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Views and Opinions.

Truth and the Clergy.

To use a piece of slang dear to the heart of the journalist and the popular novelist, I was greatly "intrigued" to see a sermon by Bishop Gore headed "The Need for Courage to Welcome Truth." I know there are fewer places in which the truth is more sadly needed, but I also know that there are fewer places in which it is usually less welcome. Even when it makes its appearance it bears such a battered appearance, that one can easily see what a rough reception it has had. It is not that the Christian clergy have not talked plenty about "truth"; but, as they have always explained, it is "Christian truth" with which they are concerned. And the distinction was necessary. For Christian truth is something by itself, something that is peculiar to the Christian pulpit. It consists in accepting as true only such things as agree with propositions previously accepted, and is consistent with the fabrication of all sorts of "experiences," of miracles, of documents, etc., etc., in short, of anything and everything that can advance the interests of the Christian Church. I have always admired the way in which "Christian truth" is separated from truth in general; although, as a matter of fact, it separates itself. It is a species of truth that belongs to the pulpit; and it flourishes there with the proverbial exuberance of the green bay tree.

* * *

The Influence of Christianity.

Now Bishop Gore is a Christian priest, addressing a Christian audience in a Christian Church. That audience has behind it a Christian ancestry; it has been brought up in a Christian society saturated with Christian traditions, a society in which the Christian Church still exerts considerable influence. In a scientific assembly, or in even a political one, it would not be considered necessary to tell its members that they ought to accept the truth. They would take that for granted, and consider any other implication

an insult. True, either of these assemblies might reject a truth, but its rejection would be accidental. In a Church gathering the rejection is not accidental, but deliberate, the advice to accept truth is not merely necessary, but imperative. More, the fact of a Bishop telling his congregation that they ought to accept the truth is considered so daring, so unusual, so out of line with traditions of the pulpit, that it attracts a greater measure of attention than would have been aroused by the most eloquent of sermons. How could one draw up a more damning indictment of the influence of the Christian Church than is contained in this situation? Dr. Gore, obviously without seeing the full implications of the statement, says that, "Our Lord, indeed, gave us a strong foundation of faith in things that really concern the saving of our soul, but as for the satisfying of intellectual curiosity he plainly did not care for it." Well, I have been saying all my life that of all the alleged great religious teachers the world has seen, there is none that occupies a lower intellectual level than the Jesus of the New Testament; and I am rather "intrigued" to find my judgment backed up by a Christian Bishop. Jesus cared nothing about intellectual curiosity, he knew nothing about and cared nothing for that insatiable quest for truth, that determination to value truth above all things, nor of its tremendous repercussion on the moral nature of man. Intellectually he moved on the level of the grossest and most stupid of superstitions, animated by the one desire to save the imaginary souls of men from a fictitious hell in the after life, with a mouthing of such moral commonplaces as were current in his time. He would have opened his eyes in stupid incomprehension if he had been told that there could be no safe moral development in the absence of that intellectual culture of which he had not the slightest appreciation.

* * *

Truth—with Limitations.

It is noteworthy that when Bishop Gore begs his fellow believers to welcome truth, he has in mind the acceptance of certain truths only. He warns them that the time has arrived when they must give up such Bible stories as the Creation, the Garden of Eden, the Flood, with the historical accuracy of such stories as those of Jonah, Daniel, or Esther. And he calls this welcoming the truth! One feels inclined to ask, what kind of a welcome did Bishop Gore give these truths in his earlier, and more Christian days? Long before he was born, men and women belonging to the Freethought movement were going to prison for not merely welcoming these truths, but for, what was really more important, proclaiming them. Christians might have forgiven Freethinkers seeing that these stories were mere fables, but to say they were such was more than the Christian con-

science could stand. Hypocrisy was never a punishable offence with the Christian Church; it was only honesty of speech that it denounced. It is a revelation of the quality of the Christian intelligence, no less than the quality of Christian honesty, to find a Bishop solemnly warning his congregation that these fables, which have been exposed as such for quite two hundred years, can no longer be taught as true by the Christian churches, *with safety*.

* * *

Safety First.

The last two words put the position in a nutshell. It is not truth that these Bishops and clergy are after, but safety. If they could still go on teaching the old fables with safety they would do so. As it is dangerous they make a parade of fearless truth-seeking, but with never a hint that it was their Church which forced these fables on the people, which still does so when it can be done with safety, and with no acknowledgement of the crimes they have committed in sending honest men and women to prison, in slandering them, living and dead, for trying to get the Christian world to see how it was being misled by their leaders. If anyone thinks this kind of language too strong, if they are still beset with the superstition that we must regard these priests as high-minded gentlemen with the single desire to get at the truth, let them take the following passage from Bishop Gore's address:—

It is no good kicking against facts, and we delay the necessary readjustments of Christianity to the new world of ideas so long as we go on murmuring to the contrary and deceiving the minds of children.

The readjustment is necessary because the world is getting to know the truth about religion. That is all. If scientists could keep their teaching to themselves, no readjustment would be necessary, and the priests could still go on "deceiving the minds of children." And what is meant by a readjustment of Christianity to modern knowledge? The Church came before the world with a revelation which it claimed came direct from God almighty. It told them about the creation of the world and of man. It told them, not as a story, not as an allegory, how languages came into existence, how God himself came down to earth and was offered up as a sacrifice for the benefit of man. How can you "readjust" these things? Either they are true or false. Either the Church was teaching the truth or it was not. There is no other alternative that is consonant with honesty. The Bishop's idea of welcoming truth is to hang on to a fable as long as possible, to deceive the minds of children, and of adults who are still mentally children, as long as is possible, and when it is no longer a profitable game to play, to try and make these stories mean what they do not mean, what they cannot mean, and never have meant to the people who believed in them. This is not welcoming truth, it is distorting truth in the interests of an ancient lie. Complete honesty would inform the world without qualification or reservation, without reinterpretation or readjustment, that these tales were not true, that the teaching of the Christian Church through all the centuries had been false, and that its persecutions and suppressions and deliberate lying mounted up to one of the most frightful crimes ever committed against the intellectual and moral welfare of humanity. And a man who so acted would no longer stand in a Christian pulpit. He would come out of it, and prove by his action that he would no longer take a part in deceiving either children or adults.

What of the Rest?

Let it be observed also that Bishop Gore's welcome to truth is of a very limited character. For two and a half centuries the substantial truth about these Old Testament narratives has been known. For a century and a half the truth about the New Testament story has also been before the world. Bishop Gore is ready to throw over the childish story of the creation of man from dust, of a woman from a bone, and of the world from nothing at all. But what of the virgin-born, miracle-working, resurrected God? Is Jesus curing a blind man by spitting in his eye, or casting devils out of epileptics, more believable or more scientific than the story of the Garden of Eden? Does not Bishop Gore know that among scientific men these tales rouse as much derision as do those of the early chapters in Genesis? Does he doubt that the same fate that has so largely overtaken the Old Testament must also overtake the New? What of the story that science has told the world of the development of the belief in Gods and ghosts, of souls and angels and devils, of heaven and hell from the fear-stricken ignorance of the primitive savage? The things he admits to be true are only the lisplings of infantile Freethought, but the full-throated speech is there also. Bishop Gore *knows* it is there, but he is silent concerning it. He says you must not go on deceiving the minds of children with the Adam and Eve story—because you will be found out if you make the attempt. The world knows too much. But the other truths are not so well known or so widely understood, so you may go on for a little while longer deceiving where deceit may be still possible and profitable. He welcomes truth where it can be no longer denied, he closes the door to it where it can be excluded with safety. O Admirable Bishop! If there be a place in which all the Bishops of the past are now living, where all those priests who fought against the new truth so long as they could, and "welcomed" it when it could be no longer denied, who gloated over Bruno at the stake and Galileo in his cell, who applauded when Freethinkers were placed in the stocks or sent to spend years in Christian prisons for denouncing those things which Bishop Gore says can no longer be taught with safety, if there be such a place from which the spirits of these dead priests observe things on earth, we can well conceive them saying "Well done, thou good and faithful servant! Thou canst not now burn or rack or imprison, but thou canst still 'readjust.' And if thou canst readjust a lie so as to make it appear truth, there is still hope for the Church on behalf of which we in our day on earth did so much." Bishop Gore is in line with the best Christian tradition.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

LIBERTY THE CURE.

THERE is only one cure for the evils which newly-acquired freedom produces, and that cure is freedom. When a prisoner first leaves his cell he cannot bear the light of day; he is unable to discriminate colours or recognize faces. But the remedy is not to remand him into his dungeon, but to accustom him to the rays of the sun. The blaze of truth and liberty may at first dazzle and bewilder nations which have become half-blind in the house of bondage, but let them gaze on, and they will soon be able to bear it. In a few years men learn to reason. The extreme violence of opinion subsides. Hostile theories correct each other. The scattered elements of truth cease to contend and begin to coalesce, and at length a system of justice and order is evolved out of chaos.—*Macaulay*.

God's Love, a Mischievous Myth.

It is a most significant fact that successful ministers of the Gospel owe their success to their ignorance and credulity. Wherever credulity obtains, it is of necessity rooted in ignorance. In no other soil whatsoever can it germinate, grow, and prosper. Dr. J. D. Jones, of Bournemouth, preaching the other day in Westbourne Park Baptist Church, London, in connexion with the celebration of its Jubilee, contended that the Church is "essentially other-worldly," and a report in the *British Weekly* of September 29, describes the sermon as "really great and challenging." In reality, Dr. Jones can wax movingly eloquent on the subject of other-worldliness, simply because he knows absolutely nothing about it, not even that there is such a thing. He says truly that the Pilgrim Fathers were "men with a tremendous sense of God and of their responsibility to him," but he does not add that, alas, they were also men with a shameful lack of the sense of humanity. The Pilgrim Fathers went out to America in the seventeenth century to escape persecution, but in New England, as readers of Bancroft's *History of the United States* (chapter xix) well know, they soon developed or degenerated into cruel persecutors themselves. Dr. Jones alleges that they "did not persecute those who differed from them," but the facts of history contradict his assertion; and it was their sense of God and eternity that was directly responsible for their wicked conduct. Nathaniel Hawthorne, born in 1804, was a descendant of these people, and yet his *Scarlet Letter* tells an extremely sad story, in which their religious character is depicted as contemptible in the extreme. Poor Hester Prynne had given birth to an illegitimate child, and was doomed to go through the rest of her life despised and persecuted, wearing "on the breast of her gown, in fine red cloth, surrounded with an elaborate embroidery and fantastic flourishes of gold thread, the letter A." The name of her fellow-sinner she persistently declined to disclose, because she loved him. "People say," said one, "that the Reverend Master Dimmesdale, her godly pastor, takes it very grievously to heart that such a scandal should have come upon his congregation." Master Dimmesdale was an exceptionally scholarly and popular minister, literally looked up to and worshipped by his people. And yet it was he, the long-faced, sweet-voiced, devout saint, who was the father of Hester Prynne's baby, but he was morally weak, and lacked the courage to confess his fault and take his place beside the woman he had ruined. His faith in God, his other-worldliness, his alleged communion with the unseen, utterly failed to make a man of him. Why? Because he walked by faith, not by knowledge, and because the objects of his faith did not possess the reality and efficacy generally ascribed to them.

In the *Christian World Pulpit* of September 29, there is a sermon entitled, "The Transcendent Love of God," by the Rev. Ira G. Goldhawk, Superintendent of the West London Mission. The very title of this discourse is challengable. It is true that the Bible attributes love to the Supreme Being, and even says that his essence is love; but when the Supreme Being was known as Jehovah, he took delight in slaughtering hundreds of little children because they made fun of one of his prophets, and a little earlier still he was only one of many similar deities, every one of whom claimed supremacy. Even the Christian God of to-day is passing through a never-ending process of evolution, and can be traced back to the time when he was merely the ghost of a dead tribal chief, or even the sun itself. In other words, God is a purely human creation, and has only an

imagined existence. There was once an eminent Welsh divine who defined faith as sanctified imagination, a peculiarly accurate definition, if the adjective "sanctified" be deleted.

Now we come to Mr. Goldhawk, who attributes transcendent love to an imaginary being called God. He begins thus:—

I want to speak for a few minutes about the transcendent and surpassing love of God. That is at once the most attractive and the most difficult thing any preacher can choose. It is the most attractive thing because it is the very centre and soul and essence of the Gospel we have to preach. Our one business as preachers is to tell men and women that God loves them . . . It is a most attractive thing, but it is also a most difficult thing, and I will tell you why. We are dealing with a word for which we cannot find an adequate definition, the word "love" . . . Therefore I shall begin with the confession that I have come to talk on a subject which is altogether too big for me.

The preacher is apparently candid enough; but the real difficulty is quite other than that which he apprehends. The true difficulty is not to supply an exhaustive treatment of the subject of the infinite love of God, but to adduce the least convincing evidence that such love is an objective reality, or that a superhuman being exists capable of so omnipotent a passion. Mr. Goldhawk makes this humiliating admission: "Our only theme—and we don't understand it," but he does not seem to realize why he does not understand it. It is only to ignorant and superstitious people that the superintendent of the West London Mission can appeal at all. The adjective "ignorant" applies to all human beings. We are all alike totally ignorant of the supernatural, the only difference between us being that multitudes are ignorant of and decline to believe in it, while a minority, though equally ignorant yet believe, and are often guilty of treating *faith* as if it were synonymous with *knowledge*, which it is not and never can be. Of course, Mr. Goldhawk expresses some ideas in his sermon, which are at once beautiful and true. Here is one:—

Who is the righteous man? He is a man who has principles, a man of honour, justice, uprightness, who will keep the letter of his bond and will not go back on his word. I heard him described the other day: "I have done business with that man for thirty years, and my business relations with him are such that if I was entering into a contract with him tomorrow I would not even ask him to give it me in black and white. His word would be all I should want."

Curiously enough such men need not be Christians, and many of them do not profess to be. They are to be found even in Heathen countries. The present writer remembers that about thirty years ago he enjoyed an interview with a sea captain, who was in the service of a firm which had numerous commercial transactions with China and Japan, and his enthusiastic testimony was that the word of a Chinaman or of a Jap was as reliable as any written bond. At that time we were comparatively ignorant of both these nations. Since then we have read the works of Herbert A. Giles, Professor of Chinese in the University of Cambridge, and some time H.B.M. Consul at Ningpo, and of others, and have learned how very true that sea-captain's evidence may well have been. Even Mr. Goldhawk naively admits this when, in reference to a tribute paid anonymously to an unnamed business man, he says:—

That is a fine tribute to pay any business man, is it not? I wish it could be said of every Church official. It would mean a tremendous ethical revival if only we could say of every member of our Church that his word was his bond, and he could always be trusted to fulfil his obligation.

What Mr. Goldhawk neglects or fails to do is to cite a single instance of the unmistakably beneficent activity of God and his love in this world. No wonder the Churches cannot accept the theory of evolution, because it is a theory that excludes the possibility of a sane belief that a God of love has even had the smallest thing to do with it. Even Bishop Barnes, who believes that the whole long process has been under Divine guidance, dare not enter into minute details. We do not know whether Mr. Goldhawk is an evolutionist or not; but in any case he is utterly powerless to produce one clear and indisputable illustration of the active presence of a God of love in the history of the world. His only appeal is to the apostle Paul and his reported experiences, whose every statement he regards as true. We much prefer the version of the universe presented, as the outcome of numerous observations and experiments undertaken by severely scientific investigators from Darwin, Huxley and Tyndall down to Sir Arthur Keith, the present Chairman of the British Association.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Jester's Dream.

"We are prepared to snatch at any dirty receipt for immortality rather than face death like ladies and gentlemen."—*Bernard Shaw.*

"We call ourselves enlightened, but there is nearly as much superstition now as there was in the past."

Aldous Huxley.

MARK TWAIN was, for a whole generation, regarded as the foremost humourist of the Anglo-Saxon race. He was, however, so much more than that, for he was a great man, a great citizen, and a great writer. Mark Twain was the national author of the United States in a sense in which we, in England to-day, have no national writer. The feeling for him among his own people was like that of the Scots for Robert Burns, or like that of our forefathers for Charles Dickens. There was admiration in it, gratitude, pride, and, above all, real affection. This was shown at one of the last public dinners Mark Twain attended. When he came in he was escorted to the table, and the whole company, in which no man was undistinguished, rose to greet him, and remained standing till he had taken his seat.

This full flame of personal affection went out to Mark Twain for what he had written and what he had done. His brave and fiery dashes against tyranny, humbug, and corruption, attracted men no less than the irresistible gaiety of his humour. The incident of his financial failure, which, like Walter Scott's, was wholly the work of others, raised him to the rank of the heroes of literature. For he actually assumed a moral where there was no legal responsibility, and he worked hard for years and paid off the huge debts. It takes an exceptional man to engage in and win such a grim fight with fate as that. Such a man's humour was bound to be interwoven with seriousness. "Papa," said his young daughter, "can make bright jokes, and he enjoys funny things, but still he is more interested in earnest books and earnest subjects."

Mark Twain was a thorough Freethinker, and he loved Bob Ingersoll "this side idolatry." Unfortunately, he always wrote under the restraint of a family chock-full of religious prejudice. His pious wife edited his jokes, and timid publishers toned down others. Some of his serious attempts at philosophical writing, such as *What is Man?* were suppressed, or else withdrawn from circulation by the unseen hand of religious prejudice. We shall never know what we lost by this procedure, or what we

missed by this kindly philosopher being trammelled by the critics on the hearth.

For this reason all Freethinkers should be delighted at the honesty and frankness of Mark Twain's literary executor, who has resurrected many manuscripts, the posthumous publication of which has saved them from the dust-destroyer. Perhaps the most outspoken of these half-forgotten volumes is *The Mysterious Stranger*, which should prove of unusual interest to all those who share the author's philosophical and sceptical views.

The book deals with the follies and crimes that men are led into by religion, and the mysterious stranger is Satan, who appears as a handsome youth named "Philip Traum." A fierce attack is made on the god idea, which is described as so monstrous that Satan wonders why man does not regard it as a nightmare. The profanity is not veiled, for "Philip" goes on:—

"Strange, because they are so frankly and mysteriously insane—like all dreams: a God who could make good children as easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones; who could have made every one of them happy, yet never made a single happy one; who made them prize their bitter life, yet stingily cut it short; who gave his angels eternal happiness unearned, yet required his other children to earn it; who gave his angels painless lives, yet cursed his other children with biting miseries and maladies of mind and body; who mouths justice and invented hell—mouths mercy and invented hell—mouths Golden Rules and forgiveness multiplied by seventy times seven, and invented hell; who mouths morals to other people and has none himself; who frowns upon crimes, yet commits them all; who created man without invitation, then tries to shuffle the responsibility for man's acts upon man, instead of honourably placing it where it belongs, upon himself; and, finally with altogether divine obtuseness, invites this poor, abused slave to worship him."

And the critical Philip sums up by saying:—

"You perceive now that these things are all impossible except in a dream. You perceive that they are pure and puerile insanities, the silly creations of an imagination that is not conscious of its freaks."

So Mark Twain goes on holding the noses of his readers to the grindstone of thought, forcing them from complacency to discontent, stinging them into sensitiveness. Under the relentless rhetoric we are pierced through and through with a sense of the contrast between what life is and what it might be. "Can you suggest any improvement in the Universe?" said a clergyman to Colonel Ingersoll. "Yes," answered Bob: "I would make good health catching instead of disease."

What are Christians making of life? What are Christian priests teaching their dupes? These are really Mark Twain's questions, and the burden of his "dream." He is the corrosive acid that eats into the Christian complacency. It is the critic who does not give a moment's peace for cheap pious conclusions, or easy religious platitudes. This book is, in its way, highly significant, for this attack on Godism was written by one who was, in his time, the most eminent man-of-letters in America, and whose books are still a large asset of national pride. The volume shows the comedian turned tragedian, shows Ariel turned Prospero, and showing in the transformation how impressionable and extraordinary a spirit Ariel is. When Mark Twain passed away, the event eclipsed some of the gaiety of English-speaking peoples. Despite his motley dress, he was ever a knight-errant charging down the wind at the hosts of superstition. Honour was his shield, and truth tipped his lance. He was an honourable figure, and one which will always be contemplated with satisfaction.

MIMNERMUS.

Cities of the Plain.

I RECENTLY returned to a perusal of *The Ruins of Empires*. From an occasional and ever deepening desert desolation of the spirit I found calm, hope almost, inspiration in Volney's meditations among the dead cities of the desert plain. I sat with him in the moonlight, in the shadow of those ruined shafts and pillars and crumbling walls, of Palmyra and Thebes, stretching "far as eye could see"—limitless horizon, limitless time, infinite mutations, profound reverie, perfect peace, silence and solitude. The philosopher extenuates God and arraigns man, and shows what might have been, had man been wise, not foolish, good, not bad, and points the way to "renovated France," and the larger hope of a world renewed in the dominion of sovereign Reason. There are flaws in the finest philosophy—save in that of Leopardi, who is never seduced by the "false flatterer Hope," whose wish is never father to the thought, but whose conclusions are formed from actual, uncoloured life itself, only to be disputed by this sanguine son of man, whose heart and spirit outruns a little the slower, surer, inevitable conclusions of his reason. Leopardi, mighty in learning, lived with Reason alone, cold companion, yet how peerless, how precious, how loveable this philosopher! But one splendid example at a time. Volney has been accused of rhetoric; but, alas, how little of our reading, writing and speaking is rhetoric nowadays; rags and tatters rather, most of it; all the scrape and cackle of the literary farmyard, even in the solid scholarly columns of the *Manchester Guardian*—A.N.M. and others; C.E.M., with a rarer genius, shone even there. But these fair columns of the *Guardian*, envy and despair of lesser scribes, how soon—in a week or so—they are ruined pillars, crumbled into dust!—The heart and brain of true genius builds more securely . . . but we will not boast even of him. The editor of my copy of *The Ruins*, the late George Underwood, a shrewd and capable critic, whose untimely death so many of us lamented, confessed himself a little impatient of Volney's style, but came round to a much more favourable view; concluding his "economical" introduction and handing the reader on to "the ardent eloquence and clairvoyant teaching of this noble book" of a great humanitarian, Mr. Underwood finely says:—

In these days of spiritual darkness and despair, all those who are tempted to discard the illusions of progress and the perfectibility of man's reason and emotions, will find in the contagious enthusiasm and sympathy, in the clear-eyed wisdom of this great book, a never-failing support for their sadly shaken faith.

The Ruins was an early love of mine, before I was critical—ah, what? Do we not lose as well as gain something by learning and experience, do we not always "die a little," is it quite wise to put away "childish things?" What is it often to be a man, even a "great" man; is it to have better taste, better heart, a purer joy, a greater love? Is it not often to dull the spirit's edge in some "learning's dull despair? Who are the benefactors? Those who exercise the qualities catalogued in 13th Corinthians—how such a passage got into such a book I cannot imagine—St. Paul on charity—or, in greater language—"That man, stupendous and incredible, more concerned about the good and ill of another than about his own." A man, as this world goes, rare indeed; yet we have heard of one or two people who retained some virtues at sixty and over—"Heart—a piece of anatomy sometimes found in man; but it either becomes corrupted by commerce with the world, or proves fatal to its possessor."

To return to our author, his reflections, and our own: Volney laments those fallen civilizations, recorded in those mute but eloquent ruins, both owing to man's folly or evilness, not to fate, or God, or nature's laws. The "Genius" in his accusing questionnaire asks of man: "Will he then never open his eyes to the light, and his heart to the admonishments of truth and reason? This truth everywhere presents itself in radiant brightness; and he does not see it!"—The case for Freethought is here presented in all its force. What should be obvious to all is seen only by a few, even by these few darkly, only a favoured few having the full clear light; the brightest, too, also the simplest. "Why,"

asks our author, "Why are so many cities destroyed? Why is not that ancient population reproduced and perpetuated?" He is amply answered by the genius of the ruins. But we, surveying these successive scenes of man and might, of power and glory, now sand and crumbling stone, might not sorrow for the passing, now 'tis past, but rather regret our own more lamentable case, who have yet to perish, in what manner few may choose, from a flourishing or a falling empire. This also is the light of Freethought—surcharged with selfish sorrow now and then, or here and there, in the individual; but full of soothing, sympathy, solidarity, in the race, begetter of brotherhood and love; for:—

Once, in the flight of ages past,
There lived a man—and who was he?
Reader, where'er thy lot is cast,
That man resembled thee.

For if God, non-arbitrary as natural law, so loved the world yet could not save it, why should man await interventions he should know to be impossible; heavens that even he is learning can never exist; why not join in making the best of a bad job, as Christian and Heathen are already doing, with astonishing results, already, on the higher plane; with much still to do, more than mankind can achieve in the remaining period of its time on earth; too busy, too exalted, near the end of all, to trouble about an individual end, when life, not death, will be the all-absorbing care?

We know, in the main, how those buried empires rose and fell, and why. We visualize their kings, priests, generals, inventors, artists, orators, architects, the leaders of the people, civil and military: in the background the toiling, or idling, unhistoric millions, the various artizan and husbandman; most of the latter, as now, remote from treasons, stratagems and spoils, hearing faintly and afar off the news of conquests and defeats; their homely joys; as now, at times disturbed by conscripting or invading armies. The peoples died naturally or were slain—a friend reminds me of a phrase in Sir Thomas Browne's *Urn Burial*: Some antique human remains had been unearthed in a field in this old writer's estate, of which he said: "These bones have lain quietly there under the drums and trappings of three conquests." Or we ask of that older mummied dead:—

"Didst thou not hear the pother o'er thy head
When the great Persian conqueror, Cambyses,
Marched armies o'er thy tomb with thundering tread,
O'erthrew, Osiris, Apis, Horus, Isis?"

These myriad dead knew but little while they lived, and now, "Behold, they know not anything! Nor is the living dog better than the dead lion. (Ecl. Chap. 9.) We see with Volney the creation and effacement of empires; greater waves on the larger ocean of Time, whose billows beat the shore; but round that again the infinite shoreless ocean of Eternity. We cry to this Infinitude—"What is man that thou art mindful of him?" and to all human reality there was, and is, but the unanswering void. If wise, individual man is driven back upon himself, and contents him with the little time and space he really needs and knows and understands. He may be wise as the wisest, knowing little even of his finite world, yet knowing all in the manner of an elder sage, who said: "I consider myself." As he, so all have felt, and feel—The bounding pulse, the languid limb, the changing spirit; and on the moral plane, he sees within his own, the battle-ground of contending passions and principles that have stirred every human breast: Desire to urge, reason or prudence to restrain—need one man name the contending principles or passions so well known to every man? Nor can it be analysed in any of the lines of poetry that leap to the lips—facile commonplaces! But even in the strife of so-called good and evil, or of sex desire and repression, may be found, if not the origin, then the perpetuation and sublimation of the idea of God—with association of other ideas that should be "disassociated"—evil and good are at war; say the former, as nearly always, wins: as Oscar Wilde said, the only way to resist temptation is to yield to it; suppose vice is the victor, it is a victory over itself, for what is now the one quality is now the other . . . But not to lose myself, and the reader, in sophistication—in this battle of the ages, vice is not victorious,

virtue is not vanquished, but only alternating in the fortune of war; a warfare, this, that ultimately raises, not degrades humanity. But in this process of victories and defeats, the soul—shall we call it?—comes upon ultimates; gods and devils, entities of good and evil; these, like other "spirituals," being in turn dismissed in the merciless march of rational and scientific research. Remorse and conscience are not primary but secondary emotions. Remorse is the sting of conscience—conscience born of love or fear, but most, perhaps, on a very noble human pride, it may be mere conceit, akin to honour. Take from a man all his pride, self-respect, etc., and you shatter all his bulk. But even in the valley of humiliation of the Christian, pride survives—he is proud of his humility!

We find we have wandered away from *The Ruins of Empires*, but the greatness of this noble book lies in its suggestiveness: contrariwise, the delight of it lies in its soothing, slumberous sound, its reverie of reason and compassion. The eloquent "Invocation" is unforgettable, so with the "Meditations"; sonorous, simple, and sincere for the average reader; with more recondite matter for the student, philosopher, historian, man of letters; something to love, a treasure of the past, a guide for the present, a legacy for the future.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Acid Drops.

The mentality developed by Christianity, and upon which Christianity lives, may be gauged by the fact that harvest thanksgiving services are proceeding all over the country. This year has been, for farmers, one of the most disastrous on record. Many will be ruined and all will suffer. And the rest of the people will suffer from high prices. All the same, Christians will hold their services and thank God for the harvest he has given them. If these people do not believe that God has anything to do with the bad weather and the ruined harvest, a thanksgiving service is a piece of elaborate humbug, a humbug so vile that it could occur nowhere but in a Christian Church. If they believe that God does actually cause the harvest to be what it is, then one stands almost aghast in the presence of a mentality that can note the ruined crops and the distressed homes, and then thank God because he has not made things worse than they are. It is the attitude of the slave who prates of his owner's generosity because he has given him one hundred instead of five hundred lashes. It might be generous of man to say nothing to his God about the ruined crops. It would be excusable if he gave him a good talking to; but it surely is the height of contemptibility to grovel on one's knees before a God whom these people profess to believe is responsible for it all and thank him for not being worse than he is.

We have had an infernal summer, but the reason for it has been explained by the Rev. Owen Owen, of Duckpool Road Baptist Church, Newport. This gentleman explained, in the course of a thanksgiving sermon, that the excessive rainfall was due to "a controversy between God and the world." He explains that man has robbed God of Sunday, by golfing, driving, and playing on that day, and "if you rob him of one day in the week, He will rob you of your six days of tennis, croquet, bowls, and other sports." Now we know all about it. God is just getting level with those who will not keep Sunday as Mr. Owen believes it should be kept. And he destroys the crops of other people to show what he can do when he gets into a temper with anyone. Mr. Owen knows all about it. And those who have talked lately about the tremendous advance of the intelligence of man when compared with that of the ape, must draw their horns in a bit. They should remember Mr. Owen, pastor of Duckpool Road Baptist Church, Newport, and make their statement with qualifications.

In the *Daily News*, the confidence of Dr. T. R. Glover is not of that type which characterized the utterances at one time of professional theologians. The impregnable

rock of holy scripture appears to be following in the wake of Cornhill, the trumpets sound faintly; he writes:—

What will be the future of English Christianity—Anglican or dissenting? It has not the protection that caste would give it. Will it, as Romans say, disappear because heretical, like the Nestorian church in China?

An answer to when are we going to have some fine weather would be interesting and more cheerful.

Ebbw Vale Sunday School Union, at a recent monthly meeting, expressed much regret at the recommendation of the Trades and Labour Council to convert the Workmen's Hall into a "licensed" club. The Union's protest was based on the granting of a liquor licence, which it believed would be a source of danger to members, and which would militate against any social or educational advancement. We hope the Trades and Labour Council politely told the Sunday School fanatics to mind their own business.

How the gospel of poverty beds down with the treasure that rusts and corrupts may be seen in the modest £21,072 left in the will of the Rev. Dr. Robert McIntosh, Minister Emeritus of the United Free Church of Scotland.

Canon Whitechurch, at the Church Congress, is to discuss "The Country Parson in Fact and Fiction." We trust he will not forget that striking phenomenon in the country parson—the portly build representing years of hard work.

We do not think that the Lord Mayor of Bradford will be again asked to open a missionary exhibition. When he recently acted in that capacity he expressed a doubt whether we were quite right in spending money on converting Chinese, and others, when there were so many dark spots at home. He also said that if the philosophy of Confucius had been carried out in China it would have shown itself to be as great as the philosophy of Christ. The Lord Mayor is, however, thinking only of the people. But what of the parsons? What is to be done with such parsons as are failures at home if the foreign missionary field is closed to them? And not merely the missionaries who go abroad, but the large number of men who hold positions at home? After all, these men must live, and the number of people unemployed is already great enough without adding to them. The Lord Mayor ought to know better than to measure up foreign missions as though they were solely concerned with saving the souls of the "heathen."

The scientist, says the Rev. Leslie D. Weatherhead, is within his rights if he asks the religious man to produce his evidence for his theory of man's origin. The answer would be, he says "The Book of Genesis," and the time has come when we can say clearly that it is absurd to go to the Book of Genesis for science, as it would be to go to a text-book of physics for religion:—

The only words you need take literally in the first eleven chapters of Genesis are the first four words of the first chapter: "In the beginning, God." The editor of Genesis had simply set out to write a picture parable with the one purpose of showing that behind all natural phenomena is God. He had used what science he had, drawn from Babylonian myths and folk lore, but he has used even this—which we should not even call science—with all the poetic license of an artist. Of course, people will say at once: "Then you don't believe that Genesis is true?" My answer is, "Do you believe that the *Pilgrim's Progress* is true?" They are both true in regard to those great spiritual truths they were constructed to set forth, but to debate the accuracy of the detail in Genesis is as foolish as to debate whether, in regard to Apollyon, "out of his belly came fire and smoke, and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion."

It is a pity God didn't tell Christians nineteen hundred years ago that the first eleven chapters of Genesis were only a "picture parable." Had he done so, what a lot

of bloodshed and folly he might have saved his human creatures from! And if one portion of the inspired "Word of God" is merely myth, or parable, or whatever we please, on what grounds are we to accept the rest of Holy Writ as being fact?

According to the *Truth Seeker*, the untaxed holdings of the churches in the State of New York reach in value the enormous sum of 433,181,000 dollars. The cemeteries, which are also untaxed, are valued at 95,906,000 dollars. The *Truth Seeker* estimates that the amount annually dodged by the churches is between eleven and twelve million dollars; and besides the exemption, some of the churches enjoy huge appropriations from the public treasury.

A member of the Sculcoates Board of Guardians, Mr. Thomas Carrick, has regularly visited the workhouse infirmary with noises and exhortations of a "spiritual" nature. The inmates apparently fail to appreciate the kindly attentions of this Christian man, and have lodged an objection, saying: "Some of us hope to get well, and it depresses us to listen to hymns suggesting that we are on the point of death." Certain pious people appear to fancy they have a right to force their religious notions on the sick who have also the misfortune to be poor. Any decent Board of Guardians would protect people under their charge from the attentions of impertinent religious fanatics. We are pleased to note that one such fanatic has been politely told to keep his spiritual "tonic" to himself. The Sculcoates infirmary inmates may be poor in health, but they are certainly not poor in spirit.

"Woodbine Willie" in a recent address on "The State Church," said he dreaded a purely Secular State, he dreaded a King who owned no formal allegiance to Christ, and he dreaded a Parliament that did not even have formal prayers. For a bold and fearless fellow, such as the papers say he is, "Willie" seems to harbour a lot of "dreads." They, however, can be summed up in one—the dread of the priest being left out of the picture. And that is a nightmare which seems to worry most of our clerics nowadays.

"What do you want from life," is a question a newspaper has been putting to well-known men and women. Mr. Arnold Bennett's reply is:—

I demand regularity. I want to do the same thing at precisely the same hour every day in an unchanging monotony. Work? No, I'd like very little of that; mine would be an almost entirely pleasurable routine.

Assuming that he is to be taken seriously, one cannot help wondering why Mr. Bennett never entered a Roman Catholic monastery. The conditions therein seem ideal for a man with his kind of "want."

The Rev. A. Brook Jackson: "I have a rooted objection to shaking hands with an ape as a blood relation." Perhaps an ape might have as strong an objection to shaking hands with Mr. Jackson, if the ape saw our reverend brother performing his usual Sunday antics before the "altar of the Lord."

A Sunday School journal frankly confesses that there is a slackening interest in "the things that matter"; the Church does not bulk so large in national affairs as it did fifty years ago; and the children are not sent to Sunday School as a matter of course, as they were then. There has been tremendous progress in many directions, we are told, but with this progress there has not been a corresponding advance in moral and spiritual things. Has the aim, asks our contemporary, of the Sunday School changed with the new conditions? And it answers—not in the slightest; "it is still to train the children and youth of the nation for Christ and His

Church, to give them an early bias towards truth, goodness and purity, and righteousness and brotherhood and peace." The reader can appreciate just how much bias the Sunday School gives towards these things, by noting the antics of Protestants versus Anglo-Catholics, and the love of truth and brotherhood Christians of all sects show towards Freethinkers.

Clergy are expected to preach like apostles on Sunday and to visit like postmen during the week, complains Canon Sinker. Well, what's the value of divine inspiration if it doesn't enable the parson to gratify this very moderate expectation? Were the parson expected also to talk sense there might be grounds for complaint, for that is the one thing the Holy Ghost always fails to inspire.

British working-class savings in the form of bank deposits, life and social insurance, and building society deposits amount to £1,000,000,000. This sum might be doubled if the working-classes stopped dumping some of their spare cash into the Churches' greedy maw. Insurance against a fictitious hell is not thrift but stupidity.

Major Harding Cox, in a letter to the *Daily Mirror*, spoke about legends and folk-lore in the Bible. This roused up a Fundamentalist critic, to whom the Major replied:—

I imagine your readers will be able to differentiate between the legends and folk-lore of the Old Testament and the historical facts of the New, though the two widely distinct sections may be under one binding.

We should much like to see Major Cox's list of those "historical facts" of the New Testament. We hope he is not too busy to supply us with it. Our readers are interested in such things.

"Commander" Evangeline Booth, head of the Salvation Army in America, defends the wearing of short skirts and bobbed hair. She gives common-sense reasons for her defence. But we suspect the real reason for her agreeing with the fashion of the day, is that the younger generation of Salvationists are objecting to be governed by Puritan prejudices. It's a question of, "Shall we keep to our Puritan notions and thereby lose clients, or shall we tolerate the fashion and retain clients?" Naturally there is only one answer for a lady with the "Boothian" eye to business.

A reader of a daily paper points out that the admission of the Bishop of Birmingham—that the accounts of the Creation and the "Fall of Man" in Genesis are mere folk-lore—deals a deadly blow to the foundations of Christianity. The editor of that paper permits him to add:—

If there was no "fall," there was no need for Atonement, no need for a Saviour or redeemer, and the whole scheme of Christianity is rendered futile.

This is a dangerous sort of statement for a respectable paper to print. Why, it might set some good Christian man doubting, and petrify his natural instinct for religion.

When at a recent sports club dinner a toast was proposed to the Devon and Somerset Stag Hunt, a procession of diners rose from their seats and left the room, as a protest against stag butchery. We may add that the number of stags slaughtered to provide amusement for the D. & S. Hunt is about 200 each year. There ought to be a special V.C. for the galloping slaughtermen of Devon and Somerset. We hope the time will soon come when decent men and women will be ashamed to be seen wearing blood sports uniforms.

The stupid paraphernalia of horses and hounds and men to hunt a fox might well be presented as a problem

to those who believe that man is a fallen angel. The riff-raff of society do not follow the hounds; it is only people of wealth and position who deck themselves out to assist in the comic-opera extermination of Reynard. The Rev. Henry Percival Bryan, Rector of Askerswell (Dorset) at the meet of the Cattistock Hounds at Bridport, collapsed in his saddle and fell to the ground dead. We feel sure that the *Daily Express* will not take the same interest in this case as it did in the death of a speaker at a Rationalist dinner some time ago.

A daily newspaper, in conducting a discussion on "Paying for our Mistakes," publishes a letter signed, "Somewhat Regretful." In the course of her remarks, the lady states, in connexion with managing a husband, "Least of all would I give up my Church for his." She is sure that he (her husband) would have been happier in her church. And this illustrates what delights are missed by those who have no churches to serve, and no particular fancy to back in the theological stakes.

Mr. Hugh Martin, Parliamentary Correspondent of the *Daily News*, is of the opinion that with the best will in the world it is impossible to extract essence of interest from the majority of Parliamentary speeches. We had no idea that the House of Commons was in such close competition with pulpits, but, to quote the editor of the *New Age*, it is probably explained by the fact that electoral issues and church matters are synonymous with a discussion as to whether water shall be raised from a well with sieves, colanders, or pitchforks.

The Chief Scout, Sir Robert Baden-Powell recently attended a Scout service at a local church in Scotland. The sermon, it appears, was all about the Scout staff and dear old King David and his staff (God) which guided him in difficulty. "B.-P." was seemingly so impressed by the sermon that he passes on some of its wisdom to youthful readers, thus:—

If you, as a Scout, look to God, in the same way, as your guide and protector, you will look on your Scout staff in a new light. It will be to you a visible reminder of God, Who can help you along life's road and guide you in dark and difficult times and lead you to greater happiness.

It would be interesting to know what, after reading this, is the average boy's notion of God. We fancy he visualizes him as a very large Scout, complete with badges and staff. And a Scouty Heaven wouldn't be home-like unless there was plenty of opportunities for tracking and trekking, hiking and camping, not to mention bugle-calls and camp-fire sing-songs! What amazes us is, that a man of Sir Robert's alert intelligence has not yet tumbled to the fact that the churches and chapels and Salvation Army are not really interested in his Movement, but are merely exploiting it as a means of getting clients.

From the *Book Chat* column of a religious weekly, we learn that:—

At one time the suggestion that advertisements rule newspapers would have been indignantly repudiated, but now it is frankly admitted that big advertisers can make demands which editors and all others have to take into account.

In other words, the super-tradesmen call the tune, and our sturdily independent "moulders of public opinion"—what a misnomer!—dutifully produce the music. But we have, so far, failed to note them frankly admitting the fact. Perhaps, however, this is only done at journalistic dinners, where back-patting and self-praising is the favourite pastime. The "free" Press of Britain in fetters to "big business"—what an inspiring picture!

Referring to his professional experience at a mental hospital, a Dr. Arthur Evans, at Westbourne Park Church recently, said that there was no type of insanity

so terrible as that which centered on self. And this was true, he added, whether the patient was in Bedlam or in the Church. Considering the fact that the Christian embraces his religion because he hopes to save himself from eternal damnation and to secure for himself a place in Heaven, Doctor Evans certainly showed a sense of the fitness of things in choosing a Christian audience for what he had to say.

At the same Church, the Rev. J. N. Britton said that youth could not be attracted to the Church by telling it that the Church would go to pieces without its help. For this was not true: the Church was built on a rock. The chief note of the Church's message to youth, he said, should be that the Church was not something needing support by youth, but something that helped youth to make the best of what was within him. By the look of things, we should say that youth doesn't care a tuppenny damn what the Church tells it. And it certainly doesn't show any anxiety for officious advice on how to make the best of what is within it. That is a pity, for parsonic advice is notoriously disinterested.

The Rev. Dr. J. D. Jones, in a recent sermon chose his text from the book of Ezekiel, "When they stood they let down their wings," which referred to the cherubim the prophet saw in his vision. Dr. Jones said that he did not profess to be able to understand all the details of this vision of Ezekiel, any more than he could understand the strange creatures mentioned in Revelation. But he thought that here and there in these wonderful words, "one could catch a sentence that has a special message for us." How delightfully Christian all this is! Here is a priest asking people to base the conduct of life on visions and imaginings which he confesses he cannot understand. There is, of course, nothing unusual in that. Christian priests have been doing so for many centuries. Knowing that, one can appreciate why Christian history is the mad and sad thing it is. Intelligent men and women, however, believe that a sounder guide for the affairs of life is reason and experience, and not the incoherent ramblings of an ancient priest.

In the history of unpopular ideas, there comes a time when it is a mark of vulgarity to throw mud. Two exponents of ideas so diverse as Freud and Darwin are dealt with in the *Times Literary Supplement* as follows:—

But at least it may be said of Freud that there is no humbug about him—any more than there is about Darwin. He does not "bluff" but, on the contrary, puts all his cards on the table.

And we might add, that if a few more of our present-day advanced thinkers followed suit, the results of their courage might not be so disastrous after all. Christianity now has degenerated into mere shifts and turns, in advertising, in trying to swallow (incredible thought!) something bigger than itself, so that, in a way, the path is now made easy for Sir James G. Frazer and others to declare without equivocation their logical position. It is never too late to mend.

To provide endowments for the new "sees" of Guildford, Portsmouth, Blackburn, Leicester, and Derby, the sum of £312,816 has been collected. "Fools and their money are soon parted."

Wireless music, says Sir Richard Terry, is mostly on the intellectual level of the old "penny dreadful." Sir Richard is hardly justified in saying "mostly." A large proportion of the B.B.C.'s music is of good quality. But perhaps his nerves have been set on edge by the doleful noises accompanying the broadcast service on Sunday, not to mention the dreary dirges of the "Silent Fellowship" which are permitted to end the Sunday Programme.

The "Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

THE total subscriptions to this Fund, to date amounts, as will be seen, to £5,568 13s. 3d. There is a further £1,615 promised conditionally on the whole sum of £8,000 being subscribed. We thus need £816 6s. 9d. to secure this promised £1,615.

We have about nine weeks to accomplish this, and if we are to succeed, the friends of this paper will have to bestir themselves. We are still waiting for the Freethinker who will walk into this office and present us with a cheque for all that is required. He is not a mythical individual, he is only slow in coming forward. Perhaps this may serve as a reminder.

Our accountant calls our attention to a slight error in last week's figures. It is a difference of 10s. too much. This has been corrected.

FOURTH LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

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Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the Freethinker Endowment Trust, and crossed Clerkenwell Branch, Midland Bank, and directed to me at 61 Farringdon Street, London E.C.4.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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.

D. P. S.—Thanks for suggestions. The title is quite a good one, and we shall take the liberty of using it.

A. MACHIN.—We are glad to have the poem, which we have read with considerable amusement. The story is an old one, but we have never before seen it versified.

C. T. ROSS.—We never attempt to explain "wonderful" experiences of the kind you recite. It is so easy to make mistakes in the narration, and to omit circumstances which would throw much light on the mystery. We are not questioning your genuineness or sincerity, but simply pointing out the fallibility of human testimony. In any case, there is no proof there of continued existence.

W. K. HURTY.—Sorry your name was misspelt. It is one we know quite well, and have every reason to respect.

G. G.—Thanks for further contribution to Fund.

H. LATIMER VOIGHT.—We are quite sure you will always do what you can to promote the interests of Freethought. Brandes' book *Jesus A Myth* is not a great book, its chief value lay in the position of the author. Greater books

than his have been ignored by the Press, merely because the writers of them were not so well placed. The shocking ignorance of many journalists on the subject was well shown when they greeted the work as something strikingly new in Freethought criticism.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Next Sunday (October 16) Mr. Cohen will lecture at the Chorlton Town Hall, Manchester. This is the opening of the Autumn Session, and a good muster of friends is expected. He will be followed, in the same hall, by Mr. J. M. Robertson.

There was a good audience at the Picton Hall, Liverpool, on Sunday last, and Mr. Cohen's address on, "The New Warfare between Science and Religion," was listened to with close attention. Unfortunately, question time was spoiled by one or two rather noisy individuals, who were rather more concerned with hearing themselves shout, than dealing seriously with anything. They received scant encouragement from the platform, and were invited to favour future meetings with their absence. It is to be hoped the invitation will be accepted. Mr. Sherwin occupied the chair. The Liverpool Branch has quite a number of young men in its ranks, and it has been hard at work in the open-air during part of the summer, and has met with a fair measure of success. On the Saturday evening preceding the lecture the Branch held a social, which Mr. Cohen attended, and helped the members spend a merry and enjoyable evening.

We are asked to announce that the Secretary of the Glasgow Branch is Mr. J. Christie, 35 Greenknowse Road, Pollokshaws. We wish the new Secretary every success in his office.

We are glad to note a protest in one of the daily papers against the high price of newly published books. Good books were always published at too high a price in this country, and since the war some of the prices charged are almost farcical. Works extending to only 250 pages are published at as much as a guinea, or at a figure which places them beyond the range of anyone save the man with a long purse. The policy of publishers appears to be to count upon the fact that there are a certain number who will buy a book on a certain subject, no matter what the price, and to make these provide the profit which should be spread over the sale of a much larger number. But the larger number are not sold, mainly because the price charged is in the nature of a hold-up to the book reading community. It is really too

bad that the desire of men and women to own good books should be taxed and exploited in this way. Barrabas is still going strong in the publishing world.

We feel sure that if an enterprising publisher, or publishing company, were to set up with a resolve to issue books at a reasonable price—new books, we mean, for reprints of old ones are issued at a reasonable figure—there would be found good writers who would gladly co-operate in their production. Most serious writers write to be read, and the larger their public the better. It might, in the long run, be found financially profitable also. Of course, the reply is that only a small number of a really good book is sold. That may be true, but we are fairly certain that this is because the price makes it impossible to all but a small number to buy. We write feelingly, in view of the number of books which we might have bought had they been published at a reasonable price, and the feelings with which we have spent more than we could afford for books which we simply had to get. Why does not some man of money try and do something in the way of establishing a company on the lines suggested? It would certainly be as great a public benefaction as very many of the things on which huge sums are spent.

The Fall of Man.

Continued from page 630.)

MR. WILLIAMS finds that the doctrine of the Fall of Man first appears in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch and the Second or Fourth Book of Esdras: "marked by the dates 50 and 120 A.D.—that is to say, within a period roughly contemporaneous with the development of Apostolic Christianity and the writing of the New Testament; and they therefore may be taken as first-hand evidence for the back-ground of Jewish thought on the origin and ground of sin which is presupposed by St. Paul's treatment of the subject."

The doctrine of the Fall is not mentioned in the Four Gospels. It seems passing strange that, if Jesus Christ came to Earth as a vicarious sacrifice to redeem us from the consequences of the Fall of Adam, he never thought it worth while to mention it to his disciples. The first writer to mention the Fall doctrine in the New Testament is St. Paul, and the earliest passage in the Pauline writings which refers to it is 1 Cor. xv. 21-22:—

21. For since by man came death, by man came also resurrection of the dead.

22. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

Without following Mr. Williams in his examination of the Latin Fathers, we come down to St. Augustine, who is the first (A.D. 397) to use the epoch-making phrase *originale peccatum*, meaning a sinful quality which is born with us and is inherited in our constitution. In Augustine, says Mr. Williams: "we have now reached the fully rounded, logically coherent expression of that 'African' or 'twice-born' type of Fall-doctrine, which in our last lecture was seen, slowly assuming definite shape and consistency, in a succession of Latin writers reaching from Tertullian to Ambrosiaster." The last-named being better known as St. Ambrose.

The scheme of St. Augustine, says Mr. Williams, purports to be founded upon Scripture texts—and undoubtedly it is, for there is no denying, or explaining away, St. Paul's teaching on the subject.—According to St. Augustine the human stock constitutes a single *massa peccati* or "lump of sin"—a "terrible phrase" remarks Mr. Williams—and as such doomed to everlasting death:—

In God's resultant dealings with the human race His mercy and justice are equally exhibited. Out of the *massa peccati* His mercy selects a fixed number of souls, who through no merits of their own are brought to baptism, "justified" (which in Augustine's terminology means "sanctified"), and saved. The rest of mankind is left by His justice in the "lump of sin," rolling on its way unhindered to the bottomless pit. The equity of this procedure, which glorifies a small body of arbitrarily chosen favourites, and abandons all other human beings (who are *ex hypothesi* not more deserving of damnation than the fortunate objects of predestination) to their fate, is defended partly by the consideration that the lost have in any case no right to complain, inasmuch as they only get what they have deserved (by "original guilt"), and that the predestined have every reason to be satisfied with the arrangement, so far as it affects themselves: partly by an appeal to mystery and to the transcendental nature of the workings of the Divine Mind. "How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!"—(N. P. Williams: *Ideas of the Fall and Original Sin*. p. 329.)

Considered as a psychological document, says Mr. Williams: it proclaims itself to be the product of Augustine's own personality: "The downright brutality which led him to discard his mistress of fifteen years' standing, the mother of Adeodatus, without, apparently, so much as a thought of making reparation for his fault by marrying her, appears in his theology as the heartlessness which leaves the great bulk of mankind, even helpless infants, in the *massa perditionis*, doomed to everlasting flames for a sin which is not their own." (p. 330.)

At first, St. Augustine—in his treatise *Genesi ad Manichaeos*—had held to the allegorical interpretation of Genesis, but a few years later, in the treatise *de Genesi ad litteram*, he upholds the literal truth of the Adam and Eve story, with the sexual implications of which he was deeply impressed. St. Augustine is a typical instance of the connexion between sex and religion, and the powerful influence sex exerts in forming religious doctrines and dogmas. As Mr. Williams points out:—

The terrible strength of the sexual passions which devastated his youth and early manhood accounts for the prominence which the idea of "concupiscence" assumes in his writings; and the apparently instantaneous sublimation of these emotions through his conversion explains the feeling of irresistible grace upon which his theology of predestination and election was founded, as well as the ultra-puritan fanaticism which, as we shall see, coloured his opinions with regard to wedlock and procreation. Augustine's personality, in short, was that of the typical "introvert," or "twice-born" religious genius. We have, in a previous lecture, shown how such "sick souls," distracted by the conflict between their stormy passions and the no less insistent longing for immediate communion with and possession of God, attain to peace and unification only through a mental and emotional explosion which diverts the greater part of the obscure energies of sex into the channel of mystical religion, through an interior *bouleversement* which appears in consciousness as the hand of God reaching down from the clouds to pluck the brand from the burning, the favoured sinner from the "lump of perdition." (p. 331.)

Augustine, Luther, and, to cite a modern instance, Tolstoy, were all men torn between the strength of their sensual passions and their devotion to religion. Augustine forsook his mistress upon his conversion. Luther threw up a brilliant career to become a monk in a monastery, in order to seek peace from what he regarded as the promptings of the devil, but which was really only the pressure of suppressed sexual emotion. Of course he did not find it; sensuality

¹ N. P. Williams. *The Ideas of the Fall and Original Sin*. p. 75.

is not cast out by prayer and fasting, it is rather accentuated by the visions of female voluptuousness they are apt to evoke, as an acquaintance with the lives of the Saints and Hermits will prove. Luther burst the Papal bonds and solved the problem by marrying the nun, Katherine von Bora. Tolstoy, after years of vacillation, ran away from his wife and family, only to perish miserably at an obscure railway station.

In the same way, Bunyan made the hero of the *Pilgrims Progress* desert his wife and family directly he was convicted of sin and seeking salvation. Bunyan was a nonconformist monk, his book would have been received with enthusiasm in the Middle Ages, if the reference to the Pope had been deleted.

However, it was due to St. Augustine, more than to any other individual, except St. Paul, the originator of the doctrine of the "Fall," that the doctrine attained the commanding position in Christian theology it afterwards assumed: "This macabre doctrine," says Mr. Williams, "runs through the warp and weft of Augustinianism like an endless black thread." He gives the following quotation, which is taken from St. Augustine's *Enchiridion*, a manual of moral and dogmatic theology:—

Banished [from paradise] after his sin, Adam bound his offspring also with the penalty of death and damnation, that offspring which by sinning he had corrupted in himself, as in a root; so that whatever progeny was born (through carnal concupiscence, by which a fitting retribution for his disobedience was bestowed upon him) from himself and his spouse—who was the cause of his sin and the companion of his damnation—would drag through the ages the burden of original sin, by which it would itself be dragged, through manifold errors and sorrows, down to that final and never-ending torment with the rebel angels. . . . So the matter stood; the damned lump of humanity (*totius humani generis massa damnata*) was lying prostrate, nay, was wallowing, in evil, it was ever falling headlong from one wickedness to another; and, joined to the faction of the angels who had sinned, it was paying the most righteous penalty of its impious treason. (*Enchirid 26, 27.*)

It is perhaps better, says Mr. Williams, "not to speculate with regard to the amount of unhappiness which these ideas must have brought to sensitive souls between the time of their first promulgation and that of the final eclipse of Augustinianism by Darwinism in the nineteenth century." (p. 374.) With the later developments of this ghastly doctrine we shall deal next week.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

American Notes.

AN ANTI-BIBLE SOCIETY.

In busy New York City Mr. William S. Bryan is Secretary of the American Anti-Bible Society, whose headquarters are at 119 East 14th Street. Mr. James Elliott is President, Mr. O. H. Bailey Vice-President. The object of the society is frankly "to discredit the Bible."

It would be discourteous and injudicious for a visitor from England to criticize the methods of American Freethinkers. Candidly, I think the National Secular Society of England has done wisely to adopt a different policy, and I hope the N.S.S. will develop and increase and multiply on its old lines. Other lands, other manners. In America, new ideas, new ways, and new names are being tried out. Every Freethinker in every country will wish every attack on superstition to succeed, by whatever name and in whatever form.

I hope, therefore, I shall not be misunderstood if I comment on the A. A.-B. Society, while I wish it every

kind of success. Any help I can give I will gladly offer.

"Secular" and "Secularist" seem to me to be more effective, dignified and justifiable than "Anti-Bible." It strikes an Englishman, who knows the history of our own movement, as extraordinary to see "Atheistic" and "Anti-Bible" labels adopted by societies. In England our fight has been against the opposite tendency. Mr. Chapman Cohen knows how our critics have begged him to call himself an "agnostic"; and the admirable *Freethinker* has been asked to call itself *The Meek and Mild Rationalist*. Well, I have seen no argument powerful enough to convince me that "Atheist" or "Rationalist" is any better than "Secularist" or "Freethinker" as propagandist labels.

With the main object of the A. A.-B. S. I cannot imagine any of our Freethinkers disagreeing. "To discredit the Bible." If some of the other objects of the Society are expressed in rather extreme language, I should prefer to be on the side of the extreme Anti's, than to accept the common defences of a Book which deserves nearly everything that this Society says about it.

The fact is, of course, that this Society, when you get to rock-bottom, is in no sense attacking a very ordinary old book, containing good and bad news, views and advice. It is, like the Secularist Party in every country, fighting for this book to be read, criticized and judged by exactly the same standards as any other book. No book deserves to be treated like the Bible—forced into the hands of children and used as a fetish in churches, public assemblies, police courts, ships, hospitals, prisons, workhouses and elsewhere. A much better book would be equally out of place if enforced by law and authority. One has only to imagine the vast difference between compelling one to accept the Bible as a companion in barracks, prisons, etc., and offering one the choice of one's favourite book!

The A. A.-B. Society's *Statement of Aims* is the most thorough indictment of the Bible ever put into so concise a form. It covers every fault, it explains why we Freethinkers discredit the volume, it shows the injustice of the absurd claims made for it. Finally it appeals to all Americans to "help us free America from Bible bondage."

UPTON SINCLAIR'S PROTEST.

Mr. Upton Sinclair's new book *Oil* has been attacked by the pious Boston Police. Sinclair has endeavoured to get the authorities to prosecute *him*, instead of a book-seller's assistant. With this end in view Sinclair invited the police to purchase a copy of *Oil* from him. They have done so, but they have gone no further.

Incidental to this case, Upton Sinclair publicly read some so-called obscene passages from (a) Shakespeare, and (b) the Bible, with a view, I presume, to show that *Oil* is comparatively innocuous. I am bound to say I think these comparisons ridiculous and wide of the mark—and very cheap too, because nobody is going to prosecute either of these classics. No magistrate will ever issue a summons or warrant, I hope, for such prosecutions. It is quite to the point to resist a prosecution against *Oil*, by showing how infinitely more "obscene" is the Bible.

PRUDES ON THE PROWL IN NEW YORK.

The Rev. Dr. John Roach Straton of Calvary Church, New York, is imitating Mrs. Chant in her worst moments. Here is one of his *bons mots* about dancing:—

How can a young man and a young lady dance together without improper feelings being stirred up?

But he is really superb when describing what he saw one day in the rôle of Peeping Tom. So disgusted is he at the idea of women wearing short skirts that he watched them for hours. What he saw were:—

Knock-kneed, pigeon-toed, bow-legged, and slough-footed women, ring-straked and spotted, gracefully tapering and grossly fat, the pipe stem and the gingerbread, the broomstick and the Indian club. One woman, slightly pigeon-toed minces along the street as though she were walking on egg-shells; another faintly slough-footed ambles the way a coon paces, another hops

across the street like a wounded jay-bird or a hamstrung frog.

Quite an observer, eh?

It comes as a bit of a shock to read that Dr. Straton too has his critics. Here is a description of some "Pentecostal" services at his own church:—

It is reported that all-night meetings have been held in his sanctuary where men and women lay on the floor screaming for a baptism of the Holy Spirit. "The groaning and murmuring became something awful," one participant testified. "Dr. Straton's son Warren fell with a thud. I thought he had a fit. He was twitching as if strong electric currents were running through him. It was terrible—savage. He sang in a most weird, beautiful way. Others, including women, fell flat on their backs and their dresses were pulled down to cover them up."

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Books and Life.

THERE is a Spanish proverb to the effect that "the Lord sends us walnuts when we have no teeth to crack them," and this in another way seems almost true of the smiles of Fortune on the life and work of Mr. Eden Phillpotts. He has been writing for quite forty years, but now, the sun of fame and real acknowledgment is making up for lost time. An appreciation of him appears in the September issue of *The Bookman*. It is written by Mr. Thomas Moulton, a careful and discriminating writer, who evidently finds his subject congenial. How shall we place Mr. Phillpotts? In some respects he seems to be the other side of the medal of Hardy; in others, it is as though Richard Jefferies had included in his incomparable nature pictures those familiar characters created by the author of some one hundred and fifty books. "Nature without man is barren," wrote William Blake; we are, in a novel like *The Secret Woman*, perplexed with Salome, and try to fathom her character, and turn over the page to the beginning of a chapter, when we find this lovely picture that is fitting praise for the dedication of this novel to Swinburne.

"Between earth and sun, in the loftiest chambers of the air, silver cirrus shone like a net of pearl, and poured down pure light from a million separate cloudlets that spread upon the blue. Anon their radiance waned, and they massed slowly into sobriety before the darkening of the south. Floods of sunshine still fell over the valleys, but where Yes Tor and his twin towered against the west, their heather's royal purple partook of gloom, soaked up the gathering darkness like a sponge, and split it upon the lesser hills and coombs beneath. Water crawled leaden there until sunshine broke through and touched it to gold." Now this is pure Jefferies, until a little further on the character of Jesse in the grip of fate cries out, "The sun is the only God!" And that is the touch of our author that brings fertility to the land and sea that is meaningless without man the measure of things. An industrious collector, many years ago, in *The Quest*, had a contribution entitled "Nietzsche's Diatribe against Christianity." This contribution contained all the references to Christianity from all Nietzsche's works—nothing of importance was omitted. Not with the irony or satire of Meredith does Mr. Phillpotts deal with religion; his methods are somewhat different but quite as effective, and a collection of all such references would be a labour of love well repaid—amusing, laughable, humorous, whimsical, but never without that stroke of pity which is a sign of power. The Widecome Edition of his Dartmoor Novels, by Macmillan, is a keystone to his life, and these may make them valuable for their intense human interest, now that it is possible for sensible men to agree with Sir Arthur Keith without fear of being socially blotted out. If we can be tolerably certain of where we came from, we shall not behave like fanatics in our desire to return.

The book reader will now have another short book to remember, more on account of its contents than its brevity. There have been, to recall a few, *The Soul of Man*, by Oscar Wilde, *An Essay on Liberty*, by Mill,

Counsells and Maxims, by Schopenhauer, and these burn in the memory. Although our colleagues have noticed *Materialism Re-Stated*, it is a pleasure to record our measure of praise at the appearance of a book that will be more discussed in private than in public. The author, in his preface, gives us a straightforward definition of his subject: "The essence of Materialism lies in the simple statement that every phenomenon in the universe is the consequent of a composition of natural forces." That is concise, unambiguous, and clear, and allows the materialist the privilege (why do we have to write this?) of lifting up his eyes in appreciation and admiration of a rainbow, the snow-capped mountains of Switzerland, the colour on a butterfly's wings, or that mingling together on a plate, of cream with raspberries. And if you should think that the world of humour is a closed place to the materialist, here is one of his jokes that carries with it more than a sneeze of reason: "What exists outside consciousness we shall be able to determine only when a man is able to pick himself up by the waistband of his trousers and carry himself round the room." What particularly attracted us was the definition on page 55: "In science 'matter' is an hypothesis, used as other hypotheses are used to help to an understanding of the world around us." And this is pure gold. With deadly effect this is used on *The Introduction to Science*, a book written by Prof. J. A. Thomson. In other words, matter as an hypothesis works; the religious theory does not.

A booklet, *Responsibility and Culture*, by L. P. Jacks, is a Yale lecture, published by Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, at one shilling. It is a readable thesis, and although the lecturer does not include in a subject of this kind the workings of universal finance, he says some very good things on the way. "The price we pay," he states, "for gaining our rights as citizens is that we become aware, immediately of our responsibilities." We believe that it was Faguet who wrote that what the Englishman feared most was responsibility, but on the religious side of the picture, there are many forces at work to relieve him of it. Generous discipline in matters quite speculative have had a tendency to stifle the critical faculty, and this with the feather-bed of confession and a scapegoat do not tend to produce a self-reliant type of mind. When, however, the lecturer introduces the subject of Christianity into the League of Nations he is his own critic. The war in which, with the exception of France all nations were Christians of some sort, created the League of Nations. For that reason the less there is said about Christian goodwill the better. The League of Nations is to deal with things on this earth, and although nothing exceptionally great has yet been achieved by it, it is an attempt on the way towards a United States of Europe.

Beware of these novelists. Firstly, they will inveigle you with a novel such as *By Thor, No!* and then, at a time when you have been sharpening your teeth on *Materialism Re-Stated*, they follow up the John the Baptist of romance with a stiff little book *Towards the Answer*. Mr. C. R. Boyd Freeman has an intense personality in his writings; he discourses with conviction on difficult subjects, but, happily he has the art of making a synthesis after his destructive analysis. He prefers Mohammedanism to Christianity, defines Confucianism as a religion of common sense, and following his line of thought logically, he comes out into the broad daylight with a summary of ten useful deductions. Number one, in its nakedness, politely kicks the question of what we are here for? It is:—

We enter this life under no obligation whatever—not even to live.

Number five is a good tonic for croakers:—

This life is all we are absolutely sure of. Therefore we are justified in making the best of it.

The remaining eight are equally good. In the book we can trace the influence of Ingersoll, and we think that also, there is the human philosophy of Montaigne at work. He does not forget the Nordic origin of the English race, which is his especial lever for the over-

throw of both Protestant and Catholic, and concludes on the note of hope. "Let us," he writes, "keep our self-respect and behave with serenity. And even if (but it is a far-off possibility) this little life is all, let us live it in dignity and manfulness." So that, through the throwing overboard of vain and fruitless speculation on matters outside his consciousness the Freethinker is left with a careful ordering of his life without piling up a debit or a credit in a future existence. *Towards the Answer* is published at 4s. 6d., by J. S. Reynolds, 1, Church Street, Ripley, Derbyshire, and the county of Derby carries on the tradition of Spencer with Mr. Freeman's brief book that is an antidote for woolly thinking.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Music, Emotion and Rationalism.

AN advertisement recently appeared in a contemporary offering free lessons in musical theory and harmony for poor students, and it has set me wondering how many will take advantage of it. The British are accused, the world over, of being an unmusical nation. Yet, whilst observing the large crowds that gather in the public parks whenever there are band performances, one cannot help feeling that there is a huge public for music if such a public were but given a little more consideration by the authorities. Will they never learn the lesson of the English "summer"? Band performances could be given all the year round if we had a few real "winter gardens" in our public parks, and I feel sure that if only we laid more stress upon the interdependence of music with the other arts, public appreciation of music would grow rapidly to a surprising degree.

The other day a teacher told me that it was amazing how keenly his working-class pupils took to his illustrations of this interdependence of the arts. Working in conjunction with the local public library he has been able to induce a considerable amount of reading on these lines. For instance, finding a pupil interested in the music of "Faust," he has introduced the German legend and thus put his pupil in touch with Goethe and his circle. Much good rationalistic propaganda may be done thus. Many of the great composers, if not actually rationalists, were at least associated with the rationalists of their day. I know of one student who traces the whole of his fairly wide reading to a chance acquaintance with Heine through the medium of one of Schubert's songs. Ibsen, too, may be approached through the popular "Peer Gynt" suite, and even the devout Mozart can lead one to the "Don Juan" legend!

The humanistic value of music may, it seems to me, be greatly enhanced by teachers working by such methods, and it is pleasant to know that there is in existence a league of students that specializes in the study of folk-lore and classic legends in their relationship to music. The trouble with most musicians appears to be that, like Balzac's character, who was "quite too exclusively Marnesse," they are quite too exclusively musicians. Mr. Wells has said somewhere that the most important of all educational mediums is the printed book. Most rationalists will, I imagine, agree with this dictum, and thus will see that music may be made a most powerful educational force if treated as a means of introduction to its most nearly associated art.

Rationalist propaganda may be subtly conducted by such methods, and considering how greatly the churches have always exploited music, one feels justified in using the same weapon. The strength of the churches has always been in their emotional appeal, which is precisely the strength of music. But whereas in the churches emotionalism appears to be the net result, music may lead to rationalism, whilst at the same time leaving to the student power to enjoy his music emotionally. The Ethical Churches appear to have made a great mistake in this respect, by their use of hymns allied to music of a type that has always been associated with religious experience.

The foremost writers of all ages have been great humanists and have inspired many great musical works, but musical education seems largely to have missed the connexion or to have feared to stress it. Such a fear

may be explained by the fact that musical education is usually the privilege of the moneyed and conservative classes who give short shrift in many cases to a teacher of avowed freethought views. But in these cases such a teacher must work by the subtle methods indicated above, and if he can induce wide and catholic reading amongst his pupils his work will not be in vain.

The late General Booth once said, I believe, that "the devil ought not to have all the good tunes," and the Salvation Army has used many popular tunes in its propaganda. The rationalist can go one better by using classical music for his propaganda, and in stressing its origin wherever it has been inspired by humanist or freethought ideas. Since emotionalism is the most powerful weapon in all propaganda, it occurs to many of us that it is too much neglected as a step to rationalism, whilst the latter need not necessarily sound the death-knell of the former. In many cases, unfortunately, the "exclusive" musician is utterly deaf to appeals to his humanism; hence the fact that few musicians will be found taking an active part in politics or any progressive movement apart from music.

By inserting a note in musical programmes to the effect that such and such a work was based on, or inspired by, another work, the public might, I think, be often stimulated to follow the matter up, and thus very greatly widen its views. Indeed, our text might be taken from the title page of Mr. E. M. Forster's fine book, *Howard's End* . . . "only connect."

JOHN MURRAYFIELD.

Correspondence.

ATHEISM AND BUDDHISM.

SIR,—Permit a brief reply to Mr. Maurice White. The question is an important one. When a good many years ago I was studying anatomy under Sir William Turner, of Edinboro', sleep was spoken of as a function of the brain, and it was stated that if a particular lobe or portion of the brain was injured sleep did not occur. "Macbeth has murdered sleep." But science may have changed all that. Every one, however, knows that various drugs promote various brain phenomena more or less akin to sleep and dream, others prevent them, e.g., tea and coffee. Indeed, one theory about sleep is that it is a sort of auto-intoxication by the carbonic acid in the body. Mr. White seems to think that the function of the brain is to reason and that is all. When it is not "at work" oblivion occurs, whatever that may be. I do not think science is justified to assert dogmatically: "It is rather a partial . . . down to 'oblivion.'" E. Carpenter, in his interview with a Guri makes it clear that one of the Hindu psychic disciplines has in view the complete cessation of the brain's thought functioning—a most desirable faculty in Carpenter's opinion and mine. But the result is *not* at all oblivion according to the statement of those who practice the method successfully, but a condition of extreme pleasure, such as exuberant health, or natural surroundings give. It is only by experiment and observation that any good results can be obtained in knowledge of the world around us; theories framed to accord with preconceived ideas can do no good. It sometimes appears as though the Freethinker objected to anything of the kind, but they do not accord with the theories about the brain and consciousness of the anomalists and materialists, who first dissected the one and tried to explain the other.

W. W. STRICKLAND.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

OUR Winter Session at the St. Pancras Reform Club opened with a very excellent debate, between Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe and Mr. Leonard Ebury. The subject: "Should we Love our Enemies," brought out the best in both debaters, and evoked many questions and keen discussion from the many questions and keen discussion from the audience. Mr. George Saville was the chair-

man, and the collection was good. To-night, Mr. R. B. Kerr, who is a great favourite in North London, opens a discussion on "Over-population in Britain." We hope for a good audience.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.

DESPITE the lack of proper advertising the Glasgow Society started its Winter Lecture Season on Sunday last. The audience was not up to the average in numbers, but the speakers, Mr. W. H. MacEwan and the President, got a good hearing. We hope to see a much larger gathering on Sunday next (October 9).

Earlier in the day Mr. MacEwan went, by special request, to Govan Central Socialist Sunday School, and spoke to the children on "Relationships, a lesson on Evolution." There was a good attendance of adults, and the speaker was listened to with close attention. The Society is invited to send Mr. MacEwan back again, and it will do so.—THE REPORTER.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH.

THE Chester-le-Street Branch celebrated its first anniversary by a Social evening, and entertained many friends from Newcastle, South Shields, and other places nearby. The Chairman said there was no falling off in either the energy or the enthusiasm of the members, which was largely due to the fact that all who had joined had resolved to put his or her best into the movement, and had actively assisted in the meetings, whether indoors or outdoors. The Branch was also free from debt, which was something for which to be thankful. There was a good programme of work before the Branch, and all looked forward to the coming year with all confidence. There was a good programme of music and song, contributed by the members. The customary votes of thanks to the officials of the Branch brought a pleasant evening to a close.—J. T. BRIGHTON.

The National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON SEPTEMBER 29, 1927.

The President, Mr. Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Mrs. Quinton, Miss Kough, Miss Vance, Messrs. Coles, Moss, Quinton, Rosetti, Samuels, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed. The monthly financial statement was presented and adopted.

New members were received for the Birmingham, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and South London Branches.

The Secretary reported correspondence from the Birmingham, Edinburgh, and Manchester Branches, and from members of the Society.

The Executive expressed, in the most eulogistic terms, their appreciation of Miss Kough's services to the Society during the period in which she had assisted Miss Vance.

The meeting then closed.

FRED MANN,
General Secretary.

Mr. G. Whitehead at Liverpool.

THE wet weather prevented a start being made on the Saturday evening, and the time was utilized by Mr. Whitehead getting better acquainted with some of the members of the Liverpool Branch, an experience he found very enjoyable. The other six meetings arranged passed off without anything unusual, the good order displayed on the occasion of the first visit being again in evidence. The Branch has several very enthusiastic workers, whose assistance was much appreciated by Mr. Whitehead. Mr. Sherwin is a very capable speaker, who has held weekly meetings in Islington Square all through the Summer.

The last week of Mr. Whitehead's tour will be spent at Bolton, commencing Saturday, October 8.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE (Emerson Club, 1 Little George Street, Westminster): 3.30, Lecture in French, by M. Deshumbert, on "Le Psychologie des Enfants et des Parents." All are invited.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Mr. R. B. Kerr—"Is Britain Overpopulated?" Admission Free. Ladies specially invited.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7.0, R. Dimsdale Stocker—"William Blake: The Prophet of Humanism."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"The Family in Modern Life."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (34 George Street, Manchester Square, W.1): 7.30, Lecture by Mr. Saphin.

OUTDOOR.

FREETHOUGHT MEETING.—(Corner of North End Road—near Walham Green Church): Saturday at 7.30. Speakers—F. Moister, F. Weight and A. J. Mathie.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. J. Hart. Wednesday at 8 p.m. (Clapham Old Town): Mr. F. P. Corrigan; (Peckham, Rye Lane): Mr. I. Ebury. Thursday at 8 p.m. (Clapham Old Town): Mr. W. Sandford.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Mr. Fred Mann—"The Dishonesty of Bishop Barnes." 6.30, Messrs. Campbell-Everden, Hyatt and Le Maine. (Ravenscourt Park): 3.30, Mr. Campbell-Everden, A Lecture. Freethought Lectures in Hyde Park every Wednesday and Friday at 7.30. Various Lecturers.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (Assembly Rooms, Front Street): 6.30, Mr. S. Hamblin—"Thomas Paine." Chairman: Mr. D. Holyoake. Open daily for reading, etc., from 10 a.m. All Freethinkers and enquirers welcome.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.30, Miss D. Seed—"Ibsen the Man, his Work and Religion." Important Committee Meeting after lecture.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Co-operative Buildings, Drake's Circus): General Meeting, October 18, at 8 p.m. Business: Treasurer's Report; Proposed Meeting; General Business. All members are requested to attend.

OUTDOOR.

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President :

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary :

Mr. F. MANN, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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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.

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