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JESUS AND THE STAGE.

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

Views and Opinions.

Jesus and the Stage.

FOR many years the late Wilson Barret cherished the ambition of giving the British public little but high-class serious plays. The result was financial loss. Then he struck a new vein. He produced the "Sign of the Cross." As a work of art it was third rate; as a presentation of historic fact it was worthy of the pulpit. But it was a religious play, with a good lower-class Protestant flavour, designed to capture a particular audience. The play provided the virtuous Christian—male and female created he them and also the Roman ruler worshipping brute force and wallowing in lust, with crowds of gentle believers Christ being sent to burn at the stake or to be devoured by lions. That was Pagan and Christian history as Christian preachers had set it forth for the benefit of their pupils, and it was swallowed with gusto. It was a Christian Evidence lecture in a more than usually attractive setting. Some clergymen were induced to attend, and out of gratitude for their free seats and the endorsement of their own ignorance, or malice, they preached and wrote of the play's deep spiritual pathos, etc., and for some time the pit of the theatre carried the atmosphere of a dissenting chapel. An outsider might easily have expected the audience to cry "Amen" instead of applauding, and would not have been surprised if they had sung the doxology before leaving. All that was required to complete the religious atmosphere was a collection.

For the first time in his life Wilson Barret made money. He knew the play was rubbish, and to at least one well-known Freethinking journalistic friend he confessed the reason for the play, and joined with him in laughing at the "spiritual pathos" of the performance. It paid, and other dramatists were not slow to follow the example. The vein of sloppy religious sentiment had been opened, and it was worked for all it was worth. If God had provided so many fools, it would have been flouting Providence not to have taken advantage of his gifts. The faith of certain dramatists and novelists in prophecies might be

doubted; there was never any as to their fondness for the profits.

* * *

An Unseen God.

When the "Movies" came along, it was inevitable that this same field should be cultivated. Picture makers cast their eyes upon religion and "behold it was good." There was, for example, the recently much boomed Ben Hur—a frightfully ignorant presentation of Roman history, but with the expected stock picture of the wicked pagan and the good and gentle Christian. Over a million went to see this play at one Cinema house alone. It introduced the figure of Christ, but in accordance with convention, never showed the head of Christ. At one time one saw a pair of "divine" legs, at another a "divine" body, but never a head. The seat of intelligence was always missing. That might have been intended by the producers as a gentle satire upon Christian believers; but it was accepted as an expression of reverence. Now another play has been produced called "The King of Kings," dealing with the life of Christ. In this the face of God Almighty is actually shown, but it is hung up for the present, so far as this country is concerned, because the Lord Chamberlain is not certain that he ought to permit the face of Christ to be seen. In America, in Germany, and in France, where the picture has appeared, Christ may have a face on the top of his shoulders. But in Britain he must appear, if he appears at all, without a head. Which is curious, because while I have read a legend of a headless horseman, I do not remember ever reading one of a headless Saviour.

* * *

Reverence or Nonsense?

But why should the Lord Chamberlain hesitate? It is said that presentation of the face of Christ is prohibited because it destroys a sense of reverence. Why? If Christ ever existed he must have had a face of some sort. It is true that the New Testament does not say what he looked like, but it does say that he wept, and how could one weep without a face? The only abnormal thing about the household of Joseph, the husband of Mary, was the absence of a father—and even that might more correctly be described as irregular rather than abnormal. Moreover, there are a great many pictures of Jesus, all showing him with a head. It is true that hardly two of these pictures agree in detail, and none of them depict a Jewish Christ. He may have a Dutch face, or a Spanish face, or an Italian face, but never a Jewish face. The Jewish faces are reserved for the villains of the peace, not for the hero. None of those who painted these pictures were ever accused of irreverence. Why is it irreverent on the part of the maker of motion pictures to present Jesus as having a face that the audience can see?

The Princess Bibesco, daughter of Lord Asquith, wrote an article for the *Evening Standard*, written, she explained, "from the furnace of my fury," protesting against the "King of Kings," which she saw, but does not want anyone else to see. She says that "This film is an insult, not only to the religious," but also "to the many unreligious, who know that their lives have been enriched by the mystery of Christ's life." I suppose we may charitably take the last clause as due to the article having been written in a furnace of fury. But what is there to get wild about? If it is bad art, that is not so unusual as to rouse a woman to fury. It is evidently due to the fact that Christ is brought upon the stage, head and all, and that shocks religious—her religious—susceptibilities. She complains that when Christ goes into the temple and drives out the cattle and sheep, they stampede "somewhat aimlessly, and may provide visions for butchers, but for no one else." Tut tut! How does this lady expect the sheep and cattle to come out if they are, as the New Testament says, "driven out"? Did she expect the cows to come out with "reverent" slowness, so that one could picture one cow murmuring to another, "be careful, Christ has arrived." Perhaps she was thinking of the Christian stories, which relate that when Jesus was born the cattle bowed their heads and knelt on the ground in adoration, and would have liked the film producer to have had some trained cattle who would have repeated the performance. If sheep and cattle are driven out with whips, it is quite natural they should rush out, and if a butcher in the audience felt inclined to cast up their market value, he would be acting far more sensibly than the Princess Bibesco appears to have felt.

* * *

Real Religion.

The restriction of the Lord Chamberlain is absurd. The furnace of fury of Princess Bibesco is absurd. The whole position is absurd, but there is something more serious in the background. Let us note that religious plays have been performed, during the Christian period, without creating a furnace of fury, of raising the cry of irreverence. Those who know the old plays (many of them have been reprinted by existing societies) will remember incidents such as God Almighty depicted as an old man with a grey beard, going about in the dark with a lantern, before he sets about creating the sun. They will remember also the Garden of Eden scene, in which the fig leaf is adjusted on a nude woman without exciting any feeling of irreverence. There was also a dialogue between Joseph and Mary, in which the former says much that a husband might say to a wife of whose child he was not the father. Jesus was presented as a boy, as a youth, and as a grown man. Yet no one saw anything out of place in any of it. What is the cause of the difference? Why should a representation be accepted as quite a matter of course, and act as an aid to belief in one day, and be denounced as irreverent and act as a cause of disbelief in another? I think the cause is pretty apparent, although it is quite probable that Princess Bibesco is unaware of its nature. In this instance it is, in fact, her case that has to be diagnosed, and it is that of very many other half-and-half believers.

* * *

As Others See Us.

I have used that last expression advisedly, because it is really a difference of belief and half belief. It is not a question of the subject dealt with being considered valuable. Every question that concerns

human nature, every relation that holds between human beings, is dealt with on the stage, sometimes in a grave and sometimes in a gay manner, but no one protests against it on the ground of irreverence. So long as we deal with realities no objection would ever be raised. And so long as religious belief is real no question was raised concerning its dramatic portraiture. Men thought of God as a figure in human shape, of Jesus as a man, with a man's peculiarities, and saw nothing wrong when they were depicted as they conceived them. It was even possible to depict miracles on the stage. All that was needed was a clever sleight of hand performance, or some clever trick, and the "miracle" actually took place before the eyes of the onlooker. But how can one do that kind of thing to-day? If Jesus is placed upon the stage as a wandering pair of legs, or a moving pair of hands, or a body with a ball of light, like a police signal in the middle of the road, instead of a head, he is sufficiently apart from ordinary men to give an air of mystery to the unthinking onlooker. But if he is put upon the stage as a whole man, many nowadays will think of him as a man in other connexions—as one who might sit down to dinner and grumble at the pudding not being done, or complain to the boarding house keeper that some of his washing had been lost; and away goes the atmosphere of mystery which is vital to religious belief. And what kind of a miracle could one put upon the stage to-day? In *Ben Hur*, when the hands of Jesus pass over the heads of the two women, the two who were marked with leprosy suddenly possessed a "school-girl complexion," and someone near me laughed. It was not solemn, it was simply funny. A medieval audience would have gone away amazed at the demonstration of the truth of the gospel story they had just witnessed.

In a sense, the psychology of the situation remains unchanged. But the environment has altered. The medieval onlooker saw God and Jesus on the stage, and there was nothing there to shock his faith. He was seeing what he believed, and the seeing strengthened his belief. The modern onlooker is seeing what he professes to believe, and the sight gives him a nasty jar. When, in the medieval song and play, the story of the parentage of Jesus is told to the audience, it confirms their sincere belief. It is a pictorial representation of it. Tell the same tale to a modern audience, and a broad smile would go round the house. The same people would listen to it being read in church and would vow their belief. In the theatre they are *seeing* what they profess to believe, and that makes a world of difference. The real objection to having "sacred" characters on the stage is not that it is irreverent, but that it helps people to realize the kind of thing they profess to believe. Love on the stage does not make people believe love to be a poorer thing. Domestic scenes on the stage do not destroy in anyone's eyes the value of domesticity. But rob religion of its artificial surroundings, let people see it as it is, and, to many, its days are numbered. A man may go on playing the fool for a long time without discovering what he is doing. But let him once see himself as others see him and he is apt to become ashamed of his folly. If I were a parson I would strongly protest against religion being placed on the stage.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Belief in the supernatural forces that were (and still are) supposed to control human destiny has been responsible, ultimately, for most of the persecution, resulting from intolerance, which men have inflicted upon their fellows throughout history.—*Prof. Elliot Smith.*

Captious Critics.

The only true conquests—those which awaken no regret—are those obtained over ignorance. The most honourable, as the most useful pursuit of nations, is that which contributes to the extension of intellect."

Napoleon.

MUCH literary criticism is sheer, unadulterated rubbish, and almost justifies Beaconsfield's jibe that critics are "the men who have failed." Some of them are the merest partisans and special pleaders, like Mr. Gilbert K. Chesterton, who has, in *The Victorian Age of Literature*, grossly insulted the "intellectuals" of three generations, in order to bolster the claims of the hindmost of the Christian Churches. Other critics are so badly equipped for their tasks that they excite little but derision. And, curiously, some well-known University professors appear to be the biggest sinners in this respect. Professors have usually taken themselves very seriously, and this pleasing weakness was duly noted by Matthew Arnold when he was elected to the chair of literature at Oxford. In disclaiming the title of professor, Arnold pointed out, smilingly, that a famous pill-maker, and a still more famous illusionist, already enjoyed the title, and adorned it so much more than he could himself.

These thoughts were prompted by reading, recently, the two last volumes of the monumental *Cambridge History of English Literature*, edited by Sir A. W. Ward and Mr. A. R. Waller. These books bring to a close a lengthy chronicle of English writers, and, frankly, one would have liked more biography and less so-called criticism. With so many men engaged upon the work, there was bound to be a clashing of opinion, but some of the views are so curious as to deserve quotation. Professor George Saintsbury, for example, is extraordinary. Writing of Dickens, he is more cocksure than Macaulay himself in his best schoolmaster's vein:—

Certainly he (Dickens), perhaps more than anyone else, started that curious topsy-turvyed snob-bishness—that cult of the lower classes—which has become a more and more fashionable religion up to the moment.

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" What is all this nonsense? Pity and indignation at the sufferings of humanity were not initiated by Charles Dickens, and to suggest that such emotions were a "fashionable religion" at any time is grotesque in the extreme. And what are we to make of a professor who introduces "certainly" and "perhaps" in the same sentence?

The literary giants of the Victorian era bulk largely in these volumes. Professor Grierson writes on Alfred Tennyson and compares him favourably with Keats and Milton. Sir Henry Jones's chapter on Robert Browning comes as a complete surprise, for this portentous critic declares that the promise contained in *Paracelsus* was never fulfilled by the poet. This is, indeed, astonishing, for few would deny the splendour of Browning's portraits of men and women, or the real genius of the creator of "Bishop Blougram" and "Sludge the Medium." However, we must take the *Cambridge History* as we find it. The editors were not always nodding, and the merits of the earlier volumes more than compensates for the few shortcomings of the closing books.

It is a far cry from the pontifical utterances of learned professors to the up-to-date criticism of Mr. E. M. Forster, who, in his *Aspects of the Novel* (Arnold) discusses classic writers and present-day penmen with extraordinary frankness. This critic expresses his fervent admiration for Dostoevsky, Tol-

stoy, Proust, and other Continental writers. England is a free country, and Mr. Forster has a right to his peculiar preferences; but why should present-day young men go so far as Russia in search of emotion, whilst there is a stool in England to be melancholy upon? Young men like to wallow in the pathetic, just as old ladies used to enjoy snuffling over the sorrows of the heroine of *East Lynne*.

After this perfervid confession, there is short shrift for some very famous English writers. As for Walter Scott:—

For my own part I do not care for him, and find it difficult to understand his continued reputation.

Another great writer has to walk the plank with the author of *Ivanhoe*:—

Meredith is not the great name he was twenty or thirty years ago, when much of the universe and all Cambridge trembled.

This is simply "mouthing and cockscombry." Meredith, like Landor before him, always addressed a small and select audience. Bernard Shaw has the widest reputation among modern authors, but even the Shavian wit only arouses the laughter and admiration of the "intellectuals" of the chief cities of Europe and the United States. The universe has no ague, or even St. Vitus's dance.

Certainly there is no lack of strong language in this volume, and James Joyce's *Ulysses* is described as:—

A dogged attempt to cover the universe with mud, an inverted Victorianism, an attempt to make crossness and dirt succeed where sweetness and light failed, or simplification of the human character in the interests of hell.

Critics, nowadays, are "thick as leaves in Vallombrosa," but few of them appear to realize that, in the last analysis, noble thinking means noble writing, and that all else is as ephemeral as ocean foam. Great writers are better than the weevils who swarm in the purlieus of Oxford and Cambridge.

MIMNERMUS.

Modern Science and Materialism.

(Concluded from page 772.)

It is amusing to the Freethinker to watch the excited warfare being waged in the Church, concerning prayer-books, rituals and sacraments, about which, most intelligent people are profoundly indifferent; while the really important ideas of God and a future life, to say nothing of the Bible, are being questioned and rejected by multitudes of the newer generation, as the yearly statistics of nearly all the Churches show. It seems that by the time the clergy have settled their wrangling, if they ever do, they will find that their congregations have departed, sickened by the disputes of these religious viragoes. They resemble men fighting while their house is on fire.

The late Lord Kelvin, the "Christian Prince of Science," as he was loudly trumpeted by the Christian world, declared that, according to the laws of thermodynamics, the universe was like a clock wound up, but which would inevitably run down; all the energy would, in time, be converted into heat, and the universe run down to stagnation, deprived of all motion and dead; and then, of course, God would have to wind it up again; according to the Bible the last winding up—the only one of which we have any record—took six days. We don't think it could be done again in the time.

However, this view of the universe, as a clock wound up, has been discarded by modern science. As Sir Oliver Lodge has observed, can we think of a

time when matter did not exist, and a coming time when everything will be resolved into ether, and all energy dissipated? And proceeds:—

Or may we suppose that there is a recuperative process at work, the formation of matter as well as its destruction? Will there always be a transformation of energy, unabated, which will continue the activity even of the physical universe for ever?

The law of dissipation of energy used to teach us that, sooner or later, all the gravitative matter in the universe would have exhausted its potential energy, would have done all it could do by falling together, and that the end would be a cold lump of desolation. In that form the doctrine is not tenable. But is the idea of termination tenable in any form? I doubt it. (Sir Oliver Lodge: *Evolution and Creation*. 1926. Page 88).

As he further remarks, we see things in all stages of evolution, not one after the other: "all these stages are concurrent, co-existent. I ask, Has it not always been so?" (Page 87.) This was what the Materialist always contended for, and for holding which he was most bitterly abused and derided. Now it is calmly conceded as the inevitable teaching of modern science. We are beginning to see too, how this cycle of evolution is perpetually renewed, without the assistance of the Gods, or any supernatural power, but simply by the inherent forces of Nature itself.

From time to time new stars suddenly flash out in the sky, Novae, the astronomers call them. One of the most remarkable of these was discovered by a Scotchman on the morning of February 22, 1901, in the constellation of Perseus. It was then a star of the third magnitude. On a photographic plate taken twenty-eight hours previously it was not visible, although the plate recorded stars as faint as the twelfth magnitude. On the next day (February 23) the new star surpassed all other stars except Sirius in intensity. By the 25th it was of the first magnitude. Then its brightness began to decline, fluctuating periodically, until by December, 1902, it was of the tenth magnitude, and since then it has gradually dwindled to the twelfth magnitude. What is the explanation of this phenomenon?

Professor Frederic Soddy, famous for his researches in radio-activity, has suggested that, owing to emanation of radium from the radio-active materials, the interior of the earth must be getting steadily hotter, and while this may have little effect for a hundred million years or so, yet it must eventually cause such heating that the globe will burst and become an incandescent cloud. In that case then, these Novae are probably stars that have finished their evolution and reached the point where they explode by the radio-active forces generated in their own interiors, and are once again prepared to run the cycle of evolution from Nebula to stars and planets.

I have before me a Bulletin (No. 4), published by the New Zealand Astronomical Society; it is by Mr. P. O'Dea, M.A., L.L.B., F.R.A.S., and is entitled: *The Interior of the Earth and its Relation to the Surface Features*. Mr. O'Dea, I may add, is a practising barrister at Hawera, New Zealand. He is also a practical astronomer, and a member of the New Zealand Astronomical Society. Besides this, Mr. O'Dea is an able expounder, and defender, of the Gospel of Freethought; often engaged in vigorous controversy, on the platform, and in the Press, with representatives of the Roman Catholic, and other Churches, entailing much loss, no doubt, to his profession as a barrister. How Mr. O'Dea finds the time and the energy for all these pursuits is a mystery to me. I may add, that Mr. O'Dea is also a member of the National Secular Society. But to return to the Bulletin

we have mentioned, and from which we take the following quotation:—

It has been the fashion in the past to picture our earth as a dying world, gradually cooling until life would be impossible on it. Is this a true picture? It may be if we consider æons of time. The discovery of radio-activity, however, has presented a different aspect of the matter. The accumulation of heat goes on, so Joly contends, until a cataclysm happens in which the world and all we know on it is destroyed. Then stable conditions again supervene, and so the cycle goes on. It may be, therefore, that civilizations far exceeding ours in their advancement have been engulfed in one of the catastrophic happenings thus postulated. Professor Soddy, one of our greatest radio-physicists, is strongly of this way of thinking. . . . May not novae, those so-called "new stars," which suddenly blaze out and then slowly die down again, be an ocular demonstration of such a "revolution" on a much vaster scale than Joly thinks has happened, and will happen again to our earth? I do not know if my suggestion is original or not, but I have never seen such an explanation for the novae yet put forward. Take the case of Nova Aquilae, No. 3. We know that before this star blazed out in 1918, it was a faint star, visible only in powerful telescopes and apparently was a cooled down star approaching extinction and death. May not the blazing out into a star of the first magnitude be the releasing of the pent-up energy of the interior, of the stored-up radio-activity of the star, the whole resulting in a cataclysmic "revolution" on a much more gigantic scale than our earth has ever experienced, or will experience?

So far as we are aware, Mr. O'Dea is the first to expound, in print, this new and very satisfying view of the cycle of evolution. But I do not suppose he would claim that it is operative in every case. For instance, in the case of the "White Dwarf" companion of Sirius, Professor Eddington says, that having got into that condition, he does not see how it is ever going to get out of it again. In time, it will constitute one gigantic atom, in fact a Proton. In that case it will continue travelling until it comes within the attraction of another star, in the manner suggested by Prof. Bickerton, and largely adopted by astronomers to account for the origin of nebula and stars.

We shall treat of the theory of "Relativity" in a future article.

W. MANN.

MODERN WAR.

The material conditions of war, big armies and big armaments, exist [to-day] more than ever. But war and peace are, above all, conditions of mind. War is produced by a spirit of conquest, by distrust and a spirit of revenge. Is there a war spirit among the peoples of Europe? I do not believe it. It is not true that the French and German people hate each other; the Italian people have no aversion to others. It is very difficult to find in England any honest man who has hate for other people. But, unhappily, it is not the people who loathe each other: there are the actions of Governments; there is the conduct of the Press; there are in each country virulent minorities who even to-day speak the language of drunken dervishes. The people are dragged into wars, which they do not desire, by forces which are often hidden and always dangerous. . . .

After the war came that ignoble phenomenon of dictatorship. There will not be peace, nor a serious reduction in armaments, nor an end of Balkan intrigues, without an end of dictatorships. There are historical truths which are always the same. Plato, four centuries before Christ, wrote that the power of a dictator created enemies for himself, and when he feels himself menaced he has no other resource except to make war.

Signor Nitti (ex-Premier of Italy).

Christ on Stage and Cinema.

THE dramatic story of the alleged life of Jesus, as told in the Gospels, has formed the subject matter of many stage plays for centuries. *The Ober-Ammergau* production, for example; and even the eminent actor and artist, Sir Johnston Forbes Robertson, who has witnessed a performance of this primitive play, could find no fault with it; although the character of Christ is the most important part in the drama. Indeed, of this production the distinguished actor who had seen it played "very simply by the peasantry," considered it "more like a survival of the old morality plays than a modern artificial drama."

He objects, however, to what he calls the "Sacred figure of Christ" being introduced either upon the stage or the cinema; and in the *Daily News* of November 21, he protests most strongly to the filming and releasing of the life of Christ, under the title of "The King of Kings," wherein, he says, "surely the climax of cinematographic horror has been reached."

Sir J. Forbes Robertson is very sensitive about the mention of the "sacred" name of "Christ," and he recalls his sense of horror when, in America, he beheld on the news placards in the street, after Allenby had entered Jerusalem, the announcement, "British take Christ's Home Town"! Thus we see that it is hurtful to the tender susceptibilities of this distinguished actor, who is also a pronounced Christian, to even mention the name of Christ in such a connexion.

Sir J. Forbes Robertson recalls a number of beautiful plays, in which Biblical stories are used in a manner to which no sincere Christian could object, such as Maeterlinck's *Mary Magdalene*, and Rostand's *The Woman of Samaria*—these, he says, "do not offend—it is only the clumsy representation of the central figure of our Faith that can hurt us," he exclaims. But if we were to enquire why Christians are hurt by these "clumsy representations" of the character of Christ, I fancy we should find that it is because Christians regard the Jesus of the Gospels as a God—and any other description of him as a stage figure, as highly blasphemous. If, however, Jesus was only a man, however good or noble his character may have been, Sir J. Forbes Robertson would not feel the same degree of pain as he does when he regards Him as a sacred figure, too pure and noble for the profane hands of the dramatist or the cinema producer to deal with. And so he "fears that the beauty, with the reverence of the sacred story, is to be shattered by the clumsiness of insensitive hands." Consequently he thinks that "the censorship ought to be tightened up in this direction," and I suppose all other representations of the sacred figure of Christ on the stage and cinema prohibited in future.

But this is rather late in the day for Sir J. Forbes Robertson to assume such an attitude. True, it is a good many years ago now since he produced Jerome K. Jerome's play, "The Passing of the Third Floor Back," in which the chief character was a mysterious person, who seemed in a sense to resemble the ideal side of the character of the Christ of the Gospels. But of this he says: "The mystic beauty of the 'Passing of the Third Floor Back,' which I played both on the legitimate stage and for the films, made its appeal to all classes and creeds. Nonconformist ministers, Catholic priests and Rabbis—they all came to my dressing-room after the performance to tell me how deeply it had touched them." Quite so, and it certainly would appeal to a large number of Christians of various denominations, and perhaps to a few Jewish

Rabbis. But what of the large number of people who have no belief in the Jesus of the Gospels at all, and who regard the main features of the character as founded upon an astronomical myth? And what about the majority of the Jews, who are regular playgoers, who do not regard Jesus as their Messiah, and deny that they ever crucified him? Have their feelings not to be considered? I have no doubt we shall all agree with Sir J. Forbes Robertson when speaking as an artist, he says, "To catch the fleeting beauty of life, to crystallize it for an instant in word or look, that is the function of the artist in drama; but to try to express the inexpressible, to make material that 'spirit which bloweth where it listeth,' that is hurtful and terrible." And I have no doubt Sir J. Forbes Robertson would object just as earnestly against a grotesque misrepresentation of the life of a famous Freethinker such as Voltaire, Thomas Paine, or Charles Bradlaugh, as he would of that of the alleged sacred character of Christ. But would the ordinary Christian feel as keenly about such misrepresentation? I am afraid—not. I have seen several plays in which the supposed character of Christ has appeared, and I have always found that they have been received very respectfully by the unsophisticated audience of a popular play-house. If any persons were present who objected to such representations, they were at least courteous enough to remain silent.

The last one I saw was the "Open Door," at the Lyceum, by the late Arthur Shirley and Benjamin Landeck, in which a character named "Homo," resembling in some fashion the supposed character of Christ, appeared. The audience treated the character with profound respect and admiration, nevertheless, the play had but a short run. I have also seen several plays on the screen in which the character of Christ has appeared. The best one was entitled "From Manger to Cross," in which most of the incidents in the alleged life of Jesus were filmed, even to such miracles as the opening of the eyes of the blind, walking upon the sea, turning the devils out of the body of a man, and sending them into the bodies of pigs—although we did not see the pigs, who were supposed to have run down a steep pit into the sea and were drowned—the pigs, not the devils—what became of them we were left to imagine for ourselves. The story of the betrayal of Jesus by Judas formed an important incident in the plot; the trial and condemnation; the cruel treatment of Jesus by the mob; the crucifixion. Yes—we actually saw Jesus on the Cross, moving his head and body, opening his eyes and mouth, and expressing in his countenance great grief and anguish. But there were no scenes of the Resurrection and Ascension—these apparently were beyond the power of the film-makers to produce, but all the rest were shown with dramatic skill and great realism. Whether any of this would come under the head of a "clumsy representation of the central figure of our Faith," in the opinion of Sir J. Forbes Robertson, I know not; but I do know that the film was received with general approbation by the majority of the audience present. And for my part, as a Freethinker, I do not mind how often such films are put forward by film exhibitors for propagandist purposes, for I am satisfied that they will make people think, which after all is the first step on the road to Truth.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

"Psychology, like Evolution, deals with processes; but there is a Beyond within, which it cannot analyse or account for," says the *Methodist Recorder*, discussing religious (or spiritual) experiences.

In Quest of the Beautiful.

VII.—PROSE.

IF I was only looking at the living world of writers, what a hard task for me to find Beauty, but, as the spacious past holds so many, my gratitude to the numberless dead must be recorded, for among the giants I found the marks where the object of my search was visible. She had been sought for by others who had gone through the same experiences, and growth in myself made it recognizable. To Defoe, then, I must pay tribute, with his immortal story of Robinson Crusoe. He has touched the enchanting beauty of romance that will enthral generations unborn. He has, by a simple narrative, caught up adventure, where the spirit of imagination was always adjacent to reality; he had, by sheer force, compelled time to stand still; he had, by genius forever circumscribed the happy period of youth with a book. For youth alone? No, never! For those also who find refreshment of the mind in the infinite kingdom of romance that is lacking in the grey ordinary world. In Crusoe's Calendar the record of his soliloquy lets in the spirit of reason: . . . "I was very pensive upon the subject of my present condition, when Reason, as it were put in expostulating with me the other way, thus: 'Well, you are in a desolate condition, it is true; but, pray remember, where are the rest of you? Did not you come, eleven of you, into the boat? Where are the ten? Why were not they saved, and you lost? Why are you singled out? Is it better to be here or there?' And then I pointed to the sea. All evils are to be considered with the good that is in them, and with what worse attended them." Here was Beauty in a very modest dress; not as it were in a painting by Botticelli, but carrying the charm of common sense in the narrative of Defoe.

Another aspect of her was to be found in the medieval novel of *Aucassin and Nicolette*. The fair Nicolette against whose instep the broken daisies showed altogether black, was imprisoned; in pleading for her Aucassin replies to the Viscount's advice: "In Paradise what have I to do? I care not to enter, but only to have Nicolette, my very sweet friend, whom I love so dearly well. For into Paradise go none but such people as I will tell you of. There go those aged priests, and those old cripples, and the maimed, who all day long and all night cough before the altars, and in the crypts beneath the churches; those who go in worn old mantles and old tattered habits; who are naked, and barefoot, and full of sores; who are dying of hunger and of thirst, of cold and of wretchedness. Such as these enter in Paradise, and with them have I nought to do. But in Hell will I go. For to Hell go the fair clerks and the fair knights who are slain in the tourney and the great wars, and the stout archer and the loyal man. With them will I go. And there go the fair and courteous ladies, who have friends, two or three; together with their wedded lords. And there pass the gold and the silver, the ermine and all rich furs, harpers and minstrels, and the happy of the world. With these will I go, so only that I have Nicolette, my very sweet friend, by my side."

This story may be considered as a romantic prelude to the Renaissance. In the answer of Aucassin to Count Garin, I heard the beginning of a challenge to authority—the authority of the Church. In the description of Nicolette's escape (I refer to Mr. Eugene Mason's translation in the *Everyman Library*) I was moved to believe that the original writer or writers were in love with pretty descriptive language. For me, there seemed to be a sheer love of beauty in word painting—exquisite and riotous excess and striving to impress the beauty of Nicolette on the reader. A free spirit was at work; beauty of the human form, colour, brightness, movement—the discovery that the human body differed from the saint's description of it—this discovery seemed to be almost as important as that of Columbus. What then was it all but the story of human love—a story that has the touch of immortality, near to the hearts of men and women. In this romance I found Beauty, as old as the hills, and as young as a crystal drop of morning dew.

Another turning brought me again to Beauty—this time in Schiller's *Æsthetical Essays*. It is said that Bismarck out-witted diplomatists by telling the truth; could you not have deceived one of Sterne's characters three times a day if twice was not enough for your purpose? But, in Schiller, I found something that awoke a response in me, for with the involved, the tortuous, the ambiguous, I wanted nothing to do; like Lucian's reply to Timotheus, I had but a few paces to go along the corridor of life, and I could not compromise with the efforts of those who wished to make the simple complex. Here then was the object of my quest, what I had often thought, but could not express in this manner: "Simplicity in the mode of thinking cannot then ever be the act of a depraved man; this quality only belongs to children, and to men who are children in heart. It often happens to these in the midst of the artificial relations of the great world to act or to think in a simple manner. Being themselves of a truly good and humane nature, they forget that they have to do with a depraved world; and they act, even in the court of kings, with an ingenuousness and an innocence that are only found in the world of pastoral idylls." This quality I found in Emerson, in Lucretius, in Horace, in Blake, in Schopenhauer, in Gorki, and in Wilde. In all these writers, there was, I felt sure, a man speaking, and they had followed the advice of the old savage Carlyle—"Be a man before you become a writer." In Wilde's *The Soul of Man*, he takes the luxury of saying what he thinks as a right—not a privilege, and with Voltaire he had become a vehicle of truth.

In *The History of European Morals*, Lecky uses this simplicity in two sentences that cover the whole world of ethics: "The eye of the pagan philosopher was ever fixed upon virtue, the eye of the Christian teacher upon sin. The first sought to amend men by extolling the beauty of holiness; the second by awakening the sentiment of remorse." And again, in two simple sentences, "The ethics of paganism were part of a philosophy. The ethics of Christianity were part of a religion."

Beauty in the ethical world, to me at least, was to be found in the pagan world, where obsessions and cloudy metaphysics had no place. Rewards for doing the right thing as near as human being could approximate? This was incompatible with all the best that the shepherds of humanity had spoken.

In Schopenhauer there was what might be called a devastating simplicity which I could not sense until many years had gone in search and sometimes fruitless quest. Much stubble and thicket of bewilderment and doubt was cleared away by his extremely simple philosophy. With clear eyes he looked on the topsy-turvydom of useless metaphysics, and his books compelled me to shut many books for good, and look with my own eyes on the book of life, which in a man's existence only closes once. There was beauty in this form, this power, this genius of reducing the complex to terms of understanding, yet his truths spelt disaster to countless interests and they are too strong for the eyes of everyone to behold.

Another gateway on my quest was opened by Richard Jefferies, who dedicated his life to an effort to transfer to others his impression of beauty. It is unthinkable that he has failed, and his fidelity to one spacious idea proves that what has many forms is a unity that we cannot deny. His *Story of My Heart* is the outpouring of an excess of adoration for the simple things of life with the sun as a centre and source of inspiration. *The Pageant of Summer*, that silently takes its immortal place in literature, does not do so by beauty alone. From it, there is the gentle glow of helpfulness to those who respond, and his simple truths from nature draw their vitality from the earth. "Let us labour," he says, "to make the heart grow larger as we become older," and to make this thought clear, he continues, "as the spreading oak gives more shelter." And, in a perfect affirmation of acceptance to that which I had set out to find from first glimpsing a lady-smock in a meadow, he writes: "The hours when the mind is absorbed by beauty are the only hours when we really live, so that the longer we can

stay among these things so much the more is snatched from inevitable Time."

There was recompense for me in following the path which had no end. Truths were caught up in the robes of the figure I pursued; truths were left on the way where Beauty had gone ahead, and a retrospect brings the ratification of choice prompted by external impressions at an early age. I could wish no one a happier entrance to the world than that I had myself for it is in the truest sense, and apart from all mythical vapourings, the "Garden of Eden."

TRISTRAM.

Acid Drops.

If it is difficult for a wise man to always avoid speaking nonsense, it is equally difficult for the wise man's opposite to always avoid saying something sensible. Thus, the other day, the Bishop of London said that death was one of the greatest blessings we have, and that if no one ever died in this world, life would be absolutely intolerable. It almost seems as though the Bishop had been reading our *Other Side of Death*, in which this particular argument is developed at some length. But if eternal life would make existence intolerable here, one wonders by what reasoning it becomes something to be longed for hereafter. If we are the same in the next world as we are here, the conditions that are intolerable here would be intolerable there. And if we are not the same in the next world, then it is not us that exist at all, and the question of immortality ceases to have a personal interest. We wonder whether the Bishop of London is able to see this? If not, we wonder how on earth he came to get so near a sensible statement as he did.

But Judge Parry makes the Bishop's statement the text of an article in the *Sunday Chronicle*. In the course of his article he quite properly points out that it has never been the high-minded lay writers, poets, etc., who have dwelt upon the horrors of death, but "magicians and high priests," who "invented these things to keep their ignorant congregations under their thumbs by playing on their fears." Judge Parry might also have pointed out, more clearly than he does, that this intense fear of death is almost peculiarly a Christian product. It was present with neither the Greeks nor the Romans. It was the religion of love which drove men almost insane with their teachings of hell, and then bribed them by offering the doubtful boon of a Christian heaven. Christianity first of all scattered a poison broadcast, and then did a roaring trade with an assumed anti-toxin.

Mr. James Douglas has been ranting away, in the manner of a tenth-rate evangelist, at the alleged degraded books and plays of this age. A candid reader of his diatribe does not, however, see eye to eye with him, as the following extract from a letter to the *Daily Express* reveals:—

Mr. James Douglas has excelled himself. To his sugary sentimentality he seems to have allied a close study of the most striking advertisements of insecticides and combined them with the unbalanced venom of an anonymous letter-writer. Modern literature has nothing to fear from his abuse.

Which is a neat and accurate summing up of Mr. Douglas's effusion. But we don't suppose it will disturb Mr. Douglas's quaint delusion that he is a God-inspired critic and expert valuer of literary goods, or stem the flow of pontifical nonsense from his gifted pen. In between spasms of telling an indifferent world what true religion without theology is like, he will continue to dictate to his semi-educated and pseudo-cultured readers what in literature they should like and dislike.

At a meeting of the Christian Evidence Society, the Rev. Dr. Garvie said that the three great enemies of religion were ignorance, indifference and inconsistency. It was amazing, he said, what false conceptions were held of what Christianity really stood for. Very amazing, indeed, in the light of the fact that there are in this country thousands of parsons, innumerable lay preachers

and Sunday-school teachers, hundreds of religious journals, many thousands of books explaining religion, as well as religious articles in the Secular Press. Besides these, every school in the land gives some instruction in religion. One is therefore left wondering how ignorance of religion and false conceptions can possibly arise. The truth of the matter is that Dr. Garvie is badly puzzled to account for the widespread indifference to religion and the Churches, and he thinks the ignorance explanation will serve.

Dr. Garvie also thought it odd that the semi-savage man more frequently had a form of religion than did civilized man, whose complicated mode of life seemed to have removed from him his sense of dependence on God. The explanation of Dr. Garvie's odd fact is, that the semi-savage is more ignorant and consequently has more fears of the unknown.

The statement by a Manx secondary-school headmaster—that he would like to burn Bibles used in schools, because the Bible was the worst of dull, uninteresting books—has not pleased the *Sunday-School Chronicle*. Such a statement at such a meeting, it says, is likely to have a disastrous effect upon the work of Sunday-schools, if it is accepted. Our contemporary does not object to "reverent criticisms" of the Bible, but it does object to irreverent tearing to pieces of the sacred writings by "a few ill-balanced individuals." But "reverent criticism" is a phrase embodying a contradiction of terms. If a man comes to examine a thing with his mind already decided that the thing is worthy of "reverence," he has judged it before he has had time either to analyse or criticize it. How, then, can his criticism be anything but lop-sided, and therefore worthless? What is worth noting is that only in connexion with religion is this way of regarding things deemed a virtue. Science abhors it. Yet the "funny men" of religion wish us to believe science and religion can be reconciled.

Bishop Gore condemns Birth Control as anti-social. A physical culture journal reminds the Bishop that "the most effective way of artificially limiting the population is by way of celibacy"; and therefore the Bishop's plea for unrestricted procreation "does not come well from a life-long celibate." A good hit, that. Bishop Gore's defence should be interesting. We hope he attempts one.

The "tonic" tit-bit of the *Daily Express* the other day, urged the reader to think things out for himself, instead of accepting uncritically what he may read or hear. That is excellent advice, and has been given in the *Freethinker* for many years. In the mouth of our contemporary, however, it seems hardly expedient. Is not the *Express* trying to get the masses back into the Churches, and to keep in the Churches people that are already there?

"Woodbine Willie" has commended from the pulpit the play "The Kingdom of God." A pious weekly remarks that it is not a frequent occurrence for a minister to commend a play in a church. And we gather that our contemporary doesn't approve of pulpit commendation of plays—theatres and the things of the theatre are ungodly, earthly contraptions. But this particular play, you must know, has "a real message"; so the parson may be forgiven his departure from pulpit decorum—especially as the play may bring in a few clients for the churches.

Sir Wilfred Sugden, M.P., who is a Wesleyan local preacher, is optimistic about the future of religion. He sees evidence of great public interest in religion, the evidence being the demand for articles on religious subjects in the general Press, and in the popularity of semi-pious plays. On the contrary, Freethinkers see in these things merely attempts of astute newspaper editors and theatre proprietors to exploit a public that they know has been carefully impregnated with religious notions throughout adolescence.

"An Attack on Atheism" is a heading to a review of the Report issued by the Christian Evidence Society. What follows gives one the impression that, during the past year, the Society has been busy, not in attacking Atheism, but in a back-to-the-wall defence of the Christian creed. The godly are told that:—

The foes of religion, and particularly of Christianity, are well-organized and strongly supported financially, and it is imperative that united effort should be made by Christian people to counteract these efforts.

The Society appeals for more money. So it would appear that prayer and the help of God are not the wonder-working things they used to be. God can do little without the aid of £ s. d.

The *Schoolmistress* has fallen in love with the Bishop of London. At a dinner of the London Teachers' Association, the dear man very graciously said to the teachers: "You are all my comrades and friends in the greatest work in the world." And our scholastic friend is immensely pleased with the good man's patronage. How thrilling it is to be the "pal" of a Bishop! His Grace, however, was not at that meeting merely to whisper "sweet nothings" in his comrades' ears. He was there to do a bit of business for his trade. He appealed to the teachers "to stand steadfast against any loosening of the old moral ideals." By "old moral ideals," the Bishop meant, of course, the Christian religion. Hence, all his appeal amounted to was, that he wished the teachers to co-operate with the Church (or Churches) in implanting the Christian religion in the impressionable minds of their pupils. If teachers refused to do that, we wonder how long they would enjoy the comradeship of Bishop Ingram.

Reverent Agnostics, and other kid-gloved fighters of the Christian superstition, please attend. Mr. T. R. Glover says Bishop Barnes has raised a vital question, and bishops, archbishops, and Oxford professors condemn him—for being too abrupt and rude. They condemn him, says Mr. Glover, not for bad thinking or for misrepresenting the mind of Christ, but for "giving pain," "needlessly wounding the deepest feelings of some of the most devoted and most truly Christian members of the Church of England." But, asks Mr. Glover, if a truly Christian man has a "feeling" which depends on a false belief, which should come first—feeling or truth? A pertinent query, is that. And the answer to it is so obvious, that militant Freethinkers need never again defend their mode of attacking religion. Mr. Glover has done it for them once and for all. Thank you, Mr. Glover!

Sitting in the West London County Court, the other day, Judge Sturgis is reported as saying, "I hope to bring in legislation abolishing the oath. If people are going to tell lies, they will do so whether the oath is taken or not." Well, that is exactly what Freethinkers have always said, but we are quite sure that our pious Home Secretary would never agree with that. The original idea of the oath was to invite the judgment of God if a lie was told. But as people gradually discovered that God did nothing, here as elsewhere, they lied whenever they felt inclined. And this was particularly easy in the case of Christianity, as no other religion has done so much to encourage lying, or at least done so little to encourage habits of truth-speaking.

The Rev. "Dick" Shepherd used to be a favourite Sunday preacher with the B.B.C., mainly because what he said meant very little. But he pleased numbers of people, and reaped a reward in the shape of a legacy of £20,000 from one of his admirers. He also published a book called *The Impatience of a Parson*, in which he went for his brother parsons, some of whom appeared to have more definite religious opinions than he possessed. And now the Bishop of Chelmsford reviews the book and goes for Mr. Shepherd in fine style. When Mr. Shepherd says that the Christian Church is the only one that never revises its teaching—which is a statement that any man who gave serious consideration to the teaching of the Christian Churches during the past three centuries

would never make—the Bishop makes the obvious retort that every year there are many books grappling with various problems, but he doubts "If Mr. Shepherd could understand these books if he attempted to read them." That is a very hard knock, but we fancy it is deserved.

Of course, the statement that the Christian Church never revises its teaching is glaringly absurd. It has revised its teaching over and over again. What has become of witchcraft, and slavery, and hell, and numbers of other things? It is one of the peculiarities of the situation that a Church which has the truth about things direct from Almighty God has to keep on revising what he has told them in such a way that it often amounts to a flat contradiction. Thus, when God says, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," the Church "revises" it by saying there are no such things as witches. When God says that demons enter into men and cause insanity or epilepsy, there is another revision to the effect that demons have nothing to do with either. In politics or science we should call these contradictions, but in religion they are revisions. In politics or science we should say in such cases that our teachers were wrong. In religion we say that greater spiritual discernment has led us to revise our understanding of the teachings. This quarrel between a preacher whose stock-in-trade is a cloud of pleasing phrases, and a Bishop who has to defend his church in some way or another is quite amusing.

An unbeliever reading Coué's *Self Mastery by Conscious Auto-Suggestion*, and noting the Professor's replies to religious people's questions, cannot help suspecting that Coué was a Freethinker. The suspicion becomes certainty when one reads the following written to Mr. Orton by Coué:—

My father was not religious. In my infancy I was, but am so no longer. My religion consists in doing the most good possible, without mixing it with any other idea . . . Although I am not religious, I am very tolerant; I allow that one can believe that which I do not believe. I have friends in all parties. Men are to me men only; and if they have rank, I take no account of it.

"In my infancy" is a suggestive phrase. It seems to imply that when Coué became a man he put away infantile beliefs and modes of thinking.

The late Prof. Emile Coué, says Mr. J. Louis Orton (in *Health and Efficiency*), was sometimes styled "the apostle of auto-suggestion," or "the apostle of optimism." Mr. Orton, who was once closely associated with Coué declares that Coué hardly appreciated being called an "apostle" of anything. A pompous official desiring to create a good impression once said to the Professor: "M. Coué, you are a true apostle." Coué pondered over the statement as if trying to ascertain whether the description was an apt one. Then, shaking his head, he replied: "I do a great deal more good than an apostle." The reply suggests that Coué had no particularly great opinion of apostles.

Christopher South, in the *Sunday-School Chronicle*, gives his notion of the religion of Joseph Conrad:—

A friend, commenting upon my review of Conrad's life, asks if I intended to imply that Conrad was destitute of religion. It was *not* my intention to suggest that, and, in fact, I judge from his books that he had a basis of genuine religious faith in his intellectual make-up. Of explicit creed in a religious sense he had none. Perhaps his faith was nothing more than a belief in some form of existence after death. His brooding ironical commentary on men and events, which is a marked feature in all his books, makes very clear that such religious beliefs as he had brought him no easy or deep comfort. As he viewed the world *sub-specie aeternitatis* this is no wonder. But if Conrad had written a diary and let himself go, what a book it would have been. As it is, Conrad's views on religion will never be known. The chances are that such a diary would not have pleased Christians.

The "Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

We have to acknowledge, this week, an addition of £64 13s. 9d. to the Trust Fund. This leaves just £165 11s. 0d. to be subscribed, in order to secure an additional £1,615. There is just about a fortnight to do this, although we have to reckon on a little disarrangement owing to Christmas coming in between now and December 31. I am in hopes that, as Christmas is the season of giving, friends will not forget what is at stake and grade their gifts accordingly.

I gave the names of those who have promised, conditionally on the balance being subscribed, and I repeat the list here:—

Mr. P. G. Peabody	£1,000 0 0
Mr. H. Jessop	200 0 0
Mr. C. W. Bush	150 0 0
Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook	100 0 0
Mr. G. H. F. McCluskey	100 0 0
"Cine Sere"	30 0 0
Mr. J. Middleton	20 0 0
"Keridon"	10 0 0
Anon	5 0 0

Those who have sent in have been full of good wishes, with many expressions of personal esteem for what is being done. "G. G.," who sends along this week his third subscription, trusts what is required will be forthcoming, "if only as a compliment to your untiring and devoted work in the cause of Freethought." Mr. H. Spence also compliments us on the way we get through so much work, and in steering the Freethought movement through such troublesome times. These are all very nice things to be said, and we quite appreciate them. They give us fresh incentives to go on with what we have in hand. And it would be a pity not to give all a chance of helping on the work. They have it just now plainly before them.

What I want all to realize is that on getting another £165 between now and December 31 depends whether we get the £1,615 promised. It is not often that so much has hung upon so little, and every promise is worth its full face value in cash.

The following is the list of subscriptions to date:—

THIRTEENTH LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

	£	s.	d.
PREVIOUSLY ACKNOWLEDGED	6,154	15	3
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Promised on condition that a further £165 11s. 0d. is contributed by December 31, 1927 £1,615 0 0

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 a 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.

A. MILLAR.—Please pass on our compliments and thanks to your friends. Good opinions of one's work are always pleasant.

J. BRIGHTON.—Sorry, but we have not had the time to enter into the correspondence. A brief letter would be of little use.

BUENOS AIRES.—It will come right in time. We do not mind the struggle so long as we are making headway.

T. G. J.—Thanks for cheque for Fund. We quite appreciate the suggestion that the next Fund should be for the benefit of the editor, but the best present to us is to get new readers for the paper. We value that above everything. We want to see the *Freethinker* in the position, financial and otherwise, it should occupy. And a little more than three years will see it celebrate its Jubilee.

S. WILLIAMS.—We are afraid we cannot spare space to disentangle all the confusions of Mr. Joad on the subject of Determinism. He is evidently quite unable to understand what the discussion is about. The statement you cite, that if we accept Determinism "ethics and all that ethics implies is a fiction" is ridiculous in its childish in-consequence. We would advise you to spend your time with a writer who does at least realize the nature of the questions at issue.

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

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

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

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, 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.

To-day (December 11) Mr. Cohen will lecture, afternoon at 3, and evening at 7, in the Co-operative Hall, Franfort Street, Plymouth. Admission will be free, but there are some reserved seats at 1s.

Mr. George Whitehead will visit Manchester to-day (December 11) and will lecture in the Engineers Hall, Rusholme Road, at 3 and 6.30. To-day also, Mr. Mann will pay a return visit to Birmingham, and will lecture in the Bristol Street Council Schools at 7 p.m., on "Magic and Religion." We hope there will be good meetings at both places.

Mr. C. R. Boyd Freeman publishes, through the Pioneer Press, a pamphlet entitled *The Cake God, a Present-day Survival from Prehistoric Times*, price 3d., by post threepence halfpenny. As may be inferred from the title, Mr. Freeman deals with the question that is the subject of present-day controversy, and his examination of the origin and history of "God Eating" will be found of interest to many. Mr. Freeman writes with plenty of vigour, but *Freethinker* readers will be the last to find fault with that. We wish the pamphlet a large sale.

We are glad to know that Mr. Rosetti had a very good meeting in the Picton Hall, on the occasion of his first visit to Liverpool. The lecture was listened to with great appreciation by those present, and hopes were expressed of a return visit. Mr. McKelvie occupied the chair, and although he is a comparatively young man, he has been so long at the work that one is inclined to call him a veteran Freethinker. He can always be relied on when work is to be done.

We are asked to announce that the West Ham Branch will hold another of its popular Socials on Saturday, December 10. There will be the usual "mixed grill" of songs, dances, music, and games. Admission is free. Time 7.30.

Mother India.

(Concluded from Page 779.)

THERE are, in India, 60,000,000 (yes, printer, seven noughts) Untouchables. They are, by religion again, regarded as Unclean. They are lower than the lowest caste, the Sudra, and treated, according to that Indian saint, Mahatma Gandhi, as if less than beasts. Their very shadow defiles in the name of God. Some of these "unclean" pollute beyond a caste man's use, any food upon which their shadow falls. The food, after such defilement can only be destroyed. Even the bodies of certain Untouchables exude an effluvium which contaminates. He, or she, must put at least 200 yards between the wind and the nobility of the passing Brahman.

We have no space to deal with Miss Mayo's investigation of the unhappy lot of domestic animals in India. As we all know, the cow is a sacred animal to the Hindu. What that means in actuality can be learned from our author. The cow is apparently more sacré than sacred.

It is now time that one or two misconceptions that may have been forming in the mind of the reader were tackled and dispelled. The first may be answered by Miss Mayo herself. "I do not wish to imply," she writes, "that some of the most unflattering things here affirmed of India are without counterpart in character and tendency, if not in degree, in certain sections of our western life." There are, as she remarks, other facts, other statistics, other angles from which the Indian peoples can be regarded. But she had a particular job to do and she has done it. And that job was not to raise in the bosom of the Westerner a pharisaic complacency, but to arouse both the Indians and their white governors to a sense of certain evils in the hope that they might be grappled with. It is not the business of the prosecuting counsel to put the case for the defence. A case for the defence there always is. Let others put it and let the reader judge, weighing allegation against allegation.

If we may still further exploit this legal metaphor, we would emphasize the very documented nature of this book. Do not let that frighten away any potential reader. This documentation, which so adds to the value of the book, is not obtrusive. There is nothing of the Blue Book about *Mother India*. The book is most agreeably written, and the facts marshalled with brilliance. Most of the witnesses called by counsel are either Hindu or Moslem Indians. It is this array of witnesses, on subpoena, as it were, that makes Miss Mayo's case so impressive.

The defence has indeed already begun, but such as we have seen does not in our opinion shake the author's position. Mr. Gandhi has attempted a reply in his organ *Young India*. The Mahatma, by the way, is one of Miss Mayo's chief witnesses. *Pro forma*, in his article, he condemns, as he must as a leader of Hinduism. The book, he says, is untruthful, meaning not that it does not contain certain truths, but that it is tendencious. He considers the book to be unfit to be placed in the hands of Americans and Englishmen, for, says he, it can do no good to them. "But," writes this Balaam called to curse, "it is a book that every Indian can read with some degree of profit. We may repudiate the charge as it has been framed by her, but we may not repudiate the substance underlying the many allegations she has made." He adds, that the agitation that has been got up against the book is in danger of being overdone.

Despite Mr. Gandhi, we wish we could place this

book before all English people. Especially Theosophists. The common sense of this book should be of great value to correcting much of the mystical nonsense that makes so seductive an appeal to our rootless intelligenzia who have not dwelt in India. They would then learn what the logically attractive (logical enough if we accept spiritist premises) theories of karma and metempsychosis mean when translated into practical everyday life.

Every step in reform attempted by Hindu or Englishman is opposed in the name of religion. The English administrator is hamstrung by the solemn engagement of his predecessors not to interfere in what are called religious matters. With a people most of whose customs are based on their religions, this forms an effectual barrier to progress. Frankly, the outlook is black if this standpoint is to be adhered to by India's rulers. Perhaps, in the end, we shall find that India's salvation will be reached through the hateful pathway of industrialization. Capital enslaves maybe, but it stands no nonsense from religious fanatics, if their beliefs impede the wheels of industry which grind out its profits. Ask the directors of industry in Belfast how they regard the squabbles of Romanist and Protestant. Industrialization, we repeat, is a hideous but effective remedy. In the end, the mills of Bombay and the factories of Lahore may do more to annul the Laws of Manu (whoever that gentleman was) than any other reforming agency. Miss Mayo, by the by, does not mention these significant items.

What India needs, it seems to us, more than all else, is a good dose of Atheism. It is too much to hope that the country should be handed over to the N.S.S., to be run for its own and the world's good. At the moment of writing, a commission has been formed by the British Government to consider the future government of India. It is to hear evidence from all parties and communities, and to make recommendations. Well, may we invite it to turn its gaze to the Republic of Turkey and its remarkable President, Mustapha Kemal Pasha?

That resolute man is engaged, very successfully it would seem, in modernizing his compatriots. He has struck the fez and the turban from their heads and plucked the yashmak from their faces. He has abolished polygamy and driven away the dervishes. His opponents, not unnaturally, call him an Atheist. We doubt if the Ghazi is quite that, but he has, colloquially speaking, been "asking for" that label. It is reported that when recently his attention was drawn to some passage in the Koran which was in conflict with some projected action, he pitched that venerable relic across the room. He says that the Mohammedan religion is an outworn creed, and must be uprooted if the new State is to progress.

Some day (may it be soon) a son of old Mother India will arise to do for her what is being done for Turkey. Till then, the British Viceroy must rub along doing what he can to bring sanitation and sanity to her teeming children. Ephraim is at present very much joined to his idols, but the iconoclast will come. While awaiting his coming, all friends of India will join in the cry *Bande Mataram!*

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Understanding is the first great need in all human relations.—Ibsen.

G.B.S. described the Archbishop of Canterbury's reply to Bishop Barnes "a heartfelt appeal for ambiguity."

("Stated in Methodist Recorder.")

The Confessional.*

IN describing Roman Catholicism, an ever present difficulty is that of finding words strong enough to express our condemnation of its principles and practices. To nothing does this apply more than to "confession."

To say that R.C. priests are out for world dominion hardly conveys to any ordinary person the full extent of their designs. To be general bosses, political, social, and economic, is not enough. They actually wish to know and control the very thoughts of men. The confessional is for this latter purpose.

The Catholic has to submit his children to the priestly inquisition at the age of seven. From that age onwards the Catholic has to tell the priest not only what he does but what he thinks. The Catholic church consists of priests and chattels.

That such a device should ever have succeeded, that grown men should ever have accepted such ignominy, lowering themselves beneath contempt, lost to all mere human dignity, can only be explained by a partial softening of the brain. Strong and healthy-minded humans would never do it. But Catholicism saps mental health and strength. Its dupes are mental imbeciles.

Of course, there is no warrant in the Bible for the business, and in fact it was not thoroughly established till the year 1216, since when the practice of confession has been obligatory for all Catholics; since when (also) it has been the worst poisoner of morals the world has suffered from.

For if the general principle of the thing is vile, the details of its practice are worse. It has always had a vicious tendency towards sexuality. The lascivious instincts of the priests are titillated by their intimate sexual talk with women, and the prurient tendencies of women are encouraged on the same occasions. Mr. McCabe (an ex-priest) writes as follows (*The Popes and their Church*, p. 133):—

A large number of Catholic young women, even of fairly good character, are seduced—slightly at first—by the consecrated pruriency of the business. They would shrink from telling their intimate feelings and occasional mild lapses even to a father or brother. It would be immodest. But instead of being immodest it is highly proper to talk about such things to a priest, however young. The nuns and lady teachers who prepare them, when young, for the confessional, impress upon them that they *must* speak in detail. A priest would *sin himself* if he let them off with a general statement. He must ask questions. Was it solitary misconduct? If so, to what extent did it go? If otherwise, to what extent did it go, and was the partner in vice a relative, a priest, a married man? If you proceed tactlessly and ask the grave questions first you may get a horrified shriek. Most of them do not like it, but some do. Most people would be prurient if it were not a sin. It is no sin at all in the confessional . . . Some readers will ask what truth there is in the stories of priests abusing the confessional. There is much truth . . .

The vileness of the business is *not* unintentional. It was put on to a deliberate footing by *Saint* Alfonso de Liguori, who was not only made a Saint but a Doctor of the Church, *i.e.*, one who was used by God to *teach* the Church. He wrote a work on Catholic Moral (!) Philosophy, which is the chief text book of the Church. The following quotations in reference to it are from Robertson's *Roman Catholic Church in Italy*: "Liguori does not hesitate openly to advocate laxity of morals on the ground that by making religion easy the R.C. Church will gain adherents"

* Copyright by Author.

(p. 100). A large part of the book is taken up with the intercourse of the sexes. And in dealing with this subject, his descriptions and insinuations and questions are so obscene that any one daring to publish them would certainly be prosecuted for outraging public decency. An Italian newspaper offered 1,000 francs to any Catholic newspaper that dare publish an Italian translation from the Latin of p. 767 of Vol. V. and p. 298 of Vol. VI. The challenge was never taken up. A German professor published a translation in German, and though it was proved in court to be perfectly accurate he was condemned. One Italian translation was immediately sequestered; another proposed edition, *in Latin*, was forbidden. Yet the book is the standard work, the text book used in the training of priests as father confessors. Some time ago there appeared in the *Times* a letter by a lady signed "A Protestant, Thank God." Wishing to peruse a Roman Catholic breviary or missal, she asked a young lady friend to lend her one. The book she got was entitled "The Daily Companion, with a complete Preparation, the Sacraments, etc.," published in Liverpool. One of the chapters was "Devotion for Confession," and from this she quotes questions which she says horrified her. I need not give these questions for they are simply Liguori's, but this is how she summarizes the book: "Every crime for which Sodom and Gomorrah were burned is here openly alluded to, and this book is a Roman Catholic lady's companion!"

The immorality that is fostered by "confession" is tremendous, but Catholic "morality"—which is mainly immoral—shall have fuller treatment shortly. Speaking from a broad humanitarian point of view, there is some comfort to be derived from the fact—the well known fact—that the Catholic laity are, at bottom, ashamed of this "confession" business. They do not like it, and they are very touchy about it. And well they may be! They *know* the onlookers' scorn is justified. In kneeling to priests—and such priests! they are abject slaves. They are the victims of a vile crime against manhood and womanhood. The sooner they rebel, the better.

Anglo-Catholic priests are in a blackguardly conspiracy to make English people moral and intellectual slaves. Mr. Walsh, in his *Secret History of the Oxford Movement*, quotes extensively from their own statements, and we give a small selection to show that they exalt the priest and debase the laity quite as much as Roman Catholic priests do.

"Turn and throw yourself at His (God's) feet. He waits for you in the Confessional *hidden in the priest.*" "The power of the remission of sins is ordained in the hands of the priesthood, and no other channel whatsoever is appointed for our assured forgiveness." "The man who confesses to God *may* be forgiven . . . he who confesses to a priest *must* be forgiven." (Gosh!)

"The obedience which alone befits the human soul in spiritual relations must be pure and unquestioning, preventing, with a settled purpose of submission, every command which the judgment of the priest sees fit to lay on us." (*What about singing Rule Britannia after this?*)

"The priest, so far as his priesthood is concerned, is Christ himself." (*I don't think!*)

"A penitent, prostrate at the feet of the priest is a man raised and elevated and supremely honourable." (*Just the position for having his or her photograph taken—eh?*)

"The laity whose high and noble prerogative it is to listen and obey."—*or, Mum's the word and sharp's the motion.*

"We are teaching men to believe that God is to be

worshipped under the form of Bread, and to endure willingly the pain of Confession (an intense trial to the reserved Anglo Saxon nature) and to believe that a man's 'I absolve thee' is the voice of God." (Not MEN surely?)

"Confession is the toilet of the conscience. The priest washes and cleanses the soul, soiled with sin. Those children who will not be cleansed by their mothers remain all day dirty and disgusting."

You perceive that Anglo Catholic blether is on a par with the Roman Catholic brand. Occasionally, as in the last quotation, there is unconscious humour. Middle aged readers will be reminded of two famous soap advertisements, "Twelve months since I used your soap, since when I have used no other" and "You dirty boy!" There is something very funny in the idea of a penitent going into a confessional box like a dirty little boy to have its dirty little nose wiped—but the idea is not mine, it belongs to an egregious, humourless Anglo-Catholic.

The real object of "confession" is, of course, the enslavement of the laity, but equally, of course, it has to have a theological explanation to disguise it and make it plausible, for, at least, those who are both simple and slavishly-minded.

There are no direct instructions in the Bible, which, in a sense, is an advantage, for the theological argument has to be very involved, and in its involvement the truth can be hidden and a contradiction in terms cunningly camouflaged.

As one of the "proofs" of the divine origin of Christianity, it is claimed that the morality taught is higher than mere humans could have evolved. Of all moral qualities the New Testament says that the greatest is charity. Jesus pointed out that even "publicans" loved their friends, and were at least liable to return good for good. But, said he in effect, do unto all others as you would be done by, forgive not only your friends but your enemies as well, return good for evil, do good even to those that spitefully use you.

Jesus is claimed to have been perfectly good and to have lived absolutely by the Golden Rule. And as God is Good, He also is supposed to follow it too. In fact, the popular impression is that *everybody* ought to live by it. But Catholics keep the rule in stock, for shop window dressing purposes. When and where they are in a minority and on their good behaviour, trying to make a "good" impression, trying to make people believe they are "good" and guileless and harmless, they put the Rule very conspicuously in the window. But, actually, it will be found, on an acquaintance with their theology, their canon law, their episcopal and papal instructions, and (above all) acquaintance with their practice, that the Rule is only (theoretically and practically) applicable between the members of the Catholic laity. It is not obligatory on the priests at all—not even in their dealings with their own laity. Not only is it not obligatory in Catholic dealings with Non-Catholics—it is there actually illegal. It may be, as just mentioned, used with Non-Catholics as a matter of expediency. But "Holy Church" looks on all Non-Catholics who are not amenable to its blandishments with quite savage hatred—and, when it can, treats them with savage brutality. We will treat of this more fully when we discuss "Holy Church and Persecution." What is our present purpose is to show that "Confession," like the doctrine of Hell and Purgatory, is based on theological dogma that God Himself can and does behave in a way directly contrary to the Golden Rule.

C. R. BOYD FREEMAN.

(To be continued.)

American Notes.

AN AMERICAN SAINT.

Many American critics are severely handling the memory of Henry Ward Beecher, the famous preacher, whose biography, by Paxton Hibben, has just been published. Perhaps the stories are exaggerated. Remembering how Beecher stood up for Ingersoll, I am inclined to wish that some of the Torreys, the Billy Sundays, and the clergy generally had followed Henry Ward Beecher a little more consistently.

Here is one of the succinct summaries of a long indictment of a man of God:—

The result is a fascinating but appalling picture of an ecclesiastical fraud. The great leader of moral opinion shrinks to the proportions of a shifty and unconscionable politician, ever seeking to find the safe and easy way. The liberalizer of Puritanism becomes a shrewd double dealer. And the pattern of all the manly virtues becomes a voluptuary without either the courage to sin in the grand manner or the strength of character to avoid sin altogether.—(*Chicago Tribune.*)

I am afraid a great deal of this kind of criticism is nonsense. The adjective "ecclesiastical" detracts from the importance of the word "fraud." A fraud one can understand, but what is the particular crime alleged against an "ecclesiastical" fraud? What does the *Tribune* expect? Underlying all these interesting but somewhat overdone accusations, there is a sense of "Et tu Brute" a feeling that of course one generally finds perfection in a parson—and here was so rare an exception that there is a corresponding disappointment. How long will it take the average journalist to understand that we are all human? To express greater severity over a man's faults because he believed in a religion, is as banal as to praise an Atheist more than another because he is virtuous. A fraud is a fraud, whether he be a parson, a politician—or—let me add—a journalist. I suspect the sincerity—or the experience—of those who take a "Saint" at face value—till found out.

"PLAIN TALK."

Here are a few excerpts from the November issue of a new magazine called *Plain Talk* (35 cents. monthly, 188 West Fourth Street, New York).

"High power evangelism has proved a failure. So a new stunt of soul-saving is being tried. But the leaders are the same: Billy Sunday, Campbell Morgan, Gipsy Smith, etc. . . . It strikes us that what should be done away with is not necessarily the evangelism, but the evangelists."—(*Evangelism At Large.*)

"Of course Christian Scientists do not die, so Miss Eddy merely passed on into some new existence." (*Miss Baker Eddy.*)

"Clergymen appoint themselves the guardians and censors of the minds of the people to the end that no scientific truth becomes known which might in any way undermine their interpretation of the faith." (*Do Chautauquans Think?*)

"There is something amusing in the rantings of the true Nordics forever boasting about their superior Nordic virtues, and who then humbly confess themselves the upholders of a faith and moral code Semetic and Asiatic."—(*Why Denver Knifed Ben Lindsey.*)

And finally, there is an article called "The Atheist Nobody Knows," by Rev. J. Walter Houch (a New York Congregationalist pastor). The spirit of the article is admirable. The writer quotes Burns:—

I rather would be
An Atheist clean
Than under Gospel colours hid be
Just for a screen.

And, of course, there is the trite contrast between the excellent Atheist and the not-so-excellent orthodox believer, and there is the inevitable patronage always so well-meant and always so unacceptable to the Atheist: "I have found these men worthy: they are stimulating," but naturally, "I doubt if there are many 'permanent and final' Atheists," and once more it seems impossible to find a parson (this one is the best by a long way of those I have come across) who understands why an

Atheist is an Atheist. He tells a story of an Atheist who "lost control of his body, mind—and cigarette—as he cut loose upon the church which he refused to attend, even for the funeral of his dearest friend." This is the definition of an Atheist by one of the fairest-minded parson I ever met: "The Theist experiences God through the moral life, the Pantheist through nature, and the Atheist as well as the Materialist through science." "Atheism as a label is as meaningless as it is infantile" . . . and then comes the final blessing, in which the friendly parson goes the whole hog of charity: "It is conceivable that the most thorough-going Atheist of revolutionary France was more of a Christian than the blind believer in our successful orthodox church" . . . I give it up!

JEWES AND CHRISTIANS.

Some new societies in New York are worth watching. There is a "Permanent Commission on Better Understanding," composed of three well known Jews, three Catholics and three Protestants. I gather that the object of this Commission is to help to prevent injustices arising from mixed marriages and generally to set straight the troubles caused by the three creeds in family life.

The American Association on Religion is composed of members of the same three groups. Their main object is to defeat Secular Education, and to force the taxpayers to dole out public money for religious teaching in the public schools.

The Church and Drama Association consists of Rabbis, priests and parsons, and has no other reason for existence except to smell out "unwholesome" plays and screen-pictures. Unfortunately this society has been joined by timid playwrights, movy-magnates, and a few "playgoers" (according to reports these playgoers are churchgoers and synagogue-goers more than playgoers).

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Correspondence.

"THE MAN NOBODY KNOWS."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am afraid Mr. Wilcox has quite misunderstood my letter. It is simply not true that I am "determined to hear nothing good of that Arch-rascal, Jesus of Nazareth." I never dealt with Jesus, the man or God, at all. I discussed Mr. Barton's book and the completely ridiculous picture it gave of Jesus. Mr. Wilcox thinks I missed "the whole spirit and essence of the book." Well, that is a matter of opinion. It was not "a serious waste of time" to criticize a work which, with the aid of powerful newspapers, was influencing even such hardened anti-Christians like Mr. Wilcox. A conception of Jesus as a big advertising man in the modern sense as well as the "father" of "modern business," written by a keen American business man in the style of penny dreadfuls and boosted on two continents by many "anti-Christians" had to be criticized, and no other paper but this one and one other allows a word to be said against the Christian deity; and because there are many Free-thinkers who admire "much in the 'life' of Jesus," it is our duty to find out why.

Now, the principal reason given is generally that what the admirer does not like or believe is "smothered or obliterated by stupid stories of miracles or virgin births"—the rest being his justification for the admiration or even adoration. But no two people, even Free-thinkers, quite agree on the "rest." Others, an orator, or vinced that Jesus was a poet. Others, an orator, or vegetarian, or wine-bibber or prohibitionist or medium, or like M. Henri Barbrisse, a Communist and an Atheist!

For my part I look upon the four Gospels as hopelessly unauthentic from the historical point of view, but full of "symbols" and "mysteries," some of which we are beginning to understand. I have never attacked a "real" Jesus because I am certain, in my own mind, no such person ever existed. And I simply cannot understand the attitude of those who are "not in the least concerned" "whether Jesus actually lived or not, but find much in the life of Christ attractive." As a Free-

thinker, however, I bow to the inevitable. If other anti-Christians can seriously admire a book like *The Man Nobody Knows*, I simply have my say and pass on.

H. CUTNER.

Obituary.

DEATH OF DR. JAMES LAING.

It is with very deep regret that we have to record the death, on December 3, of Dr. James Laing, of Rochdale Road, Manchester. Dr. Laing and Mrs. Laing had both been regular attendants at Secular meetings in Manchester for the past forty years, and none were stauncher in the opinions they professed. Of a quiet, retiring disposition, only those who had the privilege of knowing Dr. Laing intimately could appreciate the fine character he exhibited. His reading was of the widest and most varied character, although the diffidence with which he put forward his own opinions hid from many the carefulness of his thinking, and the soundness of his conclusions. If modesty be a fault he had that fault in excess.

My own acquaintance with Dr. Laing goes back for well over thirty years, and there are none whose friendship I valued, or whose death I regret more. I never knew him express a harsh opinion about anyone, and should be surprised if he ever felt in that mood. His daily task must have shown him much of the seamy side of life, but it had no effect, so far as one could see, in subduing the natural gentleness of his disposition. I saw him when in Manchester last, and found him looking very frail, but unchanged otherwise. I did not think then that it would be our last meeting, but I shall treasure the more the memory of our lengthy and unbroken friendship.

Dr. Laing leaves behind him five sons, all of whom, with the exception of one, follow their father's profession, and a widow. We offer them all our very sincere sympathy, and we may safely do so in the name of all Manchester Freethinkers.—C.C.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

A TYPICAL December London Sunday was no doubt responsible for the small audience at the St. Pancras Reform Club. A great pity, as Mr. George Ives's excellent lecture gave rise to a most interesting discussion, and showed the wide variety of opinions upon the subject of "Easy Death," which one might have thought would have been agreed upon by all rational thinkers.

To-night, Mr. Campbell-Everden lectures for the North London Branch for the first time. We hope for better weather conditions and a good audience.—K.B.K.

The Battle of the Bishops.

AN OPEN LETTER TO BISHOP BARNES

By Chapman Cohen.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.)

Price ONE PENNY (16 pp.)

5/- per 100, for Propagandists.

A large edition of this pamphlet has been printed, and they should be put into circulation at once.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGDON STREET, E.C.4.

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, S.W.1): Lecture in French by Monsieur Cerisier-Duvernoy, on "Cuvier." All invited.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Mr. W. P. Campbell-Everden—"Goo-goo, Golliwog and Goblin."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Mr. H. Cutner—"The Failure of Socialism."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7.0, T. C. Archer—"What of the Future—Peace or War?"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2.): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"Bishop Barnes and the Church Crisis."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (34, George Street, Manchester Square, W.1): 7.30, Mr. Roberts—A Lecture. Thursday, 8.0 p.m.—A Lecture. At 101 Tottenham Court Road, on Thursday: Dance at 7.30 p.m. Admission 1s.

OUTDOOR.

A MEETING will be held on Wednesday, December 14, at 8 p.m., at 32 Micklethwaite Road, Walham Green, respecting formation of a N.S.S. Branch in Fulham. All interested are invited.

FREETHOUGHT MEETING (corner of North End Road, Fulham, near Walham Green Church): Saturday, 7.30. Speakers—F. Bryant and A. J. Mathie. Local Freethinkers' attendance invited.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.0, Messrs. Hyatt, Saphin and Jackson. 6.0, Messrs. Campbell-Everden, Le Maine, and Darby. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith): 3.0, W. P. Campbell-Everden—A Lecture. Freethought meetings every Wednesday and Friday in Hyde Park at 7.30. Various lecturers.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Schools, Birmingham): 7.0, Mr. Fred Mann, "Magic and Religion." Admission Free. Questions and discussion cordially invited.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (Assembly Rooms, Front Street): 7.15, Mr. Jno. Welsh—"Embryology." Chairman: Mr. Fred Brown.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. H. Watson—"The Metaphysics of Love." The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 p.m., in the Clarion Scouts Hall, 22 Portland Street North.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street off Bold Street): 7.30, Lecture on "Buddhism a Religion of Freethought." Admission free. Readers' Circle as usual at Princes Road, 6 p.m.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers Hall, 120 Rusholme Road): Mr. Geo. Whitehead (London)—"What shall we do to be saved from Crime, Disease and Insanity?"—3.0 p.m.: "The Answer of Physiology."—6.30 p.m.: "The Answer of Psychology." Tea will be provided, price 1s. 3d., for convenience of members staying for evening meeting.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Socialist Club, Arcade, Pilgrim Street): 6.30, Members' Meeting.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Franfort Street, Plymouth): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3.0, "The Priest and the Child," 7.0, "The Battle of the Bishops." Questions and discussion cordially invited. Admission Free. Reserved seats, 1s. and 6d.

OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Meetings held in the Bull Ring on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, at 7 p.m.

SECONDHAND BOOKS—Bertrand Russell: *The Analysis of Matter* (21s.) for 10s.; G. L. Roberts: *Objective Reality* (7s. 6d.) for 3s. 6d. All post free—W. M. WALTER, 3, Gordonbrock Road, Brockley, London, S.E.4.



Attractions

IS there anything more attractive than a handsome man and a beautiful woman becomingly and tastefully dressed? And would they be less attractive, or seem less handsome and beautiful, if dressed by a firm advertising in the *Freethinker*?

Christianity decries pride in one's self as "sinful, worldly vanity." Freethought says make the rational best of yourself—physically and mentally. Upon the ground of sheer principle, a firm advertising in the *Freethinker* is the most likely source from which to obtain becoming and tasteful garments. We, who advertise every week in the *Freethinker*, ask you to put logic to the test. Every Freethinker ought to take a pride in herself, or himself. We do—and we therefore take a pride in our work.

Send a postcard now for any of the following:—

- Gents' A to D Patterns, Suits from 59/-;
- Gents' E Patterns, Suits all at 72/6;
- Gents' F to H Patterns, Suits from 81/-;
- Gents' I to M patterns, Suits from 106/-;
- Gents' Overcoat Patterns, prices from 52/6;
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