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

Views and Opinions.

Blasphemy.*

WHEN one comes to think of it, the offence of blasphemy is the most peculiar in our legal vocabulary. In other offences, damage is alleged and must be proven against some person. In treason, against the community, or the king as representing the community. In robbery, against the person whose property is taken by force. In assault or libel, against some person who is injured by our action. And in all these and other offences it is assumed, and may be proven, that some injury to some person or to some body of persons has been done. But in the case of blasphemy it is a crime against someone—God—whose very existence is open to the gravest doubt, at least; and who, if he exists, we cannot injure, do what we will. We have merely the word of someone that God is—not injured—but angry with us for not believing in his existence, or for telling other people that we do not believe in his existence, or for speaking of him in a way that this other fellow says God does not approve. In blasphemy the injured party is unknown, his residence is unknown, his existence is doubtful, and a very little examination of those who bring the charge proves that, if he exists, injury to him is impossible.

It is also, be it noted, the one offence about which our legal pundits dare not trust themselves to laugh or joke. In trials for forgery, for treason, for robbery, even for murder, judge and counsel will trust themselves to joke. But I have never heard of a joke being perpetrated during the hearing of a trial for blasphemy. Why? Perhaps it is because if once the barriers of formality were broken down, once those responsible for a blasphemy prosecution ventured on a smile, the proceedings would resolve into devastating laughter. If an absurdity is to be carried through successfully, those responsible must

train themselves in the gravity that apes wisdom, and the solemnity which so often masks absurdity.

* * *

Slandering a Myth.

Freethinkers are under an obligation to Mr. G. D. Nokes, who, in his *History of the Crime of Blasphemy*, has given the fullest legal account of the offence that I am acquainted with. Mr. Nokes is concerned with the legal history of the matter, and does not enter into the arguments against the perpetuation of this law-made “crime.” Nor—although he gives a list of over two hundred cases, involving a much larger number of persons—does he give an exhaustive list of the trials, but all the principal ones are noted, and full references given in each case, so that those who wish to follow them in detail may do so. But it is strictly a history of the crime of blasphemy, and not a plea for the abolition of the law, or even an alteration of it. But the one thing that is brought out, and must by the very nature of the subject be brought out, is the shifting character of the judgments delivered, and the manner in which the question of blasphemy, a purely religious offence, has been jumbled up with the offences of treason, sedition, defamatory libel, etc. The author points out that there have been trials, with convictions, for attacks on the deity, the Trinity, separate persons of the Trinity, the existence of the deity, referring to the Holy Ghost as a character in a side-splitting burlesque (this was as late as 1882), upon Jesus Christ, his divinity, his resurrection, his historicity, upon the Bible, immortality, etc. Indeed, had the scope of Mr. Nokes’ work called for it, he might have shown that there is hardly a Christian doctrine the advocacy or the denunciation of which has not been treated as an offence at law.

* * *

Ringling the Changes.

So long as blasphemy fell under the old ecclesiastical courts there was no doubt whatever as to what constituted the offence. It was a punishable offence to deny any of the tenets of Christianity. It was the falling into disuse of the old powers of these courts that brought the offence under the Common Law, and here there appears to have been a fine confusion of moral offences, as in the case of Sir Charles Sedley, with purely religious ones. In fact, in the famous case of Taylor, in the seventeenth century (usually taken as the first of the new era), an objection was raised that the court had no jurisdiction to try him for the offence alleged—that of uttering foul words against Jesus Christ. It was overruled by Sir Matthew Hale, who made the famous, but stupid declaration that as Christianity was part and parcel of the laws of England, to reproach Christianity was to speak in subversion of the law. That this could

* *A History of the Crime of Blasphemy*, by G. D. Nokes, LL.D. (Sweet & Maxwell, 16s.).

have been accepted by other judges shows how completely religion can blind men. Mr. Nokes appears to be sympathetic towards Hale's dictum, viewed in the light of the current theory of Church and State. But the point, to my mind, is not whether Christianity was part of the law, but whether it was illegal to attack or to criticize the law, and to agitate for an amendment. And the mere effort to get the law amended or changed, provided one went about it properly, could hardly have been reckoned an offence from the end of the seventeenth century onward. Hale's dictum appears to have been no more than the attempt of a Christian lawyer to give the offence of blasphemy a standing at common law. And the law lords were quite correct, in the case of *Bowman v. Secular Society, Limited*, in treating the statement as unintelligible nonsense. Apart from religious prejudice, that would have been recognized long before.

* * *

Bigotry in Difficulties.

In the first stage of the history of the law against blasphemy there was never any doubt as to its nature. It meant denial or criticism of the truth of the established religion. It remained wholly that so long as blasphemy was an ecclesiastical offence. But with its removal to the ordinary courts it became a secular offence, and the growth of anti-trinitarianism led to the passing of the savage act of William III, the only existing statute against blasphemy. But here bigotry defeated itself, for its very savagery, joined to the difficulty of establishing a clear case, prevented it being put into operation. The verdict was modified from Christianity being part and parcel of the law of England, to Christianity "in general," and judges began to say that the law only interfered when the very root of Christianity was struck at. But the growth of opinion could not be stopped, it could only be hindered, and judges began to fall back more and more upon the principle underlying the law of libel, namely that there must be some ground for assuming that the attack on religion is made in such a way as to give reasonable ground for a jury assuming that the feelings of believers of Christianity would be so affronted that a breach of the peace might be expected. More and more judges dwelt upon this aspect, until the famous Coleridge decision laid it down that the very fundamentals of Christianity might be attacked so long as the decencies of controversy were respected. That is where the law stands at present. From blasphemy being an offence against God, it has become an offence against certain believers in God. And that makes blasphemy a law made for the gratification of bigots; for it is only the most bigoted (who, no longer able to burn the Free-thinker, have to be content with imprisoning him) who ever act.

* * *

An Absurd Law.

It may, of course, be a partial view, but it is difficult to see how anyone who reads the record of cases compiled by Mr. Nokes can avoid realizing the ridiculous character of the "Crime of Blasphemy." The primitive reason for punishing the blasphemer is plain, and, granted the premises, logical enough. He is suppressed because of the ills that will come to the community through the anger of God if he is tolerated. But the modern law of blasphemy is illogical, arbitrary, uncertain, partial and absurd. The law of libel, of which so much is heard nowadays when a trial for blasphemy is afoot, protects all alike. If I slander a man, or insult him to the point of inviting an outbreak, the law does not enquire

whether a man belongs to this or that sect within the community. He may even be a foreigner, the law will still protect him. It does so on the ground that being a human being, he must be dealt with as such. The law of blasphemy deals with a man as a member of a particular sect. I can attack the Jewish or the Mohammedan religion in any language I please, I may pour ridicule on Buddhism, or on Positivism or on any creed I like, I cannot be impeached at common law for the offence of blasphemy. Blasphemy can only occur when I am talking in a particular way about the Christian religion. Nay, it may not be possible even then. For I may attack specific Roman Catholic or Nonconformist beliefs in any way I please, still no action for blasphemy can arise. This can only occur when I speak of the established religion in a way of which its members do not approve. How then can it be said, with decency, that the law of blasphemy aims at preventing the gratuitous outraging of religious feelings? Have not the Mohammedans and the Buddhists and the Jews and others feelings that may be outraged? If the law has this concern for feelings, why not embrace within its purview all, as is done in the case of libel? To say that it is not a belief that is being protected and an opinion that is being attacked only adds hypocrisy to a legal wrong.

The law is uncertain because no man charged with blasphemy knows whether he has committed the offence until the jury has decided his case. With the utmost solemnity a judge presiding at a blasphemy trial proceeds to tell a jury what is blasphemy. But no judge can say that. He can only tell the jury what has been considered to be blasphemy. It is the jury, in this case, who decides what the law on the subject is; they remake, from time to time, the law of blasphemy. And it is partial in the very highest degree. A week or so ago, one of the weekly papers having incautiously said that one of our judges was incapable of administering justice fairly, very tamely climbed down and explained that it did not mean what it said. But it may be taken as unquestionable that no Freethinker on trial for blasphemy ever receives or can receive justice. In a jury of twelve men, every one of them—bar accident—is pledged to a verdict before he enters the box. He is there as an aggrieved party. It is, in the very terms of the case, his opinions that have been attacked, his feelings that have been outraged. So true is this that if any juryman told the judge that he was quite indifferent as to what anyone said about religion, he would be discharged from the case. No one would dream, if it were a case for assessing damages, of permitting the party who claimed compensation to act as arbitrator. In this case it is always the interested parties who are called upon to act as judge and jury. The old law of blasphemy was at least straightforward in its ferocity and its religious bigotry. The existing law is a mixture of religious bigotry and pious hypocrisy. If readers of Mr. Nokes' book do not realize this much they will have read it with little profit.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THEY NEVER FAIL.

They never fail who die
In a great cause; the block may soak their gore;
Their heads may sodden in the sun; their limbs
Be strung to city gates and castle walls;
But still their spirit walks abroad. Though years
Elapse, and others share as dark a doom,
They but augment the deep and sweeping thoughts
That overpower all others, and conduct
The world at last to freedom.—Byron.

Under the Microscope.

"Believe that life is joy, only let joy be read spiritually; in other words, not as a thing to claim, but as a thing to share in."—*Geo. Meredith.*

"The youth of a nation are the trustees of posterity."
Beaconsfield.

TIME works wonders with reputations. Gladstone's statue "in London's central roar" exhibited but one solitary wreath on the anniversary of his birth a few years after he had passed away. An outstanding figure in British political life for well over half a century, Gladstone was scarcely cold in his grave before his life's record was being revised in no uncertain fashion. Generations after Beaconsfield's death his statue is loaded with flowers, and his name acclaimed by the descendants of the people who regarded him as a pariah. Byron, who woke one morning to find himself famous, and whose poetry crossed all European frontiers, is now but little read.

Shelley, who woke many mornings to find himself called infamous, is now recognized as one of the glories of his country's literature. Wellington, dying at an extreme age, had long outlived his popularity; whilst his great rival, Napoleon, our life-long enemy, upon whom had been exhausted the vocabulary of vituperation, is acclaimed as one of the world's most remarkable men.

A similar reversal of verdict has been applied to the Victorian era. Our parents and grand-parents were self-complacent folks, and sometimes deemed themselves the favoured heirs of all the ages. And now their age is a common synonym for a narrow and conventional view of life, and every journalist has his fling at them. Truly, the whirligig of time brings its revenges.

These ideas are prompted by the new and cheaper edition of Mr. Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*, an acidulated and witty study of some of the best-known personalities of that period. His survey is at once comprehensive and entertaining, and includes, among others, Thomas Arnold, the famous headmaster of Rugby School; Florence Nightingale, the heroine of the Crimean War; Cardinal Manning, the Roman Catholic priest and politician, and General Gordon, of Khartoum fame, all of whom Mr. Strachey criticizes with a playful freedom and cool detachment which will irritate some readers and amuse others, under Mr. Strachey's microscope the alleged heroes and heroines of the famous Victorian era are dissected, and the result is more entertaining than the pages of most contemporary novels.

Mr. Strachey's manner is shown in his caustic account of Cardinal Newman's visit to Rome, where he says the Italian priests looked at the famous English ecclesiastic "with their shrewd eyes and hard faces; while he poured into their ears—which as he had already noted with distress, were large and none too clean—his careful disquisitions, but it was all in vain." Gladstone does not escape the dissecting knife, for Mr. Strachey points out, playfully, that "in spite of the involutions of his intellect and the contortions of his spirit, it is impossible not to perceive a strain of naivete in Mr. Gladstone." This was shown most clearly in that statesman's excursions into theology, where his zeal so often outran his discretion. The very title of his attempt at religious apologetics proves this, for *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture* was a delightful misnomer for a book of Christian evidence. It was, indeed, as ridiculous as a former Bishop of Gloucester's expressed desire to do something to help Omnipotency, which so delighted Matthew Arnold that he made bishop-baiting one of the fine arts.

How biting, too, is Mr. Strachey's denunciation of the Taeping leader in the Chinese rebellion, who is described as being "surrounded by thirty wives and one hundred concubines," and devoting himself to the "spiritual side of his mission." Perhaps the most amusing example of Mr. Strachey's quality will be found in the account of General Gordon's departure from Victoria Station on his last adventure into the Soudan:—

Gordon tripped on to the platform. Lord Granville bought the necessary tickets; the Duke of Cambridge opened the railway-carriage door. The General jumped into the train; and then Lord Wolseley appeared, carrying a leather bag, in which were two hundred pounds in gold, collected from friends at the last moment, for the contingencies of the journey. The bag was handed through the window. The train started. As it did so, Gordon leant out, and addressed a last whispered question to Lord Wolseley. Yes, it had been done. Lord Wolseley had seen to it himself; next morning every member of the Cabinet would receive a copy of Dr. Samuel Clarke's *Scripture Promises*. That was all. The train rolled out of the station.

Few things, it will be observed, escape Mr. Strachey's keen eyes. Perhaps it is human to be pleased with this, but in some cases the pleasure is short-lived. Even the brilliant Mr. Strachey may not be omniscient and infallible in his judgment of men and affairs.

Apart from the foibles and weaknesses of individuals, there is yet something to be said on behalf of this maligned period. So far as literature is concerned, there must have been a high level of taste which made it possible for Browning, Carlyle, Meredith, Matthew Arnold, Swinburne and Tennyson to be acclaimed so loudly. These writers, of such varying degrees of genius, all required more constant and active intelligence on the part of their many readers than any authors who are popular to-day, Science, too, made its appeal, and never lacked enthusiastic support. So far-reaching, indeed, were the changes wrought by Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and their colleagues, that at the present time we have the clergy adopting a breadth of interpretation which would have seemed the outside limit of scepticism to an earlier generation. The intellectual energy of the great Victorians precipitated a silent revolution, and we owe our present wider outlook to these men. Mental energy must be inferred in the pioneers, more than in the many ordinary intelligences who now profit by their achievements. When great questions have to be answered, may we deal with them with the same fervour as the despised Victorians, who knew how to "make the bounds of Freedom wider."

MIMNERMUS.

Ex Oriente Lux.

WHY worry?
Here is as good as there;
Now is as good a time:
What need to change our clime?
Why hurry?
In any case time bears us all away,
And we move onward as day follows day.

O, Lao-tse, great sage,
You taught the truth
To eager youth,
Maturity, and age;
That we should leave all things to take their
natural course,
And not resort to force.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Masterpieces of Freethought.

3. LA VIE DE JESUS.

By Leo Taxil.

I.

I CAN fancy some old reader of this journal staring at Leo Taxil's name and muttering in surprise, "Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?" For, indeed, Leo Taxil is by no means an ornament to Freethought. His name seems to have been studiously avoided by both J. M. Wheeler and Mr. John M. Robertson. Even Mr. McCabe left him out of his dictionary of Rationalists. Yet he certainly deserves a niche in our Pantheon for the work he did in France in the '80's—ferocious and unsavoury as some of it undoubtedly was. He attacked clericalism in a way which might have made even Voltaire turn uneasily in his grave, and there can be no doubt about the effectiveness of his campaign. Let me commence with a few particulars of his career. His real name was Gabriel Antoine Jogan-Pages, and he was born in 1854. He seems to have had an unhappy childhood, judging from the biographical particulars he gives in one of his earliest (and perhaps now rare) pamphlets which lies before me as I write. This was the first of his *Anti-Clerical Library* and entitled *A Bas La Calotte!* (Down with the Skull-caps!) On the title page it has in addition two other very famous sayings—"Ecrasons l'infame!" of Voltaire, and "Le Cléricalisme, voilà l'ennemi!" of Gambetta. Leo Taxil was then twenty-five years of age, and he gives an interesting account of his being the only child among a crowd in a reformatory situated near Tours who refused to be confirmed. The visiting priest was anxious to see who could possibly defy the powers that be in such a fashion. The boy was then fourteen years of age, and this conversation took place:—

"So it's you who refused to be confirmed yesterday?"

"Yes!" replied the boy.

"You're not Catholic, then?"

"No!"

"Perhaps you're a Protestant?"

"No!"

"Jew?"

"No!"

"Then, *what* are you?"

The child bit his lips; the bantering tone of the visitor maddened him.

"I'm a Materialist!" he said, drawing himself up proudly. The priest roared with laughter.

"Materialist!" he sneered, "What kind of beast is that . . . !"

And he walked out with a scornful smile of pity.

"The boy, on that day," continues Taxil, "took an oath of hate. He swore to consecrate all his life to fight those who had alienated his father's love from him on such a miserable question as religious differences. He swore to wage, until his last day, until his last hour, until his last minute, an implacable war without quarter or mercy against these people—called later 'clericals'—who, under the pretext of faith and belief victimized children and made parents into tyrants . . . O great Voltaire, I, your humble son, I shall take up your tradition and breathe everywhere the hate of the priests. I am young, with my future before me; I feel within me the fire of irreligion, and I belong to Paris, the centre of incredulity . . ."

The priest who interviewed the boy in 1868, became Cardinal-Archbishop of Paris in 1879, and Taxil finishes his autobiographical sketch in these words: "You scorned the boy in his cell. Now I

spit my scepticism in your face and in all those who belong to you!"

I have purposely quoted so fully, because one can get an idea of the lengths Taxil was prepared to go in his merciless war on the Church, a length to which even the tolerant Parisians would not—indeed, could not—tolerate.

A Bas La Calotte brought Taxil into court, and he was heavily fined, though, I believe, the conviction was later quashed. But fine words do not always make fine souls, and justice compels me to say the intrepid Frenchman was entirely unscrupulous. He "pinched" (to use an army expression) where he could, and was more than once had up in court for publishing works under his own name, which certainly he had never written. Moreover, he intensified the sexual side of religion, attributing "amours" to popes and priests, which, if true, would have left them little time for anything else, and must have been quite impossible under the circumstances. Of course, this does not mean that the "clericals" were really saints badly libelled. It means simply that Taxil exaggerated enormously everything he touched, and thus often defeating his own object. The *Anti-Clerical Library*, however, in spite of this, contained some extremely valuable works from a propagandist point of view, many of them written by other men. Indeed, it is impossible to say exactly how much of the work attributed to Taxil himself was really his own. He formed, in connexion with the Library, a League, and in 1885 it had 15,000 members. The harm this association caused the Church can be imagined. Books and pamphlets were poured out in great profusion, and Taxil was made the President of the 1885 Freethought Congress in Paris.

Out of the mass of literature for which he was responsible by this time, three books stand out, *La Bible Amusante*, *La Vie de Jésus* and *Les Livres Secrets des Confesseurs*. They are, in my own opinion, quite valuable in many ways. It is, for example, difficult to get any works on confession in the Roman Catholic Church written in English, they are mostly in Latin. Taxil translated the most infamous passages in some of the most famous books into French, and I venture to say few even of the most notorious pornographic works could rival this collection of questions and comments from the holy confessional.

Then in *The Amusing Bible*, or, perhaps I ought to say, in its final edition, Taxil provides a humorous commentary on the more stupid of Bible stories, quoting at the same time many well known Deists such as Bolingbroke and Voltaire. Some of the accompanying illustrations are, I may add, in striking contrast to those generally found in Family Bibles.

But before proceeding to a review of his *Life of Jesus*, which forms the subject of this paper, a few words on Taxil's later career will prove interesting. In 1885, when he seemed to have reached the summit of his ambition, he suddenly turned *volte-face*. In other words, to the surprise and consternation of his followers he became converted to the Roman Catholic Church. There was a whisper that the Pope had in his mind the possibility of making Taxil a present of 1,000,000 francs if such a happy event could occur, though this was never proved. But the humble way in which the ferocious Atheist kissed the Pope's toe during his pilgrimage to Rome, and the contrite and sincere retraction of his former views found in the *Confessions of a Freethinker*—published on his return—would certainly lend colour to the view that the conversion was utterly and finally complete. He had been kicked out by the Freemasons, who are known

on the Continent as the enemy of the Church, and so he turned his attention to exposing their rites and ceremonies, and finally, in 1897, with or through the aid of "Miss Diana Vaughan," a complete exposure of the nefarious society was to be given in public by the devotedly religious Leo Taxil. Alas, something went wrong, and Taxil caused more consternation than ever when he announced he had nothing to expose, it was all a hoax, and for twelve years he had fooled the Church and all her adherents!

The curious reader will find a complete account of this in one of Henry C. Lea's works. After 1897, the redoubtable Leo seems to have silenced down, and though some of his later books can be considered noteworthy (such as *La Corruption Fin-de-Siècle*) little more was heard of him. He died in comparative obscurity a few years ago. *La Vie de Jésus* certainly stands in a class by itself among all the 235,789 lives of Jesus written to date. Leo Taxil makes no attempt to rival Straus, Renan, Neander or any of the other famous biographers in their own field. He does not trouble himself about Greek or Latin, and is quite indifferent as to whether scribes missed out a letter, word, paragraph, page or chapter, when making copies of the holy MSS. Discussions as to the value of the various codices leave him cold. Arguments as to whether Jesus was the greatest being that ever trod this earth he brushed aside as irrelevant.

"After a long and attentive examination," he says, "I definitely range myself among those who take the view that Jesus never existed. My work then is not written to diminish Jesus the God so as to aggrandize Jesus the Man, but to follow step by step the Christian legend, to expose all its nonsense and contradictions in order to demonstrate that from one end to the other, and under whatever aspect it is envisaged, the history of Jesus Christ, man or God, is nothing but a tissue of stupid and immoral fables."

I shall deal with the book more fully in a following article.

H. CUTNER.

Mind and Matter.

MANY years ago *Punch* summed up the problem between the idealist and the materialist in two questions and answers: "What is Mind? No Matter. What is Matter? Never Mind." Which is a witty way of side-stepping the question, and was much applauded by the idealists.

What is Mind? There are many definitions given of the word. To the rationalist it is an abstract, collective term for all forms of conscious intelligence and reasoning power, as distinguished from instinct and emotion. To the idealist, mind is synonymous with spirit, as apart from, and opposed to, matter. The materialist holds that mind is an offspring of matter, and that there is no mind apart from matter. Mind only appears when matter has reached a high and complex stage of organization, as in the brain of man, with its intricate network of millions of nerves. The materialistic psychologist sums up his belief, briefly, in four words: "No psychosis without neurosis." That is, to put it plainly, no thought without a nervous organization. Or, to put it still more concisely, "No nerves, no thought."

The idealist believes that mind can exist apart from the brain. That the brain is merely the instrument used by the mind, just as a musician uses an instrument to produce music. The idealist also believes that, after the decay and death of the brain and nervous system, the mind continues to exist without

the aid of any material organization, although how such a wraith could exercise its five senses without a material instrument of some kind he does not attempt to explain. He just drops the statement, like a hundredweight of coals, and leaves you to it. What would the continued existence of such a spectre be worth without the use of the five senses? It might just as well be dead outright.

Within the last few years science has made an immense advance towards a better understanding of mental activity. The revelations of the biologists as to the influence of the ductless glands upon mental development has been nothing less than astounding. These alone would put the spirit hypothesis out of court.

The physiologists have been equally active in studying the mechanism of the nervous system, as represented by the brain with its elaborate and complex in-going and out-going signaling apparatus running to all parts of the body. Of this Prof. Sherrington's work is an outstanding example.

The psycho-analysts have also shed much light upon obscure mental problems. Much work has also been done on animal mentality, of which Prof. Koehler's work on the mentality of the higher apes is an outstanding example.

The idealist always plants his banner in the no-man's-land of ignorance. He argues: You cannot explain such and such a mental phenomenon on the materialistic hypothesis; therefore your theory fails, and the phenomenon must be the work of a spiritual entity. But if the present rate of progress continues for another fifty years, there will be little left to explain. As it is, the idealist has to be continually patching up his defences and altering his theories and arguments to meet the ever encroaching tide of knowledge. As knowledge advances, so the spiritual recedes. When the old guard, the remains of the generation that was brought up on the old spiritist teaching, has passed away, the realm of spirits will pass with it. Science has no use for the hypothesis. It was never more than a stop-gap for our want of knowledge. Like God, it was only brought in to explain the phenomena that science was unable to explain.

No one to-day thinks of explaining any astronomical problem by calling in the aid of Gods or spirits. Fancy an astronomer getting up at a meeting of the Royal Astronomical Society, and declaring that as they were unable to account for certain irregularities in the annual revolution of the planet Mercury these must be due to a supernatural cause! The members would laugh in his face, and conclude that he had "bats in the belfry." There is no more necessity for invoking spiritual aid in mental operations than there is in astronomical.

It is becoming the fashion, especially in America, to publish books dealing with a certain specified scientific subject, and consisting of lectures or essays contributed by a number of professors of science, who each deal with the subject from the point of view of their particular science. One of the latest of these is an English collection entitled *The Mind*, and edited by Prof. McDowall (Longmans Green, 1927, 8s. 6d.). It consists of eight lectures by eight professors of different sciences, all dealing with the mind. The subject of the first lecture is "Biology," by Prof. Julian Huxley. The Second is by Prof. McDowall—the editor of the series—on "Physiology." Both of these take the materialistic view, and it is with them we wish to deal. Prof. Huxley quickly comes to the point. He observes:—

... the processes of conduction, excitation, inhibition, and passage of a synapses which the physiologist finds occurring in the brain when a man thinks

or feels, and which he rightly hopes and expects to analyse in physico-chemical terms, these same processes are, to the brain in which they occur, experienced as consciousness. The material and the mental are inseparable. I know of no other hypothesis which not only satisfies the biological and physiological facts, but yet does not unnecessarily go beyond them . . . The concept of evolution is of fundamental importance to any general scheme of thought: and one of the ways in which its importance is greatest is in defining the place of mind within any such scheme. If bodies and their contained brains have evolved, why have not the accompanying minds? Indeed, to-day the question can only be properly put the other way round: how can the minds *not* have evolved? Mental evolution can only have failed to occur if we deny to mind the principle of continuity, which is one of our axioms on the physical side: only, that is to say, if the world ceases to be rational.

If we knew nothing of a nature intermediate between ourselves and rocks or clouds, it would be permissible to believe that human consciousness was in its essence unique, with no ties binding it to other objects of the material universe; and this attitude was still possible so long as the theory of special creation held the field. But with the demonstration that all life was one, and further, that it was a product of the one matter of which all objects in the universe are made, such a distinction was no longer possible. Through our knowledge of ourselves, mind and living matter are seen to be connected. Through our knowledge of evolution, mind is linked with all matter. (Prof. J. S. Huxley. *The Mind*. pp. 5-6.)

Consciousness, proceeds the Professor, so far as all experiments take us, is confined to the frontal part of the brain, and almost solely to the cortex or layer of grey matter covering the cerebral hemispheres. And further:—

The essential part of this organ consists of millions upon millions of nerve-cells, each with a large number of branches, so that in all probability any cell can be connected comparatively readily with any other cell. Different regions, each comprising huge numbers of cells, are associated with different functions and different psychic processes. In all probability, again, every conscious process is associated with the activity not of one, but of a very great many cortical cells simultaneously. (*Ibid.* p.7.)

The brain is the great exchange, and the nerves are the wires that are incessantly sending and receiving the messages by which we maintain our existence.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

WAR.

With regard to war, the greatest and most pompous of human activities, I would fain know whether we shall regard it as arguing some prerogative or as a testimony of our imbecility and imperfection, the science of defeating and killing one another, of ruining and destroying our own race.—*Montaigne*.

HEROES.

Take these men for your example. Like them, remember that prosperity can be only for the free, that freedom is the sure possession of those alone who have courage to defend it.—*Pericles*.

Let dead hearts tarry and trade and marry,
And trembling nurse their dreams of mirth,
While we the living our lives are giving
To bring the bright new world to birth.

William Morris.

Acid Drops.

Some of our readers may not be quite certain where Crowland is. For their benefit we will explain that it is in Lincolnshire, and it has *some* Vicar. This Vicar, the Rev. G. D. K. Clowes, recently published in his Parish Magazine, the following:—

Complaints reach me from parents and others—which are supported by my personal observation to some extent—that we have some day-school teachers in this country who are virtually infidels, avoiding places of worship and deriding the Scriptures. Surely for the honour, to say nothing of the common-sense of the teaching profession, these things ought not to be.

For a Crowland teacher (above all) to deride the Scriptures would be an example of Himalayan ignorance and conceit not to be beaten the world over. If there is such a one here, may I beg him or her to take some radical step for the removal of this disgrace and positive danger to Crowland's welfare. We, who are parents especially, should exercise all the influence we possess through our religious organizations to lessen the havoc caused by the presence of such teachers who attempt to destroy the ideals of humanity. The profession is great enough, and should be noble enough to purge itself of this menace to civilization.

We don't quite know what the Vicar would like to do, or what he can do. The stake is out of fashion, although there is the mean and quite Christian weapon of boycott left. Anyway, it is evident that something is going to be done about this "menace to civilization."

We notice that in some of the replies sent by the B.B.C. to those who have written complaining of the religious services a new excuse has been found. Those who complain are now told that the sermons are not broadcasted "in a spirit of controversy." Of course they are not. Controversy implies hearing the other side. And with the B.B.C. no other side is permitted. People who imagine that this kind of childishness meets the objection that a public institution is being utilized for the exclusive benefit of the Churches are almost hopeless. In connexion with no other subject save that of religion would such a childish reply be made. But where religion is concerned any kind of nonsense serves.

There is a certain artful childishness about the Bishop of Lichfield. Speaking in a Liverpool church, he said that while walking along the street a man said to him, "You preachers always take it for granted that your congregations believe what you believe, but some of us find it the most difficult thing in the world to believe in the Christian faith." Some clergymen might have taken into their heads to discuss the matter, but the Bishop of Lichfield knew better than that. He explained to the congregation that he knew there were very real difficulties concerning the Christian faith, but "I do not think I can serve this congregation best by discussing these difficulties." For, he plaintively explained, "the great majority of you do believe or want to believe." So the least said the better. People who do believe, must not become acquainted with difficulties. And people who want to believe ought to be kept away from them. So the Bishop was wise in his generation. The less Christians understand about their religion the better for their belief.

The *Church Times* says that the Catholic conception of the authority of the Church strongly commends itself because it harmonizes with the unmistakable requirements of human nature. And, we presume, the proper requirements of human nature are such as harmonize with the authority of the Church. Trust a religious writer for making things quite clear and reasonable.

After many weeks of rowdyism at St. Cuthbert's Church, Darwen, the Bishop of Blackburn decided to close the Church for a time. Now we wonder whether the health or the morals of the people of Darwen will suffer in consequence? If they do not, will the people of Darwen have the commonsense to draw the obvious conclusion and not open it again, and follow the example

with other churches? We really should like to see a close season for parsons.

"No more war" is the inscription on a new war memorial erected in Vienna. We hope the statement is more than a pious hope. The wish should be father to the action. The causes of war are known. They could be prevented from operating, if the leaders of the nations could but be persuaded to dump some of their medieval notions.

Someone hath blundered. The British Industries Fair is in progress at the White City, and yet one of the principal industries of the country is unrepresented there. This particular industry has a workshop in practically every village and town in the land. Indeed, large cities have scores of workshops. The industry employs at least 50,000 clerks of various grades. Head Clerks are known to receive as much as £15,000 a year, and lesser men as much as £5,000. As well as clerks, there are employed, wholly or part-time, many thousands of less skilled workers. Obviously, this is a great industry. The employees declare it is the most important in, not Britain alone, but the world. Newspapers give it a plentiful amount of free advertisement, and aid it also by suppressing anything likely adversely to affect it. The commodity with which this industry is concerned is the manufacture of superstitious opinion, belief, and practice. The name of the industry is the Church of Christ Jesus.

According to the Secretary of the Lord's Day Observance Society, a great opportunity awaits Christians in London to strike a decisive blow for righteousness. The dear old fanatic is anxious that the Sabbath Day be saved in the metropolis of the Empire. He urges his fellow fanatics to vote, at the L.C.C. elections, only for candidates pledged to rob the non-pious citizen of his liberty to enjoy Sunday as he may please; to vote for candidates, that is, who will be willing to close the Parks against games on Sunday and to oppose Sunday cinemas. Our London friends should see what they can do towards circumventing this Sabbatarian activity; otherwise, Londoners are likely to have their hard-won Sunday liberty filched from them by a mob of Christian dervishes.

In regard to the New Prayer Book the *English Churchman* brings a number of charges against the majority of Bishops. They resent all criticism of the Book; call its opponents "extremists"; never show the slightest practical consideration for the conscientious convictions of opponents; are not impartial, and exercise "patronage" one-sidedly. If Bishops are like this with special illumination from God in their hearts, we shudder to think of what they might be like without the aforesaid illumination. Still, we think the *English Churchman* might as well remember that, after all, the Bishops are Christians; they are only acting as Christian Bishops always have acted. Tradition has always been a well-beloved thing with bishops and churchmen. Surely, then, a churchman should be the last man to reproach bishops for acting according to the traditions of their tribe?

Says the Bishop of Derby: "My diocese is far too big to allow me to do the star turns in the circus." Still, *noblesse oblige*, your lordship. The chief clown shouldn't need to be reminded about that.

Birmingham is buying 160 acres of playing fields. Some other large cities are building churches. A free copy of the *War Cry* is offered to every reader getting the correct answer to: "Which will benefit the nation most?"

"Truth at all times has a ring like that of a good coin," says Mr. Gordon Selfridge. Christian "truth" has a ring like that of a cracked church-bell. One thing we are glad of is, that more and more people are be-

ginning to know the proper ring of truth. As evidence, we cite the fact that an increasing number of people keep away from churches.

There is too much talk and too little practice of religion, says the Bishop of Carlisle. Perhaps after all the world is no worse for the state of things deplored by the Bishop. Years ago, when priests and the masses whole-heartedly practised the religion they interpreted from Holy Writ, this sad old world was made sadder by bloodthirsty intolerance and religious massacres. In light of this, we shall be content if Christians continue to talk rather than practise.

A fair number of British towns have now got rid of their war trophies. Apropos of this, a contemporary says that love of tanks and guns is no longer accepted as a test of patriotism; soon the scorn of these things will probably be recognized as a fairly good test of Christianity. Our contemporary should have said—a good test of real civilization.

Apropos of a recent meeting which was supposed to demonstrate the Church's sympathy with the unemployed—the meeting at which Canon Donaldson and the Rev. Thos. Nightingale spoke—a Methodist in the audience says that a letter was read from the Bishop of London. This advised emigration for the surplus population. That was a £10,000-a-year thought, indeed. We are told that the only comment was a sarcastic cry of "Marvellous!" from one of the unemployed. The Bishop is in no danger of losing his reputation.

As regards a fixed Easter, leading men of practically every industry, of the railways, of the scholastic profession, etc., in Europe agree that stabilizing the holiday is desirable in every way. Yet the nations are required to wait patiently for this great improvement while the Christian Churches scan their dogmas to see if anything religious can be urged against it. What a humiliating state of affairs for nations, claiming to be civilized, to endure! There is no need to wait, cap in hand, upon the priest for a final decision in the matter. All the governments of Europe require to do is, to say that on such and such two days in April there shall be two Bank Holidays. The Churches could then be left to celebrate their myth of a Saviour "rising again" on any days they might please.

Dr. F. W. Norwood believes that we human beings are now on the fringe of the mightiest era in human knowledge. We have to find our way to a new Canaan, or perish in the wilderness. The only alternatives are a flaming apocalypse or the emergence of a new faith. If we go on in unbelief, despair and lovelessness in the new era, our civilization will certainly be destroyed from top to bottom. Underlying Dr. Norwood's firework rhetoric is the very real fear that if the new era leaves religion out of its scheme of things, the priest is in for a lean time. That fear has oppressed medicine-men of every era, and in every country. It has never failed to produce a doleful crop of forebodings as to the future, and veiled threats about the vengeance of the Lord God as a penalty for his being ignored. Dr. Norwood is a "true blue" medicine-man.

Dr. Dinsdale Young told a Methodist gathering:—

Don't be cowed by pretentious intellectualism. If ever you are told that it is a sign of intellectual feebleness that you believe the old Gospel, don't you believe it! Never was there more reason than to-day for accepting the Bible as the very Word of God. We don't have to apologize to-day for the Gospel.

The dead horse that Freethinkers are alleged to be flogging seems far from being defunct. The views enumerated by Dr. Young find response in the hearts of the majority of Christians.

The Rev. Dr. John Hutton likes the young people of to-day; he doesn't agree with the criticisms so readily passed upon them. The young people are "courageous, clean, and wholesome." Possibly the Doctor's benediction will start in the pulpit a fashion of similar benedic-

tions. Like Dr. Hutton, the parsons are discovering that abuse of the younger generation for being non-religious, critical and outspoken does not bring them back to the churches. And so there may be tried the effect of "blarney" and gracious patronage. We have a suspicion that the young people will treat this in the same way as they treated abuse—with light-hearted laughter, as they go on their way past the churches to enjoy a man-given Sunday of rest and recreation.

In one of the books by David Grayson, says a contemporary, is a story of a man whose self-appointed work was to paint texts on roadside rocks. Grayson found him one day just as the finishing touches were being put to "God is Love." Grayson said: "Do you always paint the same sign?" "Oh, no," he answered. "I have a feeling about what I should paint. Sometimes near towns, I can't paint anything but, 'Hell yawns,' and 'Prepare to meet thy God.' When in doubt I always paint 'God is Love.'" It seems a pity this poor half-wit never had a feeling to paint the three texts always together. If he had done that the notice might have done a little good. It might have set Christians wondering about the incongruities embodied in Christian teaching.

The *Methodist Recorder* advocates "hard thinking." The problems confronting the nation, it says, are of unsurpassed difficulty and complexity, and are not to be solved by rhetorical speeches or by ingenious catchwords, but by resolute and clear thinking. There can be no doubt, we learn, that shibboleths and catchwords have been among the most formidable obstacles to progress. Again, the spirit of detachment from ingrained or inherited prejudices can be won only by intelligent thinking. What our contemporary says is all very fine and large, but what, we ask, in the way of clear thinking have the Churches and their hordes of priests ever done towards solving the nation's problems? If this solving were left to the God-inspired leaders of the Churches, the problems would remain till doomsday. In light of the fact that the Churches have always boycotted, persecuted or suppressed the clear and resolute thinker, it seems rather incongruous for a religious journal to advocate "hard thinking." In the Churches themselves and as regards religious matters, the faithful have always been taught to believe, to accept without question, to follow the priest's guidance. Is this kind of training likely to fit men and women for hard thinking in matters outside the Churches? What the Churches have been doing for centuries past is to breed generations of "soft" thinkers. And now the *Methodist Recorder* expects this kind of thinker can, all of a sudden, be turned into the other kind! That's the sort of sudden conversion that simply doesn't happen in human nature. Still, no doubt our friend meant well. But we fear its exhortation to "hard thinking" will fall on barren soil. Perhaps that is just as well—for the Methodist Church itself.

Canon Horsefield has been writing in the *Christian Herald* on the theme: "Are the Churches 'falling away?'—the disease and its remedy." He attacks Modernism, Higher Criticism, and Papiatism. His remedy is to do away with these, and to try to get the Churches to forget their dissensions. Cannot, he says, those who claim to be walking in the footsteps of Jesus show their faith in one God by a readiness to lay aside minor differences, and so present a united front to the world? Until this is done the Church will fail to get the allegiance of countless number of these outsiders. We are afraid it cannot be done. The trouble is that each Church believes its "minor difficulties" are not minor difficulties. And the man in the street thinks that all the Churches' major beliefs are major imbecilities, and believes he is better off without them.

Bishop E. S. Johnson, of the American Methodist missions in Africa, says of certain converted natives (Makaranga) that the progress made by these people

is very marked. "They are outgrowing their old taboos." Exchanging one set of savage taboos for another set, strikes us as a very queer kind of progress. He speaks also of a native Christian, son of a chief. This man has grown, we learn, into a wonderful Christian. He used to earn a living as a sawyer, but now, without adequate support, he has given himself to taking the Gospel to certain natives who asked for a religious teacher. We congratulate this son of a chief on his acumen. He sees that by praying and preaching and begging he can get his daily bread supplied without his needing to work hard with his muscles. We presume he is a shining example of "progress" as engendered by the religion of Christ.

As it only requires one of the five senses to appreciate the films, in the same way that picture newspapers are for people who cannot read, it is perhaps a matter of small importance what is said about them. The "Seventh Heaven" is the Screen's most perfect picture; it will be noted that even here, those with a pious turn of mind are greedy, for they want a lot. Chico, in the screen's most perfect picture, is a Paris sewer-man, and he is an atheist, and his lack of belief was brought about through the Bon Dieu having betrayed him once, when he prayed for a wife with golden hair and wasted the francs he spent on candles. There are elements of comic opera in this story that move the ordinary man to laughter, but they apparently move Sir John Martin-Henry, whoever he may be, to superlatives. He writes that he will never forget "the utterly charming picture" of the heroine in "Seventh Heaven," and if words are given us to conceal our thoughts, Sir John Martin-Henry has utterly succeeded.

Mrs. Philip Snowden states that the B.B.C. want a certain amount of controversy, but not propaganda. She defines propaganda as the presentation of one side of the picture only, and, taking her at her word, this rules out all and sundry Christian addresses, services and sermons. We are extremely obliged to you Mrs. Snowden for simplifying the matter.

There is gross neglect on the part of celestial care of Joseph's Tomb at Shechem. It has been rifled, and valuable records and relics have been stolen.

A pretty little game is in progress in Rome. According to a report there is imminent a national edition of D'Annunzio's writings financed by the King, the Government, and prominent persons, and the Pope, although not mentioning the famous author by name, is advising the faithful to have nothing to do with such works. The Pope is coming to grips with the gospel of superman, and the piquancy of the situation will be appreciated by those who know that there is no connexion between a devout Catholic in Tipperary and the policy of the Church of Rome. Was it not the Jesuits who thoroughly hated Machiavelli because he used the same methods in politics that the nice kind gentleman used in religion? But, after all, it is not to be expected from the Church of Rome that it should tolerate freedom of opinion considering that it only recognized the world as revolving round the sun as recently as 1820.

Mr. E. Roy Calvert, Secretary to the Society for the Abolition of Capital Punishment, writes to a Liverpool paper protesting against a remark of the Rev. C. C. Eleum, that capital punishment is an ordinance of God. We have every sympathy with Mr. Calvert's campaign, but the parson is in the right this time. Capital punishment is laid down in the Bible for quite a number of offences. It was death for picking up sticks on the Sabbath, also for dealing with the devil, also for trying to induce your neighbour to try a change in gods, to say nothing of the very mundane offence of murder. The parson is quite right this time, and we like to give the devil his due. After all, humanitarianism in the treatment of the criminal owes more to religion than does humanitarianism in any other direction.

National Secular Society.

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

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

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

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Those Subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that 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.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—W. J. Lamb, £1; E. A. Kemp, 2s.; J. Wearing, 6d.

S. KING.—There are plenty of ways in which one can help the Cause, and each must decide for himself the way that suits him or her best. Thanks for all you are doing in bringing the paper to the notice of likely subscribers.

W. J. LAMB.—We are obliged for your good wishes. We also appreciate your desire to do something in the other direction, but personal matters can wait.

L. HURRY.—We think it highly desirable that courtesy and good humour should at all times be shown by a lecturer to his audience, and by the audience to the lecturer. But we do not think that any good would be done by opening these columns for them to fight it out. In the nature of the case the readers must be in the dark as to the merits of the respective parties.

P. TROWER.—Mr. Cohen has written you.

H. ARMITAGE.—There is no question whatever of any will properly drawn in favour of the National Secular Society not being carried out in the manner desired by the testator. Mr. Cohen will always be pleased to advise you in the matter.

R. BROWN.—If the B.B.C. was not dominated by religious prejudice, they could hardly fail to appreciate the cogency of your comment "include all, or exclude all." A very large number of our readers have written protesting against the religious propaganda being carried on, and we hope that all will do so with as little delay as possible. It does these Christians good to be made to realize that there are others in the world beside themselves.

Sugar Plums.

On Sunday next (March 11) Mr. Chapman Cohen will lecture at 3.0 and 6.30, in the Engineers Hall, Rusholme Road, Manchester.

The *Durham County Advertiser* gives a column report of Mr. Cohen's recent lectures at Chester-le-Street. We understand the lectures have aroused considerable interest in the neighbourhood, which is all to the good.

Mr. George Bedborough writes from the United States:—

I have been asked to act as President of the Love Culture Society, and as long as I have the unanimous support of the members I shall be glad to do all I can to make the society worthy of its great name. E. F. Ruedebush will continue to act as Secretary and Treasurer.

The Love Culture Society, we should explain, is an organization for the systematic development of universal good will. And as the world goes, it looks as though it could do with a fair-sized dose of this medicine.

One of our readers, on the strength of what he had read in these columns, cited the story of Jesus stretching a plank to a required size. Some Christian friends strongly denied the existence of any such story. Well, here it is, and as others may be interested, we give the story in full:—

And Joseph, wheresoever he went in the city, took the Lord Jesus with him, where he was sent for to work to make gates, or milk-pails, or sieves, or boxes; The Lord Jesus was with him wheresoever he went. And as often as Joseph had anything in his work, to make longer or shorter, or wider, or narrower, the Lord Jesus would stretch his hand towards it. And presently it became as Joseph would have had it. So that he had no need to finish anything with his own hands, for he was not very skilful at his carpenter's trade.

The story will be found in the Apocryphal Gospel of the Infancy.

Mr. F. E. Monks, the Secretary of the Manchester Branch, is to open a discussion on Capital Punishment, on March 7, at the Recreation Hall attached to the works of the Castner-Kellner Alkali works, Runcorn. The debate will be opened at 7.30, and admission is free. Lancashire friends will please note.

We are glad to hear of an improved meeting at Mr. Rosetti's lecture on Sunday last. The lecture was enjoyed by those present, and a good number of questions followed. We understand the Liverpool Branch has in view a very active campaign during the summer months, in which we hope they will get the support of all local sympathizers.

Mr. F. Mann will lecture to-day for the South London Branch, N.S.S., at their Hall, 30 Brixton Road, on "The Age of Erasmus," the lecture will commence at 7.15.

GEORGE MEREDITH—FEMINIST.

Meredith was a whole-hearted champion of the equality of the sexes. He rejected the belief common in his time, that woman was an alabaster angel, to be set on a pedestal under a glass case, or that she was an inferior creature to be kept in a restricted sphere. No man has seen more truly into the hearts of women. His great heroines, from Lucy to Diana, are not unworthy to be compared with the Rosalinds and Imogens of Shakespeare. They are no pale, shadowy ghosts; we are not always sure that they are exactly beautiful. But they are vital and individual and valiant. They are robust athletic, and efficient, glowing with health and vigour. In an age when sickliness was a feminine attraction, Meredith showed us that women could eat heartily without losing their charm.

Sex equality to Meredith was no mere abstract question of "rights"; it was a necessity for human progress; the chief hope in the upward struggle to the world of spirit. It was as essential for men as for women. Love without equality is a worthless sham. He showed the need for the free possession of one's own soul; for the soul must be possessed before it can be given. His generous mind revolted passionately against a society which took its marching orders from a hierarchy based on caste or sex privilege. Meredith's sincerity as a feminist has been doubted because of his famous aphorism, "Woman will be the last thing civilized by man." Mr. G. K. Chesterton shows that it is the opposite of what Meredith believes. Of course it is. Meredith intended it to be, and so he puts the phrase into the mouth of the foolish Sir Austin Feverel. The saying is plainly an ironic comment on an England timid of ideas, over-ridden with ancient prejudices.

G. Barker (in the "Schoolmistress.")

Hwuy-Ung Looks at Us.

(Concluded from page 123.)

Now let Hwuy-Ung entertain us in lighter vein, through the inimitable translation of his brother which is, indeed, a very close and literal rendering of the original Chinese. He was greatly impressed by our sports, and one day his cousin Chek took him to see a cricket match:—

They struck fiercely with heavy flat clubs at a hard ball, and sometimes hit. Then ran past each other between sticks stuck in the earth, as if hunted by ox-headed tormentors. One face other men pursue the ball they flung back with speed of the wind. The people, usually quiet, had much excitement at times, and ten thousand voices roared like the noise of a thunder-clap. I asked my cousin what made them so furious, and he said, because one man caught the ball. There was more serious cause, not? For men having reason cannot be stirred by that small thing. I began to think up that there were three sticks standing together each end of the running space. The number three indicated a symbol. For in many lands that is a sacred and religious number. There are Three Lights, Three Powers of Nature, Three Auspicious Stars, also Three kinds of Dependence for Women, Three kinds of Abundance, Three Sins, and others. We have Three Religions, the Buddhists have a Trinity, and the Christians have Three Gods in One. Thus I have belief that the origin of this national game, of great antiquity, was a religious ceremony or rite. The three sticks are symbol of Trinity in Unity—the firm principle of Good. The ball is active principle of Evil. If the virtue of man—the flat club—overcame evil by driving the ball away, then would the principle of good triumph. But if the virtue of man failed to resist the attack, and his gods were overthrown, then would he be undone and evil triumph. So all had clear explanation—rule, and I could share in the feelings of the spectators by clapping hands that time the ball—the evil principle—was defeated. I explained to my cousin my measure of this game; but he not appear convinced. Some people not like to be told simple things their minds not understand.

A somewhat similar explanation of Foo-poh (football) is equally amusing. Hwuy-Ung greatly admires our proficiency in sport. He says:—

I altogether believe I have made discovery of secret cause for the Ying (English) people's greatness. Is to give-say in one word, "Sport," as written in their language. The measure of this word is not easy. It includes all exercises required for increase of bodily strength, agility, skill, endurance, and other valuable qualities. This purpose, continued for centuries, has made the men of Ying-ka-li stronger and more stubborn than men of other races that have not sport . . . This "Sport" we must introduce in the Middle Kingdom. Will make us more capable as individuals, more powerful as nation. An army of men wise in these games how defeat?

But our dancing filled him with horror:—

When I entered the hall, I was as one blinded by lightning; for the illumination, in truth, is of same nature as lightning, being from electric fire . . . When I was able to discern clearly I perceived more than eight tens guests present, half of them women. Ai-ya! what manner of propriety was in their garments? Near to me was a red-coloured girl, who caused me shame when I looked upon her. Never before had I seen female form so exposed! Her neck, her back, her arms and breast—all uncovered . . . I looked away, and saw that most of the other women were just as little clothed. My heart became sour . . . At this moment I heard sounds of music produced by fiddles—small and big—flutes and trumpets. All for a moment was confusion. I was not prepared for what came after—shall I erase it from my mind? How can? Young men rushed towards the women and, embracing them, hopped and glided

about, keeping time with the music! . . . Seeing me retire, my cousin with a smile bid me select a young woman and hop and glide with her. I turned away and went out into fresh night air, and could then breathe freely.

He does not at all approve of the ways of our women, not even of his cousin's wife:—

My cousin has adopted all the customs of this country. His wife, who is of the red-haired race, commands him and he must obey. If she has not her will, it may be said of her scolding that "men are worn out and horses are exhausted," for she is "the female fowl that announces the morning."

As for the general run of them:—

Their manners are sometimes so bold and rough, standing and staring into your eyes, that out of shame for them I look away . . . My cousin has become accustomed to this disrespect. What time shall I be the same? He says that they not mean to be insolent more than the ass desires have long ears and a badly tuned song; they are as they were made. So I will be sorry for them as I am for the ass. Their fathers should be reprov'd and warn'd by their headman. But the fathers may be subdued by their wives, as my cousin is; then what can do? . . . How men must manage women will be difficulty as long as the world endures.

The jury system in our courts of law does not impress him favourably:—

Twelve men of the public, in many cases when knowledge financial, scientific or technical required, they how can possess it? They listen to words they know not more than meaning of birds' singing and dogs' barking. Is pitiable seeing twelve men appointed to judge and understanding not one side of subject. When they retire from court to room at back then is ignorance displayed. One looks at the other for guidance as sheep in fold. They sit at table; some take out smoke-pipe, some speak of "Sports," or of a public event. Chief of jury asks opinions on case. Man with loud voice and rough manner and words gains support. There is discussion with little reason or interest. One man says he wants return to his business; another that he judges man to be guilty; another urges a decision for his dinner is calling him; another says: "Give accused benefit of doubt." This last is good advice saving trouble of thought. Thus when chief of jury announces in court "Not guilty," jurymen hear the accused is old offender and had three, ten-five convictions above time. The criminal is free man, and leaves court-house with smile of contempt for jury.

But he admits that our method, with all its defects, is better than the Chinese:—

I speak-talk what thing? These defects compared with our law judgments are but as the overflow of insignificant stream to a flood of the Yellow River.

The titles so freely handed out to our public men nowadays do not impress him:—

In this land titles much importance. "Sir" before name much desired; some men not want it. But wives consider in suspense be called "Lady" Meh-li or "Lady" Jih-mai-mah, and wear tall hat. Husbands must please them so accept title of "Knight," coupled with "Sir." "Knight" was in Ying-land ancient honour for soldiers having big gall and ability to hand many enemies to Heaven. Now time big gall no use. More high title of "Sir" is for Nam (Baronet), for it is hereditary, though progeny be four-square block.

His cousin called these people, and their admirers "snobs," a word that puzzled our philosopher greatly. At last:—

I look-see in words-collection and read: " "Snob," a leather workman." That honourable, not honourable? But I see below: "A vulgar person who apes gentility." Good; it is one who has ambition of away throwing vulgar manners to attain propriety. For I hear-say many of the rich at here were old-time diggers of gold, keepers of samshu-

shops, or shepherds. So "Snobs" is term for those desiring to become better; some being honourable leather workmen. I not see fault.

He was greatly impressed by the official weather forecasts as published in the daily papers:—

I asked my cousin if I could rely on these prophecies which are published in the new-her papers. He said that I in truth could, for they were infallible as the words of the Chief of the Lord of Heaven sect (Pope of Rome); but I must interpret his divinations according to custom. It might offend the spirits of the air if their intentions were clearly exposed. . . . So when the Official Diviner proclaims for day below that it will be "Fine and settled," knowing his meaning, I away go with umbrella. That he is always right, and friendly guide to me in this land where is summer and winter same one day. He is great sage favoured by the spirits of the air and the local deity. Is deserving his rich pay.

Hwuy-Ung acquired a good knowledge of colloquial English, but he admits that some of the idioms puzzled him at first:—

For long time I have been as one lost in a dense fog; perplexed by the constant hearing from the common people of a word that sounds like "*Pla-ti*." My instructor tells me it is not used by men of culture. This word, often repeated in a phrase, refers to the life-stream in our vein channels. Every object is then painted red and gory. This is untrue and horrible. Thus they will say in ordinary converse: "I went to see the *pla-ti* man in his *pla-ti* house, but he was at his *pla-ti* little meal. So I could not have a *pla-ti* talk with him about our *pla-ti* business." This does not show clear brightness on the part of such people. For the man, his house, his little meal, a talk and a business not can all be gory. My tutor gives me the explanation-rule for this curious habit of speech. Those who have it are of low class whose gall is small, but who desire to appear brave as grizzly bears. These poor beings are found in the *samshu*-shops. They have the faces of foxes but try to look like wolves.

In our speech and our manners, as well as our policy in relation to foreign countries, he finds little of the alleged refining influence of Christianity. In many respects our superstitions are no more enlightened than those of China, as for instance spiritualism and belief in ghosts and charms:—

In truth there is no wise man who is not also foolish. They of the Lord of Heaven sect (Roman Catholics) wear round their necks near the skin a medal or piece of cloth blessed by a priest they believe preserves them from harm. They would make invincible warriors. Perhaps in battle they would be undeceived as were our Boxers, who had same belief. However, I have not heard that members of this sect are free from accidents or sickness.

Thus does the genial Hwuy-Ung discourse amiably upon many things in a manner that places him as a humorist. But, with it all are the sage reflections of a very wise man. He clearly sees that the future progress, and the independence, of China demand that she shall bring herself in line with the material achievements of Western civilization; and he outlines a practical programme with that end in view. "For, Tseng Ching, we are destined to be top powerful nation on earth," and he quotes with approval the opinion of M. Simon, who knew the Chinese well: "The day that they take a fancy to engage in Western industry will mark a disastrous day for Europe."

The greed and rapacity of Mammon-obsessed, apostate Christendom is preparing a well-deserved nemesis. China will, undoubtedly, adopt our science, our mechanical inventions and devices, everything, in short, that is *sane* in our civilization; but she will

not accept our religion which is beneath the contempt even of the most ignorant Chinese coolie.

Alas! Hwuy-Ung is no longer with us. On his return to his native land, the vessel encountered a severe storm, and he was washed overboard. But his letters remain, and fully deserve the widest publicity that can be given to them. I know of no other book that presents the Chinese mind and character more intimately, more clearly or more attractively.

E. J. LAMEL.

A Confession and a Warning.

I AM NOW sixty years of age. As a youth I was extremely "pious," and had circumstances permitted, I should have been prepared for the "ministry" of the Methodist Church.

The story of my "break away" would take too long to relate. Serious doubt commenced with the preparation for a science examination. I was then a pupil-teacher, and about eighteen years of age.

One incident stands out in my memory, however. I had undertaken to read a paper at a "Mutual Improvement Society," on "Infidelity, its Cause and Cure." I thought it would be well to know something of the matter at first hand, and took the bold step of attending a Secularist lecture. That paper was never given.

Later, the personality of Charles Bradlaugh appealed to me, and he became my hero. I heard him lecture whenever possible. Thursday was the great day of the week, for each Thursday the *National Reformer* came into my hands. I recollect with what avidity I devoured the articles by Bradlaugh, by the Annie Besant of those days, by J. M. Robertson, "D," and others.

At the age of twenty I left my orthodox home, because my views were anathema there.

For several years I ploughed a lone furrow, and then I struck Unitarianism.

I was not consciously a hypocrite, but, looking back, I see that the chief thing that attracted me to that cult was the fact that it offered the advantages of freedom of thought minus many of the disadvantages of the Secularist.

I was engaged in a business of a highly competitive character, and was determined to make progress, and although I had no fears regarding my employers, who would not have objected to my views so long as I could influence business, it was a different matter with customers. I was now able to "go to church" as other respectable citizens did. Even if the particular church which I attended was referred to, the name, to the majority of people, meant little. They might perhaps regard one as a "crank," but any relation was better than none. Looking back forty years, I see at first, a young man caring for nothing more than for the integrity of his mind, scorning evasion and reconciliation to creeds, or "playing for safety."

And gradually—although he never accepted any definite creed—I see him adapting himself and performing such mental gymnastics that he was able to pass as a Christian—a great asset to him in his business. I admit willingly, that my association with Unitarianism has brought me into contact with some splendid people. I hold in great respect many of the leaders, and believe that they are doing a useful work in their own way. Most of them are transcendentalists or mystics, and their "creed," "salvation by character," is far removed from the abject prostrating attitude of believers in vicarious atonement.

It is also far from my intention to imply that there are many, or any, amongst them who were influenced as I was. I speak only of my own motives and experience. Doubtless Unitarians are doing good work within the confines of organized religion itself—but to each man his call. My call was to the ranks of militant Free-thought, and to me, Unitarianism was an escape. No doubt my long association with it has influenced my thinking, but as Abraham returned in his later days to the altar where he had sacrificed "at the first," so now,

after years of wandering in those quasi-theological, quasi-philosophical mazes, I find myself returning to the position I held as a young man, and repeating the old Secularist formula: "One world at a time."

But I do regret the wasted years of my life. I regret that I have stood aside while others were fighting the battle of freedom. I regret that I have conciliated where I should have condemned, and have played with words so as to express agreement when I did not agree.

My hope now is that I may live for some years to serve the cause of Freethought faithfully, and so atone to some little extent for my desertion.

And the warning I would give to any others who may be tempted by the prospect of an easier time to take "the line of least resistance," may be well expressed in words attributed to Jesus Christ: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

To be a professed Freethinker in these days may not be quite so difficult as it was thirty years ago, but whatever the disabilities or discomforts, "I see not any road of perfect peace which a man can walk, but after the counsel of his own bosom." "Nothing can bring you peace but yourself, nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles." (Emerson.) A. H. M.

Edison and Religion.

MR. THOMAS A. EDISON has flopped again. For some time past I have felt it in my bones that it was about due. During the past twenty-five years his periodical floppings in regard to religion have been so thoroughly regular that I have formed the habit of looking in newspapers for them. His flop this time is decidedly on our side, and I am pleased to notice that he didn't keep me waiting quite so long. Probably he realizes that at the age of 81 it is time to be getting on. However, I will give below a few extracts from his public utterances since 1906, including the most recent, which I was pleased to notice in my London paper of February 13, 1928.

At Marion, Ohio, August 11, 1906, on the occasion of the funeral of Warren G. Harding, Edison said:—

"I am seeking after truth and have made much progress. The soul after death takes flight, but in what manner and form is unknown. I do not believe that the spirit returns to earth to communicate with the living, but we know that the soul lives after death.

"I have not found it possible to demonstrate the existence of life after death, and I cannot say that men like the beloved President Harding live after death. . . . There is a great dissecting head of things and people—a supreme being who looks after the destinies of the world. I have faith in a supreme being. You know there are living cells in the body, so tiny that the microscope cannot see them at all. The entity that gives life and motion to the human body is finer still, and lies infinitely beyond the reach of our finest scientific instruments. When the entity deserts the body, the body is like a ship without a rudder—deserted, motionless and dead. It is mere clay, as all orthodox Christians believe."

Next I have a clipping dated November 20, 1910, from New York. It is in reply to criticisms of the Rev. Chas. Aked and Henry Frank, regarding his (Edison's) atheistic views. Edison says:—

"So I am an atheist now, am I? These people who call me to account don't even read what I have said. I am not an atheist, never have been and never said I was one. I believe in a supreme intelligence, but I have grave doubts as to whether you and I and all the other good folk of this earth are going to be roused from our graves to go to some beautiful shining place up aloft. I do not see it, I cannot understand it, and neither do these ministers of fashionable churches. They do not say what they think. Often they do not think. It is all business with them. They tell me I am heading straight for Hell. Maybe I am, but I'll take my chances with the fashionable minister, and if there is such a spot as Heaven I'll bet I'll get there ahead of the Rev. Dr. Aked. No, I do not believe a man's mind lives after

him. His work lives after him, but his work is a material thing. And I am willing to take my chance with all these people who worry about what they call their souls and write me abusive letters."

The next clipping I have is from New York, and is dated October 15, 1926. The headline reads "Edison's belief in immortality." It is too lengthy to quote in its entirety, so I will give extracts:—

"Though we lack sufficient data for definite conclusions, such scientific evidence as does exist is decidedly on the side of immortality. Instead of scoffing at the idea that the life of the soul may be eternal, there is nothing to which practical intelligence need object in the conception of immortality.

"It is the duty of religious leaders to gather together the evidence bearing on the question, and make sure it is such evidence that the sceptic cannot overturn. However, if science ever succeeds in determining the facts, it may have to seek a term more definite and descriptive of eternal life than immortality.

"I would point out that even now there are certain forms of life which maintain themselves on earth for incredibly long periods. I therefore think it possible that the human soul might also maintain itself, perhaps for ever, in an environment specially suited for it."

An Editorial comment in the same paper on these utterances, says:—

"This interview with Mr. Edison presents a striking contrast with the one he gave to Mr. Edward Marshall in 1910. Sixteen years ago Mr. Edison said: 'I cannot believe in the immortality of the soul. This speculative idea needs but to be analysed to fall wholly to the ground. Soul, Soul, What do you mean by Soul? The brain?' And answered his own question by saying: 'The brain is nothing more than a piece of meat mechanism.'"

Mr. Edison's latest flop is from Fort Myers, Florida, and is dated February 12, 1928. I am copying it from a London newspaper.

When questioned on the subject of religion he replied:—

"Americans are drifting away from bunk and superstition. Scientific knowledge is responsible for the fact that 11,344 of the Churches of the U.S. had no additions last year." Regarding Eternity he remarked: "Fifty Fifty, one way or the other. That is my present belief on life after death."

Commenting on the foregoing, I would say that Mr. Edison is a scientist of value we would want on our side. He is however a much overestimated man. His past struggles of thirty years to keep in the limelight have been painful indeed. His periodical practise of promising us marvellous motors, talking pictures, etc., has become positively tiresome. Deny this man the limelight and he is unhappy.

But his struggles in this direction by using religion as an avenue are about at an end. He has sponged it out. In his latest utterance he has not "come clean" absolutely, but the situation looks hopeful. May he yet be with us a long time, for finally we hope to number him with the other few glorious Americans. We wish to keep him in our memories with Thomas Paine, Robert Ingersoll and Luther Burbank.

HENRY H. PRATLEY.

Proof of Holy Writ.

JERUSALEM, thou precious gem of earth;
What wondrous proofs of holy writ have birth,
Within the abut of thy hallowed ground.
But recently a moss-grown slab was found,
On clearing which, these lines, engraved appeared:
Here lies the ass that Jesus commandeered;
And when before a court of justice led,
To answer for his conduct, calmly said:
"The cattle on a thousand hills are mine;
The ass belonged to me by right divine."

S. PULMAN.

MEDIOCRACY: The Ravings of a Thirddrate Mind.

PROLOGUE:

The following are a series of monologues inflicted upon Mary, the wife of Joseph the Carpenter, by Rachel, the wife of Isaac, their nearest neighbour. They are pieces of Rachel's mind concerning the doings of Jesus, Mary's eldest son. The author challenges any psychologist or student of human nature to prove that they are not authentic.

MONOLOGUE No. 5.

CONCERNING A FAMOUS DANCER.

DIDN'T you tell me once that John, the son of Zacharias, was a cousin or something of yours?

Well, well, I always said that young man's tongue would get him into trouble. You've heard about it I suppose?

"Only that he was in prison?" Oh, my poor Mary, try to bear up.

There, there now, don't get flustered. Remember that if he had only kept a civil tongue in his head it wouldn't have happened. We all know that the goings-on at the Court are something disgraceful, but at the same time he was old enough to know which side of his bread was buttered.

"What happened?" Now my dear Mary, how am I to tell you if you will keep on interrupting? Where was I? Oh yes, of course, it was his own fault really, after all, Herod rather liked him, and would have let him talk until doomsday, if he had only been discreet. There's no harm in trying to reform the people, but it doesn't do to try and reform those in power, one is bound to get the worst of it. After all, Herod isn't such a bad sort really; it's that dreadful woman!

My dear Mary, don't be silly, of course the woman is always to blame; that's the basis of society. As for the daughter, that Salome creature, she is just as bad as her mother, how could she be anything else with such parents? Oh, and I have been told, on the best authority, that she only wore—well really, I don't know how to tell you, promise not to tell anyone I told you, and, er, I'll whisper it in your ear . . . Wasn't it dreadful! I don't know what girls are coming to nowadays, in my time . . . If my Rachael dared to do such a thing I would half murder her—but then she wouldn't, I have brought her up so carefully. She couldn't be more ignorant of life if she had been born blind, deaf and dumb. That is the only reliable method. Now as for this modern dancing, it is simply disgraceful, it's so . . . so suggestive; at least it is if it's danced that way, and I am quite, quite sure that that is how she would dance.

Mary, how dare you say such a thing? You know perfectly well I was talking of Salome and not of Rachael. You must have a nasty mind to imagine that my Rachael would even dream of doing such a thing. And I do say that it must have been a disgraceful exhibition because it pleased Herod, and we all know the kind of thing men like, if they get a chance. Personally, I never allow Isaac out of my sight if I can possibly avoid it, of course Isaac is a model husband, but there is no object in running unnecessary risks.

Well, as I was saying, it was a disgraceful affair altogether. Imagine offering a little chit of a girl anything up to half his Kingdom. Did you ever hear of such an absurd thing? Why she might have asked for something valuable, and we all might have been taxed and oppressed to help pay for it, so I suppose after all it might have been worse, you know John had been asking for trouble, and one man's life in these troublous days . . .

My dear, what a way to scream! You did make me jump.

Yes, yes of course, she asked for John's head on a charger, haven't I been telling you so for the last half hour?

MONOLOGUE No. 6.

CONCERNING MIRACLES.

My dear Mary, they are saying such absurd things about your son. Saying he has been working miracles. Isn't it absurd? Can you imagine anyone believing in miracles nowadays?

Yes, yes I know that the old prophets worked them. We're told all about them in the sacred books, and we're taught about them in the Synagogues. But then that was altogether different; they were prophets.

They actually say he brought a girl to life who was dead. "Nonsense," I said when I heard it, "she wasn't dead, she was shamming." Must have been. It's the only solution. And as for curing a blind man, I don't believe it. It couldn't be done. The idea's preposterous. Perhaps he wasn't blind, or perhaps he chanced to recover his sight just at the moment Jesus touched him—such very remarkable coincidences do happen sometimes.

No, I won't believe the testimony of eye-witnesses, they might be lying or they might have been tricked. I wouldn't believe the testimony of my own senses if they told me something against my reason.

As for feeding thousands of people on a few small fishes and a few loaves of bread, it couldn't be done. It simply couldn't be done. Don't tell me! I haven't kept house all these years, and done all the entertaining which Isaac's position demands, without knowing exactly how much food one has to have not to look mean. And I say it couldn't be done, though I should very much like to find out how it was done if it could.

No, no, it was a trick of some kind, like that wine business that took us all in. I don't say he isn't clever in his way, but miracles, bah! I would believe anything before I would believe a miracle.

ETHEL BREF.

Correspondence.

THE HUMAN SPECIES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It is generally assumed that the human is by far the most intelligent species of all living things. This assumption is undoubtedly true should the test be of human control to its own uses, of the forces of nature it finds surrounding it. These triumphs have been and are now astounding.

Yet let us pause to think.

What is the human species? Only one of the mammals.

Its brain-power may have surpassed that of all other mammals, but it is doubtful whether it has surpassed the brain-power of insects such as ants, bees and many others, judged each for the point of view of protection and perpetuation of its kind. Far be it from me to disparage the human species, but I do think we should remember its terrible depravity, while thinking of its many virtues.

Like all forms of life that have existed in the world, the human form is undoubtedly doomed to extinction unless the intelligence it has acquired saves it from that fate.

T. WILFRED HAUGHTON.

The National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON
FEBRUARY 23, 1928.

The President, Mr. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Mrs. Quinton, Miss Kough, Miss Vance, Messrs. Coles, Clifton, Gorniot, Moss, Quinton, Rosetti, Samuels, Silvester, and the Secretary.

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

The following resolution concerning the death of Mr. J. T. Lloyd was passed:—

In recording the death of Mr. J. T. Lloyd, this Executive desires to place on record its deep sense of the high

character displayed in his surrendering an important post in the Presbyterian Church for the arduous work of a Freethought propagandist, and desires to also place on record its appreciation of the services rendered by him, by tongue and pen, to the Freethought Cause during the past twenty-five years.

New members were received for Birmingham and West London Branches, and for the Parent Society.

Correspondence was received from Plymouth and South London Branches, and from members of the Society.

The Executive discussed the arrangements for the Social and Dance on March 3, and for the lectures in the Fulham Town Hall. It was decided to invite Mr. Whitehead to undertake the duties of N.S.S. "Missionary" during the summer.

The Secretary was instructed to inform Branches that invitations for the Annual Conference would now be received.

Other routine matters were dealt with and the meeting closed.

FRED MANN,
General Secretary.

Obituary.

MR. VINCENT J. HANDS.

JUST as we are going to press we regret to learn of the death of our friend and contributor, Mr. Vincent J. Hands. A very young man, he had for several years been suffering from tuberculosis, and there had been for some time, little hope of his recovery. He was brave and cheerful through it all. He leaves a widow and child.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

MR. REX ROBERTS was unfortunately unable to take part in the advertised debate last Sunday, but at very short notice Mr. George Saville prepared a most interesting address on "The Trend of Modern Education," on which, in his capacity as a teacher, he is well-qualified to speak. It is a subject of absorbing interest, and the time all too brief to do more than merely touch the fringe. We North Londoners can congratulate ourselves on the fact that the subjects discussed and debated on our syllabus stimulate desire for further knowledge. To-night Mr. John Murphy will speak on "Roman Catholicism and the Modern Spirit."—K.B.K.

MANCHESTER BRANCH.

MR. GUY A. ALDRED, of Glasgow, making a first appearance under the auspices of the Manchester Branch, had excellent meetings on Sunday at the Engineers Hall, Rusholme Road. His addresses disclosed a wide knowledge of economic and political as well as religious topics, and the audiences were keenly appreciative. On each occasion there was a lively discussion after the address, and the literature stall was well patronized. Replying to one of many questions following his afternoon address on "Why Jesus Wept," Mr. Aldred made the apt remark: "Rulers don't believe in religion. They use religion to keep the people believing in their rulers." In the course of a plea at the evening meeting for the attitude of free-thinking towards all subjects and not only towards religion, Mr. Aldred said that the truly atheistic mind was concerned with much more than the Church: it should carry its questioning attitude over into politics, economics, etc., and work for the destruction of all systems of error. The world was moving increasingly towards Atheism, and that meant progress towards liberty.—C.E.T.

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.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Mr. John Murphy—"Roman Catholicism and the Modern Spirit."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Mr. F. Mann—"The Age of Erasmus."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0 C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"The United States and Peace."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (34 George Street, Manchester Square, W.1): 7.30, Debate between Mr. Reynolds and Mr. Botting. Subject: "Should we Retain Capital Punishment?" Thursday, at 7.30 p.m.: Dance at 101 Tottenham Court Road.

OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of North End Road near Walham Green Church). Meetings on Tuesdays and Fridays at 8 p.m. Speakers—Messrs. Day, Barnes, Moister and Mathie.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan—A lecture.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12 noon, Mr. James Hart—A lecture; 3.0, Messrs. Hyatt and Shaller; 6.30, Messrs. Campbell-Everden and Le Maine. Freethought lectures every Wednesday and Friday at 7.30. Various lecturers.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Social Evening (Whist, Dancing, etc.), at Mecca Café, Waterloo Street, 6.30 p.m. Tickets, 1s. 6d.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (78a Front Street): 7.15, Mr. W. Raine—"The Physical Basis for Psychology." Chairman: Mr. F. Philips.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. Jno. K. Oliphant—"Hell."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, 47th Anniversary of the Opening of the Secular Hall.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.30, Mr. F. E. Monks (of Manchester)—"Determinism or Freewill?" After the lecture a Committee Meeting will be held. All members are particularly requested to be present.

OUTDOOR.

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

WANTED TO BUY: private collections of Neo-Malthusian or birth control literature. Odd vols. of Carlile's publications as well as long runs (bound) of working-class and Freethought periodicals. Give full description and price in first letter.—NORMAN E. HIMES, Holden Green, Cambridge, Mass, U.S.A.

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SOME PIONEER PRESS PUBLICATIONS:

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- CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILIZATION. By Prof. J. W. Draper. A Chapter from *The History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*. 2d., postage ½d.
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