

JESUS, MARX, AND LENIN.

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Views and Opinions.

Jesus, Marx, and Lenin.

SOME twenty-five years ago the Borough of Bethnal Green was prominent in my mind for having double the death rate of any other parish in London. It was also noticeable as having within its borders an area which had about double the death rate of any other part; and that land was owned largely by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, from whom part of the incomes of the "poor clergy" of the Church of England is derived. I do not suppose that all these same clergy were aware of the fact and I do not believe they would have been seriously disturbed if they had known. Many of them would have said that their business was to look after the welfare of the souls of their parishioners, not their bodies, and living in a deadly slum area in Bethnal Green would not debar them having golden harps and sitting on golden thrones in the New Jerusalem. For while the housing conditions were quite scandalous, there was no shortage of churches and chapels, nor of parsons. That is one thing that must be placed to the credit of Christianity. The Christian Church could put up with dwelling houses—for laymen—that were hotbeds of disease, it could put up with over-crowding, under-feeding, and lack of education and of open spaces, but it could not bear to see that there was not at everyone's door, a church. Many years ago a well known religious writer claimed as one of the benefits of the National Church, that it had placed a Church in every village. The statement is unchallengeable. Food may have been insufficient, clothing scanty, education a minus quantity, but the people have always had plenty of religion. How far the minus and the surplus were related, is a matter on which some people may have very definite opinions.

* * *

A New Trinity.

This same parish of Bethnal Green has just made another bid for fame. A new block of Council dwellings has recently been opened in the Borough,

and by a vote of fourteen to ten the Borough Council decided to call the block the "Lenin Estate." There appears to have been a warm discussion on the matter, during the course of which Councillor Boyce said, that among the three great names in history "that of Christ came first, Marx second, and then Lenin." Thus is established a new Trinity. It is not every generation that can see so clearly the birth of a new religion, and we hope that Sir James Frazer will take note of this fresh chapter in mythology. Otherwise in days to come there may be a discussion as to whether the last two are not as mythical as the first one. Father, Son and Holy Ghost is paralleled by Christ, Marx and Lenin. They are the three greatest names in history. Councillor Boyce has said so. I do not, I am ashamed to say, know anything about Councillor Boyce, but hereafter I shall reverence him as one of the great creative forces of history. For sheer generalizing power I have always given Aristotle and Herbert Spencer a very prominent place. For the future I shall place at their side Councillor Boyce, ex-Mayor of Bethnal Green. Let us hope that the history of the new trinity will make better reading than that of the old one.

* * *

Christ as a Labour Leader.

One can hardly suppose that Christ, Marx, and Lenin, an arch-supernaturalist and two Atheists—were lumped together because of their religious similarity. It is to be presumed that Councillor Boyce is deeply interested in social affairs, and that, somehow or the other he has got it into his head that he has three social reformers to deal with instead of two. Whatever the social value of Lenin and Marx, that was quite clearly the direction in which their interest lay. But how on earth does Jesus Christ come into that galley? If Mr. Boyce believes what he says about Christ, it seriously discounts his valuation of Marx and Lenin. For a man who can read the New Testament and then decide that the aim of Jesus Christ was social improvement, and social improvement in such a way that he stands in the same category of such well meaning enthusiasts as Marx and Lenin, comes about as near being mentally hopeless as it is possible for a man to be. Of course, Mr. Boyce might plead that he did not mean that Jesus Christ was a scientific thinker on social and economic problems, only that he was filled with goodwill towards mankind. I am not sure that even this can be truthfully said of the average Eastern religious fanatic, of which class Jesus, if he existed, stood as a specimen; religious preachers of all ages and of every creed, have usually been full of love towards those who agreed with them, and overflowing with malevolence against those who flouted their message. And, after all, teachers who are full of goodwill to their fellows are not at all uncommon in the world,

either in ancient or in modern times. It is not goodwill that has made the trouble in the world, but goodwill supported by the right kind of mentality. Mr. Meanwell cuts quite a charming figure, but on the whole he is apt to do more harm to others than the much rarer individual who deliberately sets out to work evil to his fellow men.

* * *

Wanted, a Sense of Humour!

Social reformers should be made of sterner stuff. If a man believes that the theories of Marx, or of Lenin, or of anyone else are likely to remove some of the evils from which mankind is suffering, let him say so, openly and boldly. We may disagree with him profoundly, but we can respect the mentality and the character behind it. But when a man repeats this idle and quite baseless chatter about the sociological ambitions of either an alleged incarnate deity, or of a Jewish peasant, who may or may not have lived some two thousand years ago, one can respect neither the character nor the mentality that motives the stupidity. If he can do no better in this direction we may well suspect the quality of his thinking when applied to other matters. If he is induced to use these parrot-like phrases, in the hopes of capturing the attention of the unthinking, and of gaining the support of the credulous, there is certainly good ground for distrusting his actions in public life. I do not question that Mr. Boyce is in good company in dragging Jesus Christ forward to support his ideas. Every quack in the country is at the same game. Mr. Boyce uses Jesus because he is among a people where Jesus is the established deity. It is extremely likely that if he were in a Mohammedan country he would use Mahomet with the same freedom and with as much justification. Jesus, Marx and Lenin? If I could work a miracle, I would give to everyone neither money nor health, nor leisure. My first miracle would be to give them all a good solid, active sense of humour. And if that were common, half the shams and impostures and wrongs of the world would probably die out in the course of a single generation. Even Councillors might experience its beneficial influence.

* * *

The Prophet of Otherworldism.

May I venture to suggest to Councillor Boyce, and to all other Labourists and would-be social reformers, that the issue on which the Jesus of the New Testament fixed his mind was not sociological, but entirely, in its aim, theological. His business was to save men's souls, not in an ethical sense, so that they might become more useful and more decent citizens, but wholly so that they might one day form part of the glorious company around the golden throne, eternally singing hymns to the Creator. Nothing mattered but that, everything had to be subordinated to that. Of course, something had to be said about secular duties; the wildest and maddest religious fanatic that ever lived could never altogether ignore the fact that men did live together, and that some kind of obligation was due to one's fellows. And this is all we can honestly place to the credit of the gospel Jesus. But of genuine social problems he showed never the slightest recognition. There was no sense of even the elementary sociological truth that the real betterment of the individual depends ultimately upon the betterment of the society of which he is fundamentally a part. Ingersoll said the place to be happy is here, the time to be happy is now, and as you cannot be really and permanently happy while others are unhappy, make others happy likewise.

That is a genuine human aspiration quite foreign to the character of the New Testament figurehead. Jesus would have said that this was neither the time nor the place to be happy, real happiness was postponed till the next world; and his gospel set on one side the conception of individual salvation by way of corporate betterment. What conception had he of the State, save that of something existing to which obedience was due, so long as it did not interfere with religious practices? What notion did he ever display of the function of the family as a humanizing and civilizing force? The one shape in which the labour problem fronted him was that of slavery, and he left that untouched. His greatest defenders have been unable to do better than to manufacture the plea that he set on foot a spirit of brotherly love that was destined to destroy slavery. But a spirit that took about sixteen centuries to work, and which did not prevent the revival of slavery in the countries most devoted to his teaching, is surely not a thing of which one may boast. If Councillor Boyce will read a little of what some of the Greek and Latin writers had to say about all these problems, he may get hold of some useful ideas. By mouthing the name of Jesus, he may only secure the co-operation of knaves and the support of fools.

* * *

The Way of Reform.

Quite seriously one is left wondering whether men who talk as Councillor Boyce is reported to have talked are of any real value to the task of social reform. I do not question their good intentions, but the world has never lacked these, nor has the world benefited much from them when they have stood alone. It may be that Mr. Boyce thinks he will get support from many by using the name of Jesus. But that does not make the outlook more promising. Somewhere Emerson says that all truth begins as the property of an individual, and it is not doing its full work until it becomes individual property again. That is a golden saying, for there is no security of progress through the way of unthinking adherence to a formula. You cannot usefully educate a democracy by mere phrases, although it is the easiest of all tasks to fool them by their use. Unfortunately Councillor Boyce is not alone in this playing with Jesus as, one may assume, a method of gaining the support of the unthinking sentimentalist. The "dope" against which Karl Marx did warn his readers has evidently not yet lost its strength. But it is curious to find his professed followers using it.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Ora Pro Nobis.

A NATION gathers round a man unknown,
And reverently bows in silent grief;
The symbol of their gratitude hath grown
To vast proportions, with its bold relief
'Gainst those who linger on. His time was brief,
His glory great, whose life was not his own.
There seems a cruel fate that bids us feel
A world of woe o'er one devoted head;
We lavish thus our passions on the dead,—
Our living sympathies for others' weal
Are with our grand display so swiftly shed:
A bold restraint should bind with hooks of steel;
For often virtues have a vicious strain,
And vices echo to a sweet refrain.

WM. J. LAMB.

Trust is the best of relationships.—Teaching of Buddha.

A Characteristic Sermon in Wales.

LIKE Scotland, Wales was for many years an exceptionally religious country, practically all the people being devoted frequenters of Church and Chapel. Religion was the supreme object of thought and conversation throughout the length and breadth of the land. Farm labourers, slaters, and carpenters were omniscient theologians, for whom the universe contained not a single insoluble riddle. There were two theological parties, the Calvinistic and the Arminian, which were in a state of never-ceasing warfare with each other, and the whole country resounded with the noise of their acrimonious controversies. These theological conflicts alternated with wildly emotional religious revivals. The present writer distinctly remembers the painfully sensational one that occurred in the year 1859, when commonsense was flung recklessly down the wind and rational practices gave place to the most irregular, insane mental exercises and the most preposterous contortions of the body. The ethical value of that revival was ridiculously small, and the same is true of many later revivals which followed at certain intervals. It may be said, indeed, that Wales has been exceptionally a land of frequent religious revivals. And yet in spite of, or possibly as the indirect result of these revivals, religion has, for the last seventy or eighty years, been slowly but steadily losing its hold upon the Welsh mind and heart.

Now, strangely enough, those religious fluctuations just referred to, were a peculiar, if not exclusive feature of Welsh Nonconformity. It was at one time a Nonconformist habit to charge the Episcopal Church in Wales with being spiritually dead, or with having no care whatsoever for men's souls. At present we are not at all concerned with either the truth or falsehood of that accusation, our only point being that the Anglican Church in Wales was never victimized, as the Free Churches often were, by base sentimentalism or mawkish sensationalism. And now that Wales is drifting away from chapel-going, we learn that the Episcopal clergy are exerting a stronger influence over the population than those of all the Dissenting bodies put together. More than that, it appears that the Episcopal pulpit is, on the whole, more in accord with modern thought than that of Nonconformity.

In proof of the accuracy of that statement we desire to call special attention to a discourse recently delivered by the Rev. F. H. R. Hughes, in the Church of All Saints, Mardy, Rhondda Valley, South Wales. We owe our knowledge of this occasion to a report by Sam Jones, which appeared in the *Western Mail* of July 16. The Rev. Mr. Hughes is clearly above the average of present-day preachers in Wales, as an examination of the sermon preached by him on Sunday, July 10 abundantly shows. The text was Job xiv. 14: "If a man die shall he live again?" Sam Jones says: "The text caught instant attention—partly owing to the delivery and partly to its challenge on such a bright morning as this. . . . There is a strange quality in Mr. Hughes's voice. It is a plaintive note, a slight touch of pathos, very pleasing to the ear. He utilizes this voice well, as I noticed during morning prayers." Let us now critically consider the reverend gentleman's treatment of his text. According to Sam Jones's report the teaching was as follows:—

The question in Job, we learned, was a vital one, for both our mortality and happiness depended upon our being able to answer it in the affirmative. There were a few noble-minded folk who would lead fine lives even without belief in immortality. The majority, under such condition, would say, "If we

are born only to die, why trouble about character and conduct?"

Mr. Hughes must surely be aware that only a small proportion of our population even pretend to be Christian believers, but it is a simple truism to observe that non-Christians, as a class are not one whit behind ardent believers in character and conduct. There are at present tens of thousands even in Wales of active or passive Freethinkers, to whom the supernatural is non-existent, but it cannot honestly be alleged that on that account they are less upright and noble than their brethren in the household of faith. Mr. Hughes asserts that "Sceptics had acknowledged that human happiness would suffer when man could no longer believe in an after-life." Will the reverend gentleman be good enough to supply us with the name of one accredited Sceptic who ever said that genuine happiness is impossible to those who do not believe in a life beyond the grave? Personally we have never had the misfortune to meet such a man or to read his works. Neither are we convinced that such a Sceptic exists anywhere. Mr. Hughes is further represented as declaring that "the treasures of philosophy and all the repositories of science could not provide a balm for the wounded spirit." We are equally confident that science does provide most ample satisfaction for those who have lost their faith in immortality by putting its whole emphasis on the life that now is, and on the supreme duty of making the most and best of it.

The reporter of the *Western Mail* informs us that "Mr. Hughes dealt in skilful manner with the question from the scientific point of view. His was the role of the teacher. His argument was deliberate, concise, and clear, and one that was obviously followed keenly by his congregation." Let us now see what it was:—

It was a fundamental axiom that matter was indestructible. The disappearance of matter meant molecular change. Not one atom of the material body ceased to be at death. Did not that suggest that the spirit which was in man was not going to be cast after a few short years here "as rubbish to the void?"

Mr. Hughes ignores the fact that the men of science, who advocate the indestructibility of matter, do not recognize the existence of a spirit in man as a separate entity from the body. The Dictionary defines "spirit" as "the soul; the intelligent, immaterial, immortal part of man;" but in reality it signifies life, the life of the body which is the only life known to us. When the body dies the whole man dies; that is to say, the body resolves itself into its component parts, and the individual called man ceases to be, as such, for ever. Mr. Hughes was fully justified in saying that not "one atom of the material body ceases to be at death"; but he was supported by no fact whatever when he added that that suggests the immortality of the spirit in man, because science is utterly unaware of any spiritual existence whatsoever, and so is Mr. Hughes himself. He believes in spirit without the slightest warrant from the realm of knowledge. It is quite true that thought is but a function of the brain, and William James maintained that, in "strict logic," precisely the same thing is true of the soul. In any case, to say that "the body is only the temporary vehicle of the soul," is to attempt to explain the known by the unknown, or, as Shakespeare puts it, to give to "airy nothing a local habitation and a name." As Mr. Hughes knows well, William James was an Atheist, and his argument in the famous Lecture on Immortality was, as he frankly admitted, feeble in the extreme. Equally feeble and futile is our friend's ex-

clamation that he "refused to believe that God had been engaged countless ages producing man, only to let him suffer destruction after a brief existence here." The preacher's predicament lies in the fact that he endeavours to be at once an orthodox theologian and a loyal recipient of scientific knowledge, which is a wholly impossible feat.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Profits of Prophets.

"There is no darkness but ignorance."—*Shakespeare.*

"The vain crowds, wandering blindly, led by lies."—*Lucretius.*

"Clericalism, it is the enemy."—*Gambetta.*

"Give me the wages of going on, and not to die."—*Tennyson.*

AGREABLY to the law of supply and demand, prophets have in all times arisen to foretell events, smooth and otherwise, at prices absurdly cheap, considering the value of their services. From the days of the Roman augurs, who, it is said, could not look one another in the face without laughing, down to those of the present-day fortune-teller, who giggles in her dainty sleeve until an infidel magistrate usurps her calling, and prophesies that she will spend some months in a little room, an unbroken line of more or less inspired personages has existed.

The phenomenon is not unknown in this country, and we can estimate the case of some notorious folks more correctly than those of the lesser luminaries. In the early years of the nineteenth century, Joanna Southcott was a well-known prophetess in the time when the great Napoleon was identified as the "beast" in "Revelation." She was a domestic servant, and up to the age of forty seems to have had no higher aspirations than the kitchen and the wash-tub. Then she blossomed forth as a prophetess, and made a lot of money by the sale of "seals," which were to ensure the salvation of those who purchased them. It was a highly profitable career, for she "sealed" no less than 144,000 people, and also received, with becoming modesty, the free-will offerings of the faithful.

There was more madness than method in the career of Lieutenant Richard Brothers, a retired naval officer, whose portrait was engraved with rays of light descending on his crazed head. The word came to Dick that he would be revealed to all men as the King of Jerusalem and Ruler of the World. But the humble message fell on stony ground, and the wicked world justified its title. After Dick had invited King George the Fourth to deliver up his crown, and had ordered both Houses of Parliament to meet for receiving the divine message, the Messiah was led away into that house of bondage, where so many sons and daughters of high heaven have suffered restraint at the hands of unbelieving keepers and sceptical doctors.

Innocent folks of a later generation revered the utterances of that portentous prophet, the Rev. Dr. Cumming, who demonstrated that the Biblical prophecy of the locusts, whose sting is in their tail, was fulfilled by a famous Turkish general having used a horse's tail as a standard. Dr. Cumming also contended that the Pope of Rome was "anti-Christ," and that the entire French nation were the particular persons aimed at in the theological tirades of "Saint John" in "Revelation." This modern Jeremiah preached before Queen Victoria, and the avenues of his church were as crowded as the approaches to a fashionable theatre. But nemesis came at last, and he fell from his pinnacle of popularity. In a reckless moment he named the year 1861 as that in which the end of the world was to take place. The year was not uneventful, for it saw the start of the American

Civil War, but it failed to fill the prophet's programme, and from that time his fame declined. His dupes subscribed handsomely to place him above difficulty and want, and he passed his last years in peace and comfort, musing quietly on the credulity of laymen.

There was still money in the hocus-pocus business, and Cumming's golden mantle was soon on the shoulders of another charlatan. For many years the Rev. W. Baxter's name was a household word in certain religious circles. To multitudes he was a heaven-sent seer, commissioned by a benevolent deity to receive the light of prophecy and throw it over a naughty world. Otherwise decent people reserved a warm corner in their hearts for a spiritual guide who taught them precisely to whom they might point as "The Whore of Babylon," and the "beast" in the Apocalypse. That quintessence of nonsense, "Forty Coming Wonders," was purchased with unabated credulity, although the error of Baxter's prophetic pretensions were proved again and again by the logic of facts to the satisfaction of all reasonable persons.

Few prophets would find it easy to go on year after year delivering a succession of silly prophecies destined to utter failure. But some Christians are the most greedily credulous of their kind. The prophet gravely announced the ascension of 144,000 Christians, without dying, in 1896, and the great Persecution from 1896 to 1901. The second advent of Christ was fixed for the opening year of the present century. The prophet was nearly cornered once by the lawyers of the City Corporation. He applied for the lease of a newspaper office, and it was pointed out to him that he had asked for a lease extending a quarter of a century beyond the time he had fixed for the end of the world. Nothing daunted, Baxter said he was present as a business man and not as a prophet, and he told the simple truth for once in his life.

These are a few notorious cases. The impenitent and worldly-minded may laugh, but these instances throw a searchlight upon the methods of priestcraft. Joanna Southcott was an illiterate domestic servant, Cumming and Baxter were clergymen, and educated in the pater of their profession, and Brothers had a bee in his bonnet. But all of them had sufficient shrewdness to impose upon credulous and ignorant people. They were fortune-tellers, although they did not tell women how to find lovers, or tell men if they would succeed in business. They made bolder dashes into futurity, and their courage met with its golden rewards. They were, however, just as much imposters as a gipsy fortune-teller. They pretended to possess powers which neither they nor other people possess. They belonged to the troublous tribe of dabblers in the alleged "super" natural, the tribe that includes thought-readers, clairvoyants and mediums. But whereas an ordinary person who tells fortunes is fined or sent to prison, the same fraud may be practised with impunity if one uses the jargon of the Christian religion. The Vagrancy Act, which ought to be repealed, provides that all persons professing to tell fortunes shall be liable to fine or imprisonment. Such is the modern and merciful form of the Divine commandment: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." John Selden, in his "Table Talk," says wisely that the old laws against witchcraft do not prove witchcraft to have existed. That is so, for it never did exist. As a fact, tens of thousands of old women, perfectly harmless and innocent, were legally murdered on fantastic evidence, which ought to have been incredible, for doing what was physically impossible, in supposed obedience to a legendary command of a doubtful deity.

Fortune-telling to-day means fines and imprison-

ment for poor vagrants, but the career of Joanna Southcott, and of many another religious charlatan, shows how it may be turned to commercial account by any Christian who remembers the simple fact that a large number of his co-religionists are uneducated, foolish, and credulous. Joanna was a lunibug, but a hundred years after her death her disciples are ready to defend her reputation. It takes so much to shake the belief of those with the will to believe, and it is one of the curses of priestcraft, that it trades upon this weakness of humanity. We plume ourselves on our civilization, on our science, on our commonsense, and yet we hand over the nation's children to the priests, who saturate their young minds with their superstitious nonsense, so that when they reach manhood they may be exploited as easily as sheep by the shearers. The clergy no more assist progress than a fly on the wheel of a locomotive assists the speed of the express train. They simply go round together.

MIMNERMUS.

The Religion of the Criminal.

HAVE you ever heard of Andreas Bjerre? Probably you have not; unless you can read Swedish, and also take an interest in criminology. I had never heard of him myself until a week ago, when I read his book, *The Psychology of Murder* (Longman's & Co., 9s.) which has just been translated into English, with a preface by Birger Ekeberg, formerly Minister of Justice in Sweden.

Andreas Bjerre, then, was born on March 21, 1879, at Gothenberg. In 1900 he took his degree of B.A., at Upsala University; he continued his studies in Paris and Lund—where he took the degree of Bachelor of Laws—Berlin, Oslo, Copenhagen and Stockholm. In 1919 he was appointed Professor of Criminal Law at the University of Dorpat, and in 1921 to the chair of legal philosophy; which, however, he was obliged to resign in 1925, through illness, and died on the 22nd of November of the same year, at the early age of forty-six; an irreparable loss to science and humanity.

Bjerre devoted his life to the study of Criminology; many others, doctors, lawyers, philosophers and essayists, have done the same, but not in the way that Bjerre did. He did not content himself with criminal statistics, medical diagnosis, reports of trials, memoirs and journals, and other second-hand matter; but went direct to the criminal himself, and devoted many years of his life to constant personal association with criminals in Swedish prisons, in the effort to reveal the dark secrets of their psychic lives.

In a way, Bjerre reminds us of Fabre, the quaint and pious little French naturalist, who has been described as "The Insects' Homer." Fabre lies on the ground, and with his lens, peers into the insect's nest, recording the most dreadful cruelties and terrible tragedies he sometimes witnessed there, in the same matter-of-fact way in which he might describe the making of butter or cheese. Bjerre exhibits much the same impassivity, and just as Fabre holds us intensely interested so does Bjerre; for as Ekeberg observes, Bjerre was not only a pre-eminent criminal psychologist, but he had a considerable literary gift, and one follows his analysis of these criminals with the same tenseness of interest with which we follow a drama. Ekeberg describes *The Psychology of Murder*, as "an extremely fascinating book." Speaking personally, I can confirm the description, I read it at a sitting. The hours flew by unregarded, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot," until the end of the book was reached with the dawn of day.

It is true that Bjerre was fortunate in being accorded unusual facilities for his investigations. Victor Almquist, the Director-General and Head of the Royal Board of Prisons in Sweden, afforded him opportunities for exhaustive conversation with a large number of all sorts of criminals at the Central Prison at Langholmen, Stockholm. Of course the privilege was granted in consideration of Bjerre's known ability and eminence in this line of investigation, but it is very doubtful if anyone, however eminent he might be, would be allowed to conduct such an investigation in any of our prisons; the rules and regulations would not allow it. Neither would the privilege be of any use, unless the investigator adopted the system so successfully employed by Bjerre, for he never questioned or cross-examined the prisoners, his method was to gain the confidence—not always an easy task—of the prisoner, and let him tell his story in his own way. His methods seem not unlike those employed in psychoanalysis, and many psychoanalysts profess to find the basis of much crime in a suppressed sex complex; but Bjerre repudiates this idea altogether. He says: "Deviations from the normal sexual development, . . . are, apart from certain forms of homosexuality, only symptoms or effects of deeper-seated psychic defects, and are never primary or original causes of the growth of criminal qualities, and the details of these aberrations can never be of fundamental or essential significance in criminal psychology."*

The book is divided into three chapters; each chapter deals with a murderer, representative of his type, and of the special weakness, or defect of character, which caused his downfall. It has been said that every man represents at least three persons. Firstly, the man as he really is. Secondly, the man as other people see him. Thirdly, the man as he thinks he is, or as he thinks people see him. It is in the last category that self-deception plays the largest part. For instance, when the bore deceives himself into the belief that he is a brilliant conversationalist. Or a woman as regards her personal charm, especially when youth is rapidly passing. Again, we may have, perhaps on the spur of the moment, done something which, upon after, and cooler reflection, we see to have been mean, or cruel, or unjust. Then we make all manner of excuses to justify our conduct, and sometimes even succeed in persuading ourselves that we are really the injured party. But mostly our self-deceptions are quite unconscious and innocent, but in the criminal this natural weakness is raised to the nth degree. Says Bjerre:—

As I have already remarked, the fateful significance of self-deception in the life of a criminal can scarcely be exaggerated: criminals are a race addicted to extremes of self-deception. The more or less innocent tendency of the ordinary, average human being to shun reality, or to transform it, as far as possible, whenever it is inconvenient, appears in the criminal released, as it were, from all restraint or check, and expands and develops into the most incredible forms. This occurs, he it said, not only among the class of murderers we are here considering, in whose life the causes and effects of self-deception are the dominating influences, but also among practically all criminals, not only in their apparently unimportant daily habits, but also in the decisive moments of their lives. Self-deception is a psychological weapon of defence, which every criminal must employ to an immeasurably greater extent than other human beings. (p. 22).

The absence of Atheists from the statistics of our prison population has often been commented upon—much to the bewilderment of many pious people who think that absence of religion is the cause of crime.

* Andreas Bjerre. *The Psychology of Murder*, p. 115.

It has even been suggested that Atheists hypocritically adopt religion, "take the veil," as it were, upon entering prison life. This is manifestly untrue; the real Atheists who have been sent to prison, like Carlile, Truelove, Holyoake and Foote, were not guilty of hypocrisy. As a matter of fact there is very little hypocrisy practised in prison, for the game is not worth the candle. Bjerre himself testifies that: "As a general rule it may be said that among criminals in prison, and especially among those under life-sentence, one practically never finds conscious religious hypocrisy." (p. 33). Partly, he explains, because nothing they could possibly gain by it would compensate for the trouble and irksomeness of keeping up the pretence; and partly because most felons harbour a deep aversion to religion and its representatives. But these felons must not be confused with Atheists; Bjerre has confused the issue here by declining to recognize as religion the beliefs entertained by these criminals, declaring that it would be very extraordinary to find among the worst felons: "the strength for real genuine, sound religious life," which he defines as "the capacity for faithful devotion." If that is all religion consists of, then dogs have more religion than men, which is ridiculous. That these criminals had religious beliefs we have no need to go outside Bjerre's book to prove, for on the very same page we read:—

The essence of all religion is evidently the capacity for faithful devotion. But quite apart from all criminological theories it is clear as day that that is just what criminals completely lack. In fact, among all the religious criminals I have had an opportunity of studying, there was not one whose religion I could call sound and genuine. Certainly, I found among some a kind of religiosity, which undoubtedly appeared genuine in so far as it manifestly proceeded from a vague seeking for community with something outside and above themselves. But the essence of this desire was in reality nothing else but a boundless need for support, in the literal sense of the word; and the result of it, if it at all deserved the name religion, certainly cannot be called genuine. It grew up out of psychological disintegration, in confinement, among degenerates. It began with inarticulate, agonized prayers to the powers of Heaven or Hell, no matter which, in which the suppliant did not believe, and it broke out the moment these prayers were answered, as it were, from the void beyond. Then out of their distress they evolved some weird protector, who became henceforth their secret god. Often this cell religiosity vanished when the prisoner was removed to the common prison, but sometimes it assumed real control of their psychic life and developed into wonderful dogmas, which could be made to harmonize by great straining, with Biblical teaching. Possibly among the most backward races one might find religious phenomena of a similar or related kind. (pp. 33-34).

Although the account is rather confused—how, for instance, could they supplicate "the powers of Heaven or Hell," if they did not believe in them?—yet it is clear that these criminals were not Atheists, and in fact there is no mention of Atheism throughout the book.

This is the only adverse criticism we have to make on the book.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

Great souls are not those which have fewer passions and more virtues than common ones, but those only which have greater aims.—*La Rochefoucauld*.

When truth is revealed, let custom give place; let no man prefer custom before reason and truth.—*St. Augustine*.

A Sunday in the Glen—Society and Solitude.

Shall I, wasting in despair,
Turn my gaze from Nature fair?
Shall I, though so poor a thing,
Deny the impulse of the Spring?
Tho' death is sure and time is fleet,
Shall I not taste what now is sweet?
Or must I, weary, old, and sad,
Do penance still and ne'er be glad?—*Adapted*.

No: like the rejected lover of the old song, I will seek consolations, nor die because a woman's fair, or life and fortune fickle as the maid. For one day at least I will be even as "The blythe wee birds in the bonnie wee glens." There seems to me nothing more fitting than that a man should write about what delights him most; even if but to escape from what fills him with despair, be it the dry-as-dust of reason or learning, or the sweeter illusion of the wild glen sae green. I salute the scholars, therefore, in their studies, even as they may sorrow for him who lives on grass; who knoweth not the food of the gods in libraries vast and dim, who idly seeks instead,—

... the violets now

That strew the green lap of the new-come Spring;
or the green margin of that copious stream he had a glimpse of, bestarred with lesser celandine. Here also comes the tired scholar, when he can, to repair the wasted tissue of his haggard days. But long he may not tarry; something equivalent to the Christian devil drives him back to his books; so it would seem, variously doomed, some devil drives us all, we finding our happiness here or there, in this or that, but never for long, and never in reality:—

God save thee, ancient mariner,
From the fiends that plague thee thus!—
Why lookest thou so?—with my crossbow
I shot the albatross!

We have all shot our bolt, or been shot at, often to our own or other's hurt—but here we are at the glen itself. A little London lady friend of mine will picture it in ready, wistful fancy—to her it is dedicated. At my feet the upland roadway, over a grey bridge; on my right the brown moor topped with the Mount of Meditation; to the left a purling stream, with many tributaries, deep cradled in a mile or so of tortuous, wooded ravine, with glimpses of silvered sea through the yet dun, leafless trees. The stream is crystal clear, its bed a pinkish-grey sandstone—of what epoch I know not, but of it all those slopes and hillocks are compiled—the whole over-arched with a superb dome of blue and grey; only the chilled breeze creeping up the glen reminding one it was all too early Spring. One crossed and recrossed the ever widening stream—on mossy logs, on slippery stones; over pool and rapid, cascade and shelving glissade; by red scaur and steep, elbowed promontory and rooted bank—at one supreme spot, a louder linn, a wider pool, overhung by an ivied tree; bustling, rustling, shining ivy, thickly clustered, alive and lovely, fed on finest food, drinking deep of the jewelled ambrosial spray below! Near by, on the smooth, clean bole of an elm, some clean-stemmed ivy crept upward in the most delicate tracery: surely as Dickens said, "A dainty plant is the ivy green!" There remained the more finely picturesque and romantic foot of the glen; and time, and light, and love, and temperature, and the spirit of the hour, even a new spirit, remained; and one exulted still in knowes and slopes, and promontories within the windings of the burn; all littered with leafage and leaf mould, with abundant promise of summer flowers—but one would not anticipate the fulfilment; one was happier in reflecting it was all to come!

Emerging on the lower road by the sea, and finding it busy as a city street with wicked Sunday traffic, truly, I thought, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, and it is growing less and less the monopoly of "the lads in black." By way of contrast to the sustained sweetness and whispering wisdom of the woods I walked homeward with a somewhat loudly garrulous acquaintance. The *Freethinker* came under review. My friend preferred the general newspaper, not

papers that specialized in, or were biased towards one idea. What was the good of trying to prove there was no God? As well try to prove that nothing existed! Not so, the still small voice from the glen rejoined: The *Freethinker* was as willing to prove there was, as that there was not, a God. It was purely a matter of evidence. What the *Freethinker* really did was to assemble all the evidence, examine it, analyse it, and abide by the result. The *Freethinker*, while far in advance of other journals, was not alone in these investigations, but only alone in the full and free expression of their results. Science and life itself were the real opponents of religion; would he, the believer be asked, if God was finally proved non-existent, would he still deprecate the truth being told? I seem to forget the answer, I think he just demurred evasively. He seemed a little shocked to know that my children had learned to have no shadow of fear of a "worse" or "better" beyond death. His final appeal to reason was to picture a villain and oppressor of the worst description going unpunished in this life. Was there no later, but certain, divine retributive justice for men of this type? All I could ask at parting was—What would be the good? The evil was done: prevention would have been wiser than punishment: even as a deterrent, post mortem pains had failed: The fear o' hell was a hangman's whip, but it did not keep the wretch in order; and often made a Torquemada of a saint, filled pulpits with fools, asylums with the insane, and our prisons with people who believed in hell . . . But it was tea-time, my friend's and mine, so the walk and the discussion ended. I returned to my reverie of the woods and streams, a pleasing aftermath; while a little duty mingled with the pleasures of the day.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Acid Drops.

The Rev. T. A. Jefferies, of the United Methodist Church, recently presented a report on the Sunday School position. There was a decrease (4,000) in the number of scholars attending their schools, but this was largely caused by there being fewer children of school age than there had been hitherto. At the same time it would be unwise not to recognize that it was imperative that they should make their schools attractive enough to hold their own against outside attractions. We suggest a few Punch and Judy shows might prove useful, seeing that the all-conquering Christ alone appears not to be magnetic enough nowadays to capture youthful interest.

At a missionary conference at Maidstone the other week, Dr. Piell said of China, that it was in the throes of a five-fold revolution—educational, industrial, economic, social, and religious, while at the same time it was trying to cope with the rising spirit of nationalism, which it failed to understand. The Doctor added that the religion of Confucius was no longer functioning as it had in the past. The people had practically thrown it over, and there was nothing to take its place. He therefore put in a strong plea for the continuance of Christian mission work in China, along the lines of educational and medical service. Dr. Piell is a true Christian egotist. He appears to fancy that the Chinese people having got rid of their own home-grown brand of superstition, are eagerly looking about for his particular brand to put in the place of the other. We can hardly credit that. The Chinese have a reputation for being intelligent.

Certain politicians are making as much capital as they can of the action of the Clyde Lighthouse Trust in dismissing one of its men, who declined to carry out a test on Sunday, on the ground that it was against his religious convictions. Now we wonder whether, if the man had been a Mohammedan, would these M.P.'s have upheld him in declining to do anything of the kind on a Friday? Or a Jew who raised the same objection to Saturday? We have every respect for a man who declines to do what he thinks is wrong—and stands by the consequences of his refusal. But a man who wants

all the privileges of his job, and declines to carry out some of its duties on the ground of religious scruples, gives rise to very different feelings. We do not believe in preferential treatment in the public service, even when those asking for it are the most bigoted of Christian believers.

Sanitary dwellings, sunlight, fresh air, and good food, says a weekly paper, will stamp out small-pox quicker than inoculation with vaccine. What's the matter with prayer as a remedy? If Pastor Jeffries and other wonder-workers can work miracles of cures by aid of prayer, surely this Christian specific for all the ills God allows to afflict humanity, might have honourable mention? We think that as our contemporary's suggestion smacks of horrid materialism, all good Christian people will do well to ignore it. Jesus had nothing to say about sanitary dwellings, sunlight, fresh air, and good food as preventives of disease. He advocated living the holy life, and large doses of prayer. If the aforesaid things had been necessary, there can be no doubt the man of God would have told us all about them.

Man is a "praying animal," and advertising—which has persuaded masses of people to do some extraordinary things in recent years—could persuade men to give scope to their national religion. So the Hon. Sec. of the C. of E. Advertising Association tells us. That "man is a praying animal" is a variant of the moth-eaten assertion about man being naturally religious. If that is a fact, it does seem odd that so much persuading and cajoling to do praying and worshipping exercises should be necessary. Possibly prayer may be natural to primitive men. But as men grow more civilized they slough off their primitive habits and the fears which induce them. That explains why men are ceasing to be praying animals, and why clerical advertising proves largely abortive. Advertising may have persuaded the masses to do extraordinary things, but there is a limit to what religious advertising may do in the persuading line. That limit is set by the awkward fact that the masses have slowly become more receptive to civilized notions and opinions, and hence unresponsive to the primitive notions of the Christian religion.

What the *Freethinker* says to-day is echoed in our contemporaries the day after. Hence it is not surprising to read in a weekly journal a plea for rational amusement on Sunday. The writer says that a clergyman complained to him about the almost universal indifference to religion, and of the attitude of the man-in-the-street to the parson trying to get in touch. The writer thinks this may be accounted for by the Church's opposition to Sunday amusement, which the average man regards as being the antagonism of a vested interest out to smash competition. We are next told that a great appeal has been made for the further provision of playing-fields. Yet in almost every town there are parks, with children's playgrounds and open spaces for various kinds of games, which are closed down on the one day in the week when people can avail themselves of them. "Let us have more playing-fields, by all means, but why not, at the same time, make full use of the playing-fields we have? That seems to me the commonsense view, but propose to permit the common people to enjoy themselves healthfully on Sunday, then the churches are up in arms at once." We are grateful to this writer for passing on, almost word for word, to a larger public what has been said in these columns. But why not observe the usual courtesy of the Press and make due acknowledgment of the source of the ideas?

At Kew (London) a small chapel in the the parish church has been turned into a little church for children from five to fourteen years of age. The children form the choir, elect their own officers, secretary and treasurer, take the alms, read the lessons, and do

everything but preach. It appears, however, that many parents do not support the arrangement. They object to children being taught creeds in which they themselves only half believe. They do not wish the children to learn anything that will have to be unlearned later. A women writer in a weekly paper attempts to convert this type of parent. Such parents, she says, should remember that certain great attributes of love and gentleness, justice and hope, are common to all religions. She therefore commends the children's church because it enables the lives of great men and women to be held up for emulation, and interest in fine ideals to be aroused. All that sounds very nice. But the plain truth about this children's church is that its primary aim is to make little clients for the Church. What the children are taught to do reveals that plainly enough. The originators of the scheme are not so much concerned with inculcating or developing certain great attributes, as with implanting certain habits which, it is hoped, will in later years bring the matured child automatically to the parson's house of business.

The certain great attributes mentioned may be common to all religions—though we might be pardoned for doubting this after a survey of some religions, such as the Christian and Mohammedan, in actual practice. But their association with religion comes from the fact that they are the finer natural qualities of human nature. This being the case, they do not require the nonsensical paraphernalia of the Christian creed to enable them to be inculcated. The ecclesiastical stuff is merely the lead debasing the natural gold. Besides, the lives of the great men and women usually selected for a Christian child's emulation are nearly always those of stupid Biblical and religious fanatics and bigots. And children are likely to be all the better if they are without such doubtful exemplars. That being the case, the better advice to the parents would be this. They should support or start Secular Sunday-schools, where their children could learn about the great human attributes, be taught admiration for the noble lives of men and women of every creed and of no creed, and become acquainted with the finer aspects of a truly civilized life. The children would then have nothing to unlearn as they grew to maturity. On the other hand, the adult thus trained in youth would be little likely to be attracted by ecclesiastical flummery. But only professional Christians would be likely to deplore that.

Mr. Algernon Ashton writes to the *Daily News* (of all papers!) the following:—

How extraordinary, how incredible, that in a great city like Birmingham, with its close upon a million of inhabitants, no restaurants and tea places are open on Sundays! . . . Is such a state of things really to last for ever? Impossible!

We can tell Mr. Ashton just how long such a state of affairs will last—until such time as the citizens of Birmingham get rid of their respect for the Christian Big Bogey's alleged taboo on everything except religious exercises on Sunday. Mr. Ashton need not despair. Religious taboos have a habit of going the way of all flesh. And judging by what is happening all over the country, we should say this particular taboo will soon vanish from Birmingham.

In *The Dawn* there recently appeared an article by Mr. T. C. Horton, Superintendent Emeritus of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles. This was headed "The Progress of Truth," and dealt with the state of affairs of the Christian religion in America. The writer said that the Y.W.C.A. now receives Roman Catholics and Jews into full fellowship. The Y.M.C.A. is largely given over to social clubs and educational programmes. "Millions of dollars which were contributed by Christian men and women to be used in saving and sanctifying men and women, are now being employed, instead, in faith-destroying teaching and for purely educational and social service." This is indeed highly deplorable. Still, the Christian men and women taking salaries from the two institutions mentioned didn't wish to lose their jobs.

They knew there was a slump in religion, and so they reduced the "one true light" to a feeble glimmer, and introduced things that are more likely to attract the popular fancy. That appears to be the explanation. The conduct of the people responsible for the innovations may not be honest; but when necessity drives, desperate remedies become necessary.

Representatives of Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Judaism, Theosophy and Christianity recently gathered together at the City Temple. This did not please the *English Churchman*. It remarks that the novelty of the occasion no doubt drew most of the people who attended. But it "cannot understand any persons calling themselves Christians being present on such an occasion." It adds later:—

There is no doubt that the gathering at the City Temple is in entire harmony with the spirit of the age, although utterly opposed to Holy Scripture.

From this one may legitimately infer that the spirit of the age—toleration—wasn't hatched from Holy Writ (Christian brand) nor nurtured by the Christian religion.

Apropos of Lord Hugh Cecil's defence of the new Prayer Book, a Protestant paper says that he does not seem to see that "there is a great difference between the toleration of false teachers by lax administration and the imposition of false teaching by law." From this one can see just how near is the accomplishment of that much-advertised Brotherhood of Christian People. The only thing appearing to stand in the way is that each Christian sect will persist in holding to its own opinion as to what is true teaching and what is false. Still, the antagonism to which this stubborn holding of opinion leads is steadily diminishing. Christians everywhere are learning to tolerate one another. Note how mild is the following extract from an Italian paper, *Il Giorno*, published in Naples:—

I am astonished that these Protestants are still tolerated in our Catholic city. They must, at all costs, be driven out, for they are dangerous elements for our Catholic faith, just as they are disintegrating elements in our country. They do not shed abroad the good seed of Christ and of God, but the putrid and corrupting seed of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and company.

You will note there is nothing said about exterminating, but only of driving out. Obviously, the Christian sects are getting a lot kindlier one to the other, and the Brotherhood of Christian People is well on the way.

The League for the Prohibition of Cruel Sports has issued a special women's number of its magazine, in which many well-known women have given their opinions. Lady Bonham Carter says that the attitude of most women in the matter of cruel sports is that of the averted mind. Such things will not bear thinking of, and so they are not thought of. Many of the contributors to this special number show that when once they have considered the matter, all possibility of upholding or taking part in such sports is at an end. We may add that something similar happens to the pastime of God-worshipping, when intelligent men and women can be got to examine the Christian creed in the light of what the paper has to say of it and its crudities.

Be that as it may, Miss Radclyffe Hall, author of *Adam's Breed*, declares she was once an ardent fox-hunter, but now, she adds: "I could no longer kill for the sake of pleasure, could no longer harry and torment dumb creatures for the sake of so-called sport; I could, in fact, no longer ignore the victim, for imagination has led to understanding, and understanding to compassion." We suggest Miss Hall is hardly right in what she says about imagination. It would be more accurate to say that reason and reflection had excited imagination to picture herself suffering the torture of the hunted; and from this has come compassion, and hence disgust. It is reason and reflection that leads men and women to humane thoughts. For is it not always the reasoning, reflecting few who pioneer nobler views, kindly reforms, and finer civilization?

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.—O. Underwood, 7s. 6d.; E. L. Bishop, 1s.; G. Chapple, 5s.; S. Brooking, 4s. 6d.; P. G. Beauchamp, £1.

T. WILLIAMS.—Certainly, there ought to be more Freethought work done in South Wales, but some amount of local co-operation is necessary to make a start. We will do all we can to help at this end.

S. L.—There is no law against holding public meetings, provided the meeting is not held in a prohibited place, that the object of the meeting is a lawful one, and that no obstruction is caused by the gathering. And even then it is not the right of public meeting, as such, that is questioned.

H. KING.—We have pointed out over and over again that the Churches and Chapels in this country are heavily subsidized from the public purse in the shape of relief from rates and taxes, as well as from such sources as tithes and royalties from mines. This relief is obtained under the Poor Rate Exemption Act of 1833. If all these buildings paid their proportion of rates the sum would amount to many millions.

P. PATTERSON (Memphis).—The quotation is interesting, but only as one more specimen of the state to which a man may be reduced by over-absorption in Christian teaching. These cases are almost pathological in their nature.

A. C. RICHARD.—We have some such handbill in view for use in the near future. With regard to the other matter. There is no harm done, but you should insist on having from your newsagent what you order.

C. J. TACCHI.—Shall look forward to seeing you again when you return to England. Thanks for getting new subscriber. Paper is being sent.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Owing to the holidays, a number of letters are held over, to be dealt with in our next issue. Some correspondents that would have been answered in the usual way, through these columns, are receiving replies by post.

Mr. Cohen's new book *Materialism Re-stated* is now in the hands of the binders, and will be on sale early in September. It is issued by the Secular Society, Limited, cloth bound, and at the low price of 2s. 6d. It should form a companion volume to his *Determinism or Free-will?* which has become quite a standard work on the subject.

It will be good news to those of our friends who have been doing their best to secure new readers, to know that of late there has been an upward move in the circulation of this paper. During the summer season, when so many of our readers are travelling about the country, there are plenty of opportunities of introducing the *Freethinker* to probable regular readers, and we hope as many as can will convert themselves into circulation agents. We are ready to send on parcels of specimen copies to all who require them, and also to send the paper for six weeks to any address, provided six half-penny stamps are sent to cover postage.

A West African Correspondent writes:—

This paragraph in your issue of May 29:

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

Ah! si vous saviez, mon cher ami! I could make readers for a hundred copies weekly of your fine journal but I'd find myself so sent to Coventry by the Christian Powers-that-be, that I might just as well poison myself out of hand!

As a matter of literal truth, when I have copies of the *Freethinker* on my library-table, and Native callers (men of culture) drop in for a chat, and to "beg, borrow or steal" the gleanings of my most recent mail-bag, I am fain to hide your journal out of sight—for once borrowed, I realize that the paper would pass from hand to hand in every direction, and ultimately lead to a fine old shernozzle at one or other of the many churches!

So I always send it away to "the bush"—to some lonely outpost, where it may work its will without my being too acutely aware of the reaping of my insidious sowing!

If this seems a contradictory statement of the local position, please bear in mind that not one White in a hundred troubles to attend any form of worship—unless that job happens to be his livelihood; and that we most scrupulously, in our West African Nights, avoid all discussions of religion. We talk morals, ethics, science, literature—but never dogma: and it's an honest fact that I do not know whether my ten best pals here are Romans, Pres., Anglicans or Infidel—and damned if I care!

But alas, the poor native has an awful time—he is bludgeoned into the Churches, whether he likes or not—and Superstition is superimposed upon Superstition, till the poor devil wears an intellectual (*sic*) covering that is onion-like in its endlessness!

If one were only safely "pensioned" (a modest hundred a year might satisfy me at this time) one could go the whole hog—but to be an Atheist—my word! talk about *tabus*! Imagine the fulminations of the several Bishops—for we are of sufficient importance here in tiny Onitsha to have both a Roman Catholic and a C.M.S. "Lord"—to say nothing of another Catholic of the Italian Church only just across the river! No wonder your "missionary informs the world that Nigeria is Methodism's richest field!"—I'd merely amend that to *Dogma's* richest field!

What purports to be a translation of a manuscript handed down in the Bella Mina family since the sixteenth century, is now published by the Old Royalty Book Publishers, John Street, Adelphi, under the title of *My Escape from the Auto De Fé*, October 1559. Whether the work be a translation of a real MSS. or not, there is an air of verisimilitude about the story that carries considerable conviction. The story is simply and effectively told, and the love interest in it makes it as good as a novel. And one is inclined to say that the story is true even though it is fictitious, for what is set down here may easily have happened more than once when every man and woman moved under the shadow of the Church, and when a straying from the beaten path, or an incautious word might mean death at the stake, or years in prison.

One is inclined to accept the story as genuine because of its general atmosphere. It is difficult for one living to-day to picture a time when any man's neighbour might be playing the part of a spy, and when the

church utilized the better side of human nature to perpetuate one of the vilest tyrannies that ever dominated the human spirit. Priest and layman might each be dominated by a strong sense of duty, and apart from their religious beliefs might be quite admirable specimens of humanity. It was the infernal influence of the Christian Church that worked corruption. It enabled people to stand approvingly by while their fellows were being burned in batches as a penalty for doubting the truth of Christianity. Of course, the fact that the goods of the convicted heretic became the property of the Church played its part, but mere love of gain could never have kept the machine in action. And even worse than the deaths at the stake was the influence of this long-drawn-out terrorism on the minds and character of those who were permitted to live. It made hypocrisy and mental cowardice life-saving virtues. It kept men Christian, but at the price of much that was best in their manhood. The published price of the book is 3s. 6d.

New Courses.

"I PRESS toward the mark for the prize," says a New Testament writer. And sometimes I fancy that, of all the youths in a certain Buckinghamshire village, about the years 1873-5, I might have obtained first prize for Evangelical piety. At prayer-meetings oft, labouring in Scripture classes three times each Sunday (two in the morning, and one in the afternoon), singing to Jesus in Sunday evening service at church, kneeling solitary in my barely-furnished chamber three times daily (8 a.m., and 1 p.m., and 10.30 p.m.) and praying mightily for grace, spending many a leisure hour in reading and reciting passages from the Old and New Testaments, attentive at revival meetings, and eager to hear missionaries—surely I qualified for some sort of recognition, if only the humblest seat in the stadium of the Eternal Heavens. When I visit the churchyard, once so familiar to my devout eyes, I see the graves of young acquaintances, who had lustily shouted hymns to God, and died all-too-early for lack of attention to the physique. I recall a villager who forsook his family, and tramped round the country, imploring sinners to bathe in Christ's blood, and who died in a Mental Hospital. I recall the aged Parish Clerk, by whose dying-bed I stood, as he raved:—

Yes, Frederick, the Lord has washed me in his precious blood!—I am snatched as a brand from the burning!—Forever with Jesus! Blessed be his name!—My name is in the Book of Life!

And in that same countryside, children received most inadequate schooling, illegitimate mothers were cruelly damned, farm-labourers enjoyed scanty wages and ample rheumatism, and never a breath of political emancipation, or new thought, or message of woman's freedom, blew into the pretty villages amid their beeches and elms. Not so very long ago, I strolled along a lane on the outskirts of Buckingham—a high hedge on the left, and cottages on the right—and beheld a man raking tin cans and old kettles and crockery out of the hedge, into which the cottagers, for lack of dust-bins, had flung their refuse during the last few months. And in the Buckingham churches and chapels, the choirs celebrated the superb mansions to which all the ratepayers might go, free of cost, and where they might lodge with the angel-aristocracy and the royal family of the universe.

I thought of this lane when, in the July number of Mr. Robertson Scott's *Countryman*,* I read the following letter:—

* An excellent non-party quarterly magazine of rural life and policy. (To be had for 2s. 6d. from Mr. Scott, Idbury, Kington, Oxford).

NEW COURSES FOR THEOLOGICAL COLLEGES!—A wholly unorganized community puts its empty tins into the hedge-rows! It sounds trivial, but as a fisherman I deplore the fact that on the remotest streams I am always stumbling against tin cans and broken bottles. I rejoice in the growth of paper containers, at least they will decay and can even be burnt. How we need an organizer in every village! If only the parsons—. Fancy a theological college with a course on local government, another on domestic economy, a third on the history of English land, on co-operation, etc., etc. Let us have better living and chance the dying!—F.R.S.

It is a broken-winded, spasmodic kind of letter, but I like it very much. I catch in it a cry like the cry of the prophet Ezekiel, when he reproached the priests for neglect of the Common People—though I beg the gracious bishops who read the *Freethinker* to forgive my citing the Bible in connexion with a hedge-row and tin cans:—

As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock, therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord—Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against the shepherds!

I love the Bible when it talks—or rather, bawls—like that; though I fear my friends the Bishops will scarcely approve such love of the Sacred Writings. There are different sorts of love.

So it is proposed that, in our village churches and in the theological colleges, we should have New Courses. Once, an old harlot, aged 90, repented of her amours, and it is never too late to mend. It really is late in the Church's history, and "it is toward evening, and the day is far spent,"—as the disciples said at Emmaus. And the stodginess, the ignorance, the crabbiness, and the narrowness of the English villager's religion is still ghastly. A few weeks ago, I called on a veteran dame who, more than half a century since, dwelt in my dear Buckinghamshire, and we exchanged reminiscences. She was a sensible soul, and I ventured to tell her, in a simple way, that I had abandoned the theology of our youth; nor did she wince. But her husband was of a holier and diviner cast; and next day, having heard of our converse, he wrote for her (she, poor thing, had gnarled arthritic hands) the following letter, here printed exactly, except the signature:—

17 May, '27

Dr Sir,

Just to say owing to your changed views which are quite opposite to my Husbands it will not be convenient for you to call again I am sorry very

Yours obed * * *

However, if England accepts the hint of the *Countryman's* correspondent, this dreadful piety will be displaced by a religion which studies economic, finance, sanitation, politics, and history. Ah! if only the Church had started on this "Course" sooner—say even in 1883, when my friend Hyndman wrote fierce pages on social revolution. Suppose I place a few of his words in the mouth of a village rector or vicar at sermon-time, when the farmers and the ploughmen and ditchers listen for revelation. This will be the effect:—

Dearly beloved brethren—The rural labourer, like his fellow of the cities, is in such penury that pleasure is [1883] almost unknown to him, and he is too often driven to drink to drown his cares. Change the social conditions from early youth, secure the children not merely bare education—which means, even now, mere common-place instruction

that their poor feeding and squalid surroundings prevent them from taking advantage of—but a really pure and healthy existence, with sufficient food and leisure in return for wholesome work, and drunkenness or low debauchery would soon disappear. As it is, after a life of hopeless and degrading toil on starvation wages, they have but the squalid misery of the workhouse to look to in old age. The landlord, the rector, the farmer, the whole array of consumers who have lived at ease on the labour of these underpaid wage-slaves grudge the worn-out labourer even the cost of maintenance after forty or fifty years spent in providing them with food and luxury out of his labour. Therefore, dearly beloved brethren . . .

The first utterance of such sermons would, perhaps, have occasioned a degree of surprise, but, after due experience, and the kind co-operation of the Bishops, the congregation would have learned to break out into the frequent shout of "Amen"!

Anyway, public opinion will, sooner or later, sanction the New Courses. The village pulpit will deliver discourses on science, history, drama, the higher literature, and social issues connected with the land, water-power, coal, oil, mines, shipping, housing, domestic economy, industrial guild organization, currency reform, prevention of disease, conflicts of race and colour, etc.; and apartments of the church may be devoted ("devoted" is the very appropriate term) to a library and a museum, and the like. I would not propose much alteration of the stained-glass windows. The east window might still show, in glowing red, green, orange, brown and blue, the risen Christ in the act of ascension. The vicar would then say to the congregation:—

Humanity rises, and the ascent of Man is being accomplished.

F. J. GOULD.

Colonel Ingersoll.

"The Destroyer of weeds, thistles and thorns is a benefactor, whether he soweth grain or not."

"The Clergy know, that I know, that they know, that they do not know."

The above quotations will no doubt be recognized as extracts from the works of one of the greatest Freethinkers of all time.

No words of mine are needed to enhance the reputation of that brave and gallant soul who, for over forty years, stood four-square to the Religionists of the whole world, and, amidst the roar and din of battle refused to allow the attacks of the flower of the theologian army to shake his so deeply-rooted conviction. Calmly and confidently he met every onset, never dismayed, never for one moment swerving from that course which he felt and knew to be the right one. It is impossible for anyone to estimate the value of his unselfish devotion. The ground which was covered by Robert Ingersoll and the gallant band who rallied round him has cleared the way for those to whom he handed the torch which Death alone could pluck from his grasp.

My admiration and my grateful thanks cause me to attempt this short appreciation, inadequate though it be. For when I read his works and learn of his self-sacrifice and his entire neglect of all personal considerations and advantages, I feel that the generation which has followed him does not know enough about him. Apart from Freethinkers, he is little more than a name; and a much maligned name at that.

Even his greatest opponents were impelled to bear witness to his wide generosity and the integrity of his life.

Dr. Henry Field, in an open letter, used the following words:—

I have no dispute with the quiet and peaceable gentleman, whose kindly spirit makes sunshine in his home; but it is that *other man* over yonder, who comes forth into the arena like a gladiator, defiant and belligerent, that rouses my antagonism.

Is it not perfectly obvious that it was the kindly spirit to which the Doctor refers that caused him to rise in indignation, when he considered that innocent people were being led grossly astray by those who were capable of commanding their attention?

But an even greater tribute was paid him on the occasion when he defended C. B. Reynolds, who was arraigned on a charge of blasphemy. At the conclusion of his speech for the defence, a throng pressed after him to offer congratulations. One old man said: "Colonel Ingersoll, I am a Presbyterian pastor, but I must say that was the noblest speech in defence of liberty I ever heard! Your hand, sir; your hand." (Extract from *The Times*, New York, May 20, 1887.)

Colonel Ingersoll's complete knowledge of the Bible and Church history enabled him to speak with the utmost authority on theological matters, and to refute the finest intellects of all denominations. Even the eloquence of that Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the late Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, failed to make any impression on his arguments. This last discussion, indeed, which was conducted by correspondence, formed a most interesting contrast in styles. The stately but highly involved rolling periods of the famous English statesman require the closest attention on the part of the reader, if he wishes to unravel the somewhat obscure thread of the argument; while the clear, crisp sentences which characterize all the works of Col. Ingersoll, set forth his point of view in a manner which a child could comprehend.

The extent of his human sympathy is well illustrated by the following passage:—

Let me say here, once for all, that for the man Christ I have infinite respect. Let me say, once for all, that the place where man has died for man is holy ground. And let me say, once for all, that to that great and serene man I gladly pay, the tribute of my admiration and my tears. He was a reformer in his day. He was an infidel in his time. He was regarded as a blasphemer, and his life was destroyed by hypocrites, who have, in all ages, done what they could to trample freedom and manhood out of the human mind. Had I lived at that time, I would have been his friend, and should he come again, he will not find a better friend than I will be. . . . Back of the theological shreds, rags and patches, hiding the real Christ, I see a genuine man.

Surely to describe the author of those words as a "monster" and a "menace to Society," is an absurdity of which only desperate and frustrated partisans could be capable. How much more are they calculated to instil the spirit of kindness into the mind of a child than the Sunday-school text: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting flames."

And let me place before those who imagine that the psalms of David are the highest and most beautiful expressions of thought in the English language, this irrefutable exposition of man's knowledge of the future life:—

We do not know, we cannot say, whether Death be a door or a wall. Neither is the idea of immortality born of any book, creed or religion. It was born of human affection; and it will continue to float amidst the mists and clouds of doubt and darkness as long as Love shall kiss the lips of Death.

No one, be he pope or bishop or priest, can declare that he knows more than that. The position of the ecclesiastics, indeed, on this point is not a little amusing. They first of all inform us that man has no conception of the infinity of God. They tell us that our puny brains are not capable of comprehending the first letter in the alphabet of heaven. And the

next instant we find them painting alluring pictures of the abode of bliss, omitting no details; and describing, with gusto, the horrors of the future home prepared for heretics—again omitting no details.

Just one more brief glimpse at that intellect which gleamed and burned as a beacon in the darkness as a certain guide for all the Good and True, and I am done. It will be a fitting conclusion also for this small tribute to his memory.

These were the final words of his funeral oration to Dr. T. Seton Robertson, September 8, 1898:—

Dear Friend, farewell! If we do meet again we shall smile indeed—if not, this parting is well made. Farewell!

B. S. WILCOX.

Hell : Purgatory : Heaven.

A few little idylls from a R.C. book: *The Sight of Hell*:—

See! on the middle of that red-hot floor stands a girl; she looks about sixteen years old. Her feet are bare . . . Listen, she speaks. She says: I have been standing on this red-hot floor for years. Day and night my only standing place has been this red-hot floor. Look at my burnt and bleeding feet. Let me go off this burning floor for only one moment, only for one single short moment . . .

The fourth dungeon is the boiling kettle . . . in the middle of it there is a boy. His eyes are burning like two burning coals . . . Two long flames come out of his ears . . . Sometimes he opens his mouth and blazing fire rolls out. But listen! there is a sound like a kettle boiling. The blood is boiling in the scalded veins of that boy. The brain is boiling and bubbling in his head. The marrow is boiling in his bones . . . The fifth dungeon is the red-hot oven. The little child is in this red-hot oven. Hear how it screams to come out. See how it turns and twists itself about in the fire. It beats its head against the roof of the oven. It stamps its little feet on the floor. God was very good to this child. Very likely God saw that it would get worse and worse and would never repent, and so it would have to be punished much more in hell. So God in his mercy called it out of the world in its early childhood.

The above is quoted by Lecky (*History of European Morals*) from a tract by Rev. J. Furniss, C.S.S.R., published "permissu superiorum," by Duffy (Dublin).

Do not think this is an isolated case. There is an entire literature of descriptions of Hell, and Lecky gives some remarkable samples of the ghastly stuff. All the human race outside the Church and a large proportion of those who are in it, "are doomed to an eternity of agony in a literal and undying fire." Of the monastic visions, retailed to the dupes as inspired truth, Lecky says: "It is impossible to conceive more ghastly, grotesque and material conceptions of the future world than they evince, or more hideous calumnies against that Being who was supposed to inflict upon his creatures such unspeakable misery. The devil was represented bound by red-hot chains on a burning gridiron in the centre of hell. The screams of his never ending agony made its rafters to resound; but his hands were free, and with these he seized the lost souls, crushed them like grapes against his teeth and then drew them by his breath down the cavern of his fiery throat. Demons with hooks of red-hot iron plunged souls alternately into fire and ice. Some of the lost were hung up by their tongues, others were sawn asunder, others gnawed by serpents, others beaten together on an anvil and welded into a single mass, others boiled and then strained through a cloth . . .

" . . . It was the custom then as it is the custom now for Catholic priests to stain the imaginations of

young children by ghastly pictures of future misery, to imprint on the virgin mind atrocious images which they hoped might prove indelible."

The essential vileness and inhumanness of the priestly mind is shown in two details of the theory of the "inspired" Romish Church in regard to hell. One is, that the joy of those who get to heaven will be *enhanced* by a view of hell. Here is what one of their theologians says (quoted by Lecky, *History of European Morals*, Vol. II., p. 227): "The elect will go forth, and by clear vision behold the torture of the impious . . . Their minds will be *sated* with joy as they gaze on the unspeakable anguish." Again (Lecky's *History of Rationalism*, Vol. I., p. 31). "The saint was often permitted in visions to behold the agonies of the lost. *He loved to tell* how by the lurid glare of the eternal flames he had seen millions writhing in every form of ghastly suffering, their eyeballs rolling with unspeakable anguish, their limbs gashed and mutilated and quivering, etc., etc."

The other detail is that little children, if not baptized, were said to be sent to the same torture. Again, from Lecky (*History of European Morals*, Vol. I. p. 96):—

That a little child who lives but a few moments after birth and dies before it has been sprinkled with sacred water is in such a sense responsible for its ancestors having 6000 years before eaten some forbidden fruit, that it may with perfect justice be cast into an abyss of eternal fire, that an all-righteous and all-merciful Creator in the full exercise of those attributes, deliberately calls into existence sentient beings, whom he has from eternity irrevocably destined to endless unspeakable unmitigated torture, are propositions which are at once so extravagantly absurd, that their adoption might well lead men to doubt the universality of moral perception. Such teaching is in fact simply demonism in its most extreme form.

St. Augustine emphatically denied that there was a separate place for infants—he distinctly declared that they descended into everlasting fire. St. Fulgentius wrote: "Be assured and doubt not that little children who have begun to live in their mother's womb and have there died, or who having been just born, have passed away without the sacrament of holy baptism must be punished by the eternal torture of undying fire."

The formal dogma on the matter is that because Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they and all their descendants have been put under a curse. Except under certain conditions everybody will be damned for their original parents' sin, even if (like new-born babes) they have no sin of their own. These conditions were not even in existence until Jesus was crucified, so that all the human race prior to that event are burning in hell (except perhaps a few individuals mentioned in the Old Testament). And since that event, only those who have been properly baptized have been eligible for heaven. The rest—the great majority—are in hell, that is, according to these mad and black-guard priests. Practically it is devil worship. As Lecky says, the deeds which the Romish Church ascribes to its God are worse than those they ascribe to Satan. In fact, some religious minds have taken a curious kink from this phenomenon. They say that as the person whom the Papists worship, though called God is obviously the Devil, therefore the person whom the Papists admit is their God's adversary, namely, Lucifer, Star of the Morning, must be the genuine God. So they worship Lucifer as the principle of Good. Then the Catholics call them Devil worshippers. Certainly things get a bit mixed up, don't they?

It is remarkable how often the priests try to get

a thing both ways. They present their God as, on the one hand, a God of Love and Mercy and Infinite Compassion, a Loving Father, whose heart bleeds for his erring children, and who has sacrificed his only begotten son for the sake of the millions of his other sons and daughters. On the other hand, the same God is presented as terrible and awful, cruel and unforgiving for all eternity.

If there is anything that Christianity prizes itself on it is what has been called the Golden Rule. But this rule is only for ordinary humans. It is not for such superior beings as priests and the priest's God (we mention priests first because, as we have seen, R.C. priests claim to be greater than their God. When they deal with ordinary humans they do not use a Golden Rule, but a Rod of Iron, knobably, with spikes on).

C. BOYD FREEMAN.

(To be continued.)

Drama and Dramatists.

If a facile explanation is not on the tip of the tongue, a problem may be scuttled out of the way by calling it a mystery. Three good plays, "Cyrano de Bergerac," "R.U.R." and the "Wandering Jew" have been broadcast, and as subjects of wireless are frequently matters for ribaldry, we must seek an explanation for these three plays from the depth of the microphone in the word mystery, which is an outbuilding on Spinoza's sanctuary of ignorance. We have praised these three plays in this journal, for we would rather excel in the sphere of praising, being jealous of our space, than revel in the doubtful joy of destruction. In the order as set out above, they may be described as emotion, intellect, and romance. It is impossible to see "Cyrano" without gaining some exaltation of feeling; it is equally impossible to see R.U.R. without realizing that Karel Capek had plainly mastered his subject, and that he had logically traced out the consequences of a world with its eyes set on wrong values. The play of Mr. Temple Thurston was like looking at a coloured book of the history of the world, somewhat melancholy, and not compensated for altogether by the inverted salvation of the Jew. He could not die only through belief. And we are still wondering if our pleasure in Philip Cathay's music has been shared by a single reader. We must take silence as agreement, and like a galley slave, in absence of stripes, presume that our notes find acceptance. With the intensely human touch of the spoken lines at the beginning of *The Wandering Jew*, we leave our own pet idea of the world as a little house: "We all are wanderers in a foreign land, between the furrows and the stars." The remedy is obvious, and less than twelve months' regular reading of the *Freethinker* will disclose it.

"The Beaux Stratagem," produced by Mr. Nigel Playfair, at the Lyric, Hammersmith, has been withdrawn. Built on the same lines of comedy as those of Congreve, it was amusing, entertaining, and staged with that beauty characteristic of Mr. Playfair, who, however, does not altogether, in this case, live up to his name. In a signed note on the programme, he states: "It is my experience that a modern audience does not welcome with rapture a venal and dissolute clergyman by way of comic relief." This in explanation of the deletion of the character of Foigard; the term of reproach, however, in Act 5, sc. 1 is allowed to stand. Squire Sullen, in an altercation with Sir Charles Freeman, asks, "Do you take me for an atheist or a rake?" This form of excision, therefore, will be seen to be cast on the noble lines of religious discussion in the Press. It is a discussion in which only one side is heard. Therefore, the ingenuous spectator may be fortified by the fact that his feelings will not be disturbed by a drunken clergyman, and strengthened in his conviction that the atheist is in the same category as a rake. The language in the comedy, is coarse, measured by modern standards, hard

things are said about Jesuits, and Mr. Playfair might have allowed the long dead author to tell his own story in his own way, as no one would be astonished to learn that a clergyman had other preferences besides tea, and that, according to the grand old book, he took a little wine for his stomach's sake.

In some sort of balancing-up to the preferences at Hammersmith, The Lyceum Theatre has no scruples in going forward where Mr. Playfair fears to tread. "The Terror," other than supplying thrills, does not aim very high. An ex-convict rejoicing in the name of "Soapy Marks," adopts the disguise of a parson and is killed. This is black justice, yet something ought to be done with the dramatist who has a figure on the stage capable of thinking that he can deceive the world of shadows and the big Lyceum audience by appearing in the cloth. We believe all that parsons have to say, but what we believe it to be is set out and dealt with by our colleagues in other columns of this paper.

"The Call," a drama in two acts, has come under our notice at a time when the stage has not yet thoroughly taken up the subject of Life and how to live it. There were sinister influences at work to stifle Elizabethan drama, and the abortive efforts of independent actors in the present day, indicate that similar influences are at work. The play before us is an essay on Immortality, and is none the worse for being a few hundred years too soon for the world which is still in the habit of making a mess of things. Mr. Patrick Braybrooke, in his foreword, treats the author's attempt very kindly; he writes, "'The Call' is a very delicate plea for the fact of Immortality." The author, Louis C. Henderson, has not yet mastered the medium of language; there are several awkward phrases, stiff periods, and badly chosen words, but there is promise. There is the influence of Maeterlinck in the play, and not a little of *The Betrothal*. As so many concerns have a vested interest in the future life, and as the subject has awakened all the undesirable passions of fanatics we admire the budding dramatist's ambition, but two feet on earth is a good standard for those who wish to deliver a message to mankind. Gorki asks for something to be given to improve relations with one another. Greed, revenge, oppression, are the moth-eaten hags of history; the dramatist who can quietly show them the door to oblivion is the one we are waiting for, and the job is a big one, for huge religious organizations have, in the seat of authority, relieved man of thinking for himself. They have bemused him with incantations and exploited his emotions for base ends. He is only now convalescent, with perhaps a little time to take stock of the inn where he comes unbidden. It is strange, by twisting the obvious fact of eternity, what misery has been wrought in the name of religion, and, in the words of Mr. Bertrand Russell, if we wanted a real revival in it, the best way is to make life uncomfortable and hideous. The only immortality we can be sure of is in our children, and all efforts to make the world less of a menagerie is a practical step towards it, and a smash between the eyes at that elegant sneer, what has posterity done for us? *The Call* is published at 3s. 6d. by the C. W. Daniel Company, Tudor Street, E.C.4, and we trust the author will receive enough encouragement in his venture so that he will attack problems of life. If he does this effectively, we shall not begrudge him having immortality up his sleeve.

WILLIAM REPTON.

It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.

Emerson.

It is, for instance, of no avail that thou worshipest Truth, if thou seest thy brother men ruled by Error, and dost not endeavour, so far as lies in thy power, to overcome that error.—Mazzini.

Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission at Bolton.

THE second week in Bolton was probably the most successful Mr. Whitehead has spent in this town. Despite the rain and the competition of others for the pitch, seven meetings were held, and attentive and interested and even sympathetic audiences gathered on each occasion. Although platform opposition was in evidence several times, opponents in general were much less virulent than on previous visits, when determined attempts were made to monopolize the pitch. New members are expected, and quite a number of Christians have admitted serious inroads in their belief as a result of the mission. Messrs. Sisson and Partington, as usual, lent their enthusiastic and able support, and to them our thanks are due.

Mr. Whitehead commences a fortnight's mission at Swansea, on Saturday, August 6.

Society News.

WEST LONDON BRANCH.

HYDE PARK was favoured by Mother Nature with superb weather, on 31st ult.; and, as usual, the National Secular Society's platform was surrounded by orderly crowds, concerning which the word immense is, perhaps, not an exaggeration. The size of the crowds throws a great physical strain upon the voice of the speakers; but it is gratifying to notice how many listeners will stand for hours and defy fatigue.

In the afternoon, an exceptional feature was provided by Mr. Herbert's interesting dissertation upon "The Clap-trap of Spiritualism," which provoked many questions from several persons who were, evidently, devotees of occultism. The growth of spiritualism, at the expense of christianism, is increasingly apparent; but, of course, to Atheists, both these "isms" are equally ridiculous.

In the evening Mr. A. H. Hyatt was in his best form. His genre of instruction by amusement is, certainly, most effective.

Ravenscourt Park.—Although the site allotted to public meetings is too remote to permit of attracting the attention of casual visitors, the attendance is maintained; an evening meeting was held also. Thanks are due to the veteran Mr. Sheller for his oratorical contribution. The support of local atheists would be welcomed, and is hereby invited by the Organizer; to whom communications should be addressed at the offices of the Branch, 62, Bryanston Street, W.1.—B. A. I.

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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. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Lecture by Mr. Leonard Ebury.

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

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common, 11.30; Brockwell Park, 6.0): Lectures by Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Wednesday, August 10, at 8 p.m.; Peckham Rye—Mr. F. P. Corrigan; Clapham Old Town—Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—Ramble, Dorking to Leith Hill, etc. Conducted by Mr. F. M. Overy. Tea at Coldharbour. Train Charing Cross, 9.45 a.m., or London Bridge (South Eastern), 9.51 a.m. Cheap return Dorking Town, 3s.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.0, Messrs. Cambell-Everden, Darby and Herbert. 6.0, Messrs. Hyatt and Le Maine (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith): 3.0, Mr. F. Carter, a Lecture. Freethought Lectures in Hyde Park, every Thursday and Friday, at 7.30, Various Lecturers. On Saturday, August 6, at 7 p.m., a Debate on "Is there a God," between Mr. G. Rasterbrook and B. A. Le Maine.

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, August 6, at 7.30, "The Natural Genesis of Religious Beliefs."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S.—Ramble to Inglesham. Meet at Clarkston Terminus at 12 noon.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (West Regent Street): Every Thursday at 7.30, Mr. Fred Mann. August 4, "The Inventor of God." August 11, "Christian Slavery." (Alexandra Park): 7.30, Mr. Fred Mann, "Religion and Sex."

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The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

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