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Views and Opinions.

War and War Memorials.

ON Sunday last the memorial at Ypres to the British soldiers who fell in that salient, 58,000 of them, was unveiled by Field Marshal Plumer. The proceedings opened with a hymn, followed by a prayer, then after an interval of speech-making, another prayer, with another hymn, one more prayer, a benediction from a Roman Catholic, with a Psalm and another prayer, concluding with the British and Belgian National Anthems. I can well understand the sadness of those who have relatives and friends among that 58,000 names; one would need a heart of stone to stand unmoved amongst them, or to look at that list of names with a dry eye. The satire of singing a hymn, "Now thank we all our God," will probably be lost on nearly everyone present, although one might gently ask, what kind of help did God give to the world to prevent this terrible war taking place? The war could not have been worse without his help than it was with it, and a God who did not prevent it has but a questionable right to thanks for a hypothetical help in getting us through it. It is fitting that the nation should remember the men who died in the war; it is fitting also that they should remember them in the right sort of way. If war is a dirty, horrible, brutal and essentially ineffective kind of business, our war memorial should take the form of preventing that dirty, horrible, ineffective kind of business happening again.

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The Clergy and War.

Will the Menin Gate Memorial do this? Seriously, I doubt it. The clergy will talk of the horror of war, and of the Lord's anger against those who bring it about. But one knows with absolute certainty that whenever another war occurs, the clergy in each country will be talking of its righteousness and will repeat their war-talk over again. If the clergy had taken the unveiling of this memorial as the occasion

to make a public statement—and stick to it—that if another war occurred they would stand completely aloof from it, neither blessing nor cursing it, but just, as clergymen, having nothing to do with it, they might turn the occasion to lasting profit. But this they will not do. They will, as usual, provide a justification for getting ready for war in times of peace, and forge moral and religious justifications for war when it is in being. The *Church Times* does go so far as to say that "war between Christian peoples except in the case of self-defence, is a sin." One observes the double qualification. War is not a sin if it is between a Christian and a non-Christian—as professed believers in the brotherhood of man, there must be one rule for Christians and another for non-Christians. And there is the second reservation that war is not wrong if it is a war of self-defence. Well, was there ever a war which, from the point of view of one of the parties, was not a war of self-defence? Every nation in the last war was—if we are to take its own affirmation—fighting a war of self-defence. And what is easier than for one Christian nation to brand another as really non-Christian? The whole press of this country, particularly the religious press, agreed that—at least for the period of the war—Germany had become a non-Christian nation. If people can be fooled by this kind of verbiage, the next war may be as near as Marshal Foch thinks.

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Advertising War.

At the risk of cutting across the sentimental feelings of many of my readers, I would seriously ask whether it is quite certain that the Menin Gate Memorial, that any of the war memorials we have erected, are likely for long to drive home the lesson of the unnecessary and horrible character of war? The mothers, fathers, and other relatives of the dead may well feel the deepest sorrow, and even be inspired to do what they can to prevent war in the future. But what of the rest of the nation? What, above all, of the new generation that is springing up? All over the country they see thousands of war memorials, from the Cenotaph in Whitehall to the simple slab in the small village. What do these teach them? They do not see memorials on such a scale, or in such numbers, for any civilian class of the population. Side by side with that they see the constant parading of the military, the glitter of the uniform, the praise lavished on the soldier, and experience the thrill of military music. Or they may read the Government posters pointing out the superiority of the soldier's life to that of a mere artizan. What lesson will the rising generation derive from it all? Surely not the meanness, the filth, the brutality, the essential barbarity of war, but its nobility, its neces-

sity, its grandeur. And remember, that it is with the new generation, here, in Germany, in France, and elsewhere, that the question of peace and war rests. The soldier is even more prominent in our social life to-day than he was before the war; and we are educating the youth of the nation into the belief that war must come sooner or later, and that it is the first duty of the nation to get ready for it.

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#### Why Not Eliminate?

Now I am not averse to war memorials. But I would have them take a form that would do something to educate the people out of the war-like barbaric stage. I am not averse to having national services at which the nation pays its measure of respect and affection to those who have been killed in war. But, again, I would have them take the form of educating the people in the right direction. The feature of the Menin Gate ceremonial is the presence of the clergy, and the dominance of the soldier. As a Freethinker I would eliminate the parson. But I do not want to discuss the question on the basis of sectarian difference, and so I content myself with saying I would eliminate the military. We pride ourselves that we are not a militaristic people. We are a civilian people who are forced into war. Very well, let us live up to it. The soldiers were drawn from the civilian population, let the civilian population, in civilian dress, pay their respects to the dead. I would not eliminate those who served as soldiers, they should be there, from Field-Marshal to private. They should even be given places of honour, but they should be there minus their military uniform. The 58,000 did not die as representing the army; they died as representing the nation, the civilian nation, and it is as a nation of civilians that we should pay our measure of respect. As it is, above the feeling of sorrow, will rise the pride in the soldier, the glory and glitter of the military display. In substance it becomes an exploitation of sorrow in the interests of the very militarism these men died to destroy.

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#### Real War Memorials.

We should have war memorials—plenty of them. I would take all those who were maimed, or blinded, or otherwise incapacitated during the last war, and I would establish a number of model villages all over the country, where these men might live with their families, working at such occupations as they are fitted for, but guaranteed a reasonable livelihood. And I would mark each of them as war memorials. I would not have these men dependent upon street collections, or upon grants from Boards, whose main desire appears to be to cut down the allowance to the smallest possible amount. We should thus have our war memorials all over the country, and we should be taxed, and properly taxed for them. And during peace I would keep the soldier strictly in the background. The marches, with their showy uniforms, the showiness of which is at present reserved for peace times, the band playing, the parades, should all be kept back. The people should be educated in the thought of the possibility of life without armies or, at least, life without the soldier occupying the premier position on the stage. We talk peace, but by our actions we do what we can to train the rising generation to believe that war must come, that it is not at all a bad thing that we should have a war now and again, and that at any rate, while there is danger, it is all very enjoyable, and noble and dignified. The mud, the filth, the degradation, the brutality of war

are all left till the war is with us, and then we get through it as best we can. And by the time the next generation grows up, we have educated them along the same lines.

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#### Why Cheapen War?

Mr. H. L. Mencken, writing in the *Sunday Chronicle*, says he would like to see a combination of powerful nations formed, which would thrash any "chronic trouble-maker" who threatened war. Excellent, if only the nations could trust each other. But among these Christian nations there is not one that could trust the other. During the war I made much the same kind of suggestion, as a means of stopping war. I suggested that there might be an international force existing for the enforcement of carefully arrived at decisions concerning disputes between nations, and that there ought to be formed an international Committee of non-politicians, who on any serious dispute, should publish in each nation their considered opinion on the merits of the matter. That would at least do something to prevent war. It is useless depending upon the Press. The last war showed that the government can secure the Press at any time—or what amounts to the same thing; and if Lord Beaverbrook may be believed, the Press may secure the government. Reduction of armaments, which is the most the League of Nations appears to be capable of suggesting, can have little effect. It aims at making war much less costly, and a trifle less dangerous. But it does nothing to stop war. The notion that you can do away with war by making it cheap or less dangerous is one of the most curious ideas that ever took possession of men's minds. There is no danger too great for men to face. Danger is quite as much an attraction as a deterrent. The only way to make war impossible is to make it contemptible—to show that two nations pummelling each other to decide which is right, is on a level with a bully punching a smaller man to compel his obedience. Ethically, war—modern war—does not rise to the level of the prize ring. Many of the soldiers who passed through the last war know it. I would take care that the rising generation know it also.

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#### The Cost of War.

A final word. When I have written on this subject before I have often received letters from friends arguing that some kind of force is necessary behind all law, to enforce its decrees. I am willing to grant that. But I am not arguing against the use of force in given circumstances; neither am I arguing that in certain circumstances the act of war—the most unreasoning and least beneficial application of force among civilized peoples, may be inevitable, or even necessary. I am only arguing that if we are all intelligently sincere in our expressed desire to end war, if we are sincere in our desire to pay real honour to those who fell in the Ypres salient and elsewhere, we should get to work to set forth war in its true light. And it is sheer folly, almost criminal folly, to protest against war, and at the same time to surround the profession of the soldier with the glamour and the air of first-rate social importance that is being done to-day. If "war is hell," we must do our best, during times of peace to educate the rising generation that it is so. If war is sometimes inevitable, that does not rob it of its degradation, and brutality. Over and over again in the many cases of brutal assault that have occurred during the past ten years the plea has been entered on behalf of the prisoner, that he was a good soldier during the war. Professional apolo-

gists have argued that the man was disgracing his career. I suggest that in many cases the man became what he was as a normal consequence of his career. Four years of war meant demoralization. And if it was demoralizing for the man in the trenches, it was demoralizing also for those who were at home. It was demoralizing all round. I have the most profound sympathy with all those who were mourning for the subjects of the Menin Gate Memorial. But I want to see that Society gets some benefit from the sacrifice of their lives. I want to make war impossible; and I believe that will be done when we make it contemptible, and not by merely harping upon its dangers, the risks non-combatants run, or the cost to us in cash. If we must have war I have no great desire to protect either skins or banking accounts.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### Conversion.

SUCH is the subject of an article by Canon Peter Green, in the column entitled "Difficulties of Life and Belief," in the *Guardian* of July 8. A correspondent had written to him thus: "The other day a Non-conformist friend said, with I am sure no intention of being unkind or critical, "Of course the Church of England does not believe in conversion." I protested that the Church of England both believes in and preaches it; but now that I have time to think, I am bound to admit that I cannot remember ever hearing a sermon on the subject. What do you think about the matter?" The Canon opens his examination of the subject by calling attention to the fact that it has been greatly complicated by extremists in different denominations. One set of extremists teach that conversion is an event or act that takes place in the twinkling of an eye, "and that the converted person can always name the day and hour of his or her conversion." Another extremist view is that conversion and the New Birth are really synonymous terms, whereas, according to theology, the former is man's own act and the latter God's. Canon Green is convinced that conversion may take place in a moment, his words being:—

Now I am not merely free to admit the reality of what is called instantaneous conversion. I do most earnestly insist on its reality happening to-day much more often than people imagine; I have known striking instances of it in my own experience, though, of course, modern psychologists deny that it is as instantaneous as it seems. It is rather the instantaneous release of a strain which has long been growing in force and intensity in the subconscious.

Whilst the Canon regards conversion as a human act, he is careful to express his belief that it is "impossible without the converting grace of the Holy Spirit." The clergy are evidently under the delusion that they can glorify God by belittling man and his powers. They exclaim, "O man, thou art fallen and helpless, thou canst do nothing; only give thy heart to Jesus, and thou shalt be saved and receive strength from on high."

Now the very conception of conversion involves the implication of man's utter helplessness in himself. The first Gospel message to us is that we are lost sinners doomed to perish for ever. Its second message is that our only chance of deliverance is by making a complete surrender of ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. According to Canon Green, conversion means "the free turning of the whole personality Godward." Evangelical Christianity teaches that apart from Christ we are all in a state of absolute lostness, with nothing awaiting us at death but the everlasting flames, and the only way out of this desperate condition is through conversion.

Conversion is logically preceded by what used to be called conviction of sin. The *Shorter Catechism* informs us that "the sinfulness of that state whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called Original Sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it." That is the most horribly wicked doctrine of man ever devised, and it is to be found not only in the *Shorter Catechism*, but also in the third of the Anglican *Articles of Religion*. However, detestable as the tenet of original sin undoubtedly is, it must be borne in mind that the children of most truly religious people are trained to believe it. Most distinctly do we remember the case of a boy about twelve years old, who more than sixty years ago passed through the unforgettable experience of a most harrowing conviction of sin. For weeks he was cruelly tortured by a newly awakened sense of the wrath of God crushing him down to hell, and his fear was that his guilt was much greater than he felt it to be. Poor little chap, he had never done any wrong. His parents were clean, healthy people, who had given him a thoroughly strong and wholesome constitution, and a crime was responsible for his having had to wallow in the slough of despond. It is difficult to control our sense of indignation against those who teach innocent little children to regard themselves as miserable sinners who need salvation. Our present point, however, is that the conviction of sin generally precedes and leads to conversion. As to the instantaneousness of conversion Canon Green speaks as follows:—

Though I am sure that what are called instantaneous conversions do occur, and are of great value and spiritual importance, I am equally sure that they are not the necessary, or even the usual, way by which people come to a full religious experience. For many people that surrender of the will to God, and that entire acceptance of Christ as Saviour and Lord, which we call conversion, take place as a gradual turning, a gradual growth of knowledge and self-surrender. And it is well to notice that both classes of persons are exposed to special dangers. Those who are suddenly converted need very careful teaching and discipline afterwards, lest their fervour should pass away and leave no lasting fruits. And those who have been from their youth exercised in the practices of religion need times of refreshing and of deepening of the spiritual life, lest their religion should become formal and conventional.

To the evangelicals that is sound Christian teaching, while upon the ears of the Secularist it falls like so much balderdash, lacking all reality. The only inference one can draw from the whole of that paragraph is that the Christian religion sits but lightly on those who profess it. In all cases there is the possibility; in many, the probability; and in some, the certainty of its dying out. All are in more or less danger of losing it, which proves that naturally we rebel against it. In other words, if religious instruction in the homes and schools of the land were to be discontinued, in a hundred years Christianity would be a thing of the past. Already many prominent clergymen have publicly acknowledged that such would inevitably be the result. Canon Green himself declared, fully twenty years ago, that even then our public schools were breeding Atheists by the thousand, and that organized religion was a dismal failure in this country. What was true then is truer still to-day. Church-going is getting out of fashion, a fact which is causing great alarm in religious circles. All denominations tearfully complain that the Sunday Schools are on the decline, with the inevitable result that the number of conversions among children is getting significantly smaller year after year; and it is well known

that conversions among adults are few and far between. If the Church does not secure a man's interest and devotion when he is a child, it seldom succeeds in getting hold of him at all.

Conversion is a purely mechanical change, artificially brought about. As Canon Green observes, "No one, even in the best of homes, is *born a Christian*." If "the acceptance of God as Master and Lord is always a *voluntary act*," it is never by any chance an *instinctive act*. No one has ever gone to God of his or her own accord. In every case a vast amount of urging, coaxing, and pleading must be undertaken in order to effect such a result. And naturally the question arises: Is there a God to whom to turn; is there a risen Saviour in whom to trust; and is there a spiritual world in which to live the best and noblest life? Our answer is emphatically in the negative; but there is a human race in sad need of the devoted love and faithful service of all the individuals who compose it. This is the ministry upon which we should all enter, well knowing that to do so is to undergo the grandest conversion of which a man is capable.

J. T. LLOYD.

### The Faith of a Farmer's Daughter.

"Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul  
When hot for certainties in this our life."

Geo. Meredith.

"Hail to the steadfast soul  
Which, unflinching and keen,  
Wrought to erase from its depth  
Mist, and illusion, and fear!"

Matthew Arnold.

AMID hundreds of drawings and paintings of celebrities in the National Portrait Gallery there are few more arresting portraits than one from the brush of Opie, depicting a beautiful woman with lovely auburn hair, ivory complexion, perfect mouth, and great, dark, serious eyes. This is the portrait of Mary Wollstonecraft, a farmer's daughter, who died one hundred and thirty years ago, and who wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and epoch-making book. This work was a defence of one half of the human race, and also a deliberate defiance of social laws which oppressed women.

Mary Wollstonecraft has many claims on our attention. She was the wife of William Godwin, and the mother of Percy Shelley's second wife. Godwin has written her life, and from its pages we learn that he met her for the first time at dinner at the house of Thomas Paine, the author of *The Age of Reason*. Godwin is perfectly frank, and admits that she bored him at the first meeting. He thought that she talked too much, whereas he had come to see and listen to the famous author of *The Rights of Man*, and, doubtless, to say something himself. Yet the philosopher afterwards married this charming chatterbox with the gentle and dreamy eyes, and was heartbroken at her death.

It is impossible to deny that the prevailing impression left by Godwin's life of Mary Wollstonecraft is one of pathos, the pathos of a brilliant and beneficent career, frustrated, at the height of its power, by an untimely end. And the emotion aroused by the record is accentuated, rather than shared, by the frank and open fashion in which Godwin has told the story of her life. The book reveals a story of inevitable disappointment, of exceptional abilities heavily handicapped by a woman's physique, and by way of compensating contrast, the pages bear witness to the courage of a brave woman using broken opportunities to the best advantage. Mary Wollstonecraft was so early in the fight for Freedom and so often alone, that the very story is touched to pathetic issues. Her love

affair with the good-looking Gilbert Imlay is a sad example. He was a mere adventurer, and he deserted her after eighteen months and the birth of a daughter, the ill-fated Fanny Imlay, thus giving point to Fielding's bitter irony that "none are so fortunate as handsome men; none so unfortunate as handsome women."

It is not alone Mary Wollstonecraft's message that now interests us, but the woman herself, her desires, her aspirations, her struggles, and her loves. Pathetic and lonely, she stands out in the faint mists of the past, a woman who will continue to arouse sympathy when her purely propagandist books are no longer read, except by close students in the bye-paths of literature. And of the woman no more complete revelation could be desired than the pathetic letters she wrote to Captain Imlay, who used her so ill. Other writers have been unhappy, and have known the anguish and terrors of unrequited affection, but Mary Wollstonecraft addressed these letters with a breaking heart to the man she adored—the most touching and tragic love-letters in our literature.

It was to Godwin she turned for consolation after the terrible Imlay affair, and again Fate was unkind. They did not marry for a year, and lost valued friends for their temerity, including Mrs. Inchbald and Mrs. Siddons. Then the future Mrs. Percy Shelley being on the way, they married, and assured the legitimacy of the coming daughter. Real tragedy followed close, for when the baby was born, the mother died. Godwin felt the blow keenly, and consoled himself by writing the life-story of the unfortunate woman who struck a resounding blow for the emancipation of her sex.

Their daughter, Mary, afterwards married the poet Shelley. This largely intensifies the interest of Mary Wollstonecraft's association with English literature. For Shelley himself was an ardent disciple of William Godwin, and the great poet adapted his philosophic ideas from Godwin. So much is this the case, that it may even be said that Godwin explains Shelley, and it is equally true that Shelley is the indispensable commentary to Godwin. It is no paradox to add that Godwin had no small share in forming Shelley's mind, and that the "Prometheus Unbound" and "Hellas," were saturated with the philosophic ideas of Godwin.

Nor is Mary Wollstonecraft's daughter undeserving of notice. Although overshadowed by the greatness of her husband, Mary Shelley had literary gifts of her own which commanded attention. It was while staying at Byron's villa, on the lonely lake of Geneva, that she conceived the idea of her famous novel, *Frankenstein*, a grim and powerful work which made an immense and deserved sensation, and which added a new word to the vocabulary of cultured folks. None of her other novels, including *The Last Man* and *Lodore* had the same success. She contributed brilliant biographical sketches of foreign authors and artists to Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopædia*, and edited her famous husband's poems. She survived Shelley nearly thirty years, and latterly made her home with her son, Sir Percy Shelley, at Boscombe Manor, Bournemouth. There William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, and their daughter, Mary Shelley, are buried. It was the intention of Sir Percy to erect a monument to his illustrious father in the adjoining church, but the then vicar, a Mr. Bennett, refused his permission on account of the poet's Freethought views, and the splendid memorial had to find refuge at the more hospitable Christchurch church, where it is justly regarded as one of the literary shrines of England.

We began by saying that Mary Wollstonecraft's career was one of pathos, and so, to a certain extent, it unquestionably was. And yet, perhaps, the last

word is one, not of pathos, but of strong human encouragement. For the woman who can in large measure live down disaster and shipwreck of hope, and rise triumphant over the fell clutch of circumstance, may justly be acclaimed as the victorious mistress of her fate.

For the one complete example of a deliberate and calmly philosophical defiance of feminine custom in marriage is that of Mary Wollstonecraft, who broke every social law of set purpose, and yet retained the sympathy of a large minority of excellent people. Sharing the usual fate of pioneers, she was reviled as "a hyena in petticoats" and "a philosophizing serpent." It was nearly a century later that George Eliot hurled the same challenge at custom, and scandalized her contemporaries, but the pioneer work was done by Mary Wollstonecraft, who rebelled against society in an age when laws were more ferociously enforced, and personal violence too often accompanied ostracism.

Some people imagine that men and women of letters exert little or no influence in politics and upon politicians, in statesmanship and upon statesmen. It is a fond illusion. If Karl Marx is the father of modern Socialism, Jean Jacques Rousseau is the grandfather of the movement. Instead of being a mere voice crying in the wilderness, his was the most potent voice in Europe of his day. Who heeded Thomas Paine? Yet his was the hand that first wrote the arresting and inspiring words, "The United States of America," and the great Republic of the West owed as much to Paine's live pen as to General Washington's sharp sword. The belated recognition of the rights of women is a tribute to the pioneers from Mary Wollstonecraft to John Stuart Mill. From the seed they sowed has sprung the goodly fruit of a larger and broader freedom for one half of the human race. If Freethinkers, still true to the long line of their illustrious dead, keep Mary Wollstonecraft's memory green, then better than in the proudest effigy will her life be written, and her tomb built in the hearts of her fellow soldiers in the army of Human Liberation.

MIMNERMUS.

### Films and Free Thought.

WE all know the stories of the doubts that assail inventors and innovators. Would, on the balance, their invention make for the good and happiness of mankind? Such doubts are said, in particular, to have come to the pioneers of printing. The multiplication of books (they probably did not envisage the newspaper), would it make for good or evil? Gutenberg, Caxton, and company must have passed more than one sleepless night on this account. At least, we hope so.

Fortunately, as we think, for the world, these qualms of inventors have not sufficed to prevent their mental offspring growing into a lusty child. They were, at the most, passing birth pangs. Their child grew, and though he caused a devil of a lot of childish mischief, he attained to useful and honourable manhood. That is, we think, the general attitude of enlightened opinion about printing. Its evils are manifest. But "the Press," which includes the *Daily Mail*, also includes the *Freethinker*, and the multiplication of books finally defeated all the attempts at suppression of the Congregation of the Index and the common hangman.

For the last quarter of a century we have been witnessing the perfecting of yet another, and most powerful, instrument for spreading opinions and knowledge. Perhaps we should write "yet two other," for broadcasting has developed almost coinci-

dentially with cinematography. But in this article we wish to keep to the latter subject, and to ask this question, whether the cinema, as a whole, has made for the promotion of religious superstition or for freethought. No final judgment, of course, is possible, any more than in the case of printing, though the latter invention is now about five centuries old. Our answer must depend on our individual experience and temperament, and must, perhaps inevitably, partake of the nature of belief. Only one person should be debarred from expressing a judgment. Need we say that that is the high-brow lady or gentleman who never, or rarely, "goes to the pictures"? Without being a "movie fan," it is, we submit, necessary to have a fairly extensive acquaintance with cinema programmes in both large and small halls, before one can usefully contribute an answer to our question.

One of the best ways of knowing whether any particular weapon you may have in your hand is a good one, is to ascertain your enemy's opinion of it. The strong opposition put up, for instance, to the Sunday opening of cinemas by the ministers of all denominations is *prima facie* evidence that they think that "the Devil's Temple" will further deplete the scant attendance at "the House of Prayer." And they are undoubtedly right. In London, where the cinema opens its doors on Sunday evening, it is hard to get a seat there without lining up in a queue. This is all the more striking, as owing to the economics of the question (which we cannot go into here), the pictures shown on Sunday evening are often worn, mediocre productions. But when, as in London, a choice is offered, people will pay to worship in the cinema, rather than go free (or for a button in the bag) into the churches, chapels, and, be it added, the lecture halls of the Secularists!

Let us first enquire as to what extent the film is being used as a conscious vehicle of propaganda. It is, of course, being so used. Both the upholders and opponents of the present order of society have long recognized the propaganda value of the film. The Conservative Party in this country and the Communist Government of Russia both make extensive use of the film to push their nostrums. Further, they affect free-trade in films in a negative way by prohibiting the exhibition in their respective countries of the films of their political opponents. If I cite the case of the exclusion from Britain of the Russian film masterpiece, "the Cruiser Potemkin," let no correspondent waste time by pointing out that there is no Home Office ban. On that point I know nothing. But I, and all others with a knowledge of the way in which these matters are arranged, know that there is small chance of this film being shown here. Intolerance has many more ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream. The sole point desired to be made here is that freedom of thought is affected negatively as well as positively.

The cinema then is being used as a propaganda instrument in the politico-economic field. What is being done by the Christian churches? I think the answer must be that *so far* not much directly. If and when the battle for the Sunday closing of cinemas is lost by the Churches, then we may probably look for the direct invasion of this new field of art by Christian propagandists. But that is to look ahead—to a more remote future than many of us care to contemplate.

Meanwhile film directors, even when they are Jews (as they often are), are producing their wares for Christian countries. As every one knows, the overwhelming number of films come from the United States. In that country there is a large Roman Catholic section of the population to be considered

and propitiated. Also films are produced in the U.S.A. for the European Continental market—again, overwhelmingly Catholic. The only parts of Europe that produce good films (*i.e.* artistic, well-made films) in any quantity are mainly Protestant countries, such as Germany, England and Sweden. These naturally have a market in their country of origin, and are now making considerable inroads into the American film hegemony. Non-Protestant European and South American markets are therefore of increasing importance to the great American film interests and are specially catered for.

Quite apart from any design or intention of the film directors is the fact that the Roman Catholic religion is more spectacular than other forms of Christianity. This is important where the cinema is concerned. "The Pictures" are what they are called. The cinematographical art is pictorial. Therefore any faith which provides abundant sacerdotal paraphernalia—candles, vestments, images and the like—is bound to make a greater appeal to the directors' sense of pictorial effect. I have often seen films, when for no apparent reason (other than that given) the faith of hero or heroine was made Catholic. Thus, quite unintentionally perhaps, the Roman Catholic faith receives a boost.

In the end, however, we may look for a counterbalancing force to the present monopoly of the representation, intentionally or adventitiously, of Christian ceremonial. The non-European nations are entering the cinematograph business. A year ago an Indian-produced and Indian-acted film depicting the life of Gautama Buddha ("The Light of Asia") received a long run in London, and this year a Chinese film, made in Shanghai and enacted entirely by Chinese actors, has also been shown here. We refer to the delightful "Legend of the Willow Pattern Plate." Both films, by the way, were "patronized by Royalty."

Now, it may be said, and rightly, that one is only casting out Satan by Beelzebub, if one is replacing one superstition by another. But let us remember another old tag—"when rogues fall out, honest men come by their own." Once get it well into the heads of the cinema-going public—which is a synonym for the public—that there is not one infallible faith, but that there are many creeds and many gods, then the potency and binding power of the cinema goer's own particular brand of religion will be seriously impaired. From such a mental state, tolerance must, it seems to me, finally spring. It is not after all so great a step from allowing a free choice in gods to allowing the rejection of all gods. Perhaps that is too optimistic a view—the adherents of creeds may combine to crush the creedless. That is possible, but the Atheist may hope to divide and conquer, and in the bringing about of that division the film seems destined to play a most important part.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Opinion governs all mankind  
Like the blind's leading of the blind.  
And obstinacy's ne'er so stiff  
As when 'tis in a wrong belief.

Samuel Butler.

All the best work is done the way ants do things—by tiny but tireless and regular additions. Remember that nothing can be beautiful which does not contain truth, and that making an imagination beautiful means also to make it partly true.—*Lafcadio Hearn.*

Honour is worth its danger and its cost, and life is worthless without honour.—*Bernard Shaw.*

## An Enemy Within the Camp.

IN an article in a recent issue of the *Liverpool Daily Post*, "Commentator," who is evidently an ecclesiastical correspondent, holds out the view that the Ascension of Christ did not take place in the manner in which we have always been told, and which is a fundamental part of my belief as an intelligent Christian.

What he suggests is this. That Jesus and his apostles went up into a mountain, and that while they were there, being under the influence of strong emotion, a cloud surrounded them; and that when it had cleared away, Jesus had disappeared. He asserts that "the record does not imply this" (referring to the literal interpretation of the event); . . . "but rather that there was a 'slight levitation' with a disappearance into a cloud lying low upon the hill."

I object strongly to so-called partisans of the Church attempting to undermine the deep-rooted beliefs of the populace. How can any nation be expected to progress if such people as these are to be allowed to rob the younger generation of their faith in one of the most essential doctrines of their religion? Our correspondent suggests that the original version of the affair is liable to cause scepticism on the part of present-day people. In the name of Reason and Common-sense, why? We all know that Heaven is in the sky. Therefore if a god wishes to return thither, it is obvious that he must be hauled into the ether by an obliging cloud. Again, surely a person who could walk on the water and change water into wine, should have no difficulty in indulging in a little aviation with or without the assistance of a cloud.

I deprecate this weakening on the part of the supporters of our glorious religion: a religion which is responsible for all our advance in knowledge and prosperity—one has only to consider the number of wicked Atheists whom the Church has destroyed to realize that this statement is absolutely correct. It is quite obvious that the Church stands for Right and Atheism for Wrong. There is no possible room for argument on the matter: there is not even any need to try and discover what Atheism really stands for; the fact is self-evident. Therefore, I say that the Church has proved itself an inestimable Blessing to Mankind by burning such people.

As I say, I deprecate this weakening. I have always disapproved of the way in which theologians acquiesce in the Darwinian theory. They should have stuck to their original attitude of contempt and denial. It is no excuse that a large section of the people clamoured for a fair hearing for the "Origin of Species." In such matters as this, the common people are not competent to judge. They should be guided by those who are in constant communication with the Deity. Darwin was pitted against Moses; and the very ones who should have given Moses every possible support have gone and are still going over to the enemy. Why don't they order all such books to be burnt? That was how they dealt with such blasphemous utterances in the good old days. And if the author won't see the error of his ways after having them pointed out to him by a kindly mentor, then burn him too. It's the only way.

And now they are going to take one of my most treasured beliefs away from me. Perhaps such as "Commentator" will be suggesting next, that Jesus is no longer sitting on his father's right hand in the Abode of Bliss.

I cannot even contemplate such things. My hand trembles so that I can hardly write. But cannot someone in authority be induced to move in the matter?

B. S. WILCOX.

The great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving . . . We must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it; but we must sail and not drift, nor lie at anchor.—*Holmes.*

Words, as a Tartar's bow, do shoot back upon the understanding of the wisest, and mightily entangle and pervert the judgment.—*Bacon.*

## Acid Drops.

The advent of the Advertising Exhibition has set the clergy talking about the need of advertising religion. Why, they have never ceased advertising it. There are about 80,000 preachers at it all the time. Its praise is being sung by these men in and out of season; they secure an enormous number of Press notices, they induce the Press to refrain from publishing anything that will expose the real nature of their wares; they write their own testimonials and drop them broadcast into letter boxes; they bribe politicians to appear on the public platform, and say how much better they feel since they have used this or that spiritual preparation. And then they come along and say it is time they advertised religion! There is nothing in the world so well advertised as religion. And there is nothing that the public so easily overlook, if it is not constantly kept before them.

Of Feng, the Chinese "Christian General," a Baptist journal says he is not trusted by anybody, not even by Moscow, which has supplied him with arms and munitions to the value of over £1,000,000. At any moment, Feng may change his allegiance. And in that we learn, Feng is like all the other tuchuns who none of them acknowledge any principle except their own interests. From all this we gather that the Christian General is no better than his "heathen" brothers-in-arms. Whereas he ought to be vastly superior, if Christian tales about the wonderful influence of conversion be true. That he is not, need surprise no one who has noted the quality of "improvement" after conversion to be noted in converts used to advertise home and foreign missions.

The cause of Methodist Union has received a set-back at the Bradford Conference. A 75 per cent. majority was essential, but only 70 per cent. was forthcoming. This means, we suppose, that poor God will be besieged with a few million more prayers from ardent unionists. Who wouldn't be a God! But perhaps he listens-in by proxy; for even a prayer-loving God must be surfeited with petitions. Considering the fact that Methodists believe that union will come when God wills it, when he thinks the right time has come for it, it does seem a waste of human mental energy to keep worrying God to bring it about. But that seems never to occur to the prayer addicts.

The Rev. Hodson Smith told the same Conference that they might go from the Conference to save a world. That is what they stood for. And it could be done. He also said, later, that true religion is a quest-man's quest for God. Considering the unpalatable fact that multitudes of men are not nowadays interested in the "quest," we fancy the saving of the world—which the good man says could be done—is a harder job to-day, and farther from accomplishment than ever before. Still, on the principle of assuming a virtue if you have it not, pious Presidents are always optimistic.

Apropos of the opening of the Joanna Southcote box, the *Sunday School Chronicle* says that a good deal of nonsense has been believed concerning the matter, for there is no limit to the credulity of some people. The pot appears to be jeering at the kettle for being black. Our contemporary might remember that it exists for the purpose of fostering equally stupid credulity about the nonsensical stories in the Bible.

The Wesleyan Conference's new President, Rev. W. Hodson Smith, says:—

Some of our ceremonies might with advantage be changed—I will not say to meet the findings of science or of certain philosophical positions, but to bring our formulæ into closer and clearer harmony with Truth, of which after all they may be but parts.

There is no adequate reason for clinging tenaciously to theories that are out-worn and untenable. At any rate, I am certain of this, that we have to establish by our teaching and in our work increasing evidence of truth and a convincing sense of reality.

What an intellectual valorous type of mind the Christian religion breeds! The rev. President knows that discoveries in the physical realm have greatly affected the older philosophical positions, and have rendered many theological positions and theories untenable—positions and theories, it may be added, that were based on the one and final Truth contained in Holy Writ. Does he openly aver the fact? Not a bit. He merely bleats about bringing Christian formulæ in closer harmony with Truth—the Truth meaning in this instance, not that which the originators of the formulæ and theories held to, but that which appears to remain after modern discoverers and thinkers have had their say. What Mr. Hodson Smith appears to be trying to do is, to run with the hare as well as the hounds. He is anxious to retain his more modern and wider-read clients, and he fears to offend his die-hard Gospel literalists. And that is an awkward situation most of the more intelligent clerics discover themselves in nowadays. Since parsons can keep in business only by retaining as many clients as they can, the theological net has to be cast as widely as possible. Hence the modern parson has to get busy cautiously spring-cleaning and plausibly re-interpreting the incorruptible Christian "Truth" into a mere parody of its former self. The outcome of this treatment is that some sort of semi-apology becomes necessary, such as: "We have to establish by our teaching and our work increasing evidence of truth and a convincing sense of reality."

The ex-President of the Wesleyan Conference, had also no particular piece of good news to relate. He thought all the Churches were hard-pressed. The Wesleyan Church was losing a lot of young people who simply did not want religion. We can hardly credit this. Does not Mr. James Douglas, and many another journalistic interpreter of the public mind, assure us that there is everywhere an insatiable yearning for religion? Have we not been told, times out of number, that men are praying animals, religion-hungry creatures? We had been almost inclined to believe this. And now, just at the moment of our acceptance, comes Dr. Maltby stirring up within us an almost dormant scepticism. Perhaps the much-heralded revival of religion will be still-born after all. Lots of young people simply don't want religion. Dr. Maltby states that as a fact. And we cannot quite see what use a revival will be to them, if it did materialize. They prefer more civilized things.

Dr. Russell Maltby dispensed the news that Methodism was being hard-pressed: powerful disintegrating forces were at work in every sphere, and their people were waiting for leadership, light, and an authentic word. The members of the Conference should remember to how great an extent the whole background in which they were brought up had disappeared from the generation now growing up. When their fathers preached they were able to take for granted a certain arrangement of men's thoughts about God. They really had a "Universe," and they had it arranged and set out before them, and any preacher at that time could take it for granted that ninety-five per cent. of the congregation were with him. To-day that would not be true, and they were faced with an extraordinarily difficult situation. Against every affirmation made in his youth, continued Dr. Maltby, there was now a huge question mark. They could not help that. It was not their doing, nor the doing of the Higher Critics, nor any German theologian. It was God's work. He was shaking up the things that were in order that the things that could not be shaken might endure. They were dealing with young people whose minds were in confusion. Now, seeing that the *Freethinker* and *Freethought* propagandists are largely responsible for putting "huge question marks" before the affirmations of Dr. Maltby's youth, it should cheer *Freethinkers* immensely to learn that they have, in

reality, been doing God's work. Perhaps the Christian bigots will now lift the boycott on the *Freethinker*, and cease opposing Freethought propaganda. It ill becomes good Christian men to hinder the work of God; especially as Freethought is aiming to rid the minds of the young people from confusion.

It is only theological reasoning that is capable of finding something to thank God for in the commemoration of 58,000 dead by the memorial at Menin Gate.

One of the quaint aspects in English life is the latitude to be found in the land of politics. The National Farmers' Unions, in a statement following Mr. Baldwin's speech at Hainton, contains the following: "Has there ever been a more flagrant example of the art of the political cheap-jack?" In degrees of absurdity, politics are nearer to realism than the froth and metaphysics of Christianity, but on the latter subject there is always a respectful silence from the papers, and any nonsense, any gross exploitation of emotion, any sloppy statements that would mean the cane for a schoolboy are allowed without comment?

The Lord is no more careful in Germany in looking after his houses than he is in any other country. We are told that the beautiful Catholic Church at Hemmerden, near Dusseldorf, has been completely destroyed by fire. Here was a lost opportunity of proving larger stewardship than that of sparrows.

*Cherche la femme.* On his usual weekly theological triangle, Dr. T. R. Glover in the *Daily News*, writing on "Solomon in all his Glory," states that "the one bright episode is the visit of the Queen of Sheba." We should think so. All churches could be busily employed until they all die out, in making amends for the slanders on women. And then they would have to work overtime on some of the rubbish uttered by lunatics called saints, who were presumably born, in the words of Nellie Wallace, "when their mothers weren't at home." The writings of Dr. Glover are becoming almost human. Nil desperandum, as they used to say at our Alma Mater in Abyssinia for the teaching of Celtic.

The Editor of the *Methodist Times* is a bright lad, full of ideas. Ingenuity, and originality, bubble forth from the following suggestions, which we give in full:—

The poster, he added, the handbill, the wayside pulpit, the open-air meeting, the procession of witness, the midnight drunkard's drive, the sandwich board, even the chalking on the street pavement, may all be used to advantage.

All this, rather than admit that there is anything wrong with the particular message of one sect out of some hundreds.

Trusting in the Lord is sound advice for the other fellow, but Congregational Ministers do not believe in it in practice. They prove to be very ordinary human beings in wrestling with a superannuation fund, which provides an excellent and telling criticism of their profession.

A writer in the *Outlook* makes a very sensible plea for quietness. He writes:—

Quite apart from the seemingly unavoidable noises of tram and bus and train, there must be an enormous volume of miscellaneous noises that could be dispensed with.

There are. Salvation Army Bands, discordant church bells, Boy Scouts' Bands, Church Lads' Brigade Bands, and the wail of the harmonium at street corners on Sunday nights; these, in the words of Poo-Bah, never would be missed—but lack of sense must be made up with sound.

Hamlet's problem of "to be or not to be" is, in a slightly different form agitating the minds of various churches. Whether it is better to lie low and say nothing, or to loudly proclaim that we have the goods by advertisement. A well known authority states that the poorest preachers are often the greatest advertisers. It is the Bishop of London's next move.

A sad tale of woe is that which the Methodist report on rural Methodism presented to the Bradford Conference. Village life, we are told, is not to-day a stagnant existence. Wireless, gramophones, motor-cars, and women's institutes have changed all that, and "not always to the advantage of the village chapels." "Non-conformity does not attract as once it did." From this we infer that religion—especially the nonconformist brand—flourishes best when village life is a stagnant existence and there is no alternative amusement save pub and little bethel. If that is the case, the prospect for a revival of little bethel religion is decidedly poor. For rational amusements have undoubtedly come to stay. And only little-bethel minds will deplore the fact.

"More freedom for opinion," declared a heading in a weekly paper. Excellent, though we. Parliament must have got up early and repealed the Blasphemy Laws. But our contemporary was only joking. It was merely informing a listless world that the C. of E. National Assembly had approved the Composite Prayer-Book.

#### EVIDENCE.

Perfect evidence is so rare that it may seem fortunate that we so easily dispense with it. Most of us would not recognize it if we met it.

"I suppose I can trust my own eyes, can't I?" is often said. The answer is in the negative. The evidence of our eyes and other sense-organs is very imperfect. And thus do the good conjuror and the bad but able confidence-man make a living. If three honest witnesses of a street-accident give independent accounts of it, it is quite probable that the three accounts will not agree in every detail.

Imperfect evidence seems to be enough for the important things of life, and may make a man a Mahomedan, or a spiritualist, or a vegetarian. And here we do not always play fairly. A man tries to weave a logical proof of any religion. Perhaps he is not a very good weaver. The string breaks and conviction fails. "Ah!" says the man, "but then you must have faith." No doubt. But the provinces of faith and reason are different and separate. He might as well say: "Not enough steak for the pie? Then you must fill up with marmalade."

For lesser matters it often happens that no evidence of any kind is required. Mere iteration suffices. Say, I invent and manufacture Gehenna Sauce. I borrow a hundred thousand pounds from you (don't go—this is a supposed case) to advertise as frequently and in as many places as possible that Gehenna Sauce is good. Before I have spent all your money, the housewife will be saying to the grocer: "I'm told this new Gehenna Sauce is very good—do you stock it?" And perhaps it is really very good—it would be if I invented it—but who told her? The man who wanted to sell it.

Perfect evidence should produce conviction, and generally does with reasonable people. And such conviction should influence conduct, but frequently fails. For instance, a man who suffers "from a vice is completely convinced by evidence which is, humanly speaking, perfect, that this vice is morally degrading, ruinous, and certain to destroy health. But it by no means follows that he will give up the vice. It is an old truth. "I see the better course and I approve it," wrote Ovid, "but it is the worse which I follow."

And here, where reason has failed to direct conduct, quite simple emotion may succeed.

Man is a complicated mechanism, and he cannot afford to despise or to over-rate any part of it. He generally does both for six days in every seven, and occasionally puts in overtime. *Barry Pain* (in *Nash's Magazine*).



## National Secular Society.

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

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

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

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

### To Correspondents.

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

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—J. Latham, £2; E. H. Barker, 2s.6d.

R. G. FORSTER.—We have received your letter, but it takes Mr. Gould's article as a text for discussing matter outside the scope of both the article and this paper, and is not directed as a correction or an amplification of Mr. Gould's remarks.

J. DAVIES.—The date given for Mr. Cohen's visit to Chester-le-Street was an error. He is there on November 13. November 6 is booked for Bridgend.

H. GREEN (Glasgow).—We quite appreciate what you say concerning the value of Mr. Mann's services in Glasgow, and the loss he will be to the Branch. But if he had not been a loss to the Branch he would hardly be likely to turn out a gain to the Society. We hope that others will step in and carry on the propaganda with complete success. There are plenty of workers in the City, and there is never a lack of helpers in Glasgow.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

Mr. George Bedborough, who is paying a rather lengthy visit to the United States, writes, apropos of the N.S.S. Conference:—

I congratulate the N.S.S. on its wisdom in giving itself the luxury of electing you President again. I should congratulate you too, if I did not know the work your office entails. In any case, my very best wishes to you for another year's progress in the cause you have done so very much to help. Other Presidents of the N.S.S. have had wonderful opportunities of displaying their admirable and brilliant qualities and wonderful courage. But I am convinced that you have had a much more difficult task than theirs, also too, you have had to do it without the backing of the magnificent seconds which they had. Those of us who knew Bradlaugh and Foote are as proud of our President to-day, and with quite as much reason, as we were of those splendid pioneers and fighters.

We can only hope we shall do nothing to forfeit the respect of Mr. Bedborough and other Freethinkers. We have given Freethought of our best, and while some may have done better, none could do more than that.

Unattached Freethinkers, residing in or near Bedford, will be interested to know that a meeting is shortly to be called with the intention of forming a Branch of the National Secular Society, and Mr. Ronald H. S. Standfast, of Beaconsfield Villa, 64, Adelaide Square, Bedford, would be glad to receive names and addresses of all in that locality, who would be willing to co-operate with him to that end.

We recently received a letter from Canon Streeter asking for space in these columns to reply to certain comments that have appeared in the *Freethinker* on one of his books. Of course, permission was at once given. Since then we have had a card from the Canon saying that owing to absence from home he will not be able to send his rejoinder for a week or two. It will be welcome whenever it comes.

## National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JULY 21, AT 62 FARRINGTON STREET.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair.

Also present:—Messrs. Coles, Qinton, Rosetti, Silvester and Samuels, Mrs. Quinton, Miss Kough and the Secretary.

Minutes of last meeting were read and confirmed.

The Monthly Financial Statement was presented and adopted and the Pass Book produced. New members were admitted for South London, West London, West Ham and the Parent Society.

Various items of correspondence were dealt with, and the dates of the Out-door Demonstrations were fixed. Final arrangements to be announced later.

The report of the meeting of the Joint Committees of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society, Ltd., called to approve the arrangements of the two Societies made in regard to Miss Vance's retirement, was presented and adopted unanimously.

A letter was read from Mr. F. Mann, accepting the conditions regarding the post offered him by the Executive, which he was prepared to take up at the end of August. It was resolved that Mr. Mann be asked to be present at the next Executive meeting, which was arranged to take place on September 1.

The Secretary called attention to rumours of a probable "Conversion," and desired to warn Branches through the delegates of the inadvisability of permitting non-members and practically unknown persons to use the N.S.S. Out-door Platform.

It was reported that a donation of £250 for General Purposes had been received from the Directors of the Secular Society, Ltd.

Other routine business was transacted and the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE,  
General Secretary.

## The Illusions of Mankind.

(Concluded from page 475.)

IN times of great stress and palpitating emotion credulity is at its highest; in moments of industrial prosperity and tranquility scepticism reigns supreme. Thus during the recent war no idea was too ridiculous to be hailed with unadulterated delight. The Churches, the Y.M.C.A.'s., the New Thinkers, the Christian Scientists, the patriots, had a great and glorious time. It was a period when on two continents more mush, bilge and poppycock were spilled than in all the preceding nineteen hundred years of Christianity.

Thus it is that in times of normality, every new idea is faced with absolute disbelief on the one hand, and a credulity which is staggering in its immensity on the other. Not a few such meet with a solid wall of scepticism. In these cases development is slow. It is, however, merely a matter of the lasting qualities of their enthusiasts. Constant and repeated affirmation, especially if it is of the ecstatic brand, gradually wears down anything less than the disbelief that verges on fanaticism. One such proof of this is the success of popular advertising. Of course unanimous acceptance of any especial brand of mush, except such ecumenically popular illusions as patriotism, liberty, benefits of government, cannot be expected. Precise and particular brands of religion, sociology, philosophy, can only have their own rival and enthusiastic followings.

The religion or philosophy known as spiritualism is a striking instance. There is on the one hand its army of enthusiasts, who are as loyal in their belief and as thorough in their conviction of its truth, as it is humanly possible to be; on the other hand there is the vast majority of mankind which views the movement with plain disbelief or frank hostility. A matter of ten years ago spiritualism, in England and America both, was at a pretty low ebb. It was in the main looked upon as a sort of glorified conjuring show, a mild amusement for neurotic women. The planchette was trotted out after the exhaustion of the local conjuror's repertoire of emasculated card tricks. Spiritualists themselves were looked upon as harmless lunatics, and although there were unquestionably within the acreage of these islands many thousands of sane men and women who, in secret, believed in all the main tenets of the spiritualistic movement, naturally enough, in view of public opinion, they kept these sacrilegious ideas securely behind their teeth.

The advent of Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle brought about in real earnest the beginning of the change. Professed sceptics began to sit up with a vengeance. The opinions of a leading scientist and a popular novelist could not very well be set down as the insane notions of cranks. The Press, if still sceptical, adopted a more tolerant attitude, and, what was a good deal more to the point, gave to spiritualism and its supporters a considerable amount of space and attention. Speedily the secret visitors to mediums threw off their timidity. In company with leaders of such redoubtable power, they braved ridicule and boldly pronounced their faith.

That spiritualism is growing rapidly in popularity there can be no doubt.\* No movement that secures for itself daily paragraphs in the Press, with inter-

mittent articles in the heavy reviews, can very well avoid growing. Yet, in the overwhelming main, mankind is either hesitant at acceptance of what it deems to be a new and disturbing movement, or abundantly sceptical. There are, on the one hand the padres and cardinals of the movement, with a yapping and blindly worshipping pack at their heels accepting with the maniacal eagerness of the pilgrims to Mecca every fantastical and extravagant claim of professional mediums; and on the other, the dancing, radio-listening, cinema-going, pleasure worshipping rabble, which if it ever gives the thing any consideration at all, dismisses it as legerdemain on a par with the thaumaturgical pranks of music-hall quacks. In between the two, lies an army of black-coated professional soul-savers vigorously denouncing spiritualism as the work of the devil, and chanting sounding alarms as to its dangers to the soul in paradise and to the mind while on this earthly sink of iniquity.

In an effort to make a thorough search throughout the printed lore of the Spiritualistic faith for evidence as to the survival of the soul after death of the body, I have waded through an unconscionable number of volumes. Apart from the fact that this search has not been rewarded by one jot or tittle of evidence sufficient to convince a Hottentot, the task has been an inordinately weary one. Whatever these spiritualistic devotees may be in private life, and whatever may be their abilities in other directions, of the art literary their ignorance is colossal. The best of the tomes is as uninspiring as a hen book, as depressing as a manual on obstetrics, as bald and heavy as a text book on algebra, as vapid as a work on gardening. One can tolerate and on occasion excuse nonsense that is brightly written. One can put up with the theological twaddle of a Newman, the patriotism of William Archer, the prejudices of Dr. Johnson, the utopianism of Jack London, for the sake of a sparkling sentence here, a rare bit of criticism there, a scintillating rejoinder or a living description. But these spiritualistic vapourings, at any rate, so far as all those that have come within range of my eye are concerned, not only do not contain so much as a solitary original idea, they are in the overpowering main of ditch-water dullness, they are flat as stale beer, empty as a cracked water bottle. The one partial exception is Sir Oliver Lodge. There is, apart from the incredibly dull and jejune *Raymond* and the morological *Reason and Belief*, some amusement for the seeking here. But the rest very nearly gave me liver disease. Even the bombinating Bradley fails most dismally. And the creator of the immortal Sherlock, never a man of much literary skill, has in his crusading zeal not only praised such palpably feeble work as that of Violet Tweedale, such spluttering inanities as come from the pen of the Rev. G. Vale Owen, but actually sets down in cold print, his opinion that Gerald Massey is "a considerable thinker and poet," submitting as "a splendid sample of English style as well as of English thought" the following delectable gem:—

Spiritualism has been for me in common with many others, such a lifting of the mental horizon and letting-in of the heavens—such a formation of faith into facts, that I can only compare life without it to sailing on board ship with hatches battened down and being kept a prisoner, living by the light of a candle, and then suddenly, on some splendid starry night, allowed to go on deck for the first time to see the stupendous mechanism of the heavens all aglow with the glory of God.†

With Carlyle, Swift, Thackeray, Hazlitt, Matthew Arnold, Huxley, and in our own day, Hardy, Ellis, Wells, Bennett, Galsworthy, Cabell for the searching

\* In the issue of *Light*, dated July 11th, 1925, appear the following figures (taken from the *Star*) relative to the annual meeting of The Spiritualists' National Union: "The Council's report shows a total of 396 churches in affiliation with the Union at the end of 1924. Forty-six new churches were accepted during the year."

† *The New Revelation*, pp. 138-9.

he must needs pass the lot and pick out a bit of obvious dross.

So inherent in mankind is the lure of illusion chasing, that the critic who in his work of destruction offers for consumption no alternative brand of mush is greeted with suspicion, intolerance and frank discouragement. The propounders of a cult, a religion, a system, profess to have little patience with the critic who fails to replace the cure-all he destroys with another patent panacea of his own manufacture. They hold that criticism which is merely and barefacedly destructive is as worthless as a bent pin. The failure to provide in turn a meretricious dummy is looked upon as a proof of sheer incapacity. It never occurs to an intelligence that reaches to a level little above that flourished by the village policeman that the critic may have not the slightest intention of erecting a dummy of his own.

The fact of to-day is the myth of to-morrow. Fully realized is this by every member of the *intelligentsia*. Indeed the only truth is that there is no truth. Pilate crammed into a verbal triumvirate more solid sense than Moses and Solomon and Jesus together scattered through all their multifarious aphorisms. In the succeeding centuries very few have realized to the full the bursting wisdom of Pilate's words. Ibsen did. So did Remy de Gourmont. So too very thoroughly does H. L. Mencken. But utterly futile is it to expect a shopkeeper, or a teacher, or a college professor, or a bricklayer to realize this. One would as soon expect Winston Churchill to admire the philosophy of Nietzsche or a Methodist parson to read *Antic Hay*.

GEORGE R. SCOTT.

### The Man Who Was Nothing.

OUTWARDLY there was nothing in either the appearance or the conduct of Jacob Binks to distinguish him from his fellows. Even a psycho-analyst probing the inmost recesses of Jacob's soul would probably have found there no complex that was not already in the possession of every other resident of Little Tutbury—the village where he resided, and which you can find for yourselves on the map.

And yet Mr. Binks was distinguished above all men. His distinction lay in the fact that, in a world where everybody is something, he was nothing. He was distinguished not so much by what he was, as by what he was not. A somewhat dark saying which we will endeavour to explain.

Mr. Binks was not a Frothblower. By this we do not mean that he had never blown froth, nor that he had any objection to frothblowing in general. A man of tolerant nature and sturdy commonsense, he would no doubt have agreed that the best thing, in fact the only thing, to do with froth is to blow it, and that so long as there is froth in the world there must be frothblowers. He would not have objected to anyone blowing froth so long as they did not blow it over him. But Jacob was not a Frothblower in the official sense; he had never worn the links; had never, in fact, heard of the Ancient Order, and would most probably have scorned it if he had.

Unlike you and I, Jacob never knew what it was to receive an intimation from the secretary of the Band of Happy Brothers, or the treasurer of the Sons of Temperance, to the effect that his subscription was long overdue. He never sallied forth on a wet night to a lodge meeting of the Ancient Order of Kangaroos, returning in the wee small hours wetter than the night itself. He never indulged in secret signs and his brain was unburdened by the weight of strange and mysterious passwords. He was not a Mason, a Buffalo,

a Druid, nor an Oddfellow; neither was he a Templar or a Rechabite. Jacob was none of these things. In all his long life he had never once received a visit from that ubiquitous person, that insidious individual who appears to effect an entry into every Englishman's castle—the man from the Prudential. Even that industrious gentleman, the man who calls for the empties, never bothered Jacob.

Politically, Mr. Binks was a nonentity. If he had any political views he kept them to himself. He was never invited to a garden party by the Primrose League, and he never marched in the wake of a May-day procession. He never grew enthusiastic over Free Trade and was never eloquent on the subject of Tariff Reform. His button-hole was entirely devoid of any badge or insignia that might stamp him as a man having views or sympathies; and this in an age when most people are bullied into having more badges than they can possibly wear.

As with politics so with religion. Jacob Binks was not a Churchman, a Catholic nor a Chapel-goer. He treated the claims of the Presbyterians, the Baptists, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Christadelphians and the Plymouth Brethren with unstudied indifference and genial tolerance. He never asked about the welfare of another's soul and didn't appear to bother about his own. He was as unfamiliar with Atheism and Secular propaganda, as he was with the Westminster Confession and the Mission to Seamen. Untouched by fanaticism, and indifferent to the enthusiasms of his fellows he continued his placid way to the end.

He was buried quietly and without ostentation. There was no band, no procession, no religion, no regalia; no message of sympathy from the Ancient Order of Swashbucklers; no wreath from the sorrowing members of the Breezy Brotherhood. No organization lost a member, and no hard-pressed treasurer received a welcome legacy. He simply passed away without fuss, and Little Tutbury—which, by this time, you have no doubt found for yourselves on the map—knew him no more. . . . It is possible that Jacob Binks lived a fairly useful life!

VINCENT J. HANDS.

### Who's Who in Hell.

(Reprinted from "The Truth Seeker," New York.)

"God so loved the world" that he made arrangements to damn nearly everybody in it. This is proved from the scriptures, and out of the mouths of the preachers. If orthodox religion is true, there is no denying the fact that some of the greatest and best of earth are now being rewarded with the vengeance of God's eternal wrath. If this isn't true, why don't the ministerial brotherhood say so? They don't deny it, but they haven't much to say about it. They don't seem to be seriously disturbed by the dogma of unbelief, but rather to think that if a few saints and a multitude of chosen maniacs and evangelists, together with battalions of simpletons, are successful in getting through the pearly gates, it is of slight consequence what becomes of the scientists, thinkers, and inventors. They apparently are resting on the blessed assurance that if Abraham Ezekiel, David, T. Dewitt Talmage, Billy Sunday, Aimee Simple Mac, and Dr. Riley are among the esteemed and redeemed, it is perhaps all the better if "Tom" Paine, "Abe" Lincoln, "Bob" Ingersoll, and "Tom" Edison are in hell. The holy vessels of the Most High seem to think that heaven is intended only as a home for the feeble-minded, and that hell is plenty good enough for the man who has such poor taste as to possess any brains.

It would really seem that the preachers should become alarmed at the number of reputable men who have gone and are going to hell, but they don't seem to mind it a bit. On the contrary, they appear to think that the

greater the number of intelligent men who go to hell, the more of a snap it will be for the preachers in heaven. Those intelligent men gave the preachers all kinds of trouble on earth thank; God, they won't be able to worry the preachers in heaven!

Let us glance over the pages of *Who's Who in Hell*, a volume compiled by the theologians for their information and for the rapture and encouragement of the faithful. If the theological compilers have it doped out correctly, Benjamin Franklin, philosopher, patriot and unbeliever, is now squirming and squealing in the bottomless pit; that is to say, if the Christian dogmas are true, Franklin is burning in the flames of God's eternal love. It is strange that the sky-pilots don't tell us about this. If it isn't so, I wonder why they don't impart to us the glad news.

Why doesn't the Rev. Godworthy Doolittle tell his congregation next Sunday, or any Sunday, that most of the men who fought for the independence of the American Colonies are lost souls? They were unbelievers in the inspired word, and they are now paying the penalty. Why doesn't the Rev. Doolittle tell us this? And why doesn't the Rev. Bonehead, D.D., preach a sermon on Thomas Paine and tell his flock that the father of American Independence has been burning in hell for more than a century? If this is not so, why doesn't Bonehead, D.D., tell his congregation it isn't so? George Washington never gave his heart or anything else to Jesus, never was baptized, never asked to have his name written in the Lamb's Book of life; therefore, his name is written large in "Who's Who in Hell." If this isn't so, why don't the preachers stand up and tell us it is all a mistake—that Washington was so great and good that he didn't have to stand up for Jesus; the Lord took him anyhow. If the dogma concerning second birth does not apply to a great man like Washington, is it not the duty of the anointed ones to tell us so? Is it necessary only for insignificant people, 2 by 4's and hillbillies, to repent and be born again? We want to know. It is often said that preachers talk too much, but there are occasions when they don't say enough; at times they seem to be afflicted with spiritual lockjaw.

If the Christian doctrine is true, hell is filled with the wise and good, with the heroes of all time. The greatest scientists, thinkers, poets, and benefactors of mankind are among the damned—if the Christian creeds are true. The anointed ones should preach more on this theme. They are talking about dancing, theaters, card-playing, movies, low necks, high skirts and rolled stockings; and decreasing their congregations in progressive regularity. Why don't they give 'em hell for a change—the real old-time Jonathan Edwards hell? Has the old-fashioned hell gone out of style? Has it lost its power to alarm? If it has, then what's the use to try to scare people with the impending danger of high skirts and rolled stockings?

Voltaire, who did more for human liberty than any other man, living or dead; who was the first real antagonist of theology the world had ever seen; who stabbed the Catholic Church to the vitals, and gave superstition its death wound—Voltaire has a private reservation in hell, the same heated seven times hotter than it is wont to be heated, and here the visiting pastors and priests from heaven are allowed to give him the once over from glass observation refrigerators. The show is continuous and one ticket admits to all.

David Hume demolished miracles while on earth, and contentedly breathed his last in the firm conviction that he had not lived in vain. This philosopher is now engaged in wheeling coal in God's co-operative iron foundry, and his earthly friends declare that Hume hasn't even started to believe in miracles yet. Be that as it may, his sweltering occupation furnishes unbounded joy for the redeemed hosts of heaven. The great German composers, Wagner and Beethoven, filled the world with music, but they could also add and subtract, read and write and think; therefore, the all-wise God sent them to hell with all their sweet music and clever brains. Heaven had no use for their commodities.

America's greatest philosopher and kindest of men,

Ralph Waldo Emerson, heard many sermons, but retained his reason throughout all of them, never fell for the mourners' bench, refused to give any portion of his anatomy to Jesus, and as a result he is now perspiring freely and thinking as he never thought before in the midst of God's eternal flames. But all this doesn't seem to disturb the serenity of the anointed ministers of the omnipotent. Their motto is: He that hath ears, let him hear; he that hath brains, let him go to hell. Heaven was made for those with long ears; hell for those with brains. But is there a preacher outside a lunatic asylum who will stand up before his congregation and declare positively that Emerson is in hell? And if he isn't located there, will he please say so? But if he is there, the news is just as important. We want to know. Preachers don't say enough. We wonder why they say so little.

Shakespeare had brains—everybody knows where he is. Shelley, Goethe, Schiller—in fact all the great poets, have gone or are going to hell. Some of the minor poets are going to heaven; they deserve to go there. Bernard Shaw—it will be interesting wherever he goes. And Darwin? Darwin had a great deal to say in this world about Origin of Species. He spent his life in trying to learn some things that could be set down as facts, instead of believing everything that isn't so. As a result, any Holy Roller can give you his present and future address, and can likewise inform you that if Darwin never learned the origin or species here, he certainly knows their finish now. Old Doc Riley will surely have his cup of joy full and running over when from the battlements of the New Jerusalem he beholds Darwin swimming about among the live embers of God's undying love, or being juggled about on the devil's pitchfork. Would the consecrated Doc let fall a cooling drop on the parched tongue of the damned Darwin? Not unless the Doc should forget his theology, and that he'll never do.

And Ingersoll—why, he tried to abolish the very hell he's in now. Why shouldn't he get what's coming to him? If Ingersoll should get a breath of fresh air in hell there'd be a riot in heaven. He is the arch-conspirator of the Christian world. He tried to take away the blessed hope of hell from the howling savages of all Christendom. Never mind his morality and purity of character—God's ways are not man's ways. Down with the great Agnostic. Turn on the double drafts, punch up the fires, jab him, stab him. Let heaven and angels sing; hosanna to God in the highest. Verily, the battlements of heaven would be eternally crowded with the hosts of redeemed numskulls to listen to the eloquence of the burning victim of God's wrath, and even Jehovah himself would bend down his capacious ear to catch every word that might fall from the mouth of this, the greatest creature that the God Unknown ever produced from his factory.

These are but a few names selected from "Who's Who in Hell." Frequent additions are being made to the compilation, but never a change in the addresses. All the singers and scientists, all the thinkers and doers, all the heroes and humanitarians—all are now screaming and scorching in the quenchless fires of hell. But all the popes and cardinals, all the patriarchs and apostles, all the founders of the Inquisition, all the makers of chains, the builders of dungeons, the inventors of instruments of torture, all the tearers and burners and branders of human flesh in the name of religion, all the benighted and bigoted evangelists, all the prophets of woe and apostles of ignorance; all these are clothed in spotless garments of white and are now twanging their golden harps in the city not made with hands. King David, Torquemada, Jonathan Edwards, and the defunct Billy Sundays and their imitators and improvers; all the stealers of babies and sellers of mothers and fathers in the holy name of Christ, are now circling around the great white throne and singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. This is a real orthodox picture, and no doubt any believing Christian's heart will be thrilled with the wondrous beauty and divine simplicity of his religion, even as thus portrayed by a candidate for eternal hellfire.

These called and chosen vessels of the Most High

must learn to let people alone for not believing their theological tomfoolery; they must stop persecuting thinkers, denouncing scientists, and hating humanitarians. Preachers must begin to practice telling the truth; they must cease trying to be holy, and just try to be human; they must begin acting a little bit like pilots; it is going onto their game. It is beginning to look upon the Lamb's Book of Life as a volume filled with the names of maniacs and mollycoddles, with saints and sharpers; while that other volume, "Who's Who in Hell," no longer excites the interest or fear of any man whose head is filled with brains instead of sacred sawdust.

WM. GEO. HENRY.

### American Notes.

#### "LINDY" AT HOME.

You have probably heard enough about the courageous young man who did alone what Alcock and Brown had already done long ago without receiving a hundredth part of the "Lindy" glorification. "Lindy" bears his honours with a becoming modesty, and that's that. Lindy's mother has been photographed for every newspaper on earth. Nobody mentions his father. Why? Because Mr. Lindberg is a well-known rationalist pacifist and has been assailed as a traitor by every pro-war patriot paper in U.S.A. Lindy is not to blame for the fact that the Catholic Bishop of New York officially "blessed" him, insisting on interrupting the New York Reception proceedings in order to get a purely sectarian demonstration tacked on to what ought to have been a citizens' gathering of welcome.

New York distinguished itself by punishing with imprisonment (for two days) a man in the reception crowd who omitted to remove his hat when a professional opera-singer sang the "Star Spangled Banner"!

#### AMERICAN CRITICISM OF ENGLAND.

The middle West and Western newspapers incessantly criticize and condemn all sorts of British official behaviour, particularly of course, the British insistence on Britannia ruling the waves. Amongst the minor grounds of complaint it appears that a rich American jazz-merchant was arrested one Sunday in London for not paying his income tax. The case itself has no sort of interest on its merits as far as I know, but one comment I heard here is worth noting, because this man found that no bail or release was obtainable owing to it being the "Lord's Day." This case, said a freethinker, shows how ridiculous the present compromise is in regard to the Sabbath. Apparently the Sabbath Law is abrogated as far as the arrest of a man is concerned, but is in full force as far as his release is affected. It is time we all made up our minds that Sunday is a holiday—if, as is quite unthinkable, Sunday is to be handed over to the Sabbatarians.

#### MIXED BATHING IN BALTIMORE.

The torrid zone heat here is appalling, but there is none of the ridiculous insistence on ordinary dress which makes a hot day ghastly in British cities. The State Congress here sits (or stands, or drinks ice water, or addresses the House) in shirt and trousers only. In the streets one sees many bare-legged women. At Baltimore and other cities, shower-baths on a large scale have been installed in certain streets. The police put up a notice that a certain street block will be used as a public bath. They fix an overhead frame, attach the shower connexions provided in the frame to a street fire-plug, turn on the water, and advertise that mixed bathing is allowed. All sorts of bathing dresses, old garments and—in the case of children—the *Chicago Tribune* says: "No objection was made if young children bathed as did Adam before the leaf episode."

#### JUDGE BEN LINDSEY.

Since I last wrote the bigots have secured the dismissal of the most enlightened judge in the United

States. Lindsey has offended priests by his freethought, puritans by his sensible views about sex, and prohibitionists by his protest against social tyranny. His enemies have won—for the time! His recently expressed views about the horrors of loveless eternal marriages, his thoughtful suggestion of "companionate marriages" (marriages which should be childless and easily dissolved with the object of making for permanent happy family marriages) has given his enemies their opportunity. Lindsey originated the idea of Juvenile and Family Courts, and he was the first judge of the first Juvenile Court (at Denver, Colorado). The Juvenile Court has been adopted by England and many other countries. The founder is dismissed in "disgrace."!

Lindsey's ideas may be right or wrong. They deserve discussion, not punishment. Lindsey has at least never propounded any principles which would make him unfit to continue the splendid work he has done in Denver. Lindsey's creed is an out-and-out rationalist one and he is not afraid to say so. It reflects credit on some of the popular magazines of America that Lindsey is allowed to declare his independence of religion. He writes in the *Red Book Magazine* :—

My creed is a simple one. I think it is up to the human race to behave in a way that will intelligently make for the happiness and welfare of the greatest number of persons; that we are to use our common sense as individuals, in judging what conduct, in any specific situation, will do that. I think the best morality is based on happy, expansive and generous living which reckons duly on the happiness of others, and takes pleasure in that happiness. I think such a way of living needs to be rational and not custom-bound or superstitious; and that it must be based on honest, courageous, independent thought rather than on second-hand maxims and prohibitions accepted uncritically because they are old or are alleged to be "in accord with the experience of the race." Some are, and some are not.

And Freethinkers will be interested to read how Lindsey replies in his uncompromising language to his Christian critics. It is greatly to be wished that more of our "advanced" writers had Lindsey's courage and directness of definite declaration against the authority of the old Jewish holy books which so many modern English writers go out of their way to honour.

I have been receiving a good many letters of late asking me how I reconcile some of the views I am expressing in these articles with the Bible. I have one short and conclusive answer to that question. I don't reconcile them with the Bible. Moreover I don't see why I should. Those of my views which are in accord with Holy Writ speak for themselves. Those which are not have to be classed with evolution, the roundness of the earth, and other matters which were not factors in the speculative thought of the ancient Jews.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

## Correspondence.

### A HEAVEN OF TO-DAY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I had intended complimenting you on your recent excellent replies or references to the religion of Sir Oliver Lodge; but, the idlest of men, I am frequently much preoccupied. I trust the Sage saw your notes which he must have found unanswerable arguments against any relationship between science and religion. A vague comfort suffuses at times the minds of all men, and not necessarily from religious considerations, a serene "atmosphere," existing with, yet quite independent of the realities of life and the most strictly secular and scientific outlook. This "religion" we need not object to; for the best of us, I think, would at times find life intolerable lacking such an atmosphere to shield us from the monotonous insistency of the "human tide that beats to-day on the shores of our own senses." Some of us get into the "habit" of living, and would fain go on for ever. We form other habits, which build for us other heavens, sometimes hells. There is the book habit—the greater literature, so allied to the *Freethinker*. That, wisely cultivated, often unwisely, opens to us, suddenly and unawares, the greatest happiness, nobility, and exaltation of mind. It may be but egotism, unlast-

ing and unreal, yet to the man ungifted, unindulged, in this "diviner intoxication," yea:—

"Gie him strong drink until he wink  
That's sinking in despair."

After many days I had been re-reading *The Ruins of Empires* (which I am hoping to refer to in these columns soon) and associating it with a kindred spirit; then, after the recommendation of my friend R.S., stumbled upon *Urn Burial* by the pious old Sir Thomas Browne—bless the dear old man! I was fagged and weary and dejected, and rest and recuperation soothing, and inspiration came to me in an hour and a half in an armchair in the pages of this magic book. The mind of R.S. is of the large and generous sort, of almost unerring judgment of things literary, a storehouse of the finest gems of thought, not kept for show, but natural to the man and spacious as the Freethinker. Later, we met; the precious *Urn Burial*, with Symmonds' masterly introduction, returned after many years. R.S. reads again, rises, recites, and rages in the room. "By God!" he exclaims, banging the book upon the table, "who is going to tell me that is not great writing?" And so we Freethinkers have our felicities, have them here and now, and they are like to grow richer with our years till at last we assimilate something of greatness itself. Now comes Mr. H. B. Dodds with a long quotation from the veteran critic, J. M. Robertson. Again, we are roused to enthusiasm and put J. M. R. in the Pantheon with the masters! The road to heaven is not so steep and thorny after all, nor is it the narrow way, it has wide horizons, rich pasturage, all the scents of Araby, it is strewn with the flowers of freethought, on that road we walk and talk with the wisest and best of the world; if, even for these, there be no ultimate abiding city, have they not strewed the road to it with roses all the way; and spirits like these will know how to resign themselves to the hand of Nature when at length it leads them to the vales of rest, the poppy-land of sleep.

ANDREW MILLAR.

### Mr. Whitehead's Mission at Bolton.

This week we have to report seven meetings, two of which were held at Blackburn and the rest at Bolton. The Blackburn meetings were well attended, and in Bolton the usual excitement Mr. Whitehead's visits provoke prevailed. There was, as on previous occasions, much competition for the Town Hall step—the only pitch permitted, and in spite of a religious attempt to monopolize the step, we managed to get our share, to ensure which the speaker was obliged to put in an appearance every evening about two hours before the advertised time of starting. Catholicism is strong in Bolton and sometimes vociferous, but after the opening meeting, when question time was lively, good order and keen attention was in evidence. We have to thank Messrs. Partington and Sisson for their enthusiastic help at every meeting.

Mr. Whitehead will commence a week's mission at Liverpool, on July 30. Sympathizers are urged to attend.

### PIONEER LEAFLETS

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### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

#### LONDON.

##### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S.—No Meeting.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—No Meeting.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Lecture by Mr. L. Ebury. (Brockwell Park): 6.0, Lecture by Mr. L. Ebury; Wednesday, August 3, at 8 p.m., Peckham Rye, Mr. L. Ebury; Clapham Old Town, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Thursday, August 4, at Clapham—Lecture by Mr. S. Hanson.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—Ramble, Stoke Common and District. Conducted by Mr. N. Lidstone. Train Marylebone 10.20 a.m. Cheap return Gerrards Cross, 2s. 2d.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): 11.30, 3.0 and 6.30, Speakers—Messrs Hart, Baker Hanson and Parton. Thursday, 7.30, Messrs. Saphin and Botting.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.0, Messrs. Campbell-Everden and Jackson. 6.0, Messrs. Hyatt and Le Maine. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith): 3.0, Messrs. F. Carter and B. A. Le Maine. Freethought Lectures are held every Wednesday and Friday in Hyde Park from 7.30, various Lecturers. On Saturday August 6, a Debate will take place in Hyde Park at 7.30, between Mr. G. Rasterbrook and B. A. Le Maine, subject—"Is there a God?"

#### COUNTRY.

##### INDOOR.

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

##### OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. Meetings held in the Bull Ring Monday, Wednesday and Friday, at 7.

EDINBURGH (The Mound): Saturday, July 30, at 7.30, Mr. Fred Mann, "Secularism and a Future Life."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (West Regent Street): Every Thursday at 7.30, Mr. Fred Mann. July 28, "Comrade Christ." August 4, "The Inventor of God."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Islington Square): 8.0, Mr. Whitehead's Mission from Saturday, July 30 to August 6. Special meeting corner of High Park Street and Park Lane, Thursday, August 4. Friends please note.

SHOTTS BRANCH N.S.S. (See local advertisements for meeting place): 7.30, Mr. Fred Mann, "When Freethought Comes."

TINKERS may be good, bad, or indifferent, but the word has become a synonym for bungling. We do not tinker. Those whom we will name to you will tell you so. Write immediately for any of the following:—Gents' A to D Patterns, suits from 55s.; Gents' E Patterns, suits all at 67s. 6d.; Gents' F to H Patterns, suits from 75s.; Gents' I to M Patterns, suits from 98s.; or Ladies' Fashion and Pattern Sets, costumes from 60s.; frocks from 47s.—MACCONNELL & MARE, New Street, Bakewell, Derbyshire.

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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 Freethought movement cannot well be over emphasized. For over forty years it has been the mouthpiece of militant Freethought 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 Freethinkers all over the English-speaking world.

The Trust may be benefited by donation or bequests. Donations may be sent to either the Secretary, Mr. H. Jessop, Hollyshaw, Whitkirk, Leeds, or to the Editor of the *Freethinker*, from whom any further information concerning the Trust will be given on request.

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