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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>A Study in Unreason.—The Editor</i>	337
<i>Christian Fellowship.—J. T. Lloyd</i>	339
<i>A Cynic in the Making.—Mimnermus</i>	340
<i>How to Choose a Religion.—W. Mann</i>	341
<i>The Blind Judges of Colours: by Voltaire.—H. Barber</i>	342
<i>If Spiritualism Were True.—Vincent J. Hands</i>	346
<i>The Cemetery Wall.—Joseph Bryce</i>	347
<i>Maxim Gorki—An Appreciation.—William Repton</i>	348

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

Views and Opinions.

A Study in Unreason.

THE other day, Bishop Barnes gave an address to 750 workmen employed at a Birmingham works. He explained to them the theory of evolution, and concluded with the information that this was the way which leads "thinking man" to accept the whole scientific description of the universe, "and still believe in the sort of God of whom we read in the Bible." "Thinking man" is capable of many things, and all that Bishop Barnes was really saying was that the people who think in that way have that way of thinking. For there are very clearly many "thinking men" who come to quite an opposite conclusion. Thus, there was among the Bishop's hearers a whole-hogger of a Christian, who would have none of the Bishop's shilly-shallying. This gentleman, Mr. George Parkes, remarked, "If the Word of God said that Jonah swallowed the whale I should believe it. If we do not believe the story of Jonah and the whale, we make Christ a liar, because he stated his belief in it." That was just a little extreme, because a man who believes a story such as the one named is not a liar, he is simply silly, or ignorant. Apart from that Mr. Parkes was, as a Christian, on solid ground. He differed from the Bishop in believing that the Bible meant what it said, and that when it said, for example, that all languages were miraculously created in a single night, it meant it. He also believed that if God went out of his way to give a revelation, he said what he meant and he meant what he said. I raise my hat to Mr. Parkes. He may be stupid, but he is sincere. He may be ignorant, but he is quite a good Christian. Salutations to the cave man!

* * *

A Futile Revelation.

To Mr. Parkes, replies Bishop Barnes:—

If you do accept the Bible as an infallible record of science and history, I do not see how you can take the point of view of modern science. I look

at the Bible as a religious revelation. The first chapter of Genesis is valuable, because it asserts that in the beginning God created heaven and earth, and that is what I have been trying to put before you to-day—that the whole of creation is due to the will and purpose of God, and that he devised the immensely slow progress which men call evolution.

In my judgment Mr. Parkes had the better of the argument. He holds that if God gave a revelation it is to reveal something, and what it says is what it reveals. Bishop Barnes will not say the Bible is not a revelation, but he says that what it tells us is quite wrong. It does not tell you the truth about science; it does not give you accurate history, and its morality is the morality of the age in which it was written. So the proper way is to take it as God's revelation, go on believing it as best you can, and wait for a Charles Darwin, who did not believe in the Bible God, and who did not go to the Bible for the information, to tell us just what God meant. It looks as though we should have been just as well off without this revelation, seeing that it told us nothing we could not have found out without it; nay, we had to find out the truth without its help, and then had to fight God's revelation in order to secure the liberty to teach it.

* * *

Religious Logic.

But the Bishop and Mr. Parkes do not differ so violently as one might think. On one fundamental point they are agreed. They both accept the Bible as a revelation from God, although the Bishop, who is paid to tell us what it means, says that we didn't know what the devil it had to say for itself until Darwin or someone came along and told us what the truth was. Then, whatever is true, that says the Bishop, is what the Bible teaches. That, of course, is the one infallible way of proving that the Bible is always right. Mr. Parkes accepts the story of Jonah and the whale, because he believes in the Bible. Bishop Barnes also believes the Bible to be a revelation from God, because it tells him that "In the beginning" God made heaven and earth. From the point of view of the outsider there does not seem much difference between the two. If there is any, it is in favour of Mr. Parkes. Given a whale with a swallow large enough, or a man small enough, and there is nothing inconceivable about the Jonah yarn. It is merely incredible. One can understand what it means. But the statement that in the beginning God made heaven and earth, and instituted the process of evolution, is not credible, it is inconceivable. No one can understand it. What is the beginning? I am quite sure that no man of science has any use for such verbiage. If there was a beginning, what was there before it began? Was there ever something before there was anything, or a state of nature before there

was a beginning? Or, if there was something before there was anything, what was this something that was not like anything? I shall get a headache if I try further to untangle Bishop Barnes. Besides, I feel pretty certain that if he got out of this tangle he would soon get into another. Mr. Parkes believes the whale swallowed Jonah because the Bible tells him so. He has no other evidence, and does not require any. Bishop Barnes believes God made heaven and earth "in the beginning," because it is in the Bible. He has no other evidence and does not ask for any. The Bishop and the layman are really in fundamental agreement, although they appear to differ. It reminds me of the case of two men, one of whom believed he was made of glass, the other, that he was an incarnation of Jesus Christ. Each was profoundly convinced of the other's insanity.

* * *

An Old Story.

But withal, I am puzzled by the declaration of Bishop Barnes. The mere statement in the Bible that God made heaven and earth appears to be enough, for him, to stamp the Bible as a revelation from God. But this story of a God creating heaven and earth is terribly common. There exists hardly a people who have not a similar statement. In ancient Babylon and Chaldea they had it. The Tahitians have it, most primitive peoples have it. And these beliefs are clearly independent of the Bible. Will Bishop Barnes hold that in each case the statement is a proof of inspiration? If not, why not? Were all the other gods impostors, laying claim to some other god's work? I know that some inventors are very touchy in this direction, and there have been numerous quarrels as to originality in letters, in music, and in scientific discovery. Is the Biblical god built that way; and did he give his special revelation to the Jews to preserve his rights? But if among the very many accounts of creation we have, the one there is in the Bible is the only genuine one, I would suggest that those gentlemen who have just revised the prayer book would make the meaning of the Bible clearer if they made the statement in the Bible read: "It having come to my notice that other Gods have laid claim to creating heaven and earth, I, Jawhe, God of the Hebrews, hereby proclaim that I alone am the creator; that I alone made heaven and earth in the beginning; that I made them alone, and without any kind of help or advice from any other kind of deity whatsoever; and hereby declare that all similar claims made by any other god, past or present, is false and fraudulent." That would make it quite clear on what ground we are to accept the Bible as a revelation, and it would make the position of the Bishop quite clear also. Bishop Barnes believes the Bible is a religious revelation, because it says God made heaven and earth in the beginning. He knows that statement is true, because it is in the Bible. He knows the Bible is a revelation, because it has that statement in it. I really do not think that Mr. Parkes and the Bishop of Birmingham are, mentally, very far apart. The difference seems largely one of mental digestion.

* * *

An Evolutionary God.

God having created heaven and earth, Bishop Barnes concludes that the whole of this immensely slow process which men of science call evolution is due to the will and purpose of God. Suppose that were so; what kind of a help is it to us in the way of understanding it? When scientists tell us that every form of life goes back through a slowly changing ancestry, that is information. When they explain

how planets are formed, how certain forces waste and shape the earth's surface, that again is information. It all helps us to understand, where before we did not understand. But if science merely said, what Bishop Barnes says religion tells us, that all that happens is part of the will and purpose of God, that is not information at all. It does not help us to understand in the slightest degree. We are where we were, loaded only with a statement that gives rise to a number of difficulties that, but for this revelation would never have existed. Why on earth does a deity, who could create heaven and earth invent an evolutionary process at all? What is the good of going a long round-about way to get a particular result when one could get it at once? The evolutionary process is slow, cruel, wasteful, and bungling. There is not a scientific man of any note who could not suggest scores of ways in which the process could be bettered, and many have done so. Nay, in some respects he has the power and uses it. That is why human intelligence, applied to the evolutionary process, is able to do with less bungling and waste, what God, according to Bishop Barnes, takes millenniums to do. If there is a God, I wonder what he thinks of his defenders?

* * *

A Mistaken Policy.

It is quite a mistake for the Bishop to give reasons why he believes anything. It is a risky policy. His reputation as a religious thinker has been built up by his giving reasons why he did *not* believe. And that was easy; for all he had to do then was to offer a few elementary scientific truths that were quite enough to show how ridiculous some of the Bible stories were. His strength was not so much in his own intellectual capacity, as it lay in the folly and superstition of his brother Christians. In such an environment average ability takes on the colour of intellectual genius. So men such as Bishop Barnes are quite safe while they give reasons why they do not believe certain orthodox teachings. They are then repudiating things that anyone with real pretensions to culture or ability should be ashamed to avow. But to give reasons why you still believe some things in connexion with religion is a dangerous procedure. Then one has to make one's position reasonable, and that is difficult. For the things retained are all of a piece with the things rejected. They belong to the same family group, have the same origin, and are susceptible to the same attack. In one respect these half-liberated intellects are in a worse position than those upon whom they look down. The latter have at least consistency in their irrationality. The former cannot but raise the question: Why, seeing so much, they do not see still more?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Eternal Round.

AMBITION and cupidity, the blind
Pursuit of Empire,—here are fondly wed
The source of all their woes; here foully shed
The blood of man, and nobleness of mind;
So said the sage of old, in words unkind;
We cite the hallowed wisdom of the dead,
But scorn the counsel that they left behind
Yet with the poison of the past are fed:
Though old the tale of how the die was cast,
Others for place and power boldly bid;
And the old lesson must be taught anew:
Return, O! Sage, and see from out the past,
The Great of Earth who fall as others did,—
Th' eternal thing that does as others do!

WM. J. LAMB.

Christian Fellowship.

THE Rev. L. H. Hough, Th.D., D.D., is a popular American divine of the Methodist Episcopal denomination, and he is well-known as a powerful preacher in this country also. One of his sermons appears in the *Christian World Pulpit*, for May 19, in which he dwells at some length on "the walls of division," which have been erected within the Christian Church, splitting it up into numerous more or less antagonistic sections or parties. Dr. Hough informs us that there are nearly two hundred Christian sects in the United States, and admits that "such a situation can scarcely be said to be a fulfilment of the petition of Jesus in that great intercessory prayer, 'that they may all be one.'" He goes further still and says that "we have flouted the expressed hope of Jesus," and that "we have more than we know become his foes as we have divided the Church, which we have been taught rightly to believe is the body of Christ." We transcribe the following amusing passage:—

In that able and stimulating volume, *Adventurous Religion*, Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick tells of a Church in an American city which gave itself the title, "The Church of God." It was all alone, holding communion with no other group, yet it bore that high and august title. By and by trouble came. The Church in pain and faction divided. The group which went out called itself, "The True Church of God." For a time all went well in the true Church of God. But even there trouble and difference and faction entered. At length the dissensions could be tolerated no longer. A group went out and founded another Church. They called themselves in high assurance, "The Only True Church of God." That is all of the story which has come to us, but it is half tragic, half amusing to wonder what name could be used by those who went out from the "Only True Church of God," and what names could be found by those who represented later inevitable divisions.

That story is really more tragic than amusing, for it goes far to show that there is no Church of God on earth at all. Curiously enough, every one of the two hundred denominations confidently regards itself as the only true Church of Christ, which proves that in the two hundred cases the claim entirely lacks validity. The *Church Times* boldly declares that Episcopacy is an essential constituent of the true Church, a declaration which, if true, would deprive all Nonconformist communions of the right to call themselves Churches of God. Dr. Hough deplores the existence of all such self-righteous claims, saying:—

When one surveys all the denominations of Christians in America, he remembers sadly the words of the New England poet, Robert Frost:—

Something there is that doesn't love a wall.

We, too, want to know what these walls of denomination shut in. And most especially we want to know what they shut out. For our tragic divisions have made profound and trustful fellowship impossible in untold numbers of cases. The mind of Christ is surely not reflected in the present ecclesiastical situation in the United States. We are not walking in the light which comes from his radiant personality as we divide and sub-divide in such amazing fashion.

As a matter of fact, the May Meetings in London are often employed as opportunities for denominational self-glorification, and for each sect to point out and emphasize the defects of the other sects. The *Church Times*, of May 13, devotes a long leading article to a discussion of "The Congregational Ideal," in which it indulges in the following statement: "A Church which allows no man except a priest to celebrate the Eucharist, cannot authorize its

members to receive the Lord's Supper where priests do not exist. That is simply the situation, and there is no evading it. No Congregationalist minister could possibly be allowed to celebrate the Eucharist in the Church of England." Naturally, Congregationalists would angrily resent such an absurd Anglo-Catholic claim. In reality, however, the ideals of both groups are equally silly and useless, for, after all, the Eucharist is but the perpetuation in modern guise of an ancient Cannibalistic feast.

While all these ecclesiastical divisions and persecutions prevail, our distinguished divine is deeply convinced that "the whole world is passionately and wistfully longing for fellowship," and that in its absence what threatens us is dire catastrophe. We are absolutely sure that Dr. Hough's statement is wholly true; but we are fully as certain that the fellowship for which the world so ardently longs will never come through the Church. The Church has frequently deluged the world with blood. Peace it has neither had nor loved. The Gospel Jesus is represented as solemnly saying: "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth; I came not to send peace but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Matt. x. 34-36). With what terrible literalness the Church has verified those dread words in the history of the world! Even Dr. Hough does not seem to cherish any great confidence in the Church's power to set the world right. He says:—

The fight for fellowship is the great battle of the Church, and the call of the great forces which make for peace may well command its very mind and conscience and heart. Perhaps after we have done our best, civilization will go down in the terrible holocaust of war. Perhaps after every cry of prophet and sage the wild passions of men will be too much, and we shall lose the slowly garnered treasures of civilization of the whole great world. . . . I do not believe, however, that such a tragic close is to come to the tale of the civilization of the world. I do not believe that we are to go down in ruin at last. I do believe that the forces of good will be stronger than the forces of hate. I do believe that the steadiest hands and minds in all the world are committed to a policy of conciliation and good will.

We are in agreement with the reverend gentleman, so far as that passage is concerned; but unfortunately it does not stand by itself. It occurs in a discourse in which God, Christ, and the Church are of supreme account. We believe that, on the whole, the trend of the evolution of the human race is slightly upwards, though it has had serious setbacks and will probably have many more in the future. The truth about the Church is that it has greatly retarded the progress of the world. Yet in spite of all obstacles we are convinced that our race is a little higher now than it was five thousand years ago.

Dr. Hough affirms that Jesus Christ "put a new principle into the life of the world, when he said, 'I, if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me,' and when he followed the word by the deed. Jesus Christ is the creator of that fellowship, which is the hope of the world." Here the preacher is guilty of a glaring inconsistency. In the course of his sermon, he repeatedly complains that to-day, two thousand years after Christ was lifted up, fellowship even within and between the Churches is conspicuous only by its absence. Few preachers can speak well of other Churches than their own, while of non-Christian organizations they have not the least toleration. Dr. T. R. Glover, preaching at Regent Square

Presbyterian Church the other Sunday, used shockingly bad language in his reference to unbelievers. As reported in the *Christian World* of May 19, he said:—

People who with insufficient thought and knowledge criticize Jesus Christ and his character and doings, don't realize what despicable asses they are. It is like a blind man talking about colour.

Did Renan criticize Jesus Christ because he was a man of "insufficient thought and knowledge," and is he to be known in future as a "despicable ass"? Was it "with insufficient thought and knowledge," that the Right Honourable John M. Robertson wrote *Pagan Christs*, and other scholarly works, and is he too to be damned as a "despicable ass"?

Dr. T. R. Glover, thou art a Christian, and in consequence in thine own sight a superior person with a vengeance!
J. T. LLOYD.

A Cynic in the Making.

"The young always think that the old were born old."—George Moore.

"A throne is nothing more than a piece of wood covered with satin."—Napoleon.

"People swallow falsehood as a cat laps milk."—G. W. Foote.

It is nearly half a century since the entire literary world was trying to realize the extent of the gap made by the death of that "unsubduable old Roman," Thomas Carlyle. He had been accepted for two generations as one of the foremost forces in British literature, and, what is not always the case with writers of advanced views, his works were widely popular. The interval has affected his reputation, and his fame has shrunk. But there is still vitality in the acidulated pages of *Sartor Resartus*, and the picturesque descriptions of *The French Revolution*, to keep his fame for many a year. *The French Revolution*, perhaps his finest work, is not only a masterly treatment of a very difficult historical period, full of the most powerful realism, but also a splendid homily applying the moral of past events to the present, and showing, ironically enough, that the inequality of mankind was never more thoroughly demonstrated by any event, than by that mighty Revolution, which had inscribed on its banners, "Equality, Liberty and Fraternity."

Curiously, a mass of hitherto unpublished letters from the Sage of Chelsea were unearthed some time ago, and were issued at intervals in a monthly magazine. So interesting are they that they are worth recalling, and salving from the fate of so much periodical literature. The letters were written by Thomas Carlyle to Thomas Spedding, brother to James Spedding, the biographer and champion of Francis Bacon, in the years 1838 to 1870. They contain much interesting matter, and amply repay perusal. There is plenty of humour and pathos, allied with that caustic criticism which is so characteristic of the author of *Sartor Resartus*, as when he writes to Spedding:—

It is long since I have had so interesting a dialogue with any of my fellow-creatures, as with this waste sandy ever-moaning tide-flood of the Solway. Cockneydom shrinks all into the size of a worm-eaten walnut, and this whole existence of our's, with its Peel-ministries and solar systems is worth little and worth much!

In another letter he remarks:—

As for me, I am sick; swimming in chaos these many weeks, nigh drowning towards no visible shore. Ordered by all the gods to write; forbidden by all the devils.

There are some very personal touches. Acknowledging a Christmas gift, he reminds the donor. "I am known by all of you for a man that cannot eat pies." Writing from Scotsbrig, he says:—"My appetite for locomotion, at no time vehement, is altogether satisfied now." Perhaps it is not to be wondered at, for the philosopher describes one of his own means of transport as:—

An antique vehicle of the gig species, very rheumatic on its springs, and drawn by a young plough-horse, entirely inadequate for long journeys! Another horse, thought to be efficient, rebelled with me in Nithsdale already.

Carlyle is quite poetical in some places. Referring to the death of an acquaintance, he says:—

What a wretched stroller's farce were life throughout, did not the great black curtain of Death hang ever in the background; great as Eternity, inscrutable as God.

There are, as may be expected, notable outbursts on industrialism in these letters, which are reminiscent of his splenetic utterances in *Past and Present*, and other writings of the Chartist period:—

Unless gentry, clergy, and all manner of washed articulate speaking men will learn that their position towards the unwashed is contrary to the Law of God, and change it soon, the Law of Man, one has reason to discern, will change it before long, and that in no soft manner.

He uses Chartism itself as a text:—

The fever-fit of Chartism will pass, and other fever-fits; but the thing it means will not pass till whatsoever of truth and justice lies in the heart of it has been fulfilled; it cannot pass till then—a long date, I fear.

Calvinism was in his blood, and Carlyle hated Roman Catholicism with a perfect hatred. His phrase, "The Great Lying Church," is not a compliment to Priestcraft. As may be expected, his references to the Oxford Movement are splenetic. He says that Puseyism is a "symptom," "though whether in revivifying the Church of England or in more swiftly exploding it, deponent saith not, and indeed hardly cares." He dates his letter in which this passage occurs, like a modern Diogenes, "Given in our tub at Chelsea, 1840."

Despite his assumption of the title of philosopher, there was little of philosophic calm in anything that Carlyle wrote. He more nearly resembled a volcano in eruption, and the rumblings of his blazing genius are by no means extinct to-day. The noblest quality in his voluminous writing is the eternal quality of honest indignation. Throughout there is hatred of insincerity and untruth in any form. Above all, is his exaltation of labour and duty: "Do the duty which lies nearest thee, which thou knowest to be a duty; thy second duty will already have become clearer." There never was a time where such advice was more necessary than in post-war England to-day. It is the quintessence of the life-teaching of a really great writer who did so much to rouse the national conscience with regard to social conditions.

MIMNERMUS.

Each man should learn what is within him, that he may strive to mend; he must be taught what is without him, that he may be kind to others. It can never be wrong to tell him the truth; for, in his disputable state, weaving as he goes his theory of life, steering himself, cheering or reproving others, all facts are of the first importance to his conduct; and even if a fact shall discourage or corrupt him it is still best that he should know it, for it is in this world as it is, and not in a world made easy by educational suppression, that he must win his way to shame or glory.—Robert Louis Stevenson.

How to Choose a Religion.

We should imagine that few people would require advice as to the choice of a religion. People usually believe in the religion they have been taught during childhood. If they have been brought up without religion they seldom acquire a taste for it later on.

We have just been reading an essay upon: "How to Choose a Religion." It is the second of a small book of essays entitled, *A Casual Commentary*, by that witty and clever novelist, Miss Rose Macaulay. It is a piece of the most delightful wit and irony that we have had the good fortune to meet with for a considerable time, Voltaire would have been delighted with it. It has only one fault, it is too short.

Miss Macaulay begins by observing that our journals offer information upon a great variety of matters. They will tell you how to choose a husband or a wife. How to become a journalist, a poet, or a member of parliament. How to choose a political party, a hat, or a tooth-paste. But upon such an important theme as the choice of a religion, they maintain a conspiracy of silence. Miss Macaulay holds it to be even more important to have the right religion than the right tooth-paste; but she is careful to point out that by the right religion, she does not mean the *true* religion: "as Mr. Belloc says he does." No, "the right religion for each person is the religion best fitted to his particular needs and capacities."

There are several methods of selection, says our essayist: "One is, to spend your life in travel, research, and inquiry, until all the varieties of religious experience are known to you, and then, at an advanced age, to select that which appears to you to be preferable." If your means and time will not permit of your travelling about the world until "advanced age," then she advises that: "the works of Sir J. G. Frazer should be carefully perused, together with all the Greek and Teutonic philosophers, the Hebrew Scriptures, and many modern American books on various forms of credulity. But Salt Lake City should be visited in person, as most of the literature on the religion of this town is, one way or another, a little biassed." But, as our mentor remarks: "The drawback to this laborious method is that it demands not only a life-time of study, but a brain qualified to apprehend, balance, and judge—and how few brains are this!" Having given this somewhat dubious and pessimistic advice to the earnest seeker after religion, Miss Macaulay turns her attention to the various religions, or rather, to the various sects of Christianity, pointing out their advantages and disadvantages—mostly their disadvantages.

The saying: "By their hymns you shall know them," she does not consider a fair test "for a religion's hymns are often the religion at its least intelligent; but still, having seen the hymns, you have at least the satisfaction of knowing the worst." And further:—

The hymns of most so-called savage tribes have a certain monotony, both of words and tune. They often run something like this: "Oh, Boo-Boo" (or whatever the deity's name may be), "to placate you we offer you this victim slain by the knife. Descend therefore, and eat, and spare the rest of us this time." That is the sort of thing. It is chanted very loudly, to the accompaniment of Tom-toms and of what are known as nameless orgies. But it is probably quite unfair to judge the religions of our black brethren by their hymns. When they embrace Christianity they usually become evangelical, and their hymns are rather worse than before, but have catchy tunes.

Neither is it kind, or just, she thinks, to judge the Protestant sects by the hymns of Moody and Sankey, one of which she cites as beginning: "I should like to die, said Willie, if my papa could die too; but he says he isn't ready, 'Cause he has so much to do." And another runs: "Well wife, I've found the model church, and worshipped there to-day." The Ethical Church hymns meet with more approval, where they sing, "Nearer, mankind, to thee." If, leaving these matters, the enquirer is contemplating a study of the Christian religion, it will take him "some time to decide which branch to join, for its varieties are almost innumerable."

The Roman Catholic Church branch will save you a lot of trouble in deciding for yourself what to believe, for it knows the truth and tells you. "Many people like this," comments Miss Macaulay. On the other hand, it is pointed out, its disadvantages are that "marriage with non-Catholics, and divorce with anyone at all are troublesome in this Church, and a good deal of attendance at services is expected." The Orthodox branch (Greek Church) has dignity and tradition, its disadvantages are, that its clergy are not "what our novelists call well-groomed." They are not allowed to worship statues, but only eikons, or images in bas-relief, and "They keep Easter with great enthusiasm, but at the wrong time." If you join this Church it will be better not to visit Russia just at present, as it is not in favour with the ruling powers.

If you join the Church of England you have a wide choice. You may be Anglo-Catholic, Broad, Low, or merely Anglican. If you are Anglo-Catholic "you have a congress in the summer in the Albert Hall." You read the *Church Times*. "You do not like dissenters, and you regard the office of sung Matins as a nameless orgy."

If you join the Broad Church party you belong to the Churchmen's Union, read the *Hibbert Journal*, and contribute religious essays to volumes edited by Canon Streeter: "You do not care about Anglo-Catholics, who, for their part, say masses of reparation for your indiscretions and existence. You prefer re-union with the Orthodox (Greek) Church to re-union with Rome." If you go in for Low Church, you read the *British Weekly*, "wish for re-union with Protestant Dissenters, and are the only people in the world who believe the Thirty-nine Articles." If you are just Anglican you like Sunday Matins at eleven, and do not wish for "re-union with anyone."

Then there is Presbyterianism. This religion has the advantage (if it be one) over the other Protestant Churches of Great Britain that, north of the Tweed, its members are not dissenters. Episcopalians are the dissenters in Scotland. Presbyterians have another advantage: they do not kneel in church, but sit. However, on the whole they do not have a very good time, for it is thought right that they should attend service on Sundays, and their services are rather long; also, they are supposed to keep the rest of the day rather as the Jews keep Saturday, and Sunday games are not played with that openness practised by Anglicans. On the whole, it is a pity to be a Presbyterian unless you are born so. Calvinists are even more unfortunate, as they believe in severe, prolonged and inevitable punishment after death for nearly everyone, dependent not on conduct in life, but on divine prejudice. If you are unlucky enough to be a Calvinist, you should try hard to believe that you are one of the few exceptions to this rule, and are prejudged to salvation. Many Calvinists succeed in believing this.

Miss Macaulay thinks it much better to be a Quaker: "It is very nice to be a Quaker. Quakers have no creeds, so they can believe anything they like." The disadvantages are that you have to be

very busy in getting up funds for the distressed "in Central Europe, and especially for those with whom your country has recently had differences," and when your country goes to war, "you are in an awkward position, and very unpopular, as you think it wrong to fight. Quakers make the best chocolate." Of the "Christian Scientists," Miss Macaulay observes:—

It is more comfortable, in war-time, to be a Christian Scientist, for Christian Scientists do not believe in war. They think that evil, wickedness, and suffering are fancies of ours, and that God does not know anything about them. God did not know about the Great War. Probably He does not know about the Great Peace, either. In fact, such human activities as do come within the sphere of divine knowledge must be very few indeed. It is almost certain that God knows nothing about politics (home or foreign), commerce, laws, house-agents, family life, or, in fact, about the major part of normal human existence. Christian Scientists save money when they are ill by not having doctors. They think highly instead, which is cheaper, and, I daresay, comes to much the same in the end.

As for the Baptists, Congregationalists, and Wesleyans, the chief thing known about them "is that their places of worship are always (together with the police-station) the ugliest buildings in the village. They often have 1860, 1870 or 1882 engraved upon their walls." The date when they were perpetrated. The better-off classes, says Miss Macaulay, "think it ill-bred to be this kind of Dissenter." But there are lower depths. For instance:—

It is the worst bred of all, I believe, to be a Plymouth Brother. It is also very sad, as these do not keep Christmas by so much as a mince-pie. I once met a Plymouth Brother who told me this. I have never heard what the advantages of being a Plymouth Brother are. There must be some, or there would be no Plymouth Brethren, but all one hears of are its miseries, which are very great, and which you may find narrated in a recent novel called *Mary Lee*, a story about a little Plymouth sister.

After enumerating a number of other curious minor sects, she comes to the conclusion that you can be almost any kind of Christian, and if you live in Tennessee, you can even be a Fundamentalist, or a Holy Roller. Of Unitarianism, we are told: "It is a religion for religious people who cannot believe very much." If you believe even less than the Unitarians, and are yet a religious person, you will do well to join the Ethical Church. This sect has a Chapel at Finsbury, where "it meets and worships good behaviour." The Positivists, however, believe the least of all, but "though they believe so little, they say quite a lot about it."

Our witty guide through the religious Circus, considers the Jews to be the most religious people in the world: many are Freethinkers, but when they are religious they do it thoroughly, as can be seen from the Bible. They supplied the world with Christianity, although they are not taking any of it themselves. It would be unwise to join the Jewish Church, as they have to keep Saturday as a day of rest, very strictly, with long services; and on Sunday they work. "Jews are very clever and make a lot of money, but do not think that by becoming a Jew you will become clever, for it is not their religion, but their race which does it." On the whole, however, the Jews have had a poor time for a good many centuries: "and even now they are disliked by people, such as Mr. Hilaire Belloc. Jews may not eat bacon." Miss Macaulay does not think you will gain anything by becoming a Buddhist, a Confucian, or a Mahometan. "Some people are Theosophists, and have many successive lives; others are Mormons

and have many simultaneous wives; others are Pagans suckled in a creed outworn, and have many curious gods." She thinks, on the whole, it is better to have a religion, as life is rather a dull affair without it. Speaking personally, I can say that the dullest times I have ever experienced have been in a Chapel; religion was the Incubus of my young days, and I was never happy until I had got rid of it. Miss Macaulay gives us no hint as to her own choice, or even if she has made a choice. Just as we thought she was going to fulfil the promise of her title, *How to Choose a Religion*, she comes to an end, shuts the door in our faces, and, no doubt, is heartily enjoying the joke.

W. MANN.

The Blind Judges of Colours: by Voltaire.

[The "Quinze-Vingts," mentioned, was an institution in Paris for the blind. Quinze-vingts—three hundred—the number that the institution was capable of accommodating.]

In the first years, from the foundation of the Quinze-Vingts, one knows that they were all equal, and that their little affairs were decided by the majority of votes. They distinguished by the touch copper money from silver; none of them ever took the wine of Brie for the wine of Burgundy. Their sense of smell was finer than that of their neighbours who had eyesight. They reasoned perfectly on the four senses; that it to say, they knew all that it is permitted to know of them; they lived peaceably, and were as happy as the blind may be. Unhappily one of their professors pretended to have clear notions on the sense of sight; he got them to listen to him, he intrigued, he formed a group of enthusiasts, and in the end was recognized for the chief of the community. He set himself to judge absolutely of colours, and all was lost.

This first dictator of the Quinze-Vingts formed at first a little council, by which he made himself director of the alms-giving. After that, no one dared to resist him. He decided that all the clothes of the Quinze-Vingts were white. The blind believed him; they could talk of nothing but their beautiful white clothes; although there was not a single garb of that colour. Everyone laughed at them. They went to complain to the dictator, who received them very badly; treated them as innovators, unbelievers, rebels, who allowed themselves to be led away by the erroneous opinions of those who had eyes, and who dared to doubt the infallibility of their master. This quarrel formed two parties.

The dictator, to appease them, issued a fiat by which all their clothes were red. There was not a red garb at the Quinze-Vingts. People laughed at them more than ever. New complaints on the part of the community. The dictator entered in fury, the other blind likewise. Long they fought, and concord was re-established only when it was permitted to all the Quinze-Vingts to suspend their judgment on the colour of their clothes.

A deaf man, reading this little history, avowed that the blind were in the wrong to judge of colours; but he remained firm in the opinion that the deaf were the only proper judges of music.

(Englished by H. BARBER.)

There is a certain snobbishness in human nature that makes men seek the association of well-known names and shun those with an unfashionable reputation. To observe the way in which some people will introduce into their conversation, speeches, or writings, the names of well known men, is a revelation of this mental snobbery. The moral equivalent of this is the fear of being found in the company of an opinion that has been branded as immoral. Such people have all the fear of an unpopular opinion that a savage has of a tribal taboo—it is in fact, a survival of the same spirit that gave the tribal taboo its force.—Chapman Cohen in "Theism or Atheism."

Acid Drops.

The report of the Home Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland laments the falling off from the Church. The Committee points out that the serious problem is not so much with Church members, as with that growing portion of the population which has no use for the Church, either regularly or in an emergency. It altogether fails to reach the outsider. This strikes us as a very fair summary of the situation. So long as people are brought up in the Church, a certain proportion is likely to stick to it. But a part of these gradually drift off, while on those who have been brought up without the Church, religion makes no impression whatever. The Committee concludes that in Scotland, "the centre of gravity is shifting from religion to Secularism."

This summary shows far more courage than one usually meets in such reports. The usual thing is to hide the facts by talking vaguely about some presumed revival of religion, or the burning interest of the "common man" in the personality of Jesus." What the admission really amounts to is the confession that the drift of modern life is away from the religious idea. Modern thought has no use for it, and although force of association and the power of place continues to give religion a position that it does not deserve, still the drift away from it is too strong for anyone but those who will not see, to deny. The Committee remarks it is afraid that the Scottish character is changing. We do not think it is. It is Scottish beliefs that are changing, and that will mean brighter life for all concerned.

Nine tailors, says old tag, make a man. The Congregational Union appear to think two parsons make the equivalent. They have elected the Rev. B. Smith and the Rev. F. Wrigley jointly to succeed in the chair Mr. J. C. Meggitt. A contemporary calls this "a delicate compliment." If we were these parsons we should be inclined to doubt it.

To find pleasure in a sport which consists in torturing and killing a defenceless animal bespeaks a person whose outlook is lower than that of the wolf or the tiger, says the Archdeacon of Westminster. We are glad to note that one or two humane clerics are mustering up courage to attack brutal sports and those who practice them. Perhaps they think the job of denunciation has been left too long to Freethinkers.

The Religious Tract Society publishes a book called *Far Above Rubies*, by Miss Agnes Turnbull. The author, we learn, has imagined some of the facts the Bible has refrained from telling concerning certain of its women, and has written them down. Miss Turnbull would appear to be of the true lineage of ancient Hebrew scribes. They, too, imagined "facts," and wrote them down as Holy Writ. This product of their imaginations sent, and kept, the world half-crazy for nearly two thousand years—that's all. But it should be a warning to "fact" producers to apply a brake to their fancy mechanism.

Differences, some at least 400 years old, that have divided 87 Christian denominations, are to be considered at a World Conference on Faith and Order, in Lausanne this summer, in an effort to accomplish the ideal of church unity. Five hundred representatives of the Christian Churches will meet to discuss the matters of doctrine, of history, of geography, and of interpretation, by which their respective faiths have become dis-united. We are indebted to the *Christian Herald* for this information. We don't see why the Conference should have any difficulty in bringing about unity. It has merely to discover what exactly the Bible statements mean, and how precisely they are to be interpreted. When all the Churches are agreed on this, the job is done.

A school-boy recently defined a vacuum as "nothing shut up in a box." Maybe he remembered that the Jews used to trot about with God shut up in the Ark.

The Rev. J. A. Broadbelt believes in mottoes. He sticks them all over the walls of the Bristol Wesleyan Mission Hall. One such announces:—

Satan laughs when we work only,
Mocks when we talk only,
But trembles when we pray.

From this we gather that the belief in a real, live personal Devil still exists among Christians, and that Mr. Broadbelt is doing his best to keep the silly superstition alive.

Two decades ago there was no Workers' Educational Association; to-day there are 30,000 students in the Association; to-day there are 30,000 students in the Labour Colleges; to-day 30,000 men and women are using their brains studying the problems of life. In Women's Institutes 200,000 women in the villages are following educative pursuits. Once there were no Educational Settlements: now there are 6,000 people in them making their leisure time profitable by following studies such as history, philosophy, literature, and art. These facts help to explain why the more intelligent portion of the working classes are ceasing to be clients of the churches and chapels. Instead of wasting their time in knee-bending and hymn-singing, they prefer putting their leisure to intellectually more profitable use.

One of the Yorkshire papers writes in terms of disgust at the gross superstition of the followers of Joanna Southcote. We are not inclined to look more favourably upon this particular superstition than we are upon others, but we quite fail to see why Christians should express disgust at it. There is nothing more inherently absurd in Joanna Southcote giving birth to a divine child than there was in the Mary of the New Testament doing so; and we wonder what the editor of the *Leeds Mercury* would say if he heard, for the first time, to-day of the birth of Jesus Christ of a Virgin? After all, what is possible in Judea should be possible in Leeds. Perhaps the proper conclusion is that Jesus was fortunate in getting born a couple of thousand years ago instead of to-day. Or is it that he was born that way because it was two thousand years ago?

An American statistician has been giving some figures about divorce. In the United States there was, in 1890, one divorce for every 17.1 marriages. In 1923, there was one in every 7.6 marriages. The number of divorces during the years from 1876 to 1916 was 2,250,069. He comments: "Picture what that means—2,250,069 homes broken." A Methodist writer adds: "We have been making divorce simpler and easier to obtain on this side. Do we want to arrive where the United States has arrived? What has the Church to say about it?" Here is something we will say about it. What is obvious is that the two million odd homes were not happy ones; and if divorce had not been possible they would have continued unhappy. Opportunity to break the marriage tie gave the partners a chance of contracting another union which might be happier than the first. Whereas had the first contract been unbreakable the partners were doomed to life-long unhappiness. The alternative the Church offers to this is separation, which, again, produces unhappiness because the natural instincts of the separated are denied expression. Thus, all the Church can offer the unhappily married is—unhappiness, and, we suppose, the blessed consolation of religion. As this is not a particularly attractive gift, we don't wonder at intelligent people rejecting it. And we don't suppose the rejection will cause society to disintegrate.

Far too glibly, and without stopping to ask what we mean, we talk about "the blood of Christ" saving us, says the Rev. Arthur Pringle. We want to get rid of the idea, says he, that the actual shedding of blood was

necessary before God was willing to redeem his children. That is a pagan notion, which does not fit in with Christ's revelation of the loving Father, and it has caused vast numbers of people needless distress and perplexity. The rev. gentleman then gives the latest Christian notion about this perplexing matter. To get the truer meaning, he says, put it in this way. Salvation depends not on the blood we shed, but on the blood we put into our endeavours—the heart and soul we put into what we do. That was how Christ lived and gave himself to save us—not in the actual blood shed from his body, but in the heart's blood that he put into the intensity and passion of his sacrifice. There you are, you see; all your perplexity removed as if by magic. But if you should be a little sceptical about the conjurer's explanation, he will doubtlessly be able to produce another rabbit from his shovel hat.

Miss Violet Gibson, who attempted to shoot the Italian dictator, was, according to Signor Bruno Cassinelli, her advocate, and Signor Eurico Ferri, a criminal scientist, under an obsession. This obsession, was to the effect that "the best blood of the best human creatures must be sacrificed." We are not concerned with the high politics of the case, but if the above diagnosis is correct, it would appear that the Bible as a citizen's text book would be better if completely scrapped. As there is such an extensive organization busy in preparing people for the next world, it may account for the deplorable mess they make of this.

An eclipse of the sun on August 21, 1560, caused so much consternation in France, that frightened people shut themselves up in cellars. One village curé was working overtime in attending to confessions and, in desperation and in order to quell the rush told the impatient that there was no hurry as the eclipse had been put off a fortnight on account of the number of patients. In an announcement we notice that Southport is advertising the coming eclipse, giving the time of the beginning, duration, and end. There is: Unlimited Space for Viewing the Eclipse from Splendid Vantage Points free of charge. There may be not a few thoughtful people who will ask what precisely our illustrious army of priests have done to bring down an eclipse to the level of a newspaper advertisement. For those who ask and those who don't, we give them the answer. It is nothing.

On the slender conjunction of "if" hangs many interesting implications. If it is necessary for good citizenship to know the Lord's Prayer and act up to it, then the Anglican Church is right in being concerned about the dearth of religious knowledge that prevails among boys overseas. On the other hand, it is yet to be proved that knowledge of the Lord's Prayer makes a better boy than the manly influence of example, a knowledge of the bad social consequences of lying and deceit, and the value of self-reliance. Therefore, on the little word of two letters, the Diocesan Missionary Councils in Church House Westminster, will raise the slogan, "A pioneering race demands a pioneering Church." In other words the busybodies are out to prove their indispensability, satisfied that everyone takes them at their own valuation.

The appearance of a comet this year is chronicled by the newspapers as a dull affair. It is gratifying, however, to know, if serious consequences to the earth are threatened, that before its arrival the Atlantic had been flown, and that the Bishop of London had safely returned from his world tour. In 1456, a comet was no dull affair. Pope Calixtus regarded it as an omen and ordered the bells to be rung each day at noon, so that the faithful might join at the same hour in prayer against the Turks and the comet.

The task of teaching the blessings of poverty is rendered easier by the teacher not having to worry about the price of food. The Rev. Arthur Henry Johnson, South Parks Road, Oxford, left £31,043. Some day it will be realized that in terms of reason, the fundamentals of religion are not as provable as those of the game of skittles.

Canon Sinker, of Blackburn, says that the Church exists to remind people that there is a life beyond the grave. Not quite that. The Church exists to remind people that it wishes them to believe there is a life beyond the grave. There is a world of difference here.

Canon Sinker also says, that if you are doing good it doesn't matter whether you belong to High Church or Low Church, to Wesleyans or to Roman Catholics. That is a very dangerous doctrine. It may lead people to surmise that religion is of no consequence at all. Besides, we fancy that the Canon belongs to a Church that doesn't exactly teach that. If he really believes that it doesn't matter what a man believes in matters of religion, it is surely time he left the Church altogether. It is hardly a lofty example to believe that while drawing a salary from a Church which teaches the exact opposite.

A missionary informs the world that Nigeria is apparently Methodism's richest field. The Missionary advance there is remarkable. If it is to advance anywhere we should say that parts of undeveloped Africa would contain the spots. We are never surprised at uncivilized people adopting Christianity, and there must be many fundamental features in which primitive African superstition and Christianity are in close agreement. Besides, it is worth remembering that in its very earliest days it was among the more superstitious classes in the Roman Empire that Christianity made greatest headway, and it is only a case of history repeating itself, if what the missionary says about Nigeria is true.

On the other hand, we have several native readers of the *Freethinker* in Nigeria, so Methodism will find some opposition even there.

The Rev. J. Alexander Findlay, addressing a Newcastle Ministers' meeting, insisted that, although young people might have difficulties in their religion, they must be urged to come to Christ. Ministers must stand by the young in their doubts and struggles and be ready to help them at every stage. What the rev. gent. means by "standing by" the young is, that ministers should allay doubts or scepticism by doping unfledged minds with plausible explanation and sophisticated reasoning. But was the advice really necessary, since all ministers pass through a training college where are imparted all the latest wrinkles of the doping game?

While we are writing, a troop of Life-saving Scouts, with trumpets in full blast, followed by a Salvation Band, tramps by. It is wonderful what a lot of noise seems to be necessary in order to bring the Peace of God to the hearts of sinners. The Lord be thanked, there will be no life-saving going on in our—according to the pious—booked destination in the other world.

There is a good deal about demons in the Talmud. There is not, it says, so small a space as a yard of ground upon which there are not thousands of demons ready to injure man, and generally disturb things. We fancy the inspired writers of the Holy Bible, and also the figurehead of the Christian religion, had similar notions about demons. Millions of Bible-trained Christians, too, have cherished the same notions. One of the blessings the world owes to the Bible is that it kept alive the belief in evil spirits, and all the stupid customs and superstitions that cluster around the belief. But that is a fact which our outspoken Deans and fearless Bishops never dream of telling the world.

It is amazing how many disputes arise from mental untidiness, declares Mr. H. P. Macmillan, K.C. One thing that isn't amazing, is that mental untidiness is so very common. The mass of the people are Christian trained and religion soaked. In these circumstances mental tidiness is naturally the exception rather than the rule.

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.—E. L. Bishop, IS.; C. J. Tacchi, 5S.

C. MORRIS.—You appear to have far more faith in medical diagnosis than we have. It does not follow that because a doctor suspected cancer, and that after a visit to Lourdes the woman was better, that the cancer was actually there. There is always the possibility of the doctor being mistaken.

C. J. TACCHI (China).—We note that you heard the Bishop of London preach while on his world trip, and that he does not improve. Knowing him as we do, we should hardly have expected it. When are you coming to England again?

E. L. BISHOP.—We agree with you that a sense of humour is a great thing. A serious work, or a serious journal, does not lose by the inclusion of humour, save with those who mistake a long face for wisdom.

H. FULKS.—Sorry we have not the space for the insertion of your letter.

S. MASON.—We do not see what is the use of sending us lengthy accounts of the way in which God has helped you. Similar testimony can be found concerning every God that has ever been believed in.

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

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

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

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

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

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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.

This is the last opportunity we shall have of calling attention to the Whit-Sunday Conference at Glasgow. We are expecting to see a good muster of friends and delegates, and there should be a well attended meeting in the large City Hall in the evening. Local friends can do something to make the gathering a complete success, and we hope they will assist. Mr. George Whitehead, who has concluded a week's campaign in South London, will be in Glasgow for some time before the Conference, and will conduct a number of open-air meetings at various points of the City. An advertisement of the evening demonstration will be found on the back page of this issue.

The business meetings of the Conference will be held in the Kenilworth Hotel, Queen Street, and will be open to members only. These meetings will be at 10.30 and 2.30. A luncheon, price 4s., will be prepared at the Kenilworth Hotel, at one o'clock. It would be as well if all those who wish to partake would acquaint the secre-

tary, Mr. F. Mann, 34, Trefoil Avenue, Glasgow. Any who have yet to write, saying whether they wish accommodation to be secured for them during their stay in Glasgow, should inform either Mr. Mann, or Miss Vance as early as possible. There will be an excursion on the Monday following the Conference, to Lochgoilhead, and, given the proper weather, the excursion should be a memorable one. The cost, including dinner and tea, will be 10s.

To-day, everybody is kindlier, gentler and more humane, says Mr. Meggitt, chairman of the Congregational Union. The sick and aged are better looked after. Woman has never been so honoured. The sense of right and wrong is more acute, and public morality is higher. Mr. Meggitt might well have added that this state of affairs is to be observed after a decade or so when the larger portion of the people have been, and are, indifferent to the Christian religion. It is a state of things, be it noted, in striking contrast to that recorded of the ages when religion swayed most men's minds. The world seems to have got better more quickly without religion than with religion. Then, why wait for a revival of Faith? The Lord alone knows why, and he appears to have told only the parsons.

We once again venture to remind friends that the fine weather gives everyone who is inclined, the chance of doing a little work in the shape of propaganda. We are ready to send parcels of specimen copies of the *Freethinker* to all who will undertake their distribution, and very many new readers have been gained in this way. Our offer to send the paper free for six weeks to any address on receipt of postage, six halfpenny stamps, is still open.

We notice a very good article in the *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, by "Avondale," dealing with affairs in China, and which draws very freely from Mr. Walter Mann's recently published pamphlet on *Christianity in China*. We are glad to find the pamphlet put to such excellent use. We take this opportunity of recording that the pamphlet is selling very well, and supplies what is evidently needed in the present state of affairs.

We also note a lengthy letter in the *Darwen News*, of May 21, by "Perpetual Vigilance," which we welcome because it is an indication that now and again Freethought views do find expression in the general newspaper press. Very much more in this direction might be done, and we should like to see in every town, a certain number of Freethinkers who make it their business to give publicity to their opinions wherever possible. Merely to know that there are large numbers of people who have no hesitation in avowing their disbelief in Christianity is a salutary lesson to a certain type of believer.

A clergyman of the Polish National Church has been sentenced by a court at Bromberg, Poland, to £48 fine or eighty days imprisonment for denying the existence of Satan. It is terrible to think of this clergyman leading men and women to face death without the consolation that there is a hell for them to go to. The Polish court's motto is evidently, "Give 'em Hell."

Little children in Belfast have seven play centres, with sand gardens and shelters, and in most instances a woman play-organizer and man attendant. The children are thus kept off the streets and given healthy and pleasurable occupation. We hope the children are not denied these benefits on Sunday. But knowing Belfast has its full share of Sabbatarian bigots, we have our doubts about it.

Canada has had its Blasphemy trial, and it now indulges in a heresy hunt, with Prof. Marshall, of the Theological Faculty of McMaster as the hunted, and the Rev. Dr. Shields as leader of the Fundamentalist pack. There would appear to be a revival of religion in Canada, if nowhere else.

If Spiritualism Were True.

THERE is a certain impressiveness in the way in which the exponents of Modern Spiritualism state their case. To the sceptic who casts doubts upon their claims, or who asks, with perfect justice: How it is that we are only just beginning to discover this other world that people have been going to for thousands of years, and how it is that our communication with it should be dependent upon mediums and the abnormal conditions of the seance-room—they have a fairly effective reply.

Did we (they ask) know of wireless telegraphy a hundred years ago? Would not the marvels of modern science have been deemed wildly impossible by our ancestors of the sixteenth century? Does not every day bring us entirely new discoveries? Is not our whole view of the physical world being continually modified in the light of advancing knowledge? Have we a right to prescribe just what is and what is not possible to natural forces? As for the mediums: Why may it not be that among millions of beings one here and there may possess peculiar powers? Have we not discovered quite peculiar energies, for instance, in radium and thorium that no other substances have? And may it not be that there is manifested in the seance-room energies, the nature of which we are at present ignorant of, but about which the future may bring us more light, etc., etc.?

In these days, when you can sit in your parlour in Tooting and listen to an orchestra playing in Moscow, scientific dogmatism is rather out-of-date. None of us like to be considered old-fashioned. We may pride ourselves upon our sturdy commonsense, but we are haunted with a suspicion that it may only be a form of prejudice arising from our own limited vision. "I would not believe the testimony of eye-witnesses," said Voltaire, "to that which is opposed to commonsense." There can be no doubt that he would thus have rejected the possibility of many of the phenomena of modern life. At any rate, the amazing developments of modern science—the end of which no man can foresee—has immensely strengthened the hands of they who, for one reason or another, wish to appeal to our bump of wonder; and we have heard this kind of argument so often, that it has cast a kind of spell on us, and we are ready to follow whence it leads.

And whence does it lead? I often wonder if the Spiritualist who is so fond of telling us that the spirit hypothesis is the only one that covers the facts (the "facts" being the phenomena of the seance-room as seen by him), ever keeps the enormous consequences of his theory in mind. What these consequences are has been well pointed out by Professor Munsterberg, who was not only a very able psychologist and keen critic of Spiritualism, but who succeeded in exposing the famous medium Eusapia Palladino. He says:—

If we accept the principle, we must accept the consequences. Our surprise at the hands and faces which fly through the air in the darkened room and touch us on the shoulder and kiss us on the cheeks, is no wiser than the surprise of an African savage, who sees a locomotive or an airship.

All right. But let us at least understand clearly that if we accept this revised universe, then really nothing of value remains in that poor sham edition of the world with which science and scholarship have wasted their efforts so far. If at any moment a third arm can grow out of our shoulders in order to tickle a neighbour, and if a woman can prolong her neck three feet, in order to show her face over the curtain, if a head can suddenly become as small as a fist and then bulge out again, then it is simply

silly to fill our libraries with that old-fashioned knowledge which so far we have called physics and biology. From the standpoint of natural science we have to begin anew. We must go back to a view of nature which fits well into the ideas of the savages all over the globe, and the effort of mankind to work out a sort of knowledge which is to eliminate the spirit theories of the primitive peoples has been nothing but a colossal blunder. We may be ready to acknowledge that; but can we really be blamed if before this death sentence on the scientific reason is fulfilled, our condemned intellect at least makes use of every possible reprieve and of every opportunity to insist on a new trial?

And what of the practical consequences of the truth of Spiritualism:—

Millions have to die every year because some parts of their bodies are diseased. They could be helped and could live on if some slight changes in the organisms could be effected, changes which the physician cannot effect, because the laws of nature limit the actions of the body. And now we are to believe that in reality the good-will of the spirits is not bound by such a law, that a neck can become three feet long, that a third arm can grow out of the shoulder, in short, that any transformation of the body can be secured. *And the smallest part of such radical bodily changes could have saved those millions who had to die.*

I am sometimes asked what were the considerations that led me to abandon the spirit cult and embrace the philosophy of Secularism. I think, primarily, the *inconceivability* of the future life. Whenever I attempted to visualize "that other world," it either escaped me altogether, or came into conflict with what I regarded as a commonsense view of life. Above all, I became very emphatically of the opinion that the message of Spiritualism, whether true or not, was most decidedly not a message bearing glad tidings of great joy. Like the Theist's view of the present world, the Spiritualist's conception of the future life is made attractive by dwelling on the pleasant things (re-union with loved ones, etc.), and ignoring the rest.

Assuming the truth of Spiritualism, let us apply the consequences to the every-day facts of life. A case has recently come to my notice—and such cases are common enough, in all conscience—of the sad condition of the widow of an old friend of mine. Left penniless with two children to provide for, she has, after an unequal struggle with economic conditions, lapsed into a mode of life on which it is painful to dwell, and is, in fact, faced with the prospect of an additional mouth to feed in consequence. *And her husband has been the silent, impotent witness of her gradual degradation.* He has, if Spiritualism be true, watched with anguished heart her heroic struggle; he has stretched out impotent, unfeeling arms to embrace her when, in the lonely hours of the night, a tear-stained pillow has paid eloquent testimony to her suffering. He has been there—a ghost indeed—anguished, tortured—helpless. Did ever the human imagination conjure up a scene so diabolical as this? Would not the fires of hell themselves seem soothing in comparison? And would not it be a thousand times better that he should have sunk forever into the tongueless silence of the dreamless dust, than have been the witness of the gradual moral and physical destruction of the one who, in truth, was dearer to him than life itself. "Life itself"! What is life that we should wish to hang on to it for all eternity, and be deemed lacking in moral and spiritual virtue, because we are content to have our little day and creep silently to sleep.

I once recollect reading in some Spiritualist literature a case similar to the foregoing. It was related how a mother, who had "passed over," was much

concerned about her son, who had taken to evil living. It described, with touching pathos, how she accompanied him home one night in a state of intoxication from a house of ill-fame, and how she unsuccessfully endeavoured to make her presence known and urge him to reform his ways. All right. If these things be true, they are there and we cannot escape them. But let not the Spiritualist come prating of "glad tidings of great joy." In all the arguments of religionists, it is assumed that a future life—on any terms—is something to be desired. The Freethinker is apparently the only one who ever thinks of challenging this assumption.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

(To be concluded.)

The Cemetery Wall.

An author in the *Writer*, recently, was suggesting to youthful literary aspirants that they need never rack their brains, or keep biting their pen-ends, in search of subjects; these were to be found in abundance in the ordinary circumstances of everyday life—the shop, the office, one's companions, or walks abroad would all furnish material for "copy." I am not what one might call "youthful"; but I am always open to accept a useful suggestion from any source whatever.

Now, the thing that looms largest in my daily vision, that stares at me every time I raise my eyes, is—a cemetery wall. And, although it has confronted me for seven long years, it never occurred to me before that I might be able to extract any literary juice from it. Indeed, if I had ever thought of the matter at all, I would probably have regarded it as one of those impossible tasks, like taking the breeks from a Hie'landman, or squeezing blood out of a stone. But this simple suggestion seemed to open up a whole vista of ideas, and point to sermons in its very stones. How strange it is that one should see a thing year after year, without noting its significance, until some casual suggestion focusses your attention upon its possibilities!

The writer of fiction usually begins by describing the characteristics of his hero, or heroine, and the scene of the plot. So, I will try and give the reader some idea of the position and appearance of this cemetery wall. It stands some seven feet high, but the cemetery ground is on a level with the top of the wall. It is evidently not the wall that Humpty Dumpty sat upon, as it is surmounted by spiked iron railings. Also, it is a very substantial wall, and very different to the rickety defences of ancient Jericho, which fell down at the blast of a trumpet. All the brass bands in the world would not make any impression on its solidity. It faces about fifteen different business premises on the other side of the street, from which position the graves and tombstones are practically on a level with the eye. As my position is a central one, it affords a view of almost the entire wall. The cemetery has long been a closed one, and in dull weather it presents a very depressing and melancholy appearance.

There are certain social theorists who maintain that man's individual and social life is conditioned by his economic and material surroundings; and this cemetery wall would appear to have some bearing on that theory. Readers of my recent articles have doubtless noted the dismal, pessimistic tone that has pervaded them. Indeed, one correspondent has unkindly alleged, that they have done serious damage to the credit and dignity of this paper. Readers will now understand that this deterioration in my writings has all been due to the sinister influences of

this cemetery wall. Years ago, a correspondent wrote to Mr. Foote, saying that he had never laughed so much for a long time as he had done at one of my articles. But that, of course, was before the days of my acquaintance with this cemetery wall. Somehow, it has revived all the morbid impressions of my early years, when Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and Harvey's *Meditations Among the Tombs*, were considered suitable reading for Presbyterian youths. I can remember the time when I could repeat Gray's "Elegy" from memory. It will thus be seen that I am the sad victim of that social theory which considers life only as a reflex of its material environment. The man who said that "many a jovial hour was spent inside a mourning coach," couldn't have been aware of the conclusions of these theorists—or perhaps he lived before their time. But, it is a bit rough on a writer to be bullyragged for being the victim of a theory, by the very people who consider it sound social gospel. This environmental influence, of course, only operates on the material plane, as the spiritualists say, and not on the psychic or temperamental. But it is not difficult to find illustrations of it in the intellectual sphere, where one may find those who have never developed a sense of humour. I am beginning to realize now, that the constant sight of this cemetery wall is ruining my literary possibilities.

But this cemetery wall is like human beings, it has its good points, as well as its bad ones. Many people come into my place, and looking over at the graves and tombstones, through the railings, remark: What a cheerful outlook you have! They usually smile as they say it, as if it was a kind of joke. But really, the laugh is on my side. For this reason. We know that the Great Wall of China, and also the Roman Wall of Britain, were built for the purpose of keeping out the northern barbarian hordes. And while this cemetery wall may not have any such military significance, it nevertheless serves to keep away a horde of undesirable trade competitors. A learned writer in the *Freethinker*, a short while ago, asserted that the brewers of beer had been the saviours of civilization. And so, a friend remarked to me the other day: "That cemetery wall has been your salvation." Truly, the saviours of mankind are a curious medley—brewers of beer, cemetery walls, religious fanatics, political cranks, and labour leaders! It is rather interesting to speculate on what would happen but for the kindly protection of this cemetery wall. If it were any other kind of wall or property that could be converted into shops, there would soon be erected another fifteen, facing those on this side of the street, like two armies in battle array. The first to put in an appearance would probably be the North Pole Dairy Co., telling the tale that their margarine was better than the best butter. Then would follow the At Home and All Abroad Stores, claiming that their margarine was not only better than the best butter, but that its regular consumption tended to longevity. The next arrival, accompanied by the flourish of trumpets, would be the Bombast Tea Co., displaying glaring bills: "Nothing sold: everything given away." Following on their heels would be the firm of Lip-tem's, Ltd. Their modest claim would be that they own all the tea plantations from Greenland's icy mountains to Ceylon's beautiful isle. Also, that they are specially favoured by the Sun. It is worthy of note, that there are only two instances on record, during the historic period of man, when the Sun has been known to take any interest in human affairs. The first was in the days of long ago, in that happy land of Canaan we used to sing about in the Sunday School. He was just about to set behind a hill, when he observed a terrific battle in progress, and

he stood still some considerable time, watching the tactics of the victorious general, and did not continue his course until he had witnessed the utter rout of the Amalekites. However, he must have put a spurt on during the night to make up for lost time, as he turned up the next morning to the exact minute. On the second occasion, we find his interest shifted from the field of battle to the realm of commerce. The ordinary trader has to put up with his vagaries; and sometimes he disappears quite early in the day, leaving the world to darkness—and the grocer to run up an enormous gas bill. But he never sets on the business of Lifestem's, Ltd.! If it had not been for this unfair partiality on the part of the Sun, I might have been an ardent Sun-Worshipper. The only really truthful competitor that would appear, would be the firm whom some people have called "Ananias & Co."—although that is not their trade name. Theirs would be a big central edifice, with a flag flying from the top of the dome. The flag's device, waving in the breeze, might be taken by the uninitiated to read: COMIC OPERA SOCIETY. And this impression might find some justification on a glance at the bills on the street windows. One of them would read like this:—"Our Motto: All for each, and each for himself." The other would display the novel announcement: "Drink our Teas; they will not poison you." But this fanciful picture is practically never destined to be realized.

And so, this cemetery wall stands as the silent guardian of the living and the dead—the custodian, doubtless, of many a secret tragedy in the lives of those who sleep beneath its care. And, who knows, but that within its pale may lie some village Hampden, some mute, inglorious Milton, some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood. And my earnest prayer and disinterested wish is, that this cemetery wall may long stand as the protector of the honoured bones of the dead—and, incidentally, of the business interests of your truly,

JOSEPH BRYCE.

On Some Sermonizing Remarks

(SAMPLES QUOTED) WRITTEN BY AN OLD MAID IN MISS INGRAM'S ALBUM.

SOME dame who long upon the shelf
Has lain without a look from Venus,
Turn'd saint—for her neglected self
The only rôle (but that's between us)—
Up on the cold shelf, prim and smug,
Where frolic Love may never reach her,
Turn'd saint, I say, and Bible bug,
To her acquaintance plays the preacher.

"The humdrum life it is that tells;
'Tis this alone deserves reporting:"
But see! a thousand budding belles
And lads beneath the moon are courting.
"Oh! do but keep in very close
Touch with our Lord!" cries poor old Humdrum:
But hark! the answer comes jocose,
"Go, get a cushion for your rumtum!"

"Does your salvation penetrate
Into your life?" asks Parson Polly:
"Oh! hang that clap-trap!—Take a date!
Here! drink, old lady, and look jolly!
Long as the heart beats high, we'll sing,
(Plague on your theologic drivell!)
And when the joys of life take wing,
Well, then, perhaps, we'll preach and snivel."

H. BARBER.

There is no greater enemy to peace than ignorance.—
Sir Philip Sassoon.

Maxim Gorki—An Appreciation.

IN the world of art mutual dependence of nations is almost an axiom. Wisdom and the power to portray it is no more the perquisite of one nation than is the air we breathe, and the interchange of ideas between one country and another is as valuable as the exchange effected by commerce. Maxim Gorki, like the late Georg Brandes, is an example of the difficulties that beset the life of one who aims to be universal in his outlook on different nationalities. Whether we like it or not, what the few proclaim in this respect will have to come: the artist deals in ideas; improved means of transit, wireless, annihilation of space, these follow the dreams of our writers and thinkers, and it may one day be a sign of culture to proclaim oneself a citizen of the world.

Maxim Gorki was born in 1868, at Nijni-Novgorod, and his intellectual training ground was the College of Adversity. A wanderer, a sport in the Mendelian sense, he appears to have set out early in his career in search of the ultimate. And, in the course of his journey up to the present his recorded experience in his many books offers to the student the harvest of a fertile mind, an observant eye, and the presentation of the world to us as something to be kicked, despised, loved and venerated. With music at times intensely real and human in his characters, we seem to be listening to that great unfinished Symphony of Schubert. Some writer stated that wisdom is only a short word for "Being at Home" in the world; it is also the magic word that brings us at once in sympathy with Gorki. Something on similar lines to the great creative artists like Beethoven, Goethe, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michaelangelo, there is a generous overspill in his measure to us of his experiences, questionings, and his good and bad fortune. We know that his odyssey is ours in a lesser or greater degree, but, whereas we see things obscurely, he gives objects the vivid touch of the artist that is the revelation of genius.

In this journal, however, where most of us are interested in the play and interplay of forces that prevent Man from getting up from his knees, Gorki's thoughts on this subject are wide but penetrating, and sufficient for an elaborate study in themselves. In his attack on Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, he dismisses the author's appeal for the higher "demands of the spirit" as mere eloquence unless something can be given to improve relations with one another. He also points out that Gogol is only healthy when directed by Pushkin, the European, the man who knew the past of his country, but was not poisoned by it. And he does not forget to emphasize that Russia more than any other nation, has lived under the yoke of an ecclesiastical and theological upbringing.

In a journal *Lietopis*, he writes: The Russian seeking-after-God comes from an insufficiency of conviction in the force of reason, and again this thought occurs in *Fragments from My Diary*. "When one loses faith in one's own strength, one has to seek faith in something outside oneself." And now, in the same paper, hear the artist diagnosing the complaint of a vast nation. "The mind of the ancient East weighs most heavily and murderously on our Russian life, and has an influence immeasurably deeper on our psychology than on that of Western Europe." For his background of the huge canvas, Gorki has, in the manner of a master, taken the whole of contemporary Russian life. What this is and was, is best described by Mr. Hector Munro in *The Rise of the Russian Empire*: "The Slav peasant took all the added ills of life, droughts, famines, Polovtzi, Mongols, grasshoppers and pestilences, tithes and taxes, with a fatalism he had brought with him from the East." Is it surprising then that his characters have, in many ways, that strength which makes them remarkable in their speech in the same manner that Mirabeau had this gift? It is the power of the poet to say in a few words, what rhetoricians and writers with a microscope take hours and volumes to deliver; it is the poetic power to render the abstruse simple—it is almost the faculty of using proverbs in speech.

With curiosity and eagerness we have read his latest novel *Decadence*, translated by Veronica Scott-Gatty (Cassell & Co., Ltd., 7s. 6d. net). In many ways it re-

minded us of "Peer Gynt," and from the human aspect, but as a criticism of tendencies, it would be a wholesome lesson to our aristocrats (if any) at home. Dealing in the main with industrialism, it shows the disillusion of mere money-getting, and the Revolution unties or cuts all the author's knots in his portrayal of a family and all its appendages. These problems, of course, are of great interest to the sociologist, the economist, the politician; all these new points, however, are swept up in Free-thought, which at its best and highest, will be a sane and intelligent criticism of life.

Pyotr Artamonov, on the death of his father succeeds to the business. He is a strange character, and his passion for work seems to sap all his power of comprehension of other matters in life. His outlook on the new conditions that follow industrial progress is dull, vague, and hesitating; he has, in a degree, found satisfaction in the character of a bee, but he cannot see that the new conditions must have an effect on the plastic human raw material. Wealth comes to him, there is disruption, estrangement and tragedy in his family life, but he gropes his way through it, at every turn being confronted with some new and strange phenomenon. From luxury and profligacy to the end of this book he has been almost a mute spectator of the new conditions that have arisen, and we leave him finally, old, but not forsaken by his faithful wife Natalya. She has been searching for food in the chaos of the revolution, and returns with a piece of bread for him—which he refuses, and so the story ends in the inconsequential manner of nearly all Russian novelists.

There are many striking passages in this novel, and the narrative compels attention to the end. If the reader disagrees with this presentation of life he will feel obliged to state his reasons; it is provocative, challenging, and not written altogether for "young ladies in white muslin." We give a few extracts for the benefit of those who will not lend their eyesight in vain to Gorki, the good European, the universalist, the writer, whose works are an effort to teach elementary ideas to those who may make the mistake of taking the shadow for the substance:—

"Greed is the fierce foe of rest."

"All ideas are dangerous . . . specially the simple ones."

"As stupid as a mouse in a pot of jam."

"Attempting to feed wolves on carrots."

"After the war I talked to some wounded soldiers and found that not even soldiers believed in war."

"Machinery makes dearer living and more noise."

"How could people live at variance when to-morrow they might be laid low in death?"

In Chapter IV. we move into the real vortex of the novel. Although it is centred round the Russian peasant, mere names are nothing; the problem with slight variation is the problem of all countries. It is, we think, indicated by the words already stated:—"unless something can be given to improve relations with one another." In the absence of values and direction from our own aristocrats who have abdicated, society becomes a bone to be worried alternately by varying interests, to be fooled by outworn myths, to be misled by a Press that never appears guilty of a life-furthering idea and an insult to Caxton. As an agreeable antidote to nonsense of this kind, it is refreshing to take up Gorki, to acquire independence of thinking, to absorb his plain and reasonable way of looking at problems; for this privilege we welcome the appearance of *Decadence*, for most current novels are standing waters, and as Blake states, "standing waters breed pestilence." This criterion of Blake's may be used with advantage in the judgment of those creeds that have oppressed the spirit of mankind, and turned this beautiful world into a ghost corridor. It is men like Maxim Gorki that help to push down the walls of fear and darkness and let in the sunlight of reason; in portraying the effects of superstitious fear on his characters he has defined the solution, and although there will never be any last words on the human race, Maxim Gorki's efforts will be found, if carefully examined, to supplement the work of scientists, humanists, artists and all the creative forces that believe in the essential goodness of mankind that only requires the leader-values of aristocracy to provide a suitable environment for growth.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Correspondence.

WITCHES AND BROOMSTICKS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I do wish that the kind friend who showed Mr. Montague Summers my passing reference to his views on witches, had also drawn his attention to the long criticism I passed on his book, *The History of Demonology and Witchcraft*, in these pages last February. It might then have been worth my while re-examining the subject in the light of Mr. Summers' preposterous accusation as to my "facts and accuracy." However, let us have another glance at his book. In the first place, I must point out again that the reverend author claims thoroughly to justify the burnings and tortures of hundreds of thousands of "witches and warlocks." The witch being a "social pest, the devotee of an obscene creed, a blasphemer, charlatan, bawd and abortionist," the authorities were quite right in prosecuting her.

Secondly, Mr. Summers deals, in a long chapter, with the "Sabbat"—that is, the "obscene creed" referred to. He admits, of course, to deal with it fully, would require a big book by itself, but I would ask the reader if he can get the book, carefully to go through the full details given. Mr. Summers believes in "levitation." The "exact" reference is (page 124) "It is very pertinent, however, to notice in this connexion the actual levitation of human beings . . . has occurred again and again under conditions which cannot possibly admit of legerdemain, illusion or charlatancy. From a mass of irrefutable evidence . . . (italics mine) Mr. Summers quotes Crooks, Home and W. S. Moses representing modern spiritualism and S. Francis of Assisi, S. Catherine of Siena, S. Colette ("that wondrous mystic") Anne Catherine Emmerich, S. Ignatius Loyola and many others from his own church. In other words, Mr. Summers takes the greatest pains to show that there was nothing extraordinary in witches flying to their meeting-places, though he admits "it is remarkable in the face of popular belief to find that the confessions avowing this actual mode of aerial transport (i.e., on broomsticks) are extraordinarily few." Mr. Summers then does not deny "the aerial flights." On the contrary, he gives a large number of authorities supporting this "mode of transport." On page 121, he quotes, "the erudite Benedictine Abbot, Regino of Primm" (A.D. 906) and then in his own words adds, "The witches rode sometimes upon a broom or a stick, sometimes upon an animal, and the excursion through the air was generally preceded by an unction with a magic ointment." (Mr. Summers believes also in a "magic" ointment). On page 130, however, will be found the positive proofs of Mr. Summers' beliefs. Here he calls attention to Bogue's *Discours des Sorciers*, which he calls "our chief authority," and gives full headings from the chapters of this book, it being so important from his point of view. Bogue says "Sorcerers are sometimes conveyed to the Sabbat mounted on a stick or a broom." What do you think of that from Mr. Summers' chief authority? And a renowned theologian like Dom Calmet, who did not believe in the witch superstition, actually is rebuked by Mr. Summers as "mistaken."

"In the popular imagination," says Mr. Summers, "the witch is always associated with the broomstick employed by her to fly in her wild career through mid-air. This belief seems almost universal of all times and climes"—and nowhere does the author give a plain and categorical denial of this idiotic superstition. "The statements made to this effect," he says, "are remarkably few," is about as far as he goes, but the whole of chapter four of his book implies his thorough belief in the few statements—or else why does he make a special "splash" of Bogue, who believes it?

Finally, Mr. Summers gives several reproductions of famous witch pictures and prints, and I call special attention to them all, but particularly the one on page 144, "The Sabbat," by Lianko. Here we get illustrated all the things supposed to be done by witches, including three riding on broomsticks. (The witches in the other plates have broomsticks, but are not riding them.) Nowhere does Mr. Summers deny the authenticity of this print, and his whole attitude suggests his thorough belief in the kind of witches depicted therein.

I could quote pages, if necessary, from the book—a mixture of scholarship, enormous reading, exact reference, and an infantile credulity that excites my extreme astonishment—but space, which I have already exceeded forbids. Let the reader judge of my “facts and references” not being my “strong points” from what I have already written.

H. CUTNER.

MR. W. J. LAMB'S SONNETS.

SIR,—I have read, with pleasure, Mr. Barber's letters, and I thank him for his explanation, and for the manly manner in which he hastens to remove any annoyance due to what, I am sure, was the result of a misapprehension on his part. Mr. Barber's letter will, I have no doubt, be appreciated by Mr. W. J. Lamb, as it is by myself.

D. LAMB.

[Mr. Barber writes correcting a misprint in his letter, which appeared in our last issue. The line “such work ‘blurts’ the reader's sense, should, obviously, read, ‘blunts the reader's sense.’”—EDITOR.]

Notes from Last Week.

By FLAUTIST.

One God is just as absurd as the other, and there was no economy in foolishness in giving up one absurdity in the name of another.—*Views and Opinions.*

The nature and origin of the belief in fairies are exactly the same as the nature and origin of the belief in God, and the unseen universe.—*J. T. Lloyd.*

Sincerity is not a quality one readily associates with Mr. Chesterton, yet I am persuaded that he is passionately sincere in his protests against those aspects of modern civilization that tend to destroy romance and minimise the importance of human individuality, and in this I largely sympathize with him.

Vincent J. Hands.

Science employs reason to guide its imagination; religion uses exuberant fancy. Science grounds its faith on ascertained facts and proved theory; religion beds it on the crude guesses of ancient nomads.—*Acid Drops.*

Human extremity created all the Churches, human progress is dispensing with them.—*Andrew Millar.*

Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission at Brixton.

MR. WHITEHEAD addressed seven meetings during the week, including two held in Victoria Park. One of the park meetings was interfered with by the rain, but the evening meeting was successful in every way. The meetings held in Brixton seemed to give general satisfaction, and quite a number of people testified to their interest in the lectures. Mr. Coles was on duty every evening as chairman, and he fulfilled that role with his usual tact and ability. Mr. A. Heath also was extremely helpful at all the Brixton meetings, and the branch is to be congratulated for having such a conscientious and industrious secretary.—*G. N.*

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7.0, Harry Snell, M.P., “150th Anniversary of Paine's ‘Common Sense’—and Anglo-American Relations.”

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe, “The New Industrial Feudalism (U.S.A.)”

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Sydney Hanson, a Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.0, R. H. Rosetti, a Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common, 11.30, Brockwell Park, 6.0): Lectures by L. Ebury. On Wednesday, June 1, Mr. Hanson will lecture at Clapham Old Town at 8 p.m.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): 11.30, 3.0 and 6.30, Speakers—Messrs. Saphin, Ratcliffe, Hart, Botting and Baker. Thursday, 7.0, Speakers—Mr. Saphin and Mr. Botting.

WEST HAM BRANCH, N.S.S. (Outside Municipal College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Lecture by Mr. J. Hart.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.0, Messrs. Campbell-Everden, Darby and Jackson; 6.30, Messrs. Howell-Smith, B.A., and Hyatt. Freethought lectures every Wednesday and Friday, at 7.30, various Lecturers.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH (Assembly Rooms, Front Street): Open daily for reading, etc., from 10 a.m. All Freethinkers and enquirers welcome.

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MR. G. K. HALLIDAY, a member of the R.P.A., and of the N.S.S., is anxious to get in touch with the many friends and admirers of the work of Mr. Joseph McCabe. He will appreciate it if they will write to him at 82, Bridge Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey.

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