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Views and Opinions.

Science and Progress.

THE first series of lectures delivered last year by Sir Oliver Lodge, under the Halley Stewart Trust, has just been issued in book form, with the general heading of *Science and Human Progress*. One can hardly say that the lectures live up to the title chosen. The title would lead one to believe that there would be an attempt to apply science to the problem of human progress, or to show in what way science has ministered to it. As a matter of fact there is little or nothing of the kind in the volume. The real purpose of the lectures is to see what scope is given by science for belief in the ordering of nature with a view to human progress, and whether it places a ban upon our believing that man will after death exist in some other and a progressive state. Rule out the belief in survival and in design in nature, and the book collapses. And neither of these beliefs gain in strength or even probability, because they are espoused by a well-known scientist. For what we are concerned with is not the personal beliefs of a particular scientist, but the bearing of scientific knowledge upon these beliefs. Unfortunately the history of human thought shows us many cases of giants in one department championing quite childish beliefs in others. The case of so mighty an intellect as that of Sir Isaac Newton is an illustration of this. To find a man who could work out the theory of universal gravitation spending his time in upholding such a ridiculous thing as Biblical prophecy should serve as a warning for all time. If men of learning had never championed absurd beliefs, absurdity would never have had the prestige it has enjoyed. Follies are relished by fools, but they are established in power by men who enjoy a reputation for sanity.

Exploiting Science.

Sir Oliver Lodge opens his lectures with a remark which one may well feel inclined to challenge. He

says the inaugural lectures have been entrusted to him because he is known to "regard the universe from a point of view attained through a training in scientific study." So far as this refers to those who invited him, that may well have been in their minds, since it is quite common to take the expressed opinions of scientific men on all sorts of subjects as the dictum of science. But so far as the peculiar views which Sir Oliver holds on purpose in nature and survival after death, it is quite safe to say that they have not been attained by scientific study, but have persisted side by side with them. Belief in design in nature is not and cannot be an outcome of scientific study, were it so we should be able to have placed before us a series of facts that would command the same degree of assent that is commanded by other scientific generalizations. And the same is true of the belief in survival. At most, these beliefs rank as mere speculations, and the utmost that could be said in their behalf is that science does not disprove them. But there is a world of difference, a difference which Sir Oliver would be the first to admit, between a speculation that one cannot disprove, and a speculation that has scientific warrant for its existence. Moreover, Sir Oliver's belief in both design in nature and survival, I think I am right in saying, ante-dates his scientific studies. They may not have been held in the precise form in which he holds them to-day, but they were there. The most that can safely be said is that in his case scientific studies have not led to their rejection. He holds them in spite of his science, not because of it.

* * *

Pseudo-Science.

One other prefatory remark. I do not think that it helps to the cultivation of a strictly scientific frame of mind to harp upon the mystery and magnificence of the universe, to impress upon us that we only "see through a glass darkly," or otherwise to emphasize the sharply limited character of man's intellect or studies, particularly when it is intended to encourage us to hope "that there is some deep meaning in all, and that we are in the hands of a Higher Power, who understands the reason of all the manifold activities around us, and who can already perceive—even though it be far ahead—the object that will ultimately be attained by our own individual striving and effort of pain." There is far too much of the tune that the pulpit is constantly playing. Ever since man freed himself from the primitive delusion that he was in direct contact with tribal gods, preachers of all creeds have impressed upon man his littleness, his weakness, the poverty of his understanding, all with a desire to get him upon his knees, with eyes shut and mouth open ready to take whatever teaching was given him. It is not science to dwell

upon mystery and the weakness of the human intellect; neither is it science to enter upon an investigation hoping to find that a refined form of primitive superstition may, after all, be justified. The less hoping and fearing there is in a scientific study the better. Sir Oliver might well leave this sort of thing to the pulpit. They do it very well there, and it is its proper place.

* * *

Design in Nature.

It would take a much larger volume than Sir Oliver Lodge has given us, thoroughly to examine the many curious fallacies which are presented to the reader as a scientific view of man and the world. For example, what is one to make of this:—

Planning and purpose cannot be excluded from the universe, for we are conscious ourselves of possessing and exercising these powers, and whatever we have is thereby proved to exist in the universe, for we are in it; the only question is their scope.

Exactly, no one disputes that we exercise what we call plan and purpose, but the whole question is their scope. In man we understand the case very well. He is able to bring forces into conjunction. He adds nothing new to them, save such qualities as result from their conjunction, but apart from this he is at their mercy, mastered by them at the same time that he is their master. But is this what any religious person has in mind when he talks of plan and purpose in the universe? Is it what Sir Oliver has in mind when he speaks approvingly of people who

know that all this extraordinary manifestation of (the arrangements of matter and force through the universe) Design and Purpose must have some unknown object, that there must be some far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves.

Do these people, does Sir Oliver, mean no more than that this designing power finds a universe, so to speak, on its hands, and tries to make the best job of it he, or it, can while remaining as much the servant of the powers he "directs" as he is their master? Surely they do not. Quite surely they mean by a "Designing Power," a power that not merely directs forces with settled and unalterable qualities, but actually is the cause of these forces possessing the qualities they do possess. What likeness is there, then, between man planning and designing, as a part of universal existence, and the universe as a whole exhibiting design in its structure? Clearly none at all. Our design follows *from* the universe; the design believed in by those who, as Sir Oliver says, "take comfort in the thought that underneath are the Everlasting Arms," is of a different order altogether. Sir Oliver is so transparently sincere in what he says, that one hesitates to say that he is playing fast and loose with terms, but it obviously comes to that in the end. He is using an altogether false analogy. Again, one can only say that this kind of thing properly belongs to the pulpit. It should be foreign to the man of science.

* * *

A Reversal of Experience.

Here are two other illustrations of the same order. Sir Oliver believes in the persistence of personality after death, concerning which he does not seem quite sure whether it is to be considered a scientific fact, or that one day it will become so. Both opinions are expressed. Individuality is, however, developed on this earth.

But once developed the reality is not dependent on the means that helped to produce it. The material body has had its day and may cease to be; but

existence does not cease. Even the material body does not cease; its atoms continue, although they are then, like a crowd or any other assemblage, dispersed and scattered.

Really one would be interested in knowing the scientific formula which allows for a thing to continue to exist when the basis of its existence has disappeared. And it should be plain that, as the body does not consist of atoms, as such, but in a special working arrangement, if that arrangement is broken up the material body has ceased to be. One might as well talk of an orange existing after it has been eaten and assimilated. The other illustration is of the same order. Sir Oliver points out that as we find beings much lower than man in the animal scale, so we may expect to find, or it is reasonable to believe that there exists, beings much higher than man. This is to suggest that "spiritual and individual existence persists" after death. But the existence of a large range of animal forms, all exhibiting the same basal structure, and all subject to the same fundamental conditions of life, clearly does not point to the continued existence of a selected form of animal life, amid conditions that are entirely different, and with a body quite different also. Put in plain language Sir Oliver Lodge's proposition is that inasmuch as up to a certain point animal life is all of a piece, therefore beyond that point, a beyond of which we know nothing at all, animal life will persist in an entirely different form and under entirely different conditions. Well, it may be so, but the argument and the illustration certainly would not prejudice one in its favour.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

Ballade of Our Final Sleep.

I.

WELL, yes, of course; we have to die one day,
For Death will call upon us soon or late;
In the long run he always gets his way,
And his arrival is as sure as Fate.
Of his sad victim will his friends relate,
When he has gone, like most of us, to hell,
What time they of his many virtues prate,
"After life's fitful fever he sleeps well."

II.

You may remember seeing in a play—
Perhaps by now a trifle out-of-date—
A prince, called Hamlet, who was far from gay;
His friends, no doubt, thought him an addle-pate:
His uncle was of Denmark chief of state;
But when, at last, by Hamlet's sword he fell,
Did Hamlet say of one he learned to hate;
"After life's fitful fever he sleeps well?"

III.

But when I go, with face all ashen-gray,
To meet Saint Peter, warden of the gate,
I at his feet this humble plaint will lay,
Whilst he surveys my almost empty slate,
And with Saint Michael holds a tête-à-tête,
"Let men of me in sober truth this tell,"
"Now are his troubles ceased, erewhile so great,"
"After life's fitful fever he sleeps well."

Envoi.

Prince, when like other sinners you must pay,
And in the lake of fiery brimstone yell,
Perchance upon your tombstone men will say,
"After life's fitful fever he sleeps well."

BAYARD SIMMONS.

The Imbecility of Theology.

SUB-DEAN WILLIAM H. CARNEGIE, M.A., is rector of St. Margaret's, Westminster, Chaplain to the House of Commons, and Canon of Westminster Abbey. It is said of him that he "has travelled widely and thinks broadly." It is only as a theological thinker that he is of interest to us; and in the *Guardian* of May 20, the substance of a sermon by him, entitled "The Importance of Sound Theology," was published. At the very outset of this discourse he raises the question as to whether right conduct is dependent on right belief or not, meaning by "right belief," of course, right religious or supernatural belief. He refers to the view, held by many, that "Theology is an antiquated science, interesting only to persons of academic tastes and upbringing, theological beliefs and disbeliefs being no longer of practical concern." We regard that view as fundamentally erroneous, because we are profoundly convinced that supernatural beliefs have invariably exerted a more or less deleterious influence on moral conduct. Canon Carnegie also repudiates that view, though for a different reason; but he makes important admissions. He says:—

It is quite true to say that a man's character is determined by the influences and traditions of the society to which he belongs to a much larger extent than it is by his professed beliefs or disbeliefs. A man brought up in a Christian community, who has from his earliest years breathed an atmosphere charged with Christian ideas and inspirations, will, as a rule, retain Christian habits and points of view and estimates of value, even though in later life he may be led by intellectual considerations to repudiate the Christian theology. So it comes to pass that the key to a man's character is not always supplied by his professed beliefs. These very often seem to have little or no direct effect on his conduct, which proceeds along lines of its own apart from them, and often in apparent contradiction to them.

Whilst in substantial agreement with that passage, we must call special attention to the obvious fallacy which it contains, namely, the sinister assumption that if the character of unbelievers is pure, unselfish and noble, it is entirely due to their Christian heredity and environment. The Canon evidently forgets that the moral teaching of Christianity, in so far as it is true, is as old as the hills, and that excellency of conduct is by no means confined to Christian nations. During the Russo-Japanese war the editor of the *Hibbert Journal* wrote an article in which he seriously expressed the fear that Christendom had lost its moral supremacy. Indeed, there is no convincing evidence that Christendom ever did possess such glowing superiority over some so-called Heathen nations. Even Sub-Dean Carnegie has not formed a very high estimate of the moral conduct of the British, saying:—

Englishmen may talk loudly about their principles, religious, political, or social, and even enter into vigorous controversies with regard to them. But when it comes to action they are apt to throw principles to one side, and to depend mainly upon instinct for guidance. Their instinct is generally sound, but it often leads to results which baffle all attempts at intellectual analysis or explanation. One does not wonder that other nations fail to understand us, and are apt to credit us with a subtlety to which we have no rightful claim. We do not altogether understand ourselves.

And yet he believes that the English are superior to all others, which belief is shared by most Englishmen, and it is this sense of superiority, leading to absurd self-assertiveness, that explains the fact that they are looked down upon and despised when they travel abroad.

At this point the Canon asserts that principles and

theology are vastly important things. He makes the following allusion to the story of Balaam:—

Balaam was an intensely religious man, but owing to the imperfection of his conception of God, his very religious fervour and devotion became the instruments of his undoing. Had he been less religious, he would have been far less harmful to himself and his compatriots. But his conception of God was not self-formed. It was the conception generally accepted by the community to which he belonged.

Here we are face-to-face with one of the most absurd and baseless claims ever set afloat by theologians. Why had Balaam and his compatriots such a defective conception of the Supreme Being? Simply because it was a conception of a God of a strictly human origin. Jehovah was an invention or creation of the very people who believed in and worshipped him. Objective existence he never had nor could have had. He was made in their own image, after their own likeness. The first God was the sun or the departed ghost of some chieftain, and always thought of with fear and trembling. By the very language he employs the Canon pooh-poohs the old belief in a Divine revelation. Surely, if God existed and had made a revelation of himself to mankind, false conceptions of him would have been utterly impossible, and there could have been but one God for the whole world. As a matter of fact, however, at the time Balak and Balaam are supposed to have lived the world was afflicted with millions of divinities, and like their creators they were all male and female. With this truth fully known to him the Canon has the temerity to exclaim, "There are not two Gods but one God." Matthew Arnold, a great poet as well as a distinguished literary critic, was a diligent student of the Bible, who saw therein, not a personal God who had revealed himself to his people, but an eternal and impersonal power at work in the world. In his *Literature and Dogma* (pp. 57-58), he uses these words:—

This conception was indubitably what lay at the bottom of that remarkable change which, under Moses, at a certain stage of their religious history, befell the Hebrew people's mode of naming God. This was what they intended in that name, which we wrongly convey, either without translation, by *Jehovah*, which gives us the notion of a mythological deity, or by a wrong translation, *Lord*, which gives us the notion of a magnified, non-natural man. The name they used was: *The Eternal*.

According to Arnold, therefore, the God of the Bible is "a power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness." Now, we ask what evidence is there of the actual existence of such a mystical power? Those who believe in it, must also believe, to be consistent, in a power, not ourselves, which makes for evil and calamity. We believe in neither. All we can see is the human race, consisting of individual beings who have been slowly ascending from animal conditions, but who have not yet got rid completely of the forces at work in the lower world. Some are considerably higher than others, with the result that a perpetual conflict is going on between the higher and the lower human beings, giving rise to painful and often disastrous disturbances of various kinds. There is no power, not ourselves, making for righteousness, and no power, not ourselves, making for chaos and misfortune. Possibly the warfare will never end; possibly righteousness shall never wholly win the day; but it is we alone who are engaged in the fight. There is neither God nor Devil working for or against us. Peace and perfection are so far only a dream, and the supreme joy of life lies in cherishing it and strenuously working for its fulfilment.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Loyalty of Leicester.

"Isn't it brimstone morning?"

"I forget, my dear," replied Squeers. "Yes, it certainly is. We purify the boys' blood now and then, Nickleby."—*Dickens: Nicholas Nickleby.*

"Come immediately down, and pump life into this business."—*Potash and Perlmutter.*

THE younger soldiers of the Army of Human Liberation can have little conception of the hatred and antagonism which the Old Guard of Freethought roused in the Christian camp. To-day, if there be not a greater tolerance, there is, at least, less bitterness, due as much to increasing indifference to religion as to more civilized manners. Christian apologists, who never tire of boasting of the tolerance of their intolerant creed, need to be reminded of these things. In the battle for Liberty, for instance, Richard Carlile and his wife and friends, endured many years' imprisonment, and had fines inflicted for large amounts. Daniel Eaton, who was championed by Shelley, was prosecuted several times, and had £2,500 worth of property destroyed by order of the Courts. Shelley himself was ordered to be deprived of the custody of his children, and a similar dishonour was inflicted on Annie Besant many years later. Charles Bradlaugh had to fight eleven years for a seat in the House of Commons, followed by five years of struggle before he was allowed to occupy it. Only the loyalty and courage of George Foote prevented Bradlaugh's imprisonment for blasphemy. Foote's own share of Christian charity was a year in prison. A former Marquis of Queensberry was denied a seat in the House of Lords on account of his Freethought opinions. Last, but certainly not least, thousands of pounds bequeathed for Freethought purposes were diverted to other channels. It was not Christian love that stopped this highway robbery, but the astuteness of George Foote and his colleagues.

There is more to be told of this heroic period of British Freethought. Despite persecution and enforced poverty, the pioneers had stout hearts, and in different parts of the country Secular Societies were founded and flourished. Perhaps the most noteworthy of these local organizations were the Leicester Secular Society, and the Failsworth Secular Sunday School, both of which have very interesting histories. Mr. Frederick J. Gould, who was associated with the Leicester venture for some years, has written a history of that society, which is worth reprinting and bringing up to date.

The story of the Leicester Secular Society dates from the middle of the nineteenth century. The Society sprang from a debating class held in the Mechanics' Institution, originated and animated by George Bown, one of the small band of pioneers, who carried the torch of Liberty in those dark days. Among the young men who gathered about him was Josiah Gimson, the father of Sydney Gimson. The intellectual subjects discussed in the class soon became the talk of the town. Afterwards a school was carried on during the week, with Sunday lectures, and a lending library was formed. The advanced views of progressive thinkers were discussed constantly, and Leicester thus had the opportunity of listening to new ideas, and of widening her mental horizon.

Out of this evolving institution, which readily adapted itself to changing conditions, in 1873 was organized the Secular Hall Company, and the site of the present hall was purchased. Eight years later the hall was completed from the designs of W. Larner Sugden, one of whose hobbies was the publication of pretty little booklets of a Freethought character. It

is a handsome structure in one of the best streets of Leicester.

The opening took place on the first Sunday in March, 1881, and a large number of notable Freethinkers were present from all parts. That shy genius, James Thomson, author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, contributed a poetic address at the opening of the hall. A few lines are well worth quotation, for they show the vigorous Freethought of the poet, whose talents have won for him an imperishable name in his country's literature:—

So, all the lands wherein our wandering race
Have led their flocks, or fixed their dwelling place,
To till with patient toil the fruitful sod,
Abound with altars to an unknown god
Or gods, whom man created from of old,
In his own image, one yet manifold,
And ignorantly worshipped. We now dare,
Taught by millenniums of barren prayer,
Of mutual scorn and hate and bloody strife,
With which our dreams have poisoned our poor life,
To build our temples on another plan,
Devoting them to god's creator, man!
Not to man's creature, god. And thus, indeed,
All men and women of whatever creed,
We welcome gladly if they love their kind;
No other valid test of worth we find.
Who loveth not his brother at his side,
How call he love a dim dream deified?

Another illustrious name associated with the Leicester Secular Society is that of Thomas Henry Huxley, the world-famous scientist, and champion of Evolution. Not only was he in agreement with the objects of the organization, but he was one of the financial supporters. Enclosing a cheque in support of the organization, Professor Huxley said it was sent "in evidence of the full sympathy with the objects of the Society." To a request for permission to publish the letter, he replied: "You are quite at liberty to publish my note, and I shall be glad if it is of any service." This record places Huxley in complete accord with the principles of Secularism, and should clear away some misapprehension on the subject.

The importance and far-reaching nature of the Leicester Movement will thus be understood. For nearly four generations it has spread Secular principles far and wide, and still maintains a vigorous propaganda, including a Sunday School for the children. We thus see that, give Secularism a fair field, it will show its true adaptation to human needs and welfare.

In the hall are the portraits of Charles Bradlaugh, George Jacob Holyoake, and Josiah Gimson. The name and fame of the last-named can never be forgotten in the history of the Society, or even in the record of the Secular Movement. He was one of the founders, and a most generous supporter. We do well to honour the pioneers, for pioneers are ever prophets. Swinburne saw and sang, "A Vision of Spring in Midwinter," and long before that Shelley asked the question; "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" It is no delusion this glowing belief which sees in Liberty the sister of Progress. It is no superstition, but a faith based on reason and experience, which still leads the flower of the human race to pursue the august figure with the uplifted torch, whose rays one bright day will cover a civilized world.

MIMNERMUS.

Real knowledge consists not in acquaintance with facts, which only make a pedant, but in the use of facts, which makes a philosopher.—*Buckle.*

Slavery tolerates no freedom of the Press, no freedom of speech, no freedom of opinion.—*Helper.*

A Cloud of "Witnesses."

CONFESSION, despite its abortiveness in a theological sense, is a good psychology. The Catholic Church and Salvation Army, like all good mothers, trade upon this fact, and extract from their willing victims just what they please. Yet, confession may be visualized as a reasoned affair, not the fanciful utterances of the compliant Catholic or the glib piety of the Salvationist. At present only these seem to have their innings, and the listening crowds do not seem at any time to realize that there is much more of a "catch" than a "draw" in these displays. But, then, the audience on such occasions always belongs to those who accept the particular creed on tap; sensible people pass by unheedingly, and it is rare to find many of our young people there. In this last fact lies a great future hope. If the chances for inhibitions are not allowed to occur, much conflict will be saved; there will ultimately be much less to undo, and the transition will run on rapidly to rationalism. Since our young people find these uncritical ranters beneath their consideration, the first essential is that State-education should be placed on an entirely Secular basis; when that transpires the break-up of Christianity in its various forms will follow. Young people, by their avowed dissatisfaction with religious teaching, whether received in the school, on Sunday, or at home—and, of course, at the least-exalted level of all, the street-corner—are showing what would happen were the last compulsions removed. When the instruction is administered amateurishly, their attitude of acceptance is generally one of pretence, out of sympathy merely for the deluded instructor; to the professional soul-practitioner they are often not so tolerant, where disciplinary action will not follow. May not the day soon come when rationalists will submit their "testimony"—"How I Freed Myself from Faith," or "How I Came to Discard Christ." How infinitely more enlightening it would be to hear how the mind was released from clerical bondage, how the yoke, Christian-like, was shuffled off and freedom found! Even the evangelical often express their disbelief in spontaneous conversions, in the change from bestiality to bliss wrought in the twinkling of an eye, done while you wait; even they, in many cases, find in the crudity of the convert of the corner what is suspiciously like a "put up" job. And has any divine one ever explained the nature of conversion in a manner approximately satisfactory on psychological and philosophical grounds? I think not. Attempts to recapture the convertite's mood and mind are all in the air, amounting ultimately to this, that either you have Christ or you haven't got him, which seems much the same as saying, "Imagine you have Christ and you will have him, auto-suggest Christ into you." But the reverse process could, I think, be demonstrated clearly and logically. No one knows why or when he has Christ, but it is possible at all times to know when the mind is cleared of unconvincing dogma and self-deluding cant. And, further, if you have lingered on in such a state of mental confusion, vaguely aware of something ridiculous in it all, but without certainty enough to throw it all off, it is possible to know when intellectual clarity and common-sense come to replace inconclusive mythology and primitive superstition.

If church-goers would only show some courage, would try to put the matter to the test, the greater number of our parsons would to-morrow rush into hiding or emigrate or die of sheer consternation. The majority are supporting what they tacitly feel

to be hopelessly untrue—unfounded claims for a deity inhabiting some palace of light called heaven, unproven and incredible statements about a "descendant" from heaven—while the parsons soothe them with the necessity for it all, and simper "many a holy text" that teach them to die—in expectation. Let the mind once be awakened to the absurdity of it all, admit one ray of light, and there will be no restraint for the enquiring mind. The Catholic Church keeps an *index expurgatorius* in its efforts to prevent this happening—a measure of sheer panic that not all the arguments about moral welfare and the superior mind of the better-able-to-judge-for-your-good Holy Mother Church can counter. In reality, it is practically an admission that the Voltaires, the Darwins, the Huxleys, the Bergsons of the world have delivered an unchallengeable attack on traditional religion. For the mass of the people so concerned the ban has probably its effect, but that only makes the Church more indictable still. Hardly one *believer* has real *belief* in his heart, but the vested interests of religion are too strong, and the spectacle of the complacent acquiescence in "a creed outworn," outworn by Pagans long before it ever became a Christian "monopoly," is presented. As with the claim for conversion, the lever of release must be the personal one; you must simply feel that you have *not* got Christ, that you can *never*, in fact, have him, that you are being fooled to the top of your bent in being forced into thinking that he must come between you and a decent mode of life—and death—that without him nothing is possible. Once the implications of this gross anthropomorphic theology have been taken, there will be nothing for it but "conversion" to rationalism, a feat to be proud of, intellectually and morally, one of incomparable courage beside the grovelling at Jesus' feet, that alone can impart comfort to weak-minded pietists, who take on entire trust what (to extend Leslie Stephen's idea)¹ were it read, without preconception, in a contemporary journal, would be laughed to scorn. But because it appears in an "inspired" book it counts as religion, and nothing must gainsay that. Yet, every great mind of the last two or three centuries has gainsaid it, and so will even the smallest mind once it starts to exercise its primary function. By following truth whither so ever it may lead will land you finally in the Elysian fields instead of in heaven, but your satisfaction on earth will be more than ample compensation for the deprivation of Aspramont, which even Milton, in spite of his precise information for tourists, probably failed to find.

JANSEN.

The Answer.

I WILL not seek thy pardon for a sigh,
Nor taunt thee with the zeal that overleapt
The vaunted Charity thy faith hath kept
So long, and so well hidden. If mine eye
Could shed a tear o'er millions doomed to die
Beneath the banner of the Cross,—accept
This tribute 'mid Destruction,—Jesus wept,
Nor shake a truth off with a holy lie:
I found amid the ruin Death had wrought,—
Where Christian blood by Christian hand was shed—
The faith in Man thy creed had never caught
When God had failed him, and his hopes were fled;
I found a calm where pious souls had taught
To howl for Life and slaver o'er the dead!

WM. J. LAMB.

¹ "An Agnostic's Apology."

The Home Secretary and the New Prayer-Book.

SPEAKING at a meeting of the National Church League, last week, Sir W. Joynson-Hicks remarked that the new Prayer-book "is an attempt at a compromise. . . . Let the bishops come down fairly and squarely on one side of the fence or the other."

He was, of course, speaking from the point of view of a churchman, and goes on to express the fear that he may be "driven out into the wilderness" by the vacillating methods of the rulers of the Church. I have no doubt that thousands of others will do the same; but as they will presumably adopt either Nonconformity or Catholicism, according to their tastes, it is not with these that I am concerned.

The fact at which I rejoice is that such a prominent member of Society should have voiced the opinion of Freethinkers so concisely and completely.

Revealed Religion claims to be the direct interpretation of Divine Truth. I suppose we must not be surprised that various warring sects assert that their own means of interpretation is the right one—although even this fact naturally leads to doubt and criticism on the part of those who can view the situation without bias. But when we learn that one particular party is not on firm ground with regard to its own method, the position becomes almost absurd, and used as one may be to the credulity of the Religionists, one is once again staggered at the paucity of their reasoning powers.

The question which I would put to the bishops is this: "What does God want? Does he like the Reservation of the Sacrament or not? Does he mind the names of Isaac and Rebecca being left out of the marriage service? If you do not know these things, then why not admit with me that you have no conception of the Infinite?" But perhaps they would reply that God does not mind how people worship him as long as they do so in the way best suited to themselves. In that case, why all the controversy? Why not say, "It does not matter whether you worship in my cathedral, the Congregational chapel, or in the green fields?"

To a Freethinker, of course, it is absurd to suppose that anyone knows what God desires. We have seen so many religions rise and fall, that nowadays we merely wait for the collapse of whatever system happens to be in vogue, and then say, "What next?"

The Christian Church has been driven first out of one position and then another. When their attempt to laugh Darwin out of court failed, they had the audacity to assert that after all he was only confirming the book of Genesis. Nothing seems to shake their superb confidence in themselves.

The increasing number of infidels, however, proves that the confidence of the populace has been shaken to its foundations by these things, and the Church is forced by sheer weight of numbers to soften their arrogant tone to a certain extent. I am indeed grateful that I live in an age when neither party in the present dispute can burn or torture me for refusing to accept their views.

B. S. WILCOX.

Acid Drops

This is not the place in which to discuss the political bearings of the Russian business, but a remark made by the *Church Times* is interesting. It is very dubious as to the benefits of the break, since it sees, rightly enough that the problem in such cases is how to live with people who, in spite of all we may do, will continue to occupy standing room on the face of the earth. But that is a consideration we cannot expect men like "Jix" and his supporters to see. The *Church Times* says that if Europe had formed a combined Christian State, Europe would have been justified in breaking off relations with a State that professed Atheism. But, it laments, "The Home Secretary is content to permit Russia to practice Atheism in Moscow, so long as he is left free to practice Protestantism in England." To that we are content to reply that when men measure up

the fitness or unfitness of States in terms of their attitude towards religion, it is time they ceased to dabble in public affairs as mentally unfit for the job.

Russia's great crime, in the eyes of the *Church Times*, is that it has officially opposed Christianity. If it had championed Christianity, and had, as was the case with the Russian Church under Czardom, given its spiritual blessing to any and every kind of brutality inflicted in the name of the Cross, then Russia would have had a much more sympathetic hearing in the case of our pious contemporary. A Europe combined in Christian belief, and yielding obedience to a spiritual head, the ideal of the *Church Times*, might do a deal, it is true. It might recreate the Inquisition, it might re-create the penal offence of heresy, and it might issue excommunications by the dozen. Still, it strikes us that the problem raised by the *Church Times* remains. Whether a people are ostracized or not, they are still there. Somehow or other we have to live with them, and you do not cease to live with them because you shut your eyes and pretend they are not there. How to live with one's neighbours is the real problem of statesmanship, but to-day there are no statesmen. There are only politicians.

The *Church Times* also unearths a "dreadful scandal" in Otterbourne, a town in South Eastern Manitoba. It seems that a church there has been holding a series of services by Romanists, Anglicans, Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and other Christian sects. And the worst of it is that the congregations attend all the services, and so get a little from each. We agree that is very unusual. Christians believe in brotherhood, but it must be in compartments. They believe in loving one another, but it must be at a distance. It is all very irregular. Now if all these sects met in an open field for a free fight, little surprise would be caused. But to give the same congregation weekly doses of different Christian teaching! What will "Our Lord" make of it all? It looks like he will have to either save or damn promiscuously if this kind of thing is encouraged. So the *Church Times* calls on the Bishops to stop it without delay. It will have the sympathy of Joynson Hicks.

General Bramwell Booth has been touring Scotland, and he informed the people of Killysyth that "I was a pretty kettle of fish before I was saved." But we understood that as the son of the original General Booth, he had received a very strict Christian training, and had led a quite exemplary life. Still, we suppose that the converted blackguard yarn is too valuable to the Salvation Army for it to be thrown on one side. And a lie more or less matters very little where evangelistic religion is concerned.

The late Sir J. Ernest Hodder-Williams, of the publishing firm of Hodder and Stoughton, left estate valued at £280,290. The deceased was a good Christian and, no doubt, an earnest student of the Bible. Yet he went on accumulating wealth despite the awful hint Jesus gave about the camel and the needle's eye. Perhaps, however, Sir Ernest was a modernist who believed that Jesus didn't mean what he said when he said it. If this were so, we hope St. Peter on the gate was open to conviction on that point. The chances are that he wasn't, for those old saints were such thorough-going Fundamentalists.

Religion keeps on reviving. Canada hunts for blasphemers and heretics, and now Belfast—anxious not to be thought behind the times—follows her lead with a heresy trial. The Irish Primate has appointed a committee to investigate twelve charges of heresy against the Rev. R. W. Seaven, B.D., incumbent of St. John's Malone, Belfast. If the rev. gentleman is proved guilty, we hope he will not omit to thank his God that the good old Age of Faith has passed away. If it had not, he

would need a double dose of Christian fortitude to enable him to bear up against the sentence an Ecclesiastical Court could inflict upon him. Whatever the outcome of the trial may be, Mr. Seaver may congratulate himself on the fact that his freedom of opinion did not lead to a trial for blasphemy. For the freedom of opinion taking the form of blasphemy inevitably brings the assused inside a prison.

Miss Margaret Bondfield, M.P., addressing a Young People's Rally of the Congregational Union, said:—

You can find God outside the Churches, but while that may be perfectly true . . . it is my profound belief that we do lose a great source of strength and power for character forming when we cut ourselves off from corporate worship.

All this amounts to is that Miss Bondfield contracted, in youth, the habit of worship, and the habit has become so fixed as to prevent her from being able to imagine herself getting along without it. Most drug addicts think that way.

The General Secretary of the World's Evangelical Alliance has been visiting six European countries in the interests of the Alliance, and reports hopefully of the work of God there. That he should report hopefully is but natural. As chief salesman of the Alliance's evangelical goods he has too much sense to cry failure. The Lord's commercial travellers, such as this Secretary, Gipsy Smith, and the Bishop of London, can always be counted on to produce a slab of optimism at the right moment and for the right audience.

Nearly a thousand pilgrims have gone this year to Lourdes, in the hope of being cured from some illness or other. One thing we notice about these pious pilgrims. They trust in God sufficiently to hope for a cure on arrival. But they appear not to trust him to look after them on the journey. They take with them nurses and a doctor to do that. What puzzles us is that a God who can work a miracle at a well should not be able to work it in the patient's own home, and thus save all the pain and discomfort consequent on transportation. We should like to hear a priest explain this to a sceptical friend of a patient.

"Woodbine Willie" thanks God for the "Nobodies." These are the people who drive trains and buses, cook food, or carry milk—the unknown persons as distinct from the "Somebodies." We are glad "Willie" is grateful. A parson, being a social parasite, has more cause for gratitude than have other citizens. The "Nobodies" not only serve the parson but provide his salary; and the only return he makes for doing this is to assure them, when dead, of a safe conduct through a fictitious Hades. The parson appears to be the one person in the State who gets something for nothing from the "Nobodies." No wonder "Willie" is grateful.

The Declaration of Geneva of the Rights of the Child, which was officially adopted by the League of Nations in September 26, 1924, stated:—

1. The child must be given the means requisite for its normal development, both materially and spiritually.
2. The child that is hungry must be fed; the child that is sick must be nursed; the child that is backward must be helped; the delinquent child must be reclaimed; the orphan and waif must be sheltered and succoured.
3. The child must be the first to receive relief in times of distress.
4. The child must be put in a position to earn a livelihood, and must be protected against every form of exploitation.
5. The child must be brought up in the consciousness that its talents must be devoted to the service of its fellow-men.

The *Sunday School Chronicle* thinks the Declaration one of the most striking proofs of the presence of Christ's spirit in our civilization. In this charter of childhood, we

are told, one catches the very accent and spirit of the Master; the great notes of the Gospel sound through it. All this sounds very nice. But one cannot help wondering how it is that the charter was not forthcoming long ago, seeing that the Master's spirit and the Gospel had been dominating the minds of nine-tenths of the European races and their rulers for at least 1800 years. During this period no Christian man appears to have thought the children needed a charter. Very odd it seems that the child should have to wait till such time as the Gospel influence had reached its lowest ebb before he received consideration. Future historians will doubtless mark the fact, and comment to the effect that the Children's Charter was launched upon the world in an age of widespread unbelief.

Our Sunday School contemporary uses the Declaration to point a moral. Thoughtful people everywhere, it declares, see that if religion is eliminated from education we shall have to deal with devils and not with men. For, it kindly adds, the Godless own no moral authority and claim the right to do as they please, and to keep their word only when it is to their interest to do so. Yet, the chairman of the Congregational Union said last week about this God-less generation that it is kinder, gentler, and more humane, and has a higher sense of right and wrong. Evidently the God-less "devils" are not quite so black as the reverend editor of our contemporary delights to picture them.

According to a religious contemporary, an important review, published in Rome, recently had an article dealing with the propagandist methods employed by the Russian Soviet authorities in their campaign against religion. The writer of the article notes a passage from a circular issued by the Central Pan-Russian Council: "The struggle to deliver the workers from their religious superstitions is a very difficult task. This aim can be accomplished only by means of a prolonged educational campaign, which will gradually inspire the popular masses with a purely materialistic outlook on history and nature." Another piece of Soviet literature states: "The religious teaching now eradicated from the school curricula should not be replaced by any direct anti-religious teaching. The latter would have little practical effect. Let experimental physics, geography, natural history, the history of the peoples, be taught instead, and, whenever an opportunity offers, contrast with the positive and splendid lessons of these sciences the disgusting vagaries of religion. Thus, imperceptibly, the child will drift into atheism on the strength of his own personal judgment."

The Scottish Churches' Council—representing Protestant denominations of various shades, tints, and hues—has issued an Annual Report. Regarding non-churchgoing in Scotland, the report declares, the Committee estimated that in 1921 non-churchgoing adults of 20 years of age and over numbered 1,067,656, equal to 36 per cent. of the adult population. There are now, however, approximately 1,107,000 non-churchgoing adults, the majority of whom are Protestants. The report continues that at least 141,000 Protestant children between the ages of five and fourteen years do not go to Sunday-school. About 267,000 Protestant adolescents do not attend any Bible-class. At least 30 per cent. of the children of Scotland are not baptized. These figures, says the Committee, constitute a challenge and task which the Churches cannot dare to ignore. This is a very sad tale of woe. Still, a little ray of sunshine peeps through, in the shape of the well-known fact that a revival of religion is just about to get up steam.

Miss Sybil Warner, L.R.A.M., recently gave a lecture-recital to an art group of the Theosophical Society. She talked learnedly of the mystic and occult approach to music. She tried to induce her hearers to blend their consciousness with that of a goldfish, while listening to

a certain musical composition. We fancy that only a Theosophist or a Christian would attempt the task of trying to think like a gold-fish. Intelligent persons would prefer to try to blend their consciousness with one of the world's best thinkers, with or without a musical accompaniment. Perhaps, however, this would be too severe a task for our mystics.

The greatest task of the Christian Church to-day, says the Rev. C. G. Sparham, is the winning of China for Christ. He declares he is by no means pessimistic about it. Naturally he paints the prospects of missionary enterprise as bright as possible, for money has to be persuaded into missionary coffers. As a matter of sober truth, the prospect of winning China for Christ is just about as hopeful as that of winning Britain for Christ. And we all know how near this task is towards accomplishment.

After prayer, at the meeting of the Croydon Board of Guardians, a suggestion was made that when nursing mothers were granted cow's milk and Glaxo their scale of relief must be reduced. One guardian, Mr. G. H. Foam, strongly denounced the proposal. Perhaps the guardians would be less economically inclined, and a shade more considerate of the poor nursing mother, if they dropped the pious preliminary. The influence of the Lord doesn't appear to induce generous feeling.

Every year, says Dr. W. F. Lofthouse (of the Wesley Theological Training College), the standard of education and intelligence in Church congregations is rising. Unless the standards of ministerial education advances *pari passu*, the power and influence of the Methodist pulpit will recede. From this we infer that the simple teaching of Jesus is harder to "put over," when congregations get better educated and more intelligent.

There is nothing unusual in it, but it may as well be chronicled. The New York *Sun* reports the fact that Gray, the man sentenced to death with Mrs. Ruth Snyder, for the murder of her husband, has issued a statement, written by Gray, that he is quite reconciled to Jesus. He thanks "the many kind Christians who have written him and who have prayed for him. He is sure their prayers have been answered, because "I have indeed been saved through Our Lord Jesus Christ. Praise be to God, amen." He also hopes that the day will come when people will fight and clamour to enter the Church. All things considered, it appears to be quite a good thing that the two of them murdered Mr. Snyder. His death will have led to the setting of two more gems in Our Lord's crown.

Christian preachers are very cheerful folk—that is if one takes them seriously. Dr. Orchard informs all whom it may concern, that all the non-Christian religions are crumbling—naturally, as Dr. Orchard does not believe in them. And if Christ is not the Saviour of Mankind, then the future of mankind is hopeless. Now that is a cheerful outlook. Dr. Orchard thinks all the non-Christian religions are crumbling. We know that the Christian religion is. So it looks as though we had about reached the end. Still, it may not be quite so bad as it looks. It may be possible that common-sense will save the world, even though it does not believe in candles, and vestments, and other ecclesiastical tomfoolery.

A report of the Free Church of Scotland states that "Atheism would make no progress in this country if way was not prepared for it by the higher critics of the pulpit." That is putting the cart before the horse. There would be no higher critics in the pulpit if unbelief had not made itself heard among the people. The pulpit does not lead, it follows—a long way behind.

The higher critics in the pulpit are men a little more astute than the orthodox, who see that if they do not make some concessions they may lose everything. And as it is, they say only a small part of what they know.

The Bishop of London always runs true to type. Most other apologists for the Missionaries in China are content to say that the Missionaries do the Chinese good, and one day they will recognize this fully. But that is not enough for Bishop Ingram. On the strength of a few days in a European settlement in China, he brings back the message that the Chinese really love the missionaries. Presumably that is why, whenever there is trouble in China the people always go for the missionaries, and the missionaries promptly clear out until things are settled. The Chinese ways are, in many respects, different from ours, and this is certainly one of them. Still, the Bishop is quite certain about it, and we expect he got it straight from the missionaries themselves.

But the Bishop exceeds even his own record for silliness, when he says that the great benefit Christianity brings China is that it frees the people from superstition. That is superb. The Bishop takes them the message of a Virgin birth, of a resurrected God, the belief in miracles, and a number of other Christian doctrines that large numbers of even professing Christians in this country are ashamed of, and he says he is helping to free them from superstition! The gentleman who exchanged the errors of the Church of Rome in order to embrace those of the Church of England, must take a back seat after this. For over 30 years we have reckoned on Bishop Ingram being able to say something supremely silly, where the average parson would manage to say something with a glimmer of common-sense. And, bless the man, he never disappoints. He really is worth £10,000 a year and two palaces. We shall not easily look upon his like again.

As a thought for the week, a Sunday-school contemporary gives the following, by H. G. Wells:—

There is very little deliberate wickedness in the world. The stupidity of our selfishness gives much the same results in deed, but in the ethical laboratory it shows a different nature.

"There is very little deliberate wickedness in the world"—What a thought to commend to pious readers believing that the world is full of "sinners," who must be brought to Jesus to save them from the consequences of their sinning!

The *Women's Magazine* is a monthly catering for that small portion of the feminine world addicted to Early Victorian piety. Knowing that, we were somewhat surprised to find a contributor writing: "There is a tendency in some natures—perhaps, in the present-day, not many—to regard a thing as more likely to be right if extremely unpleasant." And the writer appeared to deplore the fact. Yet the essence of Early Victorian piety was its regarding of unpleasant things as right, and pleasant things as wrong! If the Editress allows a contributor to depreciate cherished Victorian notions in this wise, we shall begin to suspect that modernism has weakened the magazine's pious foundations.

At Preston a battle between Paganism and Christianity has been taking place in miniature, and apparently the victory in favour of the former has been achieved by 28 votes to 8. The subject is Mr. G. Spencer Watson's Royal Academy picture "Nude," for £300. It is to be bought by Preston Town Council. A clergyman has congratulated the Mayor on the purchase, and a Wesleyan Sunday School teacher has also approved of it. There is hope brothers yet, that we shall overtake a civilization of three thousand years ago if we move at this rate:

National Secular Society.

The Funds of the National Secular Society are now legally controlled by Trust Deed, and those who wish to benefit the Society by gift or bequest may do so with complete confidence that any money so received will be properly administered and expended.

The following form of bequest is sufficient for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by will:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society, and I direct that a receipt signed by two of the trustees of the said Society shall be a good discharge to my executors for the said legacy.

Any information concerning the Trust Deed and its administration may be had on application.

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.

FREETHINKERS ENDOWMENT TRUST.—H. Youngman, £2; Anti-Humbug, 5s.; New Member, Chester-le-Street, 5s.

OPEN AIR PROPAGANDA FUND.—A. F. Bullock, 2s. 6d.; Regent's Park, 1s.

J. F. DIXON.—We are sending you some pamphlets, which we hope you will find useful. The price of *The Bible Handbook* is 2s. 6d.

A. W. COLEMAN.—Thanks for reminder. We had not observed the review to which you call attention.

Mr. C. MASON writes. "I have to thank all concerned for Mr. Mann's *Christianity in China*. It is a volume of information in the size of a pamphlet. I have found it very handy when talking with Christians and others on the trouble in the far East, and the fact of full references being given for every statement makes it the more valuable." Mr. Mason says he would like to see some Christian reply to it. So should we. But they find silence the safest policy. A reply might call the attention of some subscribers to the facts of the situation.

CISE CERE.—Thanks for papers. Silence in the face of criticism is the wiser policy for the Churches to adopt. But that does not prevent others reading, and here and there the good work is done.

G. EVANS.—Glad to hear from an admirer of the *Freethinker*, whose father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were ministers of religion. As Christians say, there is hope for the worst of us, and we congratulate you on having overcome the handicap of your heredity.

J. B. SMITH.—Thanks for the Song of the Iron Cross, which we have read with appreciation. We note your desire to lead Christianity in the direction of human happiness. Many others have tried that, but without much success. It is much better to do something to end it, and so pave the way for something really and permanently useful.

R. BROWN.—Thanks. The greatest thanks anyone can give us is to secure new readers. We feel quite secure with our present readers; it is the outside world we are anxious to get at. And when we are able to advertise the paper as it should be advertised, we feel confident of getting them.

W. H. C.—Next week.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

The Annual Conference of the National Secular Society meets to-day (June 5), at Glasgow. The business meetings will be held at 10.30 and 2.30 in the Kenilworth Hotel, Queen Street, and are open to members only. In the evening there will be a Public Demonstration in the City Hall, full particulars of which will be found on the last page of this issue. Following the Conference, an excursion has been arranged for Whit-Monday to Lochgoilhead, the cost of which will be 10s., including luncheon. Mr. Cohen intends accompanying the party, although it will mean an all night journey to London on Monday, in order to be at the *Freethinker* office on Tuesday.

The official address for the Conference from Saturday morning, June 4, will be The Kenilworth Hotel, 5, Queen Street, Glasgow, S.1. Delegates requiring information should report themselves and enquire for the Secretary at the Hotel. A reception for delegates and visitors will be held at the Hotel from 7 o'clock on Saturday evening. Visitors who wish to be met on arrival at Glasgow should write Mr. F. Mann, 34, Trefoil Avenue. Those who possess a pansy badge should wear it to aid recognition.

A lady correspondent writes from Shanghai to a friend of ours:—

The Missionaries are all running—you'd almost expect them to prefer to stay even if, like Christ, they were crucified! But I think the modern disciple prefers safety and his pocket before the salvation of souls. They say that any man after two years realizes missionary work is impossible in China, and that if he carries on longer he is nothing but a fraud.

A rather lengthy notice of Mr. Mann's new pamphlet on *Christianity in China*, appears in the *New Age*. The writer says the work is concise, lucid, and well documented, and congratulates the author on "an informing, and entertaining piece of work." We fully endorse what is said, and venture to say that there is nothing before the public at the moment that covers anything like the same ground. It is indispensable to anyone who wishes to get a complete view of the situation in China.

The Manchester Branch is arranging an outing for Sunday, the 26th of June. It is proposed to have a motor saloon picnic to Goostrey, via Alderley, Congleton, Brerton, and Holmes Chapel. The saloon will leave Manchester about 9.30 a.m. and return about 9.30 p.m. The total cost (including lunch and tea) will be 12s. The Branch requires a further ten members or friends to complete the party. Arrangements can be made to join the party in Manchester and Stretford. If those willing to join the party will communicate at once with Mr. A. C. Rosetti, the Branch President, the matter will be put in hand directly. Mr. Rosetti's address is 39, The Crescent, Flixton.

That Attitude of Mind.

I LIKE to think of Atheism as an attitude of mind rather than as a conclusion. Conclusions are supposed to be permanent inferences, final judgments, and they are never quite that for subsequent knowledge always necessitates slight adjustment. Dalton's atomic conclusions were correct ones and remain correct; Newton was largely right and remains right. Yet neither can be quoted nowadays without a "but." The only really permanent thing is their scientific attitude or scientific method, for that remains and will remain unaltered—it is eternal.

That is why I prefer to champion a mental attitude rather than a conclusion. I have my conclusions, and think them thoroughly sound, but I know they will be modified, or rather developed, in the future; they are such plastic things; but with mental attitude it is different. The sound mental attitude can be traced unchanged through the past, and promises to last unchanged for ever.

What is this atheistic mental attitude? Chesterton, in his play "Magic," carries us part of the way. The conjurer, the reader will recall, exasperated by a youth who claims that he sees through his tricks one after another, performs a feat by *magic*. The youth is quite unable to formulate an explanation of the feat satisfactory to himself, and this so upsets his mental balance that he becomes insane. Subsequently the conjurer, in an effort to assist the youth to recover his sanity, invents a natural, as distinct from a magical way of performing the feat. He proposes to explain the natural way to the youth, but to no one else, for he is convinced that if he explains to everyone the natural way of performing the feat, nobody will believe that he originally used magic. The conjurer realizes that the human mind, faced with a natural explanation and a supernatural explanation of the same phenomenon, tends to reject the supernatural. This is the attitude of mind adopted by practically everybody when dealing with the every-day facts of life. It was the attitude of the magistrate when a stevedore was charged with stealing whisky. The man, who had been engaged in unloading a cargo of whisky, had been searched and a large medicine bottle had been found full of whisky. The man informed the court that he could not understand the matter; he had taken the bottle to work full of medicine and had found whisky substituted. The clerk to the Court facetiously remarked that there was only one authentic case of that having happened, when Jesus turned water into wine, but the man seized upon the point by the remark, "If it has happened once it can happen twice." The magistrate faced with a natural and a supernatural explanation was in no difficulty. He just murmured a number of months and called the next case.

A further step towards the ascertainment of the correct atheistic attitude is illustrated by an incident in spiritualistic circles. Sir A. Conan Doyle was present at a seance, when what purported to be a materialized spirit hand was dipped into molten wax. After the wax had solidified the spirit hand dematerialized and the wax glove was left behind. The existence of the wax glove was, to Sir Arthur, perfect confirmation of his views. The wrist of the glove was clearly smaller than the palm and the thin wax was obviously so fragile that it was clear that no human hand could have occupied the glove, for the hand could not have been withdrawn without fracturing the wax. That was the clear and complete supernatural explanation, with a perfectly logical rejection of the possibility of a natural explanation. The problem was, however,

tackled by a scientist, who commenced with a different attitude of mind, a man who evidently was not prepared to accept any supernatural explanation until he had tested every possible natural one. The scientist after oiling his own hand dipped it once or twice in molten wax, and he found that when the wax had cooled he could remove it, uninjured, by a sharp flick of the hand.

Possibly, the attitude of the scientist went even further; possibly he had reached the true Atheistic attitude, for the mind of the Atheist can find no solace in a supernatural explanation. Not only does that mind reject the supernatural explanation when a natural explanation exists; not only does that mind search for a natural explanation when a supernatural one only is offered; but when a search fails to find a natural explanation the mind rejects the supernatural explanation with the sure knowledge that the supernatural is a figment of the imagination.

For, after all, a supernatural explanation is the substitution of one mystery for another—really it is no explanation at all.

G. J. F.

If Spiritualism Were True.

(Concluded from page 347.)

THE disappointing thing about Modern Spiritualism is that, if true, the practical consequences are so negligible. The consequences for *good*, that is. The evil consequences are many and varied; but, apart from its message of life after death to people who already believe in an after-life, the rest is silence. Out of all the messages that have come from "the other side," there has never yet emerged a thought or a discovery of any practical benefit to humanity. One can assert this with confidence for, had it been otherwise, that astute publicist, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, would have "told the world" long ago.

Surely, if Spiritualism were true, the spirits would ere now, have done something to justify their existence? One would have thought that the energies that levitated Daniel Douglas Home, and bore the weighty Mrs. Guppy half way across London, would at least be capable of protecting a small child from the wheels of a passing vehicle. Of course, I know the reply. The intervention of the spirits in human affairs would destroy that freedom of will on which the development of character depends! The Spiritualist is like the Christian: because miracles do not happen he pretends they are not ethically desirable. But if a spirit *were* to return and tell us of a cure for cancer, Spiritualists would rejoice exceedingly—and so should we all. The propaganda department would be working overtime. There is nothing like religion for turning an honest man into a canting humbug.

Mr. Cohen once observed (apropos of the collapse of a Spiritualist meeting-house during a service): "The worst of spirits is that they are no earthly use in an emergency." I can illustrate this from my own experience. I once lived for a while with a Spiritualist medium, a man who enjoyed a considerable reputation locally as a clairvoyant. During the time I lived with him I went through what proved to be one of the great crises of my life. Now, if Spiritualism were true, and seeing that I have as many friends "on the other side" as anybody (they were, moreover, Spiritualists in the earthly life—a decided advantage when you pass over!) it is, I think, reasonable to suppose that they might have given me a hint of impending disaster through my psychic friend. I do not suggest that any intervention from the other side would have materially altered the situation (it never does!); but what's a medium for anyway?

They might reply that they wished to spare my feelings; but they are not always so considerate, because a little under two years ago a medium whom I have never seen and who is entirely unknown to me, prophesied my early death from tuberculosis. In reference to the medium with whom I lived, it was interesting to note that although he was famed far and wide as a psychic healer, his wife suffered abominably from nervous headaches!

There is one thing about the denizens of "that other world"—they *are* happy. There's no question about that. They tell you so at every seance. The only thing is, I have never been able to discover what they've got to be happy about. But I'll give them their due, they *are* happy.

That delightful humourist, Mr. Stephen Leacock, has recorded his adventures with the spirits, and I defy anyone to find any serious exaggeration in the following imaginary conversation:—

"How are you great-grandfather?" I asked.

His voice came back to me as distinctly as if he were in the next room:

"I am happy, very happy. Please tell everybody that I am *happy*."

"Great-grandfather," I said, "I will. I'll see that everybody knows it. Where are you, great-grandfather?"

"Here," he answered, "beyond."

"Beyond what?"

"Here on the other side."

"Side of which?" I asked.

"Of the great vastness," he answered. "The other end of the Illimitable."

"Oh, I see," I said, "that's where you are."

We were silent for some time. It's amazing how difficult it is to find things to talk about with one's great-grandfather. For the life of me I could think of nothing better than:

"What sort of weather have you been having?"

"There is no weather here," said great-grandfather. "It's all bright and beautiful all the time."

"You mean bright sunshine?" I said.

"There is no sun here," said great-grandfather.

Mr. Leacock has no better luck with the spirit of the great Napoleon:—

"I'm happy," said Napoleon, "very happy."

"That's good," I said, "That's fine! And how is it out there? All bright and beautiful, eh?"

"Very beautiful," said the Emperor.

"And just where are you?" I continued, "Somewhere out in the Unspeakable, I suppose, eh?"

"Yes," he answered, "out here beyond."

"That's good," I said, "pretty happy, eh?"

"Very happy," said Napoleon. "Tell everybody how happy I am."

"I know," I answered. "I will tell them all."

"Heaven seems vera little improvement on Glesga," a good Glasgow man is said to have murmured, after death, to a friend who had predeceased him. "Mon, this is no heaven," the other replied. I have never been to Glasgow, but I prefer the spirits of the Scottish city to those of Summerland. One, at least, gets the former *under proof*.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

Literature was meant to give pleasure, to excite interest, to banish solitude, to make the fireside more attractive than the tavern, to give joy to those who are still capable of joy, and (why should we not admit it?) to drug sorrow and divert thought.—*Augustine Birrell*.

New opinions are always suspected, and usually opposed, without any other reason but because they are not already common.—*John Locke*.

In Quest of the Beautiful.

III.—PAINTINGS.

THE eye is an advance guard of the body, and also when wedded to the mind it helped me to discern clearly another phase in my journey. Here, in profusion, were jewels of loveliness that bid defiance to time and change against which nearly all individuals are in open rebellion. Pictures are efforts to crystallize for ever some revelation of beauty; there are exceptions of course—Hogarth and Doré will come readily to mind, but the majority of paintings reveal in one aspect that attempt to catch and hold this peculiar quality of fascination, charm, and unselfish enjoyment. Colour, form, grouping, subject, all combine to make a picture, in the popular sense, "nice," and although one may not have cut a way through the jungle of books on "Æsthetics," a careful questioning will elicit from the critic some good reasons for this preference, although, in the first place, the judgment was limited to a single word. All the colours in the sun can be caught on canvas, and from this I can gather an idea of unity in diversity. Even an appreciation and understanding of the creative spirit in man is a joy that has beauty as a background. The spirit of work in Botticelli, and Leonardo, conveyed to me the idea that such men as these had not only seen through life, but had risen above it in a majestic manner; they had not only fully sensed beauty, but would create it for the simple reason that they had mastered life. In the quiet contemplation of the masters, here for me was an extension of the beauty I had found at the age of five, in two wild flowers. The quality of beauty had only been re-distributed, and form added. There is, however, no disputing about taste; the Tuscan School of Painting, as against the Lombard School, would fill volumes, but in all, Italian, French, Dutch, Spanish and English, there is this magic property of beauty that definitely marks progress in this quest, and whatever direction a man's beliefs may lead him, the fact is, that, with religious and secular painters or pictures, there is this real and inescapable presentation of beauty that makes life a little more than a comedy.

In my quest another door had been opened. Beneath the surface of beauty I had found by accident something unexpected that commanded me to go forward. It was a picture in the National Art Gallery, painted by Paolo Caliari or Paolo Veronese. The subject is St. Helena. Vision of the Invention of the Cross. There is a life-size figure of a beautiful woman reclining asleep at an open window, and two cupids are bearing a cross through the air. On the woman's face is a tranquil expression, and, without words, woman's destiny is there for all with eyes to see. The hand of the painter in this picture has touched the minor chords in the symphony of the world's history, but with the insight of genius there is no trace of rebellion or struggle against the facts of life, and the sense of fact is as rare as snow in June.

There was also a special charm about Murillo's picture of "A Boy Drinking." Something vague and roguish, about the boy's eyes; something perhaps indicative of the eternal fun that exists in a boy's world before the sticks and stones of misdirected modern life will beat and knock out the elemental ideas that all great and human men have retained only by a strong will. In pursuing beauty then, I was brought to the undercurrent of appearances; to stay in that stage for all time would leave me on shifting sands, but a return to the subjective pleasure of looking on all my old favourites is always the means of being quit of the make believe, the senseless clamour, the froth and the stupidity of society that is full of men but lacks a man.

Rembrandt's portraits are mostly an undertone of beauty. That part of the bodily vesture known as the face is an index to the sport and grim earnestness of time. It was a terrifying thought to imagine what the original of those eyes had looked upon from the cradle to the grave. The weather-beaten and wrinkled cheeks of "An Old Lady" had once been smooth and round; those lips had once been a prize, and a fair throat has vanished and remains in the picture as simply a setting for the head. Has beauty vanished here? I think not. There is no illusion left in his subject. She has seen the coming and going of children; over the hills and dales of

pleasure and pain she has come at last to the haven of tranquillity, which is not without compensation and which does not lack the essentials of beauty—but in a slightly different form. External beauty has disappeared, but it can be found in the old counsel, wisdom, and experience; but these were later discoveries in the search and pursuit of something that runs like a silver thread through life.

My old loves, greetings and farewell! You have helped me in my quest. All the pictures in the world are but embroidered and coloured myth—useful, helpful and elevating. You are but coloured paper round the light which Chaucer's pilgrims see in varying degrees of clearness. As such, you have your rightful kingship, and yield to your subjects the beneficent blessing of hope, encouragement, and fortitude against despair. In the house of history you have cheered with your beauty the lives of those who are now but shadows; a little warmth from you has kept at bay the chill of barbarity, the Philistines, the Puritans, whose only colour is no colour at all—grey. Not the least of your virtues is that of being able to satisfy the finer side of man when his feet falter and his eyes grow dim in the dust from the battle of life. There is hope for me if I cannot pursue my quest any further than profound admiration for those who in their works seek to subjugate their natural gifts in the service of beauty.

TRISTRAM.

The Sovereign in the Waiting-Room.

WHEN I visited Italy, in the autumn of 1926, I spent a day at the little hill-top town of Assisi. The date was just seven hundred years since "Sister Death" touched the hand of citizen Francis Bernadone, and closed the career of one of the most remarkable men in Italian history. I was happy to walk in the streets and lanes where "Saint" Francis lived his fraternal life with man and beast, and, though unwittingly, signified in his simplicity of food and clothing and lodging a new and democratic standard of manners; and forasmuch as he died in 1226, I forgave him all his mediæval theology. Next day I had planned to inspect some of the rooms of the palace in which dwelt the King of Rome, otherwise known as "Sovereign of the Temporal Dominions of the Holy Roman Church." Fortune prevented this glimpse of the Vatican. I felt no regret. In Assisi, I had seen places where a real Man of the People had trod. In Rome, I had seen the spot where, in 1600, Giordano Bruno ("George Brown," we should call him in English) had yielded up his breath in a fiery furnace, as a servant of Freedom of the Mind, and as a sacrifice to Priestly Ignorance.

Nevertheless, even if we do not love the Papacy, the fact remains that Pius XI is regarded by 324,000,000 Catholics (let the large figure stand, correct or not) as their representative in those immortal interests which count for more than finance, housing, and all other earthly concerns. For a thousand years, the Popes actually ruled a considerable territory in the centre of Italy. Their claim was shattered on 20 September, 1870, when Italian troops entered Rome. In May, 1871, the Government of Victor Emmanuel II. passed the "law of guarantees," which assured to the Pope the possession of the palaces of the Vatican, Lateran, etc., with certain gardens and annexes, and earmarked an annual subsidy to the occupier of St. Peter's throne—a subsidy which Pious IX., and his four successors have declined to accept. The Pope is styled "Vicar of Christ, Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church, Patriarch of the West, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Province of Rome, Sovereign of the Temporal Dominions of the Holy Roman Church." As he deems himself a kind of viceroy on earth, deputizing for the God of the Milky Way and Beyond, it is natural he should stand on his dignity, and refuse a miserable cheque tendered by people who (he would say) rob and insult him.

But changes have occurred, and changes are foreshadowed.

Since October, 1922, Benito Mussolini, once editor of very emphatic Socialist journals, has been the effective ruler of Italy, and its 40,000,000 energetic people, and its colonies. It would be improper to speak here of Italian politics; and I will merely remark that, in my view, neither the Conservatives and Socialists of Britain, nor Mussolini's foes in the ranks of Italian Liberalism (with some of whom I have discussed) have adequately studied the meaning of the new "Social Totality" doctrine of Fascism; their support or their opposition being somewhat passionate. But I wish, pointedly and directly, to refer to a religious issue which intimately affects secular issues. Since 1922, Signor Mussolini has, in some respects, manifested a special courtesy towards the Vatican. He has made Catholic lessons an official part of teaching in the national schools, and each school honours the Crucifix of the dead or dying Jesus with a prominent display. I think the action has been political, and that it is no indication of Mussolini's personal creed. He recognizes that the faith of St. Peter is the faith of the mass of the Italian people; and, for the smooth working of his Social Totality (or Pull-All-Together) scheme, he seeks to reduce friction with the Viceroy of God. Possibly he aims, also, to bring the Italian bishops in all parts of the country into more orderly relation with the secular power by requiring them to take the oath of allegiance to the King. At the same time, he is (I have reason to gather) reflecting on a proposal to raise the Papacy to the position of a completely independent State, though with no increase of soil beyond the palaces, gardens, etc., above-named. In his small estate, the Pope would govern with an authority, acknowledged by Italy, as formal and undisputed as, say, that of the King in Spain, or President Cosgrave in the Irish Free State. But the provision might be made that all citizens of the tiny Papal State (a fragment of Rome City) should also be citizens of the secular Italian Kingdom, and (for example) be liable to extradition in case of accusation of crime against the ordinary civil law.

So be it. To all this scheme I should not care to devote more than a passing thought. It is a domestic business of Italy. But I spring very much to attention when the advocates of the scheme add: "And so the Papal State would, as an independent political community, be eligible for membership in the League of Nations."

This idea invites me to whistle loudly. It is not, indeed, novel. I have heard it mooted by a non-Catholic publicist, in London. He wanted a delegate from the Vatican to sit in the League's Assembly at Geneva every September. Yet, as I have frequently stated, the Covenant of the League is entirely devoid of theological sanctions. It legislates for peace, arbitration, disarmament, security, hygiene, economic stability, improved labour conditions, and the Mandatory protection of "backward" peoples, and all without a single reference to God. And yet some minds contemplate introducing a delegate of a priestly caste and St. Peter's creed into this (as the Germans name it) People's Bond.

Let us, for a moment, suppose the attempt were seriously made. Could supporters of such a plan logically object to a representative of the religion of Islam entering the League? Is not Mecca important in world-affairs? Could not the sacred city of Mecca be constituted an independent State? I imagine the Moslems of Arabia would find no difficulty in doing it. Would the administration of the League be helped by the presence, in the Assembly Hall at Geneva, of a special Papal delegate and a special deputy of Allah the All-Merciful and Almighty? It is quite possible the Kingdom of Siam could carve out a miniature Buddhist State, which might put forward a Buddhist candidate. And when India reaches Home-rule, or Dominion status, it might class Benares as a State, with a right to a representative of Brahmanism in Switzerland. I can imagine obstacles to the creation of a separate Canterbury State with a Church of England claim, or a United Nonconformity State (at Wesley's Chapel, City Road, London, perhaps?), or a Secularist World-centre at Bradlaugh's birthplace in Hoxton. But it is perfectly certain that, if the Papal State mooted a candidature for the League,

a crowd of objectors—Anglican, Nonconformist, Moslem, and the rest—would rend the sky with their clamour. That being the prospect, we may take it that the prayer of the Papacy would fail. But the pity of it would be that, in the meantime, an enormous volume of talk would be wasted, and the thoughts of the civilized world diverted from questions of economies, and education, and arbitration. The Pope would advance no farther than the waiting-room, but we do not want disturbances in that apartment.

F. J. GOULD.

Correspondence.

DIVORCE JURISDICTION (Overseas Domicile).

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—While we welcome the Bill of Mr. Herbert Williams (Reading), presented to the House of Commons on the 17th instant, because it draws attention to the deserted wives of men overseas, we feel that it would be a grave mistake of the Government to give any help to a Bill which will give relief to only a section of the deserted women in the country. Women who have been deserted, and whose husbands are still living in the country are often in as bad a plight, where men fail to pay the maintenance allotted by the Courts, and are living with other women, under other names, and cannot be traced.

The case before the Willesden Magistrate on Saturday last, is an instance in point. A woman stated that twenty-five years ago her husband embezzled money and ran away, he did not write to her for five years, and she had not heard a word from him for the last twenty years, until this week. He had discovered where she was living and wished her to return to him. The Magistrate asked if she wished to return and the answer was certainly not. After twenty-five years my husband is a complete stranger to me, and I have no wish to see him again. I have brought up two children who know nothing of their father.

If England and Wales had the law of Scotland where, since 1560, malicious desertion has been a ground for divorce, such cases would not be as common as they are. Why not bring the law into line with that of Scotland and allow the dissolution of marriage to both women and men on the ground of desertion, and thus put into effect at least one of the recommendations of the Royal Commission of 1909-1911.

It will be a grave injustice to differentiate between deserted women whose husbands are domiciled abroad, and deserted women whose husbands are still living in this Country.

M. L. SEATON-TIEDEMAN.

A QUESTION OF MYTHOLOGY.

SIR,—Mr. Cutner, in his article on "Jesus in Faith and History," states, on the authority of Lemprière, that Venus sprang from the froth of the sea. This assertion tends to give your readers an incorrect impression regarding the origin of this goddess. They immediately visualize a woman springing out of the ocean waves, as generations of imaginative poets, painters and sculptors have made the details of her figure known(?) to us. We know the girth around her hips, her waist, her bust, her neck and also her little love affair with Adonis. I am quite certain that Mr. Cutner does not really believe that Venus was or is a woman, so why convey a false impression? Such remarks are unfitted for the columns of a serious paper, without they are accompanied by more explanation than your contributor has thought proper to give. He, like myself, does not believe in the existence of Venus or Christ as persons, therefore we must enquire what they represent. He is on the right path in considering the basis of theology is astronomy. Eminent mythologists, who have written on this subject, have been handicapped by their ignorance of physical science, and have therefore been shooed away from the true line of research like a flock of geese.

According to Hesiod, the goddess Aphrodite (Venus) sprang from the foam which gathered round the muti-

lated member of Uranus. Aphrodite was the Semitic queen of the heavens. Cronus apparently castrated his father Uranus with a sickle and Venus flew out of the wounded part. From the blood of Uranus were born furies, giants, ash-nymphs, and Aphrodite. These additions to Mr. Cutner's statement completely alter the character of the mental picture we draw concerning the birth of Venus. They, when compared with similar myths from various parts of the world, inevitably lead us to the conclusion that Venus is the Moon, and is a part of a disrupted planet. In order to propitiate this new deity, which appeared suddenly to mankind, millions of people have been sacrificed. This new deity, whose ferocity has been gradually decreasing and virtues appearing in its place, is known as Yahveh, Christ, Krishna, Kali, Venus, Astarte, Artemis, Eostre, Aphrodite, etc. Dr. Andrew Lang says that the Greeks related tales of their gods which would make a Red-Indian turn pale with horror. The sickle which I have mentioned above is probably the curved tail of the comet—the Devil—which collided with Uranus.

I observe you say in your reply to Mr. Millar that the Scotch Calendars are behind the time and Whit-Sunday is June 5. In all countries this day is seven weeks after Easter, but in Scotland it is a fixed date—May 15—by an Act of the Scottish Parliament of 1693. This date is the great day for flitting in Scotland, and the important Vegetation Deity visits Ultima Thule. On November 11, this deity dies or flits and the great and good Corn Spirit makes his appearance and is duly worshipped. However, I must not poke fun at eminent mythologists who, notwithstanding their deplorable ignorance, have done very well in gathering facts upon which others work.

WILLIAM CLARK.

A PROTEST.

SIR,—Certain evil-minded persons in Glasgow having disseminated libellous statements to the effect that two books of mine, *Milk Brother* and *Sacrifice or the Daughter of the Son*, were indecent and immoral, and these libellous charges having been detrimental to Guy A. Aldred, who sold the editions, I beg you to publish this letter along with the subjoined certificate of the celebrated Swiss Naturalist, Dr. August Forel.

W. W. STRICKLAND.

TRANSLATION.

The subscribed, after reading the books, *Sacrifice or the Daughter of the Son* and *Milk Brother or the Fountain and the Fawn*, by W. W. Strickland, certifies that he has found absolutely nothing immoral or indecent in these books. He is indeed astounded that any one could or dares make such accusations against their author, Mr. W. W. Strickland. It is a moral duty to protest against these accusations, which will not hold water.

DR. AUGUST FOREL.

(Late Professor of Psychology at the University, and late Director of the Lunatic Asylum at Zurich, Suisse.)

Yvonne Vaud, Suisse.
May 14, 1927.

THE BLIND JUDGES OF COLOUR.

SIR,—Your compositor made Voltaire say: "They (the blind) reasoned perfectly on the four senses" Should be: "on their four senses": the blind being minus one.

H. BARBER.

THE IMMORTALITY OF FAITH.

If a man, holding a belief which he was taught in childhood, or persuaded of afterwards, keeps down or pushes away any doubts which arise about it in his mind, purposely avoids the reading of books and the company of men that call in question or discuss it, and regards as impious those questions which cannot easily be asked without disturbing it, the life of that man is one long sin against mankind.—Prof. Clifford.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON MAY 26, 1927.

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, occupied the chair.

Also present:—Messrs. Clifton, Coles, Moss, Neate, Quinton, Rosetti, Samuels, Silvester, Mrs. Quinton and Miss Kough. Regrets were expressed at the Secretary's absence through indisposition.

Minutes of last meeting were read and confirmed.

The monthly cash statement was presented and adopted.

New members were received for Liverpool, South London, West London, and the Parent Society.

A successful Demonstration at Victoria Park, on May 1st was reported. Messrs. Rosetti, Whitehead and Hart taking part.

Gratifying reports were received of the Outdoor Meetings, especially those of Mr. Whitehead in West Ham and South London.

It was agreed that the International Freethought Bureau be informed that the Society hoped to be represented at the Congress to be held in Antwerp in September.

The draft of the Executive's Annual Report was read by the President, and approved, also the full Conference Agenda and official arrangements for the Conference were reported as complete.

The final meeting of the present Executive then closed.

E. M. VANCE,
General Secretary.

Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission at Clapham.

AN excellent series of seven meetings was addressed by Mr. Whitehead at Clapham. The Sunday morning meeting was held on Clapham Common, and in spite of boisterous weather a good crowd assembled. The rain prevented questions. The evening meeting was held in Brockwell Park and resulted in many questions. From Monday to Friday very satisfactory meetings were held in Clapham in spite of rival attractions on the pitch. The speakers were kept busy answering questions and opposition until 10.15 every evening, and considerable interest was displayed all the week. One or two new members were enrolled, and numerous requests were made for a return visit. We have to thank again Mr. Coles and Mr. Heath as well as other members for enthusiastic assistance, which made the work easier.

Society News.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.

ALTHOUGH Monday, May 23, was a holiday in Glasgow, there were many Secularists and Spiritualists present at the debate between Mr. W. H. MacEwan, of the Glasgow Branch, and Mr. Norman E. Baird, of the Glasgow Ethical Society. The question at issue was, "Does Man Survive Death?" and the debate was carried on along unusual lines.

Mr. Baird said that everyone assumed a permanent something in the Universe. He named this something the "Ego," and in a somewhat confused way linked it up with the personality of man. Mr. Baird's "Ego" may be described in the words King James used to describe Bacon's *Novum Organum*. "It was like the peace of God, it passed all understanding."

Mr. MacEwan began by pointing out that his opponent had not given him any case to reply to. He said that Mr. Baird's "Ego" was apparently our old friend "Mind," and stated the Materialistic position in regard to Spiritualism. If what Mr. MacEwan said was not a reply to Mr. Baird, it was at least an excellent statement of the case against human survival. And, after all, the question to be debated really was, "Does man survive death."

The debate was conducted by both sides with rare courtesy; and Mr. Irving, the President of the Ethical Society, was a most impartial chairman.—F. M.

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 PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2) : No Service.

OUTDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common, 11.30, Brockwell Park, 6.0) : Lectures by F. P. Corrigan.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S.—No Meeting.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 3.0, Messrs. Jackson and Darby; 6.0, Messrs. Campbell-Everden, Hyatt and Maurice Maubrey. Freethought lectures every Wednesday and Friday at 7.30, various Lectures.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY Branch of the N.S.S.—Saturday June 4, at 7.30, Reception in Kenilworth Hotel. Sunday, June 5, at 10.30 and 2.0, N.S.S. Annual Conference in Kenilworth Hotel. Sunday, 6.30, Public Meeting in City Grand Hall, Candleriggs. Speakers: Chapman Cohen, R. H. Rosetti, G. Whitehead, E. Clifford Williams, F. Hale, Fred Mann Silver Collection. Monday, June 6, Excursion to Lochgoilhead. Leave Broomilaw at 9.30. Tickets 10s.

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.

HOLIDAYS IN FRANCE.

CENTRAL HOTEL, 43-45, Rue de la Marine, Le Portel, near Boulogne. Highly recommended. Excellent cooking. Modern Comfort. Good Bathing. Special Terms for June.—Valentin Picard, Proprietor. (Please mention this paper).

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