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Views and Opinions.

Christian Fellowship.

LOOKED at from the point of view of mere theory there is nothing about which the Christian is so much concerned as universal love and brotherhood. Studied from the point of view of practice, there is hardly anything he does so little to promote. In theory, every Christian is ready to spend himself in the service of every other Christian, if not in the service of every human being. In practice they pay no greater regard to the welfare of others than do non-Christians, nor do they show by their behaviour that they attach any great value to a profession of belief in Christianity. In a business deal Christians watch each other very carefully, and I have never heard of a business man who decided to trust another merely on account of his professed belief in Christianity. In a corporate capacity Christian nations treat each other in precisely the same way. They laugh at the idea of trusting to each other's sense of honesty, of duty, or of fair play. They say quite frankly that self-interest is the only motive that will operate; display of brute force is the only thing to which each will yield. Christian England cries out that it cannot trust even Christian America with too great a navy or too large an army, although one would imagine that if there is one country in the world whose army or navy mattered little to us, it is America. But the cant of love and brotherhood goes on, the proclamations of the beauties of Christian belief continue, and the plant of universal distrust receives careful attention.

The Test of Facts.

I should be the last to argue that the ideals of love and brotherhood are bad things. No one, as a matter of fact, does so argue. I believe, on the contrary, that they are fundamental to human welfare, and that their practical realization is a measure of social development. All I am desirous of doing at present is to take the display of these qualities in connexion

with religious—and particularly Christian—belief. For Christians write and talk of human brotherhood as though it were in some way a Christian product. They have done this until the very words, love and brotherhood, have acquired a cant significance. They have gained the aroma of the pulpit, and the time honoured power of an evil association has not lost the capacity for corrupting a thing otherwise quite good. For when all is said and done, the fact remains that of all the failures that may be placed to the credit of religion, there is none more marked than its complete inability to foster a genuine brotherhood or good fellowship. This is not a matter of opinion, it is a statement of demonstrable fact. Look at the relation existing between Catholics and Protestants. In social or business matters, so long as religion is not concerned, they seem able to get along with each other with no greater friction than is usual. But where their religion enters into the question, each protests that the other is not to be trusted. Each points out that the religious conviction of the other narrows his outlook, stunts his sympathies, blinds him to a sense of national duty, and makes him a worse neighbour than he would otherwise be. I am not concerned with arguing as to which is correct, a bare reminder of the facts tell their own tale.

* * *

How Religion Divides.

Take another example. It is generally recognized in all kinds of social, business, or political associations, that the most divisive thing that can be met with is religion. All over the country the one rule is no religious discussions allowed. The individual members of these associations may be each of them religious, but the more firmly they believe the more they recognize the need for the rule. And their explanation is quite frank. Once permit the introduction of religion, they say, and there is an end to all harmony, the association will break to pieces. They will all agree that religion makes for brotherhood and good-feeling, but they will also agree that if they desire to associate on friendly terms they must leave religion on one side. The cant of religion bites deep. It is said, by way of apology, that men take their religious beliefs as the most serious things they possess. The statement evades the issue, it does not meet it. The issue here is not that religious beliefs are not taken seriously, but that they serve to divide people rather than to unite them. And side by side with the fact named there is the complementary one that there are many other aspects of life about which men and women disagree, but yet are content to live harmoniously together. One can see members of all religious bodies, and of none, joining together for the promotion of all sorts of social ends. They will remain friendly in their

diversity of opinion so long as religion is excluded. It is when religion is introduced that co-operation becomes impossible. It is even paraded as a great triumph when members of different religious bodies can meet together in amicable mood. Anglican, Catholic, Nonconformist, and Jew, may meet together on the ground of a common humanity, a common sense of justice, a common appeal to social needs; never on that of religion.

* * *

Sectarian Unity.

There is only one cause that will bring religious people into some kind of unity. This is where something is imminent that threatens their vested interests as such. In the case of Sabbatarianism, for instance, an effort may be made in the name of Christian bodies as a whole. And the reason for this unity is as plain as it is discreditable. They are all faced with a common danger, a loss of custom. The "desecration" of the Sabbath affects them all alike. It means a loss of business, it encourages the growth of non-religion. It involves the secularization of life, and in sheer self-defence the religious world forgets its divisions and closes its ranks, for the moment, against the common enemy. Historically, this is the only way in which Christianity has ever developed a sense of solidarity. In the earlier centuries it held together in the face of persecution. So soon as persecution relaxed, the divisive consequences of religious belief showed themselves. Then some kind of unity was re-established by the creation of the most brutal and the most intolerable tyranny the world has ever known. Later, when social and intellectual progress began to break the power of religion, the evil influence of religion showed itself once again. Existing causes of friction were intensified by religious belief. Men hated each other for national, for class, or for political reasons. But these expressions of malevolence were comparatively mild. Religious malevolence knew no bounds. Its limits may be marked by death, but not always by that. Political hatreds may be stopped by death, but it has seldom called a halt to the hatred that was born of Christian belief.

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Christianity and Brotherhood.

In strict truth the Brotherhood of Man has never formed a genuine part of the Christian religion. What has been aimed at is a brotherhood of believers. A human being became a brother when he believed; so long as he did not believe he was outside the pale, denied social rights, treated as an enemy of society. It may be questioned whether even the propaganda of Christianity was mainly inspired by anything else than the lust of conquest. It gave vent to the intolerance of the fanatic, and may be taken as the religious equivalent of the conquering spirit that has sent whole nations into the world on piratical enterprises. It is not without significance that the Church enterprises have so often assumed military forms, aping the more avowed militarism of the secular conqueror in grades, badges, and terms. But the main reason why religion has failed to furnish the conditions of a genuine brotherhood of humanity is that there is nothing fundamental or inescapable in religious beliefs. All men have not religious opinions, and among those that have, there are endless diversities. Let the religious appeal be as wide as may be, it still remains a sectarian one. And sectarianism depends quite as much upon the feeling of dislike for the outsider as it does upon affection for those inside the accepted circle. On the other hand, the non-religious appeal to brotherhood does base itself upon qualities that are common

to all men, and which are, indeed, fundamental to the associated state. There is no man without some sense of justice, however rudimentary. There is no man without some feeling for his fellows, however imperfect its expression may be. Beneath the differences of class, sect, or colour there are qualities—mental and moral—that all have in common. A rational doctrine of brotherhood seizes upon these as the elements upon which it may work, and which it may utilize in order to be successful. And as a mere matter of fact, it is in proportion as these non-religious qualities have been developed that the sense of brotherhood has become to some extent realizable in practice. It may be true that these qualities are not irreconcilable with some kind of a religion, but it is quite certain that they are independent of it. And it is also certain that in the history of modern Europe the association has done little but hinder their development.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Purgatory.

THE official creed of the Church of England finds expression in its Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the twenty-second of which reads as follows: "The Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardon, Worshipping and Adoration, as well of Images as of Reliques, and also invocation of Saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God." Referring to this Article, the Rev. C. B. Mortlock, M.A., Hon. C. F., in a sermon on Purgatory, published in the *Church Times* of July 29, says: "By those words I, in common with every minister of the Church of England, am bound. I may not, therefore, deduce from the words of our text the Romish doctrine of Purgatory." To be perfectly fair to Mr. Mortlock, we state that the text of his sermon is Matthew v. 26: "Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the utmost farthing." After his declaration of the binding character of the twenty-second Article of Religion upon his own conscience, Mr. Mortlock proceeds thus:—

What then are we to believe concerning the condition of life into which we may expect to pass when the moment comes for dissolution of soul and body? The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews assures us that without holiness "no man shall see the Lord"; and there are many other passages of Scripture which point to the same truth. To be sure, they who die in the Lord are in peace, for they rest from their labours. But not every professing Christian can be said with certainty to die in the Lord, or to be in the state of holiness which would carry him at death into the effulgence of the Beatific Vision. The vast mass of the faithful pass out of life in a state of very imperfect holiness, and no devout and thoughtful mind can, as it seems to me, help coming to the inference that there is an intermediate state wherein the souls who depart out of this life in the grace of God suffer for a time because they still need to be cleansed from venial sins, or have still to pay the penalty due to mortal sins, the guilt and eternal punishment of which have been remitted in Sacramental Absolution.

The moment we noticed the title of this discourse we simply took it for granted that it could not be an attack on the doctrine of Purgatory, for had it been that the *Church Times* could not have risked the grave peril of giving it publicity. And here we encounter a grave problem which the Anglo-Catholics generally conveniently ignore. Can it possibly be a justifiable action on the part of an Anglican clergyman to dishonour his signature affixed to the Thirty-Nine Articles? Mr. Mortlock frankly acknowledges that

he is under a solemn obligation not to "deduce" from any words of Scripture the Romish doctrine of Purgatory; and yet, despite that acknowledgment, he immediately undertakes the task of actually deducing it from the New Testament. Is it quite honest and above-board so to act? Can he truthfully square such conduct with his own conscience? It is true that he does not call Purgatory a Romish doctrine or "a fond thing vainly invented"; but what conceivable difference can that make? The fact that counts is that he openly teaches a dogma which the Church of which he is a minister as openly condemns as "a fond thing vainly invented"; and we are afraid that this applies to the majority of Anglo-Catholic divines.

Doubtless our readers remember the following statement by Draper in his *Conflict Between Religion and Science* (p. 278): "At the end of the thirteenth century a new kingdom was discovered, capable of yielding immense revenues. This was Purgatory. It was shown that the Pope could empty it by his indulgences. In this there was no need of hypocrisy. Things were done openly. The original germ of the apostolic primacy had now expanded into a colossal monarchy." That is a historically indisputable fact; but we have no right to infer therefrom that the doctrine of Purgatory, as such, is of thirteenth century origin. As a matter of fact Origen taught it during the first half of the third, and he was possibly the greatest of the early Church Fathers. His notion was that there might be a salvation of souls even after death. Towards the end of the fourth century or in the early part of the fifth, St. Augustine mused on the subject, believing firmly in everlasting punishment, but throwing out the suggestion that at certain intervals it might be mitigated. He also hinted that "some believers might pass through a kind of purgatorial fire." Gregory the Great was the first to formulate the doctrine itself. To Augustine Purgatory was possible, and to Gregory probable, and so the doctrine grew and developed until a time came when it could be said, in Milman's words:—

Purgatory had now its intermediate place between Heaven and Hell, as unquestioned, as undisturbed by doubt; its existence was as much an article of uncontested popular belief as Heaven or Hell. It were as unjust and unphilosophical to attribute all the legendary lore which realized Purgatory to the sordid invention of the Churchman or the monk, as it would be unhistorical to deny the use which was made of this superstition to exact tribute from the fears or the fondness of mankind. But the abuse grew out of the belief; the belief was not slowly, subtly, deliberately instilled into the mind for the sake of the abuse (*Latin Christianity*, Vol. IX. p. 91).

Mr. Mortlock endeavours to prove that by "the Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory," so ruthlessly denounced in the twenty-second Article, we are to understand the theory of Purgatory as held and put into practice during the Middle Ages, when the sale of indulgences increased so enormously the wealth of the Church, and so brought the belief itself into such popular and disastrous disrepute.

What an amazingly vast amount of knowledge about Shakespeare's "undiscovered country" the Rev. Mr. Mortlock proudly claims to possess and to be able to impart to his hearers and readers. Take the following sample:—

In Purgatory we shall be confirmed in Grace—we shall be conformed perfectly to the will of God, so that we can have no thought or desire contrary to God's will. But in Purgatory, since we shall no longer be able to sin, we shall no longer obtain merit, which depends upon our choice of good or evil. It follows, does it not, that we shall not, in Purgatory, be able to help ourselves? We shall depend upon God's working out of His purpose for us, and on the

suffrages of the Church on earth. The doctrine of Purgatory is a comfortable doctrine, but it leaves no loophole for indulgence, for it concerns only those who die in a state of grace.

The truth is that the reverend gentleman talks so glibly and fluently about Purgatory because of his utter ignorance even of its very existence. At best a future life is only an object of sheer speculation. It is but a mere dream of metaphysics, out of which some of us have already fully awakened. As Shakespeare says, dreams are true only while they last. All theologians are but spinners of dreams, which they pour out upon the world as veritable, objective realities. Once awake we realize that God, Heaven, Hell and Purgatory no longer exist, and can thus, in Swinburne's words, address God himself:—

Oh thou that hast built thee a shrine of the madness of man
and his shame,
And hast hung in the midst for a sign of his worship the
lamp of thy name;
Thou hast shown him for heaven in a vision a void world's
shadow and shell,
That hast fed thy delight and derision with fire of belief as
of hell;
That hast fleshed on the souls that believe thee the fang of
the death-worm fear,
With anguish of dreams to deceive them whose faith cries
out in thine ears;
By the face of the spirit confounded before thee and
humbled in dust,
By the dread wherewith life was astounded and shamed out
of sense of its trust,
By the scourges of doubt and repentance that fell on the
soul at thy nod,
Thou art judged, O judge, and the sentence is gone forth
against thee, O God.
Thy slave that slept is awake; thy slave but slept for a
span;
Yea, man thy slave shall unmake thee, who made thee lord
over man.
For his face is set to the east, his feet on the past and its
dead;
The sun rearsen is his priest, and the heat thereof hallows
his head.
His eyes take part in the morning; his spirit out-sounding
the sea
Asks no more witness or warning from temple or tripod or
tree.

J. T. LLOYD.

Altar and Throne.

"The state is founded on follies, the church on sins."
Landor.

"If a man hears his hen cluck, he is not confused as to whether it will lay a hen's egg, a swan's egg, or a duck's egg.—Ramsay Macdonald.

A NEWSPAPER paragraph states that the Archbishop of Canterbury is most anxious that loyal members of the English State Church should not think that the prayers for individual members of the Royal Family have been reduced in number in the new Prayer Book. His Grace points out that the prayers are still in the sacred volume, but that they are now placed on separate pages. Providence, it would seem, is still liable to be bombarded with prayers on behalf of George the Fifth and lady, the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York and family, and the numerous other members of the Royal circle. The two Houses of Parliament, comprising a thousand legislators, is still to be fobbed off with a simple request for "grace, wisdom, and understanding," a supplication which has, in the opinion of many, never once been answered satisfactorily.

It will be noticed that the plain prayers are reserved for Members of Parliament, and highly coloured petitions are the rule with regard to the sacred persons of Royalty. This is not a new thing. Altar and throne have always held together like the obverse and reverse of the same coin. So far as the Christian Re-

ligion is concerned, Kingcraft is inseparably associated with Priestcraft. In their Bible their deity is pictured as "the King of Kings," and the faithful are commanded to "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." King Charles the First was a shiftless and irresponsible monarch, and an utterly unreliable man, but he figured in the Anglican Prayer Book as a "Martyr," and a special form of service was devoted to his memory. Even to-day, when Democracy is in the ascendant, the Anglican bishops do not delete prayers for monarchy from their new Prayer Book, but spread them over many pages so that they are not so conspicuous. This is a characteristic piece of clerical camouflage, and worthy of those priests who gloss the barbarities and obscenities of their Bible, and pretend that they do not exist.

On the Continent, organized Christianity is associated with Monarchism. In France, Republicanism has had to fight the Roman Catholic Church continually.

Over half a century ago Gambetta declared that Clericalism was the principal enemy of Democracy, and the remark is just as pertinent to-day as it was when it was first uttered. In Russia, the four centuries old despotism of the Czars coincided with the triumph of the Greek Church. With the Revolution the power of the priests was finished. Wherever the power of Priestcraft is unbroken, monarchism and the attendant caste-system flourishes. Ecclesiastics hate Liberty because it is fatal to their pretensions, and no hatred is more venomous than the enmity of priests.

This decision of the bishops to continue to associate the Anglican Church with rank Toryism is highly significant. It is the parting of the ways, for the Democratic Movement has other and very different ideals. But priests hope to hoodwink the Democrats by pretending to be sympathetic to a movement which they secretly dislike. The Anglican Church is notoriously weak in influence among the working-classes of this country, and especially among men. Hence it is not surprising to find impassioned appeals to the workers in the new Church of England Hymnal. Listen to the honeyed tones of the clerical siren:—

"Sons of Labour think of Jesus
As you rest your homes within,
Think of that sweet babe of Mary
In the stable of the inn.
Think, now, in the sacred story
Jesus took a humble grade,
And the Lord of Life and Glory
Worked with Joseph at his trade."

The situation has its comic side. If Democracy should triumph, the priests will tumble over each other to curry favour with the new regime. We can imagine them substituting a trade union card for the legendary latin inscription on the Cross, and asking their congregations to pay Christ's arrears due for two thousand years' membership of the Carpenter's Union.

The Christian evangel no longer inspires the younger generation. The Church's spiritual message is ignored for the mundane message of Socialism, or even Communism. Hence the growing paralysis of the Anglican Church. The gain of Freethought is always the loss of the Church. Every Christian who becomes a Freethinker assists the process of decay. The more brains that are drawn from the Church the more does the huge mass part with its intellectual leaven, and tend to flatten down to a mere mass of ignorance and intolerance. What constitutes the really obstructive character of the Anglican Church is the undoubted fact that the Church attempts to perpetuate the Feudal ideals which are now outworn and no longer useful. The abyss between Feudalism with its caste system of society and the Democratic ideals of equality and fraternity is past bridging, and no

amount of cunning and camouflage on the part of the priests will succeed in the end. And to-day the voice of the Archbishop, to which monarchs once paid heed, attracts no more attention than "the horns of Elfland faintly blowing." Priestcraft had not a safe seat on British shoulders in the far-off ages of Faith, even before the days of the Reformation. The worst tyranny of the priests in this country finished with the glare of the fires of Smithfield. It is an impossible dream now that there is an organized national Freethought Party, which has inscribed on its banners, that stirring Voltairean phrase, "Crush the Infamous." Working men will no longer be deceived by the plausible excuses of the priests, who are simply the most reactionary and hidebound of conservatives. The workers may not shout, or walk in processions, but they know what they are up against. Like the rustic who was asked if he belonged to Church or Chapel, and who replied: "Well! I don't go to either one or the other, but it's Church I stops away from."
MIMNERMUS.

Jesus in Faith and in History. The Second Greatest Muslim.

I do not know how many explanations of "genuine" Christianity have been given to the world. Certainly the number must run into thousands, and their authors must have been convinced that they were all right. This is where the Roman Catholic so cleverly scores. He says that the idea of God sending down from Heaven the Authorized Version of the Bible as His Inspired Word, specially for the edification of dissenting Protestants must really be given up. The interpretation of the said Bible cannot be undertaken by anybody else but God's own trained representatives on earth, chosen for the purpose by His own Holy Church. Any attempt at private interpretations simply means schisms, disagreements, revisions, heresy and finally, absolute unbelief. In short, the Roman Catholic is the only person who really believes the Bible to be genuine, true and inspired because the Church says so and no other explanation is necessary. Can anything be more wonderful than this touching abandonment of all reason?

I was reminded of this when reading recently the *Sources of Christianity*, by the Imam Khwaja Kamal-Ud-Din (I had better refer to him as Mr. K in future). I take a keen delight in reading new books on Christianity. Most of these, of course, follow on traditional lines, but every now and then one stumbles across something more or less new. Now a look on the origins of our national religion written by an Imam from the Muslim point of view, promised something not only original but sensational. Was Edwin Johnson at last vindicated? Was *The Rise of Christendom* to have a vigorous defender?

Alas, Mr. K. grievously disappointed me. He has nothing to say whatever about the sources of Christianity from the purely Muslim point of view. Whether Muslims have ever studied the subject in Muhammad's own language, I don't know. Certainly Mr. K. has not. All he has done is to go to Dupuis, Robert Taylor (he calls him *Richard*) John M. Robertson and J. D. Parsons. He has thoroughly imbibed all they have to say on the sun and other myths and triumphantly reproduces their chief arguments (duly acknowledged) with which to belabour his Christian opponents. Personally, I am always pleased to see the work of such distinguished Freethinkers (Mr. Parsons, I think, still calls himself a son of the Church though) quoted as authoritative and coming from a new source, there is a chance of it being read by people who would never glance at a

Freethought work. But still, I can't quite see where the Muslim idea comes in. Mr. K. is a devoted lover of Jesus. All through his book he protests (sometimes, a little too much sometimes) his love and adoration for the Christian holy prophet. All Muslims are taught to love, he points out, the Second Person of the Trinity, though not exactly as the Second Person. Indeed, I am quite convinced, after wading through Mr. K.'s book, he himself and lots of Muslims in general, look upon Jesus as the co-equal of Muhammad—or at least a good runner-up. Mr. K.'s grievance seems to be that Christians obstinately refuse to give equal honour to his own Holy Prophet, and he is obviously quite hurt about it; in fact, he appears certain that if only Christians would see how high Jesus is held in the Muslims' estimation, they would all soon become Muslims. Mr. K., after deducting from the teaching of Jesus everything he doesn't quite agree with (most of which he ascribes to the malign influence of St. Paul and other pagans) and thus getting at the "real" teaching, the "genuine" nucleus, considers it to be pure Muhammadanism. In other words, Jesus taught what Muhammad taught—so why should Christians and Muslims be at daggers-drawn with each other?

Personally, I cannot imagine Christians, taking them so to speak, in a lump, getting ready to change over. It may be my stupidity, but I cannot for the life of me, see the Bishop of London calling himself an Imam or a Shaikh or any other title peculiar to the followers of Muhammad, and calling the Churches in his diocese, Mosques. I am afraid that if every Imam produced by Muhammadanism were to use every Freethought argument ever written, and could get them all read by every Christian in Christendom, there would be precious few conversions. And this leads me back to my opening remarks.

Mr. K. uses all Dupuis' and Robert Taylor's arguments with great skill, but he does not agree with their conclusion. He does not attempt to argue the matter though he agrees that almost everything in the story of the life of Jesus can be shown to have some connexion with the Sun Myth as known to the Ancients, but this does not prove Jesus never existed. No, for there is one unanswerable argument. Jesus is mentioned in the "Holy" Qur-án! He was, like Abraham and other Bible heroes, and Muhammad, a prophet of God. That is enough, his existence is proved. And Mr. K. throws over his reason exactly as does the Roman Catholic—the one in submitting to such a tissue of fables, myths and legends as are in the Holy Qur-án, the other, in submitting to such a preposterous crowd of wily priests as are in the "Church."

The truth is, Mr. K. does not know exactly what he is up against. His ultimate fight will not be with Christianity but with Freethought. Allah will not have to appeal to Christian believers, but will have to stand the criticisms of Atheists. He will be tried in the same fire as were all the other gods. Jupiter, Bacchus, Venus, Osiris, Jehovah, Jesus—all these and countless other deities have come under the ruthless, disintegrating judgment of Rationalism. What is left of them? They have disappeared into nothingness—or if you prefer it, into myth and legend, where they are as helpless as Allah.

For after all, what is the good of Allah? What has he done for humanity? Has he provided plenty of food, has he clothed and housed the people? Has he shown them how to abolish poverty, disease, misery and war? Has he made the blind see, the maimed walk? These are not new questions, they are as old as criticism of all gods. A god who does nothing

obviously is not worth a thought, and history has nowhere shown what Allah has done for anybody.

To quote good ethical texts from the Qur-án is no answer any more than to quote a few Bible verses is an answer to the sceptic. So long as there is a problem of evil, theism—whether the god is called Allah or Jehovah, or the First Cause—has no case.

Mr. K. can rest assured of one thing if he cares to come to grips with Freethought. His god Allah will go the way of all gods—the way of logical extinction.

H. CUTNER.

"Sunday Trading in London."

"THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SUNDAY QUESTIONS' COMMITTEE MAKES A TOUR OF INSPECTION."

ABOVE is the heading of a recent article in *The Methodist Recorder*. The article is signed by George H. McNeal. It begins: "How quiet and restful a Sunday in London is! I have heard people say. It is like the people who say that now they never see anybody drunk. It depends where these people live, and where they look. Some of us who live in different places see still a great deal of intemperance: and come with me some Sunday morning, and I will show you parts of London on the Sabbath that, I think, will startle you." (The reason for the writer connecting Sunday-trading with drunkenness needs no elucidation.)

The writer goes on: "Let me give a plain recital of facts. Having, for once, a morning free from preaching, my wife and I started from Wesley's Chapel Manse last Sunday morning about ten o'clock." Then Mr. McNeal tells us where he and his wife went and what they saw. "Butcher's stalls, full of meat; old clothes' stalls, almost as busy; a periwinkle stall well patronized; stalls for cakes, boots, sweets, cats' meat" (and why shouldn't Puss claim a thought?); "fent and rag stalls; dogs of all sorts and sizes; and not dogs only—goats and rabbits!" (Good Lord! Goats and rabbits!)

At one place, the sanctified ears of Mr. McNeal and his wife "were greeted with the composite sound of the singing of a Gospel Hymn" (with a capital G and a capital H) "and the barking of dogs." (What desecration in sounds! What a world for poor Wesleyans!)

"Some faithful missionaries were hard at work, but the crowd seemed to take little notice." (Neglecting their eternal welfare! How awful!)

"At the end of the street, quite a number of people with little boxes and cages, selling pet mice. We saw some white, others striped." (Our Grand Inquisitor, it would seem, forgot his mission for a moment in his interest in the colour of the pets.)

"Near a part of the street" (he has told us it was Hoxton Street, Shoreditch) "called 'Land of Promise' (which is the entrance to the Shoreditch Workhouse) we noticed an undertaker's establishment fully open. On the other side of the street, the Parish Church of St. Anne; two of the doorways securely fastened. There was a door open at the back, in a side street; on the notice-board the announcement of High Mass of the Pre-Sanctified and a call to Confession. On the other side, the Costers' Mission Hall. What difficulties religious workers must have on Sunday mornings in such a street!"

"Some of the stall-holders were evidently Jews; but by no means all." (The reader will understand that "by no means all" had the excuse of a different religion for disturbing the serenity of the Wesleyan Sabbath.)

"A few minutes' walk brought us to Shoreditch High Street, and a penny tram landed us in Bishopsgate at Middlesex Street, the famous Petticoat Lane." (Gracious Heaven! The "Chairman of the Sunday Questions' Committee" entering a tram on the Sabbath! What will the Sunday Questions' Committee say? Unless it be interposed, in abatement of the sin, that there was a fine economy in expenditure.)

"Quite a number of soldiers and sailors in uniform were seeing the sights; and many Lascars, some of them

turbaned. They had come from the docks to buy cheap clothes. We wondered what they thought of how Christian England kept the Lord's Day in Petticoat Lane." (Mr. McNeal and his wife wondered. Wondered; after that penny tram ride.)

"Most of the stall-holders seemed to be Jews, but not all. One man (not a Jew) with a bare foot was pushing his corn specific." (Damned for all eternity, without question! No excuse of another-day Sabbath for him!)

Mr. McNeal recounts many other things that he saw, but we push on to his conclusion.

"We were back home before one o'clock." ("The Chairman of the Sunday Questions' Committee" could not allow his "tour of inspection" to make him late for Sunday dinner.)

"Is this sort of thing necessary? Is there any real need for Sunday trading on the Day of Rest?" (With a capital D and a capital R.) "Nearly all the great Traders' Associations of the country are against Sunday trading. Apart from the religious aspect, these traders believe in a day of rest." (Here, a small d and a small r; which seems to denote some shuffling in Sabbatarian logic.) They "are seeking to bring pressure to bear upon the legislature to strengthen the legal enactments concerning Sunday. Why should not this be done? The Grocers' Association, especially, is earnestly concerned about this matter" (perhaps a greater proportion of Wesleyans in that Association), "and calls to the Churches to help them in the fight." (May we hope that the grocers will not be throwing bags of sugar in their earnestness?)

Mr. McNeal concludes with a reference to "the Continental Sunday," which, he says, "we have so long decried."

A schoolboy, reading Mr. McNeal's article, would see why he writes it. It's his job. And of those in the Wesleyan ministry who support Mr. McNeal in this, we should say the same. It's their job.

Let me relate for Mr. McNeal's enlightenment a little incident in which I was involved. Some years back, I was staying for a week-end with the person who sent me *The Methodist Recorder*, containing Mr. McNeal's article. The person is my cousin, a Wesleyan local preacher, then living at Sheffield. On the Sunday morning we went to the Ruskin Museum there. When we came in to dinner, his wife asked: "Where have you been!" "At the Ruskin Museum," I answered. "What!" exclaimed the eldest daughter (a girl about twelve years old), shocked, and looking at her father with a countenance of correction: "On Sunday!"

See, Mr. McNeal, to what a pass Sabbatarianism brings your own people at times! You yourself may yet hear more about that penny tram-ride.

H. BARBER.

Acid Drops.

In a district of Czecho-Slovakia, an attempt was made to burn an old woman of 70 for witchcraft. Fortunately for the old lady, a party of huntsmen arrived in time to put out the flames and to rescue her. There is evidently one part of Christendom in which attention is still paid to the biblical command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." But these huntsmen will have to answer to the Christian deity for preventing his followers carrying out his injunction.

With most churches nothing is neglected that will bring in cash, and this is particularly the case with the Roman Catholic Church. A reader sends us a circular, issued by the Irish Clerical Workers, inviting all and sundry to partake in a sweepstake for the Cesarewitch. The books of tickets are being sent out to people who have never asked for them, and two tickets are given to the seller of each book of ten. One wonders that with all the signs and wonders vouchsafed to the Church, some guardian angel doesn't give the name of the winner to the priest in charge, and then he could win without further trouble all the money he needs.

Mr. W. C. Bridgeman, First Lord of the Admiralty, told a meeting at Easthorpe Hall, that when he parted from Mr. Gibson and Admiral Jones, that he gave them each a British briar pipe. If the Bible Society had delivered and distributed pipes instead of tons (number unknown) of Bibles, there might be less mess to clean up in the world at present. It would pay statesmen to give the subject a little thought on these lines, and we make no charge for the suggestion.

Apropos of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, a candid reader of the *Methodist Times* inquires: "Apart from holding up Methodist Union, and postponing the entrance of women to the ministry, and passing a pious resolution on the question of Freemasonry, what has the Conference accomplished for all its talking?" This is a rather sinful question for a Christian man to voice. Surely he has noticed how little all the real problems confronting the nation now appear since the Conference finished its important job?

One of the greatest needs of our time is for better music in our parish churches, says a Mr. S. H. Nicholson. Other great needs, such as housing and employment, seem very small beer compared with this "one of the greatest." There is nothing like religion for giving one a sense of proportion.

A sympathizer with the Salvation Army asks why members are compelled to wear a uniform wherever they go, and why they don't use the common dress of the times. We fancy General Booth, if caught at a candid moment, would tell him that a uniform has a very strong appeal to childish minds. And that it is by attracting childish minds that the Headquarters Staff of the "Army" is able to earn a honest living.

A pious scribe says contact with God develops character. If a person is living in God we can trust him. He will keep his contracts, will neither cheat or lie. But if there is no religion there is no security. One dare not be off guard. The best characters always have a religious basis. The writer seems to have a long-winded way of saying: "Look at me—how perfect I am!"

Two years ago there were more than 8,000 missionaries of various denominations and nationalities in China. To-day there are barely 3,000. Some 5,000, says Mr. A. M. Chirgwin, M.A., have been recalled, and many of them are beginning to wonder if they will ever return. We don't suppose China will worry overmuch if they don't return. China has enough trouble of her own, and doesn't need Christian sectarian strife sowed by missionaries to be added to it.

Mr. Arthur Porritt, a member of the Religious Newspapers' Advertising Committee, hopes to popularize these journals with the important advertisers. The religious press, he recently declared, makes its appeal to the most sober and home-comfort-buying people in the whole community. He might have added that its readers are wonderfully credulous, and are thus eminently receptive to the wiles of vendors marketing patent cures. That is a statement guaranteed to prick up the ears of certain big advertisers, and to increase the advertising revenue of the pious newspapers.

A writer says that no greater or more urgent task lies before the Christian Church to-day than that of educating the young people in religion. True. So far as the future of the Church is concerned, it is the only kind of education that is really important. Whether the young people are illiterate, or lacking in general knowledge, or deficient in reflective power, doesn't affect the Church in the least. But she must have them religiously educated, or she is doomed.

Formerly, says the Bishop of Lincoln, people regarded democratic rule as the ideal form of government, but few are so foolish as to believe that now. The Bishop may or may not be right, but what is certain is that nowadays no one is quite so stupid as to believe hierarchic rule is the ideal form of government.

"Now that I am king, shall I be allowed to play?" is reported to have been asked by the child-King of Rumania. The tiny tragedy behind such a question might well set the little King's subjects wondering whether hereditary figureheads really are essential. If they were not obsessed with the notion that kings are divinely appointed, this kind of cruelty to children wouldn't be necessary.

The Rev. Owen Watkins seems to entertain opinions that one can hardly call Christian. Because our brother's view, he said recently, is not altogether our view, it is not to say it is wrong. Now, the traditional Christian way has always been to assume that the man who differed from the Christian was entirely wrong. We hope Mr. Watkins is not departing from this attitude. For he would appear to be admitting that the Freethinker may possibly be right. And that is a dangerous admission for a parson to make.

The Rev. Dr. Horton has given the *Times* another argument why Sunday should be observed in the Puritan manner. He says he is sure that motorists do not wish to prevent other people worshipping on Sunday, and this they cannot do while passing motors disturb their meditations. But why not? Does he mean that when a man is in Church and hears motors passing, it fills his mind with thoughts of how pleasant it would be if he were to join, and how preferable the country-side and fresh air would be to the inside of a Church? The *Christian World* backs up Dr. Horton with a plea for the preservation of "other people's Sunday." But no one wishes to interfere with other people's Sunday, and it is idle to pretend that the passing of motors seriously interferes with a service inside an ordinary church. The truth is that it is the consciousness that "other people" are enjoying their Sunday in their own way that interferes with the ordinary Sabbatarian. These people are "outraging" his feelings because they treat the Sunday as a day of enjoyment instead of a day of rest. But it is a sign of the times to find the usual arrogance of the church-goer brought down to this point.

The claims of women for admission to the ministry were turned down at the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, but the *Sunday School Chronicle* thinks the matter so vital that it would like further consideration to be given to the question. It may be expedient, says this paper, to limit or to continue to prohibit the service of women as ordained ministers, and there are undeniable difficulties and a prejudice which will not easily be overcome. But, we are told, on Christian and rational grounds it is not easy to see how the arguments in favour can be overthrown. We like the writer's "Christian and rational." Seeing that the difficulties and the prejudices, founded as they are on Holy Writ, are entirely Christian, it does seem odd that "Christian grounds" and—queerest of all—"rational grounds" should be brought forward to overthrow them. We get an inkling of what the prejudice is based on in the following:—

Paul's views were coloured by the social opinions and attitudes of his own day. The modern mind could not govern the twentieth century by the conventions of the first.

But if the divinely inspired Paul was wholly wrong in his opinion of women and their position in society, a warrantable presumption is that he was likely to have been as wrong in other matters on which he claimed to guide the world. In which case, his divine inspiration would appear to be of very small practical utility either to himself or to the multitudes who have followed his leadership.

However, the explanation is that Paul went astray in the one particular because his views and opinions were influenced by the prejudices of his time. That is a useful admission. It reduces the godly Paul to the level of an ordinary fallible mortal, and rubs the gilt off his halo. And, since everyone nowadays admits that the thought of ordinary mortals may be criticized, it also leaves the Christian with no grounds to support his attempted suppression of Freethinkers for presuming to ridicule the dear old "saint's" stupidities.

We don't quite follow the statement, "the modern mind could not govern the twentieth century by the conventions of the first." What has been happening for many centuries is that the primitive conventions and absurdities of the first century have been allowed—to the world's loss—to govern and subdue the better, the more progressive thought of succeeding centuries right up to the present. And during that time it is women who have been the greatest sufferers from this Christian dominance. We presume the writer in our contemporary meant to say that the modern mind ought not to be governed by first century conventions. His inbred christian instincts, however, rebelled at such wholesome truth and caused his pen to stutter into incoherency.

The following resolution has been adopted by the Education Association of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, at Memphis, Tennessee:—

We put ourselves on record as opposed to all legislation that would interfere with the proper teaching of science in American schools and colleges.

Which prompts us to say that not all the inhabitants of Tennessee are mentally living in the Dark Age. We congratulate the Methodist Episcopalists on being a little more intelligent than their Fundamentalist brethren in Christ. We hope they will find time to convert their benighted fellows to more civilized opinions. To this end they might, we suggest, most faithfully divert some of their funds now squandered on Foreign Missions.

Says the Bishop of Exeter, the race that cannot understand the world in which we live must fall behind. Considering the fact that the Bishop's Church directs most of its energy to cultivating "other-worldism," and noting how efficiently it gives people an entirely distorted understanding of this world, one is forced to smile at the incongruity of a Bishop issuing such a warning.

The Rev. John T. Green believes that a great conflict is coming between Catholicism and Protestantism. This is very sad. But it seems inevitable when the one and only Truth has been so given to the world that hardly two persons are able to interpret it alike. Still, we are glad to say the great conflict won't be very deadly. It will mostly be fought with bladders of wind. In these days the Christian sects are not nearly so sanguinary in dispute as once they were. Ridicule of unbelievers seems to have shamed the pious disputants out of killing one another in the name of a God of Love.

An International Conference, organized by the New Education Fellowship, is being held (August 3 to 15) at Locarno. The chief subject for discussion is "the true meaning of freedom in education." We suggest that the educationalists might usefully consider whether the Christian religion in schools, and what that religion teaches and claims, is consistent with the "new freedom." Also, whether the educationalist is able to enjoy any measure of real freedom so long as the influence of priest or parson dominates education.

If Christians cannot capture bodies at their various rendezvous, they catch the eye through the letter box. A green folder with the ominous words, "The Judge Standeth before the Door," was thrust through the door's mouth. As he couldn't come he wrote—and jolly

fine nonsense it was. There were the usual fireworks of damnation, threats, and wheedling from the New Testament, and one wonders where civilization—such as it is—would be, if left in the hands of those who need treatment at a pathological institution. Hear the gospel of joy:—

Hear, believe, and be saved from the wrath to come.
Art thou waiting till the morrow?
Thou may'st never see its light;
Come at once! accept His mercy;
He is waiting—come to-night.

This must explain why so many people prefer the pictures.

We see that the Lord Chamberlain has refused to sanction the appearance of "Potiphar's Wife," at the Globe, unless a certain passage quoted from the Bible was deleted. We are not surprised. Some of the passages in connexion with the story are just a trifle strong, and it is well to have it officially recognized that some parts of the Bible are quite unfit for public repetition. After all, the language of the stage must be a little more circumspect than that of the pulpit.

It is, however, interesting to note that very many parts of the Bible would lay one open to a police prosecution if used in a public highway, or in a public place. Perhaps the incident may cause some people who are so eager to keep the Bible in the schools to reconsider their attitude in this matter. And it must also be remembered that very many parts of the Bible have already been toned down in such a way that the real meaning is known only to close students of the Bible—mainly to those who have given up believing in it. It is a curious position. On the one side we hear of the importance of everyone knowing the Bible and reading it regularly; on the other hand, the Lord Chamberlain decides that some passages are too coarse and offensive for use in a theatre. We should like to see some one bold enough to give a literal translation of the Bible, giving all those passages that are now veiled in a discreet—if dishonest—translation.

War, says the *Church Times*, is now "insensate, savage, unspeakably vile." We have said the same kind of thing often. But we wonder if the *Church Times* will act up to what it says and advocate the withdrawal of all ministers of religion from any connexion with warfare? If it is insensate, savage, and vile, what is the meaning of parsons dedicating banners, blessing warships, and lending their countenance to all kinds of military parades and shows? Wars are only fought during a period of war, they are prepared for during times of peace, and none do more to get nations ready for war than do the Christian clergy.

But we do not agree with the *Church Times*, when it says that wars used to be fought between soldiers only, or between navies only; they have never been that. If unarmed cities were not bombed they were starved, water supplies were cut off, and civilians exposed to all the ravages of disease. And it requires a Christian conscience to discriminate between the accidental killing of women and children by throwing a bomb, and starving a people in order to force the armies to surrender. Bombs and poison gas are only doing, in a more open manner, what wars have always done. Science has made war more deadly, but it has also helped to make it more contemptible.

Mr. Colebourn, of *The Guardian*, told the Religious Newspaper Advertising Committee that the religious newspaper had large claims upon the attention of advertisers and their agents. In the past, he said, they had been too shy in talking about the merits of the papers they represented. It was necessary to keep before those whom they hoped to serve, the fact that the Religious Press is really a very sound advertising proposition. Mr. Colebourn is undoubtedly right. Readers

of the religious journals—especially those journals catering for the "home"—have just the right type of mentality, a blend of credulity and faith, which makes them particularly responsive to a certain kind of advertisement and type of wares. The patent nostrum advertiser should certainly give the religious papers a trial.

Bishop Brent, of New York, told the "World Conference of the Churches," at Lausanne (at which the Roman Catholic Church was not represented) that through unity alone could the Kingdom of God be set up among men. The evil effects of rival denominations split Christians in the mission fields, making Christianity contradict itself as a world religion. We would remind the Bishop that there is nothing extraordinary about Christianity contradicting itself. It has always done so. We suggest the cause of the trouble may be found in the fact that the Master lacked sufficient intelligence to say exactly what he meant, in language all men could interpret in but one way. That being the case, we will prophesy that Christian unity will be ushered in with the first blue moon.

A pious contemporary warns readers against the "closed mind." People with such a mind, it says, are against the admission of any new fact. They have come to a definite conclusion and wish to be left undisturbed. They will hear nothing that conflicts with their view, nor read anything that does not conform to it. One of the stubborn bolts to the door of the mind, we are told, is tradition and custom.

The thoughts and ways of our fathers; the habits of the group to which we belong; the fashion of the times in which we are reared inevitably mould our thoughts. If an idea clashes with these inherited opinions we treat it as a revolutionary, and fling it out of our minds as an enemy. In this way it is possible to reject ideas that might have changed our world.

If this Christian journal is really honest in its objection to the closed mind, it should stop vending Sunday-school instruction and making little clients for the Churches. For the chief aim of Sunday Schools is to secure the unreflecting child mind, dope it with Christian prejudices, traditions and habits, in order to secure it against the ingress of any disturbing new fact or non-Christian argument and influence.

Miss M. V. Hunter, M.A., of the staff of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, wants women to be admitted to the ministry. She says the Women's Movement itself is one of several world movements which have arisen because thought has become permeated with the teaching of Christ on the value of the human soul, and which aim at equal partnership among human beings in the conduct of human affairs. It is this principle in Christ's teaching, she says, that has enabled women in Christian countries to enter so many professions and occupations. Here is a sheaf of questions Miss Hunter might seek answers for. Why has Christ's teaching taken nearly 2,000 years to do its permeating? Why are women admitted to equal partnership with men only when Christ's teaching has confessedly reached a very low ebb of influence? Why was the prejudice against women's equality at its strongest when the Christly influence was at its greatest! How comes it that, of all the professions, the profession in which Christ's influence and teaching are strongest should be the last to stand against the admission of women? Perhaps, when she had read a little wider than she appears to have read at present, and has faced these questions fairly and squarely in the light of her reading, she may discover that the principle of equality between men and women had its incidence from a quite different source than the teaching of the ascetic celibate of Nazareth.

Kindliness, says Mr. Justice McCardie, is still the great secret of life. According to the professional Christians, the secret wasn't discovered until a bit of God obliquely committed a Palestine. We find that hard to believe.

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.—T. A. Williams, 5s.; We Three, 3s.

H. CHELLEW.—Thanks for reference. The articles are interesting and useful.

I. FISHER.—Yes, copies are sent, but an extra one will do no harm.

A. TAYLOR.—The Manchester Branch holds its meetings during the autumn and winter in the Engineer's Hall, Rusholme Road. We share your dislike to evasive names and titles. Christians are not misled by them, but it encourages the bigot in his arrogance.

J. NEATE.—Received with thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

H. S. ENGLAND.—We sent on the address several weeks ago. We are sending again, and hope it will reach you safely.

J. THACKRAY.—Quite sensible. What we should like to see is those who take part in public life a little more candid about their religious opinions while they are alive. They would affect thought much more powerfully if they would be so.

W. CLARKE.—Next week.

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

The first of the Open-air Demonstrations arranged by the N.S.S. Executive came off in Hyde Park on Sunday last. Mr. Le Maine acted as Chairman, the speakers being Mr. Campbell-Everden, Mr. Rosetti, and the President. All the speeches were very much to the point, and were listened to with quietness and attendance by a large audience. The next Demonstration takes place to-day in Brockwell Park at 3 o'clock. Mr. Corrigan, Mr. Rosetti, and Mr. Cohen will be the speakers.

Mr. William James Caie, late Mayor of Bury St. Edmunds, left in his will an injunction to his wife and executors, to see that none of his children were confirmed according to the rites of the Church of England under the age of 21. After that they were to decide for themselves as to their religious views. If that were generally carried out, there would be precious few of the next generation who would belong to any church at all. Mr. Caie also says in his will:—

I am profoundly convinced that the present-day religious beliefs and teaching and preaching are not only erroneous, and in fact pernicious, but a blasphemy upon

the name of the Great Architect of the Universe, void of trust and calculated to lead children especially astray, and hence the abominable practice of making children undertake solemn confirmation vows, the nature of which not only they, but the dastardly priests who promulgate them are in absolute ignorance of, and never live up to, I cannot countenance.

I charge both my sons to become Freemasons when they attain the necessary age. Freemasonry is an incentive and valuable help to leading a clean, straight life, and is the only system of morality worth having.

I sincerely hope that no well-meaning but misguided individual will waste any time in praying for me as a lost soul, because I die perfectly happy as to my future, knowing that God, who is a loving, just, and merciful Being, not a monster of vengeance, jealousy, and pettiness as the parsons portray Him to be, will forgive all my sins, which are many, and deal with me with mercy.

It is idle to speculate on the future and to talk of Heaven or Hell as a future state; there are Heavens and Hells in this earth. I have experienced both.

We are asked to announce that the West Ham Branch has arranged for an excursion to Grange Hill on Sunday, August 28. The train leaves Forest Gate Station at 9.50. Fare eightpence return. All Freethinkers and their friends are invited.

The Mexican Department of the Interior has issued a denial of the truth of the report that the government was negotiating for the return of the priests who had been exiled for disobeying the law, and for plotting against the government. The Department says that, "The past year's experience has shown that the people throughout the country can do without the priests." Most other people would come to the same conclusion if they only put the priests on one side for a little while.

The Blake Centenary is useful and will, in a measure, help to balance up the intolerable amount of stupidity and nonsense that is each day unloaded in the Press. We are continually reminded that England is a religious country, and churches have had *force majeure* on their side for many centuries. The writer of a notice of William Blake in the *Times Literary Supplement* makes an unconscious criticism of spiritual pastors and masters; he states: "It is when we contemplate the prodigious mess that mankind still makes of life, and recall Blake's happy and victorious serenity through an existence deprived of everything that the world makes itself miserable to gain, that we feel there is a fundamental wrongness in aims and governing ideas still everywhere accepted. . . ." The last great war had the unstinted support of the churches high and low. The churches of to-day still toady to money values, and their organization is not particularly vocal at the growth of preparations for another war. There are bands and banners and blessings of war memorials at which the priest predominates. Like a parliament of birds they have been seriously discussing the prayer book and ritual, with medieval minds, as though it had any bearing on life. There is only one moral, and that is, the prodigious mess, mentioned by the writer, and their responsibility, and it is a pity that once and for all they cannot be recognized as blind leaders of the blind; they are from a Freethought point of view, welcome to all that is written about them by William Blake.

Mr. Mann's meeting at Edinburgh on Sunday afternoon last, was made impossible by the weather, but he is going there to-day (August 21) in the hopes of better fortune. In the evening, in spite of a drizzling rain, a large audience stood and listened, while the speaker got wet through expounding the gospel of Freethought. Mr. Mann is evidently keeping busy before taking up his duties in London.

We are asked to announce that the debate arranged to take place in Hyde Park on Friday, August 12 between Mr. C. Herbert and the Rev. Mr. Reed was prevented by bad weather. It has been postponed till September 2.

Hell : Purgatory : Heaven.

(Concluded from page 523.)

THE Catholic conception of the Universe of God is puerile, and ridiculously inadequate even to the facts we know—what we know is very probably an infinitely small portion of actuality. I have before used as illustration the fact that what we can see with the naked eye on a bright starry night is many times greater, compared to our earth, than our earth is to a cricket ball. Even this illustration is difficult to realize. Work up to it gradually. A cricket ball, a cricket field, the countryside, the whole country, all continents and oceans, the whole earth—and the earth, compared with the cricket ball is not as large as what we see on a starry night is to the earth. But if the cricket ball represents the earth, what sort of infinitesimal microbes on the cricket ball must represent us? The difference between a scientist and the microbes he cultivates in a test tube is great. But the difference between the Creator and us is greater. This ought to take some of the conceit out of us.

Now suppose that our scientist could do what no scientist has yet done, namely, make the microbes in his test tube into *performing microbes*. Those that are not amenable to his training he—throws away, kills off, and finishes with? Not at all. He separates them, puts them into another test tube with some chemical which does not kill but keeps them alive and writhing for ever. Nice healthy morals, such a scientist would have, eh? Yet *that* is the Catholic idea of God and Hell. The good performers would be put into a gold-mounted test tube, and the scientist would spend the remainder of his days in watching them genuflect to him. This is the Catholic idea of Heaven—a lunatic idea is it not? It certainly would be lunatic if it originated at the eye-piece end of the microscope. But it has, of course, originated at the other end, amongst the microbes. Some of these cheeky little creatures have got the idea that they are so nearly the equal of the scientist, that they think he and they can spend not only a social evening but a social eternity together. At any rate, that is the innocent impudence of the *Streptococcus Catlickia*. It is a queer insect.

Considering how cunningly the priests have catered for their fellow microbes, it is strange that they have made such a failure of heaven. Probably after these remarks of mine, they will give the matter attention, and in a few years we shall see Heaven re-opened after alterations and re-decorating, with many new and attractive features. When we see people *wishing* to die in order to get to heaven, we shall know it has been made really attractive. Till then we shall have to think either that they do not fully believe in the Heaven they talk about or they do not consider it a place worth hurrying to get to. It may, however, be confidently stated that if the priests make heaven more attractive they will put up the price of admission, and will also increase the penalties on suicide. A dead layman is finished as a wealth earner for the priests. This point will no doubt be borne in mind. A few more suggestions can also be given.

A rather more attractive heaven would—by contrast—make hell hotter and therefore more effective as a money-squeezer. For every twenty shillings produced by the hell and purgatory stunt, I do not think more than threepence is earned by the attractions of heaven. Here is surely a little flaw in the priests' money-making outfit? Mark my words, the priests will see to it.

As a really good suggestion, I put forward the idea of a graded heaven. Has the man (*e.g.*) who builds a church to have no better place in heaven than the

man who has only subscribed a few shillings? Would not men work hard to get the money wherewith to buy a good seat? Is not something that induces men to work a very good and moral proposition? Is not Holy Church sadly in need of moral propositions? No theologian would be hard put to it to find texts to fit these special propositions. For instance, that about many mansions. They will not be all alike surely? It would be a poor theologian who could not prove private boxes, orchestra and pit stalls, family circle and gallery in heaven. Then having got a scheme worked out, it could be issued either gradually, or all at once in the usual way, namely, by a vision vouchsafed to some half-wit, crazy monk or nun. (Most developments of Roman Catholicism have been inaugurated thus). What if a few Modernists left Holy Church in disgust? It would not matter a tinker's curse. The few million dupes left in would pay far more than would be lost by these unprofitable modernists.

For the benefit of those who are troubled with any fear of hell (and I know there are many such) let me put it quite straight and plain. There is no such place. Hell is but a priests' lie. They could not produce an atom of evidence in proof of such a place. All visions and descriptions of it are pure imagination. If any living person to-day were to assert he had *seen* hell, he would be considered a case for a mental institution. Can you *imagine* any sane man telling you privately that he had, himself, seen hell? You know you cannot. Can you imagine any priest saying publicly that he himself had seen it, or knew somebody personally who had seen it? You know you cannot. Therefore hell is a tale that you have heard from somebody who had got it from somebody else, who had heard it from somebody else again—and so on many times. It is a much retold tale that started in a small way and grew as it passed on. To believe in it nowadays is foolishness.

C. R. BOYD FREEMAN.

On Being Serious.

"Sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought."
Shakespeare.

A CORRESPONDENT, whilst saying that he always enjoys my articles, tells me that he likes the serious ones best, and he recalls, with pleasure, my encounter (I had almost written "historic encounter"!) with Colonel Lynch in these columns a year or two ago. My correspondent is one of the "old guard" of Freethought, and I gather from his brief comment, that he would prefer to see me flogged in full battle-array, charging down the hosts of superstition and capturing their positions by direct assault, than indulging in fanciful creations which, however entertaining, are devoid of real militant value. Unfortunately, however, the Lord does not deliver Colonel Lynch's into ones hands every day, and the average Christian apologist is hardly worth powder and shot. If one could only be sure of their sincerity one might sometimes essay the task of attempting a serious refutation of beliefs that any civilized intelligence would have abandoned long ago. As it is, I find it increasingly difficult to treat either beliefs or believers with anything but humorous contempt.

There has recently been a discussion in these columns on Methods of Controversy, and I confess that my sympathy was all with Mr. Cohen. Christians have been treated with too great a respect for too long, and it is sheer hypocrisy to pretend that Christian beliefs deserve to be treated "reverentially." One correspondent said, if I remember rightly, that

he sometimes introduces the humorous aspect of certain Christian dogmas, say the Ascension, as a prelude to discussing it as it should be discussed. But how the deuce do you discuss the Ascension? What is the "proper" method of discussing so foolish an absurdity? To attempt to discuss it at all is to invest it with an importance it does not deserve. It is not as if the Ascension presented a problem in aerodynamics.

Personally, my own method of dealing with the Christian I meet in everyday life is a short and easy one, and I have found it singularly effective. When a man tells me he is a Christian, or states his belief in some religious dogma in such a way as to suggest he is out for discussion, I look at him with something like amazement, and exclaim in my most incredulous tones: "Really, you don't believe in that damned nonsense, do you?" The effect is often striking. He is out of his element at once. Accustomed to having his pet beliefs fawned upon, he is staggered to encounter someone who treats them with amazed contempt. I have established a definite superiority at the outset, and proceed to exploit it by assuming tacitly and avowedly in all my subsequent conversation, that I regard him as quite outside the pale of a genuinely civilized society. I convey to him as emphatically as I am able, that such beliefs as his are really not mentioned wherever two or three intelligent people are gathered together. It isn't done! After all, this is the twentieth century. "Salvation Army—slums—low intelligence—primitive beliefs—quite; quite—but you and I, old man—tut, tut!"

It may be asked, what are the effects of such shock tactics on the Christian. Well, to begin with, it is highly possible that he regards me as a lewd fellow of no delicacy. I may typify for him the blatant Atheist. That does not matter much. What does matter, is that he immediately becomes considerably less confidently aggressive in his Christianity; instead of treating me as a brand to be plucked from the burning, he becomes desperately anxious to prove that he is not quite such a fool as I take him for. That marks a considerable advance. When you get a Christian trying to prove that his Christianity is not a species of mental lunacy, the situation is interesting. It is well that Christians should know that there are people who hold them and their beliefs in the utmost contempt, and the method I have indicated saps their arrogance; destroys their self-conceit; and I have abundant evidence that it sets them thinking to some purpose, also. You try it!

The serious work of attacking Christian dogmas is so effectively done by others in the *Freethinker* week by week, that I feel I can well be spared to indulge myself by introducing a little variety, which shall be something of an offset to the direct attack. Thus my object has always been, in the main, to strike a lighter note. Occasionally I am tempted to step aside to reply to some Christian apologist, who has been making rather a bigger ass of himself than usual. But I usually abandon the task with disgust. A short time ago, for instance, an article on religion appeared in the *Daily Mirror*. It was delightfully vague to suit—or rather, not to give offence to all palates. The writer dismissed Atheism because "the atheist is a man utterly devoid of imagination." So now we know. "God" is a product of the imagination. Just what the atheist has been saying all the time.

The main difference between my correspondent and myself is that we belong to different ages. He was bred in an atmosphere where Christian beliefs were an ever-present reality, a terrifying reality, and the persecutor was abroad in the land. To me, Christi-

anity has never been much more than "damned nonsense." If anyone thinks otherwise, I can only express my respectful astonishment. And if, still further, anyone wishes to make it a bone of contention in order to warm the blood of one of the old guard, I will endeavour to be strictly serious.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

Books and Life.

IN *Foxglove Manor*, Robert Buchanan attempted to write a novel round a figure sceptical in religion, yet carefully pointing out in the introduction that the tragedy in fiction must not be construed into an attack on the priesthood generally. The husband, George Haldane, when he realizes the reason for the vicar's visit to his house, declares vehemently to his wife, "Mr. Santley is like all his tribe—a meddler and a mischief maker . . . Well, my atheism, if you choose to call it so, against his theism. Mine at least keeps me a man among men, while his keeps him a twaddler among women." A novel *By Thor, No!* by C. R. Boyd Freeman (Simpkins, Marshall & Co., Ltd.) essays a similar task with an agnostic for a hero. The opening chapters are a trifle dry, the author is some time getting into his stride, but up against the Catholic and Anglican Church he uses the argument of patriotism with extreme effectiveness. We wonder if any of our readers have had the good fortune to acquire *The Mastery of Life*, by G. T. Wrench? If they have, they will remember the wanderings, fightings, brawlings, and scufflings of the Anglo Saxons, and will be greatly helped in understanding the alien character of the religious yoke that Henry VIII. flung out of doors; what he accepted in exchange was not much better, but both brands were historically unsuited for the Angelo Saxon. And this brings us back to Mr. Freeman's novel, that is almost philosophy tied up with fancy ribbons, for his figures are somewhat ethereal. Harry Westgate, the hero, in a fine straight talk with a Catholic priest, Bernard Mallen, delivers himself of transubstantiation as follows: "The Roman Catholics believe that when any one of their priests says a few words over bread and wine, the bread and wine become the body and blood of God . . . The Roman Catholic worshipping crucifixes and relics is absolutely on a par with the heathen, who in his blindness bows down to wood and stone . . . My word, Mr. Mallen, have you the faintest idea of what your sect appears to be to normal English common sense? Inspired by God? In all seriousness it is more like lunacy." The novel closes with happy marriages, the beautiful heroine is rescued from the dangers of auricular confession, the Anglican priest leaves the Church for Canada, the Catholic priest evaporates, and we are left with the feeling that the propagandist novel has in this case been successful. It implies the possession of commonsense by the reader, and that in itself distinguishes it from many of our present novels that are merely so many pounds of paper, or what H. G. Wells would term "jobfry."

The divigations of the human race are wonderful; 82,000 people witnessed the Dempsey fight. Little crowds may be seen with heroism we do not possess, standing round men slicing up roads with hideous drills. A man at a street corner has only to hold up between thumb and finger some trifling object, and the curious stop and put their ears in pawn. A person has a fit in the street and immediately the mesmerized will congregate, in order that the unfortunate shall not have the one thing needful—fresh air. One wonders who in the name of Mike—or whatever patron saint you prefer—one wonders we repeat, on whose shoulders falls the burden of civilization. Are the Atlases among the people we have mentioned? In parliamentary language the answer is in the negative. Those who have in mind a better type of man, and are prepared to live their own lives in that direction, may, with the toes for eventualities, be counted on the fingers of two hands. Dr. Oscar Levy has a number of books to his credit, together with his heroic venture in the translation of the complete works

of Nietzsche. He writes dangerously and lives dangerously, and his fate, apart from his choice, has made him a good European. In a reprint from *The Review of Nations*, March, 1927, entitled "The Spirit of Israel," he rises like the phoenix from the ashes of banishment, and, with heroic hope (we must use the word a second time), he believes in the influence of the lonely philosopher, whose shadow alone helped to make a name for George Bernard Shaw. In Dr. Levy's words, "The Spirit of Nietzsche is making for a new Elite, which will re-establish Europe in the eyes of Asia. And this Elite, and not the rabble, which now poses as European, should build the bridge between the two great continents." These are brave words; brave deeds may follow. Conquests in the mental world are more enduring than those made by cannon. We cannot imagine Spinoza offering to fight anyone to prove the truths he had deduced from a triangle. And the merest numskull in intellectual matters must now see as clear as daylight, that what savages began, will be finished by chemists. The booklet is edited by Felix Vályi, Geneva, Switzerland, and it is in the nature of an antidote to the "Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion." There is hardly intellectual standing-room for any European to be *anti* any nation; Russia is still the bad lad of the family, but our English girls do not look on him unkindly on wet days, and our publishers are grateful to him. Ask Maurice Baring, Stephen Graham, Constance Garnett, Professor Pares, Veronica Scott-Gatty, and Prince D. S. Mirsky, to mention only a few. So that anti-nationality may in this paragraph at least, be carefully wrapped up in an anti-macassar and put away with childish things.

Mr. Max Plowman gave us a wonderful and enlightening essay in his Introduction to the *Poems and Prophecies of William Blake*, in the Everyman Library. He has now added to his well-deserved laurels, *An Introduction to the Study of Blake*, published by J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 4s. 6d. net. We have to answer for our stewardship in these notes, the question, on what grounds is William Blake to be so insistently recommended to atheists, agnostics or Freethinkers? With the best will in the world we respond, although not as fully in a paragraph as the subject demands. It is commonly supposed that those who have no religious belief regard the visible world as a heap of cinders. It is also commonly supposed that the element of wonder, of appreciation, of the perception of the beautiful (your pardon—Tristram), of delight in the heavens and the earth, is only open to those who accept their mental food from priests whose uniform is a negation of life. This is all according to plan, and, since churches thrive on ignorance and prejudice, and only allow their flocks to feed like tethered goats, these ideas are accepted. A popular illustration of this attitude is G. K. Chesterton's gnat-bite at a giant like Thomas Hardy in his gibe about a village atheist, which, perhaps, we may take as a sample of Christian charity in full working order. No church was big enough for William Blake; "creeping Jesus" was not admissible in orthodox vocabulary in his time; and he, who could write that the "modern church crucifies Christ with the head downwards," is now honoured in St. Paul's Cathedral. Again, how will this thought fit any religious creed? But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul is to be expunged." Mr. Plowman writes with clarity and compels interest in his subject; we like particularly his phrase, "the privet-hedge mind"; chapter vi. is particularly helpful in enabling the reader to understand Blake, and the entire book, for the genuine student, will be an excellent primer. If there are parts of Blake obscure and bewildering, there are vivid lightning flashes, and in two such lines we justify this paragraph, and our recommendation of this book:—

"Thou art a man. God is no more.
Thine own humanity learn to adore."

We found ourselves smiling at a sentence in Dr. Levy's introduction to a new edition of *Ecce Homo*, by Friedrich Nietzsche. George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.,

3s. 6d. net. It is a splendid book, fits the pocket, and a little of the subject matter goes a long way—it should be taken in small doses. Nietzsche is familiar with us—he writes on food, drink and climate, etc., yet never flinches from his obvious task of insisting that aristocratic intellectual values come first and foremost. His teaching is hard, but the dislike for him is in his uncompromising attack on Christianity. For this attitude he finds abundant reasons, yet, in a paradoxical way, he also has wise words for the complete philosopher: "Freedom from resentment and the understanding of the nature of resentment—who knows how very much after all I am indebted to my long illness for these two things?" And hear Mr. Bernard Shaw in "Cæsar and Cleopatra"; "Resent, O thou foolish Egyptian, what have I to do with resentment?" Through Mr. Cedric Hardwicke as Cæsar on the stage, Nietzsche may even reach the Gods! And with an acuteness that is uncanny, Nietzsche states, that freedom from resentment is not a precept of morality, but of physiology. He aims at a better type of man, on his feet instead of on his knees. There are no copies of Nietzsche in the twopenny box of the bookseller, and we hope that this edition will find its way to the student's pocket for subsequent assimilation. Maxim Gorki states somewhere that the man who walks in front gets a blow on the forehead, whilst those who follow only get a kick in a soft place, and this brings us to the cause of our smile. Dr. Levy states of Nietzsche: "You will find him the most hated of all. He gets upon everybody's nerves, he fits in nowhere." When we get mountains fitting into valleys there will be the flat tableland of nothingness. We shall be thanked by Christian and Freethinker for recommending the reading of this book, which remains unanswered for a very simple reason.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Much Ado About Nothing.

It was a pleasant mid-summer's day, and I was walking down a quiet country lane bordered with trees in full leaf. I was admiring the beauties of Nature and dreaming my own dreams. Everything seemed to be at peace, and I was filled with a quiet satisfaction.

Presently, however, my thoughts were disturbed by a confused noise, which grew louder and louder as I moved along. I approached a large open space, which was filled with a tremendous concourse of people who differed widely in their appearance, dress and modes of speech. Anxious to discover what was the meaning of this gathering, I mingled with the crowd and peered interestedly about me.

At first I could make out nothing whatsoever. Everyone was talking at once, and no one seemed to take the slightest notice of anyone else. It reminded me of Hyde Park on a Sunday morning, on a very much larger scale. There were little platforms all over the place, and each was occupied by an orator who was endeavouring to make himself heard above the din. Sometimes a crowd would gather round some particular speaker who was evidently possessed of a more powerful pair of lungs than his rivals; but sooner or later they would lose interest and drift off to another part of the ground.

I was struck, however, by the earnest demeanour of all the spectators. All of them seemed to be seeking something which they had great difficulty in finding. Even when they deserted one platform for another, they did not appear to do so out of mere idle curiosity. Their attitude resembled much more that of the fevered gold-seeker who finds his claim to be unproductive. True, some of them seemed not so much to believe in the existence of the gold as to wish to give the impression of believing in it in order to conform with the majority; but undoubtedly all were very hot and very busy.

The confusion, however, was not quite so great as I had at first supposed. For I observed that in a far corner of the ground a large section of the crowd was being marshalled by some men in most curious uniforms, who were evidently regarded as some sort of officers. These men wore curious pointed hats and long multi-coloured robes; they reminded me distantly of Chinese Mandarins. Gradually they disciplined their followers into a fair

show of order, and the army slowly moved forward in my direction.

Chanting a strange air, which was decidedly awe-inspiring, they forced their way through the mob. Nor were they particular about the safety of those who were not over-ready to make way for them. Many people, including both women and children, who were too intent upon listening to one or other of the orators to notice their approach, were trampled ruthlessly underfoot, apparently at the direction of the officers.

On they came, sweeping majestically towards the platform which was nearest to where I was standing. On reaching it, several of the officers quietly mounted the steps, seized the occupant, and dragged him away to a spot where another party had been industriously heaping up a pile of faggots. To my horror, I realized that they were about to burn the unfortunate man alive. I looked round for someone who would assist me to rescue him, but no one seemed disposed to do so. All the members of the army seemed quite satisfied with the arrangements; and the others were either too much overawed to interfere, or else they were too preoccupied with their own concerns.

The fire was lit, and a loud shout of triumph burst from the assembled spectators. Evidently they seemed to consider that in some mysterious way, which I could not attempt to fathom, a glorious victory had been achieved.

Unable to stand the spectacle further, I moved away to another part. But I discovered that this method of persuasion had become infectious. On every hand, somebody was killing or burning someone else. None of them seemed to know why they were doing this. But once again they had the air of being very much in earnest, as though their very lives depended on the operation. This, of course, was absurd; for it was quite obvious that most of their victims were quite incapable of doing any harm. It reminded me of one of those senseless panics in a theatre, when someone shouts "Fire!" without any cause whatsoever.

By this time my ear had become accustomed to the roar of so many voices, and I could distinguish some of the shouts which were rending the air.

One man, almost beside himself with frenzy, was executing a sort of war-dance and whirling a huge scimitar round his head, with which he smote all who came within his reach; the while he yelled at the top of his voice, "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet."

Yet another, who was more vehement still in his gestures, was shouting something which I could not distinguish. I pressed closer to him to catch his words, and in doing so jostled against a woman, who spoke to me in a rapid undertone. Strangely enough the voice was that of my wife, and she was saying, "Do sit up straight; it's disgraceful."

The scene changed. I was in a large building. My wife was indeed by my side. At the further end of the building a man was standing on a platform, which closely resembled those I had just been witnessing. He was very red in the face for the day was hot; and he was remarking, in what seemed to me to be an unnecessarily loud voice, "Three in One and One in Three."

Good Heavens! I had fallen asleep in the sermon.

B. S. WILCOX.

Correspondence.

REALITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I take it as a compliment to my book *Reality*, that you should think it deserving of criticism in two long articles. There are many points made by the writer of these on which I should like to comment, but I will confine myself to two points:—

(1) The branches of scientific investigation to which I have given the greatest amount of study are *The Higher Criticism*, *Comparative Religion*, and *The New Psychology*. My study of these subjects has shown me that popular ideas of religion require some modification in substance, and considerably more in form. The

greater part of my book is concerned with this. But it was necessary to correlate my views on religion with the conception of the nature of the physical universe and of the nature of scientific knowledge recently set out by certain distinguished mathematicians, physicists and astronomers. It is the opinion of these gentlemen that science does not—as many people used to suppose—support Materialism. If your reviewer thinks they are wrong, he should direct his attack against them and not against me. The arguments which I used against Materialism, and concerning the limits of scientific knowledge, were not derived from theologians but from scientific writers of admitted eminence.

(2) I am not one of those persons who abuse Nietzsche without having read anything either of his works or of his biography; and it so happens that I have read the book by Mr. Figgis, which he commends to my notice. I am quite sure that there are affinities between Nietzsche's teaching and that of Christ—in fact I have in the press a book in which I point out some of these. All the same, Nietzsche would himself have repudiated the affinity, and regarded himself as the prophet of Anti-Christianity. In my book *Reality*, I was discussing, not Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole, but his conception of the Will to Power, which he himself regarded as its climax. It is a fact that psychologists do regard an abnormal craving for power as evidence of pathological instability. I may be wrong in connecting his mental breakdown with such instability; but I do not think I am. At any rate it is a hypothesis which explains quite a number of the facts recorded by so sympathetic a biographer as his sister.

B. H. STREETER.

FREETHOUGHT AND RELIGION.

SIR,—As a reader of your journal for some few months, I feel tempted to write to you a few words on how the struggle with religion strikes me. To me, the fight against theological creeds is essentially a fight against ignorance and indifference on the one hand, and a cultured and well-informed self-interest on the other. The conservatism of the masses of the people, whom it is most important to rouse in this matter, is the most difficult obstacle to the dissemination of the truth. Reared up from birth in the atmosphere of a religion to which has been attached all that they have been taught to consider respectable; urged to suspect the motives and character of any person who professed to entertain doubts as to the truth of any of the doctrines the constant inculcation of which has been the only serious effort to educate them, they regard their religion as an established institution which it is no part of their business to interfere with. Such conformity with its moral and ethical teaching as enables them to maintain the standards of those amongst whom they move, and such tacit evasion of those laws of the faith which would interfere with their enjoyment of life, or the keeping of which would draw the attention of their circle of acquaintance to them as to an oddity, these are the points at which religion makes contact with the vast majority of professing believers. And this kind of conduct meets with the approval of their spiritual leaders who, it is true, persevere in holding up before them a higher standard, but at the same time take care to impress upon them that its attainment is a matter of impossibility to them. The burden of half the sermons that are preached, the ideal life and the weakness of human nature which makes its realization impossible, puts the believer on good terms with himself. He is informed that he, as a consequence of his membership of the church, is better than his natural attributes would make him; he is also informed that though the life he is now leading differs in many ways from the ideal, yet the inherent weakness of human nature in the face of the circumstances in which he finds himself, is sufficient to explain and excuse the difference. Thus, to the enormous influence of upbringing, custom, and environment, is added the approbation of conscience, producing the mental inertia against which the truth strives in vain. "A quiet conscience makes us so serene."

Where is the remedy? What shall we do to be saved? How can we get rid of this great incubus of prejudice

and mental inertia? The solution of this problem will appear when a sufficient proportion of the human race put the question to themselves with a sincere intention of finding the answer. Our burden has for nineteen hundred years refused to fall off our shoulders at the sight of the cross, and any ameliorations which have come about can be traced, not to any cause which the cross can be supposed to symbolize, but to the effort of mankind, during the slow evolution from barbarism to civilization, to put into practice those moral principles which spring from our common humanity. We have no reason to hope for a better future for the race as a result of religious activity. The church is satisfied that the truth, or so much of it as can be known without future revelation, is known already. This complacent condition, easily comprehensible to those who understand the sources of its doctrine, makes for conservatism and intellectual stagnation, and explains the fight which has been put up in the past against progress, and the suspicion with which the church regards any forward movement which hasn't been immaculately conceived in her own virgin councils.

What is the most obvious result of this mental inertia which has been bred and is now fostered by religion? If I were asked that question I should answer that the most obvious and damaging result is seen in the fact that the mass of mankind approach the question in a manner which is fundamentally contrary to reason. Confronted with a faith which entails belief in events and doctrines which are contrary to all experience and to the rational thinking, they accept it as it stands on the authority of its advocates, and are interested in its genuineness only when this is impugned by some more rational thinker than themselves. At this juncture, instead of calling on the officials of the faith to prove their case, the average believer throws the onus of proof on the Free-thinker, when it is clearly the duty of the church to prove the logical soundness of a system which runs so in the face of all that comes within the range of the senses.

With apologies for this unconscionably long letter.

R. H. STONE.

Society News.

CHESTER-LE-STREET.

IN consequence of some anonymous letters having been received by the Secretary of this Branch, it was decided to hold an open-air meeting at Herrington Burn, on August 11. Despite the fact that it meant about ninety minutes' hard walking, a number of our members were in attendance, and gave every help at the meeting. Mr. Price, Mr. Brighton, and Mr. Brown each spoke, and were listened to with evident appreciation. There were many questions asked, enquiries made concerning membership of the Society, and all are quite satisfied that much good was done. A friend was good enough to convey the members back to Chester-le-Street in his motor-car, making several journeys in order to accommodate all. It is intended to hold other meetings both at Herrington and in the surrounding district.—J. T. B.

Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission at Swansea.

As usual, Swansea provided the most successful meetings of the season. This year the crowds were even larger and more sympathetic than before, whilst collections and sales were the best for the year. The sands provide an ideal meeting-place, and immediately the news of Mr. Whitehead's visit was published, the religious cranks commenced to broadcast it, so that a huge audience assembled for the opening meeting. The next evening, Sunday, in spite of the threatening weather, an enormous gathering was awaiting the arrival of the lecturer, and disregarding the ominous clouds, stayed until the end. The rest of the week saw no diminution of the interest, which reached its climax on the Friday, when a debate took place with a Swansea Wesleyan clergyman on "The Christian God." Half

the town seemed to be present, and considering the excitement, maintained excellent order. Altogether, including the debate, the first week of the Swansea mission yielded seven excellent meetings. Some of the interest this year may be accounted for by a report that had got abroad of Mr. Whitehead's death since the last visit, and doubtless some of the Christians came to see evidence of a second resurrection. The rumour fortunately being a trifle exaggerated, Mr. Whitehead was able to get through the lectures without having to perform a miracle. Rather strangely, no death-bed recantation had been tacked on to the rumour. Messrs. Harris, Richards, Moore, Crew and Nicholas worked industriously as usual to make the week a success.

From Sunday, August 21 to the following Friday, Mr. Whitehead will lecture in the Bull Ring, Birmingham.

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, A Lecture by Mr. Sydney Hanson.

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

FREETHOUGHT DEMONSTRATION (Brockwell Park): 3.30, Speakers—Messrs. Chapman Cohen, F. P. Corrigan and R. H. Rosetti.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common, 11.30; Brockwell Park, 6.0). Lectures by Mr. S. Hanson. Wednesday, August 24 at 8 p.m. (Clapham Old Town): Mr. L. Ebury; (Peckham, Rye Lane): Mr. F. Corrigan.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—Ramble, Great Missenden and Chesham. Conducted by Mr. F. James. Train, Baker Street, 9.58 a.m. Cheap return, Amersham, 2s. 11d.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): 11.0, 3.30 and 6.30, Speakers—Messrs. Saphin, Hart, Baker, Botting, Parton and Hanson. Thursday, 7.30, Speakers—Messrs. Saphin and Botting.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.0, Messrs Darby, Carter and Jackson; 6.0, Messrs. Campbell-Everden, Herbert, and Hyatt. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammer-smith): 3.0, Mr. Campbell-Everden, a Lecture. Freethought meetings in Hyde Park every Wednesday and Friday at 7.30. Various Lecturers.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

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

OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (The Bull Ring): 7.0, Mr. G. Whitehead (London) will give open-air meetings from August 21 to August 26. Commencing Sunday, August 21.

EDINBURGH (The Meadows): 2.30, Mr. Fred Mann, "Secularism and Religion." (The Mound): 6.30, Mr. Fred Mann, "The Churchless Million."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (West Regent Street): Thursday, August 18, at 7.30, Mr. Fred Mann, "Hell."

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CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary:
MISS E. M. VANCE, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

SECULARISM teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

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Name

Address.....

Occupation.....

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This declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription.

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