith than about either prayer or service. Faith is the great essential." The bemused fools, whose natural social instincts are being exploited by the Churches, might think over the statement in conjunction with one of ours. This is, that it is faith which has been responsible for the murdering and persecuting tactics employed by Christians since their creed infected the mind of man.

According to a speaker, our legislators spend £12 4s. 8d. per head of the population on War (past, present, and future), and £1 8s. 9d. on education. On Peace, as represented by the League of Nations, 23d. Yet some quaint thinkers there are who assert this nation is civilized! Perhaps it is—Christian civilized.

Listen to the Archbishop of Canterbury in full song:

We desire now, in the twentieth century, to give to the people of England a Book of Common Prayer, enriched and adapted to the needs of contemporary life, with its new conditions and sympathies, its new aspirations and endeavours.

On the Archbishop's own showing, for the new conditions and sympathies, new aspirations and endeavours, the people are not indebted to the Christian religion, the Church, or the Prayer Book; for these new things are here already, and the Prayer Book has to be revised in order to catch up with them. The Archbishop, however, need not be surprised at the fact. It is the habit of religions and Churches to be camp-followers.

With reference to the suggestion of the Bishops and the new Prayer Book, that certain of the prayers may be said in the old and new forms alternatively, the *Daily Express* asks, indignantly, "How can a man pray alternatively?" To which we reply, why not? As no one is quite sure how one ought to pray, there can surely be no great harm in trying different ways. In fact, it might be wise, seeing the number of Gods there are in the world, to give them all a chance and pick out, say, six or seven, and pray to each one day in the week. That would bring a little common sense in this business of praying, anyway.

Moreover, one may venture to suggest that the Christian formula, "Not my will, but thy will be done," is itself not a bad example of alternative prayer. A Christian praying, say, for rain, or for fine weather, or that the Lord will give him strength during a war to blow out the brains of his brother Christian, winds up with, "Nevertheless, not my will, but Thy will be done." What is that but an alternative prayer? Is he not saying: "Oh Lord, send us some rain, but if you do not care to adopt this suggestion, then do as you darn well please about it." Of course, he would not talk thus plainly to the Lord, for the average Christian always talks to God Almighty as though he has neither observation enough to see what is going on,

or common-sense enough to realise the meaning of the prayers that are said to him. Common-sense at either end of the arrangement, either with the God or his worshipper, would be fatal to the well-being of religion.

Following the example set by the Presbyterian Minister, the Vicar of St. George's, Wolverhampton, has started a similar Cabaret Club with no hymns, no address, no prayers. A pious investigator, who visited the Presbyterian Cabaret, admits that the class of young people to be attracted were flocking to the hall, which is proof that the scheme is successful. Nevertheless, it saddens him to think that hymns, address, and prayers were excluded. Such being the case, he says, the Sunday night club will fail, as it ought to do. He admits that the Free Church social gatherings, with hymns and prayers, which were started for the same purpose, were ignored by the outsiders. The fact of the matter is that he, and the rest of the Sabbatarian mob, are not really concerned with the welfare of the young people oppressed with the dreadful English Sunday, and cut off from all rational recreation. He is not out to solve the Church-created problem of bored youth, but desires to keep Sunday dreary, so that the young people will, in desperation, come to the Churches to pass away the empty hours. They, however, refuse to do so. They prefer to be bored outside the Churches and to make what amusement they can for themselves, rather than be bored inside the Churches. If they get into mischief the pious must be held responsible because they refuse to remove the taboo on wholesome amusement.

John O'London's Weekly has a good article on Lister entitled, "A Saint in Surgery." With many readers, however, there is a disagreeable association in connection with the word "saint," and a knowledge of the saints in history bids us beware of the exaltation of crack-brained fools. The word, in the case of Lister, is badly chosen. The writer of the article, J. A. Erskine Stuart, writes from an intimate knowledge of Lord Lister, and states that "He only thought of one eye, that of the Great Taskmaster." On receiving the Freedom of Edinburgh, Lister said: "I regard all wordly distinctions as nothing in comparison with the hope that I may have been the means of reducing, in some degree, the sum of human misery." If that is not an indictment of the Great Taskmaster we do not know what is.

A certain amount of sympathy will be felt on hearing that M.P.'s want new games, as chess and draughts are not vigorous enough. There is the famous game of "taws" or marbles, and also a circular piece of iron, which may be propelled with a hook or stick, but, as thirteen statesmen are afraid to sit down to dinner, this lack of games among the lower orders must necessarily follow as a "problem." Prayer would seem an absolute necessity to open each day's business with such abstruse subjects as these to be settled.

The Bishop of Heywood says, "I do not think God wants accidents to happen." Nothing he wants happens, everything he doesn't want to happen occurs. Really, if we believed in a God, we should strongly protest against such wholesale charges of incapacity as these parsons bring against their deity. We would seriously ask Bishop Heywood, "If God does not want accidents to happen, why the devil do they occur?"

Mr. W. H. Sharpe of Doncaster is the possessor of a rabbit with eight legs, two tails, two bodies, but only one stomach and one head. Those who believe in the Design argument will please note.

Canon Sinker, of Blackburn, is "filled with indignation" at people who give him a guinea when they are able to give a hundred pounds. He says it is the fault of the laity if the clergy are always begging. If they gave enough the clergy would not beg. That is really astute! If the clergy get all they want they will not ask for more. The only doubt that suggests itself is

whether the clergy would ever get all they want. But Canon Sinker bears the name of a jolly old Pirate, and he is living up to it in his raids on other people's purses.

The Economic Causes of War was the subject of an address by Mr. E. F. Wise, C.B., at the Whitefield's Men's Meeting, London, recently. The good Christians listening were, we fear, rather disappointed if they expected the speaker to advocate the threadbare pulpit nostrum for the cure of war, namely, more Christianity. On the contrary, Mr. Wise took quite another line, which is indicated by his final remarks. He said, that in the past, too much had been made of points of difference between nations. Also that it was our task to concentrate our attention to get a great mass of public opinion developing, strengthening, and broadening the points of common interest between the nations. By that means alone, he added, could the people of the world be safeguarded. What he might have added is that the Christian Churches have never done anything towards bringing the nations closer together. Indeed, in that respect they have been an abject failure. It is the Secular things, such as books, science, art, and music, leading to an interchange of thought, that has brought the nations in closer relationship so far. A next step is to educate the old-fashioned legislators and diplomats of the nations into viewing matters internationally rather than nationally.

Pastor W. Arnold Bennett paid a visit to Unity Chapel, Bristol, on a revival mission. A candid, or perhaps innocent, reporter says: "The attendance of the unsaved was not secured in any large numbers." Never mind about that. The Pastor will put the defect right when he comes to reckon up the total of souls saved at the end of the year. All modern revivalists are good at arithmetic, especially with multiplication.

One of the secretaries who organized the Protestant Parsons' Pilgrimage states that over 100 meetings were held to protest against Reservation, Mass Vestments, and Prayers for the Dead. These be terrible things and well worth protesting against. But there are lots of things of the same kind in *Alice in Wonderland* that deserve equal condemnation. Cannot the Protestant Parsons take a hand with these also?

Most people, says a writer, will go to any amount of trouble to avoid the pain of thinking. Need one be surprised? "Most people" are Christian bred and Christian trained. The Churches have never encouraged independent thinking. Their priests have always claimed to hold a divine warrant for telling people what to think. The Churches have always discouraged independent thinking aloud—free speech. Hence, the average man quite naturally comes to the conclusion that thinking is an activity he can quite well dispense with; especially as society, unhealthy bred to intolerance and to antagonism to new ideas by generations of Christian teaching, is likely to treat him with extreme disfavour if he dares publish his thoughts.

The Report of the Commissioners of Prisons gives some interesting facts. Out of 494 first-time imprisoned boys and girls, only 166 had a normal home. One hundred and thirty-seven had "indifferent homes," 48 had bad homes; 31 had no home at all; 160 had only one parent; 35 had no parents; 39 had parents who lived apart from one another; 27 were illegitimate children; 84 had serious mental defects; and in 51 cases there was a family history of insanity or mental defect. A scrutiny of these items reveals how important is the part played by environment and heredity in shaping character for good or ill. And in light of this fact, how absurd seems the pious blather about "sin" and "sinners," and the usual pious efforts to preach "fear of God" into the delinquents. What some of the delinquents need is better environmental influence and wise training to counteract anti-social habits. The others obviously require medical supervision. Their

cure will certainly not be achieved by soaking them in Christian superstition, or by exposing them to the stupid tactics of pious reformers unable to understand the nature of the defects to be amended.

As a part of world-wide investigation, an enquiry is to be conducted in Sunderland, Croydon, Oxfordshire, and Staffordshire to ascertain the exact cause of death of every child under twelve months. The investigation, be it noted, comes into being at a time notorious for unbelief. The thought of such enquiry never troubled the Christians of former ages. They were too thoroughly doped with pious phrases, such as: "God's will be done"; "God has thought fit to call the little one back to Heaven." Their chief concern was not why the infant had died, but whether it had died baptised, as insurance against their benignant God's hell-fire. That such an investigation should be suggested, enables one to glimpse the progress achieved in the realm of thought since Christian notions have ceased to dominate men's minds.

What's in a name? The Rev. A. J. G. Seaton, of the Wesleyan Sunday School Department, seems to think there is a lot. He wants a new name for the Sunday School in order to retain clients. He thinks scholars grown too old for day school fancy they are too old for Sunday School, and therefore absent themselves. A change of name would help avoid that idea. Mr. Seaton continues:

A "school" is generally thought of as a place where facts are taught and minds are trained. But the Sunday School is concerned with the training of more than minds. . .

We congratulate the rev. gentleman on having a sense of the fitness of things. He sees clearly. Quite obviously the Sunday School is misnamed: it certainly is not a school. For, in a school, facts are taught and minds are trained. If we may be permitted a helpful suggestion, we submit "adolescent doping depot" as being entirely comprehensive, illuminating, and apt. We feel sure Mr. Seaton will never find a better. Besides, see how pleasantly alliterative it is! It's sure to strike the popular fancy.

The eternal comedy goes on. Fame and Recognition, those two niggardly parents, half-opened the door for Thomas Hardy and then shut it in his face. Having reached a time when the veteran writer can manage without both, *John O'London's* weekly is now prepared to join in the belated chorus of praise, and intends to publish a selection of the author's poems, and displays a left-handed method in dealing with Hardy's opinions on religion. The skill required in stating the question in the following extract is on a level with the skill required in writing a *Daily Mail* leading article:—

Much has been said about Mr. Hardy's "pessimism." But the name "pessimist" is as untrue to human instinct and experience as the word "Atheist." No sane man can, or does, deny the existence of God.

The fallacious plums in the two last sentences will no doubt be gobbled by many readers of *John O'London's*, and it is a pity, for that paper is readable, educational, and will lead readers to many good writers. As it stands for something apart from publisher's advertisements, it could well dispense with special pleading of this kind, and we shall look to see if it is brave enough to publish *God's Funeral*, for Hardy was not thinking of the age of sixteen when he wrote it. An excellent inclusion would also be *God's Education*.

Dr. Norman Maclean, of Edinburgh, is alarmed at what he saw in Australia. Much of the evil, he says, lies in the establishment of a system of Secular Education. In Melbourne, on Sunday morning, "when splendid motor-car were going away to the country or the seaside, there was a trickle of people making their way to the Churches." Hence, Dr. Maclean is sad.

All we see for it is for the Church to set up an agency for motor-cars, then it will get a little profit both ways. And we are quite certain that if the Church sold motor-cars, they would be the very last to find fault with their being used on Sundays.

There has been invented a pneumatic cap, which holds a swimmer's head above water. This should prove useful to the Churches, if only they can get one made large enough. There is certainly enough "wind" in the pulpits to be able to inflate the device.

A Primitive Methodist says that wireless is as old as the hills, for messages have been sent to Heaven for years, and God has been answering from the receiving station. Prayer is the most wonderful wireless. No doubt. But we think God might have used his transmitter to better purpose. He could quite easily have sent out intelligence to his faithful listeners. Maybe it didn't occur to him to do so, or perhaps the prayists never thought of asking for it. Anyway, none ever arrived to Christian ears.

Last year 13,886,131 carcasses of sheep and lambs came into this country. The English people seem fond of mutton. Every Sunday millions of them sing the praises of a piece of Celestial Lamb that was alleged to have been slaughtered at Calvary. And 50,000 priests here earn an honest living with a conjuring trick which consists of turning a flour wafer into mutton. Mutton is a good thing, evidently. It's only drawback is that, in excess, it makes the eater mutton-minded.

A Lithuanian Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Jonas Sliupas, over here studying our methods, thinks British girls have attained a standard of physical fitness to be found nowhere else in the world. He is impressed by their vigour. "Short skirts," he says, "are the most sensible things, from the health point of view, ever introduced." But, the Doctor may be reminded, the prurient prudes, from the Pope downwards, say short skirts are shocking, and their wearers immodest and shameless. From this we infer that our girls have purchased health and vigour at the awful price of imperilling their immortal souls. That is a very sad state of affairs. And we feel too depressed at the thought of it to be able to share in the Doctor's pleasure at what he has observed.

As an instance of the wonderful power of religion and brotherly love, it may be noted that the Rev. E. B. Lauria, Vicar of St. Cuthbert's, Darwen, has received his marching orders from the parishioners. The ultimatum was presented to him—"The only way to restore peace is by your leaving St. Cuthbert's," and, from the particular to the general, we may gather that the world is in for a rough time before the whole of it is brought to the bosom of the Church. Bottling the sun's rays appears to be as easy as shelling peas in comparison, but the last things that religionists look at are facts.

Dear old Confucius, that charming Chinese gentleman, who probably does not command a thousand readers in the United Kingdom, has been "rung up" by a medium. It is a long way from a London flat to China, and in terms of years it is a long way back from 1927 to 551 B.C., but probably the medium has faith that can move mountains without picks and shovels." While you do not know about life, how can you know about death?" wrote Confucius, and we presume if our political troubles at present were with Persia it might have been Zoroaster—probably fashions with mediums are as popular as such weighty questions as hobbled hair, and the domestic economy of three stockings for women. The shade of Confucius over a London flat! It is as incongruous as imagining that fairies feed on tripe and onions.

Special.

THE Annual Conference of the National Secular Society will be held this year at Glasgow, on Whit-Sunday. It is twenty-six years since a Conference was held in that city, and judging from what occurred on that occasion, delegates, members and friends of the Party may safely look forward to an enjoyable time. There will be the usual holiday facilities offered by the railway companies, and if the names of enough visitors are sent to the Secretary in good time, still further privileges might be obtained. There will be an excursion down the Clyde arranged for the Whit-Monday, and this will give English, Welsh and Irish friends an opportunity of obtaining a sight of the Western Highlands in good company. But we would press upon all the advisability of sending in their names as early as possible. Every Branch of the Society should be represented at this Conference, and there should be a record muster of individual members.

With regard to the business side of the Conference, Branches should soon be sending in their resolution to the Agenda, covering the election of officers, and any business they wish to bring before the Conference. It should also be borne in mind that any private member has an equal right to place a resolution on the Agenda paper for discussion. I often hear about ideas that private members have for furthering the Society work; the Conference gives them an opportunity of placing their views before the Society.

But the Conference in Scotland should attract a record number of visitors.

CHAPMAN COHEN,
President N.S.S.

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.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—D. H. Kerr (Melbourne), £25; J. Ratchiffe (Victoria), £1 10s.; R. W. Cracklow (Ceylon), £10; W. Pugh (3rd sub.), £5; We Three (5th sub.), 3s.; H. J. V. Templeman, £5; G. Lawrence, 2s. 9d.; B. J. Dearlove, 7s. 6d.

T. MARSHALL.—We have not heard from Dr. Norwood and do not expect to hear. As we said, there is a world of difference dealing with Atheism in the pulpit or where no reply is permitted, and doing so in a journal where both sides would be heard. We have come across these doughty opponents of Atheism before—and with the same results.

B. F. O'CONNELL.—Sorry to hear of Mr. Harrington's continued ill-health. Shall hope for better news soon.

H. KINNELL.—Robert Taylor's *Devil's Pulpit* is a very well-known work, but is only to be met with now, second-hand.

F. W. HAUGHTON.—Thanks for papers. Will use next week.

B. E. DONAT.—The story of Darwin's death has been formally denied by the members of his family. But nothing will stop a Christian propagandist circulating such lies—save the loss of his Christianity.

W. A. SMITH.—We have no means of stopping news-agents slipping religious tracts inside copies of the *Freethinker*, but we do not suppose they will have much influence on our subscribers.

A. W. COLEMAN.—We lack space this week for dealing with the Dean of Manchester's letter on Sunday games. But it will keep.

H. J. TEMPLEMAN.—We agree with what you say about the smaller subscribers to the Trust. We will bear in mind your suggestion as to collectors when we again raise the matter in the autumn.

"JOE."—We read what you say with considerable sympathy, but still think the right course is to keep children free from propagandist teaching so far as it is possible. Whether the propaganda is one that we agree with or not is beside the question.

H. J. HEWER.—Many thanks for gift of books to N.S.S., which is very much appreciated.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (April 10), Mr. Cohen will speak in the Picton Hall, Liverpool, at 7 o'clock, on "Does Modern Science Support Religion?" From all we hear, a big audience is expected, and there should also be some interesting discussion. That remains to be seen. We are also pleased to learn that Liverpool intends launching out into greater activity in the future. There should be a very strong Branch of the N.S.S. there.

Newspapers get hold of some wonderful news. For example, the *Star*, of April 1, informed the world that, by the will of Mr. Horace Seal, of Brighton, a very old Freethinker, a legacy had been left Mr. Chapman Cohen, among others, with another legacy to the Secular Society, Limited. We believe the latter statement to be correct. The only fault we have to find with the one regarding Mr. Cohen is that it is not true. No such legacy has been devised.

There has been a great rush for copies of Draper's *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science*, and many have had to wait for the book, owing to there being a delay in our receiving copies from the binders. We mention this in order to account for the delay in discharging the orders sent in. It is a wonderful two-shillings' worth, and the rush of orders continues. It is not likely to be reprinted at this price, so those who wish for copies should send along their order at once. Many have taken our advice and sent for two copies. Some have sent for more. Such a work is bound to do good if it is lent to likely readers.

Mr. John M. Robertson's *Modern Humanists* was originally published in Swan Sonnenschein's useful *Social Science Series* in 1891. We read it at the time of its issue with both pleasure and profit; it is surprising that it has not been kept in print. All the same,

we do not think Mr. Robertson was well advised in giving his new series of studies of the same characters as in the earlier volume—Carlyle, Emerson, Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, Mill, and Spencer—the title *Modern Humanists Reconsidered*. Potential purchasers may regard it as either the same work with a few additions, or a recantation of previous judgments. It is neither of these. It is a new work, but more from the point of view of personality, than was the earlier lectures, and in some degree it is less eloquent. Ruskin does not gain by the new study, but it is a very interesting one for all that, and we advise readers to re-read the earlier essay in each case before passing on to the new one. They will probably find the two together even more stimulating than either by itself.

The essay on Spencer strikes us as particularly good, and full tribute is paid to his great powers. We are glad to see that Mr. Robertson makes a strong and reasoned protest against the fashion that has grown up this last few years of speaking of Spencer as though he was of small value. Because he kept so closely to scientific teaching it was inevitable that much of what he said would have to be revised in the light of fuller knowledge. That is really more a tribute to his work than a condemnation. Many writers on the philosophy of evolution are far more indebted to Spencer than they are aware of, or perhaps, than they care to acknowledge. The only point of criticism we have to pass on this essay, is that Mr. Robertson, in discussing Spencer's political philosophy, fails to stress the fact that his failure here came from his never having applied his own psychology to the philosophy of social evolution. This lack was made up by Leter Ward in his *Psychic Factors of Civilization*, a work that all would do well to read, although written many years ago. But we have to thank Mr. Robertson for a very stimulating volume. It is published by Messrs. Watts & Co. Price 7s. 6d.

The following letter appears to us to be worth publishing. We are sure it will interest many friends of the paper. It comes from one of our Australian readers, Mr. D. H. Kerr:—

SIR,—Herewith please find enclosed Bank Draft for twenty-five pounds (£25) to Freethinker Endowment Trust.

The suggestion which friend Petersen made and set the good example to, that last year's subscribers should assess themselves to the same amount, is a good idea, particularly as regards those who are in a position financially to do so. Unfortunately, it is not always the most affluent who are the most cheerful givers.

Freethinkers generally do not realise that the world would be a far more pleasant place if the wretched superstitions, which the great majority are loaded with, were replaced by sane views. This can only be done by Education, and Education costs money. The *Freethinker* is doing great work, but there is no limit to what could be done with the funds to extend. There must be a great number of people with sufficient brains to see the light if they could be only reached.

Freethinkers will only get a fair deal when they declare themselves in sufficient numbers to assert themselves.

The following case occurred the other day in Blyth Police Court. A witness for the Crown presented himself in a smuggling case. The following dialogue then occurred:—

CLERK: "Hold up the book."

WITNESS: "I claim the right to make an affirmation."

CLERK: "Hold up the book."

WITNESS: "I claim the right to make an affirmation."

CLERK (angrily): "I didn't tell you to take the oath, I told you to hold up the book."

Unfortunately, the witness gave way and held up the book while the affirmation was taken. Anything more ridiculous we have not come across for some time. The Clerk is obviously a very ignorant man, and appears to have got the oath and the affirmation jumbled up together in what he would be pleased to call his mind.

It is a pity the witness did not decline to touch the book, and then leave it to the Court either to take his evidence or go without it. In the latter case, something more might have been heard of it, and the ignorance of the Clerk subjected to a sharp reprimand from his superiors. A witness who wishes to affirm must be permitted to affirm, and there is no need whatever for him to touch the Bible or to handle it in any way. The Blyth Police Court Clerk is evidently in the mental condition where he feels that some sort of magical incantation is essential to any public ceremony. The passing of the Oaths Amendment Act definitely lifted English law out of that fetishistic condition, at least in relation to the oath, and it is a pity that all officials are not aware of it.

Freethinkers in West London will please note that the new West London Branch has arranged for the sale of the *Freethinker* and other Freethought literature, at their office, 62 Bryanstone Street, Marble Arch. Anything not on hand may be ordered, and will be obtained at short notice.

Fundamentalism in Excelsis.

THERE has recently been published a very remarkable book entitled, *Up from Methodism*, by Herbert Asbury (Knopf, 7s. 6d.). It deals with the childhood and youth of one brought up in the faith of Fundamentalism. That is, a belief in the Bible as the authentic word of God, and that every statement contained in that book is scientifically, historically, morally and spiritually true. Also the belief in a personal devil, heaven and hell, and a future life of eternal bliss, or eternal pain, as recorded in the gospels.

The book tells of how this religion was forced upon him, and how he suffered from it, how he was nauseated and repulsed by the dreadful creed; how he was tricked into conversion, and how he finally discarded all religion and gained peace and freedom.

We have spoken of the book as a remarkable one, we mean, it is a remarkable book to have found a publisher in this country—it is an American work—for there are several passages in it that clearly bring it within the claws and talons of the Blasphemy Laws. Many sentences of imprisonment have been recorded, even of late years, for utterances less extreme than some of those contained in this book. But it all depends upon where the blasphemy is uttered, and who utters it; whether it is a high-class publisher, or a Freethought lecturer to an open-air audience. It always did make all the difference. To enlighten the working classes, upon the subject of religion, has always appeared to our rulers to be a particularly diabolical act, to be sternly suppressed, when it can be done without too much trouble and expense, and public opinion will allow.

Mr. Asbury, then, was born in a small town in the Middle West of America—the home of rampant fundamentalism—at Farmington, in the State of Missouri, where his father was City Clerk. If pedigree counts for anything he should have taken to religion as a duck takes to water, for, on his father's side, he was related to Cotton Mather; and on his mother's to Roger Williams. His great-great-uncle was Francis Asbury, the founder, and first Bishop of the Methodist Church in America. His great-grandfather was the Rev. Daniel Asbury, an early pillar of Methodism and a great organizer of the Church in the South; it is recorded of this last celebrity, that when he was a boy, he was captured by Indians, and retaliated by converting the entire tribe to Christianity!

Notwithstanding the quality and quantity of this long line of preachers, the boy inherited no portion of his ancestors' religious fervour; he turned against

religion from the beginning, and the less inclination he showed towards religion the more he was badgered and harassed by his relatives and friends to accept it. Of his experiences during this time, he says:—

Religion and Church dominated the whole of my early life. Among all of my relatives I do not recall one whose home was not oppressed, and whose life was not made miserable and fretful, by the terrible fear of a relentless God, whose principle occupation seemed to be snooping about searching for someone to punish. . . I was hounded from pillar to post by a pack of baying, sanctimonious hypocrites, beseeching me to get right with Jesus, and to read and believe that collection of Hebrew fairy tales called the Bible. I came finally to think of God as I did of castor oil, and the flavour he left in my mouth was just as frightful. (Herbert Asbury, *Up from Methodism*, p. 98).

After a prayer-meeting at his uncle's house, he tells us: "I felt as if something was crushing me, and that something was my uncle's God, an avenging monster ready to devour me for my sins. God was in the house and I was afraid." After these prayer-meetings, he continues: "Nearly always I awoke some hours later in the throes of a nightmare, pursued by fiends and demons shrieking that I was boiled and fried and cooked in the fires of Hell." Speaking personally, and from personal experience, I can quite believe it. When I was a child I underwent the same torture. I slept in a room at the top of the house, and many a night I have crept down the long, dark stairs and passages so as to be near the room where my elders were still sitting up. No one who has not endured it can realise the exquisite torture inflicted on a sensitive child's mind by this hideous doctrine. It is the thought of the suffering endured during childhood, and the knowledge that children are still suffering in the coils of the "Galilean serpent," in the same way to-day, which creates that flaming indignation against this bestial religion and inspires us to join with Voltaire in his famous war cry, "Crush the Infamous."

One preacher at Farmington informed his hearers that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because the inhabitants danced, and for no other reason, and intimated that Farmington was destined for the same dreadful end. But let Mr. Asbury tell the story:—

It was these people who taught me of God, and who had dominion over my spiritual welfare! And not only did they instruct me to worship their conception of Him; they threatened me with eternal damnation if I didn't, and with even more horrible punishment if I ventured to cast doubt upon the truth and holiness of the Bible. Eternal damnation meant that I should, in the life to come, hang throughout eternity on a revolving spit over a great fire in the deepest pit of Hell, while little red devils jabbed white-hot pokers into my quivering flesh, and Satan stood by and curled his lip in glee. I received the impression that Satan was the only one actively concerned with religion who was ever permitted to laugh. God was not, nor His disciples, and that Satan could, and apparently did, was sufficient proof that laughter was wicked.

And they described God to me, and told me in minute detail of the architectural design of Heaven and the furnishings of the Mansions in the Sky. I do not know where they obtained their information. I gathered that God was an old man, who wore a long, white nightgown, and boasted a luxuriant growth of whiskers, with a disposition compounded of the snarls of a wounded wild cat, and the pleasant conceits of a *must* elephant. He chewed tobacco—perhaps that impression was due to the fact that so many of our preachers were addicted to the vile weed—and He had an enormous head which contained an eye for every person on earth, and this eye was constantly upon its object. And

it was a vindictive and jaundiced eye, peering into the innermost depths of the soul, and the mind, and the heart for some thought or feeling that might call for punishment. (pp. 88-89.)

The description given him of Heaven, was that of the palace of a Babylonian king, abounding with gold and silver, and rubies and diamonds, and upon every cloud that rolled down the golden streets, was seated a beautiful woman, eternally young and amiable. The heaven he was taught to aspire to, says Mr. Asbury, "was a motion-picture set on an even grander scale than the creations of Cecil de Mille."

Of the other religious denominations in Farmington, there were two or three families of Jews, but he does not recall that they ever practised their religion; certainly not in public, for, says Mr. Asbury: "Doubtless our God would have destroyed them if they had thus flaunted their sin in our faces, and mocked us with their heathen rites." Of the Catholics, he says:—

The Protestants of Farmington made little if any effort to induce the Catholics to abandon their debaucheries and embrace the true religion; generally, we considered them benighted heathens and crazy people, and let it go at that, confident that in due time God would blast them with His wrath, destroy their churches, and perhaps send their young women to Heaven to be virgin angels in a Protestant paradise. I was very eager to see this wholesale destruction, and waited patiently for many years, hoping that God would furnish advance information to His intimate, our Methodist pastor, so we would be able to view the performance. I strongly favoured an earthquake and a bolt of lightning, as being more spectacular. But, I am sorry to say, that nothing ever happened, although one night lightning struck the steeple of the Catholic church and there was some talk that God was limbering up His muscles and getting ready to show what He could really do. (p. 27.)

With the coming of the revivalist, the revival meeting, and the conversion of young Asbury, we shall deal in our next.

W. MANN.

(To be continued).

Notes from Last Week.

"The wise thrush, who sings his song twice over."

—Browning.

Paley, it may be noted, lived at a time when preachers of Christianity had not grown so thoroughly ashamed of their religion as they appear to be at present, and so stated his case in a genuinely Christian fashion.—*Views and Opinions*.

Mr. Spurr seems to think that religious experience furnishes a conclusive evidence of the objective existence of Christ, and without a doubt the majority of Christians so regard it.—*Christ and the World*. J. T. LLOYD.

Organized religion, when driven into last ditches, is still capable of doing in the twentieth century, by roundabout methods, that which it did openly when it had no opposition.—*Acid Drops*.

Straight speaking never offends anyone whose opinion is worth having.—*To Correspondents*.

The mixture of salacity and piety is quite common in the history of Christianity, indeed, it is common with all forms of religion.—*To Correspondents*.

Looking round, Lucretius sees that the chief enemy of man consists of his own fears—fears of unknown terrors in this world and the next. . . Upon this all tyrants and all priesthoods build their power.—*Lucretius*. SIMPLE SIMON.

PLAYED BY FLAUTIST.

Lucretius.

(Continued from page 219).

With this practical object in view, Lucretius sets out on his exposition of a complete scheme of cosmic evolution, from the atom up to human institutions and beliefs. To this end he sets out with two broad generalizations: nature is uniform in its operations, and nothing in nature can come out of or be reduced to nothing. If nature were not uniform in its operations, he points out, any kind might be born out of any other kind, and reasoning would be impossible. Everything in nature has its fixed stages of growth and maturity and decay; nor does anything ever come into existence except as a result of definite antecedent conditions. And nothing is ever annihilated, but nature uses over again the old materials. "Rains die, but the goodly crops spring up, and boughs are green with leaves upon the trees; trees themselves grow, and are laden with fruit; by them, in turn, our race and the race of wild beasts are fed; by them we see glad towns teem with children and the leafy forests ring on all sides with the song of new birds..... None of the things, therefore, which seem to be lost is utterly lost, since nature replenishes one thing out of another, and does not suffer anything to be begotten before she has been recruited by the death of some other."

Constant change without any increase or diminution of material. But this is explicable only on the theory of the elements being in perpetual motion; and the conclusion is drawn that nature *per se* consists of two things—bodies or atoms infinite in number and ceaseless in motion, and space infinite in extent, in which these bodies move. Or, to put the same thing in a sentence, definite and invariable natural law is only possible on the condition of the ultimate basis of matter being unchangeable likewise. The original condition of things Lucretius pictures as something in the nature of an infinite snowstorm. Innumerable atoms travelling through space form innumerable combinations; some are stable, others unstable; until at length a combination occurs that permits of the development of the universe as we now see it. But no combination can last for ever, for nature creates anew by destroying the combinations previously formed.

Neither can death-dealing motions keep the mastery always, nor entomb existence for evermore; nor, on the other hand, can the birth and increase-giving motions of things preserve them always after they are born. Thus the war of first beginnings waged from eternity is carried on with dubious issue; now here, now there, the life-bringing elements of things get the mastery, and are o'ermastered in turn; with the funeral wail blends the cry which babies raise when they enter the borders of light; and no night ever followed day nor morning night that heard not, mingling with the sickly infant's cries, the wailings that attend on death and black funeral.

Nor are the atoms even when in combination ever at rest. He insists, as does modern science, that the ultimate particles of matter are in constant motion. Their apparent rest is a mere illusion of sense, just as a drove of sheep seen from afar appear as a white speck on the bosom of a hill; or legions of men waging a mimic war, marching and countermarching, seen from a distance appear to stand still as a small bright spot.

The same principle of countless combinations, resulting, as modern science would phrase it, in the survival of the fittest, accounts for the rise of living beings on the earth; a view that Lucretius, chiefly

owing to want of a knowledge of the principle of variation, supports by many almost grotesque illustrations. But the principle that all complete forms are the results of numerous trials is grasped firmly enough.

Want of space prevents further account of this portion of Lucretius's theory, as it does more than a passing mention of his theory of mental vision and general psychology. Sight, smell, and hearing, he declares, are due to vibrations of matter—travelling films—entering the mind through the medium of the senses. In place of the theory that Christian Europe held for centuries, that sight was due to light travelling *from* the eye to the object seen, he insists on the true theory that it is the result of the passage of vibrations from the object to the eye; and he had studied the matter with sufficient care to know that the angle at which these images will be reflected will be equal to that at which they strike the object.

And now, continues Lucretius, having shown you how all these things are produced out of atoms and their combinations, without the aid of the gods, I will show you that both mind and soul are mortal. Both body and soul are made up of atoms, the latter being built up of much finer forms, such as ether, heat, air, and a certain "subtle spirit"; but the two constitute an organic unit, and it is impossible that one should exist without the other. To prove this he gives a whole series of striking illustrations. We see the mind begotten with the body, grow up with it, and decay with it. In disease the mind wanders and goes astray. Men, in fighting, lose their limbs, and the limbs lie quivering on the ground. Because they move there is a proof that they possess something of the soul. But it is absurd to imagine that there is a separate soul for each limb; therefore the soul has been divided, and that which has been divided cannot be immortal. And as the soul exhibits this close correspondence with and dependence upon bodily states, it follows that "when this life is past it goes an outcast from the body's door, and dies like smoke along the driving blast."

In the next place he urges the difficulty of picturing the soul as independent of the body. If the soul is immortal, why do we possess no recollection of any former existence? And if the mind has been so changed by birth that we possess no remembrance of past things, this does not differ from death. We do not know that which was before birth, and we shall not know that which is after death. It is absurd, too, to picture bands of immortal souls at the births of bodies standing by, each longing to be first in, each resolved to push his best and try:—

Unless they settle it on this condition,
That who comes first shall have the first admission.

In destroying the belief in immortality, Lucretius believes he is striking at the citadel of all superstition and priestly tyranny; and he brings his arguments to a conclusion in a very long passage of sustained beauty of thought and expression and close reasoning to show that his view of life and death carries with it nothing that need give rise to fear or despair. Primarily, men dread "annihilation" because they misunderstand its nature, and picture themselves *feeling* their own inability to feel.

What has this bugbear death to frighten men,
If souls can die as well as bodies can?
For if before our birth we felt no pain
When Punic arms infested land and main,
So when our mortal frame shall be disjoin'd,
The lifeless lumps uncoupled from the mind,
From sense of pain and grief we shall be free,
We shall not feel because we shall not be.

Men dilate upon the joys we shall no longer experi-

ence in death, but forget that we shall no longer desire them.

The worst that can befall thee, measur'd right,
Is a sound slumber and a long good-night.

Death, to the wise man, is nothing—even less than nothing, if a less could be. Why not, then, take thy departure like a guest filled with life, and with resignation enter upon untroubled rest? Our life and death are parts of the universal process of destruction and reconstruction.

One being, worn, another being makes;
Chang'd but not lost; for nature gives and takes;
New matter must be found for things to come,
And these must waste like those, and follow nature's doom.
All things, like thee, have times to rise and rot;
And from each other's ruins are begot.
For life is not confined to him or thee—
'Tis given all for use, to none for property.

We come out of one eternity, and go forth into another.

Not by the longest life can we attain,
One moment from the length of death we gain.
When once the fates have cut the mortal thread,
The man as such to all intents is dead,
Who dies to-day and will as long be so
As he who died a thousand years ago.

We must content ourselves with the merest outline of Lucretius's speculations on anthropology, although it is this portion of his book that brings him into closest contact with modern thought. He entirely ignores the dream of a golden age, and insists that the primitive condition of man was that of savagery. Men were hardly distinguishable from the brutes. "Like beasts they ran wild in the woods, nor naught they knew of fire, clothing, language, or religion." Gradually they acquired the art of using skins for clothes; but the most important discovery was that of fire and monogamy. Fire enabled them to defy the rigour of cold, and monogamy led to the institution of the family. "Children broke down the rude tempers of parents, and neighbours joined in a league of friendship" Metals were discovered, and one after another the various arts came into existence. It is absurd, too, to imagine that any particular man invented language. Men accompanied certain labours by certain sounds, and this formed the crude beginnings out of which all articulate language has been developed. He is emphatic, also, that man had at first no trace of religion. Religion began to be from two causes. Men speculated on the cause of the seasons, of thunder, and of other phenomena, and in their ignorance postulated the existence of gods. And the second cause is this. Men saw in their dreams, shapes and forms, and endowed them with an actual objective existence. And as a subsidiary cause he gives the gradual deification of ancestors, kings, and great men. To all conversant with modern theories on the subject there is no need to point out how close is their likeness to Lucretian speculations.

There is a remarkable aside in Book V. in which Lucretius pauses awhile in his main argument to exclaim that even without a knowledge how things are made, the imperfections of the world are enough to disprove divine agency. Large tracts of the earth are covered by inaccessible mountains and noisome pools. Extreme heat and cold forbid habitation in other portions. And the portion that does admit of cultivation, even that nature would overrun with thorns, did not the force of man prevail. Again, why does nature give food and increase to the wild beasts dangerous to mankind? Why do the seasons of the years bring diseases in their train? Why stalks abroad untimely death? Why is it, if the lightning is one of God's weapons, that the man whose conscience is burdened with no foul offence is struck

down and the evil doer escapes? Why, too, does the lightning strike solitary spots, and so spend its energy in vain? And why does the lightning of the gods destroy their own temples and sanctuaries? All the imperfections of nature, and all the inadequacies of the world are passed in review as evidence against the belief in design in nature, and in a manner that has no superior in the ancient world. SIMPLE SIMON.

(To be Concluded.)

The Parson's Collar.

"That mark of his shame! that seal of his sorrow!"
—Coleridge (adapted).

See there! as round the bend o' the street
He comes, it hits your eye!
That trade-badge under Parson's chin:
Sole thing to tell him by.
Ah! what a life! Contrast his creed,
The fog, the mental squalor,
With the pretence of holiness
That lurks about that collar.

"Pretence"?—Yes; bring him to the test!
Put him the Holy Word
On one knee; on the other set
A young, bewitching bird.
Were it Lord Bishop Thingum's self,
You bet your bottom dollar
The Word might go to Jericho,
And Saint would slip his collar.

But soon replace! Else what were left
Whereby the world could smell him?
Odour of sanctity—the whiff's
So mix'd, you'd fail to tell him.
Ability, distinction, none
As thinker or as scholar:
No saving grace. The only thing,
Lord Jesus! is that collar.

So, with his trade-badge round his neck
He goes, week after week;
Feeling (he cannot help but feel)
A make-believe, a sneak.
But hark ye, "Reverend"! Doff! Or soon
You'll hear the youngsters holler:
"Hi, Dick! Hi, Bill! Look at that shiam!
Him in the Parson Collar!"

H. BARBER.

Obituary.

MRS. JANE ELIZABETH HOPPER, JARROW.

WE regret to have to report the death of Mrs. Jane Elizabeth Hopper, widow of the late William Hopper of Jarrow. Both Mr. and Mrs. Hopper were earnest Freethinkers of many years' standing, and well known to Tyneside Freethinkers. They appeared but little in the public work of the party, but their opinions were well known, and their sympathies freely expressed. The remains of Mrs. Hopper were cremated at the Jarrow-on-Tyne Crematorium, and a Secular Service was read by Mr. Ralph Chapman.

VOLTAIRE.

Perhaps no writer has ever roused more hatred in Christendom than Voltaire. He was looked on as a sort of anti-Christ. That was natural; his attacks were so tremendously effective at the time. But he has been sometimes decried on the ground that he only demolished and made no effort to build up where he had pulled down. This is a narrow complaint. . . . The true answer is that knowledge, and therefore civilization, are advanced by criticism and negation, as well as by construction and positive discovery. When a man has the talent to attack with effect falsehood, prejudice, and imposture, it is his duty, if there are any social duties, to use it.—Prof. J. B. Bury ("History of Freedom of Thought").

Correspondence.

THE DELUGE AND THE RAINBOW.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—We are all much indebted to Mr. Wm. Clark for putting us wise concerning the rainbow. My mind, at any rate, is relieved. If there were any discrepancies, or inconsistencies in my remarks, I must needs blame the record. In any case, consistency has never been one of my virtues.

And now we know the whole truth from Mr. Clark. With the aid of a brilliant mathematician—C.P. No. 1—he figures out that the rainbow was initiated 5,400 years ago, owing to certain planets bumping, and our old earth jumping, as a result a distance of 20 millions of miles. "Oh Earth, what changes thou hast seen."

This enabled us to get into a clearer atmosphere—hence the first rainbow.

Mr. Clark certainly covers the ground very thoroughly. He has made a complete study of the Deluge question, for I remember his previous article. As he disagrees with both current theology and mythology, we may hope that the Deluge will serve Mr. Clark, as the apple did Newton. It is the discovery of an epoch.

But I don't want Methusaleh to be reduced to 242 "seasons." He is a venerable vested interest, and I am unwilling that he should turn out to be a callow youth when he died. At least leave us Methusaleh.

One more point, and I shall leave Mr. Clark in the hands of the geologists, and the physicists, and the astronomers: They are puzzled (or were until Mr. Clark invented his theory) as to the existence of large coalfields near the North Pole. Is not this a most suitable place to have a coalfield? Is it not a providential arrangement for the comfort of Amundsen and other intrepid explorers? Are we not entitled to marvel at the wonderful prescience of the Almighty in thus anticipating the needs of his children in the twentieth century?

ALAN TYNDAL.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

Mr. Ebury is to be congratulated on the clearness and lucidity of his lecture on "Hate." He is certainly a provocative speaker, and his address gave rise to a lively discussion, which would have lasted for much longer had time permitted.

To-night the debate between Mr. Alexander Thompson and Mr. Palmer, on the question of the Drink Traffic, should bring a large audience.

Will readers please note that there will be no meeting on Easter Sunday, and that on April 24, Mr. Hornbrook's address will be delivered at 293 Kentish Town Road, the rooms of the North London Labour Party, where there will be more room for Mr. Hornbrook's illustrations of physical exercises, which form a most important part of his very striking lecture on "Religion and Health."—K. B. K.

SHOTTS BRANCH.

On Sunday last we had Mr. E. Hale, President of Glasgow S.S. as our speaker, and his subject was, "The Story of Man," which he delivered to a very good audience. It was a very scientific lecture and appeared to interest the audience very much, as there were a lot of questions at the end of the address, which were very satisfactorily answered by Mr. Hale. Mr. Fred Mann, of Glasgow, presided in his usual able manner.—C. H.

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LONDON.

INDOOR.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE (Emerson Club, 1 Little George Street, Westminster, S.W.1): 3.30, Lecture in French, by Madame Céline Haegler, on "Les Révélations des Plantes-Recherches de Sir Jagadis Bose." All invited.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, Victoria Road, Kentish Town, N.W.1): 7.30, Discussion between Mr. Alexander Thompson (U.K. Alliance for Total Suppression of the Liquor Traffic) and Mr. T. F. Palmer. Subject: "Local Option for England."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W.): 7.0, Discussion, "Which is the greatest force—Hereditity, Environment or Variation?" Opened by Mr. G. Shambrook.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7.0, Mr. Joseph McCabe, "My Impression of Mexico."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, John A. Hobson, M.A., "John Morley, Rationalist."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY 101 Tottenham Court Road): 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin, a Lecture. Thursday, April 14, 7.30, Mr. M. Maubrey, a Lecture.

OUTDOOR.

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

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Lecture by Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Picton Lecture Hall, William Brown Street): 7.0, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Does Modern Science Support Religion?"

SHOTTS BRANCH N.S.S. (Public Hall): 7.0, Mr. W. H. MacEwan, "The Resurrection." Questions and discussion cordially invited. Collection.

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