

METHODS OF CONTROVERSY.

The

FREETHINKER

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

Views and Opinions.

Methods of Controversy.

It is not easy to lay down a set rule in controversy. A method that answers in one case will be found to be useless in another. Some folk are impervious to reasoning, and others to ridicule. The intellectual skin of some is so thick that the most polished sarcasm misses the mark; on the other hand it will bring others up with a round turn and compel them to examine beliefs that they have hitherto regarded as impregnable. Argue solemnly with one man who believes in an obvious absurdity, and he is straightway convinced of its importance; at most he will conclude that it is just a matter of opinion, and that his opinion is quite as good as yours. Treat one man's opinion with contempt, and he will resent your attitude as an insult. On the other hand, some will be found with whom an easy contempt for the opinion expressed is the only way to force them to the point of reconsideration. Perhaps the most general rule that one can lay down—although even here there are exceptions—is never to express an opinion as though one is doing so only by the good will and condescension of the one to whom it is expressed. In the vast majority of cases that is a sure way of confirming the bigot in his bigotry. He will listen, but without appreciation, and you will most probably receive the blow for which you have really been asking. In a world where opinion was really free and intellectual hospitality the rule, things might be different. In the world we live in I do not think that anything I have said admits of serious disproof.

* * *

Religious Opinion.

In another part of this issue will be found a letter from one of our readers which serves as the direct cause of what has just been said. I have had the letter beside me for some days, but held it over, as

there was no immediate need for publication, and I wished to deal with it at length. Mr. Mullen writes with all sincerity, and I quite appreciate both his motive in writing and the points raised by him. But, all the same I do not think he quite looks at the situation as a whole. "Indulgent persuasion," for example, is a good phrase, and covers a good idea, if we were dealing with people who held an opinion on religion as an opinion, and were ready to discuss it in the same manner that they would an opinion in science or politics. But this is not the case. Religious opinions are held to be in a class by themselves, and not to be treated as other opinions are treated. It is this assumption that lies at the root of the support given to-day to the maintenance of the Blasphemy Laws, and serves as the foundation of the impertinence and arrogance of the average Christian preacher. They demand preferential and favoured treatment for their opinions, because they say that these stand in a class by themselves. And in a very large number of cases we do nothing to weaken this attitude by approaching religion as though we endorsed the claim. If our public men who do not believe in Christianity could summon up courage to say what they really thought about it, instead of talking—quite dishonestly—about the value of true religion or pure Christianity, we should see Christianity less arrogant than it is, and—of even greater importance—there would be a stronger and healthier note in our public life generally. There are a large number of believers who are not open to persuasion, so long as we are indulgent. With these something stronger is required; something that will rouse them from their complacent bigotry, and make them realize where they really are.

* * *

Where Indulgence is Useless.

Take the case raised by Mr. Mullen, of what he calls my "refutatory chastisement" of the Rev. Desmond Morse Boycott. The substance of the article I criticised was that so soon as Atheism, or disbelief in Christianity became general, life would be insecure, chastity would be a mere name, no husband would be loyal to his wife, no parent careful of his child, no man faithful to a friend. Now we are living in the twentieth century, not in the fifteenth; unbelievers in Christianity are very common, Mr. Boycott must know many, and I decline to believe so poorly of Mr. Boycott's intelligence as to think that he actually believes these things. Mr. Boycott was arguing a brief in a court where the parties attacked were denied the right of reply. Mr. Boycott disagrees with a large body of men and women, and straightway accuses them of being potential criminals. Personally, I was not at all annoyed with him. I did not write in a temper, because

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nothing that he could say, even though he gave his remarks the most personal application, would have troubled me in the slightest. But to approach such a man with an air of "indulgent persuasion," to say, "My dear Mr. Boycott, we are not really so bad as you appear to think we are; nay, if you would deign to reconsider the matter, you might find that we Atheists are probably as good as are Christians"; to deal with such a man in that way is not to convert him, it is only to strengthen him in his impertinence. At best he will only admit that while you, personally, may not fill the bill as described, it is only because of the beneficial influence of such men as himself outweighing the evil of your creed. Indulgent persuasion may be quite good with some, and with those to whom it applies the lash is not necessary, and so far as the *Freethinker* is concerned it is not used. There are all sorts of methods used in this journal, and all are legitimate. And it is our pride that the *Freethinker* is perhaps the only journal that does not hesitate to speak out quite plainly where occasion demands. We may in this way lose the friendship of some, but we gain that of all worth having.

* * *

The Use of the Lash.

But Mr. Mullen quite misses the point of the article he names. I was not arguing with Mr. Boycott at all. I had no hope whatever of making him see the error of his ways, whatever the method adopted. He simply served as an example to other Christians of the kind of man who gains applause as a defender of the faith. With such advocates the only useful plan is to exhibit them so that decent-minded men and women may feel ashamed of that kind of advocacy. If they are not, then I am quite sure that turning one cheek when the other is smitten will be of small avail. Bigotry is above persuasion and is impervious to mere reasoning. Something is required to rouse the bigot from his complacency, and also to exhibit him in his true colours to other people. And as a matter of mere historic fact it is the great masters of satire, of ridicule, of sarcasm, the wielders of the lash, who have ultimately succeeded in making a particular superstition too ridiculous for reasonable people to entertain. Mr. Mullen's remark that there are certain things which some people regard as "sacred," also misses the crucial point at issue. I do not question their right to do so, but what is asked is that I too am to regard these same things as too sacred to be handled in the same way that I handle other controversial subjects. And to do so is to concede the very point at issue. And when religious folk are made to feel that the *Freethinker* demands that religion shall be treated as other matters of opinion are treated, no better and no worse, he will cease to use in its defence arguments that are barred in other walks of life. We need to be a little more concerned with the education of religious believers, and less with pleasing, or placating them.

* * *

Mythology Past and Present.

Mr. Mullen says that we read Greek mythology with pleasure, but do not treat it with scorn. That is perfectly true, and the great distinction is that it is not put before us as actual matter of fact, but wholly and solely as mythology. But could we read these legends with pleasure if we found that they were placed before us as actual historic facts, if many millions of public money went every year in uphold-

ing them as truths, if they were forced upon children as truth, if men and women were imprisoned, or slandered, or boycotted for not accepting them as truth? Dead gods and defunct religious systems are subjects that one can approach with the same kind of interest that one may approach a number of deadly germs safely imprisoned within a sealed flask. But it is difficult to maintain the same air of detachment if a clumsy assistant drops and smashes the flask on the floor of the room in which we are standing. I shall have no objection whatever to treating the Christian god and Christian beliefs in exactly the same way as I treat the gods and religious beliefs of ancient Greece—when men and women are sufficiently civilized to place them in the same category. But at present they are in a different category altogether. They are accepted as true by a very large number of people; another very large number pretend to accept them as true, and the problem before us is how to make the one class realize their falsity, and expose those who are trading on the credulity and ignorance of their fellows. For my own part I am convinced that a first step towards these ends is to compel Christians to realize the unwarrantable character of the claim that opinions on religion are worthy of more respect than opinions on any other subject. And that can only be done by using the same weapons that are considered quite legitimate when arguing on other subjects. As I have hinted at the opening of these notes, I do not mean that the same kind of attack will be effective in every case. It will not. Ridicule may fall flat with some, and be tremendously effective with others. Logical reasoning may do the trick in one case and fail altogether in another. All I am arguing for is the legitimacy of all forms of argument, and the need for doing as little as we can to flatter the monstrous egotism of the professional Christian believer. We have been taking him for too long at his own valuation. Let us try for a time to get him to take us at ours.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

FREETHINKING.

To begin with, the conception of freethinking implies that of hindrance, resistance, coercion, difficulty; and as regards objective obstacles the type of all hindrance is restraint upon freedom of speech or publication. In other words, all such restraint is a check upon thinking. On reflection, it soon becomes clear that where men dare not say or write what they think, the very power of thinking is at length impaired in the ablest, while the natural stimulus to new thought is withdrawn from the rest. No man can properly develop his mind without contact with other minds, suggestion and criticism being alike factors in every fruitful mental evolution; and though for some the atmosphere of personal intercourse is but slightly necessary to the process of mental construction, even for these the prospect of mental task; and the study of other writers is a condition of useful ratiocination. In any case, it is certain that the exercise of argument is a condition of intellectual growth. Not one man in a million will or can argue closely with himself on issues on which he knows he can say nothing and can never overtly act; and for the average man all reasoning on great problems is a matter of prompting from without. The simple fact that the conversation of uneducated people runs so largely to citation of what "he says," makes clear this dependence. Each brings something to the common store, and progress is set up by "pooling" the mass of intellectual variations or originalities. Thus in the long run freedom of speech is the measure of a generation's intellectual capacity; and the promoters of such freedom are typically the truest servants of progress.—*John M. Robertson, "Short History of Freethought."*

Significant Facts.

THE facts with which we intend to deal in this article are regretfully admitted to be such in the official reports of the Churches concerned. These facts relate mainly to alarming decreases in Church and Sunday School attendance, and in financial support of Missionary Societies and other ecclesiastical institutions. Before taking up this aspect of the subject, however, reference must be made to a recent laughably silly, but illuminating utterance by the Bishop of Bangor. Addressing a meeting at Cardiff, his lordship, according to a report in the Welsh newspaper called *Y Cymro (The Welshman)*, attributed the increase in the number of crimes, divorces, suicides, and immoral relationships, to the inadequate religious instruction in schools not under the rule of the Church. As *Y Cymro* observes, it would be desirable to know what reasons the Bishop had for making such a dogmatic assertion. In our opinion he had no reasons whatsoever, except those which are rooted in religious bigotry and intolerance. Is it not, therefore, just to aver that it was ineffably foolish on the Bishop's part to indulge in such groundless dogmatism? But besides being delightfully absurd, the Bishop's saying contains, what must be for him a most unpalatable implication, namely, the indisputable fact that the Church, despite its numerous daily and special Sunday ministrations, and the unlimited supply of supernatural grace and power, alleged to be freely at its disposal merely for the asking, has completely failed, and is now more unable than ever, to create and preserve a lively and predominant interest in religion among the masses of the population. Probably recognizing this fact, but without openly acknowledging it, the Church has been making a desperate effort for many years to capture the State schools, and utilize them as missionary agencies as fully as possible under its own control. Thus the Bishop of Bangor is evidently not ashamed to hold and teach the view that it is right to force religious beliefs down the throats of unthinking young children, out of the fear that if that is not done, religion will soon die out altogether. For the moment he flings down the wind the theory, so fondly cherished by theologians generally, that man has a genius or instinct for religion, and takes to it just as the new-born babe takes to its mother's milk, whereas the truth is that the majority of those whose minds are crammed with religion in early childhood throw it off again as soon as they reach years of independent thinking, and know it no more for ever, thereby proving conclusively that religion is not indigenous or native to human nature, but a foreign element, a sort of disease, or injurious germ, that needs to be ejected before healthy conditions can be established.

The facts just enumerated are exceedingly significant and prophetic of much, and now we turn to another set of facts equally significant and prophetic. The first fact that confronts us is that in the Presbyterian Church of England there is a growing dearth of candidates for the ministry. "A London Layman," writing in the *Christian World*, of June 2, says:—

While the Presbyterian Church of England is rightly considering the need for planting churches in new centres of population, it is faced with a very serious position as regards the ministry. It was stated publicly, a few days ago, that only two students would leave Westminster College, Cambridge, this year ready to undertake pastorates. The number of qualified men available in 1928 would be four, and in 1929, two. At present there are nearly 40 pastorates vacant in the Presbyterian Church of England, and it is calculated that this total might rise to 50 in 1929.

That is a serious position for a Christian Church to be in. It cannot be said of it that it is going its way conquering and to conquer. It is also a highly significant fact that several Congregational ministers are at present concentrating their energies upon the persecution of Dr. Orchard, minister of the Weigh House Church. These gentlemen seem to forget or to ignore the fact that Congregationalism used to be regarded as synonymous with Independency, and that in Wales communions of this order were once universally known as Independent Churches; each Church being supposed to be free to choose its own form of government, its own theology, and its own rites and ceremonies. Dr. Orchard's chief crime appears to be that he has been successful in surrounding himself with a multitude of people who approve of him, finding his teaching helpful and his ritualism inspiring. We hold no brief for Dr. Orchard's ministry, sharing not one of his theological or ritualistic views, but we are convinced that his right to be or not to be depends entirely upon the attitude towards him of the people who are still superstitious enough to throng his Church Sunday after Sunday. Our motto is perfect liberty, while that of Mr. Morgan Gibbon and his friends seems to be "Agree with us, or get out and be damned."

At the end of May the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church were held in Edinburgh. That of the Church of Scotland, according to the *Christian World*, of June 2, "proved uneventful, and except for the brilliant address and leadership of Dr. Norman Maclean, there was nothing to record," but the *British Weekly's* report, of the same date, describes it as one of the happiest, most united and successful Assemblies ever held. Several statements made at it are of keenest interest to Freethinkers. The Rev. Mr. Forbes, of Aberdeen, who reported on the religious instruction of youth, made a speech "to a crowded Assembly," which listened to it with absorbing interest. The *British Weekly* thus describes it:—

Mr. Forbes had pleasant things to tell us if he had chosen—so he informed us—but he considered it wiser to bring us face to face with the grave situation of the present moment in our Sunday Schools. The past year has shown a decrease of 54 Sunday Schools, and of between four and five thousand scholars. According to the Church and Nation Report, 141,000 children in Scotland are not in any Sunday School. And here is the great challenge to our Church.

Yes, doubtless, this is the great challenge to the Scottish Church and to other Churches too; but how is it to be accounted for? No question is more easily answered. The absence of so many Scottish children from the Sunday Schools is wholly due to the fact, sorrowfully admitted at the recent General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, that the Scottish people are moving from Christianity to Secularism; and the significance of this fact is enhanced by the recollection that a few generations ago, Scotland was one of the most profoundly religious countries under the sun. This is an instance of how modern knowledge is undermining ancient faith.

The same transformation is being effected in Ireland also. Dr. Miller, Bishop of Cashel, preaching recently at Ballymacarrett Parish Church, is reported to have said that "it was no exaggeration to say that at the present moment there was a need, desperately urgent, for a revival of the beautiful faith and the purity of life of the apostolical times. On all sides there was an intense desire to get the best out of this world, to the exclusion of higher aspirations. Nothing else could account for the methods employed to achieve ends, and Christian Churches stood appalled, and to some extent nerveless, at the dangers

which confronted them." In a "Foreword word by a Member," attention is being called to questions to be discussed at the General Assembly, about to meet, of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland. As reported in the *Belfast News-Letter* of June 6, "A member" said:—

The report on statistics, which will be presented by Mr. W. M. Crawford, and which is a kind of index as to how the Church is progressing, furnishes interesting reading. There are some notable increases, and, we regret to say, some equally notable decreases. In the stipend payers and contributors to the Sustentation Fund there are increases of 1,157 and 1,207 respectively, whilst in the number of scholars in the Sabbath Schools and members of Bible classes, there are decreases of 1,828 and 419.

The facts recorded in this article, and there are scores more of like import, prefigure the doom which must eventually overtake the Christian Church. It has already abandoned so many doctrines, once cherished as absolutely fundamental, and the process is still in operation, that the time is not very far off when it shall have dropped the very last, and itself must cease to be. Then, but not till then, humanity will be free to grow and develop along thoroughly natural and wholesome lines, and then it will shoulder its responsibilities and solve its problems uninterfered with by any alleged Divine or supernatural forces.

J. T. LLOYD.

Priests and Peace.

"And when I know how noble natures form under the red rain of war, I deem it true

That He who made the earthquakes and the storm perchance made battle too."—*Archbishop Alexander.*

"Thou shalt not kill."—*Old Testament.*

THE clergy never tire of telling people that the brotherhood of man is one of the primary elements of Christian doctrine. They now ignore all their patriotic platitudes concerning the "God of Battles," and bid men and women turn their eyes to the "Prince of Peace." The founder of the Christian Religion, they tell us now, proclaimed "Blessed are the peacemakers." The clergy themselves have, however, never earned for themselves this benediction, and the grim fact remains that the "men-of-God" never set themselves in opposition to militarism itself.

Turn to the history of our own country, and refer to the record of the Church of England since the so-called Reformation. Britain has waged over a hundred wars, great and small. Countries have been annexed, native races subdued, and the acreage of the British Empire has increased enormously. Whether these wars are held to be just or unjust, whether the fatalist finds them to have been inevitable, or merely provoked by kingly ambition and bad diplomacy, whether posterity will judge them as crimes or blunders, the Christian Bishops in the House of Lords have never condemned them. In every instance the Anglican Church has been the obedient, humble handmaiden of the Government of the day; blessed the regimental flags; and sung *Te Deums* for victory. The Book of Common Prayer, issued with the sanction of the Houses of Parliament, calmly assumes that justice is always on our side, and reminds credulous worshippers that "there is none other that fighteth for us but only Thou, O God."

In the late war, whole nations, professedly Christian, were engaged for years in wholesale slaughter. Europe was a streaming slaughter-house in which perished millions of young men, the entire flower of the manhood of the Christian world for one generation. It is a complete indictment of the Re-

ligion of Christ, which has proved itself the most powerless and hypocritical thing on earth. The millions who professed and called themselves Christians were entirely unaffected by the teaching of the "Prince of Peace." When passion or self-interest was aroused, every commandment and every precept of a pacific nature was forgotten. Nor is this all the sorry story, for a few hundred persons were actually treated as criminals for attempting to take the Christian religion seriously, as with the Quakers, the Conscientious Objectors, in England, and a handful of Communists and Socialists in Europe and the United States of America.

So far as the priests of the different Christian Churches are concerned, the profession of Christian ethics is a delusion and a mockery. Whether they be Roman Catholic Cardinals, Anglican Bishops, Non-conformist Divines, or Priests of the Greek Church, the fact remains the same. As for the brotherhood of man, no one remembering the awful treatment of Jews and Freethinkers throughout Europe for many centuries, can but see that Christian doctrines are of one aspect, but its practices of another.

The clergy of this country are now very anxious to persuade everybody that they have had a very important share in the improvement of the race. They wish to forget the world-war, and their own shameful share in it. But they cannot obscure the fact that in times of war they have not hesitated to shout with the mob, and rejoice over the conquest of the enemy. The cause of international arbitration owes nothing to the Bishops and clergy of the Church of England. Negotiations for peace have never sprung from their inspiration. Peaceful treaties binding nations in goodwill have not been planned by their suggestion. To-day, looking back over the nineteenth century, few can be found who attempt to justify all the wars waged by England during those years. Our wars to force the trade of opium on China in 1840 and in 1857; our wars in Afghanistan in 1842 and in 1878-9; the Crimean War, was perhaps the worst blunder of all; were opposed by some men in public life; but the Episcopal Bench never protested at the cruelty, destruction, and loss of life inseparable from war.

There has been no war waged by England that has earned the displeasure of the clergy. In every case the "men-of-God" found Britain to be engaged in a just and righteous cause, and they blessed the soldiers in their undertaking, and invoked God's help against the enemy, whether that enemy was European or Asiatic, white or black, French, Russian, German, Hindoos, Chinese, even Aborigines, were all cursed in turn by these priests of God. To the clergy it would seem that when British soldiers fight, it must be under the benediction of the Prince of Peace, and with the full encouragement of men who preach the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. Every bishop of the Church of England at his consecration promises that he will "maintain and set forward quietness, love, and peace among all men." War sets forward the peace of ruin and desolation, and the quietness of death and the grave. When enlightened public opinion declares that war is a barbaric method of settling international disputes, can the people of this country look to their spiritual "pastors and masters" for guidance? Let the records of the clergy themselves answer the question.

The brotherhood of man is a long way off, and it may never be reached, but as an ideal it is better than the sordid condition of a dozen envious nations maintaining millions of men under arms and spending millions of pounds in armaments, waiting for an affrighted sun to rise upon the fair fields of Europe running with human blood. The military ardour of the clergy is sorry stuff. It is exhibited in the arm

chair and the pulpit, and consists too often in seeing the soldiers off at the railway station, and afterwards consoling the girls left behind. Even when the "men-of-God" act as army chaplains, they conduct services at the back of the fighting front, and draw officers' pay instead of the hard-won pence of the ordinary soldier.

Secularists look to arbitration for the settlement of international differences. The clergy give no sign that to them also the worship of the God of Battles is not compatible with the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, nor conducive to the progress and welfare of the human race. This paradoxical and hypocritical attitude of Christian priests concerning peace has arisen from the fact that the clergy have always meddled in party politics, always supported Governments in their ambitions, and even in their covetousness. Priests have blessed or banned exactly as the passion or self-interest of their employers have dictated. It is one of the penalties inseparable from a State church, and it is only part of the huge price that a nation has to pay for the support of a clerical caste. And a caste of any kind is an anomaly and a contradiction in a democratic country.

MIMNERMUS.

Sophistry in Excelsis.

A CORRESPONDENT has for some time desired me to solve the following riddle: "The Atheist speaks of the idea of God as having its origin in the ignorant superstition of the savage, and so dismisses it from his mind as being outside the realm of realities. But we are told by the Christian Apologist that everything else, including music, art, and poetry, had likewise begun with the uncouth tentative efforts of the savage. Why then draw the line at God and religion? Is music, art or poetry an unreality?"

If this apology be sincere, it is an instance of the muddle-headedness so characteristic of the ordinary Christian apologist; if not sincere, it is an example of arrant sophistry. The evolution of music, art, and poetry does not belong to the same sphere of human behaviour and achievement as do the emergence and development of a religion. Such a contention is a palpable instance of homologizing cheese and chalk, and to maintain that because cheese is a digestible article of food so must chalk be, since both had their origin in living protoplasm—the one in the mammal glands of the cow, and the other in the protozoa of the earth's primitive seas.

It was in the exercise of his *intellect* that primitive man wandered hopelessly in the fog of folly and falsity, and not in obeying his impulses and developing his inborn capacities and powers. It was in the exercise of his reason that he proved himself utterly irrational; that is, in his ceaseless attempts at devising child-like theories to account for the ever-changing phenomena of Nature; or in elaborating explanations of the multitudinous calamities with which life was beset and marred and often destroyed. The efforts he made to avoid disaster were often sane enough if you assume his theories to be true. Moreover, the folly of his guesses and dreams was not only true; it was inevitably true. To reason facts are needed as a builder requires bricks or stone; but he had none; so he had to use fantastic guesses for his learned pagodas instead of facts.

Let us take a few typical examples of the way pre-scientific man exercised his intellect in forming ideas as to the nature and the origin of things and the causes of events.

Take the atmosphere. What did he think it was?

He believed it was a spiritual substance akin to life and the soul, though the term "spirit" conveyed to him no positive meaning whatever. The word was a pure *negation*. All that he meant by it was, that the air we breathe was not matter like stone, wood, or water. Indeed, air is the root of the conception; the original meaning of the term, spirit, being breath or air. And it is upon this false negation that the vast super-structure of the phantom spirit-world was based and reared. How laborious has been the task of discovering that matter may exist in three different physical states—solid, liquid, or gas; and that the air was as material as a piece of rock.

Again, it was only natural, indeed inevitable, that he should believe that matter was easily annihilated, and by implication, easily created. When an object was burnt, it vanished from apparent existence, and its annihilation was on the face of it a sound inference and a credible explanation of its disappearance; and though again absolutely false, it was nevertheless, till the advent of science, even to civilized man, not only a rational but an inevitable inference.

Similarly the moon was a goddess; the sun and the planets were gods ever riding round the earth in their celestial chariots; and the stars were deities perched on the vault of heaven watching over mankind and fixing the destiny of every individual. And so through the entire gamut of nature. Whenever he used his intellect to formulate theories to explain his experiences he invariably had to resort to the unreal and imaginary, *i.e.*, to the false and non-existent for his so-called facts.

Now, religion is a plant of two roots—one in the intellect and one in the emotions; it is a theory and a practice; a belief and a worship. It involves the whole mind—the intellect in its effort to understand and explain, and the feelings as the spring of his acts and behaviour.

The intellect is responsible for all the imaginary beings conjured into existence—spirits and gods of all grades and orders. They were all created for the definite purpose of serving as explanatory causes of his mixed experience. And the worship however cruel, gory, or mad, was a necessary sequel to the character with which he endowed them in his theory. It was certainly wise to try to placate truculent monsters who, as he believed, existed and were ever ready to wreak their vengeance upon him. Grant the dogmas to be true and the imbecilities and inanities associated with priestcraft cease to be farcical.

What a strange mentality, you may say, is that which can discover any kind of relation between the efforts of a musical composer, who simply avails himself of the mental concomitants of a physical and a physiological congruity established by Nature in the neural mechanism of the animal body including man's, and that of filling land, sea, and sky with bogus entities—ghosts and gods and spirits without count—and then under the impulse of fear worshipped his imaginary puppets with a gory ritual.

Assuming that the apologist is wholly ingenuous in his defence, it must be remembered that there are two orders of metaphysicians—the ancient and the modern; the one that flourished in pre-scientific days, and the one who does his thinking in the full glare of scientific light. The pre-scientific thinker and theologian was naturally and necessarily a metaphysician, who got his "facts," not from Nature, but from his inner Consciousness. And though generally these were grotesque extravaganzas, like the Trinity, they have a historic value. But his modern successor is a person I "cannot away with." His mentality is a provocative puzzle. Though in full possession of the myriad facts, not fantasies and word splittings, with

which science has dowered us and which have literally transformed or inverted our conception of the universe, yet he delivers himself in the same old platonic jargon as obtained during the Dark Ages, just as if the sun of science had never risen and flooded man's mental realm with its revealing light. Can one really wonder at any kind of fustian coming from such mentality?

KERIDON.

American Notes.

CHAPLAIN AND CAPTAIN.

I sailed by an American ship. We had heavy seas and tremendous gales most of the time. A child was born and a woman died in the worst of the storms. The funeral of the wealthy woman was very impressive, but all the impressiveness was due to Nature. The winds howled and drowned the voice of the Captain who read, very badly, the nonsense which even some Freethinkers have thought fine English. The episcopal burial service, read by a good elocutionist, possesses some rhythmical value, but ethically and philosophically it is all bad. It represents a wasted opportunity. However, people who meet to bury the dead, usually have other thoughts than criticism of a ritual. The very simple ceremony of "committing the body to the deep" was exceedingly dignified—probably because the sailors who carried out the "service," were not professional "grave diggers" and the like. The great waves roared themselves into an immense wall of vaporous spray as the body fell into the sea and was carried away with startling rapidity. On the other side of the ship the waves were dashing over the deck, and the ceremony was not protracted unnecessarily.

On Sunday we again met our captain in his rôle of chaplain. I attended the service out of sympathy for this overworked official, who had already confided to me his lack of interest in these ecclesiastical duties. I suggested that as there were half a dozen parsons on board it would be easy for him to find a substitute. His explanation was original and novel. "I hate these services, and everybody else hates them," he said, "but I can get through the whole darn thing in 20 minutes. Why, Sir, if we let a regular parson in on this stunt the passengers would grumble at being deprived for hours of their card room." Of course the service takes place in the "Social Hall," where table games of all kinds take place.

NEW YORK.

Do not expect any "impressions of America" from me. I must remain here for a year or two—perhaps a century—before I can generalize.

I was agreeably surprised at the ease and rapidity of the customs house examination. New York is a model of customs courtesy and efficiency. I was sorry I had not known about this when I packed up in England. If I had only guessed how lightly I should be let off . . . but I must not give away any secrets.

The Immigration Officer was polite and pleasant to everybody. Mr. de Valera and I went through at the same time. In New York, de Valera was met by a crowd of 5,000 Irishmen, headed by a noisy band of alleged music. De Valera is a wonderful mixture of Catholicism and Rebellionism, but he has a very happy smile—when he smiles.

My few days in New York were crowded with work, I hardly had any time for sight-seeing. I was interested in the Vanguard Press—a name which closely imitates the Pioneer Press. It is run by freethinking, socialist, psycho-analyst, Tuckerites (a queer mixture on paper, but a jolly good combination for running a free Press). The Vanguard Press publish some valuable "advanced" literature, new and reprinted, on good paper, well bound, at a very low price—for America. Books are dear like most things in U.S.A.).

NIAGARA BY NIGHT.

Niagara, once a place of beauty, has now succumbed to the garish taste for "the bright lights of Broadway."

If you are unfortunate enough to visit Niagara at night, you will see no silver moonlight, or the reflection of the stars in the stream. You will see instead great powerful searchlights, turning a thousand horse-power coloured rays on to the innocent cataracts. Lovers of Scott will still take his advice about visiting fair Melrose at night, but great Scot, Niagara imitating Piccadilly Circus gets my goat (I am studying S.P.E. Tract No. XXIV., in which F. N. Scott gives a useful glossary of American slang).

CHICAGO.

If Christ came to Chicago he would find them turning water into dry land. The valuable borderland of Lake Michigan is being reclaimed from the water to make a park, boulevard, promenade, stadium, etc., etc. He would be able to go to theatres and cinemas all day long on Sundays. He would find plenty of purely secular lectures—but no doubt he would rejoice to see so few nominally secularist societies. I was looking forward to seeing my old friend, Percy Ward, who, however, has found Chicago lacking in support of his splendid crusade against religion.

I lectured in a small club-room, well filled it is true. But the Seven Arts Club doesn't take a crowd to fill it to overflowing. Everybody paid 50 cents. (two shillings) and as people in England have often had the doubtful privilege of hearing me for nothing, and even then did not always come in their thousands, I wondered if a charge of 50 cents. was really any attraction. I enjoyed seeing the people pay, of course . . . but I wish I had been lecturing to more people at a smaller price of admission.

Before the lecture I visited the horribly nicknamed "Bughouse Square"—the Trafalgar Square of Chicago. Dr. Ben Reitman, my host, is a famous orator there, popular, ready, and always worth hearing. He made me address the great crowd there—a rôle I am totally unfitted for, and for which I have really no ambition, much as I love the people. I spoke for less than ten minutes (another five minutes would have shattered my voice for the rest of the evening). To my delight and relief a drunken, but eloquent ruffian, disapproving of all I had said, started in a voice I envied, to speak from the same orange-box on which I stood. At once I begged the vast audience to listen to my "friend," and then to come to the Seven Arts Club and hear my lecture. They unanimously accepted the first half of my invitation, and I was free from an awful ordeal.

DINNER TO CLARENCE DARROW.

Clarence Darrow's seventieth birthday was celebrated by a Dinner in the handsome and spacious Palmer House. Over twelve hundred sat down to dinner—a wonderful tribute to a wonderful man. Darrow is an outspoken Atheist, who never conceals his advanced views which have shut him out from the high position his genius and practical abilities signally fit him for. His extraordinary eloquence—distinguishing him as a great orator in a country of orators—has made him as successful a lawyer as Rufus Isaacs in his sunniest days at the bar. I met Darrow on my first trip to Chicago, 23 years ago, and I joined a handful (or a boatload) of his admirers for a moonlight trip on the lake, on the occasion of Darrow's marriage. Darrow impressed me then, as he impresses everybody, as an exceedingly capable man, of lofty sane principles, which he would do great things to defend. Darrow has done great things since then. The speakers at the recent dinner included judges, professors, novelists and—John Haynes Holmes, the best speaker of the evening, except, of course, Darrow himself. It was a "dry" dinner and we listened—without hearing a good deal—of the professors' doubtlessly admirable speeches. But (can you imagine the scene?), at 11.45 p.m. Darrow began to speak, and it was nearly 1 a.m. before he wound up an oration worthy of the occasion and the man. Everybody heard every word, and every word was worth hearing.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Acid Drops.

We see that Glasgow lending libraries have banned *Elmer Gantry*. The book is said to be "too vigorous for general reading." The real reason is that the author lets a little light on the character and methods of the travelling professional evangelist, and the one thing that good Christians dread is the truth. The field of travelling evangelism offers the finest outlet possible to-day for a man with a "gift of the gab," low mentality, a keen sense for money, and doubtful character. So long as he can be sensational enough he is sure of attracting an audience, and his rascality is winked at by those in responsible positions in the churches, because of the assumed good work he is doing in the cause of religion. *Elmer Gantry's* mixture of sagacity, ignorance, rapacity, and moments of mental delirium can be found in the person of more than one professional evangelist, both in this country and in the United States.

The President of the Board of Education, in conjunction with the Secretary of State for Scotland, and the Minister of Education for Northern Ireland, has summoned a conference of local education authorities "to consider the question of providing instruction for children and young people in the aims and objects of the League of Nations." This is a move in the right direction. But we would point out that such instruction will be less useful than it might be so long as certain other scholastic instruction remains unrevised. We suggest that the history books need a drastic revision. The glorification of scheming kings, diplomats and priests, and of cut-throat adventurers and soldiers, should come out. There should be given a more truthful account of the causes of the past wars. There ought to be full credit given to those men, not now named, who have pioneered enlightened views, and have striven to bring about a better understanding and better relations between nations. The factors that make for war, and the factors that lead the peoples to understand one another's mentality, should be stressed. And last, but not least, the President of the Board of Education might get the hatred-inciting verses of the National Anthem deleted, and have inserted something less vain-glorious and more peaceful. There might then be some hope of getting the aims and objects of the League of Nations to take root in youthful minds.

An appeal has been made at Liverpool for the establishment of a clinic for the early treatment and diagnosis of mental disorders. Mr. Stuart Deacon, the stipendiary magistrate, declares that many of the delinquents he has met with in the courts could have benefited by treatment in the early stages of mental defectiveness. This suggestion of Mr. Deacon's shows how far the world has travelled away from orthodox Christian notions about "sinners." The Christian way was to assume that the wrong-doer had been tempted by Satan, and to apply harsh punishment to exorcise the evilness. The modern procedure is to call in the medical expert, who endeavours to discover the root cause of the trouble and prescribes appropriate treatment.

The need of the Church to-day, says the Bishop of Sheffield, is not young men whose only desire is to "swank in a dog-collar and clerical coat." We presume from this that the Church is anxious to recruit a type of young man a little different from the former kind. A weekly paper agrees with the Bishop, and adds that the Church will get men of the right type when she is prepared to offer them a fair wage. From this we infer that the right type of young men are waiting for God to increase the material reward attached to the soul-saving job. This striking a bargain with God strikes as being a very daring business. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Eight years ago nearly twenty thousand English children were in reformatories. The number now in such institutions is 8,000. The reverse ought to be the fact, seeing that the Sunday-schools have been reporting a deplorable decline in membership, and the parsons have been prophesying dreadful things as a likely outcome of the decline.

There may be elements in the Rotary movement, says a pious journal, which one might criticize, but in the main, its ideals are essentially Christian. Our contemporary especially likes the stress Rotary puts upon truth in advertising and integrity in commercial dealings. "It is now widely recognized that good ethics is good business." In other words, Honesty is the best paying policy. That, of course, is not a lofty ethical view, but it is quite Christian. A Christian has two motives for his abstinence from lying and cheating—it ensures him a seat in Heaven, and it pays well in £ s. d. That being the case, one can understand why Christians find the Rotary atmosphere so congenial.

Wherever the Gospel is ignored, men are driven to forms of violence, either of defence or attack, asserts the *Sunday School Chronicle*. Genuine democracy of the representative type is invariably associated with some form of faith. The recent speech of Signor Mussolini, with its emphasis on national power and prestige, we learn, was almost brutally frank in its disbelief in any relationship between nations, except that of armed rivalry. All tyrannies, we are told, whether of Napoleons or groups of men, are essentially atheistic. For if we accept the Lordship of Christ, we are bound to honour men with our trust, and treat them as responsible and free. This is a pretty bundle of pious mis-statements. The truth is that most of the autocracies or tyrannies that dominated the European peoples have had as rulers, men who firmly believed in the Christian God and the Christian Gospels. Democracy of the representative type did not appear until men managed to get out of their heads the stupid Christian-engendered notion about the "divine right of kings." And, it may be added, the Mussolini dictatorship is possible only because the Fascist Italians are convinced that the dictator is a divinely appointed leader to save the nation. The great Christian Churches have always accepted the Lordship of Christ. But, in history, there are precious few indications that they treated men as "responsible and free," or that they encouraged men to think for themselves and adopt a democratic form of government. What the Churches did was to teach men to submit to some divinely installed despot.

The Rev. Albert D. Belden knows exactly what is the "right use of Sunday." It is a day "for spiritual exercise and development." The Sunday programme of the seeker after spiritual culture must include worship, collective fellowship in prayer, praise and study. And that programme, says Mr. Belden, is too full for other kinds of diversion to find a place in it. Now that is a quite reasonable contention for a parson to put up. Sunday, in his view, was made for the parson. It is his best business day of the week. It is God's gracious gift to the soul-savers. And quite naturally Mr. Belden is out to convince his flock that the right use of Sunday is to spend all their time in church.

The *Christian Herald*, a Second Advent weekly, records a large number of cyclones, earthquakes, and violent storms that have happened recently, and have done an appalling amount of damage. It was there to point a moral. We cannot read of these things, it says, without being reminded that our Lord saith, again and again, that such happenings as these would be among the characteristics of the last days. The end of the world would appear to be very near. But we are willing to wager that our contemporary's staff and its readers still pay their insurance premiums every week, and still invest their spare cash in Savings Certificates.

The Bishop of Exeter has some good news for Free-thinkers. In his address to the Exeter Diocesan Conference he said:—

Christianity throughout the world is in a powerless condition. If the Roman Church is gaining from the Anglo-Catholic party, she in other countries is losing ten where she is gaining one. The great unbelieving movements in all the Latin countries are sweeping forward; their advance is irregular, but it is without doubt an advance. Nation after nation is turning from Christ to unbelief, and with the growth of unbelief are coming endless disasters.

The Bishop is not without hope, however, for if the Protestants and the Roman Catholics unite they could win back some of their losses. In other words, if Christians do not hang together, they look like hanging separately. But we have too much faith in genuine Christianity to believe that Christians will ever cease hating each other, and in any case we do not see how even a union of Christians will altogether arrest the growth of civilization. Still, the Bishop deserves complimenting on his having courage enough to speak the truth, and in refraining from joining in the stupid cry about the great revival of religion that is at hand.

Disaster has overtaken the Bishop of London. Searching through his official war paint and general paraphernalia, he discovered that he had lost his episcopal ring. He is greatly distressed at his loss. Well, we remember that the Rev. Dr. Horton, when on holiday in Norway, found that one of the ladies in his party had lost her slipper. And he solemnly relates that he went on his knees and solemnly asked the Lord to direct him to the place where the slipper was. And then he arose from his knees, and under the guidance of God went direct to where the slipper was. An episcopal ring is surely of greater importance than a lady's slipper, and we suggest this method of recovery to the Bishop.

Hove Rest Day Association raised an objection against a proposal to open cinemas on Sunday, contending that these would be a temptation to young folk to abandon Sunday-school and Church. This is a very reasonable objection on the part of an Association run by parsons. Every thinking man will agree that the clerical industry needs safeguarding.

At a recent meeting to protest against vivisection, the question of obtaining the support of the Church was raised. Dr. Walter Hadwen declared: "I don't care a brass button about the Church. I think it is not worth troubling about. In England it is at a terrible discount." It is refreshing to come across a candid opinion asserted publicly about the Church. Dr. Hadwen appears to have discovered that humanitarian movements cannot hope for any assistance from the Church. That, however, is no new discovery to those interested in such movements. The Church's favourite trick is to let pioneers do the work, and when something has been achieved, to steal the credit for it. The Church used to boss man from the cradle to the grave. To-day, Dr. Hadwen declares it is not worth troubling about. How the mighty are fallen!

Says a pious weekly, "despite some things that jar on one, the modern girl often shows fine qualities." She is, we are told, trained in athletics, courageous and alert, full of fire and fun, and not indifferent to the heroic aspects of religion. Like her brothers, she loves life and adventure and the joy of active service. Excepting that bit about religion, this is a fair estimate of the modern girl. But, how dear old St. Paul would have shuddered at the sight of her, and at the things she thinks and does! We will prophesy that, before long, the Churches will have as hard a task getting her to

attend to divine devotions as it has had with her brothers. As things are now, we have little doubt that her lack of piety is one of the "things that jar on one." And another is that she doesn't trouble over much about the opinions of the parson—which fact explains the pulpit fulminations against her.

Theoretically, Christianity believes in the brotherhood of man. In practice, it has never meant more than a brotherhood of believers, and often in the most restricted sense. Its value in practice is shown in the way in which national, racial, and colour prejudices have flourished under its rule with full encouragement from the clergy of the various churches. There was therefore, the fullest warranty for the attack made upon the Christian churches by the head of the Mohammedan community at Woking the other day. He reminded his hearers that never before was the race question becoming so acute as it is to-day, and he made a palpable hit in the following passage:—

If Jesus came to-day, the moment He set foot in any of the Christian colonies He would be declared a prohibited emigrant, because He was not a European. He was coloured and an Asiatic; He would not be wanted; He would have to leave the territories inhabited by His own followers; He would not be allowed to earn His own livelihood. That was the religion practised to-day by the people of Christ.

It is noticeable that the Bishop of London, on his return from his world tour, had nothing to say on this question, although he visited parts where it was very acute. Christians believe in the brotherhood of man, but they intend to keep some of their brothers in separate compartments.

The Rev. E. Benson Perkins is surprised at some of his experiences during a visit to Rome. He says that he did not see a single instance of the ordinary acknowledgement of the priest by civilians such as one had grown accustomed to in Roman Catholic countries. There seemed to be a feeling of latent antagonism existing, but no outward hostility. Further there is considerable discontent among the priests. Thousands have left the Church in Italy alone, and the seminaries for the training of priests are not full. Mr. Perkins says:—

Speaking as an outside observer, it seems clear that unless a great change takes place, Italy will relapse into an actual agnosticism. The Roman Church as a mere social organism, carrying influence as a party in the State, may retain its position, but as a religious influence it will cease to be of value. At the present time a considerable number of those who call themselves Catholics have only a nominal attachment to the Church. We can hardly understand anyone saying, "I am a Catholic, but I am not a Christian"; yet that remark was made by an educated Italian, fully conscious of all it signified. Unless there is some counter-acting influence there will continue this reaction from a Church that is nothing more than an ecclesiastical organization—reaction which issues in practical agnosticism. It is difficult to exaggerate the possible effect of this in both national and international politics.

THE BEASTS.

I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contained;
I stand and look at them long and long.
They do not sweat and whine about their condition;
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins;
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God;
Not one is dissatisfied—not one is demented with the mania for owning things;
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago;
Not one is respectable or industrious over the whole Earth.

Walt Whitman.

To Correspondents.

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

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—Don Walton (sixth and seventh subs.), £4 4s. 6d.; E. L. Bishop, 1s.

R. H. S. STANDFAST.—No figures that we could give as to the number of Freethinkers in the British Isles could be complete. The numbers of avowed Freethinkers connected with definite Freethinking organizations would also be useless for your purpose, as these represent only a fraction of the Freethinkers in the country. On the whole, we should say that a million would be a rather conservative estimate.

P. REILLY.—There is no undisputed reference to the Jesus Christ of the New Testament in Roman writers. A reference in a modern writer on Roman history is not the same thing. "Christ" is a title, and a reference to a Christ or to Christians would prove nothing.

R. YOUNG.—We are quite sure that Mr. Gould would be fully with you as to the evils of intemperance and the virtues of sobriety—in other matters as well as in that of drink.

R. GAIR.—We do not know who it is that describes a Freethinker as one who acknowledges no higher authority than himself. He is probably confused between no higher authority than one's own reason, and placing oneself as above all authority. But one's own reason takes in all sorts of considerations—those derived from the experience of the race, the testimony of those entitled to express an opinion on the subject before one, etc. That is quite a different matter from what is implied in the expression: no authority higher than oneself.

T. F. HAUGHTON.—Thanks for cuttings, they will prove useful.

C. MERRITT (Cheltenham).—We should much like to see a start made with Freethought propaganda in Cheltenham. There is room for it, and there must be many Freethinkers there, as elsewhere. If you will send us the names and addresses of likely sympathizers we will see that a supply of literature is sent them.

H. LAWRENCE (York).—If a suitable hall could be found in York for a meeting, Mr. Cohen would have no objection to visiting there for the purpose of delivering a lecture. What is required is two or three friends to look after the local arrangements.

D. P. S.—Your suggestion is a good one, and might be utilized in connexion with some other subject. The *Daily Express* is not likely to invite a pronounced Freethinker to give his view of life. It might upset its religious readers too much.

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

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

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

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 Evolution of Christianity, by L. Gordon Rylands (Watts & Co., 7s. 6d.), is a work that we can warmly commend to all who wish to get a bird's-eye view of the nature and origin of the Christian cult. In just under 250 pages, Mr. Rylands sets out an interesting and suggestive account of the various factors that in all probability contributed to the make-up of what came to be known as the Christian religion, and although much of what he says is controversial in character, there is everywhere shown a freedom from dogmatism that should commend his book to even open-minded Christian readers. For our part we agree with Mr. Rylands in the completely unhistoric nature of the figure of the New Testament Jesus. Indeed, we have always taken it as a rough and ready way to value the thoroughness of a critic's work, whether he accepted the historic reality of the New Testament Jesus or not. If he did, the acceptance was certain to vitiate his reasoning, and render valueless many of his conclusions. The foundation of scientific criticism lies in searching for the origin of the myth. To seek for the evidence of the actual existence of Jesus is to look in the wrong direction.

In this respect, Mr. Rylands follows the valuable suggestion of Mr. J. M. Robertson as to the existence of the rather widely scattered Joshua cult in the Jewish world. There is no doubt that Joshua was a Palestinian deity, and there are many references in ancient religious writings bearing evidence of this. And, as Mr. Rylands says it would conduce to clear thinking on this point if readers of the New Testament would read Joshua (the Jewish form of the Greek Jesus) wherever the name of Jesus is met with. Once this is done, and the references given studied, the identity of the Joshua cult with those of other Eastern saviour divinities becomes easy and natural. The central problem here is the divine Jesus, and we agree with Mr. Rylands that it is absurd to expect to find the answer to this in the life of an obscure Jew. And so far as the whole body of teachings are concerned which came to be known as Christianity, there could have been no single originator, and no single teaching. This was formed out of numerous beliefs which were brought into something approaching order some time in the second century, although even here the conflict of beliefs, traces of which are quite plain in the New Testament itself, shows that the piecing together of the various fragments was not easily accomplished. We have done but scant justice to a very admirable work, but our main purpose is to send readers to the book itself, and as an introduction to the study of the subject on sane and sensible lines.

The West Ham Branch of the N.S.S. has arranged for an excursion to Kew Gardens on Sunday, July 3. Friends will meet at Bow Road Station (Underground Railway) at 9.30. The return fare is 1s. Tea will be provided. Kew Gardens at this time of the year is a glorious place, and weather favourable, an enjoyable day is assured.

We are asked to announce that the Liverpool Branch has arranged a series of occasional open-air meetings during the summer. Notice of these will be found in our "Guide" notices. The lecturer on June 27, will be Mr. P. Sherwin. We hope that Liverpool readers will do their best to attend. The meeting will commence at eight o'clock.

Dr. J. C. Carlile is trying to increase the sale of a Baptist weekly. A few of his remarks should be interesting to our readers. Many congratulations come to us, he states, but a journal lives upon its sales, not upon compliments; and though we are pleased to know that the *Baptist Times* is appreciated, our concern is that it should be sold. There is, he adds, a great opportunity for real propaganda. What Dr. Carlile says is interesting because it applies as cogently to this paper

and its readers. A group of enthusiastic "sales promoters" in every large town in Britain could do wonders for the *Freethinker* and the Freethought movement. Increased circulation of the paper means wider influence for Freethought ideas, and hence a greater possibility of the various injustices to Freethinkers—injustices social and legal—being removed, and of the aims and objects of the movement being achieved. From time to time we have pointed out what readers can do to help us, and many keen adherents to the cause have not been slow to act on our suggestion. But we should like to see their number trebled. The apathetic might do well to bear in mind that he who does not help makes harder the work of him who does. Mere verbal approval of the cause is not particularly helpful. Actions speak louder than words. It is what a man or woman is prepared to do for Freethought that advances it. And to-day there is a greater opportunity than ever before of doing something. There are plenty of intelligent and thoughtful men and women now unaware that such a paper as this exists, who could be made interested in it. The task before our readers is to get the two acquainted. And that is a task which is hardly likely to frighten Freethinkers who are really in earnest.

Mr. George Bedborough is paying a rather lengthy visit to the United States, and in another column he gives *Freethinker* readers the benefit of his experiences, so far. We shall hope to hear from him from time to time, until he returns again to the old country. He writes as genially as he speaks, and is always welcome.

Unreality.

THERE are many people to-day, who, having been brought up in the Victorian religion founded upon the Bible, find to their dismay that the Bible, or at any rate, the vital part of it, the first five books, are not in agreement with the teachings of Science; in fact that they are diametrically opposed. They can no longer believe in the six days of creation; or the "Fall of Man" in the Garden of Eden. But if there was no "Fall of Man," what need was there for Jesus Christ to come down from heaven to redeem us from the consequences of the Fall, as St. Paul expressly declares that he did? And further, if you are going to jettison the Old Testament and the authority of St. Paul, what reason is there for holding that the four Gospels possess any better authority?

These people can see plainly enough that if the story of the Fall is a myth, then Christianity has lost its foundations. It hangs in the air. They are generally too absorbed in business, or the struggle for existence, to investigate the matter for themselves, even if they knew how to set about it. What they want is to feel on firm ground and yet retain all their old beliefs. Troubled and unhappy, filled with fears and disquiet, they look to the heavens for relief, only to see the stars, at unimaginable distances, glittering, cold and indifferent, forcing upon them, with pitiless insistence, a sense of their utter insignificance in the presence of this vast panorama of suns.

As a last resort they will perhaps apply to a minister, or an intimate friend who has studied the subject.

In that case he will probably be asked whether he has read any of Canon Streeter's works, and told that he will find an answer to all his questions in the series of volumes for which the Canon is responsible. For Canon Burnett Hillman Streeter, is the modern Paley, who can not only prove that God exists, but justify his ways to man, to say nothing about establishing the truth of Christianity and the historical veracity of the documents in the New Testament. Canon Streeter probably knows more about the ways

and intentions of God and Jesus Christ than the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and General Booth rolled into one, he is a veritable encyclopædia upon the subject, and not only does he write himself, but—like Falstaff, who was not only a wit himself, but a cause of wit in others—he causes other to write upon the same subjects as well. Do you want to know the truth about the future life, the undiscovered country, that "bourne from which no traveller returns"? Then read *Immortality*, containing five essays, "co-ordinating scientific, psychical, and Biblical research," edited by Canon Streeter, the first essay by Canon Streeter. The publisher's advertisement quotes the testimony of *The Cambridge Review*, that: "The book offers a sorely-needed comfort to its readers . . . we believe many readers will be grateful to Canon Streeter and his colleagues." Who would begrudge ten and sixpence, the price of the volume, to gain a little "sorely needed comfort"?

Do you want to know the truth about the Bible, the Atonement, the principle of authority, God the absolute, and the historic Christ? Then you must get *Foundations*, containing seven essays, edited by Canon Streeter, first essay by Canon Streeter. *The Hibbert Journal* thinks that this book may constitute "a turning-point in the history . . . of the Church of England." *The Times*, while admiring the absence of "the distressing discord of controversy," rather unkindly observes that it represents the position of: "young men who seem to claim that they can speak on behalf of their generation." A book that is going to constitute a turning-point in the history of the Church, and is free from "the distressing discord of controversy," ought to be worth another ten and sixpence.

Do you wish for enlightenment as to the workings of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the mysterious Trinity? Then you will read *The Spirit*, seven essays, edited by Canon Streeter, first essay by Canon Streeter; in which the Rev. C. W. Emmet will explain "How God helps," and "How God teaches"; Miss Dougal shows "God in Action," and Prof. Scott explains: "What happened at Pentecost." Well worth another ten and sixpence.

If you wish to know about the benefits, if any, resulting from the practice of prayer, then *Concerning Prayer*, edited by Canon Streeter and Miss Dougal, eleven essays, first essay by Canon Streeter, will enlighten you—perhaps. This book is cheap at ten and six, as the eleven essays work out at a fraction over elevenpence each.

In *The Four Gospels: A study of Christian origins*, Canon Streeter plays off his own bat, so to speak; he has no collaborators, accordingly you must be prepared to fork out double the price of the other volumes, namely twenty-one shillings.

Of the little book *Restatement and Reunion* by the same author, *The Church Quarterly Review*, while describing it as "an admirable book," expresses a "doubt whether Mr. Streeter's position is tenable in the Church of England." Well, of course, if that is the case, then it is not worth the half-crown at which it is published. There are a few other books and a multitude of articles contributed to magazines like *The Hibbert Journal*, by this modern Goliath of Christianity, contending against the powers of Darkness, as the Canon visualizes the Atheist and the Materialist.

Canon Streeter's latest volume, recently published (Macmillan 10s. 6d.), is entitled *Reality a new correlation of Science and Religion*. The book, we are told in the "Introduction," is not addressed to philosophers, scientists, or theologians: "It is addressed, in the first instance, to the man who has no special training in any of these subjects." Never-

theless, the Canon expresses a faint hope "that some of these will deign to read it." We cannot imagine a scientist getting beyond the first half-dozen pages unless he is a psychologist studying an abnormal specimen of religious mentality.

To deal with all the fallacies, distortions, misrepresentations and errors, would require a book at least the size of the book itself, and alas, we atheists have not, like the followers of the poor and lowly Jesus, the wealth to publish ten and sixpenny volumes, or wealth enough to buy them if they were published; to say nothing of supporting people in wealthy livings to enable them to write them.

The first chapter in the book is entitled "Materialism." It is passing strange that although we are told, year in, year out, that Materialism is dead—my memory extends back to fifty years, but I cannot remember the time when this was not declared about it—yet it is always against the Materialist that the apologists for religion concentrate their attacks. The truth of the matter is that, however much they may profess to the contrary, they know, in their hearts, that Materialism is not dead; it is very much alive, and it is the philosophy they hate and fear, because there can be no compromise with it. It is a fight to the death, and it is not Materialism that will furnish the corpse.

We do not doubt that Canon Streeter honestly believes that he has answered the Materialist, and prides himself upon the achievement, nevertheless he has only caricatured it, he has not touched the real issue. The trouble with Materialism is that it never gets a fair deal. There is not a paper in the kingdom, apart from the *Freethinker*, that would allow a Materialist to give an exposition of his views. The popular idea of Materialism is derived entirely from the statements of its enemies. I have been a diligent reader upon the subject, but I have never yet read a presentation of Materialism, by an opponent, that I would recognize as correct. However, we are writing shortly about the effect of the new Relativity theory, in regard to Materialism, a theory which the pious joyfully announce has given another death-blow to the old enemy, we will therefore reserve what we have to say until then.

Another example of Canon Streeter's misrepresentation and distortion is more culpable. We refer to his treatment of Nietzsche. He knows that to the average Christian, the name of Nietzsche acts as a red rag to a bull, or the name Bolshevich to a Tory; he actually comments upon "the force and fraud, which Machiavelli and Nietzsche so extol." (p. 173). And of the "pathological instability which ultimately brought him to the madhouse, has given us the supreme expression in literature of the slave's ideal—the neurotic slave dreaming himself a king." (p. 148). And further, in so far as the Church has officially taught Hell fire and the Sultanic view of God, it has only "taught Nietzsche's own ideal." (p. 150). The question arises, has the Canon read any of the eighteen volumes of Nietzsche's works? If he has then we can only express our disgust and contempt for his methods. In this connexion we have just been reading the lately issued book *The Religion of an Optimist*, by Mr. Hamilton Fyfe, who strikes us as of a much more profoundly spiritual nature than Canon Streeter, and quite incapable of misrepresentation and distortion; Mr. Fyfe declares that we must follow Nietzsche, his words are: "We must say 'Yes' to Life, as Nietzsche teaches, however much our comfortable notions may be disturbed." (p. 82). Before vilifying Nietzsche any further Canon Streeter should read the book on Nietzsche, written by a clergyman, the Rev. J. N. Figgis, entitled *The Will to Freedom*, where we read:

"Nietzsche's life shewed not only great heroism in its struggle with ill health, but was, in its noble simplicity and poverty and unwearied interest in high things, an example to an age sunk in vulgar money-making." (p. 49). And again: "the doctrine of Nietzsche, no less than that of Christ or of Buddha, is a doctrine of redemption and deliverance." (p. 61). And declares: "Few Christians attain so high a standard as did Nietzsche." (p. 307). Very few indeed.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

Freethought and the Near Future.

(A Paper read at the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society, Glasgow, by R. H. Rosetti.)

ALTHOUGH the non-political character of our organization ensures a concentration upon purely Free-thought propaganda, that in itself must not exclude the recognition of results accruing from the clash of political parties and the consequent effect upon our movement.

It would be unwise indeed to imagine that the degree of freedom which has been won for our cause is any guarantee for its maintenance and possible future extension. History teaches only too plainly that wherever political and economic tyranny prevails, there ecclesiasticism is in clover amidst conditions admirably suitable for the suppression of Freethought.

Our movement has without doubt played an important part in the growth of political freedom in this country, partly by actual members of the N.S.S. joining the political ranks fully armed with the great principles of freedom of thought and speech acquired in our organization, and largely by the general spread of those principles through our propagandist channels. Our movement has naturally benefited by the conditions it has helped to create.

To-day there is world-wide evidence of movement towards political and economic change, which in turn has alarmed the forces of reaction, and an international campaign of suppression appears to be rapidly maturing, leading ultimately to the toleration of only official thoughts, ideas and expression, as in Italy at the present time.

In our own country, events are taking a definite direction towards the same goal: The Blasphemous and Seditious Teachings Bill, the suppression of collections and sale of literature at public meetings in London Parks, the impudent effort of the churches to get complete control of the elementary schools, all lead in one direction.

The Labour Party is fighting a Bill which they declare will take away from Trades Unions all they have won during a century, and with the prospect of such measures becoming law, we of the Freethought Party must be alive as to what the near future may bring for us.

There is no occasion to be pessimistic or panicky, but we cannot imagine reaction acquiring a new lease of life and leaving Freethought with its present degree of freedom.

The silence of the churches at the present time is very ominous. When measures, which, if passed, may result in fine, imprisonment and ruin of tens of thousands of our fellow citizens, find the churches silent, we may take it for granted that these measures meet with the approval of ecclesiasticism; and when further a Christian bishop, the Bishop of London, publicly approves a policy of snarling, teeth showing and provocative military display on behalf of imperialistic adventures, whilst perhaps embarrassing to the church, it nevertheless indicates the direction of

ecclesiastic thoughts. Further, there is the historic fact of the close co-operation of the church with reaction and suppression in the past.

Assuming then that in the near future this country will be made safe for reaction, and that it may become increasingly difficult to propagate unofficial ideas and opinions, what should be our line of action as Freethinkers in the firing line of our movement?

The first result of reaction will be the natural one of sorting out among the people. The timid will readily accept official views and thoughts, not from conviction but for safety. The strong in mind, character and principles will prepare to fight and align themselves with one of the units in the army of freedom.

The uncompromising Freethought work of the N.S.S. not only attracts those of sturdy mind and principles, but also protects it against the influx of weaklings.

It is no mere accident or coincidence that has given the N.S.S. stubborn fighters in the presidential chair and in the ranks; it is indicative of the type of men and women attracted to our organization.

And it is because of the sterling quality of the men and women we attract, that the N.S.S. becomes strongest in a fight to defeat persecution.

Just as we have driven the church to realize that Blasphemy prosecutions are becoming more dangerous to the church than to Freethought, so if the necessity arises we shall show the churches and reaction, that hands laid upon Freethought will increase our numbers, consolidate our ranks and inspire that spirit which has already shattered so many bulwarks of the Christian faith.

The forces of reaction are gathering, if they become successful the church will then come out openly to their support, and we on our side should be getting to work to meet possibilities.

Where Branches exist, steps should be taken to make them what they ought to be, active propagators of Freethought. Branch officials can make or break a Branch according as they are active and enthusiastic or lethargic, therefore it is imperative that the right people should be in the right place as officials.

Branches should hold regular lectures or distribute Freethought literature, or, better still, do both.

Freethought speakers are not made to order, but raw material is available in most Branches and requires opportunities, practice and encouragement to provide many useful additions to our platform staff.

The services of an excellent speaker and propagandist, in Mr. G. Whitehead, are available during the whole summer, and Branches should avail themselves of his services as an impetus to their own work.

There are in most places where Branches exist sympathizers with our movement, who for various reasons do not become members, but who may be willing to give an annual subscription to the local Branch.

A list of such subscribers should be compiled, and an annual reminder sent to each.

In fact, all manner of suggestions and openings will present themselves to the right people in the right place.

The old motto "unity is strength," is still as true as ever, and given what we ought to have, an active Branch in every large town and city in Great Britain, we can await any likely attack upon our cause in the future with the calm assurance and consolation, from the fact so plainly evident in history, that persecution and violence never permanently succeed in their object. This will remain true as in the past; and although we may pass through a trying period in the near future, the ultimate result will be a crushing defeat of the forces of reaction, and a larger degree

of human freedom, a better, brighter and cleaner social atmosphere in which the "Best of Causes" will further expand and proudly add the laurels won in the conflict to those gained in the past by our gallant predecessors.

On Bold Bad Men.

ALL my life I have cherished a desire to be a bold, bad man. Not that I am by nature vicious. That has been my great difficulty. The dear old lady who presided over our Sunday School class in the days of my tender youth, and who urged me every Sunday not to worship a graven image, covet my neighbour's wife, nor commit adultery, was only wasting her time and mine. I have never really been in danger of doing either. And who wants to worship a graven image, anyway? But the rôle of a bold, bad man is one that appeals to my dramatic instinct. There is a romance attaching to bold, bad men, that the most perfect-fitting halo cannot impart.

I have said that I am not by nature vicious. That is a point your orthodox moralist overlooks. He assumes that all men would be vicious if only they had the opportunity. He forgets that there are a thousand and one temperamental difficulties in the way. He forgets also, as Sir Edmund Gosse reminded the traducers of Robert Louis Stevenson: "It requires health and strength to be a bold, bad man." The teetotal fanatic who assumes that the cultivation of the drink habit will lead inevitably to drunkenness, overlooks the fact that there are many of us (probably a majority of us) whose stomachs would revolt before the intoxication point was reached. No! Bold, bad men are born not made.

My ambitions in the direction of villainy are, of course, of the milder sort. I have never visualized myself as a leading figure at the Old Bailey. But I have thought how nice it would be to have all my respectable aunts turn my photo round in their albums: "My dear, He's simply impossible! What dear Angela would have thought if she had lived...!" But I've never even got so far as that. I have always admired the old pirates and their: "Once aboard the lugger and the girl is mine!" But I know what would happen if I got a girl aboard a lugger. She'd make an appeal to my better nature, and I should put back for Port at once. That's what always happens when I am blossoming into a Valentino, and things are getting interesting—an appeal is made to my better nature. That sort of thing puts a fellow off his stroke. I know what it is. It's my blue eyes. You can't be a bold, bad man with blue eyes. [I simply can't believe what "Mimnermus" says about all the figures in Tussaud's chamber of horrors having blue eyes. It's unnatural.] All my life, people have been singling me out for large doses of uplift. As soon as they look in my blue eyes they regard me as a legitimate object for reform and the Higher Life. They immediately assume that I have a better nature concealed about me somewhere, and that it only needs to be appealed to in order for it to immediately respond. It's so disheartening.

Seriously, though, the concern that the world has always shown for the morals of other people is not only an impertinence, but is unnecessary, for the most part. I once heard someone emphasizing the virtues of a certain parson to Mr. Cohen. And Mr. Cohen retorted, with pardonable irritation, "Well, good living is cheap enough!" When one comes to think about it there are very few of us who ever find our way into the hands of the Police. Extreme forms of viciousness are necessarily confined to extreme types of person. The greatest danger arises from the less-recognized forms of moral viciousness: cant, humbug, backbiting, and uncharitableness. And here Eric (or little by little) may be a greater offender than Huck Finn or Tom Sawyer. Although preachers have always dwelt on the attractiveness of vice and the austerity of virtue, real vice is, perhaps, the most unattractive and unlovely thing in the world. Many of the pleasures the clergy have denounced have, of course, been really quite legitimate and healthy. But in so far as vice has been made attractive, the clergy

are more to blame than anyone else by reason of their insistence on it. As Anatole France pointed out: by making a mystery and a sin of sex the Christian Church increased its attractiveness and multiplied its power for evil; he further pointed out that with sex, as in other directions, familiarity breeds contempt, and the routé of the *Moulin Rouge* is in reality much less a victim of its power than St. Anthony in his cell.

During the war, I once found myself, it matters not how, in a French brothel. Miss Ettie Rout has, I think, borne witness to the widespread sex-hunger that permeated the youth of the British Expeditionary Force; the feeling of sex-frustration that dominated men sent to the shambles in the plenitude of their youth—to die, as it were, without having lived. At any rate, I repeat without apology, that I was not only there, but there for a purpose. (As a sidelight on the moral problem it is interesting to recall that my faith in the Almighty was then quite intact.) Fortunately, however, nausea intervened. I have said that vice is unattractive. The scene at the brothel at Eu seared my soul more than the worst horrors of the Somme.

On the whole I am glad that I have never been able to realize my ambition to be a bold, bad man. I take no credit for it; it is simply that I am physically and temperamentally unfitted for the part. After all, there is a great deal of satisfaction in the hum-drum moral life; the dear old stay-at-home virtues. There is a large slice of comfort in the thought that one can look back on one's past life and say, in all sincerity, that one has never knowingly and seriously wronged another; that no life has been wrecked, that no heart has been saddened because of one's having lived; that one has, to the best of one's ability, been faithful to the supreme ethic: "This above all, to thine own self be true, and it must follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

VINCENT J. HANDS.

The Great Illusion.

WHEN I behold the hopes the pious raise
By ravishing the Truth in cold disdain,
I ask: Must we create for each "in vain"
The fond illusion of th' untrodden ways,—
The saint eternal from the sport of days?
Ah! Misery, thou hast a fertile brain;
And with thine infinite conceit would drain
The blood of Gods and men,—and claim their praise!
And can it be the secret of true bliss
That brief Existence needs deception here?
Can lies that must sustain a soul in this
Awake to Truth within another sphere?
Such solace is a mockery in the strife
Where Faiths are dying at the call of Life!

WM. J. LAMB.

THE SOCIAL SENSE AND RELIGION.

New movements and new ideas always begin outside the Churches, and among these new developments is that of the deliberate resolve to place social concerns in the forefront. That this is often done in the name of religion matters little. We must learn to discriminate between the essence of a thing and the form in which it finds expression. When men live in a professedly Christian country, and are attached to a particular Christian Church, it is only natural that their feelings should find expression in the jargon of their sect. There is no more in this than Englishmen, Germans, or Frenchmen expressing themselves in different languages. But the social sense of man is wider than religion and deeper than religion. It antedates religion, and is one of the great forces that make for the transformation of religious beliefs. The man who does not recognize this has not yet mastered the alphabet of social philosophy.

Those who read history for enlightenment, instead of with the desire to select facts that will bolster up preconceived ideas, know that it is to the growing social sense that we owe every change for the better that has taken place in religious teaching.—*The Freethinker* (May 26, 1912).

Correspondence.

METHODS OF CONTROVERSY.

SIR,—With the belief that criticism within is more useful than from without, I feel I should like to remark upon a salient characteristic of many "Freethought" writers, and that is their rather contumelious attitude towards "believers."

Surely Freethought requires neither ridicule nor abuse to be brought to its aid; it is a sinecure on its own, but rather indulgent persuasion. A Freethinker must remember that he has a powerful weapon to fight with—common sense and reason—and so he can afford to be indulgent.

Although a Freethinker at the present time, I speak with feeling on this matter, as I was brought up in the Sinaitic teaching in its most virulent form (Roman Catholicism) and from personal experience I know that I would not have listened then to anything that appeared to ridicule religion, there are countless others like me, and the only result of such action must be that one's own heuristic tendencies receive a temporary setback.

Another very important thing also to consider are other people's feelings on what they consider right and sacred, and in this respect I might refer to the refutatory chastisement in your columns, which Mr. Morse-Boycott's article in the *Sunday Chronicle* called forth. It appeared to me and many others decidedly personal and hardly a via-media for closer search and reasoning on that gentleman's part.

No one believe in Greek Mythology or the story of the more prosaic "Peter Pan," yet one reads these legends and stories with pleasure, certainly not with scorn. The Muezzin call in the East is not hailed with derision, yet no European there believes in it. Apropos of this I might mention an incident, which nearly cost me my life, in considering other people's feelings. I was in a dhow during the N.E. Monsoon in the Indian Ocean, and my crew of fourteen Arabs were lowering the main-sail to save it from being swept away by the storm, when they suddenly realized that it was their prayer hour, and the result was that Allah, with his kindly theodicean foresight did it for them, but unfortunately he included the mast as well, and nearly took us all to his bosom.

The great thing to bear in mind is the enormous number of potential rationalists, who only want a little careful handling to educate them up to using their common-sense and reasoning powers; but these same people, who for generations have upheld the impossible theurgical claims of the priesthood, the vain theocratic pretensions of a Kaiser or the more deplorable stygian doctrines of hell-fire, will certainly not be convinced of their folly by derision.

The *Daily Mirror* not long ago had a leading article entitled "How these Christians love one another," and again in the *Sunday Times*, Edmund Gosse, in reviewing *Wit and Wisdom of Dean Inge*, by Sir James Marchant, states "He (Dean Inge) moves with ease amid the heights of speculation, and is felt to speak of things impalpable and supernal with the authority of one who has had glimpses of the "Presence Chamber" that are beyond the ken of work-a-day folk.

Again, a writer in a letter to the Editor of the same paper, quotes Newman's ironical remark in answering the question of the reason why the Churches are failing at the present time to enrol enough clergy, "Her path to-day is between the Scylla of aye and the Charybdis of nay, along the valley of no meaning." Very true, and perhaps more precise than the quotation of His Eminence, who metaphorically jumps from the Messina Straits into the adjoining valley, in the belief that faith can move mountains.

However, the above remarks are significant. I do not wish my letter in any wise to appear as a philippic, but solely as a suggestion, which I really think at any rate is worth considering. In any case, your readers opinions would be intensely interesting. JOSEPH C. MULLEN.

[We have slightly abridged Mr. Mullen's letter, but not, we think, with injury to his argument.—EDITOR.]

RELIGION AND MUSIC.

SIR,—It was with pleasure that I read F. J. Gould's article a few weeks ago on Dr. Farmer's recent brochure on *The Influence of Music; From Arabic Sources*. As the reviewer says, there is probably more to be learned from its pages concerning the mental progress of humanity than all the histories of kings put together.

Matthew Arnold once defined religion as "Morality touched by emotion." It would perhaps, have been nearer the truth to have said—"Credulity touched by emotion." The Christian Church has ever played on the emotions, and music has been one of the most potent forces employed. It is a long way back from the modern priest and his chair to the primitive medicine-man and his gourd rattle, but the moral is the same. Create the requisite emotional atmosphere and the trick is done. Dr. Farmer shows us what an elaborate musical system was used by the ancient Semitic priestly caste. In medieval times, however, this curious belief in the "influence of music" became secularized with the Semites, whilst it was the Christian Church that took over and continued the religious use, for the Gregorian Tones are the lineal descendents of the Magical Tones of the Chaldaeans.

I wonder if your readers have recognized the author of this brochure as the same H. George Farmer, who used to contribute articles on music and the Fine Arts to the *Freethinker*? TIMÆUS.

[We believe that most of our readers would have known that Dr. Farmer was our H. George Farmer of the *Freethinker*, whom the late G. W. Foote used to dub, "Our musical Critic." Readers desiring of obtaining his *Influence of Music; From Arab Sources* (price 3s. 6d.), may do so through the Pioneer Press.—EDITOR.]

WHAT ABOUT THIS?

SIR,—According to Luke, John the Baptist began his ministry "in the fifteenth year of the reign of the Emperor Tiberus Cæsar." According to Mark, "At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan."

Matthew says, however, that John began his ministry soon after the birth of Jesus, "in the reign of King Herod," and that "about this time John the Baptist made his appearance, preaching in the Desert of Judea." If so, John was several years older than Jesus, and born in the early years of Herod's reign, though according to Luke the difference in age was only a few months.

Herod was King of Judea 37—4 B.C., so John would probably be 56 years old when he baptized Jesus. If Jesus was born at the end of 6 B.C., being the product of a Virgin and Ghost, how was it, according to Luke, he was born a second time about A.D. 6, and then went to live at Nazareth, which did not then exist?

G. P. BARBER.

Mr. G. Whitehead at Newcastle.

MR. WHITEHEAD addressed eight meetings at Newcastle. All were well attended, especially the one held on the Moor on the Sunday evening. The audiences were exceptionally well behaved, and displayed keen interest by numerous questions and good purchases of literature. On the whole, this week was as successful as any previous mission held in Newcastle by Mr. Whitehead. As usual, we have to thank Mr. J. G. Bartram and Miss E. Bartram for their attendance and help at every meeting, and wish we could have the opportunity of extending our gratitude to a few other helpers.

This Sunday, June 26th, Mr. Whitehead will commence a week's mission at Victoria Square, Leeds. As the Leeds Branch has been inactive recently, all sympathizers are urged to rally round these meetings in order to make as good a show as possible.

Mr. Mann's report of the Glasgow Mission mentioned everybody who helped except Mr. Mann, who, in addition to having the chief burden of the Conference arrangements, managed to do most of the work at the outdoor meetings, chairing on each occasion, humping the platform about and selling piles of literature and distributing handbills. This note is inserted to fill the gap left by his modesty.

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): 11.0, John A. Hobson, M.A., "Does the World Want Peace?"

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Lecture by R. H. Rosetti.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.0, Lecture by J. Hart.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Lecture by Mr. L. Ebury; 3.15, Debate on "That Belief in God has Benefited the Human Race," between Mr. F. P. Corrigan and Mr. H. Hewitt (Brockwell Park): 6.0, Lecture by Mr. L. Ebury. Wednesday, June 29, at 8.0: Peckham Rye, Mr. F. P. Corrigan; Clapham Old Town, Mr. S. Hanson.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): 11.30, 3.0, and 6.30, Speakers, Messrs. Saphin, Hart, Baker and Botting; Thursday, 7-30, Speakers, Messrs. Saphin and Botting.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.0, Messrs. Campbell-Everden and Darby. 6.0, Messrs. Jackson and Hyatt. Freethought Lectures every Wednesday and Friday from 7.30 to 9.30. Various Lecturers.

COUNTRY.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY BRANCH of the N.S.S. (Alexander Park): 7.30, Mr. Fred Mann. (West Regent Street): Thursday, June 30, 7.30, Mr. Fred Mann.

OUTDOOR.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Islington Square): June 27, 8.0, Lecture by P. Sherwin.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY BRANCH of the N.S.S.—Ramble to Blairskaithe Moor. Meet at Bishophiggs Terminus at 12 noon.

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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Cowan's Conclusions

as quoted in a recent advertisement have been questioned upon the assumption that his inferences were insufficiently grounded. Sevenpence-worth of unused stamps has been thought a paltry evidence of trust. It would be if confined to an odd individual or so, but even only a score of sevenpences totals to a respectable sum. All pattern sets posted to inland addresses are accompanied by stamped envelopes for their return. No other firm in existence so trusts strangers, because no other firm in existence advertises exclusively in the Rationalist and Free-thought Press. No other firm in existence has the claim upon your support which we have, and no other firm in existence has the same powerful incentive to give you absolutely faultless satisfaction. Cowan put this reasoning to the test, and is glad he did so. So will you be, if you write at once for any of the following:—

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THE "FREETHINKER" ENDOWMENT TRUST.

A Great Scheme for a Great Purpose.

THE *Freethinker* Endowment Trust was registered on the 25th of August, 1925, its object being to raise a sum of not less than £8,000, which, by investment, would yield sufficient to cover the estimated annual loss incurred in the maintenance of the *Freethinker*. The Trust is controlled and administered by five trustees, of which number the Editor of the *Freethinker* is one in virtue of his office. By the terms of the Trust Deed the trustees are prohibited from deriving anything from the Trust in the shape of profit, emoluments, or payment, and in the event of the position of the *Freethinker* at any time, in the opinion of the Trustees, rendering the Fund unnecessary, it may be brought to an end, and the capital sum handed over to the National Secular Society.

The Trust has been before the public since October, 1925, and up to date over £5,000 has been subscribed. A sum of £1,000 has been promised conditional on the amount being made up to £7,000 by December 31, 1927, £450 by other friends to make up the £7,000. There is thus left about £1,500 yet to be raised. That should be well within the compass of the friends of the *Freethinker* at home and abroad.

The importance of the *Freethinker* to the Free-thought movement cannot well be over emphasized. For over forty years it has been the mouthpiece of militant Free-thought in this country, it has never failed to champion the cause of mental liberty in and out of the Courts, and its fight on behalf of the Secular Society, Limited, in which the right of an anti-Christian Society to receive bequests was triumphantly vindicated by a House of Lords' decision, was of first-rate importance to Free-thinkers all over the English-speaking world.

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